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The Late Christopher Bean

A Comedy in Three Acts

Emlyn Williams

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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THE LATE CHRISTOPHER BEAN

Produced at the St. James's Theatre, London, S.W.1, on May 15th, 1933, with the following cast of characters:

(In the order of their appearance)

DR. HAGGETT	*Cedric Hardwicke.*
SUSAN HAGGETT	*Lucille Lisle.*
GWENNY	*Edith Evans.*
MRS. HAGGETT	*Louise Hampton.*
ADA HAGGETT	*Nadine March.*
BRUCE MCRAE	*Barry K. Barnes.*
TALLANT	*Robert Holmes.*
ROSEN	*Clarence Derwent.*
DAVENPORT	*Frederick Leister.*

The Play produced by GILBERT MILLER.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY

The Scene is laid in the living-room of "The Old House," the Haggetts' home in Childer Barnston, a small village somewhere near the centre of England.

ACT I.—Morning.

ACT II.—Noon.

ACT III.—Afternoon.

The time is the present. A day in May.

THE LATE CHRISTOPHER BEAN

ACT I

SCENE.—*The living-room of the* HAGGETTS' *home in Childer Barnston.*
TIME.—*About* 9.30 *a.m., on a bright sunny May morning.*
The house is old, and the room is worthy of more tasteful furnishing than the Haggett family has given it. Mingled with the few old pieces is much of less merit, very genteel and rather overcrowded. Added to this are the desk, medical cabinet and other furnishings, which have been moved in from the Doctor's surgery. The room is used as both living- and dining-room, and there is a round dining-table R.C. *with four chairs, also a sideboard against the wall* R. *These pieces of furniture give the room away for what it is. A bay-window, with lace curtains, overlooks the village road, and in the bay is a large aspidistra on a stand. Through the double-doors up* C., *which are open, one gets a glimpse of the passage leading to the front door. In the passage is a step-ladder, paint-cans and brushes, and a crude sign on the stair newel-post, which reads "* WET PAINT." *A door down* R. *leads to the kitchen.*
(*See Photograph of Scene, also Furniture and Property Plot.*)

The CURTAIN *rises on an empty stage. After a moment of silence the front door opens to admit* DR. HAGGETT, *an undistinguished, tired-looking medical man of fifty; he is the typical English country doctor, his gentility* (*born of grammar-school education*) *slightly worn by years of contact with rustic patients. He removes his old Derby hat and shabby overcoat and hangs them on a peg in the hall, just off* L. *He is wearing old striped trousers, a shabby morning-coat and vest, a white shirt, and a wing collar with grey pattern tie. When he is standing up his trousers sag over his grey spats and black boots.*

DR. HAGGETT (*in the hall, calling*). Hannah!
MRS. HAGGETT (*upstairs*). Is that you, Arthur?
DR. HAGGETT. Yes, it is.
MRS. HAGGETT. Are you back already?
DR. HAGGETT. Yes, I am. (*He enters the room.*)
MRS. HAGGETT. Have you had your breakfast?
DR. HAGGETT. No, I haven't. (*He goes to his desk and puts his bag on it.*)

MRS. HAGGETT (*still upstairs, calling loudly*). Gwenny!

(*Something on* DR. HAGGETT'S *hands annoys him. Smelling them, he gets a strip of gauze from a glass jar on the desk and goes to the medical cabinet up* R.C. *that contains his drugs.*)

(*Calling.*) Gwenny!

(DR. HAGGETT *takes a bottle from the cupboard and proceeds to clean his hands with the contents, drying them with the gauze.*)

(*Calling.*) Gwenny!!! Get the Doctor his breakfast! He hasn't had any!

(SUSAN HAGGETT, *a pretty girl of nineteen, comes downstairs.*)

(*Calling.*) Susan, help Gwenny to get your father's breakfast ready, will you?

SUSAN (*coming into the room*). All right.

(DR. HAGGETT *throws the piece of gauze into the fire.*)

MRS. HAGGETT. Gwenny!

DR. HAGGETT. Why should Gwenny need any help in getting my breakfast ready?

SUSAN. Oh, Gwenny's so upset. . . . (*She crosses to the table and picks up the bowl of flowers.*)

DR. HAGGETT. What's upsetting her?

SUSAN. Why, Daddy, leaving us!

(*She crosses with the flowers and puts them on the sideboard, then takes the cruet and marmalade from the sideboard cupboard and puts them on the top.*)

DR. HAGGETT (*crossing to the desk*). Oh yes, of course. . . . To-day *is* Thursday! Went clean out of my head. After all the chitter-chatter there's been about it, too. . . . So Gwenny's leaving us, after all these years!

(*He is looking towards the kitchen door as* GWENNY *enters, carrying a tin tray with teapot, cup and saucer, milk and sugar, and napkin. She wears a smile that decreases in plausibility as it increases in determination. She is* MRS. HAGGETT'S *maid-of-all-work, a Welsh villager, aged vaguely between youth and maturity, of a wistful prettiness, simple and serious. She speaks with a soft and pleasing North Wales accent. She is wearing a white apron over her print morning dress, black shoes with straps, and black stockings.*)

GWENNY. I got your tea all ready, Doctor Haggett, and it iss lovely and hot and all.

(DR. HAGGETT *sits at the desk.*)

Dear me, to think of you being out all this time on an empty stomach! Did everything turn out all right?

DR. HAGGETT. It did, Gwenny. A boy, eight pounds three ounces, turned out.

GWENNY (*setting the tray on the table*). Well, dear me, issn't that a grand thing, now? I bet you that Mistar and Mrs. Elliott are that pleased because it iss a boy! I expect most fathers and mothers would sooner have boys than girls by far, and if you ask me, Doctor Haggett, I don't blame them, neither. . . . You just sit there, Doctor Haggett, and Susan, you pour your father's tea out the time that I finish with getting his breakfast. (*Pointing to the newspaper and telegram lying on the table.*) There iss his "Chester Chronicle" all ready for him, and all. And there's a telegram with it that just come.

