

Peter's Dream

A Fantasy

by

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<http://offthewallplays.com>



Peter's Dream

Characters in order of Appearance

Aunt Maggie

Messenger

Blenkinsop

Nanny

Marmaduke

Slug

Mocker

Sniffer

Jenny

Peter

Old Man

Woodland Nymphs (Dancers)

Nick Swede

Ma Cook

Pa Cook

Barman

Bar Customer 1

Bar Customer 2

Bar Customers (2)

Drunkard

Angel

Stubbins

Note: Jenny and Angel should be played by the same actor

Peter's Dream

The play takes place near Hollows Glen, a fictitious place in rural England

Era: 18th Century

The actors should be dressed in costume of the period.

The characters' descriptions are introduced within the script.

Production Notes:

This play lends itself to simple staging, using rostra at different levels. The use of mobile black or decorative flats can be used to suggest scene changes. The tunnel scene is perhaps the most challenging. The author has included suggestions for scenery at the beginning of each scene.

Suggested Doubling in the cast:

Messenger/Drunkard
Bar Customer/Stubbins
Pa Cook/ Bar Customer

Act One

Scene 1: Aunt Maggie's Cottage

The stage is empty except for a simple armchair.

The lights come up on Maggie, who is sitting in the armchair with her embroidery, and the messenger who stands L of her. Maggie is stout and in her late sixties. She wears a full blue dress of the era and simple shoes. The messenger is young, dressed in a black tail coated suit, a white shirt, red cravat and black shoes..

Messenger: Begging your pardon Ma'am (*he clears his throat before embarking on his well rehearsed announcement*) I have been requested to deliver a message (*breaking off from formality*) in the form of a letter Ma'am (*returning*) from the Honourable Mr. Sydney Blenkinsop of Blenkinsop & Blenkinsop, Lawyers and Public Notaries (*breaking off*) The message Ma'am.

He hands the letter to Maggie

Maggie: Thank you young man. Whatever can it be about?

Messenger: I'm unable to assist you ma'am since the letter has been sealed.

Maggie: (*smiling*) Then we shall have to break the seal, won't we?

Messenger: Indeed you must.

Maggie reads letter

Blenkinsop appears far left in spot.

Blenkinsop: Dear Madam, due to the lack of funds in your late brother's trust account, we are unable to discharge the monthly rental on the cottage. As you are aware there have been suggestions that your brother had bequeathed to you a substantial sum of money, but to date we can find no evidence of such bequest. I regret having to be the bearer of such sad tidings. Yours faithfully, Blenkinsop, Blenkinsop and Blenkinsop, Solicitors and Notaries Public.

Spot off Blenkinsop

Maggie drops the letter in her lap

Maggie: I don't believe it. Surely it can't be true?

Nanny enters R

Nanny: Maggie? Oh there you are. *(she notices Messenger and observes that Maggie is upset)* Whatever is the matter Maggie?

Maggie: Oh Nanny, I have just received such bad news. *(she hands her the letter)*

Nanny is about to read it and addresses Messenger

Nanny: Thank you young man, you may go.

Messenger: *(well rehearsed and formal)* On behalf of my employer I must ask the recipient of the letter whether there will be a reply, Ma'am.

Nanny: *(approaching him)* Have you not seen the lady's reaction?

Messenger: *(uneasily)* I beg your pardon Ma'am, I....

Nanny: *(interrupting)* Well?

Messenger: She does appear to be a mite upset.

Nanny: *(becoming annoyed)* She's distraught, don't you think?

Messenger: *(backing away)* Oh indeed, it would appear so, as you say Ma'am.

Nanny: Well you convey this to your employer *(grabbing his ear, which makes the messenger cry out and squirm)* Show him your reddened ear and tell him that there'll be a flea in his before the week is out. Do you hear?

Messenger: *(in pain)* Most painfully clear Ma'am!

Nanny: Good *(letting go of his ear)* Off with you before I really lose my temper!

Messenger: *(backing away)* Thank you Ma'am. Er... good day to you both.

He scampers off R

Nanny: pompous little puppy!

Maggie: Oh Nanny, what will become of us?

Nanny peruses letter

Nanny: It's obviously a mistake. In any case I always assumed the cottage was paid for.

Maggie: No Nanny, if only it was. You see, when my brother, Peter's father, was away overseas there was money owing on the cottage and somehow Marmaduke bought it and leased it to myself.

Nanny: Then you needn't worry, Mr. Marmaduke is bound to help you, I'm sure. He wouldn't dream of evicting you.

Maggie: Oh Nanny, I hope you're right.

Nanny: Of course I am my dear. We'll arrange to see him as soon as possible.

She comforts Maggie

Lights Down

Scene 2: Marmaduke's House

The stage is empty

The lights come up on Marmaduke entering R followed by a scurrying Blenkinsop who carries a letter.

Marmaduke turns and snatches the letter from him.

Marmaduke quickly reads the contents

Marmaduke: Good, most efficient of you Blenkinsop.

Marmaduke hands Blenkinsop the letter.

Blenkinsop: Thank you Mr. Marmaduke. Of course, I envisage no problems and I shall continue to support you in the matter.

Marmaduke: (*sarcastically*) And being one of your most important clients Blenkinsop....

Blenkinsop: (*quickly and humbly*) Oh indeed Mr. Marmaduke, without any doubt.

Marmaduke: Is there evidence anywhere of my brother's fortune, be it small or even miniscule?

Blenkinsop: Oh no sir, not a shred of evidence.

Marmaduke: (*aggressively*) If you so much as find a morsel of evidence be sure to inform me, d'you hear?

