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SF PERUSALS

THE WIND OF HEAVEN

A Play

by Emlyn Williams

SAMUEL FRENCH

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THE WIND OF HEAVEN

First presented at the St James's Theatre, on 12th April 1945, with the following cast of characters:

DILYS PARRY	Diana Wynyard
BET	Megs Jenkins
MENNA	Dorothy Edwards
GWYN	Clifford Huxley
PITTER	Arthur Hambling
AMBROSE ELLIS	Emlyn Williams
EVAN HOWELL	Herbert Lomas
MRS LAKE	Barbara Couper

The play was directed by the Author

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emlyn Williams (1905-1987), dubbed "the Welsh Noël Coward", was one of the most successful actor-dramatists of the 1930s and 1940s. His greatest works, *Night Must Fall* and *The Corn Is Green*, were made into films starring Albert Finney, Bette Davis and Katharine Hepburn, and remain much revived. Williams' plays have twice been rediscovered by the Finborough Theatre – *The Druid's Rest* in 2009, and Blanche McIntyre's multi-award-winning production of *Accolade* in 2011, which subsequently transferred to St James Theatre. Williams was a pioneering LGBTQ+ figure, and his remarkable life began in a working-class family in North Wales, where he spoke no English until the age of eight and could barely read or write. Coincidentally, he lived much of his adult life in Dovehouse Street, a short walk from the Finborough Theatre.

SCENES

Scene One	A summer morning in 1856
Scene Two	Evening, the same day
Scene Three	Early the next morning
Scene Four	Some hours afterwards. Early evening
Scene Five	Two days later. Night
Scene Six	Early the following evening

To
Diana Wynward

CHARACTERS

DILYS PARRY
BET, her servant
MENNA, her niece
GWYN, a boy of thirteen
PITTER
AMBROSE ELLIS
EVAN HOWELL
MRS LAKE

SETTING

The action of the play takes place in the living-room of a manor house overlooking the village of Blestin, in the mountains of Wales

TIME

The summer of 1856, soon after the end of the Crimean War

Scene One

The living-room of a manor house in the village of Blestin, in the mountains of Wales. A fine summer morning in 1856.

The house is old and mellowed; its rustic lines harmonize unobtrusively with the softer details of an educated woman's taste; flowers in pots and vases, books, old Welsh portraits and miniatures, cushions and rugs.

To the extreme right, a staircase facing, climbing almost from the footlights, leads to a landing opening off right, with a small window facing the evening sun, one corner overgrown with ivy. At the foot of the stairs, in the right wall, a door leading by a passage to the kitchen. Under the stairs, an alcove leading (to the right) to the dining-room. In the back wall, center, a large deep fireplace, and to the left, up two steps, the main door leading to the hall. When this main door is open (it opens into the room) the hall can be seen beyond. The hall projects (out of sight) to the left, as a porch which frames the front door of the house (unseen but often heard opening and closing). In the right of the hall (out of sight) a small window which can reflect a pattern of leaves on the back wall of the hall. In the left wall of the room, downstage, a large bay window forms a deep alcove; through the lace curtains there is a glimpse of a stone wall in the garden (high enough to hide people walking along the path behind it) and over it a corner of the wall and roof of the porch: the window faces the morning sun.

Between the fireplace and the main door, sideways to the audience, a screen. In the hall, a clothes-stand on which hang shawl, cloak and bonnet. Against the left wall, above the window, a grandfather clock; near the window, an old-fashioned Welsh harp, with beside it a music-chair. Facing the fireplace (its back to the audience) a sofa, with along its back a sofa-table, and in front of the table, a high-backed armchair. Against the side of the stairs, a desk, with beside it a desk chair. Downstage, right, facing left, a low-backed armchair. Downstage, left, near the window, a three-seated conversation-piece, with near it a stool.

To the right of the fireplace, in the right wall, hangs a large round mirror. The fireplace itself is shielded by a large firescreen. In the window, a small table with a pot of geraniums.