(*She goes into the kitchen.* SUSAN *pours out tea.*)

DR. HAGGETT (*rising and crossing for the telegram*). She seems to be making quite an effort for the last day. (*He opens the telegram.*)

SUSAN. Well, it's only natural, isn't it, Daddy? (*She goes to the sideboard.*) It's going to be like losing one of the family. . . . (*As he exclaims.*) What is it, Daddy? (*She comes back to the table.*)

DR. HAGGETT. It's from London.

SUSAN (*bending over the telegram*). No!

DR. HAGGETT. Yes, it is. (*Reading.*) "An admirer of the late Christopher Bean will do himself the honour of calling on you on Thursday at twelve, noon." Signed, Maxwell Davenport. (*He sits on the chair* L. *of the table.*)

SUSAN (*thoughtfully*). Chris Bean.

DR. HAGGETT. I haven't thought of him for years.

SUSAN (*crossing to the sideboard*). Chris Bean, the boy who painted all those pictures. (*She comes to the table with cruet and marmalade.*)

DR. HAGGETT. You mean, *he* thought they were pictures, when he wasn't too drunk to think! . . . But who's Maxwell Davenport? I never heard of him. I don't know if he expects me to know him, but I certainly don't. . . . (*He puts away the telegram in his left coat pocket and takes the tea which* SUSAN *has poured out for him.*)

(MRS. HAGGETT *comes downstairs. She is a thin, shrewd woman of fifty;* DR. HAGGETT *has married slightly beneath him, but she has assumed certain "cityfied" airs in dress and bearing, and a certain over-refinement of speech; these, she feels, lift her above the standards of Childer Barnston. She is the complaining sort. She wears a tweed skirt and blouse.*)

(SUSAN *sits* R. *of the table.*)

MRS. HAGGETT (*out in the hall, distastefully viewing the débris in the passage*). Arthur, why hasn't that painter and paper-hanger man taken his rubbish home? (*She picks up the two paint-cans*

and puts them down by the step-ladder, then takes the end of the trailing canvas and tucks it on the floor under the ladder.) He'd finished his work when he went home last night, and he promised faithfully he'd be here first thing this morning. . . . (*Coming into the room.*) Oh dear, (*crossing to above the table*) I do hope we don't have any more painters in the house! It may interest you to know, Susan, that your poor sister is in bed with a headache the smell of that paint has given her. . . . (*Sitting on the chair above the table.*) When I think of the work that's facing us in this house to-day, moving your father's things back into his study . . . oh, dear . . .

(GWENNY *returns from the kitchen with a tray containing the rest of* DR. HAGGETT'S *breakfast, including porridge. She puts the tray on the downstage end of the sideboard.*)

GWENNY. Here you are for you, Doctor Haggett.

MRS. HAGGETT (*still plaintive*). And Gwenny leaving us this afternoon . . . ah, well . . .

GWENNY. If you got no objection, like, Mrs. Haggett, please, I would prefer for you not to speak about me leaving. (*She gives the bowl of porridge to* DR. HAGGETT.)

MRS. HAGGETT. Well, you are leaving, aren't you?

GWENNY (*crossing to the sideboard*). Yes, I am leaving. But you know that I don't want to be leaving, and I wouldn't be leaving, neither, only it iss the will of God. (*She puts a jug of hot water on the table.*) And the only way I can keep up my spirits with me leaving, iss for nobody to speak to me about it. But if you keep on at me about it, I . . . (*She crosses to the sideboard.*)

(MRS. HAGGETT *looks up.* SUSAN *lays a warning hand on her mother's arm.* GWENNY *controls herself and smiles bravely.*)

(*Putting a toast-rack on the table.*) What I want to hear about, Mrs. Haggett, if you please, is Mrs. Elliott's baby. She didn't get married none too soon, did she? My opinion iss that when a baby comes as quick as that after a wedding, you very near have to brush the rice off it. (*Crossing to the sideboard.*) Wass it a long job with the baby, Doctor Haggett? (*She puts sugar sifter on the table.*)

DR. HAGGETT. Not very long, Gwenny. (*He has begun his breakfast.*)

GWENNY. Oh, I am sure she suffered terrible, issn't it, Doctor Haggett? You look ready to drop, your own self. It can't have be more than four o'clock when they knock you up. It seems ass if babies iss always getting you up or keeping you up, one of the two, issn't it, Doctor Haggett?

(ADA HAGGETT, *a girl of twenty-six, who fancies her baby prettiness and baby-like manner, comes slowly downstairs.*)

SUSAN (*putting her arm round* GWENNY'S *waist*). If you feel so very sorry to leave us, Gwenny, why don't you stay?

GWENNY. Oh, you are all so good to me! I don't want to go. It is the will of God.

DR. HAGGETT. First time I heard of the will of God sending a woman off to live in Manchester.

(ADA *enters and remains standing* L. *of the medical cabinet.*)

GWENNY. But it must have been the will of God to make my poor brother Idwal's wife get poorly, and die, and leave him with four little children, and no woman in the house! You know that it would not be like your Gwenny to will a thing like that!

DR. HAGGETT. Now, Gwenny, don't let us go over it all again, please! You're leaving us. We're deeply sorry to see you go, but we'll save our tears till the time comes for you to catch your train. By the way, what train *are* you catching? (*He gives the newspaper to* MRS. HAGGETT, *who begins to read.*)

GWENNY. The five o'clock to Chester, from Rocklands Station.

SUSAN. We're going to miss you, Gwenny!

GWENNY. And what about me, Miss Susan? What about me leaving this place, where I been for so long? Fifteen years I been here, fifteen years, mark you!

DR. HAGGETT. Don't harp on it.

GWENNY (*turning and crossing to the kitchen door*). I don't want to harp on it, neither, only I cannot bear—really——

(*She goes into the kitchen.*)

SUSAN (*rising*). Poor Gwenny! We'll never get another servant like her.

(*She follows* GWENNY *out, closing the door behind her.*)

DR. HAGGETT. Well, that wouldn't be a bad idea!

(MRS. HAGGETT *looks up from the paper.*)

MRS. HAGGETT. Are you suggesting, Arthur, that I should do without a servant?

DR. HAGGETT. I don't see why not. Three women in the house. I'll undertake to make my own bed.

ADA (*moving down a step*). But, Daddy, have you thought what people would say in Church on Sunday?

DR. HAGGETT. Well, what would they say?

MRS. HAGGETT. They'd say Doctor Haggett's practice had fallen into such straits that he couldn't afford to keep a servant.

DR. HAGGETT. You look after your house, Hannah, and I'll look after my practice. (*He folds his napkin.*)

MRS. HAGGETT. If it weren't for me, you'd sit by the fire all day and let everything go to rack and ruin! How long did I have

to keep on at you, to get your surgery painted and papered? And that hall, too!

Dr. Haggett. It isn't a hall. It's a passage.

Mrs. Haggett. It's a hall.

Dr. Haggett (*peace at any price*). All right. (*He sips his tea.*)

Mrs. Haggett (*her voice rising*). Which of us two was it found we could sell that old wallpaper for more than enough to give you a nice clean surgery your patients could enjoy?

Dr. Haggett. I know, I know . . .

Mrs. Haggett. And now you want to spoil the whole effect by making your wife and daughters do their own work! The idea! (*She returns to the newspaper.*)

Dr. Haggett. I know—— And if you could find some way to make my patients pay the bills they owe me . . .

Mrs. Haggett. If people won't pay you, then don't attend them. (*She reads the newspaper.*)

Dr. Haggett. And what'ld happen to my practice then?

Mrs. Haggett. Oh, it's no use talking to you . . . (*She puts the paper on the table.*)

Dr. Haggett. A doctor is morally bound to minister to the sick, even if the sick can't pay their bills. It's the ones who can pay, and don't, these days——

Mrs. Haggett (*quietly*). Ada, you'd better go upstairs, dear. I see I must have a private talk with your father.

(Ada *starts to go upstairs, but stops and listens.* Dr. Haggett *puts his glasses in his waistcoat pocket, rises, crosses to the desk, then takes his pouch and pipe from his coat pocket.*)

Dr. Haggett (*filling his pipe*). If you could find a new servant for the same wages we pay Gwenny . . .

(Mrs. Haggett *resumes perusal of the newspaper.*)

Mrs. Haggett. The new one I found won't cost us much more.

(Dr. Haggett *stops and turns to her.*)

Dr. Haggett. You don't mean to say you've hunted up a new servant already!

Mrs. Haggett. Yes, I have. Last week, when I went shopping in Blackpool.

Dr. Haggett. You found a new servant in Blackpool!

Mrs. Haggett (*putting the paper down on the table*). Don't you understand, Arthur, it's in bad times like the present that you've got to keep up appearances most of all?

(*He sits in the chair at the desk. She rises and goes to him, on his* r.)

I'm not sorry to see Gwenny leaving, either. She's been here long enough. (*As* Dr. Haggett *butts in.*) Yes, Arthur, I know what you're going to say—that it's a pleasant homely sight to see her

behaving like one of the family, and calling the girls by their Christian names.

(DR. HAGGETT *picks up the tobacco-jar from the desk and fills his pouch.*)

But you know, dear, she hasn't got an atom of style about her! Now, the new one isn't a bit like that. She's a real maid, and smacks of the town, if you know what I mean. And she has a really nice accent, quite grammatical, too; and she answers the door as if to the manner born!

DR. HAGGETT (*looking up at* MRS. HAGGETT). How much does she cost?

MRS. HAGGETT. Now what you have to think about is the money the girls and I are saving by making all our own clothes for the Isle of Man this summer!

DR. HAGGETT (*sitting back, his glance sharpening*). Oh, you're still talking about the Isle of Man this summer, are you?

MRS. HAGGETT (*flustered*). And why . . . shouldn't . . . I?

DR. HAGGETT. Because the girls and you are not going to the Isle of Man, or any other isle, till times get better!

(ADA *bursts in from upstairs.*)

ADA. Did I hear Daddy say we're not going to the Isle of Man? (*She is now* L. *of the table.*)

DR. HAGGETT (*turning in his chair*). Yes, you did, Ada. And not for the first time, either. Perhaps I do sit on one side, and let your mother paint and paper my surgery, perhaps your mother is going to have a servant from Blackpool. Perhaps! But as long as I can't collect the bills my patients owe me, it's no use talking to me about the Isle of Man. . . . I'm sticking to that, as firm as a rock. (*He swings round to face the desk again, and replaces the tobacco-jar.*)

MRS. HAGGETT. And I'm sticking too, and I wouldn't be a mother if I didn't!

DR. HAGGETT. What's being a mother got to do with the Isle of Man?

MRS. HAGGETT. Perhaps you don't care whether your daughters get married or not, but I do!

ADA. And so do they!

DR. HAGGETT. Well, they don't have to go to the Isle of Man to get married.

ADA (*flustered*). Perhaps not, but the opportunities up there are exceptional!

(MRS. HAGGETT *nods her head in agreement.*)

DR. HAGGETT (*irritably*). Rubbish and fiddlesticks, my dear girl, fiddlesticks and rubbish!

MRS. HAGGETT. It isn't rubbish, Arthur, or fiddlesticks either! Do you know, I've heard that in Douglas in the summer time

the promenade is simply alive with young men who don't think of anything else but romance and getting married.

Dr. Haggett. Young men get those ideas anywhere.

Mrs. Haggett. Not in the north of England in the winter. (*She sits in the armchair* L.C.)

Ada (*moving to* R. *of* Mrs. Haggett). Daddy wants me to grow up an old maid.

Dr. Haggett. I didn't say anything of the kind.

Ada (*moving to* Dr. Haggett). I'm nearly an old maid as it is. . . .

Dr. Haggett. You're only a baby.

Ada (*turning away*). I'm twenty-four.

Dr. Haggett (*turning and looking at* Ada). You're twenty-six.

Ada (*sitting on the chair* L. *of the table, her back to* Dr. Haggett). That makes it all the worse!

Dr. Haggett. Well, if you're in such a hurry to get married, why don't you go down to Barnston Church and get the vicar to put up an S O S in the vestry?

Ada (*turning to him*). Oh, Daddy!

Mrs. Haggett. Really, Arthur, after all the advantages we've given our daughters—Rossborough Girls' School, and everything—do you want to see them married to village lads from Childer Barnston?

Dr. Haggett (*speaking out to front*). What's the matter with village lads? You married one.

Mrs. Haggett. I hadn't been to the Isle of Man.

(*There is a short pause.*)

Dr. Haggett (*looking at* Mrs. Haggett). Thank you, Hannah. Thank you very much. After all the advantages my father gave me, too—Exfield Grammar School, and everything. . . . If Ada can do half as well for herself as you did——

Ada. There aren't any boys to speak of in this place. And what boys there are, don't like me.

Dr. Haggett. And what is it makes boys in the Isle of Man like you any better? Is it because they've seen you in a bathing-dress? All right then, give the Barnston boys a chance. Invite them in here, put your bathing-dress on, and sit by the fire!

(Susan *comes in from the kitchen and goes to the chair* R. *of the table.*)

Mrs. Haggett (*rising and crossing to the chair above the table*). Well, your father's got the better of us again. No Isle of Man for us this summer. I'll have to go into Chester and get Madame Eugenia to take back my artificial silk. (*She sits on the chair above the table.*)

Susan (*cheerfully*). Oh, Mummy, what a pity! But I don't see that it matters very much. (*She sits on the chair* R. *of the table.*)

ADA. It does matter! It does! Daddy says I'm only a baby, but what he really wants is for me to grow up an old maid!

DR. HAGGETT (*rising and moving to* C., *muttering to himself*). I don't want any such thing . . . I . . .

ADA (*facing* MRS. HAGGETT, *her voice rising*). If we stay in Childer Barnston, Susan will get married before me, because the boys here like her better than me, and if she gets married before me, I'll just die . . . I'll die! I know I'll die! (*She sobs and buries her head in her arms on the table.*)

MRS. HAGGETT (*rising to above* ADA *and patting her on the shoulder*). It's this everlasting having just enough, and not a scrap left over for——

DR. HAGGETT (*sorrowfully*). Greed, Hannah! Greed! (*He moves up* C., *then returns to* L. *of the table.*)

MRS. HAGGETT (*furiously*). Perhaps I am greedy! But it's only fools and wasters that don't try to get everything they can out of life.

(GWENNY *comes in from the kitchen, her eye cocked maliciously. She goes to the sideboard and gets the empty tray.*)

DR. HAGGETT. No man has ever called me greedy for money, Hannah. And I hope no man ever does. I'll go upstairs now and shave.

(*He exits up the stairs.* MRS. HAGGETT *starts to follow him, but stops when* GWENNY *speaks.*)

GWENNY. Well, dear me, people are funny, they are really! (*She comes above the table with the tray and starts clearing.*) There iss me crying and breaking my heart over going away, and now you are doing the very same thing egzackly because you got to stay!

MRS. HAGGETT. That's quite enough, Gwenny Thomas. We don't want any observations or remarks.

GWENNY. Oh, Mrs. Haggett, don't mind me! I am only a servant from that terrible country Wales; and I have not got an atom of style about me, and I call the girls by their Christian names, like I was one of the family. And now you got a real maid from Blackpool, and she smacks of the town, yes indeed! And she know how to answer the door-bell like a proper English lady. (*She carries the filled tray to the downstage end of the sideboard.*)

MRS. HAGGETT (*coming to above* L. *of table, furious*). You're a common, impudent girl, Gwenny Thomas, and I give you notice for listening at keyholes!

(BRUCE *crosses the window.*)

GWENNY. You cannot give me notice, because I give myself notice already. And I won't go, till my time iss ripe!

MRS. HAGGETT. I'll take no more back answers from you . . . you go now!

GWENNY. I go this afternoon.

(BRUCE MCRAE, *the village painter and paper-hanger, has come into the hall from the front door. He is a personable, self-satisfied youth in his early twenties. He is dressed in a very old paint-smeared tweed coat, old grey-flannel trousers, and a muffler hiding an open shirt-front. He speaks with a Scottish accent.*)

BRUCE (*in the doorway*). Good morning, Mrs. Haggett.

MRS. HAGGETT (*turning*). Oh, it's the paper-hanger. . . .

BRUCE. Good morning, Ada. Good morning, Susan.

(*The girls return his greetings.*)

MRS. HAGGETT. I was just saying it's about time you turned up.

GWENNY. Bruce issn't so late that you have to have a fit about it.

MRS. HAGGETT (*swinging round to her again*). Gwenny Thomas!

BRUCE. In fact, not late at all. Didn't ye know, Mrs. Haggett, that us folk frae the North, we're never behind for business appointments?

MRS. HAGGETT. And never behind for boasting, either.

GWENNY. Bruce iss all right, even tho' he iss Scotch.

MRS. HAGGETT. Well, I'm tired of hearing two such outlandish accents in my house, (*crossing to* R. *of* BRUCE) and will you please get your rubbish out of here!

BRUCE (*placidly*). The weather's quite sharp for the time of year, Mrs. Haggett—summer on the way, too!

MRS. HAGGETT (*with dignity*). Please hurry up. I'm sick of the smell of paint.

GWENNY (*picking up her tray and starting for the kitchen*). There iss plenty of things in this house that smells worse than paint.

(*She goes into the kitchen and shuts the door.*)

BRUCE (*still placid*). That's what I've come for, Mrs. Haggett, to get my rubbish out of here. And I brought for each of ye girls a wee present.

ADA. A present, Bruce? One that you paid for?

BRUCE. Well, hardly that. Ye see, I brought, for each of ye, one of my pictures. (*He comes down to* L. *of the table and produces two small framed oil paintings of still life, from under his arm.*)

SUSAN (*rising, delighted*). Bruce!

ADA. A picture of you, Bruce?

BRUCE. No, not pictures of me. Pictures that I painted. (*He hands a picture to each of the girls.*)

(MRS. HAGGETT *comes down to* L. *of the table, behind* ADA, *and examines the latter's picture.*)

MRS. HAGGETT. It's a dead fish.

SUSAN (*leaning over to see*). It looks like the salmon you caught on Sunday, Bruce.

BRUCE. Aye, that's what it is.

MRS. HAGGETT. On Sunday, Mr. McRae, when you ought to be in church!

BRUCE. Yes, Mrs. Haggett.

MRS. HAGGETT. You ought to be ashamed . . . (*Turning to* SUSAN.) What's yours, Susan? . . .

(SUSAN *tilts her picture for them to see.*)

A dead duck! You'd better change with your sister, Susan. Fish always brings Ada out in a rash.

ADA. Oh, Mummy, not in pictures! (*With a too ingratiating smile.*) And are they your own work, Bruce?

(SUSAN *sits on the chair* R. *of the table.*)

BRUCE. They are indeed.

ADA. The frames as well?

(MRS. HAGGETT *moves up a few steps and crosses* L.)

BRUCE. Aye. They are first-class paintings. I thought to meself ye would perhaps want to hang them over ye sideboard. (*He points to the wall* R.) I thought to meself they would look kind of good for it.

MRS. HAGGETT. But I wouldn't have any appetite if I had to look up at a dead fish and a dead duck! (*She goes to the desk and arranges papers.*)

ADA. No, Bruce's right, Mummy. They'd look really lovely. (*Flattering.*) To think I never knew you were a picture painter, Bruce!

BRUCE (*blandly*). It seems as if all kinds of painting come natural to me.

ADA. Oh, I can see that! Oh, Mummy, fancy Bruce! I'd no idea he was so clever. And I certainly never thought Barnston boys were as interesting as this!

BRUCE. They're not. And ye could hardly call me a Barnston boy, Ada, for I never comes over the border frae Scotland till the age of ten.

ADA. Well, we think of you as one, anyway. . . . Why, you could paint really fine pictures if you took to studying! I'm only a baby, but I used to take painting lessons myself. (*Coyly touching* BRUCE'S *arm.*) Did you know that, Bruce?

BRUCE (*moving away*). No, I did not.

(GWENNY *comes back from the kitchen, goes to the sideboard, takes the bowl of flowers, and puts it on the table.*)

ADA (*pointing to the wall over the fireplace*). Do you see that

painting of a bunch of flowers? Well, it's my work. It won a prize, it looked so natural. I could give you one or two hints on art, Bruce, if you like.

GWENNY. About what are you giving hints to him, Ada? Iss it about pictures? (*Seeing the pictures.*) Did you paint these, Bruce? Give me a look, Susan. . . .

BRUCE (*above the table,* L. *of* GWENNY). They are what is called "Still Life." (*He puts his hat on the table.*)

GWENNY (*thoughtfully*). Still life . . . That iss a word that they use in painting, still life. . . .

MRS. HAGGETT (*turning from the desk*). What do you know about the words they use in painting?

GWENNY. Oh, I know. . . . (*Pointing.*) Do you see this, Susan? . . . He did not use his brush for it. No. He stick his thumb in the paint, and he go like this . . . (*indicating*) and like this——

BRUCE. That's right!

GWENNY (*to* BRUCE). Oh, I know. I know. . . .

ADA (*with her mother's dignity*). Don't take any notice of her, Mummy. Let her go into the kitchen and wash the dishes after Daddy's breakfast, and let Susan go and help her. And you go up to Daddy, and leave Bruce and me to hang the pictures up together.

(ADA *takes her picture and starts to rise.* BRUCE *turns his back on her.* GWENNY *takes the newspaper to the mantelpiece, then empties the ashtray on the medicine cabinet into the fireplace.* MRS. HAGGETT *starts for the stairs.* DR. HAGGETT *comes downstairs in his shirt-sleeves.*)

DR. HAGGETT. I go upstairs to shave, and there's no hot water. Morning, Bruce. How are you, my boy?

MRS. HAGGETT. Susan, get a kettle of hot water for your father.

GWENNY (*as* SUSAN *rises*). Don't you worry yourself, Susan. I have no objections to fetching anything for your dad and for you.

MRS. HAGGETT (*crossing* R., *above the table*). If it were me, I suppose you'd tell me to shave in cold water! (*She puts the table-napkin in the sideboard drawer.*)

(GWENNY *sweeps into the kitchen.*)

SUSAN (*quickly, picking up the pictures and crossing to* DR. HAGGETT). Oh, it's nothing, really, Daddy. Only Mummy and Gwenny having one of their usual tiffs. . . . Look what Bruce has painted for our dining-room!

DR. HAGGETT (*examining the pictures without much pleasure*). Hmmm . . . (*Looking at* ADA'S *picture.*) Hmmmm . . .

BRUCE. If ye don't like this pair, Doctor Haggett, I got plenty more I painted doon in the shop.

SUSAN. How many, Bruce?

BRUCE. Oh, aboot a hundred.

DR. HAGGETT. You must have taken a good deal of time off your regular painting to paint as many as that.

BRUCE. I don't mind how much time I take off for painting pictures. I'm too gude to stay with paper-hanging.

MRS. HAGGETT (*above chair* R. *of table*). You're not thinking of being an artist, I hope?

