THE HAND OF ETHELBERTA

Revision 1

Written by

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Based on,
Thomas Hardy’s Novel
Mrs. Ethelberta Petherwin, a beautiful, and richly dressed young woman of around twenty one years old, exits the front door and saunters out for a late afternoon walk, carrying her parasol.

Two men are watching her as she walks past them, and down the road. One man, sweeping the straw away, is a middle-aged hostler, and the other is Michael, an elderly milkman in his shirtsleeves, waistcoat and long white apron. Michael is carrying two milk buckets on a yoke, which he puts down.

MICHAEL
Dang me, if she bain’t be a pretty piece!

The hostler looks faux-shocked at the milkman.

HOSTLER
Michael!.... Pouncing upon young flesh like a carrion crow be a vile thing in an old man!

The young woman, Ethelberta, has stopped to peer into a shop window.

HOSTLER
That figure of fashion a-standing there, be a widder, though she be no more un twenty one years, I’ll bet.

He stops sweeping and leans on his broom to gaze, also at the young woman.

MICHAEL
Well, then, ‘er can easily wed another, wi ‘ER looks!

HOSTLER
Aye, but ‘er Mother-in-Law, Lady Petherwin, might have some say in that.

MICHAEL
What’s the widder’s own family?

HOSTLER
Dang me if I know........but it’s a funny thing, see, cos the other night, she said “Good Evening, John”, as she walked past me.

Michael looks at the hostler in disbelief, picks up his pails, and nods a farewell to the hostler.
2.

MICHAEL
Well............More know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows!

Michael walks off.

The hostler stands and looks mystified.

He repeats the saying to himself

HOSTLER
More know Tom Fool than Tom Fool knows!
(uncertainly)
........Hahaha!....

He goes back to his sweeping, shaking his head.

HOSTLER
That’s a good ‘un!....hahaha!....Tom Fool!....Tom Fool knows!

Mrs. Petherwin walks gracefully on down the lane, with her jewelled silks glowing in the afternoon sun.

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EXT. ANGLEBURY/HEATH — DAY

Ethelberta Petherwin wanders, in her walk, across some meadows near a river and then follows a lane that leads out onto an open heath.

It is that early dusk when, in summer, the air is golden and still.

Suddenly a duck flies past very quickly and quite low, chased by a hawk.

Ethelberta stares, fascinatedly, as the duck flies down into the gentle valley, below, heading towards a whitely shining oval of still water.

Ethelberta starts off after them, at a run.

The duck hits the pond and dives under, and, as Ethelberta runs up, after making one or two desultory circuits in the air around the pond, the hawk flies away.

Ethelberta sees the poor duck over the far side of the pond.

She walks over towards it, but it flees into some reeds.

Ethelberta looks around at the beautiful scene, sighs at the beauty of the scene, and then sets off, back up a small valley.

She walks for a while, and then stops, looks around, and perceives that she has gone the wrong way.
The twilight is deepening, now, although there is still enough light to see.

Ethelberta comes around a corner and almost bumps into a handsome young man in his mid twenties, in holiday walking clothes and gaiters, with an open necked shirt.

She starts back, not seeing his face, properly, due to his hat brim.

**ETHELBERTA**
Oh!....... Good evening....Um, could you tell me the way to the Red Lion, please?

**CHRISTOPHER**
Yes....It’s just up that small valley and then turn left at the top and follow the path.

**ETHELBERTA**
(Surprised)
Ah!.... Mr. Julian!

**CHRISTOPHER**
(Embarrassed and diffident)
Mrs. Petherwin!.....Um, yes. I AM Mr. Julian, although I suppose that matters very little after all these years, and after....you know...hum what’s passed......

Ethelberta looks a little embarrassed, as well, and looks downwards

**CHRISTOPHER**
Shall I put you in the path? ...... It’s just up there.

**ETHELBERTA**
(Quietly downcast)
If you please.

**CHRISTOPHER**
Come with me then.

He sets off up the little valley.

They walk in silence with Christopher leading.

**EXT. ANGLEBURY HEATH/A KNOLL - EVENING**

Christopher points down the hill and then stares fixedly at her.

Ethelberta’s face is turned a little away.
CHRISTOPHER
That is Anglebury. ... This path
goes around that hill, there, and
then you will see the town.

She looks up to see him staring at her.

He embarrassingly looks away

ETHELBERTA
Thank you.

CHRISTOPHER
(Sighs) Good Evening, then.

He turns a little away.

ETHELBERTA
Well, goodbye, then - if......if
you’re not going to say any more!

CHRISTOPHER
What can I say?...... You aren’t mine,
now!........ I could forgive a woman
doing anything to me ......... except
perhaps for ...... well, for marrying
for spite...or was it the money?

ETHELBERTA
Christopher......You knew me only as a
governess. You knew little else of
me: my background and my motives,
so you have no excuse for
bitterness.

CHRISTOPHER
(Smiles)Well, PERHAPS I’m bitter,
but you are CERTAINLY married, so
there’s no way, now, that I’m going
to discover your background,
anyway........although I do think that I
know a lady on hard times when I
see one.......... I suppose, though,
that I can hardly blame a woman
born into a wealthy home from
attempting to regain that position.

He gives a short laugh.

Ethelberta gives a strange smile.

Christopher holds out his hand.

CHRISTOPHER
Could we, could we,er, perhaps part
friends...... I... I hope that we may
meet again some day.
They shake, briefly.

CHRISTOPHER
Good evening, Mrs. Petherwin.

ETHELBERTA
(Quietly)
Good evening, Christopher

He walks off and Ethelberta, after looking wistfully after him for a second, sighs, and walks off in the direction of Anglebury.

INT. ANGLEBURY/RED LION - NIGHT

As Ethelberta enters the hallway of the inn, she passes her lady’s maid, in an old black silk gown, who has come out of one door and is just about to go into the kitchen area.

Ethelberta nods.

ETHELBERTA
Good evening, Menlove.

Menlove stops.

MENLOVE
Oh, good evening, Ma’am.

ETHELBERTA
Menlove, did you see if any gentleman observed and followed me when I went for my walk, this afternoon?

MENLOVE
(Pertly)
You once told me that I was not to go staring out the window at you, after I had dressed you, as if you were a doll I had just made and sent out for sale.

ETHELBERTA
Oh...um, yes.......(Suddenly)Then did you hear any gentleman arrive here by train, last night?

Menlove looks pertly surprised

MENLOVE
Oh, no, Ma’am.......How could I? I was rinsing the smalls!

A smart, elderly lady passes and looks with shocked disgust at this public reference to smalls.
Ethelberta acts quickly.

**ETHELBERTA**  
(Loudly) Yes, yes!...There ARE some SMELLS from the drains.

The departing lady looks back, suspiciously at them, as she goes up the open staircase.

Menlove smiles, nods and vanishes through the services door.

INT. RED LION/LADY PETHERWIN’S SITTING ROOM – EVENING  

Lady Petherwin is sitting writing at a desk, as Ethelberta hurries in.

Lady Petherwin looks up.

**ETHELBERTA**  
Hello, Mama! Sorry I’m late.

Ethelberta goes over and kisses Lady Petherwin on the cheek.

**LADY PETHERWIN**  
Where on earth have you been child?  
You look quite heated!

**ETHELBERTA**  
Oh, I saw a hawk chase a duck and followed it, and then I became rather lost on the heath.

Lady Petherwin lifts up her hands in horror.

**LADY PETHERWIN**  
Mercy, Child! What a tomboy you are! You might have drowned in that swampy place!....

Ethelberta is taking off her scarf, hat and jacket.

**ETHELBERTA**  
Oh, a man told me the way, so I was alright, in the end.

She sits down and Lady Petherwin sighs, and frowns, disapprovingly, and starts to write again.

**ETHELBERTA**  
Mother.......... You know when you sent me to that finishing school in Bonn, after my husband’s death...

**LADY PETHERWIN**  
Um?
ETHELBERTA
Well, then you wrote to me to say that some family we knew had their household broken up, after the father’s death...

LADY PETHERWIN
...Do you mean the Julians?

ETHELBERTA
(Disingenuously)
Oh, was that the name?

LADY PETHERWIN
Yes, of course you know! ...Their boy, Christopher, had a day, or two’s fancy for you, just before that summer (soppily smiling) when my poor boy and you became so desperately attached to each other.

ETHELBERTA
Oh, yes............I remember his sister, Faith, now....His Mother died soon after, in childbirth. It was her thirteenth, I think...... poor woman!..........I wonder where they live, now?

LADY PETHERWIN
I have a dim notion that the son who had not been brought up to a profession, moved to a country town, somewhere, and now works as a music teacher...piano, and that sort of thing....Music was his hobby, you remember.

ETHELBERTA
Oh.

She resumes her writing and Ethelberta gazes at the fire.

LADY PETHERWIN
Ring for cocoa, dear.

Ethelberta looks up

ETHELBERTA
Yes, Mama.

INT. RED LION/ETHELBERTA’S BEDROOM – EVENING

Ethelberta enters her room and rings the bell cord.

She walks up and down in thought until her lady’s maid, Menlove enters.
ETHELBERTA
Menlove, will you go down and find out if any gentleman named Mr.
Julian has been staying in this inn, please?....And find out his
address, will you.

MENLOVE
Yes, Ma’am. ....I’ll just tell the
landlady yer interested, then.

ETHELBERTA
What?!....No!!...No, don’t mention
anything........ directly as such,
Menlove............just, just make
enquiries, um... um... INdirectly.

MENLOVE
Ah, yes.............I’ll be sure to tell
her as I’m not asking for you, but
for someone else.

Ethelberta collapses, irritably into a chair.

ETHELBERTA
(SIGHS)Menlove!....I’m sure you know
what I mean!....Don’t go to the
landlady, at all!Just ask one of
the....the under servants...you know!...

ME LOVE
...And don’t mention you, Ma’am!

ETHELBERTA
Yes!....I mean, No!...
(Angrily)
Oh!..

Menlove nods, smiles and whisks out.

Ethelberta gets up and paces the room a while, and then
Menlove reappears.

She hands Ethelberta a slip of paper.

MENLOVE
It’s Upper Street, Sandbourne,
Ma’am!

She nods, raises her eyebrows, implyingly, with a smirk, and
Ethelberta glares at the eyebrows.

Whereupon, Menlove looks saucer-eyedly ingenuous, puts her
head down, and whisks out again.
Christopher comes into the room, holding a package which he cuts the string from whilst removing his jacket and hat.

He sits down at the table, in the small, homely room, and removes the green book from its brown paper.

He reads the frontispiece: “Metres by E” and looks puzzled.

He quickly reads the poems in the collection and then looks excited.

Christopher looks up and calls for his sister.

    CHRISTOPHER
    Faith!

Faith comes through from the neighbouring room. She is affectionate, but homely in looks, and around twenty two.

    CHRISTOPHER
    Have a look at these!

    FAITH
    Hello, Christopher.

She bends and kisses his cheek.

    FAITH
    What are they?

    CHRISTOPHER
    Poems!....And I’m pretty sure that they’re from the woman that I was keen on a few years ago...you remember? She married the son of Lord Petherwin.

Faith bends over and starts riffling through the pages.

    FAITH
    Oh, yes....Well, having cast you aside, all I can say is that it’s a bit thick of her to then send you her poems!...........Anyway, how do you know they’re hers?

Faith reads the final poem: “Cancelled Words”.

    CHRISTOPHER
    Well, first she was called Ethelberta...as in “E”...., secondly, she was a seriously aspiring dramatist/poetess and thirdly, Well, I bumped into her, again, last summer, in Anglebury, on that short walking holiday I took, remember?
FAITH
Um......This last one is a very touching poem....Perhaps she still has tender feelings for you...?

CHRISTOPHER
What?...While being married?...............I rather like that last poem, though.

FAITH
So do I!

She smiles up at him.

FAITH
Tea?

INT. SANDBOURNE/BOOKSHOP - DAY

Christopher is standing at the counter, of a small, old bookshop, talking to a little, elderly man, who is wearing a big, blue apron and has his glasses on top of his head.

BOOKSHOP OWNER
No copy of the book has been sold by me.

CHRISTOPHER
But its packaging tells me that it’s been delivered, locally.

The owner looks details up in a big book, running his finger down the lines of information.

BOOKSHOP OWNER
Ummm....The book was only published last week.

He looks up

BOOKSHOP OWNER
Mind you, if it had been published last century, I probably wouldn’t have sold it!...Country bookselling is a miserable thing these days.

Christopher looks around at the small, half stocked shop.

CHRISTOPHER
Surely you don’t LIVE by your shop?!

The old man leans over the counter and puts his hand flat on Christopher’s lapel.

BOOKSHOP OWNER
Sir, I starve by it!
Christopher smiles and nods, sympathetically.

INT. SANDBOURNE/POST OFFICE - DAY

Christopher comes into the post office on his way to teaching his lessons.

There is a young male clerk putting post into pigeonholes, behind the counter.

The plump, middle-aged postmaster, at the counter, looks up at Christopher who is waving a torn package at him.

CHRISTOPHER
Good Day. Sorry to bother you, but could I ask whose handwriting this is, please? It was sent anonymously to me and I want to thank the giver.

Christopher smooths out the packaging on the counter and the postmaster and his clerk peer at it.

POSTMASTER
No........Never seen this hand before, sorry.

CLERK
I have. She comes into town every day!

CHRISTOPHER
What does she wear?

CLERK
Uhhh....A white wool jacket...... wi’ zig zags of black braid....Dunno ‘er name, though.

Christopher smiles

CHRISTOPHER
Thanks....Thank you.

He turns away.

POSTMASTER
Do you want to settle that bill for the special delivery?

CHRISTOPHER
Well, I’m late for the lessons I’m supposed to be giving, so, if you’ll forgive me, I’ll pop in again later this week....Thank you.

He goes out.
EXT. SANDBOURNE/NEARBY MEADOWS - DAY

Christopher is returning home at the end of the day. His collar is unbuttoned and his neckerchief hangs loose around his neck.

A pretty young woman comes towards him from the Sandbourne direction. She is wearing a white jacket with black zigzags.

Christopher smiles and nods and the girl does too.

Each goes on their ways.

Christopher looks back, and smiles, with puzzlement. The girl is not Ethelberta.

EXT. SANDBOURNE/RIVER FOOTPATH - DAY

The same girl, wearing another jacket, comes towards Christopher, who is just getting out a book, from his left pocket.

Christopher smiles, stops, and raises his hat.

The girl, Picotee, seventeen, and diminutive, with a fresh, rosy complexion, stops, smiles briefly and then looks down.

    CHRISTOPHER
    Excuse me, but have I the pleasure of addressing the author of a book of very melodious poems sent to me the other day?

Picotee rapidly twirls a bit of braid on her costume.

    PICOTEE
    No, Sir.

    CHRISTOPHER
    The sender, then, perhaps?

    PICOTEE
    Yes.

Christopher smiles and nods.

    CHRISTOPHER
    Ah, yes........... Such an atmosphere as the writer of "Metres by E" seems to breathe would soon spoil cheeks that are fresh and round as lady-apples - eh, little girl?.............But, are you disposed to tell me that writer’s name?
Picotee draws herself up, offended by his light tone... and the reference to her plump cheek which she touches, tentatively, in confirmation.

She responds in high dudgeon, with her chin raised.

PICOTE
No!... I am NOT disposed to tell the writer’s name.

She steps around him and walks away, while he turns around, and, in surprise, watches her leave.

EXT. SANDBOURNE/MEADOWS – DAY

Montage of accidental meetings along the wide meadow footpath:

Christopher sees Picotee and raises his hat. Picotee nods, coolly and walks on.

Christopher is reading a book and doesn’t see her. Picotee has a quick look at him, then looks away, embarrassedly.

Christopher standing looking into the river, while Picotee passes, blushing, unobserved.

Christopher is reading and Picotee, is breathing fast and looks discomposed. She doesn’t know where to look as they pass at around four meters distant. He doesn’t see her, though.

Christopher isn’t reading, so he sees Picotee, but, as he approaches, she is so overcome with embarrassment, that she has to turn around and stand with her back to him, so that he doesn’t witness her discomposure. Christopher is a little puzzled, but walks on.

EXT. SANDBOURNE/HOUSE THRESHOLD AND MEADOW – DAY

Christopher comes out of a door, followed by a middle-aged woman and her late teenaged daughter.

The ladies remain standing on the threshold as Christopher shakes their hands and takes a step down, to descend the front steps.

The girl offers a small posy to Christopher, to thank him.

MOTHER
Well, thank you for Celia’s lessons, Mr. Graye. We’re sure she’ll do well in her auditions for music college, with all of the work you put in.
CELIA
Yes....Thank you.

Christopher takes the flowers and smiles.

CHRISTOPHER
You’re very welcome....You have been a pleasure to teach, Miss Jones....

He bows.

CHRISTOPHER
Thank you, Ladies...Good Afternoon.

LADIES
Goodbye!

He walks away

LADIES
Good bye!

Christopher turns and waves.

Christopher crosses the road, turns into the field and walks along the footpath, home.

Christopher looks up to see Picotee who, when she sees him, becomes rigid with embarrassment, which Christopher doesn’t notice.

He bows to her and holds out the posy

CHRISTOPHER
Will you allow me to present these flowers to you by way of a peace offering for....for my being so indelicate as to compliment your cheeks...um...to your face...um, as it were....

Picotee takes the posy, lowers her head and mumbles something inarticulate into it.

CHRISTOPHER
(Heartily)Well, Good Afternoon, then!

He nods and smiles, then strides away.

Picotee sniffs the posy and then, furtively turns around to see him go.

She sighs, wistfully, and looks with adoring eyes after him.

Picotee sees a movement, out of the corner of her eyes, and turns to see the weir man attending to the handle of the sluice of the river’s weir, near to his house.
14  INT. SANDBURY/WEIRHOUSE - DAY  14

It is pouring down and two smart young, urban men are sitting, immaculately attired in tweeds, near a fire belonging to the weir man who is sitting a little further away.

A meadow is visible through the wet window and a path goes along it to meet a crossroads.

YOUNG MAN
I say! It’s jolly decent of you letting us invade your home fires, and all! We don’t want to put you out, you know.

WEIR MAN
Not at all, gentleman. You wouldn’t be leaving a dog out in this weather!

YOUNG MAN
You wouldn’t happen to have a little grog, or such, would you?

WEIR MAN
Happen I would.

He gets up and fetches a half-opened bottle of whiskey which he deposits on the table and proceeds to dole out.

YOUNG MAN
Oh, good oh!

They see a young woman, Picotee, approach the crossroads near where she often sees Christopher. She stands there, already sodden through, looking anxiously up and down the road.

The weir man nods at her, though the window.

WEIR MAN
Now genlemen, you be gettin’ the chance to see a love-lorn maid await ’er lover...She’s a been ’ere several days this last week, but ’e don’t come....’e don’t come at all.

The young man drinks his whisky.

YOUNG MAN
Sounds a bit of a rotter to me!...Eh, Ladywell?....What do you think?

Ladywell turns from the window
LADYWELL
She’d make an excellent subject for
another of my academy paintings...

YOUNG MAN
...And she’d be famous, too, for they
all sell!

He turns to the weir man

YOUNG MAN
I say, you wouldn’t have any eggs
and bacon would you....and perhaps a
few mushrooms?

The weir man looks put out and rolls his eyes in exasperation
at the demands of the young man.

LADYWELL
(Looking out at Picotee)
Forget food. The rain seems to be
lifting. Let’s be off for Wyndham
House, a change of clothes, and
dinner.....I’ll just give the poor
little girl another minute, and
then we don’t disturb her.

The young man smiles brightly, and looks at the weir man

YOUNG MAN
Oh, well!........... Perhaps just time
for a cup of tea, then?

The weir man sighs, melodramatically, and gets heavily to his
feet, heading for the cups on the dresser, while giving a
backwards look of disgust at the young man.

15
EXT. SANDBOURNE/OUTSIDE OF THE JULIAN’S LODGINGS - EVENING5

As Christopher returns from a walk, he sees a horse, wagon
ette and coachman waiting outside of his house.

Faith, his sister rushes towards him.

