

ALBERT NOBBS

Screenplay by
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Based on a treatment by
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and a short story by
George Moore

FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT

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1 EXT. DUBLIN, JANUARY 1898. DAWSON STREET. DUSK. 1

A gabled rooftop looms against the sky of a winter twilight. As we pan down, the soft light of the street lamps reveals a narrow, five-storey Victorian hotel, with a warm and welcoming, albeit slightly shabby, exterior, and a sign over the door, "Morrison's Hotel."

2 INT. MORRISON'S HOTEL, ALBERT NOBBS' STATION. SECOND FLOOR. 2 DUSK.

On a narrow table and various shelves is the collection of things that ALBERT needs in his work: Clothes brushes, needles, spools of thread, dusters, buttons, string etc.

A man's hand - it is ALBERT's - pulls out a watch from the fob pocket of his waiter's black waistcoat. ALBERT consults his watch then hurries down the corridor. He wears a black tailcoat, a high starched collar and black trousers, several inches too long and shiny from long wear. The most noticeable feature of his outfit are his boots, heavy and round-toed, tightly laced, cracked from wear but polished to a high shine.

3 INT. MORRISON'S, SECOND FLOOR CORRIDOR. DUSK. 3

ALBERT clumps along the corridor, lighting the gas lamps. The place comes to life: carpets of plush crimson, moss-green walls, the toffee sheen of the varnished wood of the doors, the velvety blacks.

Ahead, two maids, all starched white and black, EMMY KEYES, mid-twenties to early-thirties, and MARY O'BRIEN, mid-thirties, cross the corridor, carrying armfuls of shining white bed linen; they ignore ALBERT, and pass from view, into the shadows.

ALBERT meets another maid, HELEN DAWES, early-twenties, a fine-figured young woman, spirited and attractive. She is carrying a chamber pot covered with a cloth. As they pass, she smiles mischievously at ALBERT, holding her nose.

HELEN
Evening, Mr. Nobbs.

ALBERT
Miss Dawes.

4 INT. MORRISON'S, DINING ROOM. DUSK. 4

A face turned upward, shadowed. As the arms of the chandelier are ignited one by one, ALBERT's face is finally revealed.

(CONTINUED)

Handsome and deferential, concentrated and expressionless, one would place him in his mid-forties. The dining room comes into focus: a decidedly middle-class place of fading elegance. MRS. BAKER, is standing by the door, a stout, middle-aged, woman who, in spite of her pretensions to upper middle class sensibilities and dress, is a bit frayed around the edges.

MRS. BAKER
Good evening, Albert.

ALBERT
Ma'am.

The three maids, EMMY, MARY and HELEN, enter.

MRS. BAKER
All right, girls. And no finger-marks on the knife-blades, please!

The three maids begin to set the tables.

5 INT. MORRISON'S, DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

5

The tables have been set. ALBERT, along with two other waiters, PATRICK DONAGHUE, in his late seventies and SEAN CASEY, a pear shaped man in his late forties with the blotchy complexion of a tippler, check their assigned tables. At one of his tables, ALBERT switches a vase of seasonal dried flowers with a nosegay of delicate roses; makes some final adjustments to the place settings, and steps back, pleased with his handiwork. At the buffet, HELEN catches the eye of a particularly pinched-face EMMY and makes a pinch-face back at her, laughing just as MRS. BAKER enters. The ALBERT, SEAN and PATRICK make their way to the door where they stand at attention, white tea-towels over their left arms.

MRS. BAKER
And what are you grinning about, Helen Dawes?

HELEN
Nothing, Mrs. Baker. Sorry, Mrs. Baker.

MRS. BAKER takes up her position at the door, ready to welcome her guests. MR. and MRS. MOORE enter.

MRS. BAKER
Good evening, Mr. and Mrs. Moore. Your table awaits.

ALBERT moves swiftly to usher them to their table, the one with the roses.

MRS. MOORE
What sweet roses, Nobbs. You always remember.

(CONTINUED)

ALBERT bows, then goes to usher a party of two to their table. AN ELDERLY LADY and her COMPANION (M'LADY and MISS SHAW), are escorted to their table by SEAN. PATRICK escorts MRS. CAVENDISH to her table.

MRS. MOORE (CONT'D)
Such a kind little man.

MR. MOORE
(Studying the menu)
Eh?

MRS. MOORE
Nobbs.

MR. MOORE
Who?

MRS. MOORE
Nobbs, he has only waited on us
every single time we've come here
for the past seven years.

MR. MOORE
Oh. Right...

MRS MOORE
What do you say - the lamb or the
beef?

MR. MOORE
Do you think we'll be able to tell
the difference?

MRS. BAKER passes the MOORE'S table, at a dignified pace, followed by DR. HOLLORAN, fifties, shabbily but not cheaply dressed: he is a man of former substance, fallen into careless ways. SEAN is at DR. HOLLORAN'S usual table, ready to pull out the chair. MRS. BAKER leans down to unfold DR. HOLLORAN'S napkin and place it in his lap, taking the opportunity to whisper familiarly to him.

MRS. BAKER
Have the lamb, Doctor Holloran.
'Twill melt in your mouth.

DR. HOLLORAN
The lamb it shall be, Duchess.

MRS. BAKER laughs coquettishly and signals to the hovering waiter, SEAN, who immediately steps forward.

MRS. BAKER
Doctor Holloran will take the lamb,
Sean.

(CONTINUED)

SEAN

Yes, Ma'am.

MRS. BAKER

(looking at his tie)

There's a stain on your tie.

SEAN

I know, Ma'am, I'm sorry. Polly splashed the soup when she was -

MRS. BAKER

(Leading SEAN aside)

Have a care, Sean. Last week it was the jacket, today the tie. Remember, there are dozens - hundreds - of young men walking the streets of Dublin, looking for work. Young men, Sean.

As SEAN, cowed, hurries away, ALBERT appears with a carafe of wine and fills DR. HOLLORAN'S glass.

DR. HOLLORAN

Good man, Nobbs.

MRS. BAKER

Bon appetit, Doctor.

MRS. BAKER sails away to greet M. and MME. PIGOT, a somewhat ostentatious, French couple in their early forties, who PATRICK has just seated.

MRS. BAKER (CONT'D)

Bon soir, Monsieur et Madame!

M. PIGOT

(Rudely getting to the point)

S'il vous plait, Madame, ou est ma verre de l'eau glacé!

MRS. BAKER

(The bloody French!)

Tout de suite, Monsieur! Patrick!

PATRICK is distracted, but ALBERT comes forward with the water jug.

The tables are all occupied and dinner underway when the decorum of the dining room is suddenly disrupted as four smartly dressed young people burst in, still in their overcoats: Two gentlemen and two ladies, all four talking and laughing loudly.

MR.SMYTHE-WILLARD

I was there! I saw it!

(CONTINUED)

VISCOUNTESS YARRELL
Stop! Stop!

MRS.SMYTHE-WILLARD
I can't breathe!

VISCOUNT YARRELL
And then that fool Oakley slithered
up...

Feeling all eyes turn to them, they halt in the middle of the room, glancing about, catching their breath and smiling with superior amusement and feigned chagrin. HELEN and EMMY are entranced by the aristos' beauty and glamor. DR. HOLLORAN eats his dinner. MRS. BAKER, all obsequious smiles, approaches, violently gesturing to HELEN, MARY and EMMY to take the proffered hats, canes and wraps.

MRS. BAKER
Girls!

She addresses the elegant young man, obviously the leader of the little gang, and his haughty wife.

MRS. BAKER (CONT'D)
Good evening, My Lordship. My
Ladyship.

Curtsying a little too deeply MRS. BAKER is unable to get up. Coming to her rescue, the VISCOUNT gallantly offers his hand, then helps her save face by brushing her hand with his lips.

VISCOUNT YARRELL
Ah, Mrs. Baker, terribly sorry.
We're late, I know, but will you
forgive us just this once? We're
simply famished.

VISCOUNTESS
Aubrey insisted we walk all the way
from Ballsbridge.

MRS. BAKER
Well, My Ladyship, there's nothing
like a brisk walk to give a body an
appetite. Come along now, your
table is all set and waiting for
you.
(She leads them to the table)
And tell me, My Lordship, how is
your mother, dear Lady Yarrell?

VISCOUNT YARRELL
Oh, tip-top, Mrs. B, tip-top.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. BAKER

I certainly hope she will come and visit us soon.

VISCOUNTESS YARRELL

I'm sure she'd be delighted.

VISCOUNTESS YARRELL rolls her eyes at her husband. MRS. SMYTHE-WILLARD giggles inanely. MR. SMYTHE-WILLARD bows to MRS. BAKER, putting on all his dark-voiced, smiling charm.

SMYTHE-WILLARD

So sorry, dear lady...

MRS. BAKER

No bother at all, Mr. Smythe-Willard, I'm sure.

ALBERT has quietly appeared and, along with SEAN, pulls out their chairs. VISCOUNT YARRELL bows to the room at large.

VISCOUNT YARRELL

Ladies and Gentlemen, we do apologise...

MRS. CAVENDISH

(Loudly to PATRICK)

Who are they?

PATRICK

Who?

ALBERT at work, polishing guests' shoes with obsessive care and attention. The shoes are in a large basket, each pair with a docket showing a room number.

ALBERT on the second-floor corridor, setting the polished shoes outside each door. He looks up as the four young people, VISCOUNT YARRELL, his WIFE and the SMYTHE-WILLARDS appear, heading towards their rooms, laughing tipsily and shushing each other. VISCOUNT YARRELL carries two bottles of champagne by the neck. They pass ALBERT, not noticing him.

VISCOUNT YARRELL

And then he rolled over at her feet like one of her ridiculous dogs!

VISCOUNTESS YARRELL

I would have kicked him!

MRS.SMYTHE-WILLARD
(Horrified)
She wouldn't kick one of her dogs!

VISCOUNTESS YARRELL
Of course she would! She'd yank the wings
off her precious budgies...!

MRS.SMYTHE-WILLARD
Oh, how awful! You can't be
serious!

MR. SMYTHE-WILLARD
Awk! Awk! Awk! Hurt me! Hurt me!

SMYTHE-WILLARD starts flapping around the VISCOUNT, mimicking
a wounded little bird. Howls of laughter.

VISCOUNT YARRELL
Bunny! You're a featherbrain!

VISCOUNTESS YARRELL
No, he's not, he's brilliant!

MRS.SMYTHE-WILLARD
Oh Bunny! Bunny! Do your Clara
Westfield!

MR.SMYTHE-WILLARD
(Effortlessly switching)
Dudley, call the brigade! My hair's on fire!
My hair's on fire!

We hear the door of their room open and close. Great gales of
laughter and a squeal.

An exhausted and out of breath SEAN, arrives at the top of
the stairs, followed by an equally exhausted ALBERT.

SEAN
(slightly slurred)
A long old day, Mr. Nobbs.

ALBERT
Good night, Mr. Casey.

SEAN
I wouldn't say no to a nightcap now, so I wouldn't.
(He looks hopefully at ALBERT)
I haven't a drop left, myself...

ALBERT
(expressionless)
Yes...Good night.

SEAN
(defeated)
Good night, Mr. Nobbs.

SEAN enters his room, which is unlocked. ALBERT goes to his room, takes a key from his pocket, unlocks his door and enters. As NOBBS' door closes, the door to HELEN and MARY'S room opens and MARY slips out and down the stairs.

ALBERT locks the door. The slant-ceilinged, cell-like attic room is sparsely furnished: a straight-backed chair, a bed with a bolster, a small nightstand, a dark wardrobe, a basin on an iron wash-stand, a threadbare carpet.

ALBERT begins his nightly ritual. From various pockets, he retrieves the day's tips. He carefully sorts each denomination, counting out the coins under his breath.

ALBERT
Half-a-crown from Mrs.
Moore...sixpence from the Doctor,
tuppence...tuppence!-Monsieur
Pigot, three pence...three
pence....Mrs. Cavendish, when I
brought her stationary...Another
thruppence from what's his name,
the Viscount's friend...Smythe-
Willard and a tanner from the
Viscount and another from his
missus. That's two-and-six, and six
and two is eight, and three is
eleven, and three is one-and-two,
and six is one-and-eight, and six
is two-and-two, that's...four
shillings and eightpence

He puts the stacks on the nightstand. He then kneels, rolls up a corner of the carpet and pries up a loose floorboard, revealing rows of carefully wrapped rolls of coins and stacks of bound bills. He opens an incomplete roll and fits the appropriate stack of coins into it, re-wraps it and replaces it in its hiding place, repeating this exercise until his day's tips are all accounted for. He lovingly touches his cache, finding palpable comfort in the fruits of his years of labor. He takes a small notebook and pencil from under his mattress and makes an entry, after which he puts the notebook back under the mattress and replaces the floorboard.

10 INT. MORRISON'S, ALBERT'S ROOM. LATE NIGHT. 10

ALBERT, now in his nightshirt, climbs into bed and settles back onto his pillow with a deep sigh. After a beat, he sits up, takes the Bible from the nightstand onto his lap, opens it and lifts out a creased photograph of a lovely young woman, whose features bear a marked resemblance to those of ALBERT. With no sign of emotion, he inclines his head in an almost imperceptible nod, as if bidding a polite, formal goodnight. He carefully places the photo back in the Bible and blows out the candle. Darkness.

11 INT./EXT. THE ARDLANE HOTEL, DUBLIN - EARLY MORNING 11

We are following a uniformed hotel porter (JOE MACKINS) who is expertly balancing an assortment of fine leather luggage while following a wealthy businessman, MR. GILLIGAN, and his wife. Immaculately turned out and carrying a thin, elegant walking-stick GILLIGAN sweeps across the lobby with JOE and other various servants in his wake. He is joined by the Gilbert's manager, MR. SWEENEY, and a phalanx of fluttering assistant managers.

MR. SWEENEY

Ah, Mr. Gilligan--Madam--so good to have had you with us again. I trust your stay was satisfactory?

MR. GILLIGAN

Yes. Perfectly fine. Thank you.

The GILLIGANS descend the steps towards a waiting hansom cab. Trying to negotiate the same steps, JOE loses his grip on several pieces of luggage which bounce and clatter down the steps into the mud and horse dung, hitting GILLIGAN in the back of his highly polished boots--almost knocking him over--and splashing the skirt of MRS. GILLIGAN'S elegant traveling costume.

MR GILLIGAN

For God's sake, man!

JOE

I'm sorry, sir!

MR. GILLIGAN

Sorry?! Look what you've done!
Muddied my boots! Defaced my luggage. I've never seen such blatant incompetence!

(To his wife)

Are you alright, my dear?

In wordless fury, she shows him the stains on her gown.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. GILLIGAN

Does that look *all right* to you!

MR. GILLIGAN

Where's the Manager? Where's that fool Sweeney?

MR. SWEENEY

Here, Sir. I'm very sorry, Sir.

MR. GILLIGAN

Yes. Yes. *Everyone's* sorry! It's outrageous ineptitude.

(To JOE)

Clean up the mess you've made of my boots.

JOE, stunned, looks to MR. SWEENEY who gives him a ferocious stare. For a beat JOE hesitates, struggling to suppress a terrible feeling of humiliation and rage, then he slowly kneels down in the mud and starts wiping off GILLIGAN'S boots.

MR. GILLIGAN (CONT'D)

I won't patronize this establishment again and I will urge my friends and acquaintances to do the same, if you keep this man in your employ.

MR. SWEENEY

Yes, Mr. Gilligan, sir.

Finishing, JOE straightens up, looking at GILLIGAN straight in the eye.

MR. GILLIGAN

(holding JOE'S gaze, smiling coldly)
Dismiss him immediately.

JOE

(To SWEENEY)

Sir, if I may...

MR. GILLIGAN

Now!

MR. SWEENEY

Yes sir.

MR. GILLIGAN

Fine.

GILLIGAN climbs after his wife into the cab. MR. SWEENEY turns to JOE who hasn't moved.

(CONTINUED)

MR. SWEENEY
You're out.

JOE fights the urge to physically attack SWEENEY, but thinks better of it and turns away.

12 INT. MORRISON'S, PANTRY. EARLY MORNING. 12

The staff are at breakfast at a big table in the kitchen. At one end sit PATRICK, SEAN and ALBERT. The women sit at the other end: PATRICK'S wife, POLLY, the cook (60); HELEN, EMMY, and MARY. Two young and work-worn KITCHEN MAIDS - one of them no more than twelve - are seated on the pantry steps, their plates on their knees. After a beat, SEAN breaks the silence.

SEAN
(to PATRICK)
Give us the marmalade there, Mr.
Donaghue.

PATRICK, who is closest to the marmalade, promptly passes the salt.

SEAN (CONT'D)
(louder)
It's the marmalade that I...

POLLY
(as to someone hard of hearing)
The marmalade, Patrick, love. Pass
it to Mr. Casey.

PATRICK
(to his wife with great dignity)
On Tuesdays if I recall correctly.

It is evident by everyone's reactions that PATRICK'S deafness and occasional disorientation is something they have learned to live with. ALBERT, who is within reach of the marmalade in question, passes it to SEAN, while hardly looking up from his plate.

POLLY
(getting up and taking her plate into
the kitchen)
Thank you, Mr. Nobbs.

HELEN
God, but isn't he a smasher?

Who? EMMY

HELEN
What's-his-name - the Viscount.

(CONTINUED)

EMMY

Not to mention rich.

HELEN

Young and handsome, with money and land, that's the kind of man I want. I'll wear my new blouse tonight and give him an eyeful.

HELEN takes her empty plate and approaches SEAN, whose mouth is full of porridge. She bends very low over the table, proffering her plate, looking up into poor SEAN'S face.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Would you care for a tasty breast of duck, my Lord? Pink and succulent, just the way you like it.

MARY laughs. EMMY snorts with disapproval. PATRICK is oblivious; ALBERT eats, a faint smile on his lips. SEAN chokes on his porridge. POLLY turns around sharply. HELEN is all innocence. SEAN struggles to swallow some tea.

EMMY

That's right, lower yourself. The likes of him would only take advantage of a girl and then leave her high and dry.

HELEN

High, maybe, but I wouldn't say dry.

EMMY throws her a look of disgust. HELEN grins.

POLLY

Will you two stop trick-acting and eat your breakfast?

PATRICK

(in an imaginary conversation)
It's no trouble at all, mind you.