BRUCE. You bet your life I am, Mrs. Haggett! And I'll be a gude one, too!

(SUSAN *puts the pictures down on the floor up* L., *leaning them against the upstage end of the desk.*)

MRS. HAGGETT (*with wise decision*). No, Ada. No. I'm stopping here for a bit. (*Sitting on the chair* R. *of the table.*) I'd rather have a real painter in the family, rather than a picture painter.

BRUCE (*above the table*). I was thinking of painting the garden gate for ye, Mrs. Haggett, but——

MRS. HAGGETT (*sharply*). Free?

BRUCE. Free, gratis, and for nothing. But I've got a better idea now. I'll paint a portrait of the girls instead!

SUSAN. Oh, Bruce, will you really?

ADA. Does Susan have to be in it?

BRUCE. She does indeed. Both of ye.

DR. HAGGETT. You've come over very generous all of a sudden, haven't you, Bruce?

BRUCE. Well, Doctor, I started to think to meself one day, what good care ye took of my Aunty Allus, the time she died——

DR. HAGGETT. Oh!

BRUCE. And I started to think how ye never got any pay for that, and so——

MRS. HAGGETT. If you're so very grateful, Bruce, perhaps you'll let us have the job you've just finished in the surgery, free?

BRUCE. Well, I'm not as grateful as all that.

MRS. HAGGETT. Could you paint the girls and the garden gate?

BRUCE. I would, if ye would buy the paint for the gate.

MRS. HAGGETT. Couldn't you use the portrait paint for the gate?

BRUCE. It's no the same kind, Mrs. Haggett.

MRS. HAGGETT. Then I suppose we'll have to let the gate wait till next year's spring-cleaning.

ADA. What about the portrait, Mummy?

MRS. HAGGETT. Well, I haven't any particular use for it, but I've nothing particular against it.

SUSAN. How will you paint us, Bruce?

(BRUCE *studies the girls.*)

DR. HAGGETT. Now that's a nice problem.

BRUCE. Well, I don't know, really. I'll be forced to give a lot

of thought to the matter. Ada, you go over to that chair and sit by Susan.

(ADA *goes to the armchair* L.C., *and sits.*)

DR. HAGGETT. Suppose Ada was listening to a sea-shell, and Susan looking on, eh?

BRUCE. No, Doctor, no. . . .

MRS. HAGGETT. How about them looking into the future, as it were?

BRUCE. I'll paint them just as they are!

ADA. Oh, not in this dress! I've got a new one, and it'd look quite lovely——

BRUCE. I like that dress. I like the colour. (*Thoroughly professional.*) Your dress, and Susan's dress, and that old chair——

MRS. HAGGETT. That awful old chair that belonged to Doctor Haggett's grandmother! Have one of the nice new chintz covers from the front bedroom——

BRUCE. No, the old things are the best. . . . Yes, I like it fine. Just give me a bit of paper and a pencil. . . . (*He takes them from the desk, then crosses back to above the table and studies the girls.*)

ADA (*to* SUSAN). You sit down, and I'll stand behind.

SUSAN. Why?

ADA (*pulling* SUSAN *into the chair*). I'm such a baby, Bruce wouldn't want you towering over me, would you, Bruce?

(*The girls change places,* ADA *arranging herself.*)

BRUCE. Och! Any way will do. . . . That's fine. (*Sitting on the chair above the table and beginning to sketch excitedly.*) Now, you wait, Mrs. Haggett, and I'll give ye some slight idea of what I can do. . . . (*To the girls.*) Don't move, now!

(*There is a pause.*)

MRS. HAGGETT. Mayn't Ada be holding a bunch of flowers in her hand or something?

ADA. It's Bruce's picture, Mummy. If he likes me as I am——

DR. HAGGETT (*leaning over* BRUCE'S *shoulder*). Look, Hannah! You've got to admit the boy's quick with his pencil. You can see which girl is which already.

MRS. HAGGETT (*looking*). Which *is* which?

ADA. Does it look like me, Mummy?

MRS. HAGGETT. No!

DR. HAGGETT. Give the boy time. You don't get likenesses as quickly as all that. Do you, Bruce?

MRS. HAGGETT. What do you know about it, Arthur?

DR. HAGGETT. Well, I know that, anyway. Upon my soul, Bruce, you're quite the artist. You'll be painting religious pictures before you've finished!

BRUCE. Why releegious, Doctor?

DR. HAGGETT. Haven't you seen all those big Biblical pictures in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool? Marvellous! Figures life-size, frames twenty feet long . . . marvellous! "The Exodus from Egypt," "The Great Flood," "David and Goliath," "Potiphar's Wife"—fine Biblical pictures with a moral!

(DR. HAGGETT, *during this description, has come between* BRUCE *and the girls. He steps back quickly.*)

Where did you learn these tricks, Bruce?

BRUCE (*still working*). Do you remember that painter here, called Chris Bean?

DR. HAGGETT. Chris Bean? He was a patient of mine. Funny, I had a telegram about him this morning.

MRS. HAGGETT. About Chris Bean?

DR. HAGGETT. Yes. A chap who calls himself "an admirer of Christopher Bean." (*He fumbles for his coat pocket, and finds he is coatless.*)

MRS. HAGGETT. I don't know what he saw to admire in him.

(GWENNY *comes in* R. *with the kettle, and stops at the door.*)

BRUCE. Chris started me off on painting just after me father came here frae Edinburgh—about twelve I was then. He let me follow him wherever he went, and he let me sit by him and draw the same things he was drawing. He gave me lessons. The only lessons I got. I try to remember what he used to teach me, and——

(GWENNY *is fairly yearning towards the boy.*)

MRS. HAGGETT. I hope he didn't teach you to drink the same as he did.

GWENNY (*stiffening*). Well, if he—— (*As* MRS. HAGGETT *looks at her sharply.*) Here iss your kettle of hot water, Doctor Haggett. (*She gives the kettle to* DR. HAGGETT.)

DR. HAGGETT. What do I want with . . . Oh, yes, of course, I was shaving! Well, I'd better get on with it, I suppose, and settle down to making my visits. Thank you, my dear.

(*He goes upstairs with the kettle.* GWENNY *and* MRS. HAGGETT *exchange a venomous look as* GWENNY *goes to the kitchen door.*)

GWENNY (*turning at the door*). Oh, Mrs. Haggett, I forgot to tell you. The real towny maid from Blackpool iss in the kitchen. I found her on the back doorstep when I went to fetch the kettle. I don't really hardly think she will be staying after what I told her about the place.

(*She goes back into the kitchen.*)

MRS. HAGGETT (*rising and going towards the kitchen*). If Gwenny's gone and poisoned that new maid's mind——!

Ada. Excuse me a minute, Bruce, this is important. . . . Oh, Mummy! Do you think——

(*She follows her mother into the kitchen.*)

Susan (*crossing to* Bruce). Will you let me see, Bruce?

Bruce (*rising and stepping towards her*). If ye want to. It's only the rough beginning, of course.

Susan. It looks to me as if it isn't quite fair to Ada.

Bruce. Well, so long as it's fair to you . . .

Susan. Oh, no, Bruce! (*Taking a step away.*) You must be fair to Ada, or Mummy'll be on top of you like a ton of bricks.

Bruce. I paint pictures to suit meself, and not to suit your mother. I don't care two hoots for yer mother, or for Ada neether. . . . You know fine why I'm painting this picture.

Susan (*drawing back*). You said you wanted to give Mother a present.

Bruce. All I want is an excuse to see you every day.

Susan. Oh, Bruce, you've known me too long to begin talking such nonsense!

Bruce. And you've known me long enough to know what I think aboot you.

Susan. I don't think you'd better say any more, Bruce.

Bruce. All right; you say ye'll marry me, and I won't say any more.

Susan. Bruce!

Bruce. What d'ye mean, Bruce?

Susan. But I just wouldn't be the right wife for you. Not if you're going to be an artist, anyway.

Bruce. Why wouldn't ye be the right wife for me? I'm a hard worker, I'm going to be a gude artist, and after all, I am Scotch.

Susan. Yes, but I don't even know that I like art . . . much.

Bruce. I'll teach ye to like it.

Susan. You haven't even told me you love me.

Bruce. Do I have to tell ye that?

Susan. Well, I think you ought to.

Bruce. Ye can't take my word for it?

Susan. All right, Bruce. There's one thing, though. We'd have to wait for Ada to get married first.

Bruce. Huh!

Susan. We wouldn't have a minute's peace if we didn't do that.

Bruce (*putting the drawing on the table and turning to her*). I'm thinking I'd better gie ye a kiss.

Susan. Why?

Bruce. Well, it's you I'm marrying, not Ada, and I'm busy right up to my neck, and I've got no time to waste! Besides, I have an idea that being kissed will stop your nonsense.

Susan. Well, you never know, perhaps it will.

Bruce. You're not afraid?

SUSAN. No!

BRUCE. All right. I'll do it, then.

(*He takes her stiffly in his arms and kisses her with little passion. The kitchen door opens, and* ADA *appears.*)

ADA. Well, Bruce, here I am back—— (*She sees them and gasps—calling.*) Daddy! Mummy! Come here, quick!

(SUSAN *breaks away from* BRUCE, *to* L. DR. HAGGETT *appears on the stairs, still in his shirt-sleeves.*)

DR. HAGGETT. What's the matter?

BRUCE. It's Ada that's meddling aboot in other people's affairs.

ADA. Don't you dare speak to me!

(MRS. HAGGETT *comes in from the kitchen.*)

MRS. HAGGETT. Ada, you know how busy I am. What do you want?

ADA (*beside herself*). I don't care how busy you are! There are things going on here that want seeing to, and badly, too!

DR. HAGGETT (*coming into the room*). What's come over this house this morning? (*He is* C.)

ADA. I was in the kitchen, Daddy, with Mummy and the new servant, and I came in here, and caught him and her—Susan . . .

BRUCE (*stepping forward, undismayed*). Ye don't have to tell them what I was doing, Ada. I'd sooner show them. (*He takes the terrified* SUSAN *in his arms and kisses her again, this time with real passion.*)

(*A gasp from* MRS. HAGGETT.)

DR. HAGGETT. God bless my soul!

MRS. HAGGETT (*crossing to* C., *below the table—furious*). You take your rubbish out of this respectable God-fearing house, young man!

BRUCE. All right. I don't mind. Are ye coming with me, Susan? Susan and me are going to get married.

ADA (*shrilly*). Mummy, if you let Susan get married before I do . . .!

(DR. HAGGETT *tries to stop* ADA. *The positions are:* ADA *below* L. *of table,* DR. HAGGETT L. *of* ADA, MRS. HAGGETT C., BRUCE L.C., *and* SUSAN *below and just* L. *of* BRUCE.)

MRS. HAGGETT. Susan is not going to marry Bruce McRae, or anybody remotely resembling him. (*Facing* BRUCE.) My daughter is far too good to waste on a starving, ragamuffin artist!

BRUCE (*with great dignity*). Mrs. Haggett, I really cannot believe that in those words ye are speaking of me, Mrs. Haggett, really I can't. I am the best bet for marriage in Childer Barnston, and all the country round from Chester on one side to Yorrk on the

other. I am going far, Mrs. Haggett; and your daughter Susan is coming with me. I think she's old enough to know her own mind. Eh, Susan?

Susan. Please go along now, Bruce. Talking like this won't do any good. Really, it won't. . . .

Bruce. I won't go unless you come with me.

Mrs. Haggett (*turning to* Dr. Haggett). Arthur, if that creature isn't out of the house by the time I count ten, I'm going to call on you to throw him out!

