

Man equals Man

*The transformation of the porter Galy Gay in the
military cantonment of Kilkoa during the year nineteen
hundred and twenty five*

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Characters

URIAH SHELLEY	} <i>four privates in a machine-gun section of the British Army in India</i>
JESSE MAHONEY	
POLLY BAKER	
JERAMIAH JIP	
CHARLES FAIRCHILD, <i>known as Bloody Five, a Sergeant</i>	
GALY GAY, <i>an Irish porter</i>	
GALY GAY'S WIFE	
MR WANG, <i>bonze of a Tibetan pagoda</i>	
MAH SING, <i>his sacristan</i>	
LEOKADIA BEGBICK, <i>canteen proprietress</i>	
Soldiers	

I

Kilkoa

Galy Gay and Galy Gay's wife

GALY GAY *sits one morning upon his chair and tells his wife:* Dear wife, I have decided in accordance with our income to buy a fish today. That would be within the means of a porter who drinks not at all, smokes very little and has almost no vices. Do you think I should buy a big fish or do you require a small one?

WIFE: A small one.

GALY GAY: Of what kind should the fish be that you require?

WIFE: I would say a good flounder. But please look out for the fishwives: they are lustful and always chasing men, and you have a soft nature, Galy Gay.

GALY GAY: That is true but I hope they would not bother with a penniless porter from the harbour.

WIFE: You are like an elephant which is the unwieldiest beast in the animal kingdom, but he runs like a freight train once he gets started. And then there are those soldiers who are the worst people in the world and who are said to be swarming at the station like bees. They are sure to be hanging around in numbers at the market place and you must be thankful if they don't break in and murder people. What's more they are dangerous for a man on his own because they always go around in fours.

GALY GAY: They would not want to harm a simple porter from the harbour.

WIFE: One can never tell.

GALY GAY: Then put the water on for the fish, for I am beginning to get an appetite and I guess I shall be back in ten minutes.

Street outside the Pagoda of the Yellow God

Four soldiers stop outside the pagoda. Military marches are heard as troops move into the town.

JESSE: Party, halt! Kilkoa! This here is Her Majesty's town of Kilkoa where they are concentrating the army for a long-predicted war. Here we are, along with a hundred thousand other soldiers, all of us thirsting to restore order on the northern frontier.

JIP: That demands beer. *He collapses.*

POLLY: Just as the powerful tanks of our Queen must be filled with petrol if we are to see them rolling over the damned roads of this oversized Eldorado so can the soldier only function if he drinks beer.

JIP: How much beer have we left?

POLLY: There are four of us. We still have fifteen bottles. So we must get hold of another twenty-five bottles.

JESSE: That demands money.

URIAH: Some people object to soldiers, but just one pagoda like this contains more copper than a strong regiment needs to march from Calcutta to London.

POLLY: Our friend Uriah's suggestion with respect to a pagoda which, though rickety and covered with flyshit, may well be bursting with copper surely merits our sympathetic attention.

JIP: All I know, Polly, is I've got to have more to drink.

URIAH: Calm down, sweetheart. This Asia has a hole for us to crawl through.

JIP: Uriah, Uriah, my mother always used to say: Do what you like, my darlingest Jeraiah, but remember pitch always sticks. And this place stinks of pitch.

JESSE: The door isn't properly shut. Watch out, Uriah, you bet there's some devilry behind it.

URIAH: Nobody's going through this open door.

JESSE: Right, what are windows for?

URIAH: Take your belts and make a long line to fish for the collection boxes with. That's it.

They attack the windows. Uriah smashes one, looks inside and starts fishing.

POLLY: Catch anything?

URIAH: No, but my helmet's fallen in.

JESSE: Bloody hell, you can't go back to camp with no helmet.

URIAH: Oh boy, am I catching things! This is a shocking establishment. Just look. Snares. Mantraps.

JESSE: Let's pack it in. This isn't an ordinary temple, it's a trap.

URIAH: Temple equals temple. I've got to get my helmet out of there.

JESSE: Can you reach it?

URIAH: No.

JESSE: Perhaps I can get this latch to lift.

POLLY: Don't damage the temple, though.

JESSE: Ow! Ow! Ow!

URIAH: What's up now?

JESSE: Hand's got stuck.

POLLY: Let's call it off.

JESSE *indignantly*: Call it off? I need my hand back.

URIAH: My helmet's in there too.

POLLY: Then we'll have to go through the wall.

JESSE: Ow! Ow! Ow! *He pulls his hand out. It is covered with blood.* They'll have to pay for this hand. I'm not calling it off after that. Give us a ladder, come on!

URIAH: Wait! Hand over your paybooks first. A soldier's paybook must never be damaged. You can replace a man anytime, but a paybook is sacred if anything is.

They hand over their paybooks to him.

POLLY: Polly Baker.

JESSE: Jesse Mahoney.

JIP *crawling up*: Jeraiah Jip.

URIAH: Uriah Shelley. All from the Eighth Regiment. Stationed at Kankerdan, machine-gun section. Shooting will be avoided so that no visible damage is done to the temple. Forward!

Uriah, Jesse and Polly climb into the pagoda.

JIP *calls after them*: I'll mount guard. Then at least I won't have gone in. *The yellow face of Wang, the bonze, appears at a small window above.* How do you do? Are you the honourable owner? Delightful part of the world, this.

URIAH *within*: Hand me your knife, Jesse, so I can force these collection boxes open.

Wang smiles, and Jip smiles too.

JIP *to the bonze*: It is just awful, belonging to a troupe of hippopotamuses like that. *The face disappears.* Come on out. There's a man wandering around upstairs.

Electric bells are heard at intervals within.

URIAH: Watch where you step. What is it, Jip?

JIP: A man upstairs.

URIAH: A man? Everybody out! Hoy!

THE THREE *within, shouting and cursing*: Get your foot out of the way! - Let go! Now I can't move my foot. My boot's gone too - Don't weaken, Polly. Never! - It's my tunic now, Uriah! - What's a tunic? This temple must be wiped out. Now what? - Bloody hell, my trousers are stuck. That's what comes of being in a hurry. That idiot Jip.

JIP: Find anything? Whisky? Rum? Gin? Brandy? Ale?

JESSE: Uriah's ripped his trousers on a bamboo hook, and the boot on Polly's good foot is stuck in a mantrap.

POLLY: And Jesse's tangled up in electric wire.

JIP: That's just what I expected. Next time you go into a building why not use the front door?

Jip goes in through the door. The three climb out above, pale, bleeding and ragged.

POLLY: This calls for vengeance.

URIAH: This temple doesn't fight fair. Filthy, I call it.

POLLY: I want to see blood.

JIP *from within*: Hey!

POLLY *bloodthirstily advances on to the roof, but his boot gets stuck*: Now my other boot's gone.

URIAH: Now I shall shoot the place up.

The three climb down and aim their machine-gun at the pagoda.

POLLY: Fire!

They fire.

JIP *within*: Ow! What are you doing?

The three look up, horrified.

POLLY: Where are you?

JIP *within*: Here. You've gone and shot me through the finger.

JESSE: What the devil are you up to in that rat trap, you fool?

JIP *appearing in the doorway*: I wanted to get the money. Here it is.

URIAH *joyfully*: Trust the biggest rumpot of us all to get it first go off. *Aloud*: Come out of that door at once.

JIP *sticks his head out of the door*: Where did you say?

URIAH: Out of that door at once!

JIP: Oh, what's this?

POLLY: What's up with him?

JIP: Look!

URIAH: Now what?

JIP: My hair! Oh, my hair! I can't go forwards and I can't go back! Oh, my hair! It's stuck fast to something. Uriah, see what's sticking to my hair. Oh, Uriah, get me free! I'm hanging by the hair.

Polly tiptoes over to Jip and looks down at his hair.

POLLY: His hair is stuck to the door frame.

URIAH *shouts*: Your knife, Jesse, so as I can cut him free!

Uriah cuts him free, Jip lurches forward.

POLLY *amused*: And now he's got a bald patch.

They examine Jip's head.

JESSE: A bit of the skin came off too.

URIAH *looks at the two of them, then icily*: A bald patch will give us away.

JESSE *with a venomous look*: A walking 'Wanted' notice!

Uriah, Jesse and Polly confer among themselves.

URIAH: We'll go back to camp and get a pair of scissors, then come back this evening and crop all his hair off so the bald patch can't be seen. *He gives back the paybooks.* Jesse Mahoney!

JESSE *taking his paybook*: Jesse Mahoney!

URIAH: Polly Baker!

POLLY *taking his paybook*: Polly Baker!

URIAH: Jeraiah Jip! *Jip tries to get up.* I'll hold on to yours. *He points to a palanquin in the courtyard.* Sit in that leather box and wait till dark.

Jip crawls into the palanquin. The other three walk off dejectedly shaking their heads. When they have left, Wang the bonze appears in the doorway of the pagoda and takes some of the hair stuck to it which he examines.

3

Country Road between Kilkoa and the Camp

Sergeant Fairchild appears from behind a shed and nails a poster to it.

FAIRCHILD: It is many moons since I, Bloody Five, known also as Tiger of Kilkoa, the Human Typhoon, a sergeant in the British Army, experienced anything as marvellous as this. *Points at the poster.* Pagoda of the Yellow God broken into. Roof of said Pagoda riddled with bullets. What have we in the way of a clue? Four ounces of hair stuck to pitch. If the roof is riddled with bullets then there must be a machine-gun section involved; if there are four ounces of hair at the scene of the crime then there must be a man who

is four ounces short. So if there is a machine-gun section containing a man with a bald patch then those are the offenders. It is all plain as a pikestaff. But who is this coming? *He steps behind the shed. The three approach and observe the poster with alarm. Then they go dejectedly on their way. But Fairchild appears from behind the shed and blows a police whistle. They stop.*

FAIRCHILD: Have none of you seen a man with a bald patch?

POLLY: No.

FAIRCHILD: Just look at you. Take your helmets off. Where is your fourth man?

URIAH: Why, Sergeant, he's relieving himself.

FAIRCHILD: Then we'll just wait for him and find out if he has seen a man with a bald patch. *They wait.* He seems to take a lot of relieving.

JESSE: Yes, sergeant.

They go on waiting.

POLLY: Perhaps he went a different way?

FAIRCHILD: It would be better for you, let me tell you, if you had summarily shot one another in your mothers' wombs than if you turn up at my roll call tonight without your fourth man. *Exit.*

POLLY: Let's hope that wasn't our new sergeant. If that rattle-snake is taking tonight's roll-call we might as well line up against the wall straight away.

URIAH: Before they sound the roll-call we'll have to have a fourth man.

POLLY: Here's a man coming now. Let's have a quiet look at him. *They hide behind the shed. Widow Begbick comes down the street. Galy Gay is following her, carrying her basket of cucumbers.*

BEGBICK: What are you moaning about? You're being paid by the hour, aren't you?

GALY GAY: That'll be three hours then.

BEGBICK: You'll get your money. This is a road that hardly anyone uses. A woman might have a hard time resisting a man that wished to embrace her.

GALY GAY: In your profession as a canteen owner always involved with soldiers, who are the worst people in the world, you must know certain holds.

BEGBICK: Ah, sir, you should never say such things to a woman. Certain words put women in a state when their blood gets aroused.

GALY GAY: I am only a simple porter from the harbour.

BEGBICK: It will be roll-call for the new lot in a few minutes.

You can hear the drums already. At this hour there's not a soul on the road.

GALY GAY: If it's really as late as all that I'll have to turn around and hurry back to the town of Kilkoa, for I still have a fish to buy.

BEGBICK: Would you mind my asking you, Mr - I hope I've got the name correctly - Galy Gay, whether the profession of porter demands exceptional strength?

GALY GAY: I could never have imagined that unforeseen events would once again delay me for almost four hours from quickly buying a fish and returning home, but I run like an express train once I get started.

BEGBICK: Yes, there is quite a difference between buying a fish to eat and helping a lady to carry her basket. But possibly the lady might be in a position to express her gratitude in a manner that would be more enjoyable than the eating of a fish.

GALY GAY: I must confess I would like to go and buy a fish.

BEGBICK: How can you be such a materialist?

GALY GAY: You know, I am a funny sort of person. Sometimes I know even before I get up: today I want a fish. Or I want a curry. When that happens the world can come to an end, but I just have to get a fish or a curry as the case may be.

BEGBICK: I understand, sir. But isn't it too late? The shops are closed and they are out of fish.

GALY GAY: You see, I am a man with great powers of imagin-

ation; I get fed up with a fish, for instance, even before I have set eyes on it. People set out to buy a fish, and first of all they buy that fish and secondly they carry that fish home, and thirdly they cook that fish till it is done, and fourthly they devour that fish, then at night after they have drawn a thick black line under their digestion they are still pre-occupied with the same depressing fish, just because they are the sort who have no power of imagination.

BEGBICK: I see, you're only thinking of yourself all the time. *Pause.* Hm. If you are only thinking of yourself I suggest you take your fish money and buy this cucumber, which I will let you have as a favour. The cucumber is worth more, but you can keep the difference in return for carrying my basket.

GALY GAY: But I do not require a cucumber.

BEGBICK: I would never have expected you to humiliate me so.

GALY GAY: It is just that the water for the fish has already been put on.

BEGBICK: I see. Have it your own way. Have it your own way.

GALY GAY: No, no, believe me, I'd be only too glad to oblige you.

BEGBICK: Not another word, talking only makes it worse.