DR. HOLLORAN

(entering)

Morning, all. Somebody didn't bring me my wake-up cuppa. I'll have to lodge a complaint with Mrs. Baker.

Albert half-rises in deference. MARY rises automatically and DR. HOLLORAN sits in her place. She pours him a mug of tea, adds milk and sugar, stirs it and places it in front of him, casually putting her hand on his shoulder. He accepts these services without acknowledgement.

(CONTINUED)

14 INT. MORRISON'S, SECOND FLOOR CORRIDOR. MORNING. 14

ALBERT, carrying a breakfast tray, walks down the corridor. From the opposite direction comes a little, red-headed boy, LITTLE GEORGE MOORE, humming and dragging a butterfly net, with him is his sister, MILLY. As the children get near, ALBERT stops and stiffly steps aside to let them pass.

 LITTLE GEORGE AND MILLY
Good morning, Nobbs.

 ALBERT
Mistress Milly, Master George.

MILLY continues down the hall, but LITTLE GEORGE stops to stare at ALBERT. MILLY comes back and breaks the moment by snatching LITTLE GEORGE'S net away. She runs down the stairs with LITTLE GEORGE in hot pursuit. Squeals and giggles. Albert continues on to the YARRELL'S suite where he pauses and then enters.

14A INT. VISCOUNT YARRELL'S SUITE. MORNING 14A

Albert puts down the tray and from it starts setting the table, quickly and expertly.

Presently, VISCOUNT YARRELL steps out of the bedroom, in a negligently belted dressing gown, tousled and bleary-eyed. Through the door we catch a glimpse of MR. SMYTHE-WILLARD in the bed, his shoulder showing above the cover.

 VISCOUNT YARRELL
 (To himself, oblivious of ALBERT)
Ah-h-h...

He finds a half-empty bottle of champagne and takes a swig.

 VISCOUNT YARRELL (CONT'D)
Head's a bit thick this morning,
need something to fizz it up.

He moves to the breakfast tray and picks something to eat off it.

 (Over his shoulder)
Bunny!....Breakfast!

In the background, MR. SMYTHE-WILLARD rises out of the bed and sits on its edge, his bare body faced away from the living room.

 VISCOUNT YARRELL (CONT'D)
Shall we wake the girls?

Seemingly invisible, ALBERT continues to clear up mess from last night's revels and withdraws.

15 OMITTED 15

16 OMITTED 16

17 OMITTED 17

18 EXT. BACK YARD. MORRISON'S. DUSK. 18

The yard is bustling with the last deliveries for tomorrow's costume ball. POLLY is in charge, ordering the KITCHEN MAIDS, LAUNDRY MAIDS and DELIVERY BOYS around like a general on a battlefield. We see JOE walk by with a quick glance into the courtyard. He then reappears, pauses, squares his shoulders and steps forward into the yard. POLLY greets him briskly.

POLLY
Are you the fellow for the boiler?

JOE does some quick thinking.

JOE
(risking it)
I'm a boiler man, right enough.

POLLY (CONT'D)
Well you took your sweet time in
getting to us.

JOE
Sorry, Ma'am.

POLLY
Mrs. Baker is inside. Follow me.

POLLY starts for the kitchen. JOE follows. All the MAIDS eye him, dumb and wide-eyed.

19 INT. MORRISON'S, RECEPTION. DUSK. 19

MRS. BAKER is at the reception counter speaking to ALBERT. PATRICK, teeters at attention by the front door, trying desperately to not fall asleep. HUBERT PAGE stands close by, looking out into the street, his bags at his feet.

MRS. BAKER
(In an intense whisper)
Mr. Hubert Page is working in the morning and has come over and asked us for a bed - I've told him he can muddle in with you for one night.

(CONTINUED)

ALBERT, stunned, can hardly speak.

ALBERT
With me, Ma'am!

MRS. BAKER
Yes, Mr. Nobbs. With you.

ALBERT
But...

MRS. BAKER
Now what are you trying to say?

Just as PATRICK is about to painfully ease himself onto a chair, VISCOUNT and VISCOUNTESS YARRELL and the SMYTHE-WILLARDS enter laughing from the street. YARRELL'S arm is casually flung around SMYTHE-WILLARD'S shoulder and the two wives are arm-in-arm. PATRICK jerks to and struggles to attend them, reaching for their wraps.

ALBERT
My bed is full of lumps.

MRS. BAKER
Full of lumps!

During the following conversation, the YARRELLS AND SMYTHE-WILLARDS make their way up the stairs with PATRICK tottering after them. Half way up, PATRICK drops some of the things he is carrying, painfully retrieves them and staggers on up the stairs.

MRS. BAKER (CONT'D)
Why, it was re-picked and buttoned just six months ago! What kind of story are you telling me?

ALBERT
So it was, Ma'am, so it was. But you see, I'm a very light sleeper, and me being sleepless might keep Mr. Page awake. I'm thinking he'd be much better off on a sofa in the coffee room -

MRS. BAKER
On a sofa in the coffee room!

HUBERT
(approaching)
Ma'am, I don't want to be an inconvenience. It's a fine night. I'll keep myself warm with a sharp walk.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. BAKER

You'll do nothing of the kind, Mr.
Page!

MRS. BAKER turns and looks at ALBERT with consternation.
POLLY enters from a back hallway with JOE in tow.

ALBERT

Of course, Mrs. Baker. If Mr. Page
is pleased to share my bed, he's
welcome, I'm sure.

MRS. BAKER

I should think so, indeed...Good
then, it's settled.

As MRS. BAKER starts to leave to go to her office, POLLY
steps up.

POLLY

Mrs. Baker, Ma'am, the lad to fix
the boiler is here.

JOE steps into MRS. BAKER'S eye line, hat in hand. MRS. BAKER
gives him an imperious once-over, impressed by his looks, if
not his garb. ALBERT and HUBERT watch.

MRS. BAKER

Have you a letter from Holmans'?

JOE

Holmans' the plumbers? No, Ma'am.

MRS. BAKER

(to POLLY)

I thought you said he was---?

POLLY

(to JOE)

Didn't you say you were---?

JOE

No, indeed. I said nothing about
Holmans'

POLLY

But you *did*, you said--

JOE

I said I know about boilers.

MRS. BAKER

And *do* you know about boilers?

(CONTINUED)

JOE

I do, Ma'am.

(Hesitating; we see him deciding to
chance the lie)

I'm an apprenticed boiler-man.

MRS. BAKER considers, then.

MRS. BAKER

Well, since you're here, you might
as well come out and take a look at
the blessed thing. Thank you,
Polly.

POLLY EXITS. MRS. BAKER starts heading out, JOE follows.

MRS. BAKER (CONT'D)

I'm going to give those Holmans'
people a piece of my mind...

MRS. BAKER and JOE exit. ALBERT and HUBERT stare at each
other, neither one willing to make the first move upstairs.

One gets a sense that this is truly the bowels of the hotel;
the boiler looms large. MRS.BAKER and JOE enter.

MRS. BAKER

(indicating the boiler)

It's the bain of our lives. I'm
depending on you to put some
manners on it. We have our costume
ball tomorrow so it's of the utmost
importance that it's in full
working order.

JOE

I'll do my best, Ma'am.

MRS. BAKER is charmed.

MRS. BAKER

Right then. Good night, Mr.
Mackins.

MRS.BAKER exits. JOE slowly puts down his satchel and sits
down on whatever is available, wondering how big a fix he's
gotten himself into.

21 INT. MORRISON'S, SECOND FLOOR CORRIDOR. LATER THAT NIGHT 21

At his station, ALBERT is desperately trying to delay going to his room. He carefully puts his shoe basket away, then makes sure that all his brushes, polishes, scissors, needles threads, in fact his entire station, is in impeccable order. Finally, he painstakingly folds his napkin and places it on his stool. He checks his pocket-watch, puts it away with a sigh and looks around his tiny domain. There is nothing else he can possibly do. He turns down his station's gas-light and plods slowly down the hall into the dark, like a man going to the gallows.

22 INT. BOILER ROOM. MORRISON'S HOTEL. NIGHT 22

JOE, in his undershirt, is feverishly working by lamp light. He has been trying to figure out where certain machine parts go. He doesn't really know what he is doing, but is desperately determined to succeed. After a few attempts, he succeeds in clicking the parts into place. He wipes his hands on his shirt and gingerly pulls on various levers. Nothing happens. He picks up a wrench and taps the side of the boiler. Nothing. Taps again. Nothing. In disgust, he tosses the wrench away and searches for a cigarette.

23 INT. MORRISON'S, ALBERT'S ROOM. NIGHT. 23

The door opens slowly, ALBERT peers in. A low light emanates from a gas lamp by the door. HUBERT is in bed, asleep. ALBERT steps in. As he closes the door behind him, the click of the lock makes him flinch.

He removes his boots, and stealthily creeps forward, a floor board creaks. ALBERT freezes, checking to see that the floor board covering her money is in place. But HUBERT is fast asleep, his clothes thrown carelessly on the chair. His bags piled in a corner.

ALBERT inches forward, carefully takes off his jacket, hanging it over the back of the chair. He pulls off his tie and collar, unclips his watch from his waistcoat and places it on the desk. It makes a small noise, and ALBERT freezes. HUBERT turns over with a sigh. Trembling, ALBERT waits until he can hear HUBERT's even breathing. He proceeds to take off his waistcoat, and lay it over his jacket, making sure no coins fall out. He pulls his braces down and untucks his shirt. He moves to the bed, and slowly sits on the edge, as if sitting on a bed of nails. After a beat, he reaches for the Bible, but thinks better of it, and simply turns down the lamp. With immense care he lies down, precariously balanced on the very edge of the mattress.

Moonlight pours in through the narrow window, somewhere downstairs a clock strikes two.

(CONTINUED)

ALBERT, stiff as a corpse laid out in a coffin, hardly dares to breathe. His eyes begin to flicker and close as exhaustion takes over. Suddenly he twitches and his eyes fly open. He slaps at his shoulder and almost falls to the floor. He looks at his bedmate fearfully, then winces - this time he tries to slap at his stomach. HUBERT coughs in his sleep, and ALBERT freezes, clenching his teeth in discomfort.

Finally, he cannot stand it any longer, and eases off the bed. He is in a panic now. Like a sufferer from St Vitus' Dance, he twitches, dropping his trousers, searching his body. He finds some matches, lights a candle. Pulling down his shirt, he looks in the mirror and sees that his shoulder is covered in blotches. We see HUBERT'S eyes open. The sight of the ugly welts make ALBERT angry and in his desperation to find what's biting him, he forgets about being cautious, and tugs at his shirt and undershirt, bunching them under his armpits. We see he is wearing a man's corset around his midriff, above which he is tightly bandaged. As he struggles to find the flea, the bandages come loose to the point that it becomes evident that "he" is a "she". Suddenly HUBERT sits bolt upright, wide awake and staring.

HUBERT

Jesus, you're a woman!

ALBERT whirls around at the sound of HUBERT's voice. There is a moment of stunned silence. Then ALBERT lets out a choked wail and begins to cry.

ALBERT

You won't tell on me, a poor man,
will you Mr. Page! I'm on my knees,
I'm begging you!

She falls to her knees, weeping.

HUBERT

Stop that! Get up!

ALBERT

(Weeping and distraught)
You won't tell on me, Mr. Page! And
stop a poor woman making a
living... It would be the end of
me! I don't want to finish up in
the poorhouse!

HUBERT

Stop blubbering!

This makes ALBERT cry even harder.

HUBERT (CONT'D)

(advancing)
Get up off the floor!

(CONTINUED)

Fearful, ALBERT struggles away from HUBERT, pulling up her tangled trousers.

ALBERT
No! Don't!

HUBERT
Get a hold of yourself! You'll wake
the entire fucking hotel! Stop with
your noise!

ALBERT
(crying and sinking down into the
corner)
You won't tell, will you!

There is a loud knock on the wall. ALBERT lets out a anguished moan and gasps for air. HUBERT stares at ALBERT in the flickering light. There is a terrible pause.

HUBERT
What were you doing jumping around
like that?

ALBERT
A flea...I'm a martyr to fleas. You
must have..brought one in with
you...I'll be..covered in blotches
in the morning!

She starts to cry again.

HUBERT
Alright...alright! Just get a hold
of yourself.

There is an awkward, heavy silence. ALBERT snuffles in the corner, as far away from HUBERT as she can get. HUBERT takes in the pathetic sight.

24 OMITTED 24

24A OMITTED (SCENE COMPLETELY MERGED WITH SCENE 23). 24A

24B INT. BOILER ROOM, MORRISON'S. NIGHT. 24B

JOE flicks his cigarette away and picks up a hammer.

JOE
You!

(CONTINUED)

He strikes the boiler a violent blow of the hammer. There is a noise from inside the thing, a halting chugging sound, as if something is trying to start up. JOE, amazed, stares at the hammer, at the boiler, at the hammer. A grin break slowly over his face.

25 INT. MORRISON'S HOTEL. ALBERT'S ROOM. NIGHT. 25

HUBERT has rolled himself a cigarette; the papers and a pouch of tobacco lie on the bed next to him. He inhales deeply and lets the smoke out slowly, leaning back on the pillows.

HUBERT
So..why are you dressed as a fellow?

ALBERT
(Ignoring the question)
No one would have suspected me
until the day of my death, if it
hadn't been for the flea you
brought in!

HUBERT keeps looking at ALBERT, his face inscrutable. ALBERT waits in another uncomfortable silence, snuffling and scratching herself. HUBERT, savoring his cigarette, takes in ALBERT, a strange smile on his face.

HUBERT
So, Mr. Nobbs, what do you suggest we do
now? As far as...our sleeping arrangements
are concerned?

HUBERT gets up and crosses to the wash stand where he stabs out his cigarette. He then turns and contemplates ALBERT from across the room.

HUBERT (CONT'D)
Any ideas?

ALBERT mutely shakes her head. HUBERT crosses towards ALBERT, walking right over ALBERT'S stash. ALBERT cringes at his advance and lets out another terrified moan. HUBERT pauses and squats down in front of ALBERT who turns away with a whimper. HUBERT reaches out and turns ALBERT'S head so as to look into her face. ALBERT averts her eyes, shaking; she starts to cry again, silently, painfully. HUBERT seems to be fighting with himself. Then he decides.

HUBERT (CONT'D)
(standing up)
You take the bed. I'll go
downstairs and find a sofa or ...

ALBERT
No.

(CONTINUED)

HUBERT

So what?

ALBERT

Mrs. Baker will have my hide if she finds out you didn't sleep here. You take the bed.

HUBERT

Where will you sleep?

ALBERT

Here. I don't mind.

HUBERT

(exhausted and strangely agitated)
Don't be pathetic!

He moves to gather up his things, walking, once more, over ALBERT'S money.

ALBERT

No, please! I know her. Just..just promise you won't tell.

HUBERT

Jesus!

He thinks for a moment, then, as if it's against his better judgement--

HUBERT (CONT'D)

Alright!

ALBERT

You promise?

HUBERT

Yes.

ALBERT

You won't tell?

HUBERT

Yes! Yes, I'll promise anything. I just need to sleep.

He moves to the bed, takes a pillow and tosses it to ALBERT.

HUBERT (CONT'D)

Here. Make yourself comfortable!

HUBERT gets into bed. He throws the bolster to ALBERT.

HUBERT (CONT'D)

Might as well have that too.

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED 25

HUBERT pulls the covers up roughly and violently punches at the one remaining pillow.

HUBERT (CONT'D)
Jesus God! I didn't ask to share
your bloody bed!

On ALBERT'S anguished face. She won't be sleeping tonight.

26 INT. MORRISON'S. BOILER ROOM. NIGHT. 26

JOE makes a final adjustment and the boiler chugs to life. He can't believe he's done it. He sinks to the floor in relief and amazement. He is sweaty and filthy and proud of himself.

JOE
(shaking his head, with a laugh)
Bloody hell...

He gets up and throws himself down onto an old, broken down stuffed chair; exhausted, ready to sleep.

JOE (CONT'D)
Bloody bastard of a yoke....

27 EXT. KITCHEN YARD. MORRISON'S HOTEL. EARLY MORNING. 27

Chickens scratch in the dirt. The YOUNG KITCHEN MAID empties a pail of water into the yard. A cart goes by the back gate.

28 INT. MORRISON'S, ALBERT'S ROOM. EARLY MORNING. 28

Pale sunshine streaming in the window. ALBERT wakes with a start; she is still in the corner, but covered with a blanket. She looks about blearily, frowning, not remembering. Then she does remember, and whisks the blanket aside to look at herself, perhaps expecting to find she has been violated somehow while she slept. She is still in her shirt and trousers. HUBERT is gone, there is no sign of him. ALBERT leaps up and rushes to the floorboard covering her life savings and pries it up, making sure her money is undisturbed: all is safe. Her relief is short-lived, and when she consults her watch, she catches her breath in dismay.

ALBERT
An hour late!

29 OMITTED 29

30 INT. MORRISON'S. KITCHEN. EARLY MORNING.

30

ALBERT clumps down the servants stairway, rushes down the back hall---almost bumping into EMMY---into the kitchen and halts, panting. HELEN, POLLY and MARY have prepared ALBERT'S breakfast trays. They stare at ALBERT, who tries to be all business.

ALBERT
Has 9 rung their bell yet?

MARY
Oh yes, a while ago.

POLLY
Well, Mr. Nobbs! How did you find your bedfellow?

ALBERT
I couldn't sleep. Now I'm late.

POLLY
Oh Lord, Mr. Nobbs, I wouldn't worry my fat because I was late one morning!

HUBERT appears at the pantry door, paint-brush in hand, an ambiguous smile on his face.

HUBERT
Morning, Mr. Nobbs.

ALBERT stares at him, unable to speak.

HELEN
(stepping in for ALBERT)
Good morning, Mr....?

HUBERT
Page. Hubert Page. Charmed to meet you.

HELEN
Mr. Page. He's a shy one, our Mr. Nobbs.

HUBERT
(with a frank, open smile)
I know.

HELEN, eyebrows raised, turns to ALBERT. ALBERT turns back to the trays with greater urgency. MARY takes pity on ALBERT and steps up.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED

30

MARY

You take this one. I'll bring the children's.

HUBERT

(with a wink to HELEN)

No rest for the wicked.

ALBERT quickly exits with a heavy tray, followed by MARY.