Blenkinsop: Oh sir, you may rest assured

Marmaduke: (*smiling wickedly and sardonically*) You must appreciate Blenkinsop, I need to protect my family's interests at all costs. (*he chuckles*) It is my duty you understand.

Blenkinsop: Blood is thicker than water Mr. Marmaduke.

Marmaduke: (*smiling*) Indeed (*thoughtfully*) Although there may be some spilt (*suddenly assertively*) Thank you Blenkinsop, you may go. Keep in touch.

Blenkinsop: Indeed I shall sir. I shall continue to serve you dutifully.

Marmaduke: (*dismissively*) Yes, yes. Good day.

Blenkinsop: Good day to you sir.

He backs away and exits R

Marmaduke: Cretinous lizard! (*Calling off L*)

Slug! Mocker! Sniffer! Your presence, immediately!

They enter noisily. They are a scruffy bunch. Slug wears a shirt which was once white, a torn red jacket, patched baggy trousers and boots. His hair is unkempt and sticks out at the sides. Mocker wears a green jacket too large for him, under which he has a dirty cotton undershirt. He wears old trousers patched at the knees, and boots. He is balding and what hair is left hangs down to his shoulders. Sniffer wears a tired white shirt, which is frilled at the neck and cuffs, black waistcoat which is daubed with crusted dribbled food. He also wears white close fitting trousers which are baggy at the knees and dirty black shoes. His hair is gelled close to his head.

Marmaduke: You're like a pack of wild boar! Look at the state of you all. (*they look at each other and themselves up and down*) I don't know why I employ you.

Mocker: Cos we're cheap that's why!

Marmaduke throws him a stern look

Sniffer: Excuse me Mr. (*sniff*) Marmaduke, but did you call us here to (*sniff*) insult us.

Marmaduke: Huh, that wouldn't be difficult, would it? Just be quite and listen, I have a job for you.

Mocker: A job eh?

Slug: Is it a big job?

Sniffer: (*Aside to audience*) I smell (*sniff*) a devious job.

Marmaduke: Come with me and I shall explain (*he crosses L*) which no doubt I shall have to repeat a number of times.

He exits followed by Mocker and Slug. Sniffer remains momentarily and gives another aside to the audience.

Sniffer: *(to audience)* I think *(sniff)* I might be right.

Marmaduke: *(off)* Sniffer!

Sniffer offers a weak smile to the audience and scampers off L

Lights Down

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Scene 3 – A hilltop overlooking Hollow Glen and the distant countryside.

The stage is bare.

Lights come up on Peter and Jenny, who are looking out front, a little distance apart. Both characters are in their early teens and well dressed in day clothes of the era. We hear the sound of birds singing and the light is bright

Jenny: Oh it's so beautiful up here.

Peter: Isn't it. I imagine owning all the land as far as the eye can see. If I did, I'd make sure it remained as it is today, completely unspoiled.

Jenny: King of Hollows Glen!

Peter: *(laughs)* Yes, indeed.

Jenny: And I could be your Queen, a royal couple perhaps.

Peter: *(slightly embarrassed)* Yes, well. *(he takes a deep breath)* The air is so good. My father used to say that nothing could beat the fresh salty air of an ocean and the warm fragrance of Hollow's Glen.

Jenny: You must still miss him.

Peter: *(quietly)* Yes, especially at times like this.

Jenny: He was certainly a brave man. Some say he was a gentle giant.

Peter: Yes he was so tall. He was a great sailor too of course, yet the sea took him away from us. When I'm here on my own, sometimes I can hear him calling. Of course, it's just the wind.

There is a sudden gust of moaning wind.

Jenny: *(rubbing her arms)* I think we ought to be going, Peter. It's becoming chilly.

Peter: Yes, I think rain will soon follow.

There is another gust of wind, yet the moaning increases.

They make to exit R when the Old Man enters L He is wearing a dusty dark suit and shuffles across the stage with the aid of a silver topped walking cane.

Old Man: *(with a raised voice)* I say young man, aren't you Tarrant's boy?

Jenny and Peter stop and turn to the Old Man.

Peter: Who is it that wants to know?

The Old man approaches them and studies Peter.

Old Man: Yes, I see the resemblance; you are Captain Tarrant's son.

Peter: Who are you sir?

Old Man: I suppose you could call me a sort of guardian, but I have never been instructed to care for you.

Peter: Well you are certainly not my legal guardian. *(feeling unsure)* Are you?

Old Man: Did I hear you say you've heard your father calling you?

Peter: Were you listening to our conversation sir?

Old Man: *(ignoring him)* The wind plays some clever tricks doesn't it?

Peter: If anything, I think it stirs the imagination.

Jenny: Peter, I think we should be making our way home.

Old Man: You should listen more often to the wind my boy.

Peter: What could the wind possibly tell me?

Old Man: It often provides information. Listen!

Pause while Peter and Jenny look about them while listening.

Peter: I'm sorry, I didn't hear a thing. Did you Jenny?

Jenny: No. Peter, come, we must go.

Old Man: Go if you must my dear, or stay and listen to what I have to stay.

Jenny: And what is that old man?

Old Man: Well to be honest, not a great deal to you my dear on this occasion, but to Peter I say you must consider and follow your dreams.

Peter: Follow my dreams?

Old Man: Indeed, yes, when you next dream young man, take heed of the events and the messages it provides.

Peter: Events, messages? What are you talking about?

Old Man: I envisage you being on some kind of journey.

Peter: Journey?

Old Man: Dear me, you ask so many questions. Yes, a journey is what I see, a quest perhaps.

Peter: Forgive me, but you are not making sense old man.