GALY GAY: Far be it from me to disappoint you. If you are still prepared to let me have the cucumber, here is the money.

URIAH *to Jesse and Polly*: That is a man who can't say no.

GALY GAY: Careful, there are soldiers about.

BEGBICK: God knows what they are doing around here at this hour. It is almost time for roll-call. Quick, hand me my basket, why should I go on wasting any more time standing here gossiping with you? But I would be happy to welcome you as a visitor to my beer waggon at the camp, for I am the widow Begbick, and my beer waggon is famous from Hyderabad to Rangoon. *She takes her packages and leaves.*

URIAH: That's our man.

JESSE: Someone who can't say no.

POLLY: And he even has red hair like old Jip.

The three set out.

JESSE: Nice evening tonight.

GALY GAY: Yes, sir.

JESSE: It's a funny thing, sir, but something tells me you come from Kilkoa.

GALY GAY: Kilkoa? Why, yes. That's where my cabin is, so to speak.

JESSE: I'm exceptionally glad to hear that, Mr . . .

GALY GAY: Galy Gay.

JESSE: You've got a cabin there, haven't you?

GALY GAY: Oh, have you met me already, as you know that? Or my wife perhaps?

JESSE: You're called, why yes, you're called . . . half a moment . . . Galy Gay.

GALY GAY: Perfectly true, that's my name.

JESSE: I knew it right away. You see, that's the way I am. For instance, I bet you're married. But why are we standing around like this, Mr Galy Gay? These are my friends Polly and Uriah. Won't you smoke a pipe with us in our canteen?

Pause. Galy Gay looks at them suspiciously.

GALY GAY: Many thanks. Unfortunately my wife is waiting for me in Kilkoa. Besides, I haven't personally got a pipe, absurd as that may seem to you.

JESSE: A cigar then. No, you can't refuse, it's such a nice evening.

GALY GAY: Well, in that case I can't say no.

POLLY: And you shall have your cigar.

Exeunt all four.

4

Canteen of the Widow Leokadja Begbick

Soldiers are singing 'The Song of Widow Begbick's Drinking Truck'.

SOLDIERS:

In Widow Begbick's drinking truck
You smokes and swigs and sleeps your time away.
You buys your beer and tries your luck
From Jubbulpore to Mandalay.
From Halifax to Hindustan
Horse, foot and guns, the service man
Wants what the widow has to sell.
It's toddy, gum and hi, hi, hi
Bypassing heaven and skirting hell.
Shut your big mouth, Tommy, keep your hair on,
Tommy
As you slide down Soda Mountain into Whisky Dell.

In Widow Begbick's drinking tank
You always gets the things that you likes best.
That's where the Indian Army drank
When you was drinking at Mummy's breast.
From Halifax to Hindustan
Horse, foot and guns, the service man
Wants what the widow has to sell.
It's toddy, gum and hi, hi, hi
Bypassing heaven and skirting hell.
Shut your big mouth, Tommy, keep your hair on,
Tommy
As you slide down Soda Mountain into Whisky Dell.

And when it's war in Cooch Behar
We'll stock ourselves with gum and smokes and beer

And climb on Begbick's drinking car
 To show those wogs who's master here.
 From Halifax to Hindustan
 Horse, foot and guns, the service man
 Wants what the widow has to sell.
 It's toddy, gum and hi, hi, hi
 Bypassing heaven and skirting hell.
 Shut your big mouth, Tommy, keep your hair on,
 Tommy
 As you slide down Soda Mountain into Whisky Dell.

BEGBICK *entering*: Good evening, you military gentlemen. I am the Widow Begbick and this is my beer waggon which gets hooked on to the great troop trains and goes rolling over the entire Indian railway system; and because you can travel and drink beer and sleep in it at one and the same time it is called 'Widow Begbick's Beer Waggon' and everybody from Hyderabad to Rangoon knows that it has been a refuge to many an affronted soldier.
In the doorway stand the three soldiers with Galy Gay. They thrust him back.

URIAH: Is this the Eighth Regiment canteen?

POLLY: Are we addressing the owner of the canteen, the world-famous Widow Begbick? We are the machine-gun section of the Eighth Regiment.

BEGBICK: Only three of you? Where is your fourth man?
They enter without answering, pick up two tables and carry them to the left where they build a kind of partition. The other soldiers look on in astonishment.

JESSE: What kind of a man is the sergeant?

BEGBICK: Not nice.

POLLY: It is most disagreeable that the sergeant should not be nice.

BEGBICK: They call him Bloody Five, alias The Tiger of Kilkoa, the Human Typhoon. He has an unnatural sense of smell, he can smell criminal activity.

Jesse, Polly and Uriah look at one another.

URIAH: Indeed.

BEGBICK *to her guests*: This is the famous MG section which swung the battle of Hyderabad and is known as The Shower.

SOLDIERS: From now on they're part of our lot. Their crimes are said to follow them like shadows. *A soldier brings in a 'Wanted' notice which he nails up.* And right on their tail comes another of those signs.

The guests have stood up and slowly leave the canteen. Uriah whistles.

GALY GAY *entering*: I've been to this kind of establishment before. Printed menus. They have a whopping one at the Siam Hotel, gold on white. I bought one once. If you've got the right contacts you can get anything. One thing on it is Chicaucqua sauce. And that's just a side dish. Chicaucqua sauce!

JESSE *pushing Galy Gay towards the partition*: My dear sir, you are in a position to do three poor soldiers in distress a little service with no inconvenience to yourself.

POLLY: Our fourth man has been delayed taking leave of his wife, and if there are not four of us at roll-call we shall all be thrown into the black dungeons of Kilkoa.

URIAH: So it would help if you would put on one of our uniforms. You'd only need to be present when they number off the new arrivals and answer to his name. Just to keep the record straight.

JESSE: That's all.

POLLY: A cigar more or less that you might feel like smoking at our expense would not be worth mentioning.

GALY GAY: It is not that I am reluctant to oblige you, but unfortunately I have to hurry home. I have bought a cucumber for dinner and therefore cannot do exactly as I would like.

JESSE: Thank you. Frankly, it is what I expected of you. That's the point: you cannot do exactly as you would like.

You would like to go home, but you cannot. Thank you, sir, for justifying the confidence we placed in you the instant we set eyes on you. Your hand, sir.

He seizes Galy Gay's hand. Uriah motions him imperiously to go into the corner behind the tables. As soon as he is in the corner all three rush him and undress him except for his shirt.

URIAH: Permit us, for the said purpose, to clothe you in the noble garb of the glorious British Army. *He rings. Begbick appears.* Widow Begbick, can a man speak freely in these parts? We need a complete uniform. *Begbick produces a box and tosses it to Uriah. Uriah throws it to Polly.*

POLLY *to Galy Gay*: Here is the noble garb we purchased for you.

JESSE *showing him the trousers*: Put this garb on, brother Galy Gay.

POLLY *to Begbick*: It's because he lost his uniform.

The three of them dress Galy Gay.

BEGBICK: I see. He lost his uniform.

POLLY: Yes, a Chinese in the bath house managed to abstract our friend Jip's service dress.

BEGBICK: I see: in the bath house?

JESSE: As a matter of fact, Widow Begbick, we're having a bit of a lark.

BEGBICK: I see: a lark?

POLLY: Isn't that right, my dear sir? Isn't it all a bit of a lark?

GALY GAY: Yes, it's a sort of a bit of a - cigar. *He laughs. The three laugh too.*

BEGBICK: How helpless a weak woman is against four such strong men. Let no one ever say the Widow Begbick hindered a man from changing his trousers.

She goes to the rear and writes on a slate: 1 pair of trousers, 1 tunic, 1 pair of puttees etc.

GALY GAY: What's all this about?

JESSE: It's all about nothing, really.

GALY GAY: Won't it be dangerous if it gets found out?

POLLY: Not in the least. And in your case, once equals never.

GALY GAY: True enough. Once equals never. Or so they say.

BEGBICK: That uniform will be five shillings an hour.

POLLY: Sheer bloody extortion, three's the limit.

JESSE *at the window*: Rain clouds are coming up fast. If it rains now the palanquin will get wet, and if the palanquin gets wet they'll take it into the pagoda, and if they take it into the pagoda Jip will be discovered, and if Jip is discovered we're sunk.

GALY GAY: Too small. I'll never get into it.

POLLY: You see, he can't get into it.

GALY GAY: And the boots pinch horribly.

POLLY: Everything's too small. Unusable! Two bob.

URIAH: Shut up, Polly. Four bob because everything's too small and particularly because the boots pinch so. Don't they?

GALY GAY: To the highest degree. They pinch quite particularly.

URIAH: The gentleman isn't such a crybaby as you, you see, Polly.

BEGBICK *comes up to Uriah, leads him to the rear and points at the 'Wanted' sign*: This poster has been up all round the camp for the last hour, stating that a military crime has been perpetrated in this town. The guilty parties have not yet been identified. And if the uniform costs no more than five shillings it's because I'm not having the whole company dragged into this crime.

POLLY: Four shillings is a lot of money.

URIAH *coming forward*: Be quiet, Polly. Ten bob.

BEGBICK: Anything that might besmirk the company's honour can generally be cleaned up in Widow Begbick's Drinking Car.

JESSE: By the way, Widow Begbick, do you think it'll rain?

BEGBICK: To answer that one I'd have to take a look at the sergeant, Bloody Five. It's well known throughout the

army that when it rains he gets into the most appalling states of sensuality and is outwardly and inwardly transformed.

JESSE: You see, this lark of ours absolutely depends on its not raining.

BEGBICK: Not a bit of it. Once it starts raining Bloody Five, from being the most dangerous man in the British Army, becomes harmless as a kitten. As soon as he gets one of his fits of sensuality he is blind to everything going on around him.

A SOLDIER *calls into the room*: All out for roll call; it's that pagoda business, there's supposed to be a man missing. So they're calling the roll and checking paybooks.

URIAH: His paybook!

GALY GAY *kneels down and wraps up his old clothes*: I take good care of my things, you see.

URIAH *to Galy Gay*: Here's your paybook. All you have to do is to call out our comrade's name, very clearly and as loud as possible. Nothing to it.

POLLY: And our lost comrade's name is Jeraiah Jip. Jeraiah Jip!

GALY GAY: Jeraiah Jip!

URIAH *to Galy Gay as they walk off*: It's a pleasure to meet well-bred persons who know how to conduct themselves in any situation.

GALY GAY *stops just inside the door*: And what is in it for me?

URIAH: A bottle of beer. Come on.

GALY GAY: Gentlemen, my profession of porter obliges me to look after my own interests in any situation. I was thinking of two boxes of cigars and four or five bottles of beer.

JESSE: But we need you for that roll call.

GALY GAY: Exactly.

POLLY: All right. Two boxes of cigars and three or four bottles of beer.

GALY GAY: Three boxes and five bottles.

JESSE: I don't get it. You just said two boxes.

GALY GAY: If you're going to take that line it will be five boxes and eight bottles.

A bugle call.

URIAH: Time we were out of here.

JESSE: Right. It's a deal if you come along with us straight away.

GALY GAY: Right.

URIAH: And what is your name?

GALY GAY: Jip! Jeraiah Jip!

JESSE: So long as it doesn't rain.

POLLY *comes back; to Begbick*: Widow Begbick, we understand the sergeant becomes very sensual when it rains. And now it's going to rain. See to it that he's blind to whatever goes on around him for the next few hours, or else we risk getting found out. *Exit.*

BEGBICK *looking after them*: That man's not called Jip, I happen to know. That's a porter called Galy Gay from Kilkoa, and at this very instant a man who is by no means a soldier is forming up under the eyes of Bloody Five. *She takes a mirror and goes to the rear.* I'll stand here where Bloody Five is sure to see me, and lure him in.

Second bugle call. Enter Fairchild. Begbick looks at him seductively in the mirror and sits down in a chair.

FAIRCHILD: Don't cast such devouring glances at me, you white-washed Babylon. Things are bad enough already. Three days ago I took to my bunk and began washing in cold water. On Thursday my unbridled sensuality forced me to proclaim a state of siege against myself. It is a particularly disagreeable situation for me since only today I sniffed out a crime virtually without precedent in military history.

BEGBICK:

Follow, o Bloody Five, thine own great nature

Unobserved! For who will learn it?

And in the pit of my arm, in my hair

Learn who thou art. And in the crook of my knee forget

Thy fortuitous name.
 Pathetic discipline! Poverty-stricken Order!
 Therefore, Bloody Five, I entreat thee come
 To me in this night of tepid rainfall
 Exactly as thou fearest to: as man
 A contradiction. As must-but-don't-want-to.
 Come now as man. Just as nature made thee
 With no tin hat. Confused and savage and tied up in thyself
 And defenceless victim of thy instincts
 And helpless slave of thine own strength.
 Come, then, as man.

FAIRCHILD: Never. The collapse of Mankind started when the first of these Zulus left a button undone. The Infantry Training Manual is a book chock-a-block with weaknesses, but it is the one thing a man can fall back on, because it stiffens the backbone and takes over responsibility towards God. Verily a hole should be dug in the ground and dynamite put in it so as to blow up the entire planet; then they might just begin to realise one means business. It's all plain as a pikestaff. But will you, Bloody Five, be able to last out this rainy night without the widow's flesh?

BEGBICK: So when you come to me tonight I want you to wear a black suit and have a bowler hat on your head.

A VOICE OF COMMAND: Machine-gunners fall in for roll call!

