

**Peter**

*(oblivious)*

What harbour shelters peace  
Away from tidal waves,  
Away from storms!  
What harbour can embrace  
Terrors and tragedies?  
Her breast is harbour too -  
Where night is turned to day.

**Balstrode**

*(approaching Peter)*

*Come on, I'll help you with the boat now.*

**Ellen**

No.

**Balstrode**

Sail out till you lose sight of land, then sink the  
boat.

D'you hear: sink her.

Good-bye, Peter.

*Together, they push the boat down to the water as the orchestra begins to play for the first time in this scene. Balstrode returns and waves good-bye. Ellen sobs quietly, and he comforts her, and leads her home. It is dawn. A candle is lit in a window. A shutter is drawn back. Hobson and the posse meet on the green by the Moot Hall. They gossip, shake their heads, indicating the hopelessness of their search. They extinguish their lanterns. Some head home, other to their boats. WOMEN bring nets down from the houses to the boats. Others open their front doors and scrub the steps. Dr. CRABBE appears with his black bag, yawning. The Rector goes into the church for early morning prayer. Mrs. Sedley follows him. Keene opens the shutters of his shop. Swallow approaches the fishermen.*

**Chorus**

To those who pass, the Boro' sounds betray  
The cold beginning of another day,  
And houses sleeping by the waterside  
Wake to the measured  
ripple of the tide...

**Swallow**

There's a boat sinking out at sea,  
Coastguard reports.

**Fishermen**

Within reach?

**Swallow**

No.

*The Fishermen and Swallow go to the beach and peer out at the water. One of them has a glass. The Nieces emerge and polish the brasses outside The Boar.*

**Chorus**

Or measured cadence of the lads who tow  
Some entered hoy to fix her in her row,  
Or hollow sound that from the passing bell  
To some departed spirit bids farewell.

**Auntie**

What is it?

**Boles**

Nothing I can see.

**Auntie**

One of these rumours.

**Chorus**

*(as the CURTAIN slowly FALLS)*

In ceaseless motion comes and goes the tide.  
Flowing, it fills the channel broad and wide,  
Then to sea with strong, majestic sweep  
It rolls in back ebb, yet terrible and deep.

**PETER GRIMES****Libretto****by Montague Slater**

## PROLOGUE

*Interior of the Moot House, arranged as for a coroner's inquest. The coroner, Mr Swallow, is at a table on the dais, with the clerk at a table below. A crowd of townspeople in the body of the hall is held back by Hobson acting as constable. Mr Swallow is the leading lawyer of the Borough, and at the same time its mayor and coroner. A man of unexceptionable career and talents, he nevertheless disturbs the burgesses by his air of a man with an arriere pens.*

### Hobson

Peter Grimes! Peter Grimes! Peter Grimes!  
(*Peter Grimes steps forward from among the crowd.*)

### Swallow

Peter Grimes, we are here to investigate the cause of death of your apprentice William Spode, whose body you brought ashore from your boat, The Boy Billy, on the 26th ultimo. Do you wish to give evidence?

(*Peter nods.*)

Will you step into the box. Peter Grimes. Take the oath. After me. "I swear by Almighty God."

### Peter

"I swear by Almighty God."

### Swallow

"That the evidence I shall give."

### Peter

"That the evidence I shall give."

### Swallow

"Shall be the truth."

### Peter

"Shall be the truth."

### Swallow

"The whole truth and nothing but the truth."

### Peter

"The whole truth and nothing but the truth."

### Swallow

Tell the court the story in your own words.

(*Peter is silent.*)

You sailed your boat round the coast with the intention of putting in to London. Why did you do this?

### Peter

We'd caught a huge catch, too big to sell here.

### Swallow

And the boy died on the way?

### Peter

The wind turned against us, blew us off our course. We ran out of drinking water.

### Swallow

How long were you at sea?

### Peter

Three days.

### Swallow

What happened next?

### Peter

He died lying there among the fish.

### Swallow

What did you do?

### Peter

Threw them all overboard, set sail for home.

### Swallow

You mean you threw the fish overboard?...When you landed did you call for help?