FAITH
Oh, Christopher! They want us to
play for a dance at Wyndham
House........whatever our going rate is!

CHRISTOPHER
Oh!

He turns and looks up at the coachman on the wagonette.

CHRISTOPHER
Hello. Why have you come for us,
when there are nearer musicians?
COACHMAN
Oh, one of the guests a-staying at
the house, said they was to call
for you as you was a gentleman
musician and ’ad a sister who was
an ‘arpist.

FAITH
Which guest asked for us?

COACHMAN
A Mrs. Petherwin, Miss.

FAITH
Ah!

She turns to Christopher with wide eyes.

Then

FAITH
Well!...Go and grab some dance music,
Chris! I have my own parts
here........Christmas is overtime
rates!!

She smiles up at him

Christopher kisses her forehead and races off upstairs.

Faith turns back to the coachman

FAITH
Please could you go and give him a
hand with my harp. We’re on the
third floor. I’ll wait here with
the horse.

The coachman nods and starts to descend.

INT. WYNDWAY HOUSE/SALOON STAGE− EVENING

Christopher and Faith exit a dark servants’ passage into a
dizzying, brightly lit saloon. The footman conducting them,
shows them along the wall to a raised dais which has a
trellis of ivy and green boughs woven through it, so as to
form a screen.

On the dais is a grand piano and two other footmen follow
behind bringing Faith’s harp.

Christopher and Faith have no sooner seated themselves than
the guests come tumbling and laughing into the room. There
are around thirty of them.

Faith leaves her harp and comes up to the screen, which is
immediately next to Christopher’s piano stool.
Faith peers through the screen

FAITH
Which one is Mrs. Petherwin?

CHRISTOPHER
The one with her skirts looped up with convulvulus flowers, dancing with that perfumed piece with the high eyebrows they call Ladywell. He’s an artist, apparently.

The dancers form up into a line and start to look expectantly at the screened bower, so Faith hurries to her harp, opens her music and nods to Christopher.

They start playing.

17 INT. WINDWARD HOUSE/SALOON - EVENING

Mrs. Petherwin dances with a variety of young men and does not look at the dais screen.

Finally, she snaps and, in a conversational knot, takes a break from talking to peer half behind her, through the screen.

She sees Christopher peering out at her and quickly looks away, embarrassed at having been caught peering.

Ethelberta is asked to dance, again, and she takes Ladywell’s hand as the dancers start to form sets for quadrilles.

18 INT. WYNDWAY HOUSE/DAIS - EVENING

During a break from the dancing, while the dancers are breaking their old sets up, and slowly reforming a line, Faith leans forward, smiles and addresses Christopher.

FAITH
Are you remembering when you were once a dance goer, instead of a dance player?

CHRISTOPHER
Not really, Faith........ I was wondering who that little girl was whom Ethelberta....... Mrs. Petherwin, sent along to deliver her book to me....I believe that she’s a pupil-teacher, locally.

FAITH
Hum...We’re never likely to find out.
They start the music, again, as the dancers are looking expectantly at the dais.

EXT. WYNDWAY HOUSE PARK – DAY

Christopher and Faith are being conveyed back to Sandbourne in the wagonette. They are sitting next to the coachman and Christopher is talking with him.

Faith suddenly points to two young women a little distance away.

FAITH
Look! There is one of the dancers!
I think it is your acquaintance, Christopher. The lady with the red hair.

Christopher looks at the two ladies, at a little distance in the park.

CHRISTOPHER
Ah, yes. Ethel….Mrs. Petherwin. I see the morning glory flowers on her gown.

FAITH
How strange to be chatting at this hour! One would have thought that she would collapse in bed, after dancing all night.

The coachman looks.

COACHMAN
Oh, aye! That be the widder, Mrs. Petherwin. She be wonderful able to talk to anyone and she do……that one.

CHRISTOPHER
A widow?

COACHMAN
Aye and she lives wi ‘er mother-in-law in London.

CHRISTOPHER
A widow!…

COACHMAN
But she’s off, tomorrow, to spend New Year at Rookington.

CHRISTOPHER
Rookington?
COACHMAN
Rookington Park – about three miles
from Sandbourne......t’other way un
this.

CHRISTOPHER
(Musingly) A widow!

Faith looks at him, concernedly and squeezes his arm, affectionately.

FAITH
That makes no difference to us, 
does it Christopher?

Christopher smiles and raises his eyebrows.

EXT. THE SHORE BY WYNDHAM HOUSE – DAY

Ethelberta and Picotee are walking along.

PICOTEE
You shouldn’t have come if you’ve 
been up all night.

ETHELBERTA
I couldn’t go without seeing you, 
Picotee! Besides, I have a couple 
of packages, one for you and one 
for Mother.

She hands them over.

ETHELBERTA
There’s some money in them, too, to 
cover your expenses.

Picotee puts the small packages in her reticule and she and 
Ethelberta then walk with their arms around each other’s 
waists.

PICOTEE
Thank you, Ethel.

ETHELBERTA
Well, thankYOU for delivering my 
poems to Mr. Julian....Did you like 
them?

PICOTEE
Yes, although, naturally, I didn’t 
understand all of the experiences 
which you mentioned....You live in 
another world, Ethel..........Will the 
title of Lady Petherwin descend to 
you, when your mother-in-law dies?
ETHELBERTA
Of course not! She’s only a knight’s widow!.........Now be careful not to talk with anyone on the journey back, my dear....... Especially if any man on the train shall try to get familiar........................Has anyone ever tried to pay attentions to you, yet, Picotee?

Ethelberta smiles and peers into Picotee’s face.

PICOTE 
No..... Well....that is.....(Suddenly bursting out)I am in love with a man!

ETHELBERTA
Why?!......What has he done?

PICOTE
That’s just it!.......(Mournfully) He hasn’t done anything.

ETHELBERTA
(Jocularly rebuking)Picotee!............ You mustn’t let him see your interest. No man is ever interested in a woman if he has already got her heart for nothing!

PICOTE
(Sighs) I know, Ethel........I know.

She hangs and shakes her head.

She looks up

PICOTE
Have you a lover?

ETHELBERTA
Well......... I used to have one, and I recently saw him again...I must admit that I have never seen a man whom I hate less............He was in that carriage that just drove over the hill.

PICOTE
Ah! A great lord, then.

ETHELBERTA
No. He’s only a commoner, as yet. He was the musician that played, last night.

She smiles
ETHELBERTA
It’s that Mr. Julian to whom you delivered that book.

Picotee gasps and puts her hands on her chest.

Ethelberta stops.

ETHELBERTA
Are you alright, my dear?

They sit on a log, nearby

PICOTEES
Oh...yes....... I’m just a bit.........
overtired.........(Timidly)So you......you have met Mr. Julian and gone walks with him?

ETHELBERTA
Oh no! Nothing like that. I just accidentally had a few accidental words with him. I am not actually attached...as such.

Picotee nods

PICOTEES
(Sadly)’Tis a delightful middling mind to be in....I, however, had gone way beyond it, before I even realized I was IN it!

ETHELBERTA
You must shake yourself free, my dear....Courage, mon brave!

She smiles, stands up and holds out her hand to her younger sister.

ETHELBERTA
Are you feeling rested, now, Picotee?.......Come on! Let’s collect some shells for the little ones, before you have to get the train!

Picotee smiles, takes her hand and stands up.

INT. MR. NEIGH’S UNCLE’S LONDON HOUSE/BUTLER’S PANTRY - EVENING

Mr. Chickerel, the butler, Ethelberta’s father, is setting out his writing materials on his little desk. There are the sounds of coming and going of people and faint carriage wheels, outside.

A footman comes in.
FOOTMAN
Did you say “the best silver in the silver cupboard and the second best in the back kitchen dresser, Mr. Chickeral?

CHICKEREL
For the third time...main kitchen dresser!

FOOTMAN 1
Ah!..... Yes!

Footman goes out.

Footsteps. Pause.

Footsteps come back, door reopens and footman’s head re-appears.

FOOTMAN 1
...And the main kitchen dresser is the one behind the big table....?

CHICKEREL
(Ironically) No. It’s the one on the top shelf of the larder!

FOOTMAN 1
IS it?

Chickerel stands up, angrily and shoves his chair back, so the footman hurriedly flies away.

Chickerel sits down again, sighs, and starts writing.

CHICKEREL (V.O.)
My Dear Ethelberta,
The guests are just leaving the dinner party, here, at Mr. Neigh’s uncle’s house.
The talk was all of your poems. You are famous, my dear, but the funny thing is that they all seem to think that you are older than you are!
This letter is just to say that you are not to pressure, Lady Petherwin to remove the rules on which you live with her. She is quite right: she cannot keep us, and to recognise us would do you no good, nor us either. We are quite content to see you secretly, since it is best for you.

(MORE)
24.

CHICKEREL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You will surely get some hard blows when you are found out, but your youth and health are your power, my dear.
I had better go, now, and supervise the tidying up after this dinner. I wish that I had a footman with half an iota of your common sense, Ethelberta. Good Bless you.
Your affectionate father,
R. Chickerel

22

INT. THE JULIAN’S LODGINGS/LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Julian is seated at the piano playing a lyrical slow, beautiful piece.

Faith comes through and stands near to the piano.

FAITH
What IS that piece, Christopher? You sound like you’ve finished it, now?......It’s beautiful.

CHRISTOPHER
Thank you...... It’s that poem, “When Tapers Tall”.

He stops playing and looks up at her.

FAITH
Do you think those poems WERE Ethelberta’s?

CHRISTOPHER
I’ve no way of knowing for certain.

Faith goes to the fire and sits down

FAITH
Well, whosoever they were, I think that, if they were a woman’s, she must be rather...... ‘fast’......you know.

Christopher comes over and sits down, too.

He looks displeased

CHRISTOPHER
What?...... You mean, “bold’, or “forward”?

Faith leans forward and puts her hand upon his knee.

She smiles
25.

FAITH
Christopher...you’re not...you’re not
falling in love again with that
lady, are you?

Christopher sits back in his armchair and smiles

CHRISTOPHER
Well, if I am, it’s as well that I
fall in love with someone whom I
can’t marry, isn’t it?

Faith frowns and looks into the fire.

FAITH
I don’t like to hear you speak
slightly of what poor Father
did...He still found Mother, didn’t
he?

Christopher picks up and starts reading his manuscripts,
nearby.

CHRISTOPHER
Well, whoever I marry, Faith, there
will always be a corner of my heart
left for you!

She smiles up at him.

23
EXT. SANDBOURNE BEACH - DAY

Christopher is walking along.

Faith comes hurrying up to him, with a basket, reticule and
two brown parcels.

Christopher takes them off her and she takes his arm.

FAITH
Sorry I took such a time, but the
draper is so slow!...Have you been
waiting long?

CHRISTOPHER
No. I just went to the post office
to post a copy of my music to Mrs.
Petherwin.

They walk back home along the sand.

FAITH
Oh, you know that it’s her, now, do
you?
CHRISTOPHER
Yes. It was in the Wessex
Reflector, this morning.
Apparently, she lives with her
mother-in-law, Lady Petherwin in
Exonbury Crescent, in London.

FAITH
I hope that she appreciates your
song as much as I do.

CHRISTOPHER
Well it seems that ‘tall tapers’
must be in her blood, anyway,
because, apparently, she was the
Bishop of Silchester’s daughter
left in straightened circumstances,
after he died.

FAITH
Good grief! Those were passionate
effusions for a bishop’s daughter!

Christopher smiles and pats Faith’s hand, on his arm, as they
walk.

24

INT. A BAYSWATER HOUSE/DRAWING ROOM - EVENING

Ethelberta is being seated at the piano and is chatting with
a couple of ladies.

Two men in their early thirties are talking whilst leaning on
the wall.

There are about a dozen people in the room, in evening dress,
having finished dinner and talking amongst themselves.

NEIGH
Who is that damned pretty woman at
the piano?

COMPANION
Oh, that’s Mrs.Petherwin, the
poetess. Have you read her stuff,
Neigh?...She’s a widow, you know and
goes about with her mother-in-law,
Lady Petherwin.

NEIGH
No...not a poetry reader, myself!

COMPANION
I admire her more reflective
pieces.

A middle-aged lady, Mrs. Belmaine, leans over Ethelberta and
rootles through several sheets on the piano.
MRS. BELMAINE
So you like this version the best, dear?

Another middle-aged lady interrupts, picking up some manuscript from the stand.

LADY 1
This one is in manuscript.....the others are actually published, already!

Ethelberta smiles

ETHELBERTA
Oh, this latter is by far the best.

She takes the manuscript back and then plays and sings the song, When Tapers Tall.

The room falls silent, listening.

NEIGH
(Whispering to companion) By jingo! The woman is magnificent!

His companion raises his eyebrow.

After the song, Ethelberta rises and joins Mrs. Belmaine on her large sofa, who is talking with another middle-aged woman, on an arm chair, next to her.

MRS. BELMAINE
We were just saying, dear, that far too many people indulge their servants.....what do you think, Mrs. Petherwin?

Ethelberta smiles

ETHELBERTA
Oh, I think that someone should have written a pamphlet called “The Shortest Way with Servants”.

MRS. BELMAINE
Like the one the dissenters wrote?

Ethelberta nods and tries to hide a rogueish grin.

ETHELBERTA
Indeed!....Just so!

She turns to take a glass of wine from a tray, proffered by a footman.

She smiles, sympathetically, at him.
Ethelberta is in her dressing gown with her hair down.
She is seated at her desk and lays down her pen.
She takes up the letter, which she has just written, and reads it.

ETHELBERTA (V.O.)
Dear Mr. Julian,
This is just to thank you, infinitely. I played your piece, this evening. and everyone thought it wonderful. I prophecy great things of you!
You must allow a woman of experience, however, to say that your talent will do you no good, unless you mix it with a degree of ambition. I write to stimulate you to this.
Also, I write to say that I will energetically avoid meeting you again, as there never can really be a friendship between man and woman, who are not of one family.
Some women might have written distantly and wept at the repression of their real feeling; but it is better to be more frank, and keep a dry eye.
Yours, Ethelberta.

She sits back and sighs, wistfully.

Lady Petherwin and Ethelberta are taking their walk.

LADY PETHERWIN
I asked you here, Ethelberta, as I wished to be out of our house with its servants, before I expressed my disapproval of those, those.... ‘poem things’ that I have just heard that you have written.

ETHELBERTA
Oh, I’m sorry, Mama. I didn’t tell you of them in case you didn’t like the idea of my publishing.

LADY PETHERWIN
You should have left them unwritten and showed more....more fidelity!
ETHELBERTA
What has fidelity got to do with it?

LADY PETHERWIN
My poor boy is dead, now, and you, you, his relict, are showing.........levity!

ETHELBERTA
Levity?

LADY PETHERWIN
If I am to keep you, you should have some feeling of loyalty and show obedience to me.........and, and... you should be mourning!

ETHELBERTA
I HAVE shown obedience! ....For nearly four years!.... I wore black for two years, instead of one, and then grey for one year, instead of 6 months, and then lavender...

LADY PETHERWIN
......There is only one thing that women of your sort are as ready to do as take a man’s name, and that is, to drop his memory!

ETHELBERTA
We were only just out of childhood, Lady Petherwin, and he died on our honeymoon! ....I didn’t go out into society for over two years!

LADY PETHERWIN
Those verses are RIBALD and demonstrate your unfeeling nature.....Will you withdraw them?

ETHELBERTA
I am not ashamed of them and will not cancel them........ I spent a great deal of work upon them, Mama!

Lady Petherwin comes to a halt and regards Ethelberta, severely.

LADY PETHERWIN
Then you may go back. I shall continue my walk, alone....You have greatly disappointed me, Ethelberta!.....Greatly!

She turns and walks off and Ethelberta stands staring after her, distressed.
INT. JULIAN’S LONDON FLAT/LIVING ROOM – DAY

The Julians have just moved house into a small London flat.

There is a large, working man, just putting a box of chattels, down on the floor and Christopher comes out of the kitchen, rolling his shirt sleeves up.

Faith looks up from unpacking a vase, at the man.

CARTER
That it, then, Miss?

FAITH
Yes, thank you. Please tell Mr. Barkiss thanks for the delivery and I’ll send the payment on.

The man touches his hat.

CARTER
Thank you, Miss. I will.

He goes out and Christopher starts selecting a box which he starts to take through to the kitchen.

Faith arranges her vase and photographs on a small stand table, by the wall.

FAITH
Do you think you WILL get more pupils here, Christopher?

CHRISTOPHER
In LONDON?!!....Of COURSE!. And, also, I should be able to get a couple of organist appointments, which should help matters, greatly.....Are you coming out a walk, soon?

FAITH
Oh, there’s FAR too much to do here, Chris!...YOU go..................

Christopher nods and walks across the room with his box, in the direction of the kitchen

FAITH
......Not, um......going in the direction of Exonbury Crescent, by any chance...

She smiles, provocatively.

Christopher turns and shrugs, nonchalantly.
CHRISTOPHER
Just thought I might take a little
look......

Faith turns back to her photos

FAITH
Ummmm......Well, if a love-lorn lad can
remember to bring some biscuits,
back, he can have some with his
tea!

CHRISTOPHER
I’m not LOVE lo...

Faith waves her fingers, saucily

FAITH
Tata!

Christopher frowns and goes into the back kitchen with his
box.

EXT. EXONBURY CRESCENT/PETHERWIN’S HOUSE – DAY

Christopher walks past the house and reads, yet, again, the
sign on the lower window of:

House To Let for 6 Month Period.

He sighs with disappointment.

Montage of Christopher walking past in different outfits and
regarding the notice.

Christopher, finally walks past and notices, with surprise,
that the sign is gone, the shutters are open and he sees
movement of people across the windows.

Christopher knocks on the front door and the footman answers.

CHRISTOPHER
Could I see Lady Petherwin, please?

FOOTMAN
I am afraid that the house has been
let to us in the Petherwin’s
absence, Sir.

CHRISTOPHER
Oh.........Do you know where they are?

The footman takes a card from the hall table, nearby.
FOOTMAN
Lady Petherwin died last winter,
Sir, but I believe that Mrs.
Petherwin resides at this address.

He hands the card over to Christopher.

Christopher thanks him and walks back down the steps, reading the card:

CHRISTOPHER
“Arrowthorne Lodge, Upper Wessex”!.......Good grief!....Not far from Sandbourne!

He heaves a big sigh and rolls his eyes.

29  EXT. A LARGE, NEW COUNTRY HOUSE – DAY  29

It is a beautiful, rural summer’s day as Christopher walks up the drive and knocks at the door.

A servant answers the door

CHRISTOPHER
Is Mrs.Petherwin at home, please?

SERVANT
There is no-one of that name here,
Sir.

CHRISTOPHER
Is not this Arrowthorne Lodge?

The man shakes his head and gives directions while waving his arm indicatively about.

Christopher thanks him and leaves.

30  EXT. COUNTRY LANE – DAY  30

Christopher is walking along, in a puzzled fashion, looking around.

He sees a little girl of around eight years old who is picking plants at the foot of a small path, entering upon the lane.

She stands up and regards him, solemnly.

CHRISTOPHER
Can you tell me the way to Arrowthorne Lodge, please?

The girl points up the path.
GIRL
It be up there, Zur.

CHRISTOPHER
Arrowthorne Lodge, where Mrs.
Petherwin lives, I mean?

GIRL
Yes, Zur. She lives there along wi’
Mother and we. But she don’t want
anyone to know it, Zur, on account
of she be famous, like... T’wouldn’t
do at all.

Christopher steps up the path and knocks at the door.
The latch lifts and the door starts to open.

CHRISTOPHER
Does Mrs. Petherwin, the poetesss
live here?

PICOTEE
She does, Sir.

Christopher looks up in astonishment at seeing the blushing,
embarrassed pupil-teacher of Sandbourne.

CHRISTOPHER
This is a surprise! I’m glad to see
you, Miss....?

PICOTEE
Chickerel, Sir. I’m home for the
holidays...My sister, Ethelberta, is
in the plantation with the
children.

She points at a path through the shrubs.

CHRISTOPHER
Thank you.