Jenny: Don't listen to him. He's probably had too much to drink.

Old Man: (*chuckling*) Oh, I wish I had my dear! (*to Peter*) Listen to me dear boy, I can assure you all will be revealed in some form that is. Remember what I've said (*he takes a fob watch from his pocket and checks it*) Oh dear, I must go before the sun sleeps.

He shuffles to exit L

Peter: (*calling*) What do you mean? What will be revealed?

The Old Man stops and turns to them.

Old Man: Just follow your dream, my boy. Follow your dream.

He exits L

Peter: (*approaching exit L*) Explain yourself sir, please! Come back! (*turning to Jenny*) He's gone.

Jenny: Yes, thank goodness. (*aping the Old Man*) All will be revealed, follow your dream. (*back to self*) What poppycock!

Peter crosses to C deep in thought and looks out front

Peter: What does he mean?

Jenny: Peter, surely you don't believe all that mumbo jumbo?

Peter: It's all very strange. *(He is still lost in thought)*

Jenny: Well, if you are going to stay here and wonder about the stirrings of an old demented mind, I'll see you some other time when you have time for me.

Peter: *(breaking off)* Jenny, I am sorry. Perhaps you're right.

Jenny: Perhaps?

Peter: I mean, yes. It was mumbo jumbo, but it was odd that he knew me.

Jenny: Oh Peter don't be so gullible. He had obviously heard of you, that's all. Perhaps he did know your father after all he was well known in the neighbourhood. Please, I'm becoming quite cold.

Peter: Yes, it's time to go. *(He smiles)* Last one to the bottom of the hill buys the lemonade.

He runs off R

Jenny: *(calling after him)* Peter Tarrant, that's not fair *(she runs after him wailing, mockingly)* All will be revealed! Follow your dream!

Lights down as the wind moans

Scene 4: Aunt Maggie's Cottage

The stage is empty apart from a stool, which is LC.

Lights come up on Maggie entering R carrying a laundry basket.

Maggie: Peter's late. Where can he be?

She sits on the stool and sorts clothes in the basket.

Slug, Mocker and Sniffer enter furtively L. They draw close to her, shuffling for position as it is clear none of them wishes to address her. Slug is pushed forward by the others.

Slug: Are you Mrs. Tarrant?

Maggie is startled, making the three men jump.

Mocker: Maggie Tarrant?

Maggie: Yes?

Sniffer: *(sniff)* The tenant of this cottage? *(sniff)*

Maggie: Yes I am. *(impatiently)* What is it you want?

Slug: We've been sent 'ere.

Mocker: As messengers.

Sniffer: *(sniff)* As bearers of tidings *(sniff)*

He nudges Slug.

Read the notice, Slug. *(sniff)*

Slug: What? Oh yes.

He pulls out from his pocket a large wallet, which he carefully opens and peers inside. Sniffer and Mocker watch his actions very closely. He continues to peer inside like a horse dipping into its feed bag. He pulls out a piece of paper which is dwarfed by the size of the wallet. He stares at the paper and primes himself into announcing the contents. He frowns and stares closely at it. He turns to the others.

Slug: I can't read.

Mocker snatches the paper

Mocker: I'll do the honours! (*reading*) I Marmaduke Saint John Silas (*he giggles*) I didn't know Saint John was one of his names.

Sniffer: Sinjun you twerp! (*sniff*) that's 'ow you pronounce it! (*snatches paper*) Give it 'ere!

Mocker: (*giggling*) Sinjun, what a name! (*he continues giggling*)

Sniffer: Slug?

Slug: Yer?

Sniffer: Hit him will yer!

Slug goes to hit him, but Mocker stops giggling and hides behind Maggie.

Maggie: (*to Mocker*) What are you doing? Keep away from me. (*she slaps him and Mocker moves away, pouting*) Perhaps I should read it. (*she holds out her hand*)

Sniffer (*abruptly*) No, yer can't. (*sniff*) Now then, I Marmaduke St. John Silas (*Mocker giggles and Slug shoves him*) 'ereby gives you notice to vacate (*sniff*)

Slug: That means leave.

Sniffer: Stop interruptin'. Now where was I (*sniff*) Oh yes, to vacate Cherry Cottage within (*sniff*) seven days...

Maggie: (*interrupting*) What? Vacate this cottage? Are you sure that notice is from Marmaduke himself?

Sniffer: (*sniff*) Course it is, we said so didn't we?

Mocker: Out within seven days, lock, stock and barrel.

Slug: Does it say that? About a barrel, I mean? (*looking round*) 'Cos I can't see one.

Sniffer: Oh, shut up Slug!

Maggie: But he's asking me to leave!

Sniffer: It's an order ma'am, that's what it is. *(sniff)*

Maggie: But I'm his sister!

Mocker: It don't seem to matter to 'im do it now?

Slug: I didn't get on well with my brother either.

Mocker: What's that got to do with anything?

Slug: I was just making an obser, er...

Sniffer: Observation?

Slug: Yes, that's right.

Sniffer: Well don't!

Maggie: *(suddenly angry)* Now you just listen to me! *(Mocker is startled by her retort and grabs Slug for support, who pushes him away)* You can tell your Mr. Marmaduke St. John Silas that he has not heard the last of this! I shall not be leaving! Now get out of my house!

The men back away

Slug: Don't forget ma'am, seven days.

Maggie: *(approaching them)* Off with you! Go back to your scheming master, d'yer hear? Go on! Get out!

The men jostle each other as they scamper off

Maggie breaks down in tears and crosses to the stool and sits, sobbing.