Three oil lamps, one on the sofa-table, one on the desk, one on a small corner table above the window.

DILYS PARRY *sits in the conservation-piece, looking out of the window, a saucer and full cup of tea beside her. She is a beautiful well-bred woman in her thirties, who would be more beautiful still if her expression were not so fixed and overcast; she wears a morning dress. She has little or no Welsh accent.*

The main door is open, and in the hall the sun streams in through the open front door.

A pause. The clock strikes eleven. A knock.

BET *enters from the kitchen, with brush and duster; she is a homely clean-looking Welsh peasant, between thirty and forty. Her Welsh accent is marked but not exaggerated.*

BET *(seeing* **DILYS***)* Excuse me... *(She crosses, takes up the cup and saucer, looks down at the cup, then at* **DILYS***, who has not moved, and shakes her head)*

MENNA *runs down the stairs, happy and hurried. She is a beautiful girl of twenty dressed in a summer dress and a hat. She has little or no Welsh accent.*

MENNA *sees* **DILYS***, catches* **BET***'s eye and stops abruptly.*

BET *shows her the cup of tea and goes back into the kitchen.*

MENNA *stands looking at* **DILYS***, then plucks up courage.*

MENNA Auntie. *(As* **DILYS** *does not move, louder)* Auntie!

DILYS *starts and turns slowly to her.*

DILYS Yes, my dear?

MENNA Are you feeling better?

DILYS Better? *(She rises, and walks restlessly to the fireplace)*

MENNA You work too hard. *(Putting on her gloves)* When you think this is the first morning for eight months that you have spent at home, and not in that stuffy old Barn Hospital! After all, Auntie, the war has been over for weeks, and Mrs Pugh the Top Hall heard from London that even the flags are put away.

DILYS *(rousing herself, smiling)* The war may be over in the Crimea, but down in our Barn, it still flourishes.

MENNA Mrs Pugh says it is wrong for a gentlewoman like you to dabble in such things.

DILYS *(sitting in the conversation-piece)* I suppose she thinks one Florence Nightingale is enough, without a local copy-cat.

MENNA *moves timidly.*

Where are you off to?

MENNA I came to ask your permission. Captain Isslwyn Pugh is home.

DILYS Mrs Pugh's boy? Home in Wales?

MENNA From the Crimea. And a Captain, with a wound in the foot.

DILYS *(smiling)* So that is why his mother is quoted at me! *(Amused)* So he has been pursuing you?

MENNA I'm afraid he has, Auntie. Through the Post Office.

DILYS *(quickly)* You thought I'd mind!

MENNA Twice a week, and when he was in danger, a scribble once a day. I have not slept much, Auntie... *(Kneeling to her, eagerly)* ...do you think it shows?

DILYS How did you know he was home, slyboots?

MENNA He came to his bedroom window and waved his shirt out of it.

DILYS His shirt?

MENNA He said his handkerchief would have looked better, but might not show. His letters are very amusing, at least I find them so.

DILYS Is he very dear to you?

MENNA *(after a pause)* I think of him day and night.

The smile fades from **DILYS***'s face. She rises and walks to the window.* **MENNA** *watches her. Idly,* **DILYS** *plucks the strings of the harp, from one end to the other. The notes die away, thinly, sweetly. She looks round the room.*

DILYS This house is dead. Can you tell, Menna? *(Plucking the strings again, and looking round)* For a minute, you'd have sworn it was not dead, but listening. Did you notice? But not for long... Am I dead too? Wake up— *(Sinking onto the music chair)* —wake up!

MENNA If only you could talk about it!

DILYS *(looking at her, coldly)* Talk about it?

MENNA You never have, not since the day he died... There, I've said it! *(Kneeling, impulsively)* To you I'm a child, but let the tears flow—anything rather than this! Talk to me!

DILYS I'll talk to you. I'll tell you that for five years I was married to a fine man; a year ago next week, on his way home to me from the war, he died of the Crimean typhus; and the day after they told me, there died an unborn boy. That is all there is to say, that he is dead, and I can still breathe and think. And that new grief touches the heart of whoever is by, but old grief is irksome and wrinkles the face of the griever. *(After a pause, gently)* You mustn't be late, ymechani.

MENNA *rises and starts to go.*

Astride that stile sits your boy from Balaclava, his cap over one ear. Don't be late. *(She puts her hands suddenly to her face)*

MENNA *stands helplessly then runs out by the main door. The front door is heard closing behind her.*

A knock at the kitchen door: **BET** *enters, carrying an account-book.*

BET Escuse me, the washing-book.

DILYS *(collecting herself)* Thank goodness, work... *(She takes the book; she crosses to the desk for a pencil, and sits at the desk)*

BET Could I have a word, Mrs Parry, with all respect?

DILYS *(totting up)* What is it, Bet?

BET It's this man, Mrs Parry.

DILYS *(looking up)* Gracious, don't tell me you quiet mouse have been walking out too?

BET *(laughing)* No no—but you know about the man, that's the talk of the village?

DILYS But annwyl, I only see the postman, and I'm not in the habit of tea and tattle with him!

BET Well, this man is the one—with all respect, Mrs Parry, can I sit down for comfort to tell the story?

DILYS Do.

BET *(drawing up the high armchair, and sitting)* Well, he is the one that has took the room in the Blestin Arms, that never had anybody in the bed since old Mrs Williams Shop can remember—well, he has come and took it.

DILYS Who is he?

BET An English foreigner, but civil with it. And full of questions, so they say, like he was from the police.

DILYS The police?

BET Mrs Parry, with all respect—he is not after me, is he?

DILYS But why should he be?

BET Well, you know... *(Embarrased)* ...what we talk about when I first come to you, that you said you would not talk about again.

DILYS That? No, Bet, I promise you he won't be after you.

BET But Mrs Parry, could he be after Gwyn?

DILYS After a little boy? Gracious, why?

BET For not having a proper married couple for a father and mother.

DILYS But it's not his fault.

BET I know, but I heard say they are very touchy on it in the law courts. Quite right, granted, but—

A timid knock at the kitchen door. **DILYS** *goes back to her accounts.* **BET** *rises guiltily, puts back her chair and dusts it with her apron.*

DILYS Come in.

GWYN *enters, carrying a basket of logs. It is difficult to see his face; he looks a dreamy delicate-looking peasant boy of thirteen, shabbily but carefully dressed. He goes up in silence, and lays the basket near the fireplace.*

BET *is about to go, when there is a knock at the front door; she goes out into the hall and is heard opening the front door, as* **GWYN** *puts his hand shyly to his forelock and goes back into the kitchen.*

PITTER *(offstage)* Mrs Parry? Would you say Mr Pitter?

BET *(offstage)* Pitter...yes, sir.

She returns, agitated.

DILYS Pitter, did you say?

BET Quite right.

DILYS But it's nobody I know—

BET It is him, Mrs Parry.

DILYS The village Paul Pry? *(With an effort)* Ask him in. *(She rises)*

BET *looks at her uncertainly and goes back into the hall.*

This may liven up the morning...

BET *(offstage)* She says for you to come in.

PITTER *(offstage)* Oh, thank you so very kindly...

PITTER *appears in the doorway after handing his hat and stick to* **BET**. *He is a suave, spare Englishman of fifty, with pince-nez and careful black clothes. His old-maidish fussiness is a screen for great intelligence.*

Thank you so very kindly, Mrs Parry, and so distressingly early in the day, too, I hope I find you well, ma'am?

BET *edges apprehensively past him and hurries back into the kitchen.*

DILYS You don't look like a policeman.

PITTER The most passionate love letters I ever read, Mrs Parry, were penned by a governess with spectacles and a moustache... *(Pressing his breast)* What a climb—

DILYS *motions to the high armchair.*

Thank you so very kindly... Your Welsh hills may be joy to the eye, but they are torture to the feet.

DILYS Are you sorry you came?

PITTER *(looking at her quizzically, after a pause)* No. You see, Mrs Parry, I am before all else a student of human nature. Do you remember La Bruyère? By day he was humble tutor to the French nobility; at night he dissected them without mercy, with a quill pen. I rather fancy myself as La Bruyère. Will you allow me to ask one or two questions?

DILYS *(taken aback, sitting in the desk chair)* If you are from the police, I take it I have little choice—

PITTER Thank you so very kindly. This is your house?

DILYS It was left me by an uncle.

PITTER Delightful— *(Thoughtfully)* —then you have not always lived in this village?

DILYS No, I came here from England a year ago.

PITTER A year only—too bad...you are Welsh, of course?

DILYS Half-Welsh, yes. My mother's father was a farmer in this county.

PITTER Dear me, how charming... I learnt a good deal about you, of course, at the inn—

DILYS *(sharply)* I take no interest in the village, and I expect the same courtesy in return.

PITTER I beg your pardon... *(Rising, after a pause)* No interest in the village... Too bad. *(Looking out of the window, suddenly)* Are you religious, Mrs Parry?

DILYS Not at all. What made you ask?

PITTER There is no village church. I can understand there being no school, but there's no church either.

DILYS There hasn't been, for a hundred years. What used to be the church is now the shop.

PITTER Ah yes, the arch is still there. Interesting... *(Turning to her)* Mrs Parry, I am looking for a list of the inhabitants. But no church, no register. How am I to set about it?

DILYS I believe my uncle made it his hobby to keep account of local births and deaths.

PITTER Just the thing! Could you lay hands on it?

DILYS I'm not sure. *(Rising)* It should be in a bookcase in the dining-room—

PITTER *(picking up an open book from the arm of the high armchair)* Thank you so very kindly... *(Reading from the cover)* "The School of Spinoza". Yours?

DILYS Yes.

PITTER Can the philosophers give you the satisfaction they give me?

DILYS *(abruptly)* I'll look for your Domesday book.

She hurries into the dining-room.

PITTER *looks after her, puzzled; he crosses to the desk, puts down the book, and looks at other books.*

AMBROSE ELLIS *enters from hall. He is a flashily-dressed man in his thirties with top hat, oiled hair, gloves, rings and walking stick; his self-confident defiance lies like a lid over a cauldron of brooding nervousness. He speaks perfect English, but there is something temperamentally foreign about him. He advances laconically into the room.*

AMBROSE Good morning.

PITTER *(turning, with a start)* Good morning, sir. *(He goes tranquilly back to the books)*

AMBROSE No joyous bowings from the waist?

PITTER My only wonder, sir, is that you have not emerged from a trap-door with a flaming dagger in your mouth.

AMBROSE *(looking round the room)* An old-fashioned mode of entry, my dear Pitter, and in between trap-doors, difficult to live up to. *(Taking off his gloves, and tossing them on to the sofa)* I heard your voice and a woman's, and true to myself slunk inside for the pleasure of eavesdropping on the smack of lascivious lips. You've failed me, Pitter. *(Sitting in the high armchair)* A widow too.

PITTER A Mrs Parry.

AMBROSE She sounded plain and flat.

PITTER She has a cover of pride to her, very brittle, like egg-shell.

AMBROSE We'll see what we can do... *(Catching the other's eye)* That look, that quizzical gimlet, kindly turn it off! Those memoirs you are concocting, Pitter, I shiver when I think of them.

PITTER But what do my eyes say to you, sir?

AMBROSE They say "Stop being the man of the world, turn into yourself!"

PITTER And what is yourself?

AMBROSE That's the mischief. Take away the rings and the waistcoat, and what is there left? Sawdust. So let's flourish to the top of our bent...

AMBROSE *takes off his hat and hands it to* **PITTER** *who lays it on the table.*

Birmingham has sunk even deeper into the doldrums, so I thought I'd follow you up and see for myself. What was that about the police?

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