He nods and smiles as she closes the door and then sets off
through the shrubbery.

31 EXT. WOODLAND GLADE - DAY

Christopher pushes through the undergrowth along a grown-over
path and while he does, he hears alarming snatches of a tale
being told.

ETHELBERTA
...but he came towards me, as I
backed away...”You don’t escape me,
now, woman!” He roared.
Christopher enters upon the edge of a glade where there are five children and two young artisans sitting on the floor, listening to their sister, Ethelberta as she tells her tale.

Ethelberta is standing upon a tree stump.

The children and youths are listening in fascinated horror.

ETHELBERTA
I felt for my useless knife, and my feet were starting to slide away in the grass at the edge of the cliff. Would no-one......

Christopher hurries out into the glade, itself and calls out in great concern

CHRISTOPHER
......Good Heavens, Ethelberta! Where did you meet with such a terrible experience as this?

The audience shriek and leap to their feet at this sudden appearance.

Ethelberta looks up with amused surprise.

ETHELBERTA
Mr. Julian!

She steps down and moves towards him.

She turns towards the two young artisans.

ETHELBERTA
Will you walk on with the children, please, you two? Mr. Julian wishes to talk with me about business.

The young men nod and take the children back the way that Christopher just came.

Ethelberta turns back to Christopher and smiles, indulgently.

ETHELBERTA
I was merely telling a story, Sir.

Christopher is embarrassed

CHRISTOPHER
Ah!.........Sorry.........was a bit of an idiot!

Ethelberta shrugs and walks further into the wood, following another path, with Christopher, walking by her side.
ETHELBERTA
You weren’t to know.............My poetry isn’t exactly fitting itself to my pen, at the moment, and so I have decided to earn some sort of living as a story teller.

Christopher looks uncomfortable

CHRISTOPHER
As an .....actress?

ETHELBERTA
Oh no!....I don’t intend to lose caste, just because my benefactor has now died. “Mrs Petherwin the Professed Storyteller” will be performing in the top London salons.

She assumes a comic air of faux superiority.

Christopher is silent, and when she looks sideways at him, she discovers him looking intently at her.

ETHELBERTA
What?

CHRISTOPHER
I was just thinking of how I used to know you and then lost sight of you and then found you famous and how...now...we are under these trees........ alone.....

Ethelberta becomes business-like and she turns off in to another path.

ETHELBERTA
....Oh, (cough) yes....well....I think it must be tea-time.Tea is a great meal with us here. You will join us, will you not?

She smiles up at him and ploughs on, ahead.

32 INT. ARROWTHORNE LODGE/LIVING ROOM – DAY

Ethelberta’s siblings are seated around a large table, and a fifteen year-old girl, Emmeline, is bringing in a teapot from the kitchen to the table with its tea things, its scones and butter, and a large currant cake, which she starts to hand around.

Emmeline sits down.
Christopher is seated near to Picotee and Ethelberta, between two little girls. Ethelberta is seated sideways on to the window, from where you can see the big estate gates.

Picotee is wildly embarrassed and cannot meet Christopher’s enquiring eye. She talks only, and in an undertone, to the little children, near to her, when they transgress: manners-wise.

There are Ethelberta, Picotee, the two artisanal youths, Emmeline, an eleven year-old boy: Joey, two little girls and a small boy.

Ethelberta smiles at Christopher who is buttering his scone

ETHELBERTA
Our mother is bedridden, and papa works away, so Emmeline attends to the household, except when Picotee is home and Joey attends to the estate gate...

She smiles and shrugs

ETHELBERTA
...for which we have our grace and favour home.

She indicates around the room with her eyebrows.

ETHELBERTA
We also have another couple of sisters, but they are out at service.......Gwendoline and Cornelia.

A carriage appears at the gates and Joey springs up and opens them.

The carriage rolls through

EMMELINE
There’s a tremendous large dinner party at the House, tonight. That was Lord Mountclere’s carriage. He’s a wicked old man, they say.

Ethelberta looks at the carriage, while leaning back behind the net curtains.

ETHELBERTA
Lord Mountclere!...I used to know some friends of his.......Why “wicked”?

EMMELINE
Don’t know.........S’pose it’s cos he breaks the Ten Commandments.
She leans over and shouts through the window

EMMELINE
Hook back the gate, Joey! There’s more to come!

Joey complies and returns inside.

Another light gig appears at the gate.

EMMELINE
And that’s Mr. Ladywell, the artist....He once gave me a sixpence for picking up his gloves.

Ethelberta draws back even more behind the nets.

ETHELBERTA
(Sighs) What shall I live to see?!

CHRISTOPHER
(Resentfully ironic) A great friend of yours?

Ethelberta shrugs

ETHELBERTA
I hardly know him and certainly don’t value him.

Christopher smiles and nods, relievedly at her.

Ethelberta looks away and speaks to a small child which is stuffing its cake in with both hands.

Picotee notices with distress, Christopher looking with spooney regard at Ethelberta as the tea progresses and the room starts to darken with dusk.

Christopher rises to leave and the two artisans arise with his. They put on their headwear and the two youths kiss their sister and leave, along with Christopher.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - EVENING

The two young men walk abreast with Christopher.

SOL
We be thinking of changing jobs and coming up to London, ourselves, soon, Zur.’Ow d’you think we should set about that, then? I be a carpenter and Dan be a painter.

Christopher smiles and shrugs
CHRISTOPHER
Oh, then you must both specialize...in London. You must know to a nicety how to turn a screw...but not to drive a nail, Sol!

He then turns and smiles at Dan

CHRISTOPHER
And you, Dan, must specialize in painting blue, but be quite in the dark about green!

Sol strikes his stick on a rock in delight.

SOL
Haha! A wink is as good as a nod, Zur! We be keeping this in mind......If we do come up, though, we won’t be noticing Mrs. Petherwin in the street, cos that’s how she wants it.

CHRISTOPHER
I’m sure that Ethelberta is always delighted to see her brothers!

DAN
Mebbe...........but she wants none of that public recognition stuff, and only ever goes out at night, at Mother’s.

SOL
But not Picotee!.......No! Picotee sticks fast to us and allays wants us to visit her in Sandbourne.

CHRISTOPHER
Shall I see you both in Sandbourne?

SOL
Naw, naw! We know how unpleasant it is for a high sort of man to have rough chaps like us hailing him...no offence Mr. Julian!

Christopher laughs

CHRISTOPHER
You’re just as proud, yourself, you know. I talk to everyone and would be most pleased to have your acquaintance if you chose to give it.

They reach a crossroads.
SOL
Well, your station is down there, anyways, and we mun be away in this
direction.

Indicating with his head, the other way.

CHRISTOPHER
Well, I still hope to see you both
around.......Good Evening Sol...Dan.

He smiles and shakes both of their hands.

INT. ARROWTHORNE LODGE/MRS.CHICKEREL’S BEDROOM

Mrs. Chickerel is seated up in bed and Ethelberta, and
Picotee are seated on chairs, while Joey is sitting at the
bottom of his mother’s bed.

ETHELBERTA
If we are all together in town, I
can better look after you all......We
must give up the lodge.

MOTHER
(Timidly) Shall we not interfere
with your plans for keeping up your
connections, dear?

ETHELBERTA
Not nearly so much as staying here.

PICOTEE
But if you let lodgings, won’t the
ladies and gentlemen know it?

ETHELBERTA
I can advertize in Mother’s name,
and in Continental journals where
we will found foreign gentlemen,
with few acquaintance in London.

PICOTEE
So if Gwendoline is to be your cook
and Cornelia your chambermaid,
hadn’t they better soon give
notice?

ETHELBERTA
Yes...Everything depends on them...and
when we’ve put Joey in buttons,
he’ll do very well to answer the
door...

She looks at Joey
ETHELBERTA
...With a little training!

Joey pulls a silly teasing face

JOEY
But what if the visitors they see
the lodger leaving?

ETHELBERTA
They won’t know that he is a
lodger......besides I shall let people
know that my mother is an invalid
and so she can’t receive visitors.

JOEY
But what if Sol andn Dan call?

ETHELBERTA
They can go down the area steps.

MOTHER
And Father?

ETHELBERTA
He may enter any way he chooses...I’m
sure he will be glad to have us
near to him.

Her mother shakes her head, slowly

MOTHER
I’m not sure this is a good idea,
Ethelberta....The children will be
stuck up in the attic a lot of the
time....

ETHELBERTA
No...Cornelia can take them to the
park, regularly!

Her mother shrugs, slowly

MOTHER
Well, if you think it’s for the
best, Ethelberta....Joey, pour me
another glass of water...there’s a
dear.

Joey gets up and goes to a tray on the chest of drawers, and
and Ethelberta sits back in her armchair and looks in the
fire.

Picotee looks at Ethelberta.
ETHELBERTA
Of course, if I succeed at my attempts at story-telling and poetry readings, we won’t have to have lodgers.

PICOTEE
Can I come to London, as well?

ETHELBERTA
No, you has better stay put, in Sandbourne, and attain your teaching diploma, Picotee.

PICOTEE
Oh!

MOTHER
She’s right, dear...you MUST finish what you’ve started.

Picotee nods and looks, sadly into the fire.

35 INT. A LONDON HOUSE/LARGE SALON - EVENING 35

The room is crowded with chairs in rows which are fully occupied, and some of the gentlemen are standing around the walls. There is a small dais at one end with an armchair.

Ethelberta comes onto the ‘stage’ and there is a little ripple of applause.

She bows.

Ladywell, foppishly dressed, leans over and speaks to Neigh.

LADYWELL
It was my idea, you know, Neigh!

NEIGH
What, story-telling?

LADYWELL
Well sort of...I DID tell her that her ideas for novels ought to get out there, more publicly.

NEIGH
You know Mrs. Petherwin, then?

LADYWELL
A little.

NEIGH
Could you introduce me?

Ladywell demurs
LADYWELL
Not THAT well........ I’ll have to see
I’m...

Ethelberta seats herself, carefully, sweeping her skirts to
one side.

Christopher and Faith are seated towards the back

CHRISTOPHER
I wish you knew her, Faith.

FAITH
Ah, we live in such a plain way,
that would hardly be desirable, at
present, Chris.

CHRISTOPHER
Perhaps it would be better for us
both if Ethelberta and I had never
seen each other. Ethelberta has a
heart, which will tend to get in
the way of what she intends.

FAITH
And what’s that?

CHRISTOPHER
Well, she’s horrified at the
thought of having to have hundreds
of children, like her mother.

FAITH
I can’t say that I blame her!

CHRISTOPHER
And she wants to be a dramatist and
poet, instead of a $housewife........

FAITH
......SSshhh...she’s starting!

Ethelberta leans, dramatically over towards her audience,
from her chair.

She almost whispers

ETHELBERTA
It was a very..... stormy....black.....
night!..

She raises her head, slowly and stares at her audience who
are immediately rapt.
Joey comes into the drawing room and announces Christopher who comes in.

Ethelberta smiles, is coolly pleased to see him and shakes his hand.

They chat a minute and then she indicates out of the door, interrogatively, to ask if he wishes to see the house.

He does and so they travel through the house, seeing Sol and Dan doing carpentry in an upper room, and the children being taught by Emmeline, up in the attic.

Ethelberta comes in and rings for tea; then gives the maid the order, who exits.

Christopher and she sit down, either side of the fire.

ETHELBERTA
It is my duty to educate and provide for the children. I keep my two French lodgers for the sake of them.

CHRISTOPHER
Do your lodgers know of all of your relationships?

ETHELBERTA
Oh, no! My mother is supposed to let the ground and first floors to me, a young widow, and the next two to them......Still...I may be discovered, yet!...

CHRISTOPHER
...I think you'll succeed!

ETHELBERTA
Well, I hope that YOU succeed with your new location, too.

CHRISTOPHER
Ah, but success means getting what you want.

ETHELBERTA
And why should you not get that?

Christopher sits forward and looks intently at Ethelberta.
CHRISTOPHER
It has been forbidden
me..............Ethelberta, you have my
whole heart! You have had it ever
since I first saw you....I suppose,
however, that, after being married,
you no longer care for it,
though........?

Ethelberta colours and shrugs, slightly.

ETHELBERTA
You have all of me that you care to
have, Christopher, but I....

Joey comes in

JOEY
......Please, Berta, Mr. Ladywell has
called and I’ve showed ‘im into
the libery...

ETHELBERTA
“Library”, Joey....Library!

Joey smiles and nods.

ETHELBERTA
Sorry, Christopher, will you excuse
me....Do stay....I won’t be long!

She glides out and Joey follows.

He turns back to Christopher, grins, impishly,gives a big
wink and points his thumb at Ethelberta’s retreating back.

Christopher nods and smiles.

Christopher then walks up and down for ages, getting
impatient.

He repeatedly looks at the mantle clock.

It is getting darker and Christopher sighs, and lights a
couple of candles from the fire, putting them back on the
mantelpiece.

Ethelberta finally returns and Christopher is boot-faced, by
now.

ETHELBERTA
I’m sorry, Christopher. Ladywell is
painting me.

CHRISTOPHER
Huh...You’d be better advised to get
painted by someone who can actually
PAINT!
ETHELBERTA
He CAN paint...He’s been hung in the academy!

CHRISTOPHER
HE can be hanged, for all I care!...I thought you said he was a mere nobody to you...

Ethelberta shrugs, impatiently

ETHELBERTA
How provoking you are!

CHRISTOPHER
Yes, well, I have work that I have to be getting on with, and can’t go dangling round here, all day...Good Evening, Ethelberta.

He shakes her hand, perfunctorily and leaves.

Ethelberta gives a little shrug and carelessly moues.

38

EXT. SANDBOURNE/MOOR - DAY

Picotee is going her walk and looking pensive on a beautiful day.

She gets out a letter from Ethelberta and reads it.

She half reads it aloud, inaudibly, and when she comes to the final paragraph, she stops walking and stares, angrily at it.

ETHELBERTA (V.O.)
So you really must stay there, dear and finish your training. I don’t see why Sandbourne is such a trial to you.

I look forward to seeing you soon. bear up, little sister.
Your affectionate, Ethelberta.

Picotee crumples up the letter in her first and addresses the lonely sky.

PICOTEE
It’s a trial cos he’s THERE!...And though he loves YOU and not ME (quieter voice) I still want to see him........a bit............occasionally!

She walks away across the moor and we see her exasperated clenching of fists, from her head, into the air.
PICOTEE
Ohwuu!!

INT. EXONBURY CRESCENT/HALLWAY - DAY

The bell goes and Joey goes to the door, affecting a great air of arrogance and aplomb, in his many-brass-buttoned jacket.

He slowly opens the door and looks down to the person on the stairs. It is Picotee.

Joey’s face lights up and he leans out and grabs her, dragging her inside.

JOEY
Pixie!...Pixie!...Wot YOU doin’ ‘ere?

Picotee bends and kisses his cheek, which he embarrassedly rubs a bit, with his hand.

Joey grabs her bag and sets off towards the stairs.

JOEY
Oi’ll tell Berta wot you’ve come!

Picotee sees the umbrella in the nearby stand.

PICOTEE
No, no!...She has company, doesn’t she?

JOEY
Na!...It’s just Mr. Julian. E’s quite one of the famly, now!

Picotee suddenly looks distraught

PICOTEE
I’ll...I’ll just go down to the kitchen.

She sets off to the servants door and Joey comes towards her.

PICOTEE
Does he come very often, then?

JOEY
He’s allays comin’!...Reglar BORE to me!

PICOTEE
A boar?
J O E Y
Ah!..... Oi fergot!..... You dunno our
Lunnon words!......................Hey!....Aren’t
you NOT supposed to be here?

Picotee rubs his ruffles hair and smiles

P I C O T E E
(Joking)Yes....... I “aren’t”!!

Joey grins at her and turns to lead the way down to the
kitchen.

He suddenly stops and puts her bag down by the wall of the
entrance hall.

He looks up in eager mischief.

J O E Y
Egh! Such a lark, Pixie!...Berta’s a-
courting of her young man....D’you
wanna ‘ear ‘ow they carries on, a
bit?

Picotee looks consternated

P I C O T E E
(Sigh) Dearly I should!

Joey starts to hare off, quietly, up the stairs.

He turns, half way up and looks back at her.

J O E Y
Come on, then!....Quick!....And be
quiet!

He puts his finger on his lips and hare off.

Picotee, with dread in her heart, follows him.


They creep along the passageway and listen at a door.

Picotee hears a soft male and a soft female voice.

Picotee gasps and leans faintly against the opposite wall

Joey looks up from his listening.

J O E Y
Wot’s the matter?

P I C O T E E
Oh....um, just....um, indigestion.
JOEY
(Whispers) Huh! You ain’t had indigestion till you’ve ‘ad these ten course meals!......They ‘ave to sleep all the following morning, an’ then crawl about all the aternoons, in the park, so they can eat agin, in the evening!

PICOTEE
I think I’ll go down n....

Joey listens, again and waves his hand

JOEY
Shhh.....Listen!

The voices are raised. There is an argument.
Then there is an exclamation from Mr. Julian.
Silence...and the eavesdroppers look at each other, in suspense.
There is a final curt sentence, and then footsteps walking determinedly across the room.
Picotee and Joey dive into the opposite bedroom.
They hear Christopher walk angrily down the hall and stairs, and then slam the front door.
Picotee comes timidly out into the hall.

PICOTEE
I don’t much like biding her and listening!

JOEY
Oh, it’s ‘ow fings are done, in the West End, here! ‘Tis yer ignorance of town life that makes it seem a big thing to yer!...(Superiorly) Me!....I’m in on fings!

Picotee looks reprovingly at her brother

PICOTEE
You can’t make much boast about town life; for you haven’t left off talking just as they do down in Wessex, yet!
49.

JOEY
Well, oi’m not one o’ them great footmen, yet, cos me wages is so small that they hardly covers the tobacco oi consumes!

PICOTEE
You wicked boy! If only Mother knew you smoked!

Joey gurns

JOEY
She won’t!

Picotee walks off, back down the corridor, towards the stairs.

Joey sticks out his tongue, pulls a funny face and squints at her back.

41

INT. EXONBURY CRESCENT/DRAWING ROOM – EVENING

It is late dusk and Picotee is standing by the window, looking out, whilst Ethelberta sits staring into the fire, anxiously.

Picotee comes back to the fire, and sits down in the opposite armchair.

She picks up and resumes her sewing of a shirt of Joey’s.

PICOTEE
Why don’t you go out?

ETHELBERTA
Oh...(Sigh)...I’ve been expecting someone.

PICOTEE
When she comes, I must run away, up to Mama, hum?

ETHELBERTA
It’s a ‘He’...I may as well tell you...It’s Mr. Julian. I suppose, in plain English, that he’s my lover...whom I’m NOT going to marry until he gets rich.

Picotee drops her sewing onto her lap.

PICOTEE
Ah!...How strange!...If I had such a lover, I would marry him whether he got rich, or not!
ETHELBERTA
I don’t doubt it, Picotee! Just as you threw up your teacher training and came to London, without caring for the consequences!....Someone in the family must take a practical view of affairs, or we should all go to the dogs!

Picotee looks down, humbled.

PICOTEE
Yes, Berta........................Do you love him?

ETHELBERTA
Oh, he’s very gentlemanly, except when he’s rude and will not come and apologize.

Picotee looks spoonily wishful

PICOTEE
If I had a lover, I should ask him to come, if I wanted his company.

ETHELBERTA
I HAD been intending to keep him on until I got tired of his attentions and then finish them by marrying him.

PICOTEE
Oh!

ETHELBERTA
He has hardly declared himself, before he has now forgotten my existence, it seems!

PICOTEE
When did you get to care for him, dear Berta?

ETHELBERTA
(Airily) Oh, when I’d seen him, once, or twice....Women don’t need to know a man well, to love him. That’s only necessary when we want to leave him off!

PICOTEE
Oh, Berta, you don’t believe that!
ETHELBERTA
If a woman did not form an opinion of her choice before she has half seen him, and love him before she has half formed an opinion, there would be no tears and pining, in the whole feminine world and poets would starve for want of a topic.

PICOTEE
Would they?