FAIRCHILD: Now I must sit by this door post so as to keep an eye on this scum they're counting. *Sits down.*

VOICES OF THREE SOLDIERS *outside*: Polly Baker. - Uriah Shelley. - Jesse Mahoney.

FAIRCHILD: Ha, and now there will be a slight pause.

GALY GAY'S VOICE *outside*: Jeraiah Jip!

BEGBICK: Correct.

FAIRCHILD: They're up to something again. Insubordination without. Insubordination within. *He stands up and starts to leave.*

BEGBICK *calls after him*: But let me inform you, Sergeant, that before the black rains of Nepal have fallen for three nights you will take a more lenient view of human failings, for you are perhaps the most sex-ridden individual under the sun. You will hobnob with insubordination, and the desecrators of the temple will gaze deep into your eyes, for your own crimes will be as numberless as the sands of the sea.

FAIRCHILD: Ho, we'd take action in that case, my dear, believe me, we'd take action in exemplary fashion against that insubordinate little Bloody Five. The whole thing's plain as a pikestaff. *Exit.*

FAIRCHILD'S VOICE *outside*: Eight men up to the navel in hot sand for non-regulation haircuts!

Enter Uriah, Jesse and Polly with Galy Gay. Galy Gay steps forward.

URIAH: Scissors, please, Widow Begbick.

GALY GAY *to the audience*: This sort of little favour, man to man, can't do any harm. You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours, that's the idea. Now I'll drink a glass of beer as if it were water and tell myself: you've done these gentlemen a good turn. And all that counts in this world is to take a chance now and then and say 'Jeraiah Jip' the way another man would say 'Good evening', and be the way people want you to be, because it's so easy.

Begbick brings a pair of scissors.

URIAH: Time we looked for Jip.

JESSE: That's a nasty storm blowing up.

The three turn to Galy Gay.

URIAH: I am afraid we're in a great hurry, sir.

JESSE: We've still got to crop a gentleman's hair, you see.

They turn to the door. Galy Gay runs after them.

GALY GAY: Couldn't I help you with that too?

URIAH: No, we have no further need of you, sir. *To Begbick*: Five boxes of cheap cigars and eight bottles of brown ale for this man. *On the way out*: There are some people

who will keep sticking their noses into everything. Give them a finger and they'll have your whole hand.

The three hurry out.

GALY GAY:

Now I could go away, but
Should a man go away when he is sent away?
Perhaps once he has gone
He may be needed again? And can a man go away
When he is needed. Unless it has to be
A man should not go away.

Galy Gay goes to the rear and sits down in a chair by the door. Begbick takes beer bottles and cigar boxes and places them in a circle on the ground in front of Galy Gay.

BEGBICK: Haven't we met somewhere? *Galy Gay shakes his head.* Aren't you the man who carried my basket of cucumbers for me? *Galy Gay shakes his head.* Isn't your name Galy Gay?

GALY GAY: No.

Exit Begbick shaking her head. It grows dark. Galy Gay falls asleep on his chair. Rain falls. Begbick is heard singing to soft music.

BEGBICK:

Often as you may see the river sluggishly flowing
Each time the water is different.
What's gone can't go past again. Not one drop
Ever flows back to its starting point.

5

Interior of the Pagoda of the Yellow God

Wang the bonze and his sacristan

SACRISTAN: It is raining.

WANG: Bring in our leather palanquin out of the rain. *The sacristan goes out.* Now the last of our takings have been stolen. And now the rain is coming in on my head through those bullet holes. *The sacristan drags in the palanquin. Groans from within.* What's that? *He looks inside.* I knew it must be a white man as soon as I saw what a disgusting state the palanquin was in. Oh, he's wearing a uniform. And he's got a bald spot, this thief. They've simply cut his hair off. What shall we do with him? Since he is a soldier he must be without brains. A soldier of his Queen, coated with sicked-up drinks, more helpless than an infant hen, too drunk to recognise his own mother. We can hand him to the police. What's the good of that? Once the money has gone what's the good of justice? And all he can do is grunt. *Furiously:* Heave him out, you cheese-hole, and stuff him in the prayer-box, but make sure his head is on top. Our best answer is to make a god of him. *The sacristan puts Jip into the prayer box.* Get me some paper. We must hang out paper flags at once. We must immediately paint posters for all we are worth. No false economies: I want it to be a big operation, with posters that can't be overlooked. What's the good of a god that doesn't get talked about? *A knock at the door.* Who is calling on me at this hour?

POLLY: Three soldiers.

WANG: Those will be his comrades. *He admits the three.*

POLLY: We are looking for a gentleman, or more specifically a soldier, who is sleeping in a leather box that once stood outside this rich and distinguished temple.

WANG: May his awakening be a pleasant one.

POLLY: That box however has disappeared.

WANG: I understand your impatience, which originates in uncertainty; for I too am looking for some men, about three all told, specifically soldiers, and I cannot find them.

URIAH: That will be extremely difficult. I'd say you might as well give up. But we thought you might know something about that leather box.

WANG: Unhappily not. The unpleasant fact is that all you honourable soldiers wear the same clothes.

JESSE: That is not unpleasant. Inside the said leather box just now is sitting a man who is very ill.

POLLY: Having moreover lost a certain amount of hair through his illness he is in urgent need of help.

URIAH: Might you have seen such a man?

WANG: Unhappily not. I did however find hair such as you mention. But a sergeant in your army took it away with him. He wished to give it back to the honourable soldier.

Jip groans inside the prayer box.

POLLY: What is that, sir?

WANG: That is my cow who is slumbering.

URIAH: Your cow does not seem to slumber very well.

POLLY: This is the palanquin we stuffed Jip into. Permit us to inspect it.

WANG: It will be best if I tell you the whole truth. It is not the same palanquin.

POLLY: It's as full of sick as a slop pail on the third day of Christmas. Jesse, it's obvious Jip was here.

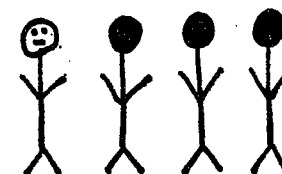
WANG: He couldn't have been in that, now, could he? Nobody would get into such a filthy palanquin.

Jip groans loudly.

URIAH: We've got to have our fourth man. Even if it means murdering our own grandmother.

WANG: I fear the man you are looking for is not here. But to make it clear to you that the man who in your opinion is here but of whose presence I have no knowledge is not your

man, allow me to explain the entire situation by means of a drawing. Permit your unworthy servant to delineate four criminals by means of chalk. *He draws on the door of the prayer box.*



One of them has a face, so you can see who he is, but three of them have no faces. You cannot recognise them. Now the man with the face has got no money, so he is not a thief. Those with the money however have got no faces, so you cannot know them. Unless they are together, that is. But once they are together the three faceless ones will grow faces, and other people's money will be found on them. You will never make me believe that a man who might be here is your man.

The three threaten him with their weapons, but at a sign from Wang the sacristan appears with Chinese worshippers.

JESSE: We shall not disturb your night's rest any longer, sir.

Besides, your tea doesn't agree with us. Your drawing, to be sure, is very clever. Come along.

WANG: It grieves me to see you depart.

URIAH: Do you really believe that when our comrade wakes up, no matter where, wild horses will prevent him from coming back to us?

WANG: Wild horses possibly not, but a small portion of domestic horse, who knows?

URIAH: Once he's shaken the beer out of his head he'll be back. *The three leave amid deep bows.*

Jip inside the prayer box: Hey!

Wang draws the attention of the worshippers to his god.

6

The Canteen

Late at night. Galy Gay is sitting in his chair, still asleep. The three soldiers appear in the window.

POLLY: He's still sitting there. Like an Irish mammoth, isn't he?

URIAH: Perhaps he didn't want to leave on account of the rain.

JESSE: Who can say? Anyhow we're going to need him again now.

POLLY: Don't you think that Jip will be back?

JESSE: Uriah, I know that Jip will not be back.

POLLY: We can hardly tell this porter the same old tale again.

JESSE: What do you think, Uriah?

URIAH: I think I'll have a kip.

POLLY: But suppose this porter now gets up and walks out of that door our heads will be hanging by a mere thread.

JESSE: Definitely. But I'm turning in now too. You can't expect too much of a fellow.

POLLY: Perhaps it's best if we all have a kip. It's too depressing and it's really all the fault of the rain.

Exeunt the three.

7

Interior of the Pagoda of the Yellow God

Towards morning. Large posters on all sides. The sound of an old gramophone and of a drum. Religious ceremonies of some importance appear to be going on in the background.

WANG approaches the prayer box; to the sacristan: Roll those camel-dung balls quicker, you trash! Close to the prayer box: Is the honourable soldier still asleep?

JIP *inside*: Shall we be de-training soon, Jesse? This truck is shaking so dreadfully, and it's as cramped as a water closet.

WANG: Honourable soldier, you must not imagine that you are in a railway truck. If anything is shaking it is the beer in your honourable head.

JIP *inside*: Nonsense. Who's that singing in the gramophone? Can't it stop?

WANG: Come on out, honourable soldier, eat a piece of meat from a cow.

JIP *inside*: Is it all right for me to have a piece of meat, Polly? He pounds on the sides of the prayer box.

WANG *running to the rear*: Quiet, you wretches! The god you can hear knocking on the walls of the holy prayer box is asking for five taels. Grace is being shown unto you. Take a collection, Mah Sing.

JIP *inside*: Uriah, Uriah, where am I?

WANG: Knock a little more, honourable soldier, on the other wall, honourable general, with both your feet, emphatically.

JIP *inside*: Hey, what is this? Where am I? Where are you? Uriah, Jesse, Polly!

WANG: Your grovelling servant is desirous of knowing what food and strong drinks the honourable soldier wishes to call for.

JIP *inside*: Hey, who's that? What is that voice that sounds like a fat rat talking?

WANG: That moderately fat rat, colonel, is your friend Wang from Tientsin.

JIP *inside*: What town am I in now?

WANG: A wretched town, exalted patron, a hole known as Kilkoa.

JIP *inside*: Let me out!

WANG *to the rear*: When you have finished rolling the camel dung into balls, lay them out on a dish, beat the drum and light them. To Jip: At once, honourable soldier, if only you promise not to run away.

JIP *inside*: Open up, you voice of a muskrat, open up, do you hear!

WANG: Wait, wait, ye faithful! Stay where you are for just one instant. The god will speak to you in three thunder-claps. Count them carefully. Four, no, five. Too bad: he only wishes you to sacrifice five taels. *Taps on the prayerbox; in a friendly tone*: Honourable soldier, here is a beefsteak for your mouth.

JIP *inside*: Oh, now I feel it, my insides are utterly corroded. I must have rinsed them in pure alcohol. Oh, it may be that I have had too much to drink and now I am having to eat the same amount.

WANG: You may eat a whole cow, honourable soldier, and a beefsteak already awaits you. But I fear you will run away, honourable soldier. Do you promise me that you will not run away?

JIP *inside*: Let's have a look at it first. *Wang lets him out*. How did I get here?

WANG: Through the air, honourable general. You came through the air.

JIP: Where was I when you found me?

WANG: Deigning to rest in an old palanquin, Exalted One.

JIP: And where are my comrades? Where is the Eighth Regiment? Where is our machine-gun section? Where are those twelve troop trains and four elephant parks? Where is the whole British Army? Where have they all gone, you grinning yellow spittoon?

WANG: Somewhere beyond the Punjab Mountains a month ago. But here is a beefsteak.

JIP: What? And me? Where was I? What was I doing when they were moving off?

WANG: Beer, much beer, one thousand bottles, and making money too.

JIP: Didn't people come asking for me?

WANG: Unfortunately not.

JIP: That is disagreeable.

WANG: But if they should come now, looking for a man in the uniform of a white soldier, should I bring them to you, honourable Minister of War?

JIP: That is not necessary.

WANG: If you don't want to be disturbed, Johnny, just step into this box, Johnny, in case anyone comes who offends your eye.

JIP: Where's that beefsteak? *Sits down and eats*. It's far too small. What is that ghastly noise?

To the sound of drumming the smoke from the camel-dung balls rises to the ceiling.

WANG: That is the prayers of the faithful who are down on their knees back there.

JIP: It's from a tough part of the cow. Who are they praying to?

WANG: That is their secret.

JIP *eating more quickly*: This is a good beefsteak, but it is wrong that I should be sitting here. Polly and Jesse are sure to have waited for me. They may still be waiting. It's as soft as butter. It is bad of me to be eating. I can hear Polly telling Jesse: Jip will definitely be back. As soon as he's sobered up, Jip will be back. Uriah may not exactly burst himself waiting, because Uriah is a bad man, but Jesse and Polly will say: Jip will be back. No question but this is an appropriate meal for me after all that liquor. If only Jesse didn't have such blind faith in his old friend Jip; but as it is he's saying: Jip won't let us down, and of course that's hard for me to bear. It's all wrong that I should be sitting here, but this is good meat.

The Canteen

Early morning. Galy Gay is still asleep in his chair. The three are eating breakfast.

POLLY: Jip will be back.

JESSE: Jip won't let us down.

POLLY: As soon as he's sobered up, Jip will be back.

URIAH: You never can tell. Anyway we won't let this porter out of our hands so long as Jip is still out on the tiles.

JESSE: He never left.

POLLY: He must be frozen stiff. He spent the whole night on that wooden chair.

URIAH: But we had a good night's sleep and are in fine shape again.

POLLY: And Jip will be back. That much is clear to my sound, well-rested military mind. As soon as Jip wakes up he'll want his beer, and then Jip will be back.