Peter enters R

Peter: Aunt Maggie, whatever is the matter? *(he hurries to comfort her)*

Maggie: Oh Peter my dear, whatever are we going to do?

Peter: *(helping her to her feet)* Come inside Aunt and tell me all about it.

Maggie: I don't know what is to become of us.

Peter helps her to exit R

Lights down and up on Marmaduke in a spot L

Marmaduke: *(laughs)* The deed is done! Within the grounds of the cottage I shall find my late brother's fortune. I shall dig for gold. That's the sort of thing the fool of a captain would have done, buried it. *(breaking off and calling off L)* Slug! Where are you man?

He walks out of spot L and the Lights go down

Scene 5: Peter's bedroom

There is a single bed and a bedside table at C

Peter is sitting up in bed. Nanny enters L carrying a lamp and crosses to bedside table

Nanny: *(placing lamp on table)* Still awake young Peter? Young men need their sleep.

Peter: I can't sleep Nanny, I've so much on my mind.

Nanny: Yes my dear, such a terrible business. *(she fusses with the bedclothes, tucking and smoothing)* However, your aunt is a strong woman and I am sure the awful business will be resolved. We're off to see Mr. Blenkinsop tomorrow. I'm certain he will put matters right. In the meantime it's a good night's sleep for you young man. What happened today has gone forever. What happens tomorrow is more important.

Peter: If my father had properly provided for Aunt Maggie and myself we wouldn't be in this position.

Nanny: It all seems very strange, he was certainly a rich man and a fortune I was sure he had alright, but we shall have to rely on the help Mr. Blenkinsop.

Peter: Yes Nanny, it seems we shall have to. Do you often dream Nanny?

Nanny: *(laughs)* Well that's a completely new topic for discussion, I must say.

Peter: Well, do you?

Nanny: I've no time for dreaming. Work and sleep have always been my lot.

Nanny: Do you believe in dreams Nanny?

Nanny: *(scoffs)* What? No, dreams are stuff and nonsense. It's human enough to think on them but never to follow them. Don't waste time with idle dreams Peter, make things happen.

Peter: How would you do that?

Nanny: Questions, questions. Look I'm just an old woman who talks too much. Get some sleep now.

He lies down and Nanny tucks him in

Peter: Don't you think I'm getting older now for fussing over?

Nanny: You are never too old for that my dear boy.

Peter: Oh, I do hope things turn out well for us.

Nanny: You have to be brave. Even if you're not, pretend to be. That way no one can tell the difference.

Peter settles for the night

Peter: G'night Nanny.

Nanny: Good night Peter

She dims the lamp and exits L

The main lights dim and a soft green light slowly pervades the scene.

Music: 'Adagio for Strings' by Samuel Barber accompanies the dancing of the woodland nymphs as they enter R and L and make full use of the stage before two of them cross to the bed and assist the dreaming Peter out of it. He rubs his eyes and is transfixed by the sight. The two dancers draw him towards the other dancers one of whom hands him a paper scroll. The dancers beckon him L and eventually they exit with Peter following.

The music fades as the lights go down

Scene 6: Hollows Glen

The stage is bare. It is dawn. There is the sound of birds singing – the dawn chorus and as such, and in order to capture the dreamlike atmosphere, the lighting creates a rosy effect.

Peter enters R in his day clothes. He carries the scroll.

Peter: (calling) Aunt Maggie? Nanny? (he rubs his eyes and quickly surveys the area) Hollows Glen! How did I get here? I...I must be dreaming, yet I'm dressed in my day clothes. (He looks at the scroll) Whatever can this be? (he unrolls it) It's a map! How strange.

Nick: (off R) Stand and deliver!

Peter is startled and turns towards the call. He places scroll in his jacket pocket.

Peter: Who is it? Who's there?

Nick enters boldly. He is tall, in his late teens and dressed as a highwayman. He points a pistol at Peter.

Nick: Keep your hands high!

Peter does so

Now then, your money or you life!

Peter: I haven't any money.

He quickly drops his hands and pulls out his trouser pockets

Nick: I said keep your hands high!

Peter does so.

Peter: You can see that my pockets are empty. You really are wasting your time, I have nothing.

Nick: You look well heeled.

Peter: I have only the clothes I stand in and I don't think they would fit you.

Nick: Not even a cufflink?

Peter: I'm afraid not.

Nick (*lowering pistol*) Another wasted exercise.

Peter lowers his arms

Peter: Who are you?

Nick: Nick Swede, Highwayman (*he bows flamboyantly*)

Peter: Doesn't a highwayman usually have a horse?

Nick: Indeed. That's a problem I have, my horse ran away. I think it was due to extreme embarrassment or boredom. We didn't have much work and since he's left it's been very difficult to hold up stagecoaches without him. It's very dangerous too.

Peter: I can imagine, but, stagecoaches? I don't think many have come this way for years, not since the opening of the new trunk road.

Nick: (*shaking his head*) I have seen a few.

Peter: Nick Swede? With respect, I've never heard of you.

Nick: I'm not surprised. The trouble is I haven't robbed anyone. I'm the only highwayman the authorities put up unwanted signs for.

Peter: So what will you do?

Nick: I haven't the faintest idea. I've waited for stagecoaches to break down, but the few that have come this way have had no cause to. I've attempted to hold up pedestrians but the only people who wander about in these parts are the penniless. I make a poor living giving directions to passers-by.

Peter: In that case you could help me. (*taking the map from his pocket*) I have somehow been given this map.

Nick: You said you had nothing!

Peter: Well a map's not worth much.

Nick: It is if it's a treasure map.

Peter: Well I very much doubt that!

Nick: (*sardonically*) You are a breathe of fresh air, I must say.

Peter: (*perusing it*) It consists of a set of directions, that's all.

Nick: I suppose there's no harm in having a look. I've plenty of time. I am enriched with time. I have time on my hands!

Peter: If it is a treasure map and we find a fortune I shall buy you a horse.

Nick: That's jolly decent of you.

Peter: That's the chance you take.

Nick: (*offering hand*) We've struck a bargain then (*they shake hands*) Let's have a look at that map. (*Peter crosses to him and shows him the map*). Not very well prepared is it? (*pointing*) According to the key we are here. The symbols appear so vague.

Peter: What's this? It's a sort of message.

Nick: *(reading)* The recipe reveals all. This is definitely not a treasure map, unless of course you treasure cooking instructions. *(he moves away R)* No, I can't see any fortune in that

Peter: But I must follow the directions, *(quietly)* I suppose I must follow my dream.

Nick: Did you say dream? *(scoffing)* A complete fantasy I'd say. *(he thinks and suddenly turns to Peter)* But I did make a bargain with you and my word is my bond *(aside)* Now I know why I am useless as a highwayman. I'm too honest! *(to Peter)* You never know, we might find the recipe for success!

They laugh briefly and shake hands vigorously.

Nick: Upon my old nag's head, I know nothing of you!

Peter: I beg your pardon?

Nick: Your name young sir!

Peter: Oh, er, Peter Tarrant.

Nick: Well Peter Tarrant we must begin our search. According to the first direction *(pointing L)* we head this way.

Peter: Are you sure?

Nick: Absolutely! Come on.

They exit L perusing the map.

Peter: *(off)* Are you certain?

Nick: *(off)* Let me see. Oops, no, oh dear my mistake!

They re-enter and cross R

Peter: I hope you're correct this time.

Nick *(aside)* I'll never make a navigator either! *(to Peter)* I apologise, it's the vagueness of the symbols which confused me.

He slaps Peter on the back and they exit R

Lights down and a spot on Marmaduke L, looking R

He carries a telescope and places it to an eye

Marmaduke: What are those two doing on my land? Poachers, cattle thieves perhaps? Oh no, just two wretched young men; oh, decently dressed too. Ah, they're on the road now. Well boil my breeches, one of 'em's my pest of a nephew, Peter! *(He lowers telescope)*

I wonder what they're up to. I'll have my boys keep a watchful eye on the pair of them and if necessary make life as unpleasant as possible *(calling off as he exits L)* Slug! Mocker! Sniffer!

Spot off, Lights stay down

Scene 7: On the Road

The stage is bare

Lights up as Peter and Nick enter R

Nick: It's at a time like this that one badly needs a horse.

Peter: *(perusing map)* We have walked for miles and yet we have seen nothing apart from the vast countryside and this endless road.

Nick: Whoever drew that map had no idea of distance.

Peter: *(he looks at map and then into the distance L)* I do believe we've found the first landmark. *(pointing L)* D'you see that steep hill ahead?

Nick: Yes, I have an unfortunate feeling that we shall be climbing it soon.

Peter: Isn't that a house at the top?

Nick: Indeed it is.

Peter: Come on, evening is nigh.

Nick: Oh I wish I hadn't seen it

Nick wearily follows Peter and they exit L

There is a short pause

Sniffer: *(off R)* Hurry up you two!

Sniffer enters R followed by Slug and Mocker panting heavily. Slug wears a battered tri cornered hat. The others are hatless.

Slug: *(fighting for breath)* You and your shortcuts Mocker.

Mocker: Well it is a short cut.

Sniffer: *(sniff)* Trouble is, we didn't ask him what it was a short cut to.

Mocker: Sniffer's right, you didn't.

Slug: Well, tell us then.

Mocker: Er... I'm not sure.

Slug: Idiot! *(He takes off his hat and smites him)*

Sniffer: *(sniff)* Oaf!

Mocker: Praise will get you nowhere, you know.

Slug: Have you seen them?

Mocker: Who?

Sniffer: The boys!

Mocker: Not since Slug broke the master's telescope.

Sniffer: *(sniff)* Slug, I wouldn't want to be in your shoes when he finds out.

Slug: I wouldn't want you in my shoes, your feet stink! *(crossing L)*
Come on we're wasting time.

Sniff pushes Mocker after Slug and they exit L.

Lights down

Scene 8: Ma and Pa Cook's Kitchen

The stage is simply set with a wooden armchair C and a rustic wooden table LC.

The lights come up on Pa Cook who is sitting in the wooden armchair. He is hard of hearing. He wears a fawn thick shirt which laces at the neck and old brown breeches and boots. He is reading a newspaper of the period.

Ma Cook enters R. She wears a long checkered dress with puffed sleeves and white apron. On her head is a mop cap. She carries a bowl of mixture which she stirs on the move. She crosses to the table where she places the bowl and continues stirring.

Ma: This place is a pickle.

Pa: *(from behind newspaper)* What?

Ma: I said it's a pickle!

Pa: *(lowering paper)* Er, no thanks I haven't long ago had something to eat. Mind you there's nothing like 'am and pickle.

Ma: No! I saidoh what's the point you big pudding!

Pa: *(looking out front ecstatically)* Oo nice!

Ma: What?

Pa: Pudding, especially meat pudding with lashings of thick gravy.

Ma: At times you make my stomach turnover.

Pa: *(turning to her)* Oh yes, 'specially apple.

Ma: Apple what?

Pa: *(looking out front and licking his lips)* Turnover! *(he returns his gaze to her)* Hot apple turnover! I can taste it now.