31 OMITTED

31

32 EXT. MORRISON'S SCULLERY. MORNING

32

JOE, shirt off, washes himself off at one of the laundry tubs. A LAUNDRY and KITCHEN MAID peek around the corner, mesmerized. One of them shyly offers him a towel.

33 OMITTED

33

34 INT. MORRISON'S, MOORES' SUITE. MORNING.

34

HELEN and EMMY are changing a bed. ALBERT, oblivious, hurries in with flowers in a bucket; goes to the dressing table; replaces yesterday's flowers with lilies; turns to leave; turns back and replaces the lilies with roses, turns and clumps to the door. HELEN stops her.

HELEN

Mr. Nobbs...?

ALBERT

(Startled. Not having realized the girls were in the room)

Mrs. Moore. She prefers roses.
Lilies make her sneeze.

HELEN

Oh...I see...?

ALBERT

(Moving to leave)

Yes...well.

HELEN

I heard yourself and Mr. Page
chattering away into the small
hours.

ALBERT's blood goes cold. She looks at HELEN blankly, appalled she might have overheard what went on in her bedroom.

(CONTINUED)

HELEN (CONT'D)
He's a fine man, he is.

Who? ALBERT

HELEN
Mr. Page.

EMMY
Is he married?

ALBERT
We...we didn't discuss that sort of
thing.

HELEN
Then what did "we" discuss?

EMMY lets out a snort. ALBERT panics. Then.

Horses!

ALBERT

Helen
Horses?

ALBERT
Yes. Backing horses. Mr. Page is a
great one for...for racing...and so
on.
(Running out of steam)
For horses...

They stand gaping at each other for a moment. Then ALBERT turns and hurries from the room.

INT. MORRISON'S, LAUNDRY. DAY.

35

HUBERT at work, standing on a ladder, painting a wall.
ALBERT, holding a mug of tea, appears in the door. She clears
her voice.

ALBERT
A...a...cup of tea, Mr. Page?

HUBERT
Do you know, Mr. Nobbs, I believe
this house runs on tea. I must have
been offered three or four cups of
it already this morning.

ALBERT is not really listening, but looking up at HUBERT, beseeching, dying to talk.

(CONTINUED)

ALBERT
I wanted to -

Sound of someone approaching. EMMY comes in from the kitchen, carrying a mug of tea. Seeing ALBERT, she halts. Each looks in silence at the mug of tea the other is holding. HUBERT, above them, smiles down in high amusement. ALBERT exits.

36 INT. MORRISON'S. KITCHEN. DAY. 36

The staff-ALBERT, HELEN, SEAN, PATRICK, POLLY and EMMY-are eating in silence. ALBERT is a bag of nerves, not touching her food. MARY enters from the kitchen.

MARY
(to Polly)
Will I take something in to Mr.
Page?

ALBERT looks up furtively.

POLLY
Yes, that's a good girl. He wants
to work through and finish early.

ALBERT takes this in. MARY puts food on a plate for HUBERT.

EMMY
I declare, the smell of paint from
that pantry is making me sick.

HELEN
Oh, is it the morning sickness, is it?

EMMY
You just think you are the funniest
thing on earth, Helen Dawes.

HELEN mimics EMMY'S sour look. MRS. BAKER enters from the pantry, followed by JOE. Everyone moves to stand. SEAN, attempting to stand holding a cup of tea, spills some onto his shirt front. He quickly tucks his napkin into his collar to hide the stain.

MRS. BAKER
So, everyone, this is Mr. Joe
Mackins.

Everyone murmurs hellos.

MRS. BAKER (CONT'D)
He worked all night and believe it
or not, he has tamed that boiler of
ours!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MRS. BAKER (CONT'D)

I have been thinking that we need a strong man about the house and so, I have asked Mr. Mackins to stay on.

Everyone stares at JOE, each one sizing him up in their own way. HELEN is intrigued. JOE nods to the room, his eyes lingering a bit on HELEN.

MRS. BAKER (CONT'D)

Mr. Nobbs!

ALBERT

Yes, Ma'am.

MRS. BAKER

After Mr. Mackins has had something to eat, show him the yard room.

(To Joe)

Welcome to Morrison's, Mr. Mackins.

MRS. BAKER exits. JOE stands, cap and bag in hand. All eyes on him. He is thrilled to have the chance of a job, but knows that the pressure is on. POLLY moves to get JOE a plate of food. JOE catches HELEN'S eye. She looks away, blushing. SEAN pulls up a chair for JOE who sits.

JOE

Mrs. Baker was talking about a big party tomorrow?

SEAN

Our fancy-dress ball. We have it every year.

EMMY

We don't dress up. It's only for the guests.

JOE

That's a shame.

MARY

Where are you from, then?

JOE

Where are you from?

MARY

Can you not tell?

JOE

(Putting her on)

Cork?

(CONTINUED)

MARY

Cork! Are you mad, are you? I'm from Galway, of course. I declare to my granny, if you don't know the difference...!

JOE

Cork, Galway...it's all the same to a Dublin man.

EMMY

Oh, a Jackeen, are you? I would never have known.

JOE

Born and bred in Sheriff Street, where no sheriff was ever known to venture.

JOE laughs. HELEN gets up with her dishes and puts them in the sink. She exits, aware of JOE'S eyes on her. Everyone except SEAN and ALBERT follows. ALBERT puts some biscuits on a plate before exiting towards the laundry room. An awkward moment ensues as JOE eats and SEAN tries desperately to think of something to say.

SEAN

(Clearing his throat)

Well...

JOE is too hungry to pay any heed.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Well....

HUBERT on a ladder, working. ALBERT, with her plate of biscuits, appears in the door. She coughs. HUBERT looks down.

HUBERT

What delicacy have you got for me this time, *Mister Nobbs*?

ALBERT carefully puts the plate down near HUBERT. HUBERT stops work and lights a cigarette.

HUBERT (CONT'D)

Don't worry. Your secret is safe with me.

ALBERT

It's just that I'm afraid...you see...in case Mrs. Baker might -

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED

37

HUBERT, starting to unbutton her work coat, goes to the pantry door and closes it. ALBERT is stiff with apprehension. HUBERT suddenly opens his shirt to reveal - a pair of woman's breasts! ALBERT gasps. HUBERT buttons up her shirt and indicates to ALBERT that she can leave. ALBERT exits, stiff-legged from shock, banging into the door jamb. HUBERT looks at the retreating ALBERT with a sad, enigmatic expression on her face.

38 INT. MORRISON'S, ALBERT'S STATION. DAY.

38

ALBERT arrives, breathing heavily, in shock from HUBERT's revelation. She sits on her stool, hands on knees, trying to calm her thoughts in her place of sanctuary. Slowly she pulls herself together, stands up, yanks at her jacket then proceeds back down the hall towards the kitchen.

39 INT. MORRISON'S. KITCHEN. DAY.

39

ALBERT enters cautiously. HUBERT, whistling, is back down on her knees finishing up the cabinet. One of the KITCHEN MAIDS cleans the stove. ALBERT begins to lay a tray for afternoon tea.

HUBERT
You're back.

ALBERT
Tea-time.

HUBERT
Jesus, Mary and Joseph! Not more
tea!

ALBERT pretends to be engrossed in her work. The KITCHEN MAID exits towards the yard, carrying a full pail. HUBERT puts her brush down and approaches ALBERT.

HUBERT (CONT'D)
(whispers)
Do you want to hear my story?

ALBERT nods.

HUBERT (CONT'D)
Not much to tell. I was married: to
a house-painter, as it happens, a
drunk and a bully.
One night he came home scuttered
and gave me the usual hiding,
rounding it off this time with an
almighty kick, and that was the end
of that.

(CONTINUED)

She puts a hand briefly to her womb to indicate where she was battered.

ALBERT
What did you do?

HUBERT
I took his things, and I left. This is his work-coat, I've kept it, all these years, to remember him by, the fucking waster.

ALBERT
So you're still...married.

HUBERT
I am.

The KITCHEN MAID appears again in the kitchen with her emptied pail. HUBERT passes ALBERT and leans in.

HUBERT (CONT'D)
(Whispering)
Her name is Cathleen.

ALBERT
What!

The startled KITCHEN MAID looks up, just as POLLY enters from the dining room, diffusing the moment.

POLLY
(Striding through into the kitchen)
Hurry up there now, girl! I've the dinner to start!
(Turns to the other two)
And you, Mr. Hubert Page - have you dealt with that damp patch yet?

EMMY
Mr. Nobbs, Mrs. Cavendish has changed her mind again and wants teas in her rooms. Shall I take care of it?

ALBERT
No. I'll do it.

HUBERT
You're a terrible slave driver, Mrs. Donaghue, so you are.

POLLY
Arrah, go on with you!

40 OMITTED 40

41 EXT. MORRISON'S, YARD. DAY. 41

The noise and steam of laundering in progress. The three LAUNDRESSES wash bed linen in two huge vats, stirring round and round with heavy wooden paddles. HUBERT has carried out her paints, brushes, etc., and is cleaning up and packing to depart. ALBERT enters.

 ALBERT
You married... a woman.

 HUBERT
A girl as lonesome as myself. We fixed up to get a place, sharing the rent and so on. It was a grand arrangement. She had her dressmaking, I had my work. But people began to talk, so we got married. Now I leave home with a heavy heart and I always return with a light one.

 ALBERT
But...?

HUBERT looks up at her.

 HUBERT
What's your name?

 ALBERT
Albert.

 HUBERT
No, I mean your *real* name.

 ALBERT
Albert.

HUBERT nods, understanding what cannot be expressed, the anonymity imposed by their predicament. SEAN comes into the yard, making a beeline for HUBERT.

 SEAN
 (To HUBERT, conspiratorial)
Listen, Mr. Page, I hear tell
you're a betting man. Have you a
tip for Leopardstown tomorrow?

HUBERT gazes at him, frowning in bafflement.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED

41

SEAN (CONT'D)
I'm in need of a winner. I lost my
shirt on Lightning Jack in the Gold
Cup. Lightning, my arse!

MRS. BAKER (V.O.)
Mr. Page!

ALBERT groans in frustration.

42 INT. MORRISON'S.DOWNSTAIRS SERVANT HALLWAY. DAY.

42

Mrs Baker is paying Hubert for her work.

MRS. BAKER
(handing over notes)
You did a grand job, Mr. Page. I
only wish I could afford to have
the whole place done! Could you
possibly tell me...in your expert
opinion... how much do you think it
would cost?

HUBERT
To paint the whole interior?

MRS. BAKER
Indeed.

HUBERT assesses the foyer and the rooms beyond. Albert
appears, hanging back in the shadows. PATRICK enters from the
back hall, walking like an automaton, and passes through the
foyer, a silver tray under his arm.

HUBERT
Well...let me see...this room, the
coffee room...dining
room..etcetera...How many guest
floors?

MRS. BAKER
Two...

HUBERT
Well, it's only an estimate, of
course, but I'd say it couldn't be
done for under two-hundred pounds.

PATRICK re-enters the foyer and trudges through, the same
tray under his arm.

MRS. BAKER
Two-hundred! Oh, my!
(Coquettishly)
Well, aren't I the dreamer!
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MRS. BAKER (CONT'D)
I can't even afford a new boiler.
Well, good-night, dear Mr. Page.
I'll dream of more salubrious
rooms.

HUBERT
Good-night, Ma'am.

She exits to her office. HUBERT stands, counting her money.
ALBERT, seizing her chance, comes clumping up.

ALBERT
Mr. Page.....

HUBERT
God almighty, Albert, you scared
the be Jesus out of me!

ALBERT
How did you . . . ?

HUBERT
What?

PATRICK trudges, yet again, through the foyer, tray under
arm. ALBERT ignores him.

ALBERT
How did you manage it... to
marry...?

HUBERT
(heading to the kitchen)
Easy! You could do it yourself.

HUBERT starts to walk off towards the back of the hotel to
collect her equipment. ALBERT starts to follow when she is
stopped by MR. MOORE who appears on the stairs.

MR. MOORE
Waiter. Ah...yes!

ALBERT
Mr. Moore, Sir?

MR. MOORE
Yes. Mrs. Moore and I would like a
sherry before dinner. Fetch a
couple of glasses up to the room,
will you?

ALBERT
Right away, Sir.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED

42

MR. MOORE

Good chap.

MR. MOORE exits up the stairs. ALBERT desperately wants to follow HUBERT, but is unable to not fulfil a guest's request without delay. She scuttles off to the dining room.

42A INT MORRISON'S. KITCHEN. DAY.

42A

The KITCHEN MAIDS are preparing dinner. ALBERT comes running in, puts down a tray and continues out through the door to the scullery.

43 EXT. MORRISON'S, YARD. DAY.

43

ALBERT, breathless, arrives in the yard in time to see HUBERT, loaded down with her gear, her coat collar turned up, disappearing out the back gate. POLLY has said good-bye and closes the gate. ALBERT wants to call out, but is inhibited by POLLY'S presence and by JOE, who lounges under an eve, smoking a cigarette. Sadly, ALBERT turns to go back into the hotel. JOE has watched the whole scene.

ALBERT, shakes her head and goes into the back door. JOE looks after the strange, little man.

44 OMITTED

44

45 INT. MORRISON'S, ALBERT'S ROOM. LATE NIGHT.

45

ALBERT, her jacket off and braces down, rinses her face. She looks at herself in her mirror.

ALBERT

But *when* did he tell his wife he
was a woman?...*before* the wedding
or *after*?

ALBERT notices something on the floor. She bends and picks it up: it's one of the big, bone buttons from HUBERT PAGE's painter's coat.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Did she say her wife was a
milliner?

Off ALBERT's face, thinking.

46 INT. MORRISON'S, ALBERT'S ROOM. LATE NIGHT. 46

ALBERT sits on her bed, her rolls of money spread around her. She counts the sums in her little notebook.

ALBERT

Five hundred and fourteen pounds,
seventeen shillings and sixpence.
No...seven pence. And...one...
two... three-farthings.
(a sudden, delighted realization)
In six months, I could have six-
hundred pounds...

FIGURE OUT ABOUT BUTTON AT DINING ROOM DECORATION SCENE

47 OMITTED 47

48 INT. DINING ROOM. MID-MORNING. 48

ALBERT, deep in thought, sits at a table polishing silver. She reaches into her pocket and brings out the button, her thoughts faraway. SEAN, EMMY, HELEN and MARY are decorating for the party. PATRICK, high on a ladder, held steady by SEAN, has succeeded in hopelessly tangling himself in a garland and is in danger of falling.

SEAN

Ah, Jesus! Mind yourself, Patrick.

MRS. BAKER enters and is appalled by the situation.

MRS. BAKER

Sean! Why in the name of God have
you let our PATRICK up there...
(Moving to the foot of the ladder)
Come down very slowly. Be careful
now...God help us!

PATRICK shakes an arm to free it and almost falls off. Everyone screams.

MRS. BAKER (CONT'D)

Hold him someone...

HELEN hikes up her skirts and starts up the ladder, followed by shouts of encouragement. JOE appears at the pantry door, wiping his hands on a rag. When he sees the situation, he hurries over.

MRS. BAKER (CONT'D)

Oh, Mr. Mackins! Please! We need your help
getting our Patrick down.

(CONTINUED)

PATRICK teeters again and everyone screams. POLLY enters, adding to the chaos.

POLLY

Sweet Jesus! Patrick! What are you doing up there! Come down!

HELEN

(to JOE)

Here. I have him.

She helps place PATRICK'S feet on the rungs as he shakily feels his way down. JOE holds the ladder with one hand and helps HELEN with the other.

JOE

Steady now. There...you have it.

Almost down, HELEN and PATRICK slip off the ladder together, but many hands are there to catch them.

HELEN finds herself in JOE'S arms. Everyone is preoccupied with poor PATRICK who protests at all the fuss.

PATRICK

Porpoises! Lovely...lovely...

POLLY leads PATRICK away. HELEN pulls away and shakes out her skirts. Her eyes find JOE'S and both feel the frisson. EMMY sees this and tightens her mouth.

MRS. BAKER

Come along, the room is not half decorated yet!

The fancy dress party. The rooms festive with the coloured garlands and many pots of flowers and candles. The tables have been removed and chairs are lined up against the walls. A small orchestra plays softly. The doors to the entrance hall and coffee room stands wide open; small round tables are set for midnight supper. Numerous GUESTS are already walking about, exclaiming at costumes, as more arrive. PATRICK, SEAN and ALBERT stand near the doors, holding trays of punch. HELEN, MARY and EMMY move through the room passing hors d'oeuvres.

The OLDER LADY is dressed as a milkmaid, the YOUNGER LADY as the goddess Diana. MRS. CAVENDISH is a witch with a broom. MRS. BAKER is wearing her usual black, a festive headpiece and carrying a fan. M. PIGOT is dressed as a poorly conceived Buffalo Bill. His wife is a veiled and bejewelled Sarah Bernhardt. The YARRELLS and SMYTHE-WILLARDS - the only ones who look truly elegant - have simply switched sexes: both girls are in white tie, and both young men wear evening gowns.

(CONTINUED)

LITTLE GEORGE MOORE, in his lion's mask, hovers at the door with MILLY, who is dressed as a fairy. At a certain moment, PATRICK, wearing shabby white tie and tails, steps up in front of the orchestra and taps a glass with a spoon for silence.

PATRICK

(In his wispy voice)

Ladies and gentlemen, attention, please! I now call upon the mistress of the house to open the ball. Mrs. Margaret Baker!

The GUESTS draw back. To the introductory strains of a lovely waltz, DR. HOLLORAN, in his black frock coat with a stethoscope around his neck, leads MRS. BAKER onto the floor. He bows; she curtsies; then he sweeps her into a waltz with unexpected elegance and grace. The gathering is suspended in the moment. Over MRS. BAKER'S shoulder, DR. HOLLORAN catches MARY'S eye. EMMY and HELEN, stand together, each dreaming her own dream. ALBERT observes. SEAN is caught just before downing yet another covert glass of punch and PATRICK, who is transported by a rare, concrete memory. The spell is rudely broken by the YARRELLS and SMYTHE-WILLARDS. The two wives lead their husbands onto the floor and bow to them in a mocking and exaggerated manner. As they start to dance, the MOORES and various other couples take to the floor as well.