### Peter

I called Ned Keene.

### Swallow

The apothecary here?  
(*indicates Ned*)

Was there anybody else called?

### Peter

Somebody brought the parson.

## ACT THREE

### Scene 2

*Scene as in Scene One, some hours later. The dance is over, the Borough is out hunting. Peter alone by his boat under a cloud-swept moon. In this distance a fog horn sounds, and we hear shouting even more distant, but which gradually moves closer as the scene progresses.*

### Voices

Peter Gri-imes - Peter Gri-imes!  
Grimes!

### Peter

Steady. There you are. Nearly home.  
What is home? Calm as deep water.  
Where's my home? Deep in calm water.  
Water will drink my sorrows dry  
And the tide will turn.

### Voices

Grimes!

### Peter

Steady. There you are. Nearly home.  
The first one died, just died...  
The other slipped, and died...  
And the third will...  
"Accidental circumstances"...  
Water will drink his sorrows, my sorrows dry  
And the tide will turn.

### Voices

Grimes, Peter Grimes

### Peter

Peter Grimes. Here you are. Here I am.  
Hurry, hurry, hurry, hurry.  
Now is gossip put on trial.  
Bring the branding iron, and knife.  
What's done now is done for life...  
Come on! Land me!  
Turn the skies back and begin again.

### Voices

Peter Grimes.

### Peter

Old Joe has gone fishing and  
Young Joe has gone fishing and  
You'll know who's gone fishing when  
You land the next shoal.

### Voices

Grimes.

### Peter

Ellen, Ellen. Give me your hand, your hand.  
There now - my hope is held by you,  
If you leave me alone,  
If you take away your hand,  
The argument's finished,  
The friendship's lost,  
Gossip is shouting,  
Everything's said.

### Voices

Peter Grimes.

### Peter

To hell with all your mercy.

### Voices

Peter Grimes, Peter Grimes.

### Peter

To hell with your revenge.  
And God have mercy upon you.

### Voices

Peter Grimes, Peter Grimes.

### Peter

Do you hear them all shouting my name,  
D'you hear them? D'you hear them?

Old Davy Jones shall answer  
Come home, come home.

### Voices

(*much nearer*)  
Peter Grimes.

### Peter

Peter Grimes! Peter Grimes!  
Ellen and Balstrode enter and watch. Ellen approaches Peter.

### Ellen

(*as Peter ignores her*)  
Peter, we've come to take you home.  
O come home out of this dreadful night.  
See, here's Balstrode. Peter, don't you hear me?

**Mrs Sedley**

Look! It's Grimes's boat, back at last.

**Swallow**

That's different. Hey.

*(shouts into The Boar)*

Is Hobson there? Is Hobson there?

**Mrs Sedley**

Good, now things are moving. And about time too.

**Hobson**

Ay, ay, sir. Ay, ay, sir.

**Swallow**

You're constable of the Borough,

Carter Hobson.

**Hobson**

Ay, ay, sir.

**Swallow**

As the mayor

I ask you to find Peter Grimes.

Take whatever help you need.

**Hobson**

Now what I claims

Is he's out at sea.

**Swallow**

But here's his boat.

**Hobson**

Oh! We'll send a posse to his hut.

**Swallow**

If he's not there, you'll search the shore,

The marsh, the fields, the streets, the Borough.

**Hobson**

Ay, ay, sir.

**Mrs Sedley**

Crime - that's my hobby - is

By cities hoarded.

Rarely are country minds

Lifted to murder,

The noblest of my crimes

Which are my study.

And now the crime is here,

And I am ready.

**Hobson**

*(calling into The Boar)*

Hey there! Hey! Come out and help! Grimes is

around. Hey! Hey there! Come on!

*Boles emerges with other fishermen. The news*

*reaches the Moot Hall, and people start crowding*

*the beach.*

**Chorus**

Who holds himself apart

Lets his pride rise.

Him who despises us

We'll destroy,

And cruelty becomes

His enterprise.

Him who despises us

We'll destroy.