Ma picks up bowl and crosses to exit R with bowl.

Ma: (*shaking her head*) I don't know. I really don't.

Pa: Where yer going?

Ma: (*stopping and turning to him at exit R*) To bake a cake.

Pa: (*returning to paper*) Paint the rake? I did that yesterday, silly woman.

Ma: I said I'm baking a (*sighs heavily*), oh never mind.

She quickly exits

Pa: (*lowering paper and looking out front*) She was standing right next to me when I painted it. (*He shakes his head*) I don't know. (*He resumes reading the paper*)

Knock at the door is heard off L. No response. There is another knock, but there is no response.

Peter: (*calling off L*) Hello!

Nick: (*calling off L*) Is there anyone at home?

No response. There is an even louder hammering at the door.

Ma enters R in a hurry. Pa lowers his paper

Ma: What a commotion! Hark at that!

Pa: 'aven't seen it!

Ma: What?

Ma and Pa (*together as Ma anticipates his reply*) The cat!

Ma shakes her head.

Ma: I'd better answer the door.

She exits L in a hurry

He resumes reading.

Ma enters L followed by Peter and Nick. Pa continues to read, oblivious to what is happening.

Ma: You both look exhausted. Would you like a drink?

Nick: Yes please, just bring in the pump.

Ma: The pump?

Peter: Yes we crave some water, please Mrs. er...

Ma: Cook. People in these parts call me Ma Cook. I'll go and get you a drink.

She hurries off L

Peter: People in these parts did she say? Well they're thin on the ground I must say.

Nick notices Pa.

Nick: *(crossing to him)* Good day sir, it must be a good article you are reading.

Pa lowers paper and looks aghast at Nick. He jumps out of his chair and backs away slightly. He raises his hands above his head.

Pa: A highwayman! *(calling)* Ma we're being robbed!

Nick: *(amused by the situation, he raises an arm and points a finger at Pa)* Your money or your life? *(he lowers his arm)*

Pa: Yes I have a wife, but we haven't got much. We are simple bakers, Cooks the Bakers.

Peter: Cooks?

Pa: Books? I have ledgers. I'll get them if you like, but I swear they won't show much of a profit.

Peter: No, please. *(realising Pa's affliction, he crosses to him. He raises his voice a little)* Please sit down. We haven't come to rob you.

Pa reluctantly does so.

Nick: We just want a drink.

Pa: (*aside*) Stink? Must be Ma's cooking.

Ma enters with mugs.

Ma: Sorry to keep you, had trouble with the pump. Have you been talking to Pa? He can't hear very well, poor man. It was as a result of his being tortured.

She hands the mugs to Peter and Nick. Pa resumes reading

Peter: Did you say tortured? By whom?

Astounded, Pa lowers paper

Pa: A room? First they want money, then (*pointing to Nick*) he says the place stinks and now they want a room!

Ma: Oh, hold your tongue Pa!

Pa shakes his head and resumes reading.

Ma: It was a few years ago. We couldn't pay our rent 'cos times were bad. Anyway, the landlord and his men took Pa away – they said it was difficult to find a new tenant, especially a baker. They said they were going to teach him a lesson, to make sure he never missed payment of the rent again. They tied him to one of the rafters in the church bell tower. The bells blasted his ears! (*she sobs a little and dries her eyes on her apron*) He still has nightmares about it.

Peter: How terrible.

Ma: (*vehemently*) Marmaduke St. John Silas has a great deal to answer for I can tell you!

Peter: Marmaduke?

Pa jumps out of chair.

Pa: Marmaduke did yer say? Where? (*He cringes behind chair*) Don't let him touch me!

Nick: The poor man. (*Nick crosses to him and leads him back to the chair*) It alright, there's nothing to fear.

Ma: You know the man? If you can all him a man that is.

Peter: Alas yes. He's my uncle.

Ma: What? (*Suddenly enraged*) Then you just get out of my house young man. No manner of person or beast belonging to that man.....

Pa: (*jumping out of chair*) What's the matter Ma?

Peter: No please, Mrs. Cook, listen. He's my uncle in name only. I abhor his actions and he has also caused me great sorrow.

Ma: Who are you then?

Peter: I'm Peter Tarrant.

Ma: (*amazed*) Tarrant? Mercy, you're not Captain Tarrant's son are you?

Peter: Yes, I am.

Ma: Pa, the lad belongs to Tarrant!

Pa: Currant?

Ma: No pa, Tarrant!

Pa: Did you say Tarrant?

She nods vigorously

Pa stands to attention and salutes.

Pa: Reporting, Captain Tarrant! (*He then peers at Pete*) He's got younger, 'aint he?

Ma: He's Tarrant's son you fool!

Pa: Oh, he's the Cap'n's boy. (*He shakes Peter by the hand*) I'm honoured to be in your presence young sir.

Ma: Pa was your father's bosun for years before he took to baking as a living.

Pa: A great man, Cap'n Tarrant. *(He gestures to Nick)* He wouldn't like you being in the company of a highwayman though.

Peter: You have nothing to fear sir. I am not outside the law.

Nick: It's a long story, Pa.

Ma: Now young sirs, I have work to do, but I am happy to prepare you some food if you would like it.

Peter: No, that's very kind of you.

Nick: *(aside)* I wish he would speak for himself, I'm famished!

Peter: We would appreciate your help with this map. *(He takes out map)*

Peter spreads the map on the table and Ma and Nick cross to it. Ma motions Pa to the chair. He sits and watches.

Peter: On this map which has led us to your house, there's mention of a recipe would you believe.

Ma: Recipe? *(she scoffs)* I've many a recipe young man. Cakes, pies you name them *(sudden realization)* A recipe! Well I'll be a currant in a bun! What a coincidence, I'm sure.

Pa smiles and returns to his paper

Peter: What is it?

Ma: Well, you being the Cap'n's son I mean. You see, just before the Cap'n went on his last voyage he gave me a small package. This is a recipe for success, he said. I want you to look after it until I return. D'yer know, I've still got it and never had cause to open the package; I respected him that much you see.

Nick: *(aside)* The plot, or the gravy thickens.

Peter: Do you think I could see it?

Ma: Well, since you're his son I'll go and find it.

She exits R

Peter: It's amazing. It does seem like a dream.

Nick: That's the second time you've mentioned a dream, why?

Peter: No matter.

Pa: *(turning to him just as Ma returns with the package)* Did you say batter? We've plenty of that if you're hungry. Ma makes a lovely batter pudding, melts in your mouth, it does.

Ma: Is he still rambling on? *(handing package to Peter)* Here it is.

Peter: Thank you, I have to open it.

Ma: Of course, you've every right to do so young sir.

Peter opens the package which is tied with string.

Peter: Its-it's another map!

Ma: A map? That wouldn't be much good for a recipe.

Nick crosses to him and looks at the map over Peter's shoulder.

Peter: I can't understand the directions.

Nick: Oh no. We have to go back down the hill and across more fields.

Peter: There are some symbols at the bottom and a piece of writing. 'More will be revealed at the Flying Angel'.

Nick: That's the 'Flying Angel' Inn.

Peter: Jenny's parents own the Flying Angel!

Nick: And a very useful place it is too. Who's Jenny?

Peter: A good friend. If you don't mind Ma, we must be on our way.

Ma: You are welcome to stay for lunch if you wish.

Nick: That's very kind of you Ma!

Peter: No, we must get to our next destination as soon as possible.

Nick looks at Peter and shakes his head

Ma: It's been a pleasure meeting you and I wish both of you good luck.

Pa jumps to his feet and salutes

Pa: Farewell Cap'n Tarrant Junior! Will you be takin' the boat ashore?

Peter: I'm afraid not (*adopting a Captain's stance*) At ease bosun!

Pa: Aye, aye sir!

The actors freeze.

Lights down.

Scene 9: Ma and Pa Cook's Kitchen – Later the same day

The stage is dressed the same as in the previous scene.

Off L there is loud hammering on the door.

The lights come up on Ma Cook hurrying on R and crossing L

Ma: Who is it this time?

She exits L

Enter Slug, Mocker and Sniffer followed by Ma Cook. They cross to C

Ma: What d'yer think you're doing, bursting in like this?

Slug: (*pacing the room*) Where are they then?

Ma: What do you want of us? Haven't you caused enough pain and suffering?

Momentarily the men stop and think

Slug)
Mocker) (together) No!
Sniffer)

Ma: Then what do you want?

Slug: We're looking for the young 'uns.

Mocker: Up to no good they are.

Sniffer: (*sniff*) Troublemakers, the pair of 'em! (*sniff*)

Mocker: We reckon they came this way and called on you for a chat.

Sniffer: (*exasperated*) Not a chat you fool! (*sniff*) (*to Ma*) They probably wanted some help from you or advice.

Ma: What help could we give anyone?

Sniffer: That's what we intend to find out. (*sniff*)

Slug draws a knife from his belt and crosses to her furtively.

Slug: Where's your old man?

Sniffer: Pa Cook (*sniff*)

Ma: You leave him alone!

Sniffer: Slug, go and get him. Drag `im here if necessary.

Slug crosses to exit R.

Ma: No, wait!

Slug returns to her and places the knife at her throat.

Slug: Well?

Ma: Alright, the lads were here.

Slug withdraws and gives a wicked laugh

Slug: Now we're getting somewhere.

Ma: They've gone!

Mocker: Where?

Ma: I'm not sure!

Sniffer: (*approaching her*) I think you are Ma (*sniff*)

Slug: Don't mess with us Ma, where are they?

Mocker also approaches her wielding a knife.

Ma: (*beside herself*) They've gone to the Flying Angel!

Sniffer: They'll be flying when we get hold of `em, eh boys.

They laugh wickedly

Mocker: If they can of course.

Slug and Sniffer look at each other in amazement.

Sniffer: What are you on about Mocker?

Mocker: Them, flying, you know, they might not be able to.

Sniffer: I wonder about you sometimes Mocker! (*to Ma*) If we don't find them there Ma, we'll be paying you a visit again. (*sniff*)

Slug, go and tell the guv'nor where they are. We'll meet you both at the inn. (*sniff*)

Slug: I suppose I have to.

Sniffer: (*sniff*) Yes, you do and be quick about it.

Slug: I'm going 'aint I!

Slug exits L

Sniffer: (*to Ma*) I hope for your sake we won't be back. Come on Mocker!

Sniffer and Mocker cross L and exit.

Ma collapses in the armchair

Pa enters R wearing a vest and long underpants

Pa: What have you done with me new breeches Ma?

Ma: (*wearily*) Oh, they're in the sink!

Pa: What! Earlier I'm told the house stinks now it's me breeches that stink!

Lights down quickly

End of Act One

Act Two

Scene 1: The bar at 'The Flying Angel'

The stage is set with a small bar UCL. There are bottles and mugs on bar. There is a small table and a chair DR, a larger table and four chairs LC and a small table and a chair UCR.

The lights come up on the Barman behind the bar drying tankards with a cloth. Four locals sit at the larger table enjoying their drinks from mugs and tankards. At the single table DR is an inebriated customer, the Drunkard who is slouched over the table and clutching a mug. The customers are wearing the dress of the peasantry of the era, including the Drunkard. The Barman wears a white shirt, laced at the neck and dark trousers, draped with a leather apron.

Customer I: *(calling to Barman)* Same again Joe!

Barman: Well, you can come and get them. I ain't your servant!

Customer 1: Ain't you the barman?

Barman: Yes and behind the bar I stay!

The customers groan and Customers I and 2 get up from the table with mugs and tankards and cross to the bar.

Barman: You seem to have a bit of a thirst today lads.

Customer 2: We'll have a bigger one if we keep 'avin' to get up for our drinks.

Customer 1 and other customers' chuckle.

Drunkard: *(sitting up and holding aloft his mug)* I'll drink to that!

He takes a swig from his mug, belches and slumps in chair. The other customers laugh.

Barman: You won't be drinking to anything any more my friend, you've had enough!

The Drunkard waves his mug in the air in inebriated recognition.

The customers titter and mutter and Customers 1 and 2 return to their seats with the drinks.

Customer 1: *(raising his tankard)* Here's for warm days and calm nights!

Customer 1 and others in unison: Warm days and calm nights!

Peter and Nick enter UR

The customers nudge each other and watch their entrance in silence.

Peter and Nick cross to the bar

Barman: Evening lads. Can I get you anything?

The customers mutter to each other as they look on with interest.

Peter: I wish to speak to Jenny or her parents.

Barman: Jenny did you say?

Peter: You must know her, Jenny Parry.

Barman: Are you sure you've come to the right place?

Peter: This is the 'Flying Angel' isn't it, although I'm surprised at its interior, I expected it be more fashionable.

Barman: Well, did you now Mister Lardidar.

Customer 2: There's nothin' wrong with this place. It suits us to drink here.

The other customers voice their agreement.

Drunkard sits up and offers a toast.

Drunkard: We all drink to that! *(he slumps back in chair)*

Nick: *(quietly to Peter)* Be careful what you say, we don't want any trouble.

Peter: I apologise gentlemen (*to Barman*) and to you sir. I do not wish to appear rude... I gained a different impression of the inn when last I came here, from the outside that is.

Customer 1: You 'aven't been drinking have yer?

The other customers laugh.

Nick: No we haven't, more's the pity.

Customer 2: (*loudly to Customer 1*) He looks like a highwayman dressed in that garb, don't 'e? Better warn 'im there's a gibbet up the road.

They both chuckle

Nick: I can assure you I am not. (*aside*) Good lord, I've never noticed the gibbet before. Suddenly a cold shudder's run down my spine.

Barman: Who did you say you wanted?

Peter: Jenny Parry. Surely you know her, her parents own the inn.

Barman: (*smiling broadly*) What? Anyone 'eard of Jenny Parry?

Customer 1: Who?

Peter: Jenny Parry.

Customer 2: (*to others on the table*) Did he say Jenny Parry?

All customers in unison: Aye!

Customer 1: Oh, that Jenny Parry!

Peter: She's here then?

All Customers: (*together*) Never 'eard of 'er!

They laugh raucously

Barman: (*smiling broadly*) Never mind them young sir. They enjoy a laugh, 'specially if it's at someone else's expense.

Angel enters UL. She looks the image of Jenny, but she is older and more sophisticated. She is well dressed.

Peter notices her.

Peter: Jenny!

Customers laugh again.

Angel: Who're you calling Jenny?

Peter: But you ... you look like her. Older perhaps and more, well... I mean. (*quickly*) You must know me!

Customer 2: Watch it Angel, don't be taken in by 'is charm.

The Customers laugh

Angel: I don't know who Jenny is. As you heard, Angel is my name.

Nick: That's a nice touch, being named after the inn.

Barman: Nah! It was named after her. Our Angel was a trapeze artist in a travelling show, wasn't yer love? She made her fortune and purchased this establishment.

Angel: I must say you look familiar, but why did you call me Jenny?

Peter: You look exactly like my friend. The likeness is uncanny.

Angel: Pretty as me is she?

Peter: She is, but as I implied, younger looking.

Nick: You certainly know how to compliment a lady, don't you?

The Customers chuckle.

Angel: (*to Customers*) Right you can mind your business now lads.

The Customers begin to enter into their own conversation. The barman resumes his cleaning duties.

Angel: *(to Peter and Nick)* Well you don't seem to need a drink, so what is it you want?

Nick: Well I wouldn't mind. I'll have...

Peter: *(interrupting and quickly producing the map)* We would like some help with this. It has directed us to your inn, but we're not sure where we go from here.

Peter hands the map to her, which Angel peruses and moves slowly DR

Angel: *(suddenly looking up)* Where did you get this?

Nick: It's a very long story. *(aside)* There I've said it again.

Angel: *(concerned)* You'd better start telling it and fast. *(holding out map)* There's an inscription. I recognize the handwriting.

They cross to her

Peter: You do? Would it happen to be Captain Tarrant's handwriting?

Angel: *(looking up at him)* Captain Tarrant? *(perusing the map again)* Why yes it looks like it! *(demandingly)* Who are you?

The Customers and the Barman regain their interest.

Peter: I'm Peter Tarrant, his son.

The bar becomes silent. The Drunkard stirs and peers about the bar as if the silence has awoken him.

Angel: Are you trying to tell me your father was Captain Joseph Tarrant?

Peter: Yes. Sadly he died at sea, not so long ago.

Angel turns away and lowers her head

Angel: I had no idea he had passed away.

She sniffs and dabs at her eyes with a handkerchief.

Peter: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to upset you.