Enter Wang. He goes to the bar and rings. Enter Widow Begbick.

BEGBICK: I'm not serving native undesirables, nor yellow ones neither.

WANG: For a white man: ten bottles of good light beer.

BEGBICK: For a white man ten bottles of light beer. *She gives him the ten bottles.*

WANG: Yes, for a white man. *Exit Wang, bowing to all. Jesse, Polly and Uriah exchange looks.*

URIAH: Jip won't be back now. We must take some beer on board. Widow Begbick, in future you will keep twenty beers and ten whiskies permanently at action stations. *Begbick pours beer and goes out. The three drink and observe the sleeping Galy Gay.*

POLLY: But how do we manage it, Uriah? All we have is Jip's paybook.

URIAH: That's enough. That'll give us a new Jip. People are taken much too seriously. One equals no one. Anything less than two hundred at a time is not worth mentioning. Of course anybody can be of a different opinion. An opinion is of no consequence whatever. Any level-headed man can level-headedly adopt two or three different opinions.

JESSE: They can stuff their 'personalities'.

POLLY: But what's he going to say if we turn him into Private Jeraiah Jip?

URIAH: His kind change of their own accord, you know. Throw him into a pond, and two days later he'll have webs growing between his fingers. That's because he's got nothing to lose.

JESSE: Never mind what he says, we've got to have a fourth man. Wake him up.

POLLY *wakes Galy Gay*: Dear sir, what a piece of luck that you didn't leave. Circumstances have arisen which prevented our friend Jeraiah Jip from reporting here on time.

URIAH: Are you of Irish extraction?

GALY GAY: I think so.

URIAH: That is a help. I trust you are not over forty, Mr Galy Gay?

GALY GAY: I am not as old as that.

URIAH: Brilliant. Have you by any chance got flat feet?

GALY GAY: Somewhat.

URIAH: That settles it. Your fortune is made. For the time being you can remain here.

GALY GAY: Unhappily my wife is expecting me in connection with a fish.

POLLY: We understand your hesitations: they are honourable and worthy of an Irishman. But we like your appearance.

JESSE: And what's more, it fits the bill. There may perhaps be an opening for you to become a soldier.

Galy Gay is silent.

URIAH: The soldier's life is extremely pleasant. Every week they give us a handful of money and all we have to do in

return is to foot it round India gazing at these highways and pagodas. Kindly take a look at the comfortable leather sleeping bags that are issued to a soldier free of charge. Cast your eye on this rifle bearing the trademark of the firm of Everett and Co. Mostly we amuse ourselves fishing, with tackle bought for us by Mum, as we laughingly call the army, while a number of military bands take it in turn to provide music. For the remainder of the day you smoke in your bungalow or idly observe the golden palaces of one of those Rajahs, whom you may also shoot if you feel so inclined. The ladies expect a great deal from us soldiers, but never money, and that, you must admit, is yet another attraction. *Galy Gay is silent.*

POLLY: The soldier's life in wartime is particularly pleasant. Only in battle does a man attain his full stature. Do you realise that you are living in momentous times? Before each infantry attack the soldier is given a large glass of spirits free of charge, after which his courage is boundless, positively boundless.

GALY GAY: I realise that the soldier's life is a pleasant one.

URIAH: Definitely. So this means you can keep your military uniform with its pretty brass buttons and have a right to be called Mr at any moment: Mr Jip.

GALY GAY: You cannot wish to cause unhappiness to a poor porter.

JESSE: Why not?

URIAH: You mean you want to leave?

GALY GAY: Yes, I am leaving now.

JESSE: Polly, go and get his clothes.

POLLY *with the clothes*: What's the reason for your not wanting to be Jip, then?

Fairchild appears at the window.

GALY GAY: The fact that I am Galy Gay. *He goes to the door.*

The three look at one another.

URIAH: Just wait a minute longer.

POLLY: Have you ever heard the saying: More haste, less speed?

URIAH: You are up against the sort of men who don't like accepting free gifts from strangers.

JESSE: Whatever your name is, you should get something for having been so obliging.

URIAH: It all boils down – all right, keep your hand on the doorknob – to a bit of business.

Galy Gay stops short.

JESSE: This bit of business is as good as anything Kilkoa has to offer, aren't I right, Polly? You know, if we could manage to get our hands on that . . .

URIAH: It is our duty to offer you a chance to get in on this stupendous bit of business.

GALY GAY: Business? Did I hear you say business?

URIAH: Possibly. But you've no time for that, have you?

GALY GAY: There's having time and having time.

POLLY: Oh, you'd have time all right. If you knew what this bit of business was you'd have time all right. After all, Lord Kitchener had time to conquer Egypt.

GALY GAY: I should think so. You mean it's a big bit of business?

POLLY: For the Maharajah of Peshawar it might be. But it might not be all that big perhaps for a big man like you.

GALY GAY: What would I have to contribute in this bit of business?

JESSE: Nothing.

POLLY: At the most you might have to sacrifice your moustache, which could possibly provoke undesirable notoriety.

GALY GAY: I see. *He takes his things and starts for the door.*

POLLY: What an utter elephant!

GALY GAY: Elephant? Elephants are a goldmine of course. If you've got an elephant you'll never end up in the workhouse. *Excitedly takes a chair and sits down in the centre of the group.*

URIAH: Elephant? You bet we've got an elephant.

GALY GAY: Would your elephant be such as to be instantly available?

POLLY: An elephant! That's something he seems extremely keen on.

GALY GAY: So you have an elephant available?

POLLY: Who ever heard of a bit of business involving an unavailable elephant?

GALY GAY: Well, in that case, Mr Polly, I too would be glad to get my cut of this.

URIAH *hesitantly*: The only trouble is the Devil of Kilkoa.

GALY GAY: The devil of Kilkoa, what's that?

POLLY: Speak quieter. You're speaking the name of the Human Typhoon, Bloody Five, our sergeant.

GALY GAY: What does he do to get such names?

POLLY: Oh, nothing. Occasionally when a man gives the wrong name at roll call he bundles him up in six feet of canvas and dumps him in among the elephants.

GALY GAY: So you need a man with a head on his shoulders.

URIAH: You have that head, Mr Galy Gay.

POLLY: A head like that has something in it.

GALY GAY: Nothing to speak of. But I do know a riddle that might be of interest to educated persons like yourselves.

JESSE: You are in fact surrounded by expert riddle-guessers.

GALY GAY: It goes like this: what's white, is a mammal, and can see as well behind as in front?

JESSE: That's a hard one.

GALY GAY: You'll never guess this riddle. I couldn't guess it myself. A mammal. White. Sees as well behind as in front. A blind white horse.

URIAH: It's a prodigious riddle.

POLLY: And you just keep all that in your head?

GALY GAY: As a rule, because I'm no good at writing. But I fancy I'm the right man for any bit of business.

The three go to the bar. Galy Gay takes a box of his cigars and hands it round.

URIAH: Matches!

GALY GAY *while lighting their cigars*: Gentlemen, permit me to prove to you that you have selected no bad associate for your bit of business. Do you happen to have some heavy objects handy?

JESSE *points to some weights and clubs lying along the wall by the door*: There you are.

GALY GAY *taking the heaviest weight and lifting it*: I'm a member of the Kilkoa Wrestling Club, you see.

URIAH *handing him a bottle of beer*: Anyone can tell that from the way you behave.

GALY GAY *drinking*: Yes, we wrestlers have our own way of behaving. There are certain rules. For instance, when a wrestler comes into a room full of people, he hoists his shoulders on entering, raises his arms to shoulder height, then lets them dangle and saunters into the room. *He drinks*. Join up with me and you can rob a bank.

FAIRCHILD *enters*: There's a woman out here who is looking for an individual called Galy Gray.

GALY GAY: Galy Gay! Galy Gay's the name of the individual she's looking for.

Fairchild looks at him for a moment, then fetches Mrs Galy Gay.

GALY GAY *to the three*: Don't worry, she's a gentle soul, being as how she's from a province where nearly everyone is friendly. You can rely on me. Galy Gay has tasted blood.

FAIRCHILD: Come in, Mrs Gray. There's a man here who knows your husband. *He comes back with Galy Gay's wife.*

MRS GALY GAY: Excuse a humble woman, gentlemen, and pardon the way I am dressed, I was in such a hurry. Ah, there you are, Galy Gay. But are you really you in that army uniform?

GALY GAY: No.

MRS GALY GAY: I can't make you out. How do you come to be in uniform? It doesn't suit you a bit, ask anybody. You're a strange man, Galy Gay.

URIAH: She isn't right in the head.

MRS GALY GAY: It's not easy being married to someone who cannot say no.

GALY GAY: I wonder who she's talking to.

URIAH: Sounds like insults to me.

FAIRCHILD: In my opinion Mrs Gray is extremely lucid in the head. Please go on talking, Mrs Gray. Your voice is more grateful to my ears than a coloratura soprano.

MRS GALY GAY: I don't know what you're up to this time with your big ideas, but you'll come to no good end. Come along now. Why don't you say something? Have you got a sore throat?

GALY GAY: I do believe you are addressing all that to me. You've mistaken me for someone else, let me tell you, and what you're saying about him is stupid and tactless.

MRS GALY GAY: What's that? Mistaken you? Have you been drinking? He can't stand drink, you see.

GALY GAY: I'm no more your Galy Gay than I'm the Army Commander.

MRS GALY GAY: I put the water on around this time yesterday, but you never brought the fish.

GALY GAY: What's this about a fish? You are talking as if you had lost your wits, and in front of all these gentlemen too!

FAIRCHILD: This is a most remarkable case. It conjures up such frightful thoughts that cold shivers go running down my spine. Does any of you know this woman? *The three shake their heads.* How about you?

GALY GAY: I've seen many things in my life, from Ireland to Kilkoa, but I never before set eyes on this woman.

FAIRCHILD: Tell the woman your name.

GALY GAY: Jeraiah Jip.

MRS GALY GAY: This is the limit! All the same, sergeant, now I come to look at him I almost get the feeling that he is somehow different from my husband Galy Gay the porter, somehow different though I couldn't put my finger on it.

FAIRCHILD: We'll soon put our finger on it, never you mind. *He goes out with Mrs Galy Gay.*

GALY GAY *dances to the centre of the stage, singing:*

O moon of Alabama
You must go under soon!
Our dear old good old mamma
Would like a brand-new moon.

He goes up to Jesse beaming. All over Ireland the Galy Gays are famous for banging the nail home in any situation.

URIAH *to Polly*: Before the sun has set seven times this man must be another man.

POLLY: Can it really be done, Uriah? Changing one man into another?

URIAH: Yes, one man is like the other. Man equals man.

POLLY: But Uriah, the army can move off any minute, you know.

URIAH: Of course the army can move off any minute. But you can see this canteen is still here, can't you? Don't you realise that the gunners are still holding race meetings? Let me tell you that God would never agree to ruin our sort by getting the army on the move this very day. He'd certainly think twice about that.

POLLY: Listen.

Drums and bugles give the signal for departure. The three fall in and stand to attention.

FAIRCHILD *offstage, shouting*: The Army will move to the northern frontiers! Starting time zero two one zero hours tonight!

Interlude

Spoken by the Widow Leokadja Begbick.

Herr Bertolt Brecht maintains man equals man
 – A view that has been around since time began.
 But then Herr Brecht points out how far one can
 Manoeuvre and manipulate that man.
 Tonight you are going to see a man reassembled like a car
 Leaving all his individual components just as they are.
 He has some kind friends by whom he is pressed
 Entirely in his own interest
 To conform with this world and its twists and turns
 And give up pursuing his own fishy concerns.
 So whatever the purpose of his various transformations
 He always lives up to his friends' expectations.
 Indeed if we people were to let him out of our sight
 They could easily make a butcher of him overnight.
 Herr Bertolt Brecht hopes you'll feel the ground on
 which you stand
 Slither between your toes like shifting sand
 So that the case of Galy Gay the porter makes you aware
 Life on this earth is a hazardous affair.

9

The Canteen

The sounds of an army breaking camp. A loud voice is heard from backstage.

THE VOICE: War has broken out as predicted. The Army
 will move to the northern frontier. The Queen calls on her

troops to take their guns and elephants and board the
 trains, and orders those trains to head for the northern
 frontier. Your General therefore commands you to be seated
 in those trains before the moon is up.

Widow Begbick sits behind her bar, smoking.

BEGBICK:

In Yehoo, the city that is always crowded and
 Where no one stays, they sing
 A song of the Flow of Things
 Which starts with:

She sings:

Don't try to hold on to the wave
 That's breaking against your foot: so long as
 You stand in the stream fresh waves
 Will always keep breaking against it.

She stands up, takes a stick and starts pushing back the canvas awnings.

I was seven years in one place, had a roof over
 My head
 And was not alone.
 But the man who kept me fed and who was unlike anyone
 else
 One day
 Lay unrecognisable beneath a dead man's shroud.
 All the same that evening I ate my supper
 And soon I let off the room in which we had
 Embraced one another
 And the room kept me fed
 And now that it no longer feeds me
 I continue to eat.
 I said:

Sings:

Don't try to hold on to the wave
That's breaking against your foot: so long as
You stand in the stream fresh waves
Will always keep breaking against it.

She sits down at the bar again. The three enter with several other soldiers.

URIAH *in the centre*: My friends, war has broken out. The period of disorder is over. So no more allowances can be made for private inclinations. Galy Gay, the porter from Kilkoa, has accordingly to be transformed in double quick time into the soldier Jeraiah Jip. To this end we shall get him involved in a bit of business, as is normal in our day and age, which will mean constructing an artificial elephant. Polly, take this pole and the elephant's head that's hanging on that wall, while you, Jesse, take this bottle and pour it whenever Galy Gay wants to check if the elephant can make water. And I shall spread this map over the two of you. *They build an artificial elephant.* We'll present him with this elephant and bring along a buyer, and then if he sells the elephant we'll arrest him and say: How do you come to be selling a WD elephant? At that point he will surely think it better to be Jeraiah Jip, a soldier proceeding to the northern frontier, than Galy Gay, a criminal with some chance of actually being shot.

A SOLDIER: Do you people really imagine he's going to take that thing for an elephant?

JESSE: Is it all that bad?

URIAH: He'll take it for an elephant all right, let me tell you.

He'd take this beer bottle for an elephant if somebody points at it and says: I want to buy that elephant.

SOLDIER: Then you need a buyer.

URIAH *calling out*: Widow Begbick! *Begbick steps forward.* Will you play the buyer?

BEGBICK: Yes, because my beer waggon is going to get left behind unless somebody helps me to pack it up.

URIAH: Just tell the man who's about to come in that you want to buy this elephant, then we'll help pack up your canteen. And you must pay cash.

BEGBICK: Right. *She goes back to her place.*

GALY GAY *enters*: Has the elephant arrived?

URIAH: Mr Gay, your bit of business is under way. It concerns the unregistered army surplus elephant Billy Humph. The deal consists in auctioning him off unobtrusively – only to private bidders of course.

GALY GAY: That is entirely clear. Who is auctioning him off?

URIAH: Someone who signs as owner.

GALY GAY: Who is to sign as owner?

URIAH: Would you care to sign as owner, Mr Gay?

GALY GAY: Have we a buyer?

URIAH: Yes.

GALY GAY: My name, of course, must not be mentioned.

URIAH: Right. Would you care to smoke a cigar?

GALY GAY *suspiciously*: Why?

URIAH: Just to keep you from worrying, as the elephant has a slight cold.

GALY GAY: Where is the buyer?

BEGBICK *comes forward*: Oh, Mr Galy Gay, I am looking for an elephant. Would you have one, by any chance?

GALY GAY: Widow Begbick, I might have one for you.

BEGBICK: But first of all take my wall down, the gunners will soon be here.

THE SOLDIERS: Yes, Widow Begbick.

The soldiers take down one wall of the canteen. The elephant is dimly visible.

JESSE *to Begbick*: I tell you, Widow Begbick, if you take the long view what is happening here is an historic event. For what is happening here? Personality itself is being put

under the microscope, we are getting under the skin of the colourful character. Steps are being taken. Technology intervenes. At the lathe or at the conveyor belt great men and little men are the same, even in stature. Personality! Remember that the ancient Assyrians, Widow Begbick, depicted personality as a tree branching out. Like this, branching out! After which, Widow Begbick, it branches in again. How does Copernicus put it? What turns? The earth turns. The earth, in other words the human race. According to Copernicus. I.e., man is not in the centre. Take a look at him, now. Is that what is supposed to stand in the centre? It's antediluvian. Man is nothing. Modern science has proved that everything is relative. What does that mean? Table, bench, water, shochorn – all relative. You, Widow Begbick, me – relative. Look into my eyes, Widow Begbick, it's an historic moment. Man is in the centre, but only relatively speaking. *Both go off.*

No. I

URIAH *calls out*: Number One: The Elephant Deal. The MG section transfers an elephant to the man whose name must not be mentioned.

GALY GAY: One more swig from the cherry brandy bottle, one more puff at the Corona Corona, then the plunge into life.

URIAH *introduces the elephant to Galy Gay*: Billy Humph, champion of Bengal, elephant in Her Majesty's service.

GALY GAY *sees the elephant and is alarmed*: Is this the WD elephant?

A SOLDIER: He's got a bad cold, as you can see from his scarf.

GALY GAY *worried, walks round the elephant*: His scarf isn't the worst thing about him.

BEGBICK: I am the buyer. *She points to the elephant.* Sell me that elephant.

GALY GAY: Do you truly want to buy this elephant?

BEGBICK: It makes no difference how big or small he is; it's just that I've wanted to buy an elephant ever since I was a child.

GALY GAY: Is he truly what you imagined?

BEGBICK: When I was a child I wanted an elephant as big as the Hindu Kush, but today this one will do.

GALY GAY: Well, Widow Begbick, if you truly wish to buy this elephant I am the owner.

A SOLDIER *comes running from the rear*: Psst . . . psst . . . Bloody Five is going round the camp checking all railway trucks.

THE SOLDIERS: The Human Typhoon!

BEGBICK: Stay here; nobody's taking this elephant off me. *Begbick and the soldiers hurry off.*

URIAH *to Galy Gay*: Look after the elephant for a moment, will you? *Hands him the rope.*

GALY GAY: But what about me, Mr Uriah, where am I supposed to go?

URIAH: Just stay there. *He runs off after the other soldiers. Galy Gay holds the rope by the extreme end.*

GALY GAY *alone*: My mother used to say: No one knows anything for sate. But you know nothing whatsoever. This morning, Galy Gay, you went out to buy a small fish and now you have got a large elephant, and nobody knows what will happen tomorrow. It's no concern of yours so long as you get your cheque.

URIAH *looks in*: So help me, he's not even looking at the elephant. He's keeping as far from it as he can. *Fairchild is seen passing by in the background.* The Tiger of Kilkoa was just passing by.

Uriah, Begbick and the rest of the soldiers reappear.

No. II

URIAH *calls out*: And now for Number Two: the Elephant Auction. The man whose name must not be mentioned sells the elephant.

Galy Gay fetches a bell; Begbick puts a wooden bucket upside down in mid-stage.

A SOLDIER: Got any more doubts about that elephant, mate?

GALY GAY: As somebody is buying him I have no doubts.

URIAH: That's it: if somebody is buying him he must be all right.

GALY GAY: I can't say no to that. Elephant equals elephant, particularly when he is being bought.

He mounts the bucket to auction off the elephant, who is standing beside him in the centre of the group.

GALY GAY: Let's get on with the sale. I hereby invite bids for Billy Humph, the champion of Bengal. He was born, as sure as you see him standing here, in the southern Punjab. Seven Rajahs stood by his cradle. His mother was white. He is sixty-five years old. That's no great age. Thirteen hundredweight, he weighs, and a forest that has to be cleared is to him like a blade of grass in the wind. Billy Humph, as you see him now, represents a small goldmine for his eventual possessor.

URIAH: And here comes Widow Begbick with the cheque.

BEGBICK: Does this elephant belong to you?

GALY GAY: Like my own foot.

A SOLDIER: Billy must be pretty old, to judge from his uncommonly stiff deportment.

BEGBICK: So you will have to bring the price down a little.

GALY GAY: His cost was two hundred rupees ex works, and he will be worth that until he goes to his grave.

BEGBICK *examines him*: Two hundred rupees with a belly sagging like that?

GALY GAY: In my view he is nevertheless the thing for a widow.

BEGBICK: Very well. But is he in good health? *Billy Humph makes water.* That will do. I see that he is a healthy elephant. Five hundred rupees.

GALY GAY: Five hundred rupees. Going, going, gone at five hundred rupees. Widow Begbick, you will take over this elephant from me as its previous owner, and settle by cheque.

BEGBICK: Your name?

GALY GAY: Is not to be mentioned.

BEGBICK: Kindly lend me a pencil, Mr Uriah, so that I may make out a cheque to this gentleman who wishes his name not to be mentioned.

URIAH *aside to the soldiers*: Arrest him when he takes the cheque.

BEGBICK: Here is your cheque, man whose name is not to be mentioned.

GALY GAY: And here, Widow Begbick, is your elephant.

A SOLDIER *laying his hand on Galy Gay's shoulder*: In the name of the British Army, what are you up to?

GALY GAY: Me? Nothing. *He laughs foolishly.*

THE SOLDIER: What is that elephant you have got there?

GALY GAY: Which elephant do you mean?

THE SOLDIER: The one behind you, broadly speaking. No prevaricating, now.

GALY GAY: I know not the elephant.

SOLDIERS: Cor!

A SOLDIER: We can testify that this gentleman said the elephant belonged to him.

BEGBICK: He said it belonged to him like his own foot.

GALY GAY *starts to go*: Unfortunately I have to go as my wife is expecting me urgently. *He forces his way through the group.* I'll be back to discuss the matter with you. Good night. *To Billy, who is following him*: You stay here, Billy, don't be so pig-headed. That's sugar cane growing over there.

URIAH: Halt! Cover that criminal with your service pistols, yes, a criminal, that's what he is.

Polly, inside Billy Humph, laughs loudly. Uriah hits him.

URIAH: Shut up, Polly!

The front canvas slips, leaving Polly visible.

POLLY: Damnation!

Galy Gay, now utterly bewildered, looks at Polly. Then he looks from one to the other. The elephant runs away.

BEGBICK: What is going on? That's no elephant, it's just men and tarpaulin. The whole thing's phoney. Such a phoney elephant for my genuine money!

URIAH: Widow Begbick, the criminal will forthwith be bound with cords and flung into the latrine.

The soldiers bind Galy Gay and put him into a pit so that only his head is visible. The artillery is heard rolling by.

BEGBICK: The gunners are loading up. When are you lot going to pack my canteen? You know, it is not just your man that has got to be dismantled but my canteen too.

All the soldiers begin packing up the canteen. Before they have finished Uriah chases them away. Begbick comes forward with a basket loaded with dirty tarpaulins, kneels beside a small trapdoor and washes them. Galy Gay listens to her song.

In this way I too had a name
And those who heard that name in the city said 'It's a
good name'
But one night I drank four glasses of schnapps
And one morning I found chalked on my door
A bad word.
Then the milkman took back my milk again.
My name was finished.
Like linen that once was white and gets dirty
And can go white once more if you wash it
But hold it up to the light, and look: it's not
The same linen.
So don't speak your name so distinctly. What is the point?

Considering that you are always using it to name a different person.

And wherefore such loud opinions, forget them.

What were they, did you say? Never remember

Anything longer than its own duration.

She sings:

Don't try to hold on to the wave
That's breaking against your foot: so long as
You stand in the stream fresh waves
Will always keep breaking against it.

She goes off. Uriah and the soldiers come in from the rear.

No. III

URIAH calls out: And now comes Number Three: the Trial of the Man Whose Name is Not to be Mentioned. Form a circle round the criminal and interrogate him and do not stop until you know the naked truth.

GALY GAY: May I have permission to say something?

URIAH: You have said a lot tonight, mister. Does anyone know what the man was called who put the elephant up for auction?

A SOLDIER: He was called Galy Gay.

URIAH: Can anyone testify to that?

THE SOLDIERS: We can testify to that.

URIAH: What has the accused got to say on that point?

GALY GAY: He was someone whose name was not to be mentioned.

The soldiers grumble.

A SOLDIER: I heard him say he was Galy Gay.

URIAH: Isn't that you?

GALY GAY *slyly*: Well, supposing I were Galy Gay, perhaps I might be the man you are looking for.

URIAH: Then you are not Galy Gay?

GALY GAY *under his breath*: No, I am not.

URIAH: And perhaps you were not even present when Billy Humph was put up for auction?

GALY GAY: No, I was not present.

URIAH: But you saw that it was someone called Galy Gay who conducted the sale?

GALY GAY: Yes, I can testify to that.

URIAH: So now you are saying that you were present after all?

GALY GAY: I can testify to that.

URIAH: Did you all hear? Do you see the moon? The moon has risen, and here he is up to his neck in this crooked elephant business. As for Billy Humph, wasn't there something a bit wrong with him?

JESSE: There certainly was.

A SOLDIER: The man called it an elephant, but it was nothing of the sort, just made of paper.

URIAH: In other words he was selling a phoney elephant. Which of course carries the death penalty. What have you to say to that?

GALY GAY: Perhaps another elephant might not have taken him for an elephant. It is very hard to keep all this straight, your Honour.

URIAH: Indeed it is extremely complicated, but I think you will have to be shot none the less, because your behaviour has been highly suspicious. *Galy Gay is silent.* Come to think of it, I have heard of a soldier by the name of Jip who even answered to that name at sundry roll calls, while trying to make people think his name was Galy Gay. Are you by any chance the Jip in question?

GALY GAY: No, certainly not.

URIAH: So you are not called Jip? Then what is your name? No answer? Then you are a man whose name is not to be

mentioned. Are you by any chance the man at the elephant auction whose name was not to be mentioned? What? Again no answer? That is immensely suspicious, almost enough to get you convicted. What is more, the criminal who sold the elephant is said to have been a man with a moustache, and you have got a moustache. Come on, men, all this calls for discussion. *He goes to the rear with the soldiers. Two of them stay with Galy Gay.*

URIAH *as he leaves*: Now he doesn't want to be Galy Gay any more.

GALY GAY *after a pause*: Can you two hear what they are saying?

A SOLDIER: No.

GALY GAY: Are they saying that I am this Galy Gay?

SECOND SOLDIER: They are saying it's no longer all that certain.

GALY GAY: Better remember: one man equals no man.

SECOND SOLDIER: Anybody know who this war's against?

FIRST SOLDIER: If they need cotton it'll be Tibet, and if they need wool it'll be Pamir.

JESSE *arriving*: Surely that's Galy Gay sitting tied up here?

FIRST SOLDIER: Hey, you, answer him.

GALY GAY: I think you're mistaking me for someone else, Jesse. Take a good look at me.

JESSE: Ha, aren't you Galy Gay? *Galy Gay shakes his head.* Leave us for a moment; he has just been sentenced to death, so I have to speak to him.

The two soldiers go to the rear.

GALY GAY: Has it come to that? Oh, Jesse, help me, you are a great soldier.

JESSE: How did it happen?

GALY GAY: Well, Jesse, it's like this: I don't know. There we were, smoking and drinking, and I talked my soul away.

JESSE: I heard them say it's someone called Galy Gay who's supposed to be killed.

GALY GAY: Out of the question.

JESSE: Ha, aren't you Galy Gay?

GALY GAY: Wipe the sweat from my face, Jesse.

JESSE *does so*: Look me straight in the eye, I'm your friend

Jesse. Aren't you Galy Gay from Kilkoa?

GALY GAY: No, you must have got it wrong.

JESSE: There were four of us when we left Kankerdan.

Were you with us then?

GALY GAY: Yes, at Kankerdan I was with you.

JESSE *goes to the rear to the other soldiers*: The moon is not yet up, and he is already wanting to be Jip.

URIAH: All the same, I think we'd better put a little more fear of death into him.

The artillery is heard rolling by.

BEGBICK *enters*: That's the gunners, Uriah. Help me fold up the awnings. And the rest of you, carry on taking it down. *The soldiers go on loading sections of the canteen into the waggon. Just one plank wall remains standing. Uriah and Begbick fold the tarpaulins.*

I spoke to many people and listened

Carefully and heard many opinions

And heard many say of many things: 'That is for sure'.

But when they came back they spoke differently from the way they spoke earlier

And it was something else of which they said: 'That is for sure'.

At that I told myself: of all sure things

The surest is doubt.

Uriah goes to the rear. So does Begbick with her laundry basket, passing Galy Gay. She sings:

Don't try to hold on to the wave

That's breaking against your foot: so long as

You stand in the stream fresh waves

Will always keep breaking against it.

GALY GAY: Widow Begbick, may I ask you to get a pair of scissors and cut my moustache off?

BEGBICK: What for?

GALY GAY: I know what for all right.

Begbick cuts off his moustache, wraps it in a cloth and takes it to the waggon. The soldiers reappear.

No. IV

URIAH *calls out*: And now for Number Four: the Execution of Galy Gay in the military cantonment at Kilkoa.

BEGBICK *comes up to him*: Mr Uriah, I have something for you here. *She whispers something in his ear and gives him the cloth with the moustache in it.*

URIAH *goes to the latrine pit where Galy Gay is*: Has the accused man anything further to say?

GALY GAY: Your Honour, they tell me the criminal who sold the elephant was a man with a moustache, and I have no moustache.

URIAH *silently showing him the open cloth with the moustache*: And what is this? You've really convicted yourself this time, my man, because cutting off that moustache of yours just shows your guilty conscience. Come now, man without a name, and hear the verdict of the Kilkoa court-martial which says that you are to be shot by a firing squad of five. *The soldiers drag Galy Gay out of the latrine pit.*

GALY GAY *shouting*: You can't do that to me.

URIAH: You'll find that we can, though. Listen carefully, my man: first because you stole and sold a WD elephant - which is theft -, secondly because you sold an elephant which was no elephant - which is fraud -, and thirdly because you are unable to produce any kind of name or identity document and may well be a spy - which is high treason.

GALY GAY: Oh, Uriah, why are you treating me like this?

URIAH: Come along now and conduct yourself as a good soldier like the army taught you. Quick march! Get moving so they can shoot you.

GALY GAY: Oh, do not be so hasty. I am not the man you are looking for. I have never met him. My name is Jip, I can swear it is. What is an elephant compared to a man's life? I didn't see that elephant, it was just a rope I was holding. Don't go away, please. I'm someone quite different. I am not Galy Gay. I am not.

JESSE: Oh yes you are, and nobody else. Under the three rubber trees of Kilkoa Galy Gay will see his blood flowing. Get moving, Galy Gay.

GALY GAY: O God! Wait a minute, there has to be an official record listing the charges and showing that I didn't do it and that my name is not Galy Gay. Every detail must be weighed. You can't rush this sort of thing when a man is about to be slaughtered.

JESSE: Quick march!

GALY GAY: What do you mean, quick march? I am not the man you're looking for. All I wanted was to buy a fish, but where do you find fish around here? What are those guns rolling by? What is that battle music blaring away? No, I am not budging. I'll cling to the grass. The whole thing must stop. And why is no one here when a man is being slaughtered?

BEGBICK: Once they start loading the elephants if you lot aren't ready you can be written off. *She goes off.*

Galy Gay is led back and forth; he strides like the protagonist in a tragedy.

JESSE: Make way for the criminal whom the court martial has condemned to death.

SOLDIERS: Look, there's someone who's going to be shot. Perhaps it's a pity, he's not old yet. – And he doesn't know how he got into this.

URIAH: Halt! Would you like to relieve yourself one last time?

GALY GAY: Yes.

URIAH: Guard him closely.

GALY GAY: They say that once the elephants arrive the soldiers will have to leave, so I must take my time to allow the elephants to get here.

SOLDIERS: Hurry up!

GALY GAY: I can't. Is that the moon?

SOLDIERS: Yes. – It's getting late.

GALY GAY: Isn't that the Widow Begbick's bar where we always used to drink?

URIAH: No, my boy. This is the rifle range and here is the 'Johnny don't wet yourself' wall. Hey! Get fell in over there, you lot! And load your rifles. There should be five of them.

SOLDIERS: It's so hard to see in this light.

URIAH: Yes, it is very hard.

GALY GAY: Wait a moment, this won't do. You people must be able to see when you shoot.

URIAH *to Jesse*: Take that paper lantern and hold it beside him. *He blindfolds Galy Gay. In a loud voice*: Load your rifles! *Under his breath*: What are you doing, Polly? That's a live round you're putting in. Take it out.

POLLY: So sorry, I almost really loaded. And that could almost have led to a real disaster.

The elephants are heard passing in the background. The soldiers stand for a moment as if transfixed.

BEGBICK *off, calls*: The elephants!

URIAH: It's all no use. He has got to be shot. I'll count up to three. One!

GALY GAY: All right, Uriah, enough is enough. The elephants have arrived, haven't they? Am I supposed to go on standing here, Uriah? But why are you all keeping so horribly still?

URIAH: Two!

GALY GAY *laughing*: You're a queer cuss, Uriah. I can't see you, because you blindfolded me. But your voice sounds just like if you were dead serious about it.

URIAH: And one more makes . . .

GALY GAY: Whoah, don't say three, or you'll regret it. If you shoot now you're bound to hit me. Whoah! No, not yet. Listen to me. I confess! I confess I don't know what has been happening to me. Believe me, and don't laugh: I'm a man who doesn't know who he is. But I am not Galy Gay, that much I do know. I'm not the man who is supposed to be shot. Who am I, though? Because I've forgotten. Last night when it rained I still knew. It did rain last night, didn't it? I beseech you, when you look over here or where this voice is coming from, it's me, I beseech you. Call up that place, say Galy Gay or something to it, be merciful, give me a bit of meat. Where it goes in will be Galy Gay, and likewise where it comes out. Or at the very least if you come across a man who has forgotten who he is, that'll be me. And it's him I am beseeching you to let go.

Uriah has whispered something in Polly's ear; then Polly runs up behind Galy Gay and raises a big club over his head

URIAH: Once equals never! Three!

Galy Gay lets out a scream.

URIAH: Fire!

Galy Gay falls down in a faint.

POLLY: Whoah! He fell of his own accord.

URIAH shouts: Fire! So that he can hear he's dead.

The soldiers fire into the air.

URIAH: Leave him there and get ready to move off.

Galy Gay is left lying as all the others exeunt.

No. IVa

Begbick and the three are sitting outside the packed waggon at a table with five chairs. To one side lies Galy Gay covered with a sack.

JESSE: Here's the sergeant coming. Can you stop him poking his nose into our business, Widow Begbick?

Fairchild is seen approaching in civilian clothes.

BEGBICK: Yes, because that is a civilian coming. *To Fairchild, who is standing in the doorway:* Come and join us, Charles.

FAIRCHILD: There you sit, you Gomorrah! *Standing over Galy Gay:* And what is this sozzled carcass? *Silence. He pounds on the table.* Atten - shun!

URIAH *from behind* knocks his hat down over his ears: Stop your gob, civvy!
Laughter.

FAIRCHILD: Go ahead, mutiny, you sons of a gun! Observe my suit and laugh! Tear up my name that is famous from Calcutta to Cooch Behar! Give me a drink and then I'll shoot you!

URIAH: Come on, Fairchild old boy, show us what a brilliant shot you are.

FAIRCHILD: No.

BEGBICK: Nine women out of every ten fall for these top-class riflemen.

POLLY: Get cracking, Fairchild.

BEGBICK: You really should, for my sake.

FAIRCHILD: O thou Babylon! Here I place one egg - here. How many paces shall I make it?

POLLY: Four.

FAIRCHILD *takes ten paces, which Begbick counts aloud:* Here I have one perfectly ordinary service revolver. *He fires.*

JESSE *goes over to the egg:* The egg is untouched.

POLLY: Utterly.

URIAH: If anything it's got bigger.

FAIRCHILD: Strange. I thought I could hit it.

Loud laughter.

FAIRCHILD: Give me a drink. *He drinks.* I shall squash you all like bedbugs as sure as my name is Bloody Five.

URIAH: How did you actually come by the name Bloody Five?

JESSE *seated again:* Give us a demonstration.

FAIRCHILD: Shall I tell the story, Mrs Begbick?

BEGBICK: Eight women out of every nine would find this gory man divine.

FAIRCHILD: Right: here we have the River Chadze. There stand five Hindus. Hands tied behind their backs. Then along comes me with an ordinary service revolver, waves it in their faces a bit and says: this revolver has been misfiring. It has got to be tested. Like this. Then I fire – bang! down you go, that man there! – and so on four times more. That's all there was to it, gentlemen. *He sits down.*

JESSE: So that is how you came by your great name, which has made this widow your slave for life? From a human point of view, of course, one might regard your conduct as unbecoming and say you are simply a swine.

BEGBICK: Are you a monster?

FAIRCHILD: I would be very sorry if you took it like that. Your opinion means a lot to me.

BEGBICK: But do you accept it as final?

FAIRCHILD *looking deeply into her eyes*: Absolutely.

BEGBICK: In that case, my dear man, my opinion is that I must get my canteen packed up and have no more time for private matters, for now I can hear the lancers trotting past as they take their horses to be loaded.

The lancers are heard riding by.

POLLY: Are you still insisting on your own selfish desires, sir, even though the lancers are loading their horses and you have been told that for military reasons this canteen has to be packed up?

FAIRCHILD *bellowing*: Yes, I am. Give me a drink.

POLLY: All right, but we'll soon settle your hash, my boy.

JESSE: Sir, not all that far from here a man clad in British Army service dress is lying under a rough tarpaulin. He is recuperating after a hard day's work. A mere twenty-four hours ago he was still – from a military point of view – a babe in arms. His wife's voice frightened him. Without guidance he was incapable of buying a fish. In return for a cigar he was prepared to forget his father's name. Some

people took him in hand, because they happened to know of a place for him. Since then, admittedly at the cost of painful trials, he has become a man who will play his part in the battles to come. You on the other hand have declined into a mere civilian. At a time when the army is off to restore order on the northern frontier, a move that demands beer, you big shitheap are deliberately hindering the proprietress of an army canteen from getting her beer waggon entrained.

POLLY: How can you hope to check our names at the last roll-call and enter all four of them in your sergeant's notebook as per regulations?

URIAH: How can you possibly hope to face a company thirsting to confront its countless enemies given the state you're in? Get up!

Fairchild rises unsteadily.

POLLY: Call that getting up?

He gives Fairchild a kick in the bottom, which makes him fall down.

URIAH: Is this what they used to call the Human Typhoon? Chuck that wreck into the bushes or he'll demoralise the company.

The three start dragging Fairchild to the rear.

A SOLDIER *rushes in and stops at the rear*: Is Sergeant Charles Fairchild here? The General says he is to hurry up and get his company fallen in at the goods station.

FAIRCHILD: Don't tell him it's me.

JESSE: There is no such sergeant here.

No. V

Begbick and the three contemplate Galy Gay, who is still lying under the sack.

URIAH: Widow Begbick, we have reached the end of our assemblage. We believe that our man has now been reconstructed.

POLLY: I'd say all he needs now is a human voice.

JESSE: Have you got a human voice for this kind of eventuality, Widow Begbick?

BEGBICK: Yes, and something for him to eat. Take this crate here and write 'Galy Gay' on it in black chalk and then put a cross. *They do so.* Then form a funeral procession and bury him. The whole operation must not last more than nine minutes, as it's already a minute past two.

URIAH *calls out*: Number Five: Obsequies and Interment of Galy Gay, last of the personalities, in the year nineteen hundred and twenty-five. *The soldiers enter, doing up their packs.* Pick up that crate there and form a neat funeral procession. *The soldiers form up at the rear with the crate.*

JESSE: And I shall step up to him and say: You are to deliver a funeral oration for Galy Gay. *To Begbick*: He won't eat anything.

BEGBICK: That kind eats even when he's nobody.
She takes her basket over to Galy Gay, removes his sack and gives him food.

GALY GAY: More!
She gives him more; then she signals to Uriah and the procession comes downstage.

GALY GAY: Who's that they're carrying?

BEGBICK: That is someone who was shot at the last minute.

GALY GAY: What is he called?

BEGBICK: Wait a moment. Unless I am mistaken he was called Galy Gay.

GALY GAY: And what's to happen to him now?

BEGBICK: To whom?

GALY GAY: To this Galy Gay fellow.

BEGBICK: Now they're going to bury him.

GALY GAY: Was he a good man or a bad one?

BEGBICK: Oh, he was a dangerous man.

GALY GAY: Yes, he was shot, wasn't he; I was present.

The procession passes. Jesse stops and speaks to Galy Gay.

JESSE: Surely that is Jip? Jip, you must get up at once and

give the address at this fellow Galy Gay's funeral, as you probably knew him better than any of us.

GALY GAY: Hey, are you actually able to see me down here?
Jesse points at him. Yes, that's right. And what am I doing now? *He bends his arm.*

JESSE: Bending your arm.

GALY GAY: So I've bent my arm twice now. And now?

JESSE: Now you are walking like a soldier.

GALY GAY: Do you people walk the same way?

JESSE: Exactly the same way.

GALY GAY: And how will you address me when you want something?

JESSE: Jip.

GALY GAY: Try saying: Jip, walk around.

JESSE: Jip, walk around. Walk around under the rubber trees and rehearse your funeral oration for Galy Gay.

GALY GAY *slowly walks over to the crate*: Is this the crate he's in?

He walks around the procession as they hold up the crate. He walks faster and faster and tries to run away. Begbick holds him back.

BEGBICK: Are you looking for something? The Army's one remedy for all diseases, up to and including cholera, is castor oil. No soldier has any disease that castor oil won't cure. Would you like some castor oil?

GALY GAY *shakes his head*:

My mother on her calendar marked the day
When I came out, and the thing that cried was me.
This bundle of flesh, nails and hair
Is me, is me.

JESSE: Yes, Jeraiah Jip, Jeraiah Jip from Tipperary.

GALY GAY: Someone who carried cucumbers for tips.
Swindled by an elephant, he had to sleep quickly on a wooden chair for lack of time, because the fish water was

boiling in his hut. Nor had the machine-gun yet been cleaned, for they presented him with a cigar and five rifle barrels of which one was missing. Oh, what was his name?

URIAH: Jip. Jeraiah Jip.

Sounds of train whistling.

SOLDIERS: The trains are whistling. – Now it's every man for himself. *They fling down the crate and run off.*

JESSE: The convoy leaves in six minutes. He'll have to come as he is.

URIAH: Listen, Polly, and you too, Jesse. Fellow-soldiers! We are three survivors, and now that they have started sawing through the hair by which the three of us are suspended over the precipice you had better listen carefully to what I say beneath the last wall of Kilkoa at approximately two o'clock in the morning. The man we want must be allowed a little time, since it is for all eternity that he will be changing. Therefore I, Uriah Shelley, am now drawing my service revolver and threatening you with instant death if any of you moves.

POLLY: But if he looks inside the crate we are sunk.

Galy Gay sits down beside the crate.

GALY GAY:

I could not, without instant death
Gaze into a crate at a drained face
Of some person once familiar to me from the water's surface
Into which a man looked who, so I realise, died.
Therefore I am unable to open this crate
Because this fear is in the both of me, for perhaps
I am the Both which has just come about
On our earth's transformable top surface:
A chopped-off batlike thing hanging
Betwixt rubber trees and hut, a night bird
A thing that would gladly be cheerful.
One man equals no man. Some one has to call him.

Therefore

I would gladly have looked into this chest
As the heart clings to its parents.

Given a forest, which would still be there
If no one walked through it, and the very man
Who walked through where a forest once was:
How do they recognise one another?
When he sees his own footprints among the reeds
With water spurting into them, does that puddle mean anything to him?
What is your opinion?

By what sign does Galy Gay know himself
To be Galy Gay?
Suppose his arm was cut off
And he found it in the chink of a wall
Would Galy Gay's eye know Galy Gay's arm
And Galy Gay's foot cry out: This is the one!
Therefore I am not looking into this chest.
Moreover in my opinion the difference
Between yes and no is not all that great.
And if Galy Gay were not Galy Gay
Then he would be the drinking son of some mother who
Would be some other man's mother if she
Were not his, and thus would anyway drink.
And would have been produced in March, not in September
Unless instead of March he had
Been produced only in September of this year, or already
In September the year before
Which represents that one small year's difference
That turns one man into another man.
And I, the one I and the other I
Are used and accordingly usable.
And since I never gazed at that elephant

I shall close an eye to what concerns myself
And shed what is not likeable about me and thereby
Be pleasant.

Noise of moving trains.

GALY GAY: And what trains are those? Where are they off to?

BEGBICK: This army is heading straight into the fire-belching cannon of the battles that have been planned for the north. Tonight a hundred thousand will march in a single direction. That direction is from south to north. When a man gets caught up in such a stream he seeks out two to march beside him, one right and one left. He looks for a rifle and a haversack and an identity disc to go round his neck and a number on that identity disc so that when they find him they can tell what unit he belonged to, so he can be given his place in a mass grave. Have you got an identity disc?

GALY GAY: Yes.

BEGBICK: What's on it?

GALY GAY: Jeraiah Jip.

BEGBICK: Well, Jeraiah Jip, better have a wash, for you look like a rubbish heap. Make yourself ready. The army is leaving for the northern frontier. The fire-belching cannon of the northern battlefields are awaiting it. The army is thirsting to restore order in the populous cities of the north.

GALY GAY *washing*: Who is the enemy?

BEGBICK: Up to now it has not been announced which country we are making war on. But it begins to look more and more like Tibet.

GALY GAY: You know something, Widow Begbick: One man equals no man, until some one calls him.

The soldiers march in with their packs.

SOLDIERS: Everyone on board! - Get entrained! - Are you all present and correct?

URIAH: In one moment. Your funeral oration, Comrade Jip, your funeral oration!

GALY GAY *goes to the coffin*: Therefore raise up Widow Begbick's crate which contains this mysterious corpse, lifting it two feet high and plunging it six feet deep in the Kilkoa soil here, and listen to his funeral oration rendered by Jeraiah Jip from Tipperary, a very difficult job as I am unprepared. But never mind: here lies Galy Gay, a man who was shot. He set out to buy a small fish one morning, had acquired a large elephant by that evening and was shot in the course of the same night. Do not imagine, dearly beloved brethren, that he was of no consequence during his lifetime. Indeed he owned a straw hut on the fringes of the town as well as various other things which had best be passed over in silence. It was no great crime that he committed, good man that he was. And they can say what they like, and it was really an oversight, and I was much too drunk, gentlemen, but Man equals Man and that is why they had to shoot him. And now the wind is perceptibly cooler as it always is before dawn, and I think we should get away from here, it's an uneasy place in other ways too. *He steps away from the coffin*; But why have you people got all your kit?

POLLY: You see, this morning we are to board the waggons going to the northern frontier.

GALY GAY: Well, why haven't I got all my kit?

JESSE: Well, why hasn't he got all his kit?

Soldiers bring his equipment.

JESSE: Here's your stuff, captain.

Some soldiers carry a large bundle wrapped in straw mats to the train.

URIAH: He took his time, the swine. But we'll get him yet.

Pointing to the bundle: That was the Human Typhoon. *All go off.*

10

In the Moving Train

Just before dawn. The company are asleep in their hammocks. Jesse, Uriah and Polly are sitting up on guard. Galy Gay is sleeping.

JESSE: The world is dreadful. Men cannot be relied on.

POLLY: The vilest and weakest thing alive is man.

JESSE: Through dust and water we have footed it down every road in this oversized country from the mountains of the Hindu Kush to the great plains of the southern Punjab; yet from Benares to Calcutta, by sun and moon, we have seen nothing but treachery. This man whom we took under our wing and who has swiped our blankets and ruined our night's sleep is like a leaky oil can. Yes and no are the same to him, he says one thing today another tomorrow. Ah, Uriah, we have tried and failed. Let us go to Leokadja Begbick, who is sitting up with the sergeant to save him from falling off his bunk, and ask her to lie down with this man so that he feels good and asks no questions. Old as she is there is still warmth in her, and once a man is lying with a woman he knows all the answers. Get up, Polly.

They go over to Widow Begbick.

JESSE: Come in, Widow Begbick, we are at a loss what to do, and are frightened of falling asleep, and here we are with this man who is ill. So you lie down with him, pretend he's spent the night with you, and make him feel good.

BEGBICK *enters half asleep*: I'll do it for seven weeks' pay.

URIAH: You shall have all we earn for seven weeks.

Begbick lies down with Galy Gay. Jesse covers them with papers.

GALY GAY *waking up*: What is it that's shaking so?

URIAH *to the others*: That is the elephant nibbling at your hut, you sniveller.

GALY GAY: What is it that's hissing so?

URIAH *to the others*: That is the fish boiling in the water, you pleasant man.

GALY GAY *gets up with difficulty and looks out of the window*: A woman, sleeping bags. Telegraph poles. It's a train.

JESSE: Pretend you are all asleep.

The three pretend to be asleep.

GALY GAY *goes up to a sleeping bag*: Hey, you.

SOLDIER: What do you want?

GALY GAY: Where are you people going?

SOLDIER *opening one eye*: To the front. *Goes back to sleep.*

GALY GAY: These are soldiers. *Looks out of the window again, then wakes another.* Mr Soldier, what is the time? *No answer.*

Almost morning. What day of the week is it?

SOLDIER: Between Thursday and Friday.

GALY GAY: I must get off. Hey, you, the train must be stopped.

SOLDIER: This train doesn't stop.

GALY GAY: If this train doesn't stop and everyone's sleeping I'd better lie down too and sleep till it does stop. *Sees Widow Begbick.* There's a woman lying beside me. Who is this woman who lay beside me in the night?

JESSE: Hullo, mate, good morning.

GALY GAY: Oh, I'm so glad to see you, Mr Jesse.

JESSE: Aren't you living it up? Lying there with a woman beside you and letting everybody see.

GALY GAY: Isn't it remarkable? Positively indecent, eh? But a man is a man, you know. He is not always master of himself. For instance, here am I waking up, and there's a woman lying beside me.

JESSE: Why, so there is.

GALY GAY: And would you believe that there are times when I don't know a woman who is lying beside me like this in the morning? To be perfectly frank and speaking as man to man, I don't know this woman. And, Mr Jesse, as one man to another, would you be able to tell me who she is?

JESSE: Oh you line-shooter! This time of course it's Widow

Leokadja Begbick. Duck your head in a pail of water and you'll know your lady friend all right. I don't suppose you know your own name, then, either?

GALY GAY: I do.

JESSE: All right, what is your name?

GALY GAY *is silent*.

JESSE: So you know your name?

GALY GAY: Yes.

JESSE: That's good. A man needs to know who he is when he is off to the war.

GALY GAY: Is there a war?

JESSE: Yes, the Tibetan War.

GALY GAY: The Tibetan. But suppose just for the moment a man didn't know who he is, that would be funny when he is off to the war, wouldn't it? Now you mentioned Tibet, sir, that's a place I always wanted to see. I used to know a man had a wife came from the province of Sikkim, which is on the Tibetan frontier. They are good people there, she used to say.

BEGBICK: Jippie, where are you?

GALY GAY: Who is she talking to?

JESSE: I think she is talking to you.

GALY GAY: Here.

BEGBICK: Come and give us a kiss, Jippie.

GALY GAY: I don't mind if I do, but I think you have got me a bit muddled with someone else.

BEGBICK: Jippie!

JESSE: This gentleman claims his head is not quite clear; he says he doesn't know you.

BEGBICK: Oh, how can you humiliate me so in front of this gentleman?

GALY GAY: If I duck my head in this pail of water I'll know you right away. *He sticks his head into the pail of water.*

BEGBICK: Do you know me now?

GALY GAY *lying*: Yes.

POLLY: Then you also know who you yourself are?

GALY GAY *slyly*: Didn't I know that?

POLLY: No, because you were out of your mind and claimed to be someone else.

GALY GAY: Who was I, then?

JESSE: You're not getting much better, I see. What's more I still think you are a public menace, because last night when we called you by your right name you turned as dangerous as any murderer.

GALY GAY: All I know is that my name is Galy Gay.

JESSE: Listen to that, you people, he's starting all over again. You'd better call him Galy Gay like he says, or he'll throw another fit.

URIAH: Oh bollocks. Mr Jip from Ireland, consider yourself free to play the wild man right up to the point where you get tied to a post outside the canteen and the night rain comes down. We who have been your mates since the battle of the River Chadze would sell our shirts to make things easier for you.

GALY GAY: No need for that about the shirts.

URIAH: Call him anything he wants.

JESSE: Shut up, Uriah. Would you care for a glass of water, Galy Gay?

GALY GAY: Yes, that is my name.

JESSE: Of course, Galy Gay. How could you be called anything else? Just take it easy, lie down. Tomorrow they will put you in hospital, in a nice comfortable bed with plenty of castor oil, and that will relieve you, Galy Gay. Tread delicately, all of you, our friend Jip, I mean Galy Gay, is unwell.

GALY GAY: Let me tell you, gentlemen, the situation is beyond me. But when it is a matter of carrying a cabin trunk, never mind how heavy it is, they say every cabin trunk is supposed to have its soft spot.