*Nieces, Mrs Sedley, Boles, Keene, Swallow, and*

*Hobson join in.*

Our curse shall fall on his evil day. We shall

Tame his arrogance -

Ha, ha, ha! We'll make the murderer pay, we'll make

him pay -

Peter Grimes! Grimes! him pay, him pay, for his

crime!

*They scatter in all directions, still shouting.*

**CURTAIN.****Swallow**

You mean the rector, Mr Horace Adams?

*(The Rector steps forward. Swallow waves him back.)*

All right, Mr Adams.

*(He turns back to Peter.)*

Was there a certain amount of excitement?

**Peter**

Bob Boles started shouting.

**Swallow**

There was a scene in the village street from which

you were rescued by our landlady?

**Peter**

Yes. By Auntie.

**Swallow**

We don't call her that here....You then took to abuse the respectable lady.

*(Peter glares.)*

Answer me....You shouted abuse at a certain person?

*Mrs Sedley pushes forward. Mrs Sedley is the widow*

*of a retired factor of the East India Company and is*

*known locally as 'Mrs Nabob'. She is 65, self-*

*assertive, inquisitive, unpopular.*

**Mrs Sedley**

Say who! Say who!! Say who!

**Swallow**

Mrs Sedley here.

**Peter**

*(fiercely)*

I don't like interferers.

*A slight hubub among the spectators resolves itself*

*into a chorus which is more like the confused*

*muttering of a crowd than something fully articulate.*

**Chorus**

When women gossip the result

Is someone doesn't sleep at night.

**Hobson**

*(shouting)*

Silence!

**Swallow**

Now tell me this. Who helped you carry the boy

home? The schoolmistress, the widow, Mrs Ellen Orford?

**Women's Chorus**

O when you pray, you shut your eyes

And then can't tell the truth from lies.

**Hobson**

*(shouts)*

Silence!

**Swallow**

Mrs Orford, as the schoolmistress, the widow, how

did you come into this?

**Ellen**

I did what I could to help.

**Swallow**

Why should you help this kind of fellow - brutal, callous, and coarse?

*(to Grimes)*

There's something here perhaps in your favour. I

am told you rescued the boy from drowning in the

March storms.

*(Peter is silent.)*

Have you something else to say?

No? - Then I have.

Peter Grimes. I here advise you - do not get another

boy apprentice. Get a fisherman to help you - big

enough to stand up for himself. Our verdict is - that

William Spode, your apprentice, died in accidental

circumstances. But that's the kind of thing people

are apt to remember.

**Chorus**

But when the crowner sits upon it

Who can dare to fix the guilt?

**Hobson**

*(shouts)*

Silence! Silence!

*Peter has stepped forward and is trying to speak.*

**Peter**

Your honour! Like every other fisherman I have to

hire an apprentice. I must have help -

**Swallow**

Then get a woman to help you look after him.

**Peter**

That's what I want - but not yet -

**Swallow**

Why not?

**Peter**

Not till I've stopped people's mouths.  
(*The hubub begins again.*)

**Swallow**

(*makes a gesture of dismissal*)

Stand down! Clear the court.

Clear the court!

**Peter**

(*shouting excitedly against the hubub chorus*)

Stand down you say. You wash your hands.

The case goes on in people's minds

The charges that no court has made

Will be shouted at my head.

Then let me speak, let me stand trial,

Bring the accusers to the hall.

O let me thrust into their mouths,

The truth itself, the simple truth.

The truth itself!

**Chorus**

When women gossip, the result

Is someone doesn't sleep at night,

But when the crowner sits upon it,

Who can dare to fix the guilt?

**Swallow**

Clear the court.

*Swallow rises with slow dignity. EVERYBODY stands up while he makes his ceremonial exit. The crowd begins to go out. Peter and Ellen are left alone.*

**Peter**

The truth - the pity - and the truth.

**Ellen**

Peter, Peter, come away!

**Peter**

Where the walls themselves

Gossip of inquest.

**Ellen**

But we'll gossip, too,

And talk and rest.

**Peter**

While Peeping Toms

Nod as you go.

You'll share the name

Of outlaw, too.

**Ellen**

Peter, we shall restore your name.

Warmed by the new esteem

That you will find.