ETHELBERTA
Um.........I must say, though, that I haven’t learnt much from my own observation, there...especially, as I intend to spend my days writing poetry, and NOT starving......or having babies........ or cleaning the house!

PICOTEE
(Wistfully) I wish I was as strong-minded as you, Berta! I wish I could help Mama and Papa with the little ones, as well!

ETHELBERTA
You can! You can spend your mornings up with Emmeline, in the loft, teaching the children, and showing Emmeline how to teach........and being of some use!

Picotee looks down

PICOTEE
Yes, Berta.

She resumes her sewing and Ethelberta sighs and stands up.

ETHELBERTA
I’d better start getting ready for my performance.....See you later, Pixie.

She smiles at Picotee and walks out.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF STAGE DOOR - EVENING

Ethelberta walks out of the door, into the street and meets a little knot of people who shake her hand and enthusiastically praise her.

She smiles and turns to walk to her carriage at the end of the rear passage, when Mr. Ladywell hurries up, in evening dress.
LADYWELL
Mrs. Petherwin! You left this notebook behind!

Ethelkberta stops, turns, and recognises Ladywell.

She smiles and takes the proffered book.

ETHELBERTA
Oh, hello, Mr. Ladywell. Good grief, I left it behind, again...thank you.

LADYWELL
(In a lowered, impassioned voice)
I take any opportunity to show my circumspection and devotion to you.....

ETHELBERTA
...Well, thank you again, Mr. Ladywell.

LADYWELL
Your triumph, tonight was very great and it was quite as much a triumph for me...

Ethelberta turns to go

ETHELBERTA
.....Oh, very kind....

LADYWELL
...I cannot express my feeling!....If I might only....

ETHELBERTA
.....I have to return home, Mr.Ladywell.

LADYWELL
May I accompany you?

ETHELBERTA
I'm afraid not, as my maid is waiting for me in my carriage just there.

She points

ETHELBERTA
Thank you again, Mr. Ladywell. That was very kind of you....Good evening!

She hurries off down the passageway, towards the coach and Mr. Ladywell looks lovingly after her.
Ethelberta comes in to the room carrying a visiting card. She is followed in by Picotee who removes her own bonnet and jacket and sits down in an armchair.

ETHELBERTA
...As I said, though, Ladywell is just a simpleton.

PICOTEE
Why did you choose him as your artist, then?

ETHELBERTA
I didn’t........He chose me.

PICOTEE
Well, you needn’t have worried about Mr. JULIAN not coming, to hear you, tonight, now you know that he visited you here, while we were away.

Ethelberta goes over to the desk, removes her hat and jacket, sits down and picks up some paper and pen.

ETHELBERTA
Ha!....Well!...... Now I’m going to punish him for staying away so long.

Picotee looks up, in surprise

PICOTEE
But I thought that honesty was the best policy!

ETHELBERTA
It is as bad to show constancy in one’s manners, as fickleness in one’s heart, at such times as these.

She starts to write

ETHELBERTA
I’m going to ask him not to visit in future, as people are talking about us.

PICOTEE
But they’re NOT talking about you!

Ethelberta raises her eyebrows, superiorly

ETHELBERTA
Shh!!
She continues writing, whilst Picotee sighs and pokes the fire.

**ETHELBERTA**
Of course, he’s so far in love, that I suspect that he WILL come, after all!

**PICOTEE**
I don’t think that he WILL, Berta.

**ETHELBERTA**
Oh, he will!.......Men just need a little taming!

INT. EXONBURY CRESCENT - DAY

HALLWAY

Ethelberta comes in at the front door, which is opened by Joey. She is taking off her gloves.

Picotee is coming down the stairs.

Ethelberta raises a brow at her, but Picotee shakes her head.

Ethelberta carelessly shrugs

KITCHEN - DAY

Ethelberta is talking with Gwendoline and Cornelia in the kitchen, and they are showing her their latest red petticoats.

The front door bell goes and Ethelberta looks up and listens.

Joey appears at the top of the kitchen stairs, and shakes his head.

Ethelberta looks away

DINING ROOM - DAY

Ethelberta and Picotee are eating their salad, when the door rings and Joey comes in, shortly after.

He shakes his head.

Ethelberta looks a bit upset.

HALLWAY - DAY

Ethelberta comes in the door, with Picotee and Joey is there.

Joey crosses his eyes and elaborately shakes his head, slowly.
Ethelberta scowls, lightly boxes his ear and walks off up the stairs, followed by Picotee, who silently admonishes Joey, for his cheek.

Joey then drags himself, in ridiculous mime play across the hallway, gurning, with his arms dangling, in a display of utter depression.

Picotee, seeing him, suppresses a titter and looks to check that Ethelberta didn’t see.

INT. EXONBURY CRESCENT/DRAWING ROOM – EVENING

Ethelberta is lying down on the sofa and Picotee is reading by the fire.

Joey comes in

JOEY
Mr. Julian is downstairs and be wanting for to see you, Berta.

Ethelberta sits up

ETHELBERTA
He WANTS to see me.

JOEY
Aye, that be wot oi said.

Ethelberta tuts and rolls her eyes

ETHELBERTA
Picotee, go down and say I am asleep, but if......if, upon enquiring, he seems particularly urgent, you have my permission to admit that I MAY be able to rise.

PICOTEE
How will I know if he is enough worried, Berta?

ETHELBERTA
Listen, silly........

She goes on to outline the behaviours of men to Picotee who seems rather reluctant to go and keeps asking questions.

The evening wears on and it starts to go dark.

Picotee eventually nods, in agreement, and slowly and reluctantly goes out.

Joey shrugs and ‘slowly’ follows her, in reluctant dumbshow.
INT. EXONBURY CRESCENT/LIBRARY - EVENING

Christopher has fallen asleep in the final embers of the fire. There are no candles.

Picotee slowly comes in at the half open door and very reluctantly advances, slowly towards him.

She touches Christopher on the shoulder

**PICOTEER**
Mr. Julian, I....

Christopher awakes with a start, sees what he thinks is Ethelberta and seizes her hand.

He covers it with kisses

**CHRISTOPHER**
........I knew you'd come!......I knew you'd forgive me!.....My love!....My angel!

**PICOTEER**
Oh!...........It's ME!....I'll get a, a light!...Ohhhhh! (Repeated sobbing)

**CHRISTOPHER**
What the...?

He leaps up, and then draws Picotee towards the light of the fire.

**CHRISTOPHER**
Picotee!.................I thought you were in Sandbourne!

He drops her arm and leaps back, upon perceiving which, Picotee redoubles her sobs.

**CHRISTOPHER**
Oh!...Huh...Yes, I see.........It was done for a joke.

**PICOTEER**
Nooooooo...(sobbing)

**CHRISTOPHER**
Then why are you here?

Ethelberta can be seen through the half opened door, listening in.

**PICOTEER**
Ethelberta doesn't know that we used to meet in, in Sandbourne and that's the reason I ran away and came here an......
Christopher looks dumbfounded

CHRISTOPHER
......You ‘ran away’ because of m........I
didn’t ‘meet’ you, in
Sandbourne!....I arranged
nothing!...........Good Heavens! You
think that I..............Well....... This IS a
strange business: you follow me, I
follow Ethelberta and she follows,
goodness knows who......

He gets hold of Picotee’s arm, gently and lowers her down
onto the other armchair.

He sits down, facing her.

PICOTEE
....Mr. Ladywell.

Christopher shoots, angrily to his feet again.

CHRISTOPHER
What?........ She’s in love with Mr.
Ladywell?

He starts to pace around the room

Picotee is alarmed

PICOTEE
Oh, no!...No....

Christopher pauses

PICOTEE
...cos she prefers Mr. Neigh.

Christopher sinks down weakly on the sofa

CHRISTOPHER
So!...It’s Mr. Neigh, is it?

Picotee stands up, still sobbing

PICOTEE
Oh, no, Mr, Julian. YOU are her
favourite!...You are, really!

Christopher stands up, again.

Ethelberta hastily withdraws from her listening post.

CHRISTOPHER
Oh! I suppose that that’s a good
thing, is it?.........Well!....Huh!....
(MORE)
CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)
I shan’t dangle around here, any
longer, waiting for her to make up
her mind from such a Surfeit of
Suitors!...Good Evening, Picotee.

He walks out and Picotee redoubles her howls.

INT. EXONBURY CRESCENT/DRAWING ROOM – EVENING

Ethelberta is standing, listening at the half open door.
Christopher walks heavily across the hall and goes out.
Picotee starts up the stairs and Ethelberta, hearing
her,rushes to the sofa, lies down and puts a scarf over her
face, pretending to doze.
Picotee rushes in and kneels down by her sister.
She puts her arm around Ethelberta’s chest and lays her
forehead against Ethelberta’s cheek.

Ethelberta pretends to be half asleep.

ETHELBERTA
Is that you, Picotee?

PICOTEE
Yes, it is!...Oh, Berta!....I’m
sorry!...... I didn’t tell you that the
man I used to meet and who I fell
in love with is Mr.Julian!

Ethelberta removes the scarf and sits up.

ETHELBERTA
What? He made assignations with
you?!

Picotee slumps with her face, half sideways on, in
Ethelberta’s lap.

PICOTEE
(Rapid, with no breath pauses)
I should of told you a long time
ago but he was YOUR young man and
then I didn’t known what to do and
that’s why I came back from
Sandbourne, and...and...I’m SO
soooooooory (loud sobs)...He, he
DIDN’T meet me, it was just that we
always passed on our ways to work,
an, an....then...an....

Ethelberta puts her fingers under Picotee’s chin and lifts
her head up.
ETHELBERTA
......Silly Pixie!.......Chasing a young man to London!...You’ll turn his head!......................Still, it’ll probably all end happily for you and him.........who knows?

Picotee stops crying and sits up.

PICOTEE
(Sniff)What?!......Then, then you don’t want him,Berta?

ETHELBERTA
(Airily)Oh, no!...... Not at all! I would much rather he paid his addresses to you!

PICOTEE
(Ruefully)Huh!...That’s the problem...he kissed my hand in the dark cos he thought it was YOURS!

Ethelberta gets up and goes to the mirror to adjust her hair.

ETHELBERTA
My dear! Men speak of the fickleness of women, when they, themselves, are as reeds in the wind....SHE, today: HER, tomorrow! ...................(Sighs)Now run along and ask Gwendoline if she managed to get that turkey.

Picotee scrambles to her feet and hugs Ethelberta

PICOTEE
Oh, thank you, Berta!...Thank you!....You’re SURE?

ETHELBERTA
Of course, silly!

Picotee smiles and runs out and Ethelberta plonks down on the sofa and idly flaps her hand, swishing her scarf from side to side.

She sighs, a bit sadly, and looks blankly around the room.

INT. EXONBURY CRESCENT/LIBRARY – DAY

Ethelberta is sorting out and writing bills at her desk.
Picotee comes in, carelessly, and sits down in an armchair.
Ethelberta doesn’t react.
PICOTEE
Berta! I really think that you
don’t know I’m in the room!

Ethelberta looks up

ETHELBERTA
What?...Oh, hello, Pixie...Sorry, I
was trying to pay these
bills......(glumly)There are so many
of them.

PICOTEE
Well there are so many of us!

ETHELBERTA
(Sigh) Yes, but I really begin to
think that I can’t pay them all
with only my earnings as a
storyteller.

PICOTEE
People LIKE you!...I’m sure they’ll
keep coming.

ETHELBERTA
Yes, but Marlborough Hall was half
empty, the other night and I don’t
have that many forward bookings,
now.

PICOTEE
Don’t worry, Bertha...........(Has an
idea) Mother and I can take in
sewing and you can do translations.

Ethelberta gets up and walks about, stretching her arms

ETHELBERTA
Bless you, child....That won’t pay
this rent of two hundred pounds a
year....never mind everything else.

PICOTEE
I thought you inherited this house.

ETHELBERTA
Good grief, no! Mrs. Petherwin only
left me the remainder of the lease
for another couple of years....As
you know, she left her money to her
second cousin, after hearing of my
writing poetry.......... I shall just
have to do what women usually do,
and marry.

PICOTEE
Who?......... Mr. Ladywell?
ETHELBERTA
Oh, no!....FAR too young and rather uncertain earnings, as well....No, I shall just have to........ look about me. I dragged Mother and the children away from their comfortable and certain shelter, all the way to London, so it must be me that does something about it.................Having put my hand to the plough, how shall I turn back?

Picotee stands up, while Ethelberta returns to her desk.

PICOTEE
(Seriously)I see it!....So, as you mean to marry high, you will have to marry, before this house is lost.....

ETHELBERTA
.....well, before my earnings give out entirely. Papa’s earnings, as a butler, are certainly not enough for living here, in London!

PICOTEE
I’ll go down to the kitchen and ask Gwenny if she has any ideas.

Picotee goes out and Ethelberta fondly smiles at her back.

EXT. A LONDON PARK - DAY

Ethelberta and Picotee are walking along a path, when, upon rounding a corner, they almost bump into Christopher.

They smile, shake hands and say hello.

CHRISTOPHER
I received your letter, Ethelberta and was just coming to say I accept the breaking off that....that you proposed. It seems that I am likely to be offered the post of organist at Melchester and am not in a financial position to say no.

ETHELBERTA
Oh, I am so glad that you will have a steady income, then, Christopher.
CHRISTOPHER
Well, steady, but small....You're right, though....I, I have no right
to ask you to be my betrothed
without having the near prospect of
making you my wife.

ETHELBERTA
It is unspeakably generous of you
to put if before me so nicely,
Christopher....I think infinitely
more of you for being so
unreserved. I hoped that you would
see the sense in what I
wrote.........You will....I mean, we must
keep in touch, however, Mr.
Julian.....When do you leave London?

CHRISTOPHER
(Murmurs) I hardly know........I
suppose that I shall not call here,
again.

Christopher leans and kisses her on the cheek.

Ethelberta gets hold of Picotee around the waist

ETHELBERTA
Kiss her, too. She is my sister and
I am yours.

Christopher kisses Picotee’s cheek and turns to go.

Ethelberta calls after him.

ETHELBERTA
I think that Picotee might
correspond with Faith, don’t you
think, Mr. Julian?

CHRISTOPHER
My sister would much like to do so.

He nods, a bit overcome and hurries away.

Ethelberta sighs and the two sisters continue with their
walk.

PICOTEE
Will you miss him, terribly,
Ethelberta?
ETHELBERTA
Yes, yes, I will......but not as much
as I should have hated having to
run a music shop while having
fifteen babies and running the
house for them all....single-
handedly!

Picotee sighs, and gives a small smile, wistfully, at the
dream.

PICOTEE
You might have enjoyed it....?

ETHELBERTA
Ergh!....I want to write plays and
poetry............ not spend my days as a
skivvy!....I wouldn’t have had a
single moment to write a single
word....What would have been the
purpose of all of my education?

Picotee nods, qualifiedly.

PICOTEE
True....true......

They walk on.

50 INT. THE ROYAL ACADEMY/A GALLERY – DAY 50

Ethelberta looks up from reading the catalogue to see her two
massive brothers, in their Sunday best and new gloves,
standing in the entrance way and peering reverentially at the
crowd, while holding their hats, nervously.

Ethelberta is dressed in quiet black with a veil for
anonymity.

Ethelberta hurries towards them, tells them to put their hats
back on, which they do and whispers to them.

ETHELBERTA
Now, Sol and Dan, we are going to
continue your arts education, and,
when you see a little painting
which may, or may not look like me,
you are NOT to exclaim out loud
anything about it....do you hear?

SOL AND DAN
Yes, Berta.

Ethelberta takes them around the room, reading from the
catalogue and pointing at the various pictures.
They then arrive at Ladywell’s portrait of Ethelberta which has a small knot of people before it.

As the boys gawp and Ethelberta adjudges the picture, Ethelberta then overhears two youngish men, talking, nearby, in the small crowd.

GENTLEMAN 1
You know who’s face this is?

GENTLEMAN 2
Yes...Mrs. Petherwin’s

GENTLEMAN 1
Wellell......... Mrs. Neigh as will be.

GENTLEMAN 2
What?!...... That elusive fellow caught by a woman at last, egh?....How do you know?

GENTLEMAN 1
Easy...He said to me when we were last in conversation, “I mean to marry that woman”....Just like that...“I mean to marry her!”

The other man smiles, broadly

GENTLEMAN 2
(Gloatingly)Wonderful!

Ethelberta sidles away with the boys following her.

She heads out of the gallery

She speaks quietly to herself

ETHELBERTA
Huh!...MEANS to marry me, does he?

Sol and Dan follow her out.

51

EXT. NEIGH’S ESTATE/CONIFER TREE ALLEY AND FIELD - DAY

Ethelberta and Picotee are in dark walking suits, and are walking quickly along a stony track in a conifer plantation.

It is earlyish in the morning and quite grey and depressing.

PICOTEE
Why are we here, Berta?

Ethelberta shrugs

ETHELBERTA
I hardly know.
They hear a sudden doleful, multi-tongued howl and Picotee clutches her sister who keeps walking.

They come out onto a big field enclosure containing lots of starved-looking horses with a ramshackle barn at one end.

There is a large pool, at the far side and a cleared area next to it.

They walk around the enclosure, keeping away from the barn.

    PICOTEE
    Why are there all these old, starved horses, here, Berta?

    ETHELBERTA
    These unfortunate, wretched creatures here are to feed the hounds, in that barn, there.

Picotee shivers

    PICOTEE
    Oh......!....Poor things!

They arrive near the pool and stand looking at the big cleared area.

    PICOTEE
    It looks like someone was thinking of building a house.

    ETHELBERTA
    And what a forsaken place to build it in!

She looks around at the desolate area, the mist curling off the pool and a big pile of dirty rags, and rotten hay bales, nearby

She shakes her head, and turns back

    ETHELBERTA
    Let’s go back.

Picotee hurries after her.

As they arrive back near the track entrance, they meet a labourer with his barrow.

    ETHELBERTA
    Excuse me, my man, do you know the owner of this property, please?

The man stands up and tugs on his cap.
LABOURER
Oh, that be a Mr. Neigh, from a family who made a fortune from the knackers and tanning business.

Ethelberta gestures to the big cleared area beyond the pool.

ETHELBERTA
Is a house going up, there, then?

LABOURER
Oh, that Mr. Neigh, he had the place cleared and acalled Fairfield Park. But then ‘e says, I don’t want a wife, so why would I wants an ‘ouse to put ‘er in?

ETHELBERTA
Indeed!

LABOURER
Yes....‘e’s a terrible hater of women, I hear......particular them of the lower classes!........ Anyhow, he now rents the land to a brother of Lord Mountclere’s.

Ethelberta nods in dismissal and hands the man a small coin.

ETHELBERTA
Thank you....thank you.

The man tugs his cap, again and resumes his barrowing.

The ladies hurry on down the conifer-lined track, again.

52

INT. EXONBURY CRESCENT/DRAWING ROOM – DAY

Joey opens the door upon Ethelberta who is sitting reading.

JOEY
A Mr. Neigh, Madam!

He makes secret ‘round eyes’ and Ethelberta, annoyedly looks quickly away from him to Mr. Neigh who comes into the room, carrying his hat.

Joey slowly closes this door whilst boggling his eyes and Ethelberta tries not to show her annoyance, while she stands up and greets Neigh.

She then sits back down on her armchair, indicating for him to sit, but Neigh shakes his head, impatiently and remains standing.

He starts to pace
NEIGH
(Clippered speech) I have been meaning to write a line to you, Mrs. Petherwin... Ethelberta!... I'm not bright at a letter... never was.

ETHELBERTA
Oh, it's just...

NEIGH
...... Look, will you give me hope that I may not be entirely unacceptable to you as a husband?... Just say "Yes" and settle it now.

ETHELBERTA
Oh... but I wasn't expecting... I mean that I can't say what you wish and......

NEIGH
...... perhaps I have been too sudden and too presumptuous!

ETHELBERTA
It's not that... It's just that there can be no question of marriage between us........ My affairs are too intricate and unpleasant for me to explain to anyone, at pres........

ETHELBERTA
...... No worries.... no worries, there. All business affairs can be sorted with the lawyer fellows.... All you need to say is just two words, "I will".