The party is in full swing. ALBERT, half-hidden behind a potted palm, is watching the scene - as if all the world lived in pairs, except her. HELEN is standing with EMMY watching the dancers. SMYTHE-WILLARD and VISCOUNT YARRELL dance together as do their spouses. MR. MOORE is kissing his wife on the mouth quite openly, then twirls away with her. A tipsy MRS. BAKER is having dinner at a small table from which she commands the room, being waited on by an even more tipsy SEAN.

Half hidden behind the open pantry door, we see JOE, his jacket thrown over his shoulder, smoking a cigarette, taking a break from the yard, jealously watching the festivities. Seeing SEAN looking at him, JOE winks. SEAN looks over his shoulder and then back at JOE, with a sheepish grin. JOE motions to SEAN to bring him a drink. SEAN points to himself with a questioning look. JOE smiles, nodding slowly. SEAN clumsily pours a glass of punch, spilling some on his sleeve, and sidles to the pantry door. He proudly hands the cup to JOE who toasts him with a charming grin. SEAN, thrilled, moves back to MRS BAKER'S table.

Over the top of his glass, JOE catches HELEN'S eye. HELEN smiles, holding his gaze. MRS. BAKER, her mouth full, spots JOE and glares at him, flicking her hand to shoo him away. JOE acknowledges MRS. BAKER with a slight bow. Turning to go, he sees that HELEN is still watching. He gives her an amused shrug; then he's gone.

(CONTINUED)

50

CONTINUED

50

HELEN, casually murmurs something to EMMY and MARY, and walks away from them, out through the pantry door. All this is noted by ALBERT.

51

INT. DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

51

DR. HOLLORAN appears behind ALBERT, drink in hand. ALBERT gives a guilty start, like a child caught spying on adults.

DR. HOLLORAN

(flushed, a bit drunk)

Albert, my man! Why aren't you in fancy-dress?

ALBERT

Me, Sir? But...I'm a waiter.

DR. HOLLORAN

And I'm a doctor! We're both disguised as ourselves! That's a good one, eh?

52

EXT. MORRISON'S. LAUNDRY YARD. NIGHT.

52

The full moon casts its magic on the high brick walls, making silver ghosts out of various sheets hanging at random on their lines. From inside the hotel, we can hear music and faint bursts of laughter. HELEN enters. A shadow passes behind a line of sheets. HELEN moves to intercept it. Nothing. She hears a soft laugh, turns and sees JOE ducking behind a sheet. She runs after him. Nothing. She's not sure which way to go. She starts slowly stalking down another line of sheets when, from across the yard, we hear the sound of a match being struck. HELEN turns, carefully parts some linens and sees the red glow of a cigarette, in the far corner. Dropping the sheet, she crouches in hiding; excited; planning her attack. Slowly, she starts creeping in the direction of the glowing cigarette. Suddenly, JOE materializes in front her, as if out of nowhere. Startled, she runs away, laughing. JOE chases her, in and out of the sheets, causing them to sway and flap like ghostly, wounded swans. He catches her and pins her against the wall, holding her hands behind her. HELEN makes a half-hearted attempt to break away, but he holds her tight.

JOE

What's your name?

HELEN laughs breathlessly.

JOE(CONT'D)

Tell me your name!

HELEN

Let me go!

(CONTINUED)

52

CONTINUED

52

JOE
(Pulling her even closer)
Your name...?

HELEN
Ouch! You're hurting me.

She starts to struggle, laughing in spite of herself. Then JOE is kissing her and she is kissing him back. They stop, gasping for air, laughing. He begins to kiss her again. Laughter and music is heard from inside.

HELEN (CONT'D)
I must..go in...!

She manages to slip out under his arms and starts for the back door.

JOE
Wait...!

HELEN stops and turns back to him, fixing her hair.

HELEN
Helen..my name is Helen. Helen
Dawes.

She goes in.

53

INT. MORRISON, RECEPTION AND DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

53

The party has broken up. In the front of the hall, the last of the guests are leaving; all in various states of happy inebriation. ALBERT, MARY, SEAN and EMMY are clearing things away. DR. HOLLORAN is slumped at a table, having a last drink. MARY approaches, collecting empty glasses on a tray. She moves to pick up DR. HOLLORAN's glass, but he deftly snatches it out of her reach. MARY looks at him for a second, then begins to move away. DR. HOLLORAN grabs her skirt and tries to pull her onto his lap. MARY, mindful of the others in the room, pushes him away, half amused and half annoyed. DR. HOLLORAN heaves himself up and carefully negotiates his way out the door leading to the entrance hall. A luminous, excited HELEN enters from the pantry, carrying a tray. ALBERT, MARY and a suspicious EMMY take note. SEAN, very flushed and drunk, expertly helps himself to yet another last glass of punch. HELEN starts to work, still under JOE'S spell.

54

OMITTED

54

54A INT. YARD ROOM, MORRISON'S. NIGHT.

54A

JOE enters. He doesn't bother to light a lantern, but throws himself down on the bed and lies on his back, gazing at the small, square patch of moonlight on the wall.

JOE
Helen Dawes...

55 OMITTED

55

56 OMITTED

56

57 INT. MORRISON'S, COFFEE ROOM. EARLY MORNING.

57

CU. DOCTOR HOLLORAN. We pull back and see that he is asleep, slumped over one of the little tables. ALBERT enters from the foyer with a tray on which is a cup of tea and a bottle of Bushmills. Approaching the sleeping DOCTOR, ALBERT gently touches his shoulder.

ALBERT
Your morning cuppa, Sir.

The DOCTOR'S eyes open. He winces as he slowly sits up and rubs his face. He looks around, then up at ALBERT.

DR. HOLLORAN
Suffering God, Albert, what was I
drinking last night?

ALBERT
Your tea, Sir?

DR. HOLLORAN
(smacking his lips disgustedly)
Methylated spirits, I should think.
(Looks up again)
What's that?

ALBERT
Tea, Sir. And your Bushmills

DR. HOLLORAN
Oh, good man, Nobbs, let's have a
drop, shall we, for an eye-opener.

ALBERT sets down the tray, puts a splash of Bushmills into the tea and hands over the cup. DR. HOLLORAN drinks thirstily, then grabs the bottle off the tray and pours in a more generous slug. ALBERT hovers, uncharacteristically distracted. DR. HOLLORAN sits back, content, studying ALBERT, sensing something.

(CONTINUED)

DR. HOLLORAN (CONT'D)
Everything all right, Albert?

ALBERT
(Startled)
Sir?

DR. HOLLORAN
Something on your mind?

ALBERT
No, Sir...well...The fact is, Sir,
I've been...thinking.

DR. HOLLORAN
Oh, *thinking* are you.

ALBERT
Yes, I've been thinking I might...I
might purchase a little business.

DR. HOLLORAN
A business! Fancy that. What kind
of a business?

ALBERT
Perhaps...a little shop...

DR. HOLLORAN
What kind of a shop?

ALBERT
Well, not a dressmaker's or a
milliner's...Something that a man
could run.

DR. HOLLORAN
Men have been known to make
dresses, Nobbs, - hats, even.

ALBERT
I've been thinking, maybe tobacco.

DR. HOLLORAN
Well, yes, a tobacconist's, now,
that would suit a man.

ALBERT
But a woman could serve at the
counter.

DR. HOLLORAN gives himself another tot.

DR. HOLLORAN
Yes, indeed. A woman could.
(Eyeing ALBERT)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED

57

DR. HOLLORAN (CONT'D)
You're not thinking of taking a
wife are you, Nobbs?

ALBERT
Well...

DR. HOLLORAN
(Chuckles)
Who's the lucky lady?

MARY enters briskly with DR. HOLLORAN'S breakfast tray.

MARY
Good morning, Dr. Holloran. Good
morning, Mr. Nobbs.

DR. HOLLORAN
(Caught)
Mary....

All business, she sets the tray down in front of HOLLORAN.

MARY
Here you are.

MARY then stands, waiting. DR. HOLLORAN glumly corks the
whiskey bottle and hands it to her. After watching MARY exit,
HOLLORAN looks at NOBBS and shrugs philosophically.

DR. HOLLORAN
Women...!

58 EXT. MORRISON'S, YARD. AFTERNOON.

58

A snowy day. ALBERT steps into the laundry yard in her
overcoat, hat and umbrella, a newspaper tucked under her arm.
JOE and HELEN are at the coal pile. JOE has stopped shoveling
coal to talk to HELEN. As ALBERT passes, she takes in JOE and
HELEN as they laugh into each other. Over their work, the
LAUNDRESSES and KITCHEN MAIDS watch ALBERT pass by.

59 EXT. BATH ST. IRISHTOWN, DUBLIN. AFTERNOON.

59

ALBERT comes down a street in a rundown part of town. She is
referring to a newspaper ad and checking the numbers on the
houses. She stops in front of a small, two-storey house,
sandwiched between two similar houses. The paint is peeling,
a couple of filthy windows are broken. The camera slowly
moves to ALBERT's face as she gazes at the building. We move
with the camera towards the house. A sign has appeared:
"TOBACCONIST - Proprietor: A. Nobbs". ALBERT crosses to the
derelict house and peers in the window.

60 INT. FANTASY SHOP. BATH ST. IRISHTOWN, DUBLIN DAY. 60

The store inside is wretchedly rundown and empty. As the camera moved through the wretched place, we go back and forth between it and ALBERT'S face.

 ALBERT (V.O.)
Two counters...Say, one for
tobacco...and things...the other
for sweetmeats. There's a door
behind...

The camera moves towards a door at the back of the store.

 ALBERT (V.O.)
leading to the parlor...

As we approach the door to the parlor, it begins to open.

 ALBERT (V.O.)
The wife's parlor.

OFF ALBERT'S face.

61 OMITTED 61

62 EXT. ESTABLISH MORRISON'S AT NIGHT. 62

63 OMITTED 63

63A SHOE POLISHING STATION. NIGHT 63A

ALBERT enters with her basket full of unpolished shoes, puts it down and exits to the kitchen.

64 INT. MORRISON'S, KITCHEN. NIGHT. 64

ALBERT has put the kettle on to boil and has set a cup and a small teapot on a little tray, a cannister of tea leaves beside it; consumed by her reverie.

 ALBERT
And where do Hubert and Cathleen
sleep?

We hear muffled laughter. Suddenly, JOE appears at the kitchen door, leading HELEN by the hand, an unlit fag in his mouth. HELEN and JOE are in post-coital disarray. When she spots ALBERT, HELEN quickly turns back.

(CONTINUED)

JOE, amused, tries to make her stay, but she breaks free and runs back to JOE'S room. JOE enters the kitchen.

JOE
Having a late one, eh, Mr. Nobbs?

ALBERT
Mr. Mackins.

JOE saunters to the cupboard and takes down DR. HOLLORAN'S bottle of Bushmills. He and ALBERT exchange looks, both knowing that JOE is stealing from DR. HOLLORAN. JOE covers with an effortless sense of entitlement and offers the bottle to NOBBS.

JOE
Fancy a drop?

ALBERT
No.

ALBERT is willing the water to boil. JOE shrugs, uncorks the bottle, gets down a glass, pours himself a generous measure, puts the bottle back. He then saunters over to the stove, puts his drink down on ALBERT'S tray, takes a match from a match-holder, strikes it on the strike-plate and lights his cigarette, eyeing ALBERT the whole time. The kettle starts to whistle.

JOE
(Seductive whisper)
Water's ready.

Flustered, ALBERT proceeds to prepare her pot of tea. JOE leans languidly against the counter, enjoying his cigarette and whiskey, watching ALBERT.

JOE (CONT'D)
Do you go out at all, Mr. Nobbs? To the pub like...No?

ALBERT
No.

JOE
(Softly)
You should get out, you know, Mr Nobbs. Good for the constitution, the odd night out.

ALBERT'S tea is mercifully ready. She takes up the tray and and hurries out. JOE swigs the rest of his drink as HELEN cautiously comes into the kitchen. She is thrilled, exhausted, vulnerable. There is a smear of black on her cheek. She goes to JOE and leans against him.

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED

64

With surprising tenderness, he gently touches the black mark with a finger tip.

JOE (CONT'D)
(softly)
Coal dust.

HELEN flings her arms around his neck with a little moan. He grasps her in his arms, buries his face in her hair.

65 OMITTED

65

66 EXT. MORRISON'S, STREET. AFTERNOON.

66

A windy day. ALBERT is dragging out a heavy trunk, her face is red from the effort. JOE is plastering over a hole in the facade.

JOE
Need a hand there, Mr. Nobbs?

ALBERT
No!

JOE
(shrugs)
All right, don't lose your rag.

JOE watches as ALBERT loads the trunk and other smaller boxes into a waiting coach. The TWO LADIES are leaving, MRS. BAKER is saying good-bye to them. ALBERT lingers expectantly, a bit too close for comfort, and the ELDER LADY does indeed slip her a coin, but with a slight grimace of distaste at such blatant greediness. JOE watches with interest as the coin disappears into ALBERT's pocket. ALBERT bows deeply, helps the LADIES into the carriage and, after a respectful pause, re-enters the hotel.

ALBERT
(Excitedly to himself)
Now she can have a clock on a
marble chimneypiece.

As the carriage rolls away, we see SEAN plodding up the road, returning from errands for his guests. As if they have a secret code between them, JOE makes a questioning gesture to SEAN for smokes. SEAN, thrilled to be JOE'S designated lackey, gives him a pouch of tobacco from one of his bags. Eyeing MRS. BAKER warily he then surreptitiously takes a racing newspaper out of another bag and holds it out JOE.

(CONTINUED)

SEAN

(Whispering conspiratorially)
The form for Punchestown on
Saturday. Do you want me to put a
few bob on for you?

JOE takes the newspaper, shrugs.

SEAN (CONT'D)

I got a hot tip. It's a sure thing.
I'm putting five bob on the nose
myself.

JOE

Not this week. Thanks though.

SEAN

Any time, Mr. Mackins. Any time.

SEAN hovers, hoping for further instructions. JOE pretends to
read.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Well....

SEAN makes an obsequious exit. JOE squats against the wall,
concentrating on the paper in his hands. In frustration, he
crumples it up and tosses it aside and starts to roll a
cigarette.

MRS. BAKER, who has been watching the carriage go, turns with
a sigh and looks up grimly at the facade, which is badly in
need of restoration. Spying JOE, she gives him one of her
disapproving looks.

MRS. BAKER

Have you no work to do, Mr.
Mackins! Get on with it!

JOE slowly puts the rolled cigarette in the breast pocket of
his overalls and gets back to work.

67 OMITTED

67

68 OMITTED

68

69 INT/EXT. TRAM. DAY.

69

ALBERT sits in the front of the crowded tram, trying hard to
avoid being touched by anyone. In her neat clothes she is
conspicuous among the smelly, poorly-dressed working people.
She stares out of the window at Dublin Bay.

69A OMITTED

69A

70 EXT. HOWTH / HUBERT'S HOUSE DAY.

70

ALBERT walks along a narrow village street of small, neat, two-storey houses and small shop fronts. She stops in front of a small house, with a sign above the bay-window: DRESSMAKER. Hesitantly, she knocks on the door. After a wait, it is opened by CATHLEEN, a kind and vivacious woman in her thirties.

CATHLEEN

Yes?

ALBERT is struck dumb by the unexpected sight of the woman who must be HUBERT'S wife. HUBERT appears over CATHLEEN'S shoulder.

HUBERT

Mr. Nobbs!

ALBERT

I was passing by, and I...

HUBERT

Come in, come in!

ALBERT doesn't catch the knowing look between her two hosts as CATHLEEN shuts the door.

71 INT. HUBERT PAGE'S HOUSE. FRONT ROOM. DAY.

71

ALBERT gingerly steps into the front room which serves as the dressmaker's shop.

HUBERT

Cathleen, this is Mr. Nobbs. Mr. Nobbs, my wife

CATHLEEN

Pleased to meet you, Mr. Nobbs.

ALBERT

Mrs. Page.

ALBERT, bows, rigidly formal. CATHLEEN throws a quick look to HUBERT.

CATHLEEN

Well now, we were just going to have a bit of dinner, Mr. Nobbs? Will you join us?

(CONTINUED)

ALBERT

Oh, no thank you, Mrs, Page, I was just passing by.

(To HUBERT. Taking the button out)

I wanted to give you this. You left it in my...in the room.

She hands the button to HUBERT. HUBERT takes it and stares at it, laughs.

HUBERT

You came all this way, to give me this!

(To Cathleen)

The button from my work-coat!

CATHLEEN

And I didn't have another one to match! You've averted a veritable tragedy, Mr. Nobbs. For that you must certainly have your dinner with us. Hubert, will you take Mr. Nobbs's coat and hat, and not leave him standing there like a stranger!

She smiles at the two "men", turns and leaves. ALBERT gazes after her, surrendering her coat, hat and umbrella to HUBERT.

HUBERT

(Gesturing for NOBBS to go into the next room)
Come on in then.

71A INT. HUBERT'S HOUSE, PARLOR. DAY.

71A

As they enter, ALBERT takes a quick look around. There is a fireplace with a small fire in it. She notes with satisfaction that, yes, there is a clock ticking on the mantelpiece. She takes in two comfortable chairs by the fire, and sees a knitting box on the floor beside one of them. A multi-coloured scarf is thrown on top of it, knitting needles still stuck in it.

ALBERT

I thought she'd be... different.

HUBERT

Cathleen? In what way?

ALBERT

She's . . . real.

HUBERT

(laughs)

Oh, she's real, all right!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HUBERT (CONT'D)

Sit down, sit down.

(She puts away the coat and umbrella,
while ALBERT gingerly takes a seat.)
So, you've been thinking about my
Cathleen, have you?

ALBERT

Well...

HUBERT

How you might find a Cathleen of
your own?

Pause; there is so much ALBERT wants to ask, she does not
know where to begin.

ALBERT

I thought you'd be dressed as a
woman at home.

HUBERT

(sitting)
And what if a neighbour passing by
happened to look in the window?

ALBERT

So you never wear...a dress?

HUBERT

(shakes her head)
It's safer, this way. But I don't
need to tell you that! We could
leave here, eventually, if we'd
saved enough. Then maybe we would
live as sisters. And why not? It's
not like we've robbed a bank or
killed someone. We can just pack
our boxes and move on.

ALBERT takes that in.

HUBERT (CONT'D)

(gently, sensing ALBERT'S turmoil)
You know...I never gave you a
chance to tell your story...why
don't you tell me now.