(Dr. Haggett *tries to restrain* Mrs. Haggett.)

Susan. There'll be no need to throw Bruce out, Daddy. Please go, Bruce. I'll see you later.

(Mrs. Haggett *goes to the table.*)

Bruce (*as steadily as ever*). When?

Susan. I'll send you a message.

Dr. Haggett. You go, Bruce, there's a good chap. And let things simmer down, eh?

Bruce. All right, Doctor. Just give me back my drawing. . . .

(Dr. Haggett *crosses to* Susan. Mrs. Haggett *picks up the drawing from the table, crumples it up and throws it into the fireplace. There is a general gasp.*)

Mrs. Haggett. There'll be no more painting portraits in this house!

Bruce (*picking up his hat from the table and suddenly going*). I'll go, to keep the peace for Susan's sake. (*He opens the front door, then turns.*) But she ought to come with me. Because we *are* going to get married. I'll go now. But I'll show ye yet! And as for you, Mrs. Doctor Arthur Haggett, ye're what they call in London a Philistine.

(*He goes out, slamming the door.* Susan *bursts into tears.*)

Mrs. Haggett. Well, Philistine or not, I think I've nipped that little romance in the bud. Huh, Philistine!

(Susan *sits in the chair at the desk.*)

Dr. Haggett (*perplexed*). Well, it's out of the Bible, Hannah.

Mrs. Haggett. I don't care what it's out of, Arthur; he didn't mean it as a compliment.

Dr. Haggett. Now you two had better clear out, and leave me and Susan to have a little talk.

Mrs. Haggett. I said this was going to be an upsetting morning, but I'd no idea how upsetting. . . .

Ada. If you let Susan——

Mrs. Haggett. Oh, go into the kitchen——

(*She pushes* Ada *before her into the kitchen.*)

DR. HAGGETT (*comforting* SUSAN). Now, now, my dear. Now, now, my own little Susan . . . that's better, eh?

SUSAN. He loves me, Daddy, and I love him!

DR. HAGGETT. Well, that's a pity, of course. If he weren't so dead set on being an artist——

SUSAN. What's wrong with artists?

DR. HAGGETT. Nothing, except the cost of food and lodging.

(TALLANT *passes by the window.*)

SUSAN. Not if he is a good artist! And he will be a good artist!

DR. HAGGETT. He's swollen-headed enough to be. But the best of them are very poor providers, from all I hear; and in these days, of course——

SUSAN (*passionately*). These days! That's all you talk about, these days! If it weren't for these days, you and Mummy wouldn't have a thing against Bruce, and Mummy and Ada could go to the Isle of Man.

(*The front-door bell rings.*)

DR. HAGGETT. And I could get a little peace.

(SUSAN *rises.*)

Here we are talking our heads off, and me with all my visits still to make. (*Starting upstairs.*) Come upstairs, my dear, and wash your face, and I'll put my coat on. I'll have a chat with Bruce, and I'll see what can be done. . . .

(*To* GWENNY, *who comes in from the kitchen very concerned.*)

If that's a patient, Gwenny, show him in here and keep the others out. I'll be down in two shakes of a lamb's tail.

(*He goes upstairs with* SUSAN. GWENNY *opens the front door to admit* TALLANT, *a smooth, youngish and well-dressed Londoner, with a minor public-school education. He is wearing a well-cut tweed coat and waistcoat, and smart grey flannel trousers.*)

GWENNY. Will you step in here, plees? The Doctor will be down in two shakes of a lamb's tail.

(*She closes the front door. They come into the room.*)

TALLANT. Thank you, I'll wait, then.

GWENNY. You can have a chair if you like. There wass some of last year's magazines in the surgery; but they wass lost in the moving, you see, on account of the surgery being painted: but the Doctor will not keep you long, he will not really. (*She crosses to the door* R.)

(TALLANT *looks quickly round the room, goes to* ADA'S *picture up* R.C.,

looks at it expectantly, and turns away disappointed. He catches GWENNY'S *eye and smiles.*)

TALLANT (*slowly, casually*). Thank you. . . . You must be Gwenny.

GWENNY (*after a pause—surprised*). I never see you before, that I can remember.

(TALLANT *puts his turned-down soft felt hat on the cabinet up* R.C.)

TALLANT. No, this is the first time we've ever met.

GWENNY. How does it come to pass that you walk in here, then, and call me by my Christian name, ass bold ass brass?

TALLANT. Ever heard of mind-readers?

GWENNY. Goodness me, you are not one of them heathens, are you?

TALLANT. Only in a small way.

GWENNY. Whatever you are, you are as cheeky as they make them. You don't have to be so downy just because you come from London.

(*She goes into the kitchen.* DR. HAGGETT *comes downstairs.*)

DR. HAGGETT. Good morning. (*He comes into the room.*)

TALLANT. Am I addressing Doctor Haggett?

DR. HAGGETT. You are.

(*They shake hands.*)

TALLANT (*over-elaborate*). I'm very glad to have met you, Doctor Haggett.

DR. HAGGETT (*pointing to the chair down* L.). Sit down, won't you? . . . I'm sorry, but my surgery is out of action. (*He sits at the desk.*)

TALLANT. Don't apologize, Doctor. I've called because I feel——

DR. HAGGETT. A little bilious? Yes, you look it.

(TALLANT *interrupts.*)

You can't fool me where a sluggish liver is concerned. I've been a martyr to it all my life.

TALLANT. I daresay you're right, Doctor, but . . .

DR. HAGGETT. Sit down and put your tongue out.

(TALLANT *goes to the armchair* L.C.)

Headache? Nausea? Bowels all right?

TALLANT. You don't understand, Doctor. I'm as fit as a fiddle. (*He pulls the armchair to downstage* L.C.)

DR. HAGGETT. Well, if you're as fit as a fiddle, what do you want me for?

TALLANT. I was just coming to that. (*He sits in the armchair.*)

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