ETHELBERTA
I'm sorry to pain you, Mr. Neigh, but......

Neigh stops pacing and fixes her with a stare

NEIGH
...... I might have expected your interest to be fixed in another quarter, were it not for the fact of your showing particular interest in ME, in the first place......

ETHELBERTA
...... particular interest?!
NEIGH
Well......I wish Farnfield had been
in a bit more of a tidy state....but,
there you are!...If one visits,
unannounced, one must, I suppose,
take pot luck!

ETHELBERTA
(Faintly and embarrased)
Oh.......um...yes, I did, er, walk
round, the other day......

NEIGH
......Quite!....... You ‘took an interest’!

He plonks himself down, smugly nodding, on the sofa, near to
Ethelberta’s armchair.

Ethelberta, stung, shoots to her feet.

ETHELBERTA
(Angry) But, but.....It’s only
reasonable that a woman should want
to see a bit of the property of the
man who has been hooting it around
London that he “intends to marry”
hers!

Neigh looks a bit shamed

NEIGH
OH!......Well....... I own I did say
that....but it’s true....and I don’t
care who knows it...............Do assent to
it, dear Mrs.Petherwin!

He leans over and takes her hand, which she slowly and gently
pulls back.

NEIGH
Look....just give it some
consideration and I’ll come back
again, in a little
while........tomorrow.....tomorrow.

ETHELBERTA
Oh... um.... I thin.......Maybe......I,
(Desperately) I don’t love anybody
and have no heart left even for
begining.......I....

Neigh jumps up

NEIGH
......Till next we meet again, dear
Mrs. Petherwin!

He gives a half bow and marches out.
Ethelberta sighs, and weakly plonks herself back down on the sofa, staring at the floor.

The door opens and Joey pokes his head in

JOEY
Your soooooter gone, then?

Ethelberta angrily throws a ball of her knitting wool at him, as he withdraws, cackling.

INT. LONDON/ST. GILES CHURCH CRIPPLEGATE - DAY

Ethelberta comes in at the main door, talking to a middle-aged woman. Another middle-aged couple follow, behind, and then Neigh.

The first woman smilingly shoos Ethelberta up to a big statue of Milton and indicates, excitedly that she is to read from the small book which Ethelberta has in her hands.

Ethelberta smiles, stands leaning back against the tomb, and starts to read, aloud.

The others deploy them selves nearby, to listen, with Neigh, passionately either staring at her, or around the church, while she reads a brief poem.

The group then scatters and goes to inspect the other tombs.

Ethelberta goes out to the churchyard, and Neigh follows her.

Ladywell comes in at the main church door, looking around for his party, which he fails to see, as they are scattered.

Ladywell goes and sits in a pew, waiting.

Neigh re-enters the church and walks past Ladywell, not seeing him.

Neigh is emplacing a partial rose head in his pocket book.

Ladywell sees this and stands up, revealing himself to Neigh, suddenly.

Neigh starts back and rapidly closes the book, scattering some of the rose petals onto the floor.

Ladywell comes out of the pew to join Neigh, looks at the petals, and good naturedly wags his finger, in fun, at Neigh, baiting him regarding romanticism.

Neigh shrugs, embarrasedly.

Ladywell asks where the others are and Neigh indicates with his head and turns to take him back outside to the churchyard.
They step out of the church into the bright light and walk towards the tower, at one end, meeting Ethelberta as she comes around the corner.

Ladywell looks surprised, but Neigh explains that he had forgotten to explain that Mrs. Petherwin was to come.

Ethelberta looks like she is recovering herself after being angry with Neigh.

She is wearing the remains of a large rose, in her corsage, but nearly all of the petals are missing, just leaving two behind on the calyx.

Ladywell sees the rose, and his jaw drops.

He looks at Neigh, aghast, and Neigh looks away.

Ethelberta says hello and shakes Ladywell’s hand, while glancing, annoyedly at Neigh.

The older married woman now joins them, nods to the men and takes Ethelberta’s arm, steering her back into the church.

    MRS. DONCASTER
    Now, my dear, I must tell you....run
    along Alfred, I have something to
    tell Mrs. Petherwin....

    NEIGH
    Yes Aunt.

He takes Ladywell, who is still shocked at his supposed discovery, back into the church.

    MRS. DONCASTER
    ....A friend of my husband’s, Lord
    Mountclere, has been dying to meet
    you for sometime....He has been to
    many of your performances at
    Mayfair Hall!...When will you dine
    with us to meet him, dear?

Ethelberta looks a bit disconcerted, as her father is, unbeknown to Mrs. Doncaster, Mrs. Doncaster’s butler.

    ETHELBERTA
    Oh...um...thank you.........Er, at YOUR
    house...yes, um...

    MRS. DONCASTER
    ....Where else, my dear?!

She sweeps Ethelberta indoors.
Picotee and Ethelberta are sitting at the table which is laid for dinner and they have their soup before them which they start on.

Joey is just leaving with the tray in his hand.

JOEY
Oi’m gonna go down t’ kitchen now, as Gwendoline ‘as made me an ‘og’s pudding. Oi’m glad oi don’t ‘ave to eat them thin veggie messes as you two do!

ETHELBERTA
(Reproachfully)Oh, Joey........”I AM!”

JOEY
Oi KNOWS you am!

ETHELBERTA
No!....I mean that you have to say “I”, instead of....

JOEY
...Mwah!!

He rushes out.

ETHELBERTA
(Sighs)That boy will be the ruin of us all!

They continue with their soup.

PICOTEE
That’s not the worst of it! He’s in love with Mrs. Doncastle’s new maid, now.

ETHELBERTA
Mrs.Doncastle’s...?!....But that’s father’s house!....Besides he’s only fourteen and she must be double his age!

PICOTEE
I don’t think father knows, or he’d stop it.

ETHELBERTA
I’ll talk to father, this evening. I’m going there to tell him I am to dine there.
To dine there?...At Mrs. Doncastle’s?!!...Gosh!..................Father will be right there, at table, you know!.........(Smiles) How I should like to see you sitting at a grand table among lordly dishes and shining people!

She puts down her spoon, in excitement.

Oh, do let me come and sneak a peek at you, Berta!

Ethelberta smiles

We’ll talk about that when I come home, this evening....I must hear what father says.

Picotee resumes eating her soup.

(Musingly) I have never seen a real dinner party in my whole life!

I can tell you, Pixie that it isn’t that much fun, trying to shoehorn ten courses down whilst being tightly corseted and having to smile all the while.

Picotee looks doubtful and slowly shrugs

Still.........

There is a knock at the door and it is then opened by the knocker: a woman in black.

She comes in, closes the door behind herself and unwraps her head veiling.

Ethelberta comes forward and kisses her father, Mr. Chickerel.

Why...it’s Berta!...Hello, pet!

Can you sit with me a few minutes, father?
CHICHEREL
I’m alright for ten minutes, or so....(Concernedly) Anything happened?

ETHELBERITA
Oh no.......All’s well. I just wanted to have a word about a couple of things.

Ethelberta sits down, after removing her coat, and Chickerel sits back in his chair.

CHICHEREL
Fire away, then, love.

ETHELBERTA
Well, first, Joey has got to be stopped....He’s taken to courting Mrs. Doncastle’s lady’s maid.

CHICHEREL
Good grief! The woman is old enough to be his mother!

ETHELBERTA
Yes, and she’ll worm all of our secrets out of the foolish boy.

CHICHEREL
Well!....Huh!..... I’ll soon sort HIM out!.............And the other thing, love?

ETHELBERTA
Oh just that................. I accepted an invitation to dine here....A Lord Mountclere wants to meet me.....(Jokingly) He probably wants to marry me, or something similar..

CHICHEREL
MARRY?!....Or “similar”?...Lord Mountclere?...I know that man’s valet....I’d sooner see you in your grave that married to a reprobate like that!

Ethelberta stands up and puts her hand on his shoulder

ETHELBERTA
Don’t worry, Father. Really!.....I’m not marrying anyone just at present.........Tell me, though, are you alright with the idea of my dining here?

She puts her coat on and resumes the veil.
Chickerel gets up, as well and they move towards the door

CHICKEREL
Oh, that’s alright, my girl.....I
like to see you getting on in the
world....I want to see you happy.

Ethelbereta smiles and kisses his cheek.

Chickerel opens the door and then, suddenly, a young woman
throws a heap of clothes at him, as she rushes past, in the
corridor, outside.

He catches a heap of clothes, including a long trained muslin
gown and a blonde wig.

MENLOVE
(Breathless speed)Hello,
Mr.Chickerel!...Sorry am late, but
could you just take this stuff
upstairs and be ever such a
sweetie?

She rushes away

ETHELBERETA
Good heavens! Who was that?

CHICKEREL
THAT was Joey’s intended....Mrs.
Menlove..

ETHELBERETA
Who?!....Oh, no!!......... Not JANICE
Menlove?!

CHICKEREL
The very one...She came a fortnight
ago.

Ethelbereta face palms

ETHELBERETA
(Groans)Ohhhh...this wretched woman
was my maid at Lady Petherwin’s and
is a very fiend of curiosity!

Chickerel chivies Ethelberta out

CHICKEREL
Don’t worry, love. I’ll cut this
off at the root.....Courting at
fourteen!....The very idea!

Ethelberta turns to him and kisses his cheek, again
ETHELBERTA
I wish I was just plain old Berta
Chickerel at the cottage with you
all, again, father.

Chickerel pats her shoulder as he sees her out along the
corridor to the servant’s entrance.

CHICKEREL
We’ve all made our beds and we’ve
all got to lie on them, Berta.
Don’t fret about it.........Now off you
go.

He kisses her cheek, then, and she smiles and turns to the
door.

ETHELBERTA
Good night, Father.

57  INT. EXONBURY CRESCENT/ETHELBERTA’S BEDROOM – EVENING  57

Ethelberta is being dressed by Picotee who laces up her rear-
laced stays, and hands her the petticoats, outer skirt and
then bodice of a (peacock blue, if blonde, or crimson, if a
brunette) gown.

Picotee then dresses her sister’s hair, putting it up with
combs and flowers, all the while talking with her sister.

PICOTEE
...And then, at the end of the
letter, Faith said that I must go
down and visit them, when they are
settled at Melchester... Mr. Julian
is now playing at the Abbey church
there, you know.

ETHELBERTA
That’ll be very nice for you,
Picotee... We must take a little
holiday, soon, as a family, as well.
I am getting worried about the
children who are now looking quite
worn and pinched with London
living. I’m thinking of going to
Knollsea.

PICOTEE
Why Knollsea?

ETHELBERTA
Our aunt, at Rouen, wants me to get
a copy of her baptism registry.
(MORE)
ETHELBERTA (CONT'D)
Mother, being born the year after her, doesn’t know, of course, which of the parishes around Knollsea aunt was born in.

PICOTEE
Ooh, Knollsea is just a little distance from Melchester!

ETHELBERTA
Um..........Gwendoline, Joey and Father would take care of Mother....I would really welcome being able to slip away from acquaintances, here.

PICOTEE
Would you?

ETHELBERTA
Um....I’d actually like to go and see our aunt, in Rouen, after.Poor Aunty, she’s always repeating her invitation.

PICOTEE
(Awed) France!....Abroad!...

Ethelberta is now dressed and she stands and picks up her fan, reticule and little evening jacket...She looks magnificent, as usual.

She sees Picotee looking wistfully up at her from a tub chair, and smiles.

ETHELBERTA
If you really want to peek at us, you can, silly!........Get along and ask Father, how......... And if that wretched Menlove woman gets to you, don’t say a thing and come away as quickly as possible.

Picotee leaps up

PICOTEE
Oh, yes, Berta!...I will! I will!....Thank you!

Ethelberta sweeps out, followed by a delighted Picotee

INT. DONCASTLE’S HOUSE/ENTRANCE HALL - EVENING

There are three people at the far end of the hall talking among themselves as they stand on the threshold of the salon door, looking in. One of the ladies is adjusting her long evening gloves.
The front door knocker sounds and the butler, Mr. Chickerel, answers the door to his daughter, Ethelberta.

He looks at her with a mixture of glee, at the situation, and with fatherly pride.

    CHICKEREL
    (Half whisper)Excellent
    timing......Just about half of them are
    here, love.

Ethelberta smiles, affectionately at him

    ETHELBERTA
    Mr. Neigh?

    CHICKEREL
    Not here, yet.

    ETHELBERTA
    Lord Mountclere?

    CHICKEREL
    He came absurdly early and is as
    nervous as a boy!

Ethelbereta nods, biting her lip, a little absently.

    CHICKEREL
    Keep up your spirits, dear and
    don’t mind me.

She smiles

    ETHELBERTA
    I will, Father......... and let Pixie see
    me, will you? She wants to see the
    outfit she helped me put together...
    and all the other ladies’ too.
    She’ll be here, shortly.

Chickerel nods and chivies her, in a kindly manner, towards
the salon threshold.

59

INT. DONCASTERS’ HOUSE/UPPER HALL - EVENING

Menlove is escorting Picotee along the top hall from the back
to the front of the house.

    PICOTEE
    I’d much rather not bother you and
    wait for father.
MENLOE
Ooh, lor! Your father’l1 be busy
for hours, now, so I’m showing
you. . . . . . . . You’re Mrs. Petherwin’s
maid, ain’t you?

PICOTEE
Um, yes...I’m...

MENLOE
Um... I used to be hers, too... terrible
flirt, she was!

PICOTEE
No, she’s not!

Menlove shrugs

MENLOE
Hum!

They arrive at the top horizontal bannisters looking down on
people coming into the salon.

There are now around a dozen people, in full evening dress.

Menlove and Picotee kneel down and peep through the
bannisters.

Menlove points

MENLOE
That’s Mr. Neigh, that is... D’yoo
know, I overheard him say that a
woman and her maid went out to
check on the size of his estates,
the other day. They were all
laughing!.... . . . . . I’ll bet that was
you and Mrs. Petherwin, wasn’t it?

PICOTEE
I don’t know what you’re talking
about!....No.

MENLOE
Go on!....You can tell me!

Picotee stands up

PICOTEE
I’ll go and look for father.

Menlove stands up
MENLOVE
Uuggghh........ No need to be
uppity!......Look, we’ll go and peep
through the doors of the dining
room....Follow me!....Shushhh!

She turns and goes back the way they came, and Picotee
follows her, a bit reluctantly....She’s having misgivings.

EXT. EXONBURY HOUSE/PICOTEE’S BEDROOM AND ROOF - DAY

Ethelberta leans back into Picotee’s bedroom through the
french windows from the roof leads, outside.

ETHELBERTA
Well, come on then, Pixie!...You’ll
miss the sunrise!

Picotee is looking for her other slipper.

She finds it, slips it on and then climbs up onto the chair
that takes her out onto the leads.

The girls sit with their back to a roof wall, and their legs
drawn up.

PICOTEE
I wasn’t sleeping, anyway.........It’s
too hot!

ETHELBERTA
Oh,good..........Well, was that Menlove
there, and did you see me?

PICOTEE
Oh!..... Yes and yes....I don’t like her
you know.

ETHELBERTA
Um.........Did you see Lord Mountclere?

PICOTEE
Yes. It’s dreadful how fond of you
he is....He was staring at you the
whole time.....Ugh, I wouldn’t have
him for the world!

ETHELBERTA
Why?

PICOTEE
He’s at least sixty five!

ETHELBERTA
So?
PICOTEE
And he shuffles with bandy legs and
he laughs like this “Hee hee hee!”

ETHELBERTA
Picotee! You shouldn’t ape
people!

Picotee ‘face shrugs’.

ETHELBERTA
Besides, Lord Mountclere said, when
he heard I was going down to
Knollsea, that he was attending a
meeting of the Imperial
Archeological Association at
Corvesgate Castle, which is nearby.
He asked if I would join them...I
think that I may, you know.

PICOTEE
I wrote and told Faith Julian that
we’re going to Knollsea. I’m
writing every week, now...It’s so
nice to have someone to write to. I
get to hear what she’s doing...AND
Christopher....

ETHELBERTA
...(Reproving) MR. Julian......Um......
Did you see Mr. Neigh, Mrs.
Doncastle’s nephew?

PICOTEE
Oh, yes.

ETHELBERTA
Well, he’s asked me to marry
him..........................What do you think?

PICOTEE
Yuk! I wouldn’t have him, either!
Menlove said that he was telling
some other men that a woman had
been chasing him and had checked
out the size of his estates!

ETHELBERTA
(Alarmed) He didn’t name names, did
he?

PICOTEE
Apparently not, but the men were
all laughing with him.
ETHELBERTA
Huh!....Oh, they were, were
they?!...........Well, I wasn’t keen on
the idea, anyway....but that DOES it,
now!

She gives a big yawn

PICOTEE
All those poor starving horses and
a knackers yard.......... Yuk,
Berta!....Surely you didn’t seriously
think of it!

Ethelberta gets up.

ETHELBERTA
(Sighs)No!....You’re right!

She stretches

ETHELBERTA
..........I think I’ll just get another
couple of hours sleepybyes...........Give
me a shout mid morning, Picotee,
huh?

Picotee gets up, stiffly.

PICOTEE
Alright, Berta.

She leans her cheek forward for a kiss which Ethelberta gives
her and then they climb back in at the french window.

61
EXT. KNOLLSEA/CAPTAIN FLOWER’S GUEST HOUSE – DAY

Knollsea is a pretty townlet lying between two headlands.

A seaman’s cottage lies on the slopes above Knollsea. Most of
the village is separated from view by a small orchard outside
of the house.

There is a small lawn, however, before the orchard.

From the parlour, where you can hear the chirrups of children
and the friendly roar of the captain, one can see the little
sails of yachts on the sea, between the scant orchard trees.

Ethelbereta is at the dining table with the four young
children, Emmeline and Picotee. She is dressed simply in a
light linen v-necked dress and has her hair simply dressed
back in a plait, on the nape of her neck.

Ethelberta is busy doling out porridge from a vast bowl, to
the children, and Emmeline and Picotee are trying to mitigate
the worst of the children’s table manners.
There is an enormous painting of a ship on the wall, behind Ethelberta.

Capt. Flower is holding the door handle prior to exiting

CAPTAIN FLOWER
You be alright then, ma dears?

ETHELBERTA
Oh yes, we’re fine, thank you, Captain.

CAPTAIN FLOWER
There’s cream, as well as milk, to fatten up the little ones and the eggs be a comin’, shortly.

ETHELBERTA
This is really very kind of you, Captain... Don’t worry, we’re really quite comfortable.

The captain goes out.

LITTLE GIRL
Oh! he stole my sugar!!

LITTLE BOY
No I didn’t!

LITTLE GIRL
I had it f...

Emmeline leans over and takes the contested sugar bowl off them, before it spills, and she remonstrates with them.

Ethelberta gives the final bowl of porridge over to Picotee for handing to the children and then attends to doling out Picotee’s bowl and handing it to her.

ETHELBERTA
I’ve decided to go to that meeting at Corvsgate Castle, today, Picotee, so do you and Emmeline take the children down to the sands.

PICOTEE
Alright, Ethelberta... What about lunch?

ETHELBERTA
Oh, I’ve arranged that Mrs. Flower will put us up sandwiches and such, every day, so we can go jaunting.
PICOTEE
Ooh, lovely!...Will do, Berta..........I’d much rather go play in the rock pools than follow some old fuddy duddies around while some lecturer-type drones on!

ETHELBERTA
Well, I was rather hoping that it might be more fun that that!....... I can’t walk all that distance, though, so I’m going to rent a donkey...a brougham is far too expensive........we need the money for the holiday.

Picotee suddenly makes a grab for a little girl who is manhandling a big jug of milk and about to spill it.

Ethelberta smiles, starts on her own porridge, and peers out at the sea.

EXT. DORSET SEASIDE/BARROW DOWNS/CASTLE – DAY

Ethelberta looks splendid in her wide-skirted, light, linen gown, dark little jacket, and pale straw hat with matching ribbons, while riding her ass.

It is a beautiful summer’s day and she is enjoying herself.

She rides along the wild shore and then up a little path, onto the barrow downs.

She rides through these small undulations in the sward and comes, eventually, to Corvsgate Castle, which she remembers from her childhood.

Ethelberta rides under the gateway into the outer ward and then through, into the inner ward. There is no-one there.

She dismounts, and ties up her ass to a stone projection.

Ethelberta looks around and, seeing no-one, rambles off amongst the stone work, becoming occupied with the architecture.

EXT. CASTLE/INNER WARD – LATER

Ethelberta hears talking and comes out into the inner ward to see a party of ladies and gentlemen around her ass, laughing at him.

DR. YORE
Perhaps he’s escaped from a local cottage?
One of the richly clad ladies pats the ass on its nose. It is a sad, sorry-looking, old ass, with a frayed, tatty saddle.

**LADY JANE JOY**

The poor thing has strayed from its owner.

Sir Cyril Blandsbury takes another swig from his hip flask.

**SIR CYRIL BLANDSBURY**

(A bit tipsily) Probably sick of being beaten by some bare-arsed peasant! (Hic)

Lord Mountclere looks up and smiles at the sight of Ethelberta approaching.

She carefully doesn’t acknowledge the poor ass.

He walks towards her and takes her hand.

**LORD MOUNTCLERE**

Mrs. Petherwin! ... I did so hope that you would take up my invitation! ... Welcome, my dear! ... Welcome!

He turns to the knot of extremely well dressed people and waves, airily and points, while Ethelberta smiles and nods.

**LORD MOUNTCLERE**

I’m sure that you recognise Sir Cyril and Lady Blandsbury, Mr. Richard Draconian, the member for South Wessex, Lady Jane Joy and the reverends Taylor and Tinkleton... oh, and Mr. Neigh...... Dr. Yore, who is just going to give his paper...... and I’m sure that we ALL know the renowned Mrs. Petherwin, the poetess!

He points to Dr. Yore who is nervously rustling some papers and then Ethelberta, who nervously sees Neigh and quickly shifts her gaze away.

**LORD MOUNTCLERE**

Now, ladies, if you would just sit on the grass... and you, Mrs. Petherwin, please, and then we gentlemen can all admire you as if you were a bed of the most exotic flowers... Hehehe!

The ladies sit down, together and the gentlemen then sit around the outside of them.
The Marquis, Lord Mountclere, whose nearby footman deploys a cushion for him, sits down, arthritically, as near to Ethelbereta as he can and smiles at her.

Dr. Yore stands before them and launches forth upon his speech, waiving his arms around at the edifice, solemnly and pompously.

The ladies do, indeed, look like a bed of flowers, in their summer silks and muslins, with their fans and parasols.

Dr. Yore’s droning becomes one with the droning of the bees and chirping of the grasshoppers on this hot day.

INT. CORVVSATE CASTLE/DUNGEON - DAY

Ethelberta and Lady Jane Joy enter into a semi-underground dungeon which is half open to the sky.

They look around at the stonework

LADY JANE JOY
The marquis told us that you are staying at Knollsea...We are probably coming on, there, for a few days after staying with him.

ETHELBERTA
Oh, well, Lord Mountclere is correct, there, but I’m afraid that I’m...uh...going away.

LADY JANE JOY
How sorry I am! We will miss you........... When do you leave?

Ethelberta looks momentarily around, somewhat alarmed at the prospect of being found out, living with her ‘rural’ family.

ETHELBERTA
Um...well, um, I’m off...at the beginning of next week...... for Cherbourg and then Rouen.

A voice breaks in and they look up to see Lord Mountclere and Neigh standing in the doorway.

Ethelberta is a bit irritated that they heard of her departure.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Did I hear you say that you were going to Cherbourg and Rouen?

NEIGH
I’m going to Normandy, myself.
Ethelberta sighs and half smiles, politely.

Neigh offers his arm to Ethelberta, who reluctantly takes it and the two ladies come out to join the rest of the party, Lady Jane chattering to Lord Mountclere, taking his arm and them walking him away.

She has to support him, as he is rather bandy and rickety on his legs, and he keeps slipping.

EXT. CORVSGATE CASTLE/INNER WARD - DAY

Neigh walks Ethelberta off around the inner side of the wall, away from the others.

He leans in to talk to Ethelberta who rears back her head, a little.

NEIGH
(Urgently) Will you give me an answer?!...... I have come on purpose!

ETHELBERTA
Please, don’t think of this, Now...please....I, I am going to, Rouen and, and will think of this on my way.

NEIGH
When will you be there?

ETHELBERTA
Next Wednesday, I should hope

NEIGH
I will call on you. Where are you staying?

ETHELBERTA
At the Hotel Beau Sejour, but......

NEIGH
......Then I will meet you there and have my answer!...I would meet you in hades, for the matter of that......I won’t be trifled with....I hate all this nonsense....Say it shall be an appointment.

ETHELBERTA
Well...(Sigh)Oh, very well.

Lord Mountclere toddles up to them, which gives Ethelberta an excuse to disengage herself.

She smiles and replies to the marquis’s enquiry, as Neigh walks away.
Ethelberta points

ETHELBERTA
Is Enckworth Court in the direction of the gorge, my Lord?

LORD MOUNTCLERE
No............Where you’re looking would be a view of the sea, if it were not for a small stand of elms which I planted as a boy....of course, these trees are twenty one years old, now...hehehehe!

ETHELBERTA
Hoho...yes.......Of course!

She taps him, playfully with her fan for his attempt at a pleasantry.

ETHELBERTA
(Thoughtfully)Ummm...... I would much rather have a view of the sea, than some plain old trees, though, I think.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Would you?! We....

Lady Blandsbury comes over and tugs on Lord Mountclere’s sleeve

LADY BLANDSBURY
......Marquis, we really must get back, as they will be waiting our dinner because you ordered an early one for my poor husband who’s ulcer does so plague him!

The party is getting itself together and starting to move towards the exit.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Oh, did I?....Sorry ma dear!

He turns to Ethelberta takes her hand and gallantly kisses it.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
I shall see you soon, Mrs. Petherwin....Thank you so much for joining us, today.I have very much enjoyed your company, yet again.

He turns away, totteringly and takes Lady Blandsbury’s arm
LORD MOUNTCLERE
Here, Lady Blandsbury! Let me guide you on this slippery slope as we don’t want you tripping, and damaging your pretty self, now, do we?

She anxiously holds on to him as he totters, slips and once, almost falls, as they hurry to join the others.

Ethelberta hides a smile, gets out her sketch pad from her reticule, looks at the last sketch and turns over a fresh page.

She looks around, behind her, at the edifice which looks magnificent in the late afternoon sun.

The ward is quite deserted, now, apart from the noisy jackdaws.

Ethelberta looks at the munching ass and addresses him.

ETHELBERTA
Come on, Tatty Bogle, you’ve had enough munchies, now. You can take me outside around the back to do some sketching.

She walks towards it and the ass looks mournfully up at her.

EXT. CORVSGATE CASTLE/OUTSIDE THE WALLS AROUND BACK – DAY 66

Ethelberta is sitting sketching, around the back of the castle, looking down at the beautiful Wessex scenery and the elms planted by Lord Mountclere, in the distance.

The ass is munching, nearby.

A hot and dusty Owen appears, walking towards the castle from the front face.

Ethelberta is enjoying her sketching. It is late afternoon.

She suddenly sees the elms falling, in the distance.

Her mouth opens in shock and surprise.

She can see the sea, where they formerly stood.

ETHELBERTA
He knocked them down!....I said it and he did it!.........Good grief!

Owen arrives in the inner ward, he paces around it and peers into the open doorways.

There is no-one there and he is very disappointed.
Owen sits down and drinks some water from a canteen.
He sighs, stands up, and then retraces his steps back out of the inner ward.

INT. CAPT. FLOWER’S GUEST HOUSE/PARLOUR – DAY

Ethelberta comes in removing her gloves.
She puts her hat on the sideboard and plonks down, exhaustedly in an armchair, just as Picotee comes in, having heard her.

PICOTEE
Hello, Berta. How did your day go?

BERTA
Oh, alright. A lecture and then some sketching...Lord Mountclere was there.

PICOTEE
Oh.....(Animated, suddenly)Guess what WE did!

ETHELBERTA
Built castles by the sea?

PICOTEE
Yes, but with Mr and Miss Julian...They came down. I told them we were here, if you remember.

ETHELBERTA
Um...

She looks a little sad.

PICOTEE
But when I told him you were at Corvsgate Castle, Mr. Julian went out to meet you...Did you see him?

ETHELBERTA
No.......What a pity...........Oh well, Picotee, I have decided to go to our aunt's at Rouen, after all, and take you with me. I have also written to Sol and Dan asking them to meet me there. I want them to see some beautiful buildings in Paris, to add to their education.

Pivoted suddenly looks disappointed.

PIVOTED
Oh!...Leave Knollsea?
ETHELBERTA
I thought you wanted............Ah!

She realises the lover’s instinct and suppresses a smile

ETHELBERTA
Weeeeeeell........ if you’d prefer to stay, I can always take Cornelia, who has just come down....I’m sure she’d love it.

Pivoted suddenly brightens

PICOTEE
Oh, would you, Berta?!....Miss Julian said that she and her brother might come down to Knollsea for a few days’ break, soon, and I should so like to see her. She’s such a nice girl!

ETHELBERTA
Ummm....

She raises her eyebrows and turns her head away

ETHELBERTA
(Soto voce and pleasantly)AND him!

She smiles to herself, and shakes her head a little at poor Picotee’s transparency.

There is a horde of children seen at the door and a trampling of feet heard.

The four children rush in followed by Cornelia and Emmeline.

The are very excited, are wearing wet, sandy clothes and carrying buckets and spades.

They rush over to Ethelberta and Picotee and kiss, clutch at and climb over them, telling of their exciting exploits.

Ethelberta laughs and attempts to defend her pale pastel linen gown.

INT. ENCKWORTH COURT/LORD MOUNTCLERE’S DRESSING ROOM – DAY 68

Tipman, the valet, is helping (unbuttoning, etc) Lord Mountclear out of his evening clothes (white tie) down to his “Union suit” (“combis”).

He then puts Mountclere’s nightdress over his lord’s head, I.e. over his combis, while they talk.
91.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Are you sure the report is true?

TIPMAN
It is a secret known to no-one but myself and Mrs Doncastle’s maid, my lord.

Lord Mountclere muses, fascinatedly

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Hum... daughter of a butler, egh?..........(Urgently) No-one else knows, egh?

TIPMAN
Oh, no, my lord. I told Menlove, the lady’s maid, to keep it totally quiet... I just happened to be the first person that she mentioned it to, as she has just begun work in Mrs. Doncaster’s house and saw Mrs. Fetherwin there, just recently.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Well, keep it mum then Tipman...keep it mum!....You may leave me now.

Tipman starts to pick up soiled clothes, prior to leaving and heads, slowly towards the door as Lord Mountclere speaks to himself.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
(Sotto voce) Hah!....A clever little puss!....Hoodwinked us all1......How DID she get those finished manners, education and that beauty?!.....Tipman?!

Tipman pauses in the doorway

TIPMAN
Yes, my lord?

LORD MOUNTCLERE
This gossip goes nowhere, do you hear?....These things are never true!.....Here!

He holds out a couple of money notes to him, which Tipman comes forwards to take
LORD MOUNTCLERE
This is for the information and one for that Menlove woman, too....If this story gets out from anywhere, however, you will both find yourselves out on the street....Do you hear?................Now listen: do you go to Knollsea and find out when the steamboat for Cherbourg starts, and when you have done that, I shall want you to send Taylor to me. I wish Captain Strong to bring the Fawn round into Knollsea Bay. Next week I shall want to go to Cherbourg in the yacht....providing the weather is alright...You’re coming, too.

TIPMAN
Certainly, my lord

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Remember....Absolute silence, now!....Your job and your reference from me depend on it!

Lord Mountclere waves him away

LORD MOUNTCLERE
(Sotto voce) I WILL have her...Hehehe, such beauty!.....I WILL have her.

69  INT. RAILWAY CARRIAGE - DAY  69

Ethelbertha is seating herself in a first class carriage. She talks to Cornelia, her “maid’, who is putting luggage overhead.

ETHELBERTA
I would be with you, Corny, if it weren’t for the fact that Lord Mountclere has come on the train.........That was his valet asking you questions at the harbour, before we shipped.

CORNELIA
Don’t worry, Berta. Oi got yer ladies’ journals as ya gave ta me...Oi’ll ‘ave a good read, oi will!

She smiles and goes out.
Second later, while she is taking off her gloves and jacket, it being hot, Ethelberta finds she is being stared at by a man in the corridor.

She moves her head a little and finds it to be the marquis.

ETHELBERTA
Lord Mountclare... what a singular coincidence.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Hehehe!... Not THAT singular!... Do you go far, today, Mrs. Petherwin?

ETHELBERTA
As far as Caen.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Ah!... Did you ever!... That’s the end of my day’s journey, too.

He smiles and starts to walk on with his valet carrying the luggage.

ETHELBERTA
(Calling after) Um... actually, I have decided to go to Paris, after all, Lord Mountclare.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
The train won’t go tonight, I think.

ETHELBERTA
(Desperately) Then... then I shall go on to Rouen!

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Yes... Now I think of it, I DID intend to go to Rouen, and shall.

ETHELBERTA
(Ironically) Where will you stay in Rouen, my lord?

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Oh, The Montmorency...

ETHELBERTA
(Smiles, acidly) That is not mine.

She nods and closes her door.

EXT/INT. THE BEAU SEJOUR HOTEL – DAY

Montage
Ethelberta and Cornelia arrive at their Aunt Charlotte’s small hotel, in Rouen, The Beau Sejour. They are exhausted with travel.

Aunt Charlotte, warm and friendly, quite smartly dressed and of a good figure, greets them at the door, kisses them and fussily gives instructions to two young boys to take the luggage which they promptly do.

Aunt Charlotte takes the two young women through the hotel to their room, talking all the while.

They ascend steps, come out onto a balcony and see a little courtyard below with potted shrubs and plants, as well as caged birds.

There are lots of busy French maids rushing about.

Occasionally, cooks, in paper caps, carrying kitchen articles, are seen scampering out and back from what is obviously the kitchen.

The scene is very lively and the girls traverse the corridors with their aunt.

The aunt shows them into their room and they thank her and look around at its prettiness.

The aunt leaves after giving them instructions about dinner.

The girls plonk down, on the beds, smile at each other, and then collapse, onto their backs, as well.

71

INT. THE MOULIN HOTEL/ETHELBERTA’S BEDROOM – DAY

The two girls are in bed asleep, when there is a knock at the door.

Ethelberta leaps out of bed, grabs a shawl and answers the door, receiving a letter.

She returns to sit on her bed, opens and reads the letter

ETHELBERTA
(Softly) Oh, Mama!

MOTHER (V.O.)
My dear, I hope that this finds you and Cornelia well. This is just to warn you that Menlove has wormed everything out of Joey. She has had another row with your father and is threatening to reveal all.

(MORE)
MOTHER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Do you hurry, my dear, and find
yourself a husband from amongst
your set, before it is too late and
your work has all been for
nothing........I'm sure that
governessing wouldn't agree with
you, you know.
Oh, and one more thing, Mr.
Ladywell called, and he asked for
your address when we said you were
in France. I really fear that he
may follow you out there.
Perhaps he would suit you, do you
think?
Have a good rest, the both of you.
With love from your affectionate
mother.

Ethelberta drops the letter onto the bed and stands up.

ETHELBERTA
(Sotto voce) I MUST do something!

She looks at Cornelia quietly sleeping on the bed.

Ethelberta smiles and starts dressing, rapidly.

72
INT. ROUEN CATHEDRAL - DAY 72

Ethelberta is just entering the door, when she hears her name
called, behind her and leans out to see Lord Mountclere
hurrying towards her.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
(Out of breath)Mrs. Petherwin! How
delightful!

ETHELBERTA
I am just about to ascend to the
parapets.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
I should be delighted to accompany
you.

Ethelberta nods her acceptance.

She is pointed to the appropriate door by a curator and sets
off up the spiral staircase followed by Lord Mountclere.

After the first level is gained, Lord Mountclere sits tiredly
down to rest, but Ethelberta sets off again, so he gets up
and gamely follows her.

When they reach the next level, he sits down exhaustedly,
 wheezing and asks if she still wants to proceed, but she
does, so he follows.
When they get to the top, Lord Mountclere staggers out, bandy-leggedly and absolutely collapses onto a box, wheezing, apoplectically, while Ethelberta peeps over the parapets and delightedly gives an account of the view.

Eventually, they descend the tower and come back out onto the leads of the main roof.

Lord Mountclere sees Neigh walk along, on the other side of the roof, and then enter the door, to descend, further.

The marquis points him out to Ethelberta.

   LORD MOUNTCLERE
   Isn’t that Neigh?!

   ETHELBERTA
   Um...yes. He has a little business with me, later.

   LORD MOUNTCLERE
   Not ‘marriage business’?...You’re not engaged, are you?

Ethelberta starts to walk slowly along the leads.

   ETHELBERTA
   Please my lord...I, I’m not engaged, as yet, but...

   LORD MOUNTCLERE
   ...Then may I have a few words in private?!

   ETHELBERTA
   Not now...No......not today!

   LORD MOUNTCLERE
   Then when may I call on you?

   ETHELBERTA
   Well, if you must.....let it be....... a month hence, at my house in town.

She shrugs, smiles, nods her head, and turns away.

   ETHELBERTA
   I must go down, now, my maid is waiting for me.

She walks away.

   LORD MOUNTCLERE
   (Sotto voce and gleeful) I must act fast, or HE will have her. But he shall not, and I will....Hehehe!
Aunt Charlotte and her husband are reckoning up accounts at the desk, when Ethelberta knocks at the half opened door and enters, taking off her gloves.

She gives her aunt a kiss while Mr. Moulin bustles round getting a chair for her which she doesn't sit on.

ETHELBERTA
(Tensely) Aunt, has a gentleman called Mr. Neigh been here?

AUNT CHARLOTTE
(Gleefully arch)Oh yes. I sent him on to join you at the cathedral.

ETHELBERTA
Ah, yes, we....

AUNT CHARLOTTE
......And another suitor called, a Mr......... Ladywell, so I shoved him in the small parlour.

ETHELBERTA
Oh, Aunt!.... Why did you?

Aunt Charlotte leans forward, conspiratorially

AUNT CHARLOTTE
(Sotto voce) Well, my dear, your mother did write that you were running out of time and so I thought it best to line them up... as it were........ But, are these men perhaps intruders?

ETHELBERTA
(Sigh) Oh, no, Aunt. A woman who attempts a public career must expect to be treated as public property, I suppose!.... Thank you, anyway.

She smiles and then goes up and kisses her uncle’s cheek and leaves.

Ethelberta and Ladywell are sitting on chairs by the window. Ethelberta is sitting on the edge, and looking ready to fly.

LADYWELL
I have come to check about the rumours, Mrs. Petherwin.
ETHELBERTA
If they’re about my engagement, they’re false.

LADYWELL
Oh, hurray!...Then perhaps I may permitted to...

ETHELBERTA
...No!...How many times have I told you that?

LADY WELL
I do not wish for any formal engagement......Look, will you delay your answer, lest, if you give it now, it may be a hasty one?

ETHELBERTA
(Sighs) If you wish

LADY WELL
When shall I come to you for my answer, then?

ETHELBERTA
(Irritably)Oh, well, it might as well be (parroting) ‘a month from now...at my London house’.

She stands up, abruptly and gestures for him to leave, which he does after bowing to her.

LADYWELL
I shall just finish the letter I started in the small parlour, upstairs.

Ethelberta bows, in acknowledgement.

He leaves and her aunt comes bustling in

AUNT CHARLOTTE
That Mr. Neigh is here again, dear!

ETHELBERTA
(Irritably)Oh, send him in, then, please, Aunt.

Aunt Charlotte bustles out.

Neigh then rushes in and bows as he gets to her.

NEIGH
Have you been able to form an answer, yet, Mrs.Petherwin?
ETHELBERTA
If you will (glazed eyes) ‘come to my London house in a month’, I will be able to give you one.