Cathleen is humming in the kitchen. ALBERT looks at HUBERT.
She's never been asked to tell her story. The clock ticks on
the mantelpiece. ALBERT looks down at her hands.

ALBERT

I don't know the beginning... I was
a bastard...Mrs. Nobbs, the woman
who was paid to raise me, knew who
I was, but she never told me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Maybe she would have one day, but she died suddenly.

HUBERT

Without telling you who you are!

ALBERT

Yes...she gave me a picture of a lady she said was my mother and she hinted, more than once, that my people were grand folk. I got a convent education because of a big allowance from my mother's family. But one day, the Reverend Mother told us that my mother was dead and that we'd have to leave... We went to live in Seven Dials, and had to go and find work. I thought I'd die living among such rough people. They were poor, living like animals, indecently...Life without decency is unbearable. Then Mrs. Nobbs died...

HUBERT

(softly)

And you were what age?

ALBERT

Fourteen...Thirty-one years last month.

CATHLEEN looks in. When she realizes that an important conversation is taking place, she pulls back and listens, unseen by HUBERT and ALBERT.

HUBERT

So you decided to become a man?

ALBERT nods.

ALBERT

One night...there was...five of them...they caught me and...they pulled me about...under the stairs... they...hurt me...and then they left me there.

She stops. HUBERT gets up and goes to the mantelpiece and, stretching out her arms, leans against it, her back to ALBERT.

(CONTINUED)

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Soon after that, I heard there was to be a big dinner at the Freemason's Hall, and that they were short of waiters. Back then, my figure was just right for a waiter's. So I managed to get hold of a second hand suit of clothes...an evening suit. I didn't think I'd get hired, but they were shorthanded so I got the job. I was paid ten shillings. And that was it. Since then, I've worked round the tables in all the biggest places in London. Manchester. Liverpool. Then I came to Morrison's...

Albert's story hangs in the air between them. The clock ticks on the mantle piece. ALBERT looks up and meets HUBERT'S gaze. CATHLEEN decides to enter.

CATHLEEN

Right, you men, up you get, before everything on the table is stone-cold!

ALBERT, HUBERT and CATHLEEN are finishing their dinner: sliced bread and stew.

HUBERT

(mimicking MRS. BAKER)

"Oh, very salubrious, Mr. Page, very salubrious!"

CATHLEEN

(Laughing)

'Salubrious'! Who does she think she is, the Queen of England? Oh, I'd love to get a squint at her, the old hake! It must be nice, Mr. Nobbs, working in a hotel. Always something happening, something to give you a laugh.

ALBERT

Yesterday Sean Casey fell down the coal-hole steps.

There is a moment of silence, as HUBERT and CATHLEEN gaze at ALBERT, then both of them burst out laughing.

(CONTINUED)

ALBERT frowns, watching them, then slowly it dawns on her that she has said something funny, and, she smiles, the first time we have seen her do so. And suddenly we see how beautiful she might be.

CATHLEEN

And who may I ask is Sean Casey?

ALBERT

One of the waiters.

CATHLEEN

And did he hurt himself?

ALBERT

He got a black eye.

HUBERT

(laughing more loudly)

A black eye - in the coal-hole!

As ALBERT starts to laugh, we-

CUT TO:

Dinner is finished. CATHLEEN is cleaning up at the sink. HUBERT fetches a tobacco tin and cigarette papers, brings them back to the table and starts to roll a cigarette. ALBERT watches, fascinated. HUBERT, aware of her interest, offers her the tobacco and papers.

HUBERT

You'd better learn how to do it, if you're going to open a tobacco shop.

During the following dialogue, ALBERT, awkwardly attempts to follow HUBERT'S action.

HUBERT (CONT'D)

We were speaking of Morrison's...now that Helen Dawes. She's the life of the place. A bonnie girl, she is.

CATHLEEN

Oh, Helen, is it?

(To ALBERT)

That's not the first time that name has been heard in this house, Mr. Nobbs. Hubert took quite a shine to her -

(to HUBERT)

didn't you, now?

(CONTINUED)

Seeing that ALBERT is doing a terrible job, CATHLEEN offers to help.

CATHLEEN (CONT'D)
Look at you, you're all thumbs.
Give it here to me.

She proceeds to roll NOBBS' cigarette expertly.

HUBERT
Well, yes, if one day you should take it into your head to run off to America, I might indeed try my luck with Miss Dawes. How can you deny that sweet face and all those little blonde curls.

CATHLEEN
Try your luck, is it? Well don't get your hopes up, Hubert Page - I have no intention of budging from this spot.

She licks the cigarette closed and puts it in the mesmerized ALBERT'S mouth.

CATHLEEN (CONT'D)
There you are, Mr Nobbs!

CATHLEEN lights both their cigarettes. Gingerly, ALBERT takes an experimental puff, not inhaling. She looks from one to the other, envious of their easy way together. CATHLEEN sits on the arm of HUBERT'S chair; she adjusts HUBERT'S collar and brushes something off HUBERT'S sleeve.

HUBERT
The shop is a sound idea, Albert.
And you've been shrewd the way
you've saved up, all these years.

ALBERT
Oh, I haven't enough yet.

CATHLEEN
(Teasingly)
You have it all stashed away under
the mattress, have you Mr Nobbs?

ALBERT succumbs to a fit of coughing.

HUBERT
Whoa there! Easy, little fellow!

Laughter.

74 EXT. STREET, SHOP WINDOW (FANTASY) DAY. 74

A door, painted blue, and a window serving as a shop window. Just like CATHLEEN's shop, but prettier, the way ALBERT imagined it before. We see the sign : TOBACCONIST - PROPRIETOR: A. NOBBS" The camera glides into the shop, which has two counters at right angles. A woman, who has been stacking boxes of cigars on a shelf, turns around and smiles at the camera: it's CATHLEEN. She turns back to arrange something else on a shelf. When she turns back again, it is HELEN, laughing to the delight of several customers who have materialized at the counter. The sounds of a tram in motion becomes stronger as we

FADE TO:

75 INT/EXT. TRAM. AFTERNOON. 75

ALBERT is smiling, totally lost in her dream. OLD WOMAN sitting beside ALBERT gives her a quizzical look. The tram slows down and stops. ALBERT looks up and realises that she has arrived back in Dublin.

76 EXT. GLASNEVIN CEMETERY. AFTERNOON. 76

HELEN and JOE walk arm in arm. They have come from a pub. JOE is a little tipsy, but holding it well.

JOE

My Da, now there was a boozier, a fierce hoor for the drink. None of us ever slept, we'd be lying there, shivering with the fright, waiting for him to come home, knowing that when he did, there'd be no place to hide. Then he'd get up in the morning with no memory of having beat the stuffing out of us the night before. Ma of course just took it doing the saint...You know what kept me from killing him?

HELEN

What?

JOE

The thought of getting on a boat and hopping it to America.

JOE suddenly pulls her behind a gravestone and kisses her. HELEN returns the kiss, then pushes him away. They emerge and walk on, but JOE stops again and pulls her behind another gravestone.

HELEN

Will you stop it! You're daft!

(CONTINUED)

JOE silences her and points through the gate to the street. ALBERT is getting off the tram, deep in thought. JOE laughs, makes a sudden decision.

JOE

You go on; I want to have a word
with His Nibs.

HELEN is about to protest but JOE turns her around unceremoniously, slaps her behind and gives her a push

JOE (CONT'D)

Do as you're told, if you don't
want a real slap.

JOE crosses the street, avoiding the moving tram. He steps nimbly in front of ALBERT, doffing his cap with a deferential, little bow.

JOE (CONT'D)

Good day, Mr. Nobbs. Out for a
stroll?

ALBERT stops.

ALBERT

I was visiting friends.

JOE

Why don't you come on for a pint.

ALBERT

No, thank you, Mr. Mackins, I've
got to...

ALBERT starts to move off. JOE steps in front of him, a mixture of vague threat and disarming charm.

JOE

Come on, Mr. Nobbs. Come on, it'll
do you good. Every fellow needs a
bit of good company now and then.
I'll stand you a wee tincture.

ALBERT realizes he's caught and follows JOE.

The pub is full of MEN, drinking and laughing at the end of a working week. The clients are all working class, so ALBERT with her neat clothes and pale face sticks out like a sore thumb. JOE has bought ALBERT a small whiskey and is already half through his pint of Guinness.

(CONTINUED)

JOE
Not so bad is it.

ALBERT'S not sure what to say.

JOE (CONT'D)
(Starting to roll a cigarette. ALBERT
blanches)
You know there's been whispers
around the place that you're
thinking of getting married.

ALBERT is shocked.

JOE (CONT'D)
A mug's game, you ask me. Got
anyone in mind?
(Offers ALBERT his tobacco pouch and
papers)
Our Helen, what about her? She's a
fine thing, now.

ALBERT accepts the tobacco and miserably starts attempting to
roll a cigarette.

ALBERT
But...I thought you . . .?

JOE
I'm not staying long in this job,
heaving bloody coal all bloody day
and taking orders from old Ma
Baker.

DR. HOLLORAN, standing at the bar, notices ALBERT and JOE,
watching as a MAN passes by their table and drops a leaflet
in front of JOE. JOE sees that ALBERT is curious as to what
it says and gives the offending leaflet a perfunctory glance.

JOE (CONT'D)
Can't have a drink in peace without
some clown pushing rubbish in your
face.

ALBERT grunts in acknowledgement. She is rolling a pathetic
mess of a cigarette. JOE can't help but laugh.

DR. HOLLORAN takes up his glass of whiskey and strolls a
little unsteadily over to the table. He is looking rather
flushed: it is obvious he has had more than one drink
already.

DR. HOLLORAN
Upon my word - Albert! Drinking,
and smoking!
(He eyes JOE)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DR. HOLLORAN (CONT'D)
And in questionable company.
Not interrupting, am I?

JOE
Not at all, doctor. As a matter of
fact, we were just talking about...
marriage.

DR. HOLLORAN gives him a sidewise, narrow look and pulls up a
chair.

DR. HOLLORAN
Ah-h-h, I see...

He sits.

JOE
(To ALBERT. Striking a match)
C'mon. Let's see if you can get
that yoke lit.

ALBERT nonchalantly puts the cigarette in her mouth. JOE
leans over and lights it for her.

DR. HOLLORAN
I was married, once; still am, for
that matter.

ALBERT inhales and tries desperately not to cough.

DR. HOLLORAN (CONT'D)
Mrs. Holloran resides in Belfast,
where she does good works and is a
stalwart of the Methodist
congregation of the Malone Road. We
lived quite contentedly together
until one day I got on a train and
transferred myself to Dublin.

They sit in silence, DR. HOLLORAN looking about in happy
befuddlement; ALBERT desperately trying to not choke on her
cigarette.

DR. HOLLORAN (CONT'D)
Here's health.

They clink glasses. JOE, suddenly impatient and bored, having
finished his pint, stands up quickly and goes off in the
direction of the gents'. ALBERT explodes. Rather morbidly
amused, DR. HOLLORAN puts ALBERT'S drink in his hand. ALBERT
takes a big gulp, not sure of what's worse: the cigarette or
the whiskey.

DR. HOLLORAN (CONT'D)
Somehow Nobbs, I didn't think you
were a smoker.

(CONTINUED)

ALBERT

(Collecting himself)

No, Sir. But...if I may be so bold...your wife?

DR. HOLLORAN

Ah...yes. There was another woman - isn't there always? They both wanted to be the only star in my firmament, but to my misfortune I loved them both. The funny thing is, they've become the best of friends. I suppose they make common cause in hating me. I wish them luck of it...I did love them.

(With a rueful chuckle)

There now, I've told you all my secrets. What about you?

ALBERT

Me, Sir...?

DR. HOLLORAN

Have you no secrets? I can't believe it.

ALBERT

I never did very much in my life, Sir.

DR. HOLLORAN

You're a wise man, Albert. Experience is an over-valued commodity.

They both turn at the sound of an altercation behind them. JOE is taunting a large, RED-FACED MAN at the bar, feinting and dancing around like a boxer, poking him with quick jabs to his arms and chest while the BARMAN remonstrates with them. It looks as if blows will be exchanged before long.

DR. HOLLORAN (CONT'D)

I think, Albert, a strategic withdrawal is called for. Give me your arm, for I confess, I am in need of support.

As ALBERT moves to DR. HOLLORAN, we CUT TO:

79 INT. MORRISON'S. DINING ROOM. DUSK.

79

The serving ballet is underway. EMMY, PATRICK and MARY tend to their tables. ALBERT is distractedly serving a platter of roast beef to MR. AND MRS. MOORE. HELEN enters briskly, carrying a tray of desserts to her station. ALBERT smiles, her eyes follow HELEN across the room. HELEN'S retreating figure is suddenly blocked by a morose SEAN, his black eye painfully evident.

80 INT. MORRISON'S, BACK HALLWAY BY SERVANTS' STAIRS. NIGHT. 80

ALBERT is walking up the stairs. HELEN is on her way down. They both hesitate then pass each other.

ALBERT
Good evening, Miss Dawes.

HELEN
Evening, Mr. Nobbs.

ALBERT, seizing the moment, stops HELEN.

ALBERT
Miss Dawes, I wonder, Miss
Dawes...if you would care to come
out for a walk.

HELEN
Pardon me, Mr. Nobbs?

ALBERT
I'm off duty at three tomorrow and
if you're not engaged...

HELEN
I am off at three.

ALBERT
Are you engaged?

HELEN
(amused)
'Engaged'? No, I'm not *engaged*, Mr.
Nobbs. But are you asking me to
"walk out" with you?

ALBERT
I am.

HELEN
Well the thing is, I'm walking out
with Joe Mackins. I don't know
what he'd say if I started walking
out with you, as well.

(CONTINUED)

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED

81

They kiss ferociously.

82 EXT. GRAFTON STREET, DUBLIN. AFTERNOON.

82

It is Saturday, the fashionable street is crowded with shoppers, strollers, beggars, street urchins, etc. ALBERT is waiting at the top of the street across from the corner of St. Stephen's Green. She peers anxiously this way and that, then her face lights up when she sees HELEN, in street clothes and a dingy hat, coming out of the gates of the Green and crossing the road to meet her.

HELEN

Were you afraid I wasn't coming?

ALBERT

Not very.

HELEN gives ALBERT a look as they walk down the crowded street. The silence between them is rather awkward when, thankfully, they are distracted by a PUPPETEER who has gathered a small crowd. The puppet, dressed like a Joker, is being made to flirt with the girls. The PUPPETEER notices HELEN and makes the puppet act as if it's found its long lost love. HELEN is delighted. ALBERT is thrilled that everything is starting out so well. They move on down the street.

HELEN

(looking after a fashionable couple who
pass them by)

Oh, look at that one; did you see
the dress? Five guineas if it was a
penny.

ALBERT

(shocked whisper)

Five guineas . . .?

HELEN

At least.

ALBERT smiles queasily. They come to Bewley's Coffee House, and look at all the enticing goodies in the window. HELEN waits for ALBERT to say something. After an awkward pause -

HELEN (CONT'D)

Oh, Lord, I love the smell of
roasting coffee.

ALBERT

Would you . . . would you like to
go in?

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED

82

HELEN hesitates. She would love to go into Bewley's, but it is no small challenge for someone of her station. At last she decides.

HELEN

All right.

Huddling close together, giving each other courage, they venture into the coffee house.

83 INT. BEWLEY'S. DAY.

83

ALBERT and HELEN in the wide shop section of the coffee house; Red plush walls, mahogany counters, tall mirrors. All kinds of cakes, sweets, boxes of chocolates on sale. HELEN stands in the middle of it all, looking about with an ecstatic expression. ALBERT looks in one of the mirrors and sees the two of them reflected to infinity. It makes her happy. HELEN clutches ALBERT's arm excitedly.

HELEN

(hushed whisper, pointing to large
boxes of chocolate on a high shelf,
each one with a satin bow)
Look at the chocolates! Aren't they
gorgeous?

ALBERT looks at the chocolate boxes, swallows heavily.

ALBERT

I'm afraid they'd cost a lot.

HELEN looks contemptuously at ALBERT and tosses her head.

HELEN

Oh, well... come on then we'll go
somewhere else...somewhere cheaper.

ALBERT

No, please.

ALBERT gestures for HELEN to go into the inner dining room. Rather daunted by their posh surroundings, they make their way to an empty table. ALBERT pulls out HELEN'S chair then sits down. She raises her hand, signaling to AILEEN, a haughty, young waitress who wonders who let the riff-raff in. After looking around to see if any other waitress is available, Aileen reluctantly approaches, as if she's detected the source of a faint bad odor.

AILEEN

Yes, may I help you.

ALBERT

We'd like some chocolate, please.

(CONTINUED)

AILEEN

What *kind* of chocolate?

ALBERT

Just chocolate.

AILEEN

Dark chocolate? Milk chocolate?
Creams? Caramels? Peppermint?
Pralines? Nougat? Nuts?

HELEN

(Deciding)
No, a *box* of chocolates.

HELEN (CONT'D)

(smugly matching AILEEN'S attitude)
To take with us.

AILEEN

Oh...to take with you...And not
something to drink?

HELEN

(Spelling it out)
No. A...BOX...OF...CHOCOLATES!

ALBERT

(pointing to the elaborate display
behind the counter)
One of those.

AILEEN

(Rolling her eyes)
Which one?

ALBERT

(to HELEN)
Which one?

HELEN

(pointing)
That one, with the two ladies.

With an exasperated toss of her head, AILEEN, starts to turn.

HELEN (CONT'D)

No, no, wait - that one, with the soldier
and the lady. Ooh, I can't decide!

Off AILEEN'S withering look we,

CUT TO:

84 EXT. BEWLEY'S DOOR/GRAFTON STREET. DAY. 84

ALBERT and HELEN come out of Bewley's, HELEN carrying the two boxes of chocolates. ALBERT is in shock.

85 EXT. GRAFTON STREET. DAY. 85

ALBERT and HELEN continue slowly down the street. HELEN rattling on happily, stuffing chocolates into her mouth. ALBERT halfheartedly nibbles on one.

HELEN

. . . And when the chocolates are gone, I can use the boxes. This one will be grand for my sewing things, and this...well, I'll think of something!

They stop in front of a jewelry store.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Oh look at the little gold bird with the ruby eyes!

ALBERT

(desperately trying to distract her)
Oh look! That cyclist was almost hit by the tram.

HELEN

Oh, I've always wanted a bicycle.

Off the look of sheer panic on ALBERT's face, we CUT TO:

86 EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF MORRISON'S. DAY. 86

HELEN and ALBERT walking slowly back toward the hotel.

HELEN

...Then my Da died, and I had to go out to work. First I was in service, then I served behind the counter in a shop for a while -

ALBERT

In a shop?

HELEN

Yes, in a draper's; treated like dirt by any bloody bitch with sixpence to spend.

ALBERT

Where did you live?

(CONTINUED)

86

CONTINUED

86

HELEN

I had my own room -

ALBERT

Over the shop.

HELEN

Yes, over the shop.

HELEN watches, puzzled, as ALBERT smiles to herself, her fantasy vindicated.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Do you know what, Mr. Nobbs, I
think you are the strangest man
I've ever met.

They turn into the alleyway beside Morrison's.

86A

EXT. MORRISON'S. A SERVANT'S ENTRANCE. DAY.

86A

HELEN offers ALBERT the nearly empty box of chocolates.

HELEN

There's not many left, I'm afraid.

ALBERT bows, taking the box.

ALBERT

Thank you. And thank you for the
pleasure of your company.

HELEN

(curtsying charmingly and hugging the
unopened second box of chocolates.)

Thank you, Mr. Nobbs.

ALBERT opens the door for her. HELEN pauses, strangely touched, then steps in. ALBERT smiles.

87

INT. MORRISON'S. ALBERT'S STATION. NIGHT.

87

ALBERT, deep in thought, sorts through some mail.

ALBERT

Should I tell her before we're
married? Or save it for the wedding
night? But she might call the
police, who'd take us both to the
station! If only I'd been able to
ask Hubert how she did it!

88

INT. JOE'S ROOM. INNER YARD. MORRISON'S HOTEL. NIGHT

88

JOE is hunched over some books on his table, studying by the light of a small gas lamp. We see that the books are primary readers, the kind with simple words and lots of illustrations, and that they are well worn. JOE is painstakingly moving his fingers under the words, trying to sound them out. On the table are other books: text books, fiction, poetry, even some Shakespeare. There is a soft knock at the door. JOE quickly hides the primers under his mattress. He goes to the door and opens it. HELEN slips in. She is holding the second, unopened box of chocolates. JOE closes the door behind her. They kiss. HELEN breaks away. Whispering is second nature, as they know there are ears everywhere.

HELEN

(holding out the chocolate box)
Here.

JOE

Is this the best you could do?

HELEN

At least he bought me something!

JOE, opening the box, looks sharply at her; antennae up.

JOE

What's up with you, Miss high-and -
mighty? Old Albert put ideas in
your head, did he?

HELEN

You should have seen him pay for
it. Blood from a turnip.

JOE

(Popping chocolates into his mouth)
He must be sweet on you then, eh?
Next time, ask him for...

HELEN

Next time!

JOE

I don't know...ask him for a bottle
of something.

HELEN

What sort of something?

JOE

Whiskey; a good bottle of malt. I
like a drop of malt. Say it's for
your brother.

(CONTINUED)

HELEN

I haven't got a brother.

JOE

He won't know that.

HELEN

I've walked out before, but never
with the likes of Albert Nobbs.

JOE

He's a freak, is what he is.

HELEN

He has manners, at least; not like
some people I could mention.

JOE pulls back and looks at HELEN

JOE

His manners won't get you to
America now, will they?

HELEN

(Not sure she heard right)
What?

JOE

I may not have manners, but I swear
I'm getting us out of here.
I don't know how, but I will!
There's no hope for us here, Helen.
None. All my life I've dreamed of
getting out and *nothing* is going to
stop me. *Nothing!* Someday I'll be
my own self, not anyone's punching
bag, not anyone's pathetic lackey.
America's the only place for people
like me. Over there, I'd learn fast
and work hard. And we could have a
life!

He kneels in front of her.

Will you chance it? Will you chance
it with me? *Will you!*

HELEN tenderly touches his face

HELEN

Yes. I love you, Joe. I love you!

They cling to each other.

89 INT. MORRISON'S, ALBERT'S ROOM. NIGHT.

89

ALBERT in her shirtsleeves, is sitting on a chair beside the bed, her rolls of money spread out on the blanket before her. She is working on her expenses in her notebook with a stub of pencil.

ALBERT

(rapid muttering)

Chocolates--three and sixpence. If every time we walk out is to cost three and six...four threes are twelve and four sixes is two shillings, fourteen shillings a month twice, that is twenty-eight; twenty-eight shillings a month...two boxes a week..at this rate...sixteen pounds six shillings a year ----- Oh Lord!

She gazes before her, worried, then her eyes become dreamy.

FADE TO:

90 INT. FANTASY SHOP. BATH ST, IRISHTOWN, DUBLIN. DAY.

90

ALBERT V./O.

Maybe I'd only need to court her for three months...?

Camera moves through the shop with the two counters and approaches the door leading to the parlour, similar to the one in HUBERT'S house.

90A INT. HUBERT'S PARLOR. DAY.

90A

The camera moves into the room. HELEN is revealed sitting by the fire, in Cathleen's chair, knitting a multi-coloured scarf (like the one in CATHLEEN'S sewing basket). She looks up and smiles at the camera. FADE TO:

91 INT. MORRISON'S, ALBERT'S STATION. AFTERNOON.

91

CU. ALBERT, absentmindedly sewing a button on a pair of trousers, she looks up, day-dreaming.

ALBERT

Two big chairs, covered with chintz...but chintz dirties quickly...maybe dark velvet.

92

EXT. DUBLIN STREET. DAY.

92

ALBERT and HELEN are walking down a quiet little street. ALBERT is carrying a bottle of something, carefully wrapped. HELEN is wearing a pretty new hat. She looks around with a puzzled expression. She's not feeling well.

HELEN

Why are we going this way?

ALBERT

(quietly excited)

You'll see.

HELEN

Can we not stop and have a cup of tea somewhere? My heels are raw, we've walked that far.

ALBERT stops in front of the run-down two-storey house she visited before. ALBERT gazes at the house in rapture. HELEN stares at her and then at the house. Behind them we see a wagon carrying rough coffins to a paupers' grave.

HELEN (CONT'D)

What's this?

ALBERT

Just imagine: blue door, cream walls inside, lace curtains on the upstairs windows.

(Points to wall above the window)

Up there a sign: TOBACCONIST. What do you think?

HELEN gazes skeptically at the house, and shrugs.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

It would be big enough for a shop and for...for people to live above. It's a very desirable property, and can only appreciate, the agent said so. In fifteen years, it will fetch three times what it's worth now. Sell up then, move to some place by the sea ... I've always wanted to live by the sea.

HELEN inspects the house with deep distaste.

HELEN

You haven't moved in and you've already got yourself retired.

HELEN turns on her heel and strides away. ALBERT catches up to her.

(CONTINUED)

ALBERT

(dismayed)

But I just wanted to show it to you-

HELEN

You ask me to come out with you.
You walk me off my feet, and we end
up in this back-alley! I've spent
my life trying to get out of holes
like this.

She strides away again, ALBERT clumps after her. When she catches up to her, HELEN has stopped, angrily wiping tears from her face with the heels of her hands. ALBERT is appalled - what has she done to upset her so?

ALBERT

Helen...?

HELEN

(weary and feeling sick)

Please take me back. I'm tired.

(Taking the wrapped bottle from ALBERT)

HELEN (CONT'D)

Thanks for the bottle.

ALBERT

(Gently)

And the hat.

HELEN

Oh yes...thank you.

HELEN starts walking.

ALBERT

(Following)

Where does he live?

HELEN

Who?

ALBERT

Your brother.

HELEN

(Stopping. Perplexed)

My brother? Oh! My *brother*! In...
in...Mallow. But he often comes up
to Dublin.

She doesn't look at ALBERT. ALBERT suspects she's lying, but doesn't care. With a shrug, HELEN turns and walks away. ALBERT follows.

93 INT. MORRISON'S. BOILER ROOM. DAY.

93

HELEN enters, concealing something in her shawl. JOE is not to be seen.

HELEN

Joe? Joe?

JOE appears from around the boiler, wiping his grease-stained hands on a rag. He startles HELEN.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Joe Mackins! You nearly made me wet myself.

JOE moves to kiss her. HELEN hesitates for a second and then let's him kiss her. Pulling away, HELEN reveals the bottle of whiskey.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Here.

JOE

What's this?

(Unwraps the bottle)

Well well, so His Nibs coughed up, did he? This is good stuff! Good girl. Now see if you can screw a few quid out of him.

HELEN

A few *quid*?

JOE

Yeah. The first one'll be the hardest; after that, it'll be like shelling peas. How else are we going to get the fuck out of this place?

HELEN

Oh, you don't know Albert Nobbs if you think we can get him to pay our passage to America. He wouldn't give you the steam off his water!

JOE

He bought you those chocolates, didn't he? And this. Oh and a hat? You've got him hooked.

(Pause)

Has he tried...?

HELEN

What?

(CONTINUED)

JOE

You know... Next time you go out with him, work him up a bit, see what he's made of. See if there's a sting in him.

HELEN

I'm not going out with him anymore.

JOE

How else will we get to America before we're old and gray? You have to walk out with him as long as there is a bob in his pocket, and you have a hand to pull it out.

He pulls her to him.

JOE (CONT'D)

Come back tonight?

They kiss. HELEN runs out. Disheveled and dirty, JOE looks after her, sensing something. He opens the bottle, takes a good, long swig and goes back to work.

94 OMITTED

94

95 OMITTED

95

96 INT. MORRISON'S. THE MOORE'S ROOM. DAY.

96

HELEN, looking distracted, drawn and tired is changing the bed linens. Presently, fighting a wave of nausea, she sits down on a chair and closes her eyes. ALBERT enters carrying the Mr. Moore's dinner jacket and trousers, half expecting HELEN to be in the room. HELEN leaps up.

HELEN

Mr. Nobbs.

She moves to the bed and sharply snaps a sheet open.

ALBERT

Miss Dawes.

ALBERT hangs the clothes up in the wardrobe and turns to HELEN who, feeling ALBERT'S gaze, stops and looks at her.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Will you think about what I said?

(CONTINUED)

HELEN

About what?

ALBERT

About the shop.

HELEN

Oh...you, and your silly shop.

ALBERT

But you'll think about it?

HELEN

Yes. Yes. I'm thinking...

She sighs. There is an awkward pause as HELEN works and ALBERT tries to think of what more to say. HELEN'S face registers a thought. She sighs again, a little louder, and looks at ALBERT plaintively.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Mr. Nobbs...

ALBERT

Please...call me Albert.

HELEN

I've not wanted to tell you this..

ALBERT

What?

HELEN

I am so embarrassed to...but...

ALBERT

What is it?

HELEN

(Sitting on the edge of the bed)
Well...it's terribly sad...my
mother's health has taken a
terrible turn for the worse.

ALBERT

Oh...I'm sorry to hear that.

HELEN

Yes...and...the doctors are saying
that if we can't pay for her
medicine, there's really...no hope.

She is disturbingly convincing, maybe even managing a few tears.

(CONTINUED)

HELEN (CONT'D (CONT'D))
My brother has given all he can
without begging himself and
ending up in the poor house,
leaving his three little babies
without a father and I...I have
nothing! I don't want my mother to
die!

ALBERT
(Not thinking to question)
Please, Helen. What can I do?

HELEN
Lend me some money?

ALBERT
Some money? How much?

HELEN
(In a tiny voice)
A few quid?

ALBERT swallows hard.

The OLDER KITCHEN MAID and SEAN look down at the YOUNGER KITCHEN MAID who is lying in a corner, on a pile of unwashed laundry, shivering in delirium, her face flushed and wet with sweat. MARY cradles her head. EMMY and DR HOLLORAN appear at the door. Indicating that EMMY should not go in, DR. HOLLORAN enters.

He takes one look at the YOUNGER MAID and his expression turns grave. He kneels beside the girl, feeling her pulse, her temperature.

MARY
She was like this when we came
in...

SEAN
Is she dying?

DR. HOLLORAN
(to MARY)
Has anyone else been here?

MARY
Only us.

DR. HOLLORAN

Leave me with her, now. And wash
your hands, all of you - scrub them
in carbolic.

SEAN backs away in terror.

SEAN

Oh, Mother of Jesus, is it the
fever, is it . . .?

DR. HOLLORAN

Go on!

SEAN and the OLDER MAID flee. MARY gently lays the girl's
head down on a makeshift pillow of rags.

DR. HOLLORAN (CONT'D)

Don't say anything to anyone. I'll
talk to Mrs. Baker. And wash your
hands!

JOE creeps up the stairs, aware that he is venturing into a
forbidden part of the hotel. He knocks on HELEN'S door. After
a beat, the door opens and HELEN slips into the hallway,
closing the door after her.

HELEN

(Whispering)

What are you doing here!

JOE

Come downstairs...

HELEN

You can't be here!

JOE

Hey now...what's up with you?
Everything is working out grand.
You got your first guinea off him.
We're going to be shot of this
place before you know it...
I waited for you last night.

HELEN

I'm just tired.

JOE

(Louder, trying to stroke HELEN'S hair)
It's lonely down there with just
myself and that bloody boiler.

(CONTINUED)

HELEN

Sh-h-h-h!

ALBERT cracks open her door. JOE sinks to his knees in front of her, inviting her into his arms.

JOE

Here I am...

He tries to pull her down to him.

HELEN

No! Stop, Joe.

After a bit of a tussle, JOE leaps up, pushing her away.

JOE

Suit your precious self, then!

JOE exits down the stairs. After a moment of unhappy indecision, HELEN slowly follows after him. ALBERT shuts her door.

99 OMITTED (COMPLETELY MERGED WITH SCENE 98)

99

100 INT. MORRISON'S, ALBERT'S ROOM. EARLY MORNING.

100

ALBERT, restlessly turns in bed. Suddenly, she sits up, gasping. She looks around her wildly. Her face is flushed, she is sweating heavily. She rushes to her washbasin, leans over it, vomits. With trembling hands she washes her face, then begins to dress.

101 INT. MORRISON'S, SECOND FLOOR CORRIDOR. DAY.

101

Scenes of panic and disorder, as word of the fever spreads through the hotel. All happens in strangely hushed atmosphere, as people scurry, whisper, hurrying each other along:

MRS. MOORE exits the Moore's suite, followed by NANNY with LITTLE GEORGE and MILLY in hand and MR. MOORE, carrying two heavy bags. They hurry toward the stairs. ALBERT, flushed, with feverish eyes, attempts to rise from his stool and take the bags as MR. MOORE hurries past.

MR. MOORE

Never mind!

Seeing ALBERT, MRS. MOORE hesitates. At the landing, MR. MOORE turns back.

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED 101

MR. MOORE (CONT'D)
Amelia, for God's sake . . .!

MRS. MOORE hurries to follow. NANNY pulls the children after her. MILLY and LITTLE GEORGE look back at ALBERT, knowing something is terribly wrong.

CUT TO:

102 OMITTED 102

103 INT. MORRISON'S, MAID'S ROOM. NIGHT. 103

JOE and HELEN hover at the door of a tiny, squalid attic room, where, lit by the light of a guttering candle, DR. HOLLORAN attends the inert YOUNGER KITCHEN MAID. MARY stands at the foot of the cot. DR. HOLLORAN gently pulls up the coverlet and shrouds the MAID. MARY kneels down, making the sign of the cross. Off DR. HOLLORAN'S look, JOE and HELEN are hit with the gravity of the situation.

104 INT. HOTEL, ENTRANCE HALL. DAY. 104

M. AND MME. PIGOT and MRS. CAVENDISH. JOE and SEAN carry their luggage. A wan MRS. BAKER comes from behind the front desk, proffering a bill.

MRS. BAKER
Dear Monsieur Pigot, I insist that
you not leave before...

M. PIGOT crosses into the entrance hall, on the run, pushing his wife before him.

M. PIGOT
Yes, yes...so sorry...please to
send the bill on.
(To his wife)
Allez! Vite! Vite!

MRS. BAKER
Monsieur, please! I must insist!

The PIGOTS hurry out, followed by JOE.

MRS. CAVENDISH
(hobbling across the lobby, glowering
at MRS. BAKER)
But where is my man? Where is my
Patrick! Why isn't he here?
Everything is impossible.
(To SEAN as she exits)
Who are you?

(CONTINUED)

104 CONTINUED 104

As she leaves, MRS. BAKER sinks into a chair, distraught.

105 EXT. MORRISON'S, FRONT STOOP. DAY. 105

MRS. BAKER is pleading with a HEALTH OFFICIAL. When she realizes he will not be moved, she closes the door with finality. A CONSTABLE hangs a sign on the door: CLOSED: TYPHOID FEVER.

CUT TO:

106 INT. MORRISON'S, DINING ROOM. DAY. 106

All is silent. A terrified and tipsy SEAN, closes the curtains in the dining room, plunging the room into an eerie half-light.

107 INT. MORRISON'S, SECOND FLOOR CORRIDOR. NIGHT. 107

ALBERT, delirious with fever, managing to carry a tray, wanders slowly along the empty, silent corridor. She drifts to a stop, stands unsteadily, then abruptly falls to her knees. Smashing china. She struggles to clean it up.

108 OMITTED 108

109 OMITTED 109

110 INT. MORRISON'S, ALBERT'S ROOM. NIGHT. 110

ALBERT, wrapped in a wet sheet, lies in her bed, shaking with fever.

111 INT. MORRISON'S, MRS. BAKER'S ROOM. DUSK. 111

MRS. BAKER lies in her bed, fevered and sweating, tended by HELEN, who is bathing her forehead with a wet cloth. JOE enters with a basin of chipped ice and replaces the one by the bedside. MRS. BAKER seizes HELEN's hand.

MRS. BAKER

Oh..oh...don't leave me...don't go...I can't be alone..

HELEN

(stroking her hand)

There now; there now. Sh-h-h-h.

MRS. BAKER moans, her mind wandering.

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED

111

MRS. BAKER

I must be careful. Very, very
careful. It's a long way down and I
could fall. I don't want to
fall...I'm so frightened.

JOE has moved to the window and stands looking out, his
thoughts far, far away. HELEN notices.

112 INT. MORRISON'S, SERVANTS' FLOOR. DAY.

112

MARY is setting a tray with a bowl of soup and a jug of water
in front of ALBERT's door, removing a second tray, with an
empty bowl and jug, and a chamber-pot covered with a cloth.

MARY

Mr. Nobbs?

She pauses, moves away. At the top of the stairs she pauses,
hearing the bolt of ALBERT's door being drawn. ALBERT's hand
comes out through the partly opened door and takes in the
tray. Suddenly, from the floor below, we hear POLLY'S
terrible, keening wail, ending in sobs.

POLLY (V.O.)

Oh God No-o-o-o! Patrick! No-o-o!

MARY runs down the stairs.

113 INT. MORRISON'S, KITCHEN. NIGHT.

113

HELEN and JOE are exhausted after another day of tending the
sick. JOE sits at the table, elbows on knees, staring at the
floor, a lit cigarette dangling between his fingers. A glass
of whiskey from DOCTOR HOLLORAN's bottle sits on the table
next to him. HELEN, is making tea. An ambiguous silence hangs
between them. HELEN finally speaks.

HELEN

Joe....

JOE

Yeah...

HELEN

There's something...I have to tell you...

JOE

(a tired sigh)

What's that, then?

Not looking up, JOE takes a long draw on his cigarette and
slowly blows the smoke out. HELEN doesn't know how to begin.

(CONTINUED)

(CONTINUED)

As they talk, MARY gently adjusts a shawl around MRS. BAKER'S shoulders, refills DR. HOLLORAN'S cup and stands apart. There are tears streaming down MRS. BAKER's face as she lifts a delicate cup to her lips.

MRS. BAKER
I'm ruined...ruined!

DR. HOLLORAN
You do have a great gift for
exaggeration, Duchess.

MRS. BAKER
No, no it's true. I'm mortgaged up
to my ears and I have an office
full of unpaid bills...If the
quests are afraid to return....

She puts down her cup and weeps, dabbing at her eyes with her handkerchief.

DR. HOLLORAN
Come on, Madge, you'll rise again.

MRS. BAKER
(grabbing his hand)
I would surely have perished
without you!

DR. HOLLORAN
Oh, but it wasn't just me. You had
some unexpected angels looking
after you.

Who? MRS. BAKER

DR. HOLLORAN
Helen Dawes and Joe Mackins. It was
those two who kept things going.

OFF MRS. BAKER, incredulous.

116

A deeply subdued POLLY, dressed in black, is at the stove. EMMY is helping to prepare dinner. ALBERT enters.

EMMY
Sweet Jesus and all the saints in
heaven...Mr. Nobbs!

EMMY wipes off her hands and, crossing to ALBERT, takes his arm.

(CONTINUED)

EMMY (CONT'D)
Will you eat something?

ALBERT
Thank you, no.

EMMY
(pulling out a chair, making him sit)
Come on; look at you, there's not a
pick on you.

ALBERT
Is there some porridge?

EMMY
(who seems to have taken charge)
Yes, of course.

MARY enters, halts and stares at ALBERT as if seeing a ghost.

MARY
(genuinely overjoyed)
Mr. Nobbs! Thank the Lord. You're
well again.

ALBERT
Yes...Is Helen safe?

MARY
The fever never touched her.

EMMY
Oh yes, she's all right; blooming
you could say.

ALBERT looks relieved.

ALBERT
And, the others?

The maids look toward POLLY. POLLY shakes her head, not
looking at ALBERT.

POLLY
(starting to weep)
My Patrick...

MARY
And hundreds of others...

ALBERT's head jerks up.

117 EXT. HOWTH/HUBERT'S HOUSE, FRONT DOOR. DAY. 117

ALBERT approaches HUBERT's house, full of dread. The shop window is draped with black crepe and a funeral wreath hangs on the front door. ALBERT knocks. No response. She knocks again. Silence. ALBERT hesitates, then turns away, stricken. Behind her the door opens, and a devastated HUBERT appears in the doorway. ALBERT turns back. They gaze at each other for a moment, then ALBERT notices the black silk mourning band circling HUBERT's sleeve.

118 INT. MORRISON'S HOTEL. MRS. BAKER'S OFFICE. DAY. 118

MRS. BAKER, pale and fragile, is at her now even more cluttered desk. There is a knock at her door.

MRS. BAKER

Come in.

JOE enters. He is freshly shaven and has cleaned himself up as best he can, still conscious of his rough and stained hands. Not knowing why MRS. BAKER would ask to see him and expecting the worst, he gives a nervous bow.

JOE

Mrs. Baker, Ma'am. You wanted to see me?

MRS. BAKER

Yes, Mr. Mackins...Step into the room so I can see you when I speak to you!

Deeply apprehensive, JOE takes a few steps further in. There is an awkward silence as MRS. BAKER looks him up and down, her face inscrutable.

MRS. BAKER (CONT'D)

Dr. Holloran has told me that I am in your debt. I want to thank you for it.

JOE

'Twas nothing, Ma'am.

MRS. BAKER

Oh, it was indeed, I know that. Our kind doctor assures me that you'd be a good risk. And since our dear Patrick is no longer with us...

(Her voice catches)

I'm offering you a front-of-house-job. There will be a variety of tasks you can do for me. It won't be the same from day to day.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MRS. BAKER (CONT'D)

Mainly, I'll need help in the office, for the reason I can't handle all the paperwork anymore. I trust that you can read and write and do sums.

CU. JOE: A look of complete devastation on his face which slowly hardens into a dull anger as MRS. BAKER babbles on.

MRS. BAKER (CONT'D)

I'll need you to make sure all orders are filled and everything is paid for in a timely fashion, especially during the holidays and high season. As to pay and conditions, at the outset, you'll start at six in the morning to just before suppertime although I'll need to depend on your being available in any emergency and any time I need you...

ALBERT, in shirt sleeves, is at the sink briskly washing up. The kitchen is a mess; unwashed dishes, stale food, wilted flowers, etc. A whiskey bottle stands on the table, half empty. HUBERT is nursing a drink. She is dishevelled; her eyes red.

HUBERT

What am I going to do?

ALBERT stops work. She dries her hands and sits down at the table. She desperately wants to comfort HUBERT.

ALBERT

Mr. Page...the two of us could always set up together...

(She waits, but HUBERT is lost in her whiskey-fed grief.)

I mean...perhaps...we could pool our money and buy a bigger shop. We could run it together. Just like you and Cathleen did. You could keep at the house painting, and I could run the shop.

HUBERT, looks at ALBERT trying to comprehend what she is proposing.

HUBERT

What are you saying...?

(CONTINUED)

ALBERT

Or perhaps I could live
here...like...like Cathleen.
Neither of us would be alone.

There is a pause as HUBERT silently digests ALBERT'S proposal, tears coursing down her face. She looks up at ALBERT and realizes, even in her grief, that ALBERT is not callous, but merely ignorant about anything having to do with love.

HUBERT

(Gently)

She was my world, my life...You
can't just...We loved each other.

ALBERT digests HUBERT'S words, frozen with the realization that she can't just slip into HUBERT'S life.

HUBERT (CONT'D)

Come with me.

120

INT. HUBERT'S HOUSE, BEDROOM. DAY.

120

ALBERT takes in the room which is very much lived in, with men's clothes scattered about, pictures of saints on the walls, and lots of little, cheap ornaments. There is a big double bed covered with a colourful quilt. HUBERT is pulling out dresses from the wardrobe and carefully laying them on the bed.

HUBERT

She made them all herself.

ALBERT

They are very beautiful.
(Softly)
I can't remember what it's like.

OFF HUBERT'S look.

121

EXT. HUBERT'S HOUSE. HOWTH. DAY

121

The front door opens. HUBERT and ALBERT, in their dresses and now bonnets, step out into the street. ALBERT is terrified. It has been thirty-one years. They look at each other, then, resolute and excited, they proceed down the street. ALBERT anything but graceful, struggles to negotiate her skirts. A nicely dressed gentleman approaches and tips his hat as he passes. Further on, three servant girls step deferentially into the street to give the two ladies room to pass.

122 EXT. HOWTH, BEACH. DAY.

122

ALBERT and HUBERT make their way along a pleasant beach. There are children and mothers, lovers and dogs. ALBERT is ecstatic. She breathes in the scenery, the gentle lapping sea, the sun, the distance, longing for freedom. With a look to HUBERT, she hitches up her skirts and starts running down the beach, her shawl flowing behind her like a banner. HUBERT watches, inscrutable, then briskly follows. We see ALBERT trip and fall, her bonnet torn away by the wind. We see HUBERT retrieve the bonnet and offer ALBERT a hand up. As ALBERT shakes the sand out of her skirts, we see HUBERT hand her the bonnet as together they walk to the edge of the sea. ALBERT takes it all in. She looks out across the great expanse of water. She looks at the various people on the beach. She finally looks at HUBERT and she knows. She knows that this is not who she is. She knows that it wouldn't work. She knows that it is too late, that it's not about what she may wear, but about what she has become.

123 INT. HUBERT'S HOUSE, BEDROOM. AFTERNOON.

123

HUBERT and ALBERT have changed back into their male garb. A subdued ALBERT sits in a chair, lost. HUBERT pulls up another chair and faces her. The afternoon sun streams in the window.

HUBERT

Albert, you don't have to be anything but what you are. Look how you have survived all these years. You have worked hard and you have saved your money. And if you want someone to start a new life with, go and find that person. You can do it. You are kind and strong and, believe me, it would be their lucky day.

OFF ALBERT.

124 EXT./INT. MORRISON'S, YARD/KITCHEN. NIGHT.

124

Back from the outing to Howth, looking pre-occupied, ALBERT crosses the yard and is about to enter the kitchen when she hears shouting coming from JOE'S room. HELEN and JOE are fighting. ALBERT takes a step toward JOE'S door, but stops as MARY appears at the scullery door. MARY shakes her head. ALBERT hesitates, torn between heeding the warning and following the sound.

HELEN

I didn't say that, Joe!

(CONTINUED)

JOE

Well I'm not deaf, am I! I know what you said. You couldn't help yourself!

HELEN

But I wouldn't say that! Why would I ever say that?

JOE

Because it's what you think.

HELEN

It is NOT what I think!

JOE

I can see it on your face. You don't have to say anything. I can see what you think.

HELEN

That's not fair, Joe. It's not fair and you know it!

JOE

So what *is* fair? Tell me that!

HELEN

I can't talk to you when you're like this.

JOE

No! No! Just tell me what you think is fair?

HELEN

Why should I! You don't care what I think.

JOE

No, tell me! I'm all fucking ears.

HELEN

Stop it, Joe!

We hear dull thuds as JOE throws things to make his point.

JOE

Nothing!..Nothing!..Nothing in this whole fucking...bloody... place! That's what!

ALBERT hesitates another moment, then turns aside, blank-faced, walks past MARY, and goes into the kitchen.

POLLY at the stove, cooking. ALBERT enters.

(CONTINUED)

POLLY
Are you all right there, Mr. Nobbs?

ALBERT does not reply, but simply stands, making up her mind.

POLLY (CONT'D)
Are you all right, Mr. N?

No answer. POLLY decides to speak. She approaches ALBERT, addressing her in an intense whisper.

She's not worth it, you know.

MARY enters from the scullery with a bowl of fruit and makes up small plates of it for the guest rooms during the following.

POLLY (CONT'D)
Tell me to mind my own business if
you like, but it's the truth. If it
was any other girl - Emmy, even -
but Helen Dawes!...She's full of
that Joe Mackins. And now she's got
herself in the family way, but he's
a waster, if ever I met one. He's
telling her they're going to go to
America.

POLLY approaches ALBERT and speaks directly into her face.

POLLY (CONT'D)
Pshaw! He may be going, but he
won't be taking her with him. With
her expecting! You mark my words!
He'll *never* take her. Not now! Not
ever!

ALBERT stands, looking intently at POLLY, who shakes her head in disgust and turns back to the stove. ALBERT exits in a hurry. MARY and POLLY share a look.

126 INT. MORRISON'S, ALBERT'S ROOM. DAY. 126

Dressed in a suit, ALBERT stands before her mirror, adjusting her tie with difficulty, her hands shaking. Then she combs her hair, critically examining herself. She is determined.

127 EXT. IVEAGH GARDENS. LATE AFTERNOON. 127

ALBERT and HELEN sit on a secluded bench. HELEN isn't feeling well. Both of them deep in their own thoughts. ALBERT struggles with how to begin.

(CONTINUED)

ALBERT

It's a pity this place isn't nearer Morrison's.

HELEN

You think we'd be let out to walk in it if it was? It'd be Lord and Lady Snot swanking it up and down the grass and you and me.

There is an awkward pause.

ALBERT

You and Joe have been down to the sea, haven't you?

HELEN

And what if we have?

ALBERT

Well, it's just that I don't think that it's right for a girl to be keeping company with two fellows. And I thought...

HELEN

Now, what did you think?

ALBERT

That you didn't care for *me* enough.

HELEN

- enough for what! We've been walking out, so-called, for awhile now; it's not natural to be just talking, never wanting to put your arm around a girl's waist.

ALBERT

But that's for when we're married...

HELEN

Married!

ALBERT

I've put a deposit on the shop. A hundred pounds. The agent said he has another offer and that we have until Monday to decide. After that we'll lose the deposit.

HELEN

"We"?

(CONTINUED)

ALBERT

We'll make a great success of our shop. People will be coming to see us, and having tea with us in the parlor...And our wedding will be a great...wonder.

HELEN

A great wonder? Oh, it would be that, all right! Sometimes I think you're soft in the head, do you know that? And what kind of a man would ask a girl to marry him without ever having so much as kissed her? You must not love me if you don't want to kiss me.

ALBERT

But I *do* love you!

ALBERT leans over and kisses HELEN gently, on her cheek.

HELEN

You call that kissing!

Her eyes flashing, HELEN leans forward and kisses ALBERT, fiercely and passionately.

HELEN (CONT'D)

That's how people in love kiss!

ALBERT is stunned.

HELEN (CONT'D)

That's the way I want to be kissed.
That's the way Joe Mackins kisses me!

(She stands)

I'm going home.

She marches off along the path, and ALBERT hurries after her.

ALBERT

Helen! Helen, wait...

HELEN

You're a fool of a man!

ALBERT

But if you think me a fool of a man, why did you walk out with me?

HELEN

I don't know! I wish I hadn't!
Anyway, you won't have to worry about it any more

(CONTINUED)

ALBERT

What do you mean! Please Helen,
wait! What about the stockings and
shoes I ordered for you. Tell me
what to do with them!

HELEN

I'll take the stockings.

ALBERT

And the shoes?

HELEN

And the shoes.

ALBERT

And you'll wear them when you walk
out with Joe Mackins?

HELEN stops and whirls around, confronting ALBERT.

HELEN

Yes!

ALBERT

He won't take you to America! He'll
leave you here. You and the baby.

HELEN looks at ALBERT as if she had just punched her in the
stomach.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

He will. He'll leave you.

HELEN

(Erupting with rage and despair, starts
pummeling ALBERT)

No! No! He will not! He will not!

ALBERT stoically takes HELEN'S blows

ALBERT

I will take care of you both.

HELEN

He will *not* leave me.

ALBERT

You would be safe with me.

HELEN

STOP IT! Why do you say that!

It has started to snow. HELEN, spent, stands sobbing. ALBERT,
oh so tentatively, puts her arms around the distraught girl.

(CONTINUED)

127

CONTINUED

127

HELEN lets herself be embraced and, with a shaking sigh,
rests her head against ALBERT'S chest.

HELEN (CONT'D)
It's...snowing...

ALBERT
Don't worry about the hat, I'll buy
you another one.

The moment hangs in the balance.

HELEN
(Pushing ALBERT away)
No! Goodbye.

HELEN runs away down the walk. ALBERT, devastated, watches her future disappear into the now heavily falling snow.

128

INT. MORRISON'S, ALBERT'S ROOM. DUSK.

128

ALBERT sits down on the side of her bed, still in her damp frock coat. Grief overwhelms her.

129

OMITTED

129

130

INT. MORRISON'S, MAIN STAIRCASE. DAY.

130

The long reception hall is filled with murmuring voices and occasional laughter. From the landing of the main staircase, we see MRS. BAKER welcoming some new guests.

SEAN climbs up the stairs past us, carrying luggage, followed by MRS. CAVENDISH, with MARY in attendance. Seeing EMMY, who is dusting at the top of the stairs, MRS. CAVENDISH brandishes her cane.

MRS. CAVENDISH
Out of my way! Out of my way!

EMMY curtsies and hurries down the hall, rolling her eyes. SEAN stops at the first, guest room door and struggles to open it. MRS. CAVENDISH beats impatiently on a piece of luggage as the three disappear into her room.

MRS. CAVENDISH (CONT'D)
Hop to it, you lazy fellow! Hop to it!

We pull back and up to the second floor, moving along the corridor until we come to ALBERT's station. There ALBERT sits like a statue. Head bent. The bell to No. 11 rings. She does not move.

131 INT. MORRISON'S, KITCHEN. DAY. 131

In silence, MARY, SEAN and EMMY are setting up for the evening meal. ALBERT enters from the scullery with some bottles of wine and exits towards the laundry room. MARY, EMMY and SEAN follow her with their eyes. HELEN enters and all turn and look at her with disgust. HELEN avoids their gaze.

132 OMITTED 132

133 INT. MORRISON'S, COFFEE ROOM. DAY. 133

Tea is being served with ALBERT in attendance. MRS. BAKER and DR. HOLLORAN are having whiskies at one of the little tables at the back of the room. Two guests sit at the second table and MRS. CAVENDISH at the third. HELEN, miserable, is serving MRS. CAVENDISH who peruses a plate of dainty sandwiches and sweets, one of which has blue icing.

MRS. CAVENDISH

This isn't what I wanted at all...What's that? I don't eat anything blue. Please take it away!

HELEN proceeds to remove the offending foodstuff.

MRS. BAKER

(In a terrible whisper full of
righteous fury, looking at HELEN)
Am I the last to know?
(DR. HOLLORAN shrugs)
I'll throw her out, the brazen hussy. I'll
throw them both out! By God I will!

DR. HOLLORAN

My dear Duchess, you'll do no such thing.

ALBERT has heard it all. Alarmed, her gaze shifts to HELEN, who, oblivious, exits the room.

134 INT. MORRISON'S. SERVANTS' FLOOR. LATER THAT NIGHT. 134

A distraught JOE comes up the stairs. He approaches Helen's door, turns away then turns back and knocks.

135 INT. MORRISON'S, ALBERT'S ROOM. NIGHT. 135

We are behind ALBERT as she silently opens her door. Over her shoulder, we see JOE who knocks louder a second time. We see HELEN open the door. As she looks back into the room, JOE slips past her.

(CONTINUED)

135 CONTINUED

135

After a beat, MARY comes out into the hallway and closes the door. After a moment's hesitation, she goes to the landing and waits, apprehensive.

OFF ALBERT'S face.

136 INT. MORRISON'S. HELEN'S ROOM. NIGHT.

136

JOE and HELEN face each other. She has been crying.

JOE

I can't do it, Helen. I hate myself
for it, but I can't. I can't do it!

It's the same old story and you *know* it...How
many times have you seen it happen? It
shouldn't have happened!

HELEN

But it *did* happen!

JOE

Too soon!...it'll change us. It will change *me*
and I'm *not* going to be that person, Helen!
I'm not going to become my fuckin' Da! I can't
even fucking read!

HELEN

Joe...

JOE

What have you done to us? You've
ruined everything!

HELEN

Just listen to what you're saying!
None of this would have happened
without you! You came after me,
Joe, you caught me, you wouldn't
let me go and now you say it's all
my fault!

JOE

I didn't mean that Helen.

HELEN

What didn't you mean? Out of
everything you've told me,
everything you've promised me, what
didn't you mean!

137 INT. MORRISON'S, ALBERT'S ROOM. NIGHT. 137

ALBERT, in her shirtsleeves, stands listening to the fight next door. She comes to a decision, put on her suit jacket and exits down the hall.

138 INT. MORRISON'S, HELEN'S ROOM. NIGHT. 138

There is a knock on the door. HELEN and JOE freeze. HELEN breaks away. Another knock. HELEN opens the door. There stands ALBERT.

 ALBERT
Helen...

 HELEN
There's nothing more to say. Please
go away!

 ALBERT
Wait!

HELEN looks at ALBERT, shaking her head.

 ALBERT (CONT'D)
Marry me. I'll take care of the two
of you. You and the child.

HELEN, alarmed, wide-eyed.

 ALBERT (CONT'D)
He'll never take you to America. He
doesn't want...

Suddenly, JOE appears behind HELEN. He wrenches the door out of her hands. Pushing ALBERT into the hallway, he speaks with terrifying intensity. MARY makes her way up from the landing.

 JOE
What do you know, you miserable,
little prick!

 HELEN
Joe! Stop!

 JOE
 (spitting words into ALBERT's face.)
Well? You were all talk just now.
Say to me what you were saying to
her!

ALBERT stares at JOE, mute. SEAN opens his door and looks out, trying to focus.

(CONTINUED)

JOE (CONT'D)
(Inches from ALBERT's face.)
What have you been telling her!

ALBERT
(mumbling, terrified)
I told her... that you won't...that
you won't... be taking her to
America.

JOE starts to feint jabs at ALBERT. Expecting a blow, ALBERT shields her face with her arms. EMMY comes running up the stairs and joins MARY. HELEN tries to intervene between JOE and ALBERT. SEAN steps out of his room.

JOE
(jabbing deftly.)
That is!...none!...of your God-
damned!...Business!

HELEN
Stop it! Stop it!

JOE tries to reach around HELEN to get at ALBERT. The three of them struggle in the doorway, witnessed by the others who hover, not knowing how to intercede. JOE frees his arms and tries to pull HELEN back into her room. Suddenly, something snaps in ALBERT. She pulls herself up and throws herself at JOE, bellowing in a preternatural voice that comes from the depths of her soul.

ALBERT
DON'T YOU HURT HER!

JOE, off-balance, whirls around, trying to get ALBERT off his back. ALBERT stumbles backwards for several steps and then loses her balance. Falling, she hits her head against the wall and crumples to the floor.

HELEN
(leaping at JOE)
STOP IT!

In an ugly, messy tussle, JOE tries to grab HELEN's arms to subdue her. MARY, SEAN and EMMY move to intervene. HELEN launches herself at JOE yet again, fists flailing. JOE fends her off.

MARY and EMMY try to subdue HELEN who is slapping and pummeling JOE. SEAN dances around in alarm on the sidelines.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Why! Why! Why! Why! Why do you do
that! Why!

(CONTINUED)

MARY

Helen! Helen, stop--!

SEAN

Oh, no! Oh, no! Oh, no!

EMMY

Leave her alone, Joe Mackins--!

JOE

(to MARY and EMMY)

GET AWAY FROM ME!

ALBERT manages to crawl down the hall and sit against the wall, stunned and disorientated. She then struggles to her feet. Forgotten in the fray, she slowly and unsteadily moves toward her room. If anyone were to notice, they would see a trickle of blood coming from her ear, as well as some blood on the side of her head. Upon reaching her room, ALBERT fumbles with her keys and unlocks the door. She disappears into her room.

The fight continues down the hall.

SEAN

For God's sake, Joe, you'll have the Peelers in!

EMMY

Look out!

MARY

Stop it, Joe! Get a hold of yourself!

JOE

Don't you put your hands on me!

MARY

Both of you!

SEAN

(Bleary)

Ah, Jesus, now Joe, take it easy--

MARY

Get a hold of yourselves!

JOE

(To HELEN)

It's you! You did it. You did this to us!

(CONTINUED)

138

CONTINUED

138

HELEN

You're a boozier, Joe Mackins,
that's all you are. You hate your
father, but you're just like him! A
boozier and a dirty bully!

JOE

(Frantic, heartbroken)

Don't say that! I'm not like that
bastard--don't say it!

A terrified, totally ineffectual SEAN tries to restrain JOE.

JOE (CONT'D)

GET YOUR PAWS OFF ME, YOU FUCKING
NANCY-BOY, OR I'LL BREAK YOUR
FUCKING FACE!

139

INT. MORRISON'S, ALBERT'S ROOM. NIGHT.

139

ALBERT shuts the door behind her and, out of habit, tries to
lock it, but the keys fall to the floor. Outside, the
shouting continues. ALBERT leaves the keys where they fell
and, fully clothed, lies down on her bed.

140

INT. MORRISON'S, SERVANTS' FLOOR. NIGHT.

140

EMMY and company have succeeded in pulling JOE and HELEN
apart. MARY and EMMY hold HELEN, while SEAN attempts to
shield her from a pacing, distraught JOE. The two combatants
glare at each other, gasping for air. Angry tears course down
HELEN's face.

HELEN

I don't want you any more. I don't
want you.

JOE stands panting, shaking his head. He looks up at HELEN,
devastated, unable to speak. Then he slowly straightens and
dusts off his clothes. He walks to the stairs, pauses on the
top step, and turns. Looking at HELEN, he smiles, is about to
say something, but thinks better of it. He shakes his head,
ruefully shrugs and is gone. HELEN looks after JOE, realising
that she has lost him, she attempts to run after him, but is
stopped by the two other maids.

HELEN (CONT'D)

JOE....!

She sobs on MARY'S shoulder. EMMY and MARY take her into her
room and close the door. SEAN is left...devastated.

141 INT. MORRISON'S, ALBERT'S ROOM. NIGHT. 141

ALBERT is still lying on top of her bed, staring at the ceiling.

142 INT. MORRISON'S, SERVANTS' FLOOR. NIGHT. LATER 142

All is quiet. The door to HELEN'S room opens and HELEN steps out. She is cried out and fragile. She moves to ALBERT'S door.

 HELEN
 (Softly)
 Mr. Nobbs? Mr. Nobbs?

When there is no answer, HELEN puts her ear to the door, then leans against it, arms spread, as if she is embracing ALBERT. After a beat, she pulls away and goes back to her room.

143 INT. FANTASY HOUSE (HUBERT'S HOUSE), PARLOUR. DAY. 143

The room is empty. We see the fireplace flanked by the two chairs; CATHLEEN'S knitting basket by one. An air of calm expectancy, of anticipation. A soft breeze moves the curtains. Bright, surreal sunlight pours through the window. Slow CU. of the clock ticking on the mantelpiece.

CUT TO:

144 INT. MORRISON'S, ALBERT'S ROOM. NIGHT. 144

CU. ALBERT'S face. Her eyes are closed. She is smiling.

145 INT. MORRISON'S, PANTRY. EARLY MORNING. 145

HELEN, some bruises evident, is preparing the breakfast trays. POLLY can be heard in the kitchen, yelling out orders. EMMY brings in hot dishes from the kitchen. The bell for No. 9 rings. HELEN looks up and sees what room has just rung. She realizes it is one of ALBERT'S rooms. Worried, she exits the pantry.

146 INT. MORRISON'S, SERVANTS' FLOOR. EARLY MORNING. 146

HELEN is at ALBERT'S door. She raises her hand and knocks.

 HELEN
 Mr. Nobbs...

She turns the knob, startled when the door opens.

147 INT. MORRISON'S, ALBERT'S ROOM. DAY. 147

HELEN enters. ALBERT lies still.

 HELEN
 Mr. Nobbs...Albert?

She approaches the bed. Something about ALBERT'S stillness terrifies her. She runs out.

148 INT. MORRISON'S HOTEL. DR. HOLLORAN'S ROOM. EARLY MORNING. 148

DR. HOLLORAN and MARY are in bed. There is a pounding on the door. DR. HOLLORAN'S head comes up from between MARY'S thighs.

 HELEN (O.C.)
 Dr. Holloran! Please come! It's Mr.
 Nobbs! Dr. Holloran!

149 INT. MORRISON'S, SERVANTS' FLOOR. EARLY MORNING. 149

A frightened HELEN comes up the stairs followed by a puffing and disheveled DR. HOLLORAN. When they get to ALBERT'S door, HOLLORAN turns to HELEN.

 DR. HOLLORAN
 Mind, out of the way.

He enters the room and shuts the door, leaving HELEN rigid with foreboding.

150 INT. MORRISON'S, ALBERT'S ROOM. EARLY MORNING. 150

DR. HOLLORAN looks over to the bed where ALBERT lies, motionless. He notices ALBERT'S keys, picks them up and puts them on the bedside table, then bends down and puts his ear to ALBERT'S heart. A strange look comes over him. He looks closely at ALBERT'S face and proceeds to unbutton her vest and shirt. He sees the corset and the bandages which he carefully unloosens. Unwrapping the bandages as far as he needs to, he straightens up, deeply disturbed. He turns and catches his reflection in the mirror. He stares at himself and at ALBERT, lying in the background.

 DR. HOLLORAN
 (softly, with ineffable sadness)
 Oh, Albert Nobbs...

151 INT. ALBERT'S ROOM. DAY.

151

The body has been removed. MRS. BAKER and DR. HALLORAN stand by ALBERT'S bed, looking at the paltry collection of her personal belongings which have been carefully laid out on the blanket: her bible, pocket-watch, key ring, a white napkin, a brush and comb, a clothes brush, a jar of pomade, a small pair of delicate, filigreed sewing-scissors with a faded and frayed satin ribbon attached, her small, worn, leather-bound ledger, her bowler hat, and a small nondescript box, her cuff links and studs in a tiny, chipped porcelain bowl.

DR. HALLORAN is deeply affected by what he is seeing. He picks up the hat and carefully brushes it off. He then gently places it on the bedside table.

DR. HOLLORAN

Dear Jesus, I don't know what makes
people lead such miserable lives.

With uncharacteristic abruptness, he turns on his heels and leaves.

MRS. BAKER stays, carefully assessing the pathetic items before her. She picks up the box and opens it. In it, amongst the odd button, is a pencil sharpener, a few pencils and a worn eraser. Finding nothing of interest, MRS. BAKER puts down the box and picks up the ledger. Opening it, she sees all of ALBERT'S calculations--all nineteen years at Morrison's and more. She starts to leaf through the pages, slowly at first and then with mounting excitement. When she finally reads the total, her eyes widen in disbelief. With a yelp of delight she slaps the book shut and clutches it to her breast. Her mind is racing. She runs to shut the door then whirls around. The money must be somewhere in the room! Quivering with anticipation, her eyes darting about, she furtively starts to search.

151A EXT. MORRISON'S. DAY. MONTHS LATER.

151A

Scaffolding covers the facade of the hotel. Work is progressing on various levels.

152 INT. MORRISON'S, RECEPTION. DAY.

152

CU. HUBERT PAGE'S face.

HUBERT PAGE

Albert Nobbs, a woman!

HUBERT is standing in the lobby, talking to MRS. BAKER who is resplendent in a new dress.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. BAKER

Yes! Yes! Did you not hear? It was in all the papers. Well, the death was bad enough, but then...! All those years, and no one suspecting! Even you, who slept here, in the same bed with him...her.

HUBERT tries to maintain her composure, stares at MRS. BAKER.

MRS. BAKER (CONT'D)

And Dr. Holloran left us. Just packed his bags and was gone. Took off to England with, what's her name, Mary! Said he was tired of secrets. Can you imagine! And that good for nothing Joe Mackins went off to America, and left me with an unwed, hussy of a maid, with a brat on the way! Of course, I have a heart, Mr. Page. I couldn't throw her out into the street and call myself a Christian, now could I. And she's grateful for the work, don't you know, and I need all the hands I can get, what with the refurbishing of the hotel and all.

She finally breaks off, due to lack of breath.

VISCOUNT and VISCOUNTESS YARRELL come down the stairs, followed by a new, beautiful couple. MRS. BAKER is all smiles.

MRS. BAKER (CONT'D)

(with a careful curtsey)

Good morning, My Lordship. My Ladyship. I hope you are finding your suites satisfactory.

VISCOUNT YARRELL

Splendid, my dear Mrs. B. However, we seem to have carelessly misplaced the key to the connecting door. Could you have your man open it for us?

MRS. BAKER

I'll have it done at once!

VISCOUNT YARRELL

Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

The VISCOUNT makes his way into the entrance hall, carelessly throwing his arm over the new BEAUTIFUL LADY'S shoulder, while the VISCOUNTESS follows, linking arms with the BEAUTIFUL MAN

MRS. BAKER

(turning back to HUBERT)

Lovely people, lovely.

HUBERT

(Trying to keep her composure)

So you want the whole place painted?

MRS. BAKER

Yes, the whole place, top to bottom. You'll have to hire in help, I should think.

HUBERT

Yes. A big job. It won't be cheap, Ma'am.

MRS. BAKER

Oh, don't you worry about that. I came into a bit of money, you see. A bit of good fortune.

(She pulls herself up)

Now to work, Mr. Page! I've put you up in Albert's room...

(With a mordant wink)

For old time's sake.

She sweeps into her office. HUBERT is left standing alone, struggling with her thoughts. Feeling a presence, she looks down and there is LITTLE GEORGE MOORE, with a ball under his arm, staring up at her. After a beat, LITTLE GEORGE'S eyes widen; he takes a step back and then runs out. After a moment, HUBERT moves off towards the back stairs.

HUBERT opens the door and, after a moment of hesitation, slowly steps into the room, unwittingly treading on the creaking, floorboard under which ALBERT had hidden all her money. Putting down her bags, she looks around the wretched room; the mattress is rolled up at the head of the bed; bed linens have been placed on one of the nightstands; the floor is bare. The table and chair by the door have been removed. The long curtains and valance are gone from the window. The tatty lace curtain remains, through which a bright, slightly other-worldly shaft of morning light cuts through the gloom. Suddenly overwhelmed by the morning's revelations, HUBERT sits down heavily on the bare, metal springs, her hands on her knees, her head bowed. A breeze stirs the worn curtains, causing something to be gently blown from under the bed. It comes to rest at HUBERT'S feet.

(CONTINUED)

153

CONTINUED

153

She leans down and picks it up. It is the photograph that ALBERT kept in her Bible. HUBERT examines the face of the serene, mysterious young woman. Turning the picture over, she reads the word written in a childish scrawl---"Mother". She carefully puts the picture in her breast pocket. A breeze stirs the curtain again and we hear sounds of a baby crying, down below in the courtyard. HUBERT listens for a beat, gathers herself and follows the sound.

154

EXT. MORRISON'S, YARD. DAY.

154

HUBERT steps out from the kitchen and pauses to watch HELEN rocking her baby in her arms. HELEN is now a laundry maid, her dress and apron plainer and much coarser than what she wore before. She is pale and subdued. She lays her baby in a laundry basket, takes a sheet out of another basket and proceeds to hang it on the line. Then, sensing she is being watched, she turns. HUBERT approaches.

HUBERT

Hello, Helen Dawes.

HELEN

Mr. Page....I heard Mrs. B say you were coming.

HUBERT

Yes. It's a big job she wants me to do.

HELEN

Ah yes... Good.

HELEN smiles weakly. The baby starts to fuss again. HELEN picks the baby up. HUBERT looks at the two of them. HELEN catches HUBERT's look.

HUBERT

May I?

HUBERT tenderly takes the baby from HELEN, and cradles it in her arms. The baby stops crying. HELEN looks at the two of them.

HELEN

(Softly)

His name is Albert. Albert Joseph.

HUBERT

Ah...it's a..."he", is it?

HELEN

Yes.

HELEN nods and goes back to hanging the sheets.

(CONTINUED)

HUBERT

So... Mrs. B. is letting you stay?

HELEN

(With a bitter laugh)

Oh, she told you that, did she. Out of the kindness of her Christian heart?

HELEN pauses and then turns to HUBERT.

HELEN (CONT'D)

The truth is, Mr. Page...

(She can hardly say it.)

The truth is...she says she won't tell the priest about my Albert, as long as I work here for nothing. But...they are going to take him away from me...you know they will...and they are going to throw me out onto the street. It's just a matter time.

HUBERT stands looking intensely at the devastated girl; the cooing baby in her arms. Suddenly, a random gust of wind causes them to be surrounded by dancing, white sheets.

HUBERT

Well now...we can't let that happen, can we.

A blowing sheet momentarily hides them from view as the camera starts to pull away. Then we catch a glimpse of HUBERT, the baby in her arms, talking to HELEN with gentle insistence, but the billowing sheets keep obstructing our view. We hear BABY ALBERT beginning to fuss. We see HELEN take BABY ALBERT from HUBERT and offer him her breast. We see HUBERT softly stroking the head of the nursing baby, peering at HELEN, smiling. Finally, we see them no more as the screen is filled with fluttering white sheets. But faintly, in the background, we think we hear...it might, of course, just be the wind...but we think we hear the sound of someone's laughter.

THE END