POLLY *ostensibly aside to Jesse*: Just keep him away from that pouch around his neck, or he'll read his real name in his paybook and throw another fit.

JESSE: Oh, how good a paybook is! How easily one forgets things! Therefore we soldiers, being unable to carry everything at once in our heads, have a pouch on a cord round each man's neck containing a paybook with his name in it. Because if a man spends too much time thinking about his name it is not good.

GALY GAY *goes to the rear, looks gloomily at his paybook and returns to his corner.* In future I shall give up thinking. I shall just sit on my bottom and count the telegraph poles.

THE VOICE OF SERGEANT FAIRCHILD: O misery, o awakening! Where is my name that was famous from Calcutta to Couch Behar? Even the uniform I wore is gone. They bundled me into a train like a calf going to the slaughterhouse. They stopped my mouth with a civilitic hat and the whole train knows that I am no longer Bloody Five. I will go and fix this train so that it can be tossed on to a rubbish dump like a twisted stovepipe. That is plain as a pikestaff.

JESSE: Bloody Five! Wake up, Widow Begbick!

Fairchild enters in soiled civilian clothes.

GALY GAY: Have you been having trouble with your name?

FAIRCHILD: You are the most melancholy specimen of them all, and I shall start by crushing you. Tonight I am going to chop you all up ready for the cannery. *He sees the Widow Begbick sitting there; she smiles.* I'll be damned! There you are still, you Gomorrah! What have you done to me that I am no longer Bloody Five? Get away from me! *Begbick laughs.* What are these clothes I'm wearing? Do you call them suitable? And what is this head I've got? Do you suppose that's pleasant? Am I to lie down with you again, you Sodom?

BEGBICK: If you want to, do.

FAIRCHILD: I do not want to! Get away from me! The eyes of this country are upon me. I used to be a big gun. My name is Bloody Five. The pages of the history books are criss-crossed with that name, in triplicate.

BEGBICK: Then don't if you don't want to.

FAIRCHILD: Don't you realise that my manhood makes me weak when you sit there like that?

BEGBICK: Then pluck out your manhood, my boy.

FAIRCHILD: No need to tell me twice. *He goes out.*

GALY GAY *cries out after him:* Stop! Don't take any steps on account of your name! A name is an uncertain thing, you can't build on it.

FAIRCHILD: That is plain as a pikestaff. That is the answer. There we have a rope. There we have a service pistol. That's where we draw the line. Mutineers will be shot. That is plain as a pikestaff. 'Johnny Bowlegs, pack your kit.' No girl in this world will ever cost me a penny again. That is plain as a pikestaff. And I shall remain cool as a cucumber. I accept full responsibility. I have to do it if I am to go on being Bloody Five.

A shot is heard.

GALY GAY *who has been standing in the doorway for some time laughs.* Fire!

SOLDIERS *in the waggons on either side:* Did you hear that scream? – Who was screaming? – Somebody must have got hurt. They've all stopped singing, even up at the front of the train. – Listen.

GALY GAY: I know who screamed and I know why. On account of his name this gentleman has done something extremely bloody to himself. He has shot off his manhood. Witnessing that was a great stroke of luck for me. Now I realise where such stubbornness gets you and what a bloody thing it is when a man is never satisfied with himself and makes so much fuss about his name. *He runs over to Widow Begbick.* Don't get the idea that I don't know you. I know you very well indeed. And anyway it doesn't matter. But tell me quickly, how far away is the town where we met?

BEGBICK: Many days' march, and it gets further every minute.

GALY GAY: How many days' march?

BEGBICK: At the instant when you asked it was at least a hundred days' march.

GALY GAY: And how many men are there here travelling to Tibet?

BEGBICK: A hundred thousand. One equals no one.

GALY GAY: Of course. A hundred thousand. And what do they eat?

BEGBICK: Dried fish and rice.

GALY GAY: Everybody the same?

BEGBICK: Everybody the same.

GALY GAY: Of course. Everybody the same.

BEGBICK: They all have hammocks to sleep in, each man his own, and denims for summer.

GALY GAY: And in the winter?

BEGBICK: Khaki in winter.

GALY GAY: And women?

BEGBICK: The same.

GALY GAY: Women the same.

BEGBICK: And now, do you also know who you are?

GALY GAY: Jeraiah Jip, that's my name. *He runs over to the three others and shows them his name in his paybook.*

JESSE and the others smile: Right. You know how to keep putting your name across, don't you, comrade Jip?

GALY GAY: How about food?

Polly brings him a dish of rice.

GALY GAY: Yes, it is most important that I eat. *Eats.* How many days' march did you say this train covers in one minute?

BEGBICK: Ten.

POLLY: Just look how he's making himself at home. How he stares at everything and counts the telegraph poles and gloats at the speed we are going.

JESSE: I cannot bear the sight of him. It is truly loathsome when a mammoth, just because a couple of rifles are shoved under his nose, chooses to turn into a louse rather than be decently gathered to the bosom of his forebears.

URIAH: On the contrary, it's a sign of vitality. So long as Jip doesn't come after us now singing 'For man equals man, since time began' I think we will be over the hump.

A SOLDIER: What's that noise in the air?

URIAH *with a nasty smile*: That is the roaring of the artillery, for we are nearing the hills of Tibet.

GALY GAY: Isn't there some more rice?

II

Deep in Remote Tibet Lies the Mountain Fortress of Sir El-Djowr

And on a hilltop Jeraiah Jip sits waiting amid the thunder of guns

VOICES FROM BELOW: This is as far as we can go. - This is the fortress of Sir El-Djowr which blocks the pass into Tibet.

GALY GAY'S VOICE *behind the hill*: At the double! Or we'll be too late. *He appears, carrying a gun tripod on his shoulder.* Out of the train and straight into battle. That's what I like. A gun takes some living up to.

JIP: Haven't you seen a machine-gun section with only three men in it?

GALY GAY *charging on irresistibly like a war elephant*: There's no such thing, soldier. Our section consists of four men, for instance. One man to the right of you, one to the left and one behind you, after which it's proper for it to get through any pass.

BEGBICK *appears, carrying a gun barrel on her back*: Don't run so fast, Jippie. The trouble is, you've got a heart like a lion.

The three soldiers appear, groaning as they drag their machine-gun.

JIP: Hullo, Uriah, hullo, Jesse, hullo, Polly! Here I am again.

The three soldiers pretend not to see him.

JESSE: We must get this machine-gun set up at once.

URIAH: The gunfire's so noisy already you can't hear yourself speak.

POLLY: We must keep a particularly sharp eye on the fortress of Sir El-Djowr.

GALY GAY: And I want to have first shot. Something is holding us up, it must be taken out. All these gentlemen here can't be kept waiting. It won't hurt the mountain. Jesse, Uriah, Polly! The battle is starting, and I already feel the urge to sink my teeth in the enemy's throat. *And he and Widow Begbick together assemble the gun.*

JIP: Hullo, Jesse, hullo, Uriah, hullo, Polly! How are you all? Long time no see. I was a bit held up, you know. I hope you haven't had any trouble on my account. I couldn't make it sooner. I'm really glad to be back. But why don't you say something?

POLLY: How can we be of service to you, sir? *Polly puts a dish of rice on the gun for Galy Gay.* Won't you eat your rice ration? The battle will be starting soon.

GALY GAY: Gimmel! *He eats.* Yes: first I eat my rice ration, then I get my correct apportionment of whisky, and while I am eating and drinking I can study this mountain fortress and try to find its soft spot. After that it will be a piece of cake.

JIP: Your voice has completely changed, Polly, but you still like to have your joke. Me, I was employed in a flourishing business, but I had to leave. For your sakes, of course. You aren't angry, are you?

URIAH: This is where I fear we must inform you that you seem to have come to the wrong address.

POLLY: We don't even know you.

JESSE: It is of course possible that we have met somewhere. But the army has vast reserves of manpower, sir.

GALY GAY: I should like another rice ration. You have not handed your ration over yet, Uriah.

JIP: You people really have become very different, you know.

URIAH: That is quite possible, that's army life for you.

JIP: But I am Jip, your comrade.

The three laugh. When Galy Gay also begins to laugh the others stop.

GALY GAY: One more ration. I'm ravenous now we're going into battle, and I like this fortress better and better.

Polly gives him a third dish.

JIP: Who is that gobbling up your rations?

URIAH: Mind your own business.

JESSE: You know, you couldn't possibly be old Jip. Old Jip would never have betrayed and abandoned us. Old Jip would never have let himself be held up. So you cannot be old Jip.

JIP: I certainly am.

URIAH: Prove it! Prove it!

JIP: Is there really not one of you who will admit he knows me? Then listen to me and mark my words. You are extremely hard-hearted men and your end can already be foreseen. Give me back my paybook.

GALY GAY *goes up to Jip with his last dish of rice:* You must be making a mistake. *Turns back to the others.* He's not right in the head. *To Jip:* Have you been going without food a lot? Would you like a glass of water? *To the others:* We shouldn't upset him. *To Jip:* Don't you know who you belong to? Never mind. Just sit down quietly over here till we have decided the battle. And please don't get any closer to the roar of the guns, as it demands great moral strength. *To the three:* He has no idea what's what. *To Jip:* Of course you need a pay-book. Nobody's going to let you run around without a pay-book, are they? Ah yes, Polly, look in the ammunition box where we keep the little megaphone and fish out Galy Gay's old papers, you remember, that fellow you used to tease me about. *Polly runs over to the box.* Anybody who has lived in the lowlands where the tiger asks the jaguar about his teeth knows how important it is to have something on you in black and white, because, you see, these days they are always trying to take your name away,

and I know what a name is worth. O my children, when you called me Galy Gay that time, why didn't you just call me Nobody? Such larks are dangerous. They could have turned out very badly. But I always say let bygones be bygones. *He hands Jip the papers.* Here is that paybook, take it. Is there anything else you want?

JIP: You're the best of this lot. At least you've got a heart. But the rest of you will have my curse.

GALY GAY: To save you people having to listen to too much of that I'm going to make a bit of a noise with this gun for you . . . Show us how it works, Widow Begbick.

The two of them aim the gun at the fortress and start loading.

JIP: The icy wind of Tibet shall shrivel your bones to the marrow, you devils, never again shall you hear the harbour bell in Kilkoa, but shall march to the end of the world and back, over and over again. The Devil himself, your master, will have no use for you once you are old, and you will have to go on marching night and day through the Gobi desert and the waving green rye fields of Wales, and that shall be your recompense for betraying a comrade in need.
Exit.

The three are silent.

GALY GAY: All set. And now I shall do it with five shots.

The first shot is fired.

BEGBICK *smoking a cigar*: You are one of those great soldiers who made the army so dreaded in bygone days. Five such men were a threat to any woman's life.

The second shot is fired.

I have proof that during the battle of the River Chadze it was by no means the worst elements in the company that dreamed of my kisses. One night with Leokadja Begbick was something for which men would sacrifice their whisky and save their shillings from two weeks' pay. They had names like Genghis Khan, famous from Calcutta to Couch Behar.

The third shot is fired.

One embrace from their beloved Irishwoman set their blood to rights. You can read in *The Times* how staunchly they fought in the battles of Bourabay, Kamatkura and Daguth.
The fourth shot is fired.

GALY GAY: Something that's no longer a mountain is tumbling down.

Smoke begins to pour from the fortress of Sir El-Djowr.

POLLY: Look!

Enter Fairchild.

GALY GAY: This is tremendous. Leave me alone now I've tasted blood.

FAIRCHILD: What do you think you are doing? Take a look over there. Right, I am now going to bury you up to the neck in that anthill to stop you shooting the whole Hindu Kush to pieces. My hand is steady as a rock. *He aims his service pistol at Galy Gay.* It's not shaking at all. There, it is plain as a pikestaff. You are now looking at the world for the last time.

GALY GAY *loading enthusiastically*: One more shot! Just one more. Just number five.

The fifth shot is fired. A cry of joy is heard from the valley below: "The fortress of Sir El-Djowr that was blocking the pass into Tibet has fallen. The army is advancing into Tibet."

FAIRCHILD: Right. Once more I hear the familiar step of the Army on the march, and now I propose to take a few steps of my own. *Steps up to Galy Gay.* Who are you?

VOICE OF A SOLDIER *from below*: Who is the man who overthrew the fortress of Sir El-Djowr?

GALY GAY: One moment. Polly, pass me that little megaphone out of the ammunition box, so I can tell them who it is. *Polly fetches the megaphone and hands it to Galy Gay.*

GALY GAY *through the megaphone*: It was me, one of you, Jeraiah Jip!

JESSE: Three cheers for Jeraiah Jip, the human fighting-machine!

POLLY: Look!

The fortress has begun to burn. A thousand horrified voices cry out in the distance.

DISTANT VOICE: Flames are now engulfing the mountain fortress of Sir El-Djowr, in which seven thousand refugees from Sikkim province had found shelter, peasants, artisans and shopkeepers, most of them friendly, hard-working people.

GALY GAY: Oh. But what is that to me? The one cry and the other cry.

And already I feel within me
The desire to sink my teeth
In the enemy's throat
Ancient urge to kill
Every family's breadwinner
To carry out the conquerors'
Mission.

Hand me your paybooks.

They do so.

POLLY: Polly Baker.

JESSE: Jesse Mahoney.

URIAH: Uriah Shelley.

GALY GAY: Jeraiah Jip. At ease! We are now crossing the frontier of frozen Tibet.

Exeunt all four.