NEIGH
(Loudly) But I came here for an answer!

ETHELBERTA
Shhhh!... Keep your voice down, Sir. There are others nearby!

A servant enters with a note for Ethelberta which she takes

NEIGH
I hate this writing business....

ETHELBERTA
... Will you excuse me a moment?

She turns away and reads

LORD MOUNTCLERE (V.O.)
I must see you again today. I will arrive five minutes after you receive this note. Pray be alone and eternally gratify, Yours, Mountclere.

NEIGH
If anything has happened, I shall be pleased to wait.

Ethelberta whips around

ETHELBERTA
Oh, would you?........ I’m sorry for this......... I, I may be rather a long time.

Neigh bows, again

NEIGH
My time is yours

ETHELBERTA
Then could you please wait upstairs, in the small... no, no, not that one... er, er...... ... can you go into the small linen room, two doors along...... on, on the left, upstairs, please?

NEIGH
LINEN room... (Sighs) Alright.

He leaves.
Ethelberta hears the wheels of the marquis’s carriage, has a quick look out of the window and dashes out.

INT. HOTEL BEAU SEJOUR/OFFICE - DAY

Ethelberta tears into the office to find her aunt, alone, writing at her desk.

Aunt Charlotte looks up, in surprise at Ethelberta’s hurry.

ETHELBERTA
Oh, Aunt Charlotte! I hope that you have rooms enough for my visitors, for they are like the fox, the goose and the corn, in the riddle; I cannot leave them together and I can only be with one at a time!

AUNT CHARLOTTE
My dear...what is this?

ETHELBERTA
I’m sorry, but I need the nicest drawing room you have for an interview of a bare few minutes with an old gentleman.

AUNT CHARLOTTE
Old?...Who?

ETHELBERTA
I’m sorry, Aunt, but I only arranged to meet one suitor. The other one pursued me in his yacht and then another was sent by my misguided, but well meaning mother!

AUNT CHARLOTTE
(In awe)Three suitors!

Ethelberta pulls a reluctant face

ETHELBERTA
Ughhhhh!

She peeps through the window, as she hears a carriage pull into the yard.

INT. HOTEL BEAU SEJOUR/LINEN ROOM - DAY

Neigh is sitting, upright, sullenly, on a stand chair, in the linen room.

He taps his foot.

He looks at his pocket watch.
He suddenly hears talking, outside.

ETHELBERTA (V.O.)
Yes, the scene is pleasant, today.
I like a view over the river

LORD MOUNTCLERE (V.O.)
I should think the steamboats
rather objectionable, when they
stop here, though.

Neigh sits up, out of his lounging slump

NEIGH
Mountclere?!

He goes to the window, and sees, Lord Mountclere and
Ethelberta on the balcony, below.

EXT. HOTEL BEAU SEJOUR/OUTSIDE FACE - DAY

Neigh hears a slight cough and looks to his right, and there
he sees Ladywell.

LADYWELL
(Hissing, dumbfoundedly)You,
Neigh?!

NEIGH
(Annoyed)You, Ladywell?!

The voices,below, resume and they both look down, again.

ETHELBERTA
As I have said, Lord Mountclere,I
cannot give you an answer now, as I
must consider what to do with Mr.
Neigh and Mr. Ladywell........

LORD MOUNTCLERE
....To the dogs with Neigh and
Ladywell!...

ETHELBERTA
...And I shall not consider that you
have addressed me on the subject of
marriage until you have received a
letter that I need to write to you
and then, having received it, you....

LORD MOUNTCLERE
......Repeat my proposal!....Look! I’m
repeating it now, Ethelberta!....How
long is it that I have to suffer
this uncertainty?
ETHELBERTA
A month.................. By that time, perhaps I will have grown weary of my two other suitors.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
A month!!.....SO inflexible?!

They return inside.

Neigh and Ladywell look at each other.

LADYWELL
Come and see me!

NEIGH
I will!

They both pop their heads back.

INT. UPSTAIRS SMALL PARLOUR - DAY

Neigh strides in and finds Ladywell, in his usual fastidious flamboyance of dress and a big daffodil yellow neck tie, scribbling at a table with pens and hotel paper.

Neigh nods at Ladywell and sits down opposite him, taking up a piece of paper and a pen.

NEIGH
Just let me write a note, Ladywell, and I’m your man.

Ladywell nods

LADYWELL
Just doing the same thing, old chap!

They both snatch envelopes and write, “Mrs. Petherwin” on their envelopes.

Ladywell rings the bell and regards his envelope

LADYWELL
That’s for you, my fair one!..................Yours for Mrs. Petherwin, too, old boy?

NEIGH
Umph!

When the servant has taken the two envelopes and has left, Neigh stands up.
NEIGH
(Disgustedly) Let’s get out of this place!

EXT. ROUEN STREET - DAY

Neigh and Ladywell walk down the street and see two, big young men coming towards them. They are Sol and Dan.

Sol tips his cap at Neigh.

SOL
BONGJOOR, MONZUR!.....EEENGLESHEE?

NEIGH
(Irritably) I certainly hope so!

SOL
(Relieved) Oh, good. Could you be atellin’ us, Zur, where be the Hotel Beau Sejour, please?

Neigh turns around and points.

NEIGH
Yes....... Just up there.

Sol and Dan now both tips their caps

SOL
Thank ‘ee kindly, Zur.

Ladywell stands with raised eyebrows as they walk away.

LADYWELL
Good grief!.....Not MORE of us?!

NEIGH
(Acidly) Once a woman’s been on the stage, she gets Bohemian ideas.

LADYWELL
(Glumly) Yes, like swapping us for Mountclere!........A beautiful creature to think of marrying an old coot like that!

NEIGH
He can give her a title.

LADYWELL
But I distinctly understood her future answer to be favourable to ME!

Neigh grabs a chair at a small outside table of a wine shop and sits down.
NEIGH
(Grumly mimicking) “I’ll give you
an answer in a month”........To all
three of us!!

Ladywell collapses, dramatically in a chair and calls

LADYWELL
Wine! Wine!........Give me wine and
oblivion!

He closes his eyes and points his face to the sky

Neigh leans his head on his hands standing on their elbows, on the table, and stares moodily at said table.

A waiter comes out and hovers nervously and interrogatively near to the devastated couple with a pad and pen.

80  EXT. HOTEL BEAU SEJOUR/INNER COURTYARD – DAY  80

Sol and Dan walk into the courtyard and look around.

A couple of young maids come out of door, see them, giggle and scatter through an opposite door.

A cook boy, with a paper cap comes out of another door, hurries across, acknowledges them, enroute, and then enters another door.

COOKBOY
Bonjour!

SOL
BONGJOOR!

Dan leans in towards Sol

DAN
Oi don’t know ‘ow you be adoin’ o’
that lingo, Sol. Don’t feel natural
to be a pretendin’ as we is one o’
them, you know.

SOL
Oi’m not pretendin’, Dan. Oi’m just
making ‘em feel comfortable wi’ us,
loik.

DAN
Oh......Roit then....

He looks around and sees a young woman hanging up some
washing on the first floor gallery.

Dan calls up
DAN
Er.......BONGJOOR, Madam!.....Silver plate?!

The young woman starts to reply and turns around to see them

CORNELIA
You ruddy what?!....

She sees them and beams

CORNELIA
Ah!.......Sol!...Dan!.....

She darts down the stairs and gives them big hugs.

CORNELIA
Ya great lopplollies!

More kisses

CORNELIA
Oi’ll be givin’ ya “silver plate”,
bless you!.......Come on, oi’ll show
you your rooms!

SOL
There’s nay need to ballyrag us
like that, Cornelia, being as ‘ow
you be younger ‘n us and don’t
speak French, yersen, no how!

The boys pick up their bags

A valet emerges from another door and is followed by an
elderly gent, his master.

The gentleman climbs into his coach and the valet climbs on top.

The coachman drives away.

Sol, Dan and Cornelia start off across the yard and
Ethelberta appears from another doorway.

She sees them, smiles, comes across and kisses them, too, but
a bit less effusively than Cornelia.

ETHELBERTA
Sol! Dan!...How lovely to see
you!....You got here safe, then....I’m
so sorry, though, but I’ve got to
go back to London, now, after
meeting with the gentleman who just
left....I DO hope that you’ll
forgive me.
SOL
Yer not comin’ to Paris, then?

ETHELBERTA
No, but I’ve got you a nice, little
guest house, there, and I’ll give
you a list of things that you must
see....My treat......I do hope you’ll
both forgive me.....?

Cornelia starts to chivvy Sol and Dan up the stairs.

CORNELIA
‘Course thi’ will!...Come on, you
two!

ETHELBERTA
See you both for dinner, this
evening!

DAN
Alright, Berta......Egh...get a look at
this staircase, Sol! The treads are
all in little blocks!

SOL
....And all painted chocolate, as
oim aloive!

They ascend the stairs while staring at them.

Ethelberta picks up her skirts and hurries indoors.

81

INT. EXONBURY HOUSE/MRS CHICKEREL’S BEDROOM—DAY 81

Ethelberta is just seating herself on her Mother’s bed with
Cornelia.

Mrs. Chickerell is sitting with her accustomed bed shawl and
nightie on.

ETHELBERTA
Well, we’re nearly all here, Mama.
I’ve just left Picotee at Knollsea,
as I’m going back there, tomorrow.
Emmeline is putting the children to
bed.

Mrs. Chickerell looks up

MRS. CHICKERELL
Going back, tomorrow?!...Whatever
for?
ETHELBERTA
Picotee is going to finish off her schooling and I am going to set myself a little study of geography.

MRS. CHICKERELL
Geography?!

ETHELBERTA
Yes, I’m going to give up the performances, as they’re less popular, now and I’ve had enough of them, anyway........ I’m going to ask you to let my extra rooms while we still have the remnants of the lease, Mother, and this should give us enough to live on, along with Father’s money.

MRS. CHICKERELL
But what will you live on after?

ETHELBERTA
By the time this money runs out, Picotee and I will have taken on a little school in the country, somewhere, and you can come and live with, or near us.

CORNELIA
What about yer marriage proposals, though?

ETHELBERTA
Oh, I’ve had enough of suitors and their insults to last a lifetime.

MRS. CHICKERELL
Proposals?.......Several proposals?!.......A proposal can never be an insult, Berta!....Do be sensible, love and give any proposals a good consideration.

Ethelberta stands and draws off her gloves.

She leans down and kisses her mother’s forehead.

ETHELBERTA
I’m too fagged for talking, now, Mother(smiles) but I promise to give ALL proposals my very best consideration.

Cornelia looks up.

ETHELBERTA
Good night, you two!
She bends down and kissed Cornelia, turns and goes out

Mrs. Chickerell shakes her head, mystifiedly, at Cornelia

MRS. CHICKERELL
Lots of proposals and she’s thinking o’ being a school teacher!...Oi ASK ya!

EXT. STREET/RAILWAY STATION/STREET/CRT. FLOWER’S GUESTHOUSE - DAY

Ethelberta waves her hands around and instructs a cabby driver who is loading four bags into a handsome cab.

She then gets in with her reticule and umbrella

Ethelberta waves her hands around and instructs a porter who is loading her four bags and suitcases into a second class train compartment.

Ethelberta then gets in with her reticule and umbrella

Ethelberta waves her hands a round at the dog cart driver who is loading her bags onto his fly.

She then gets in with her handbag.

They start to drive off when, Ethelberta suddenly realizes that she has left her umbrella on the train and starts calling him to stop.

Ethelberta races back into the station.

Ethelberta comes out, glumly, without her umbrella and remounts the cart.

It starts to rain. She is even glummer.

INT. CAPTAIN. FLOWER’S COTTAGE/SITTING ROOM - DAY

There is a fire and Picotee and Ethelberta are sitting by it.

Picotee is pouring the tea and Ethelberta is drying her hair with a towel, by the fire.

PICOTEED
It’s such a pity you missed Mr and Miss Julian!.......They stayed an extra two days, you know, as well!

ETHELBERTA
Well, perhaps I’ll see them next time, Pixie....Any more news?

Picotee hands her cup of tea to Ethelberta.
PICOTEE
Not really........Oh!....No!....I nearly
forgot! This letter was re-
addressed from Exonbury Crescent
and just got here, this morning.

She pulls the letter out of her pocket, and hands it to
Ethelberta who reads it.

ETHELBERTA
Oh!...It’s from Lord Mountclere....

She reads and then looks up.

ETHELBERTA
Now Picotee, we’ll have to see him
and make the most of him, you
know........He’s coming down, next
week, for I have, um.... altered my
plans since I was last here.

PICOTEE
What?........Are you NOT going to be a
poor person, after all?

ETHELBERTA
Indeed not! (Smiles)........I know, I
seem to turn and turn
about!........Now, before I reply to
this letter, we must go into new,
smart lodgings. I will rush out,
immediately and look out a large
villa.

PICOTEE
Can I come?

ETHELBERTA
Of course! It must be the gayest
house that we can find.

Picotee shoots to her feet, but Ethelberta sips her tea.

Ethelberta looks up at her.

ETHELBERTA
(Reprovingly surprised)Tea first,
dear.

Picotee sits down, abashed.

PICOTEE
Oh, yes........tea, of course.

She picks up her own cup, and sips, in a ladylike manner,
just like her older sister.
Ethelberta and Picotee are sitting in identical positions before returning thge fire, still sipping tea, but, as the camera pulls back it can be seen that they are now in a very large, polite, drawing room a with pale washed walls, plenty of paintings and ornaments.

They are in their best clothes.

Picotee puts her cup and saucer down, gets up and goes out onto the balcony.

They hear carriage wheels

ETHELBERTA
Is that he?

PICOTEE
No....STILL not!

Picotee cranes, looking up and down.

PICOTEE
Can we go and look at the fireworks....? The coast guard is practising for the autumn wrecks....Perhaps Lord Mountclere has stopped to watch them.

ETHELBERTA
Well, you just pop out, then, Pixie.

Picotee whizzes through from the balcony, grabs a light shawl and exits the room, into the hall.

Ethelberta continues to drink, whilst listening to the fireworks.

Eventually, Picotee reappears, looking excited.

ETHELBERTA
Why were you so long?

PICOTEE
Oh, I thought I’d just watch the fireworks a while.

ETHELBERTA
But is he there?

PICOTEE
Yes....But he’s gone, now?

ETHELBERTA
Lord Mountclere?
PICOTEE
No, Mr. Julian!.......He just passed through. He wanted to call here, but an accident prevented him calling. He couldn’t miss his seat for Sandbourne, so when he had helped the gentleman, he had to go.

Ethelberta gets up and goes into another room for a fan.

She returns with it and paces up and down, whilst Picotee takes and eats a biscuit.

ETHELBERTA
An accident

PICOTEE
Yes, umph, said, umph, um...

ETHELBERTA
(Reproachfully)Not with your mouth full, dear!

Picotee swallows the mouthful of biscuit ands Ethelberta fans herself.

PICOTEE
An old gentleman’s carriage had overturned at the bottom of the hill, coming into town, and Mr. Julian stopped to help out the man who had sprained his ankle.

ETHELBERTA
I suspect that that carriage might have been Lord Mountclere’s.

PICOTEE
He said that the old gentleman swore like a trooper, and then got back into another coach and went back up the hill...Mr. Julian then saw me as he passed by, going to the steamer.

ETHELBERTA
You didn’t say anything about it possibly being Lord Mountclere?

PICOTEE
No...I was thinking of other things (Sighs)

She muses, absently.

ETHELBERTA
(Amusedly) Ummm...I’m sure you were!
Ethelberta is taking her morning walk, and reading a letter, when she is caught up with, by a hurrying Picotee.

Picotee’s bonnet is hanging off and she is breathing, breathlessly through her mouth.

**ETHELBERTA**
Good grief, Pixie!....Look at you! You look likely you’ve put your clothes on with a pitch fork....and don’t hang your mouth, so! It’s quite vulgar!

Ethelberta stops.

Picotee catches her breathe, while bending over, somewhat, and holding her side, in pain.

**PICOTEE**
Sorry, Berta!.....Good Morning!........Got a stitch!.....Was late for breakfast!

**ETHELBERTA**
Well, you won’t be able to ‘lie in’ when you go back to finish your schooling!

**PICOTEE**
Ugh!....No....

Ethelberta carefully folds up her letter and the girls walk on

**ETHELBERTA**
It WAS Lord Mountclere who injured his leg, you know, and because of this injury, which is still mending, he has kindly asked me if I will go over and join himself and some friends at Enckworth Court.

Picotee is still a little breathless and still rubbing her side

**PICOTEE**
Gosh!....Visiting at a Marquis’s house, Berta!........Are you going, then?

**ETHELBERTA**
Um....I think I will.
PICOTEE
You don’t want a lady’s maid, do you?...I’ve nothing to do till term begins.

Ethelberta smiles and shakes her head

ETHELBERTA
Uh, uh!... I’ve had QUITE enough of my family pretending to be my servants!

PICOTEE
PreTENding?!

ETHELBERTA
Alright...............BEING!

She straightens up and takes a deep breath in

ETHELBERTA
Come on, Pixie!

She speeds up her walking

ETHELBERTA
Stop this lolling around and lets take some bracing sea air, then!

She pulls ahead

ETHELBERTA
(Shouts back)Come on!

Picotee, still rubbing her side, looks up at Ethelberta’s departing back, in dismay.

86

INT. ENCKWORTH COURT/DRAWING ROOM - EVENING

Everyone, who was at Corvsgate Castle, is yet again assembled at Lord Mountclere’s house.

The party is in evening costume of white ties and tails, with the women in brilliant silks and gauzes.

The women are languidly fanning themselves nearish to the fire and the men are just coming in to join them after their port.

There are two ladies on a particular sofa, and Ethelberta is sitting on an armchair, near to them.

One sofa dweller addresses the other

MRS. O’FANAGAN
Mrs. Webley! Would you perhaps entertain us with a little piano?
MRS. WEBLEY
Oh, my dear... really, I couldn’t!
I’m far too exhausted this
evening!... Do you know, I did a third
time around the shrubbery!... It’s
positively extinguished me!

MRS. O’FANAGAN
Um....

She turns to Ethelberta

MRS. O’FANAGAN
Mrs. Petherwin! Perhaps you would
entertain us with one of your own
amazing stories which we hear so
much about?

Ethelberta sighs, and nods.

ETHELBERTA
Well, if the others want....

MRS. WEBLEY
... Oh, yes, my dear!... DO!... DO!

The others similarly urge her, so Ethelberta straightens out
her skirts and settles herself.

ETHELBERTA
Alright, then.... This is a tale, um,
a tale about a girl born into a
servant’s home.... The fifth of ten
children...

The audience all nod, appreciatively and Ethelberta tells her
very own tale.

The audience don’t realize that the tale is her own, but,
after a while, she begins to get a bit emotional and flags in
her telling of it.

The Marquis stands up and interrupts her.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Well, that’s enough for the time
being. Mrs. Petherwin must be
exhausted and, anyway, I’m after a
high stakes game of piquet!... Anyone
taking?

He points to three large round table set out with cards over
the other side of the room.

Mrs. Webley jumps up and claps her hands.
MRS. WEBLEY
Oh, high stakes! What fun!... (To Ethelberta) Thank you, my dear!

The party hurries over to the tables.

The marquis comes over to Ethelberta.

He whispers, tremulously

LORD MOUNTCLERE
My dear!.... Don’t bother telling them all about yourself! They’re not worth it, and I know all, anyway!

ETHELBERTA
Know all?!

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Yes. Look! Meet me in the conservatory along the passage, outside. Go straight there, now!

He hurries off through another door and Ethelberta leaves through the door into the passage.

87 INT. ENCKWORTH COURT/CONSERVATORY—EVENING 87

Ethelberta enters the conservatory and Lord Mountclere hurries up to her from around some plants.

ETHELBERTA
How long have you known?

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Oh, weeks, ma dear!......... Weeks!

He takes her hand and comes close up to her

LORD MOUNTCLERE
You promised at Rouen to make me a decisive reply!

ETHELBERTA
But, but my father and friends are servants, you see and....