**Peter**

Until the Borough hate

Poisons your mind

**Ellen**

There'll be new shoals to catch:

Life will be kind.

**Peter**

Ay! only of drowning ghosts:

O, Time will not forget:

The dead are witness

And Fate is Blind.

**Ellen**

Unclouded,

The hot sun

Will spread his rays around

Your voice out of the pain,

Is like a hand

That I can feel, that I can feel

Here is a friend

Here is a friend.

*They walk off slowly as the CURTAIN FALLS.*

**Ellen**

My 'broidered anchor on the chest.

Embroidery in childhood was

A luxury of idleness.

A coil of silken thread giving

Dreams of a silk and satin life.

Now my 'broidery affords

The clue whose meaning we avoid.

My hand remembered its old skill -

These stitches tell a curious tale.

I remember I was brooding

On the fantasies of children

And dreamt that only by wishing I

Could bring some silk into their lives.

Now my 'broidery affords the clue,

Now my 'broidery affords,

Now my 'broidery affords

The clue whose meaning we avoid.

**Balstrode**

We'll find him, maybe give a hand.

**Ellen**

We have no power to help him now.

We have no power.

**Balstrode**

We have the power. We have the power.

In the black moment

When your friend suffers

Unearthly torment

We cannot turn our backs.

When horror breaks one heart

All hearts are broken. All are broken.

**Ellen**

We shall be there with him.

**Balstrode**

We shall be there with him.

Nothing to do but wait

Since the solution

Is beyond life - beyond

Dissolution.

*The EXIT. Mrs Sedley crosses to The Boar.*

**Mrs Sedley**

(*calling through the door*)

Mr Swallow, Mr Swallow.

I want the lawyer Swallow.

**Auntie**

What do you want?

**Mrs Sedley**

I want the lawyer Swallow.

**Auntie**

He's busy.

**Mrs Sedley**

Fetch him please, this is official

Business about the Boro' criminal.

please do as I tell you!

**Auntie**

My customers come here for peace, for quiet

Away from you and from all such nuisances.

**Mrs Sedley**

This is an insult.

**Auntie**

You will find

So long as I am here I always speak my mind.

**Mrs Sedley**

I'll have you know your place, You baggage!

**Auntie**

My customers come here,

They take their drink, they take their ease!

**Swallow**

(*emerging from The Boar*)

Hi. What's the matter.

Tell me. What's the matter.

What is it? What is it?

What's all this noise about?

**Auntie**

Good night!

(*disappears into the pub with bang of the door*)

**Mrs Sedley**

(*points dramatically*)

Look!

**Swallow**

I'm short-

Sighted you know.

**Keene**

Are you mad, old woman  
Or is it too much laudanum?

**Mrs Sedley**

Has Peter Grimes been seen?

**Keene**

He's away.

**Mrs Sedley**

And the boy?

**Keene**

They're fishing likely.

**Mrs Sedley**

Has his boat been seen?

**Keene**

Why should it?

**Mrs Sedley**

His hut's abandoned.

**Keene**

I'm dry. Good night.

*The dancing in the Moot Hall stops again. Keene breaks away from Mrs Sedley, goes into The Boar. Dr. CRABBE, the Rector, and other burgesses come down the Moot Hall stairs. Mrs Sedley retreats into the shadow of the boats. A hornpipe starts in the Moot Hall.*

**Burgess**

Come along, doctor -  
We're not wanted here, we oldsters.

**Burgesses**

Good night - it's time for bed.  
Good night! Good night! Good night, good sirs,  
good night!  
Good night! Good night! Good night, good people,  
good night!

**Rector**

I looked in a moment, the company's gay,  
With pretty young women and youths on the spree  
All parched like my roses, but now the sun's down.  
I'll water my roses and leave you the wine.

**Burgesses**

Good night! Good night! Good night, good people,  
good night!

**Rector**

Good night, Dr. Crabbe, all good friends goodnight.  
Don't let the ladies keep company too late.  
Don't let the ladies keep company too late.  
My love to the maidens, wish luck to the men.  
I'll water my roses and leave you the wine.  
(*he exits*)

**Burgesses**

Good night! Good night! Good night, good people,  
good night!

**Mrs Sedley**

(*still hiding*)  
Crime, which my hobby is  
Sweetens my thinking,  
men who can breach the peace  
And kill convention -  
So many guilty ghosts  
With stealthy bodies  
Trouble my midnight thoughts....

*Ellen and Balstrode walk up slowly from the beach, solemnly preoccupied. Balstrode shines his lamp on the nearest boat, The Boy Billy. They do not see Mrs Sedley.*

**Ellen**

Is the boat in?

**Balstrode**

Yes! For more than an hour.  
Peter seems to have disappeared.  
Not in his boat, not in his hut.

**Ellen**

(*holding out JOHN's jersey*)  
This I found  
Down by the tide-mark.

**Balstrode**

The boy's?

**ACT ONE****Scene 1**

*Street by the sea: Mote Hall exterior with its outside staircase, next door to which is The Boar. ned Keene's apothecary shop is at the street corner. On the other side, breakwaters run down to the sea. It is morning, before high tide, several days later. Two fishermen are turning the capstan, hauling in their boat. Prolonged cries as the boat is hauled ashore. Women come from mending nets to take the fish baskets from other fishermen who now disembark. Captain Balstrode sits on the breakwater looking out to sea through his glass. Balstrode is a retired merchant sea captain, shrewd as a travelled man should be, but with a general sympathy that makes him the favourite rentier of the whole Borough. He chews a plug of tobacco while he watches.*

**Chorus of fishermen and women**

Oh hang at the open doors net, the cork  
While squalid sea-dames at their mending work  
Welcome the hour when fishing through the tide  
The weary husband throws his freight aside.

**Fishermen**

O cold and wet and driven by the tide  
Beat your tired arms against your tarry side.  
Find rest in public bars where fiery gin  
Will aid the warmth that languishes within.

Several fishermen cross to The Boar where Auntie stands in the doorway.

**Fisherman**

Auntie!

**Auntie**

Come in gentlemen, come in.

**Boles**

(standing aside from all the drinkers)  
Her vats flow with poisoned gin.

**Balstrode**

(*points and laughs*)  
Boles has gone Methody.

**Auntie**

A man should have  
Hobbies to cheer his private life.

*Fishermen go into The Boar. Others remain with their wives at the nets and boats.*

**Chorus**

Dabbling on the shore half-naked sea-boys crowd  
Swim round a ship, or swing upon a shroud:  
Or in a boat purloined with paddles play  
And grow familiar with the watery way.

*While the second boat is being hauled in, boys are scrambling over the first.*

**Balstrode**

Shoo you little barnacles  
Up your anchors, hoist sails.

*Balstrode chases them from the boat. A more respectable figure now begins, with much hat-raising, his morning progress down the High Street. He makes straight for The Boar.*

**Fisherman**

(*touches cap*)  
Dr Crabbe.

**Boles**

(*points as the swinging door closes*)  
He drinks 'Good Health' to all diseases.

**Fisherman**

Storm?

**Second Fisherman**

Storm?

They shade their eyes, looking out to sea.

**Balstrode**

(*glass to his eye*)  
A long way out. Sea horses.  
The wind is holding back the tide.  
If it veers round, watch for your lives.

**Chorus of Fishermen**

And if the Spring tide eats the land again  
Till even the cottages and cobbled walks of fishermen  
Are billets for the thieving waves which take  
As if in sleep, thieving for thieving's sake -

*The Rector comes down the High Street. He is followed, as always, by the Borough's second most famous rentier, the widow, Mrs (Nabob) Sedley. From The Boar come the two 'Nieces' who give Auntie her nickname. They stand in front of the pub, taking the morning sun. Ned Keene, seeing Mrs Sedley, pops out of his show door.*

**Rector**

*(right and left)*

Good morning, good morning.

**Nieces**

Good morning

**Mrs Sedley**

Good morning, good morning, dear Rector.

**Ned**

Had Auntie no nieces we'd never respect her.

**Swallow**

Good morning! Good morning!

**Nieces**

Good morning!

**Mