

**SCENE II.**

Carvil seated. Bessie. Captain Hagberd (white beard, sail-cloth jacket).

Bessie (Knitting). You've been out this afternoon for quite a long time, haven't you?

Capt. Hagberd (Eager). Yes, my dear. (Slily) Of course you saw me come back.

Bessie. Oh, yes. I did see you. You had something under your coat.

Capt. H. (Anxiously). It was only a kettle, my dear. A tin water-kettle. I am glad I thought of it just in time. (Winks, nods.) When a husband gets back from his work he needs a lot of water for a wash. See? (Dignified.) Not that Harry'll ever need to do a hand's turn after he comes home... (Falters--casts stealthy glances on all sides)... tomorrow.

Bessie (Looks up, grave). Captain Hagberd, have you ever thought that perhaps your son will not. . .

Capt. H. (Paternally). I've thought of everything, my dear--of everything a reasonable young couple may need for housekeeping. Why, I can hardly turn about in my room up there, the house is that full. (Rubs his hands with satisfaction.) For my son Harry--when he comes home. One day more.

Bessie (Flattering). Oh, you are a great one for bargains. (Captain Hagberd delighted.) But, Captain Hagberd--if--if--you don't know what may happen--if all that home you've got together were to be wasted--for nothing--after all. (Aside.) Oh, I can't bring it out.

Capt. H. (Agitated; flings arms up, stamps feet; stuttering). What? What d'ye mean? What's going to happen to the things?

Bessie (Soothing). Nothing! Nothing! Dust--or moth--you know. Damp, perhaps. You never let anyone into the house . . .

Capt. H. Dust! Damp! (Has a throaty, gurgling laugh.) I light the fires and dust the things myself. (Indignant.) Let anyone into the house, indeed! What would Harry say! (Walks up and down his garden hastily with tosses, jings, and jerks of his whole body.)

Bessie (With authority.) Now, then, Captain Hagberd! You know I won't put up with your tantrums. (Shakes finger at him.)

Capt. H. (Subdued, but still sulky, with his back to her). You want to see the things. That's what you're after. Well, no, not even you. Not till Harry has had his first look.

Bessie. Oh, no! I don't. (Relenting.) Not till you're willing. (Smiles at Capt. H., who has turned half round already!) You mustn't excite yourself. (Knits.)

Capt. H. (Condescending). And you the only sensible girl for miles and miles around. Can't you trust me? I am a domestic man. Always was, my dear. I hated the sea. People don't know what they let their boys into when they send them to sea. As soon make convicts of them at once. What sort of life is it? Most of your time you don't know what's going on at home. (Insinuating.) There's nothing anywhere on earth as good as a home, my dear. (Pause.) With a good husband...

Carvil (Heard from his seat fragmentarily). There they go... jabber, jabber... mumble, mumble. (With a groaning effort?) Helpless!

Capt. H. (Mutters). Extravagant ham and eggs fellow. (Louder.) Of course it isn't as if he had a son to make a home ready for. Girls are different, my dear. They don't run away, my dear, my dear. (Agitated.)

Bessie (Drops her arms wearily). No, Captain Hagberd--they don't.

Capt. H. (Slowly). I wouldn't let my own flesh and blood go to sea. Not I.

Bessie. And the boy ran away.

Capt. H. (A little vacantly). Yes, my only son Harry. (Rouses himself.) Coming home to-morrow.

Bessie (Speaks softly). Sometimes, Captain Hagberd, a hope turns out false.

Capt. H. (Uneasy). What's that got to do with Harry's coming back?

Bessie. It's good to hope for something. But suppose now----- (Feeling her way.) Yours is not the only lost son that's never...

Capt. H. Never what! You don't believe he's drowned. (Crouches, glaring and grasping the rails.)

Bessie (Frightened, drops knitting). Captain Hagberd--don't. (Catches hold of his shoulders over the railings?) Don't--my God! He's going out of his mind! (Cries.) I didn't mean it! I don't know.

Capt. H. (Has backed away. An affected burst of laughter). What nonsense. None of us Hagberds belonged to the sea. All farmers for hundreds of years, (fraternal and cunning?) Don't alarm yourself, my dear. The sea can't get us. Look at me! I didn't get drowned. Moreover, Harry ain't a sailor at all. And if he isn't a sailor, he's bound to come back--to-morrow.

Bessie (Has been facing him; murmurs). No. I give it up. He scares me. (Aloud, sharply.) Then I would give up that advertising in the papers.

Capt. H. (Surprised and puzzled). Why, my dear? Everybody does it. His poor mother and I have been advertising for years and years. But she was an impatient woman. She died.

Bessie. If your son's coming, as--as you say--what's the good of that expense? You had better spend that half-crown on yourself. I believe you don't eat enough.

Capt. H. (Confused). But it's the right thing to do. Look at the Sunday papers. Missing relatives on top page--all proper. (Looks unhappy.)

Bessie (Tartly). Ah, well! I declare I don't know what you live on.

Capt. H. Are you getting impatient, my dear? Don't get impatient--like my poor wife. If she'd only been patient she'd be here. Waiting. Only one day more. (Pleadingly.) Don't be impatient, my dear.

Bessie. I've no patience with you sometimes.

Capt. H. (Flash of lucidity). Why? What's the matter? (Sympathetic.) You're tired out, my dear, that's what it is.

Bessie. Yes, I am. Day after day. (Stands listless, arms hanging down.)

Capt. H. (Timidly). House dull?

Bessie (Apathetic). Yes.

Capt. H. (As before). H'm. Wash, cook, scrub. Hey?

Bessie (As before). Yes.

Capt. H. (Pointing stealthily at the sleeping Carvil). Heavy?

Bessie. (In a dead voice). Like a millstone.

(A silence.)

Capt. H. (Burst of indignation). Why don't that extravagant fellow get you a servant?

Bessie. I don't know.

Capt. H. (Cheerily). Wait till Harry comes home. He'll get you one.

Bessie (Almost hysterical; laughs). Why, Captain Hagberd, perhaps your son won't even want to look at me--when he comes home.

Capt. H. (In a great voice). What! (Quite low.) The boy wouldn't dare. (Rising choleric.) Wouldn't dare to refuse the only sensible girl for miles around. That stubborn jackanapes refuse to marry a girl like you! (Walks about in a fury.) You trust me, my dear, my dear, my dear. I'll make him. I'll--I'll ----- (Splutters.) Cut him off with a shilling.

Bessie. Hush! (Severe.) You mustn't talk like that. What's this? More of your tantrums?

Capt. H. (Quite humble). No, no--this isn't my tantrums--when I don't feel quite well in my head. Only I can't stand this... I've grown as fond of you as if you'd been the wife of my Harry already.

And to be told----- (Can't restrain himself; shouts.)

Jackanapes!

Bessie. Sh-----! Don't you worry! (Wearily.)

I must give that up too, I suppose. (Aloud.) I didn't mean it, Captain Hagberd.

Capt. H. It's as if I were to have two children to-morrow. My son Harry--and the only sensible girl----- . Why, my dear, I couldn't get on without you. We two are reasonable together. The rest of the people in this town are crazy. The way they stare at you. And the grins--they're all on the grin. It makes me dislike to go out. (Bewildered.) It seems as if there was something wrong about--somewhere. My

dear, is there anything wrong--you who are sensible.. .

Bessie (Soothingly tender). No, no, Captain Hagberd. There is nothing wrong about you anywhere.

Carvil (Lying back). Bessie! (Sits up.) Get my hat, Bessie.... Bessie, my hat.... Bessie.... Bessie. ...

(At the first sound Bessie picks up and puts away her knitting. She walks towards him, picks up hat, puts it on his head).

Bessie, my... (Hat on head; shouting stops.) Bessie. (Quietly). Will you go in, now? Carvil. Help me up. Steady. I'm dizzy. It's the thundery weather. An autumn thunderstorm means a bad gale. Very fierce--and sudden. There will be shipwrecks to-night on our coast.

(Exit Bessie and Carvil through door of their cottage. It has fallen dusk.)

Capt. H. (Picks up spade). Extravagant fellow! And all this town is mad--perfectly mad. I found them out years ago. Thank God they don't come this way staring and grinning. I can't bear them. I'll never go again into that High Street. (Agitated.) Never, never, never. Won't need to after to-morrow. Never! (Flings down spade in passion.)

(While Hagberd speaks, the bow window of the Carvils is lit up, and Bessie is seen settling her father in a big armchair. Pulls down blind. Enter Lamplighter. Capt. H. picks up the spade and leans forward on it with both hands; very still, watching him light the lamp.)

Lamplighter (Jocular). There! You will be able to dig by lamplight if the fancy takes you.

(Exit Lamplighter to back.)

Capt. H. (Disgusted). Ough! The people here. . . (Shudders.)

Lamplighter's Voice (Heard loudly beyond the cottages). Yes, that's the way.

(Enter Harry from back.)