Lord Mountclere shakes his head

LORD MOUNTCLERE
......... Nothing that an annuity and a comfortable cottage won’t solve!

ETHELBERTA
But my brothers are artisans!
LORD MOUNTCLERE
Manufacture is business. I might just set them up with their own. That is, if they don’t buy ME up, first, egh!....Hehehe!

ETHELBERTA
But your own family....

LORD MOUNTCLERE
.......Pshaw!......It would take fifty alliance with fifty families so little disreputable as yours, darling, to drag mine down! I do assure you!

Ethelberta smiles, shyly

ETHELBERTA
Then, Lord Mountclere, I shall think it a great honour to be your wife.

She shyly and slowly drops her head, while he kisses her on the cheek and then nods.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Hehehe!

INT. KNOLLSEA/VILLA’S DRAWING ROOM – DAY

There are a few melancholic notes being played, on the piano, as Lord Mountclere is shown into the drawing room, by the servant.

MAID
Lord Mountclere, Ma’am.

Ethelberta rises from her piano stool, comes forward and extends her hand to him.

Lord Mountclere takes the hand, draws her near and kisses her on the cheek, looking into her face.

Ethelberta submits and then draws away and pats her own hair bun at the nape of her neck.

She surreptitiously wipes away a tear.

Lord Mountclere has observed the tear in her eye, and her draws near to her manuscript music, to inspect the name at the top.

It is Christopher Julian
LORD MOUNTCLERE
Ah!...You shed a tear for the giver of this homage, I suppose, my dear....?

ETHELBERTA
What?....(Smiling ironically brightly)For his unpardonable use of the diminished seventh, in the introduction, his execrable taste in modulating twice between major, and minor, within only three phrases, or because you think I pine over lost loves, my lord?

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Oh!..Hehehe....No!...I’m sure that there are no previous entanglements, as such.......

ETHELBERTA
(Annoyed) .......My Lord....I believe that I am now “entangled’ with yourself. HOW, then, could I be “entangled” with another?....Are you perhaps jealous, Sir?

Ethelberta walks over and sits down on an armchair, near to the fire.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Oh, no!.....NO!....I mean, I was just, um, not, ....Um...I’ve actually come to ask you if you would care to accompany me to a charity instrumental concert?

Lord Mountclere follows her over and sits down on another nearby armchair

ETHELBERTA
When?

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Next week, in Melchester....Just a......oh, you know,a random assortment of players.

ETHELBERTA
If my family gets to hear of our engagement, it is cancelled, my lord. Is it wise, therefore, that we are seen together, in public?

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Why should our marriage be cancelled?
ETHELBERTA
Because my father would prevail
upon me to break the engagement.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
(Haughtily) He won’t object. I don’t
see why he should!......... Oh, no, you
will be mine, now.........(Suddenly
smiling) So will you meet me at
Anglebury and go on with me to
Melchester, my dear?

ETHELBERTA
Well, I don’t understand why you
are so keen to go to this
particular concert, but if my
sister may accompany me, I will
attend.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Yes, of course!.... Of course she
may...... Splendid! Splendid!

Ethelberta stands up, and so Lord Mountclere rises, also.

ETHELBERTA
Now, if you will excuse me, my
Lord, I have to meet my dressmaker,
shortly.

Lord Mountclere picks up his hat and gloves.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Yes, yes!......... My pretty bird must
ruffle her gay feathers!

He leans and kisses her cheek.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Good bye, my dear..... My own one!

He departs and Ethelberta sits down, breathing heavily.

She then looks over at the music on the piano and sighs,
smiling wistfully, and then looking down at her lap.

INT. LORD MOUNTCLERE’S COACH - DAY

Lord Mountclere settles himself down on his seat and raps,
authoritively, to the coachman to drive on, which the
coachman does.

Lord Mountclere gets out a concert leaflet and peruses it.

There, at the head of a short list of players, is the name of
the organist, Mr. Christopher Julian.
119.

Lord Mountclere nods his head, smiles and cackles to himself.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Hehehe!

90 INT. MELCHESTER TOWN HALL/GREEN ROOM – DAY 90

There is the sound of instruments tuning up with long ‘A’s being held, in the next room.

Lord Melchester ushers in Ethelberta and Picotee and sits them down, on two chairs at the other side of a table which stands at one side of this corridor room.

He remains standing, nearby.

The party is in smart day clothes

LORD MOUNTCLERE
You see, we have come in quite privately and, when the musicians enter, we can follow them out and huddle to our seats, anonymously.

The door opens and around eight musicians hurry through, going out of the other door, towards the stage entrance.

Christopher comes through last.

He sees Ethelberta, gasps, halts, and sags, plopping his music down onto the table.

He breathes loudly and is white-faced.

Ethelberta stands up rapidly and shoots a piercing look of hatred at Lord Mountclere.

ETHELBERTA
(Hisses) This is your pretty jealous scheme!.....I see it!...DON’T think I don’t!

She hurries around the table, takes Christopher’s hand, and smilingly nods, and murmurs encouragement at him, while he recovers, nods, and then smiles at her.

Lord Mountclere and Ethelberta suddenly hear a gasping exclamation from Picotee who then starts to swoon.

PICOTEE
Oh!

Ethelberta drops Christopher’s hand, leaves him, and hurries back around the table to catch Picotee as she faints.

Ethelbereta realizes her opportunity and seizes it.
She stabs a finger at each of Picotee and Christopher, and addresses Lord Mountclere

ETHELBERTA
NOW do you see it?!

LORD MOUNTCLERE
I do! I do!

Christopher comes round to help Ethelberta sitting Picotee back upright in her chair.

Picotee is very embarrassed and won’t look at anyone.

She plays with her handkerchief, dabbing at her nose and sniffing.

Christopher smiles at her and then at Ethelberta.

ETHELBERTA
Are you feeling better, now, Mr. Julian?

CHRISTOPHER
Yes, yes....Um, just a little stage nerves, I suppose! I’m, I’m glad to see you both, but I must go through, now....Thank you.Thank you!...... Good Evening!

He hurries, embarrasedly away.

Ethelberta leans towards the hovering Lord Mountclere

ETHELBERTA
(Sarcastic whisper)You’re quite sure between whom the love lies then, now, egh?

LORD MOUNTCLERE
I am! I am! Oh, yes!......Beyond a doubt!

Ethelberta sweeps out of the room, in high dudgeon and Lord Mountclere follows, totteringly.

EXT. MELCHESTER/HIGH STREET – DAY

Ethelberta storms along, with Lord Mountclere occasionally catching up, and then pausing to catch his breath and falling behind again.

Picotee follows slowly, in the distance.

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Ethelberta, dearest! Please forgive me!
ETHELBERTA
    You had no right to mistrust me!

He falls back, again and then recovers his ground

LORD MOUNTCLERE
    I DO trust you...I do! You didn't
    bleynch...You should have told me
    that it was your sister and not you
    who was entangled with him!

ETHELBERTA
    Are you not ashamed?!

LORD MOUNTCLERE
    I am. I am...Sorry, my dear!

She pulls ahead, again, dabbing her eyes.

He catches up to her

LORD MOUNTCLERE
    It was an inconsiderate trick of
    me, I own it....Now do you....

She has pulled ahead, again and he stands wheezing and
looking after her.

Ethelberta has a quick look at the train times on the board
outside of the railway station, sighs, and then returns along
the road, on the other side, meeting Picotee, there.

The two of them storm down the road, and then go into the Red
Lion Hotel, and so Lord Mountclere totters into the White
Hart, opposite.

INT. RED LION HOTEL/PRIVATE SITTING ROOM - EVENING

Ethelberta, standing, seals a letter, addressed to Lord
Mountclere, and gives it to the servant.

Picotee, is sitting by the fire and she pours the tea.

Ethelberta is just sipping her tea, when the servant returns
a letter from Lord Mountclere.

She opens and reads it and rolls her eyes.

She goes over to the other table, picks up the pen and writes
again. She addresses it to Lord Mountclere.

Ethelberta rings for the servant.

The servant arrives and collects the letter.

Picotee offers a cake to Ethelberta.
Ethelberta sniffs, sits down, picks up her side plate and takes the proffered slice.

She takes a big, snapping bite and chews, ruminatively, glowering.

ETHELBERTA
I’m going for a stroll and a ‘think’ around the cathedral, Pixie....You have a rest here.

Picotee stretches her feet to the fire and wiggles her toes. She has taken her boots off.

PICOTEE
Oh, alright, Berta.

Ethelberta regards her food

ETHELBERTA
Actually, this cake’s not bad.....FOR a public house!

93  INT. MELCHESTER CATHEDRAL/AISLE – DAY

Ethelberta is strolling down the aisle, when Lord Mountclere hurries up to her.

He takes her hand and kisses it.

He explains and apologises, yet again.

Ethelberta accepts his apology.

Lord Mountclere urges that she marry him soon.

Ethelberta agrees, whereupon he takes her hand, kisses it, and then kisses her on her cheek, delightedly.

She gives a small smile and nods her head.

94  INT. TRAIN – EVENING

Picotee is struggling to put a bag in the overhead container and Ethelberta is rearranging her hat and hair.

ETHELBERTA
Pixie, I ought to tell you that I am getting married early.....Not that I can believe the fact....It’s to be the day after tomorrow.

Pixie plumps down on a nearby seat
PICOTEE
Gosh!...So soon?........ He can’t make you, you know!

She moves over and sits next to Ethelberta and takes her hand, looking concernedly at her.

ETHELBERTA
(Languidly) I agreed to the day..........It’s to be a secret wedding, so we need no preparations.

PICOTEE
Is this on account of his family?

ETHELBERTA
No..........OURS, dear. I suspect that Papa would try to stop me, if he heard. I suspect that he has....um....
prejudices....Now dress again as my sister, tomorrow, Pixie, as Lord Mountclere is dropping by early, to
conclude some bits of paperwork.

PICOTEE
Gosh! My sister marrying a lord!

ETHELBERTA
Gosh is vulgar, dear...and yes, I’m thinking that with Lord Mountclere being a little more mature than
most suitors, I won’t be expected to have ten children and then spend my life ill in bed, like poor
mother.

PICOTEE
Yeeees................. but I think I wouldn’t mind, though, having TWENTY children if it was with
Chris....Hum, I mean, you WILL still visit abroad, and entertain at home, won’t you?

ETHELBERTA
I don’t really know, but I will certainly now have time to get on with my writing. I am already
planning a grand play cycle and will be able to use his vast library.

Picotee puts Ethelberta’s hand down, and sits back in her seat.

PICOTEE
Oh, yes....(Uninterestedly puzzled)Writing.....
Ethelberta looks out of the window and remembers her last meeting in the church with Lord Mountclere.

Flashback:

LORD MOUNTCLERE
Marry me on Friday and, as you desire, I solemnly promise all that money and influence can do to bring about the union of your sister and her desired love.

Ethelberta nods and he raises her hand to his lips.

ETHELBERTA
On that condition, I am yours...... irrevocably.

INT. MRS. DONCASTLE’S HOUSE/BUTLER’S ROOM – DAY

Mr. Chickerel is sitting reading the newspaper when there is a commotion at the door, with a raised young woman’s voice and a man, speaking bullyingly to her.

Then butler puts down the paper and looks up.

The door bursts open and a well-dressed, late, middle-aged man strides in.

He stops and stares.

BERTIE MOUNTCLERE
You Chickerel?!

Chickerell stands up.

CHICKEREL
I have that honour, Sir. May I ask who you are and why you are here?

BERTIE MOUNTCLERE
Name’s Bertie Mountclere....Brother of the Marquis!

Chickerell looks very worried

CHICKEREL
(Faintly) Lord Mountclere.....?

BERTIE MOUNTCLERE
Yes, and my blasted brother is going to marry your daughter!....Are you in on it, Sir?
CHICKEREL
(Insulted) I beg your pardon, Mr.
Mountclere? I know nothing of
this.

Mountclere starts to pace, furiously

BERTIE MOUNTCLERE
Then you don’t approve, egh?!

CHICKEREL
(Shocked) Approve?........I would
rather she be a scullery maid! I
would rather she scrubbed the
floors!

BERTIE MOUNTCLERE
Then, will you come with me and
persuade the girl otherwise?

Chickerell grabs his coat and umbrella and races out of the
door.

CHICKEREL
Try and stop me!........
I just need to drop in at Exonbury
Crescent and collect a few
clothes....Have you a carriage?

BERTIE MOUNTCLERE
It’s outside....Hurry!

They thunder down the corridor

EXT. EXONBURY CRESCT. - DAY

Chickerel comes out of the front door, with Joey boggling out
at the carriage and then closing it behind him.

As he starts down the steps, a handsome cab draws up at a
quick trot and Sol and Dan jump out.

They address their father as he is on the steps.

SOL
Father, our Berta be a runnin’ away
with that Marquis fella!

DAN
No, Sol! Pixie said as ‘ow ‘e were
a marrying ‘er!

SOL
Well, yeh, so we reckoned as ‘ow
the aristocracy would be a marryin’
in London, loike, and that you
moight be able to stop it, Father.
Chickerel resumes hurrying down the steps and mounting into the carriage.

CHICKEREL
(To Bertie) We might need some reinforcements, if your brother has brought along some footmen who try to interfere!...My sons are here!

BERTIE MOUNTCLERE
Oh, bring them along! Bring them along....Dammit!!

He bangs the roof

BERTIE MOUNTCLERE
Ride on!...Ride on!!

The boys mount and the carriage horses canter away.

EXT. ROAD TO ENCKWORTH COURT - DAY

Christopher is slogging along the road to Enckworth Court, when he hears a carriage approaching.

He stands in the road and waves it down.

The carriage stops and Christopher goes to the door, with the open window.

CHRISTOPHER
Excuse me, Sir, but do you know....Mr. Chickerel!!...What are you.......... Are you going to Enckworth Court, as well?

CHICKERELL
Yes, we are, indeed!

CHRISTOPHER
So you’ve heard, then?

Bertie leans forward and calls

BERTIE MOUNTCLERE
Yes, the whole ruddy world has heard and...

CHRISTOPHER
........I’m a good friend of Miss Petherwin’s, could I possibly come along........ please?

BERTIE MOUNTCLERE
What do you think this is?...We’re in a hurry....Oh, for goodness sake.....Get in, then! Get in!!
Christopher scrambles in and squeezes, uncomfortably between the two brothers.

Bertie raps on the roof, again and roars

BERTIE MOUNTCLERE
Ride on! Ride on...and fast, Man, fast!!

The coach canters off.

EXT. ENCKWORTH COURT/Front Door - Day

The men stream up the front steps and Bertie rings the bell.
The butler tells them that Lord Mountclere has left for the church.
The men all pour back into the carriage and canter off, again.

INT. CHURCH/NAVE AND VESTRY - Day

The men pour into the church and look around.
It is empty, but there are traces of confetti on the floor.
The men stream into the vestry where the priest is just finishing disrobing.
They demand to hear about the marriage and he shows them the new entries in his marriage celebrations register.
They all stand up, again and look at one another, in dismay.

INT. THE JULIAN’S HOUSE/SITTING ROOM - Day

Julian enters, haggardly, at the door and Faith jumps up to greet him with a kiss on his cheek.

She is waving a letter around

FAITH
You’ll never guess!...Aunt Lucy has left us a few hundred pounds in her will!....Hundreds!

Christopher looks up
CHRISTOPHER
A few hundred
pounds?..........(Sighs:suddenly
decisive)Well, in that case, we’re
going to live in Italy for a few
years, to get away from all of
this!

FAITH
Oh Italy!...Rome?

CHRISTOPHER
Wherever you want!

He sits down, heavily, in the armchair

FAITH
Oh!....Sorry!.... Did Mrs. Petherwin
marr...

CHRISTOPHER
...Yes, yes!

He bites his nails and stares into the fire.

FAITH
Well, then!....That’s
that!...............Tea?....And you can tell
me about
Italy......(Reproachfully)Don’t bite
your nails, Chrissy!

She playfully taps his hand, picks up the kettle and goes to
fill it.

Christopher sighs

EXT. FIR TOP VILLA/SANDBOURNE - DAY

Christopher, looking tanned and a little Bohemian, approaches
the house, when he has suddenly to stand back for a quickly
driven carriage which swiftly emerges, turns in the opposite
direction to where he stands, and bowls off down the road.

Christopher recognises the shoulders, hair and bonnet of
Ethelberta. Her driver stands postillion in the rear. She is
driving.

Christopher smiles to himself, slowly shakes his head and
enters the drive.

INT. FIR TOP VILLA/SITTING ROOM - DAY

Mr and Mrs. Chickerel are seated by the lit fire and Picotee
is sitting near to them, together with a nine-year old girl,
seated on a stool.
Mrs. Chickerel has a blanket over her knee.

Joey ushers Christopher in and Chickerel gets up and wrings Christopher's hand.

Picotee is pleased, but very embarrassed and doesn't know where to look, especially after Christopher smiles at her.

Chickerel ushers Christopher to a seat and Picotee pours and hands him some tea and cake, the latter of which he deposits on a nearby elbow table, while drinking his tea.

CHICKEDEL

Come in, Sir! Come in! How kind of you to accept our invitation....

MRS. CHICKEDEL

...Yes...Kind!

CHICKEDEL

As soon as your Faith wrote Picotee you were coming back, and to Melchester, I said, we've got to have them for tea....

MRS. CHICKEDEL

...For tea!...Yes!

CHRISTOPHER

I'm sorry she couldn't come, Sir, but she has had to visit a friend who is very ill.

CHICKEDEL

Oh, we're happy to see either of you....You've just missed Ethelberta, you know!

CHRISTOPHER

Yes, I just saw her driving away, with the carriage boy merely looking on!

MRS. CHICKEDEL

Oh, she's allus bin an independent body....allus!

CHICKEDEL

She completely runs the marquis's estate, now...the books, the orders, who rents which farms.

CHRISTOPHER

Good grief...Well, she always was a good organiser.
CHICKEREL
And she’s published a cycle of plays, to great acclaim. They’re going to put them on in the West End of London.

CHRISTOPHER
Whatever next? How is the marquis with all of this?

MRS. CHICKEREL
He don’t be saying much at all. He’s much in the gardens, these days and she don’t let him drink and such. ‘e be very happy to leave things in ‘er ‘ands..................Picotee, take those secateurs and pick me some roses for the table, there, pet........ P’raps Mr. Julian would help you?

Both Picotee and Julian shoot nervously to their feet.

CHRISTOPHER
Yes, of course... Certainly.

Picotee blushes, and picks up the secateurs, from the table. They both go out through the French windows.

103 EXT. FIR TOP VILLA/GARDEN - DAY

Picotee wanders down to the bottom of the garden, followed by Christopher.

She shyly bows her head and starts cutting roses and putting them into her trug, on the floor, there.

PICOTEE
I’m sorry you missed Berta.

CHRISTOPHER
I’m not.

She looks up, startled.

PICOTEE
Why?

Christopher takes her hand, removing the secateurs to the trug.

CHRISTOPHER
I came to see you.

PICOTEE
Me?
CHRISTOPHER
Yes...You, Pixie....At long last I’ve
realized what a blithering idiot
I’ve been, letting a little flower
bloom unseen, whilst chasing
visions of strangling vine flowers
in the jungle.

PICOTEE
Is, is the strangling vine........
Ethelbera?

CHRISTOPHER
(Faux embarrassed) Um........I suppose
so!

They both laugh and then Picotee turns her head away, in
confusion.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)
Picotee, I realized that I was
waiting to hear the next instalment
of your letters to Faith, in Italy,
not because I wanted to hear of
Ethelbera, but because I wanted to
hear of you.....I missed you!

Picotee’s head is still turned away.

PICOTEE
Me?

CHRISTOPHER
My missing you made me realize
that...... that I love you,
Picotee......And that you are the
sweet lady that I want.

Picotee turns her head and looks up at him.

Christopher takes her other hand, now, as well, and kisses
them both.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)
Will you have me as your husband,
Picotée?....Will you marry me and
make me the happiest man alive?

PICOTEE
Yes...yes....Oh, yes!

He kisses her.

Mr and Mrs Chickerel look out of the French windows, see them
and smile at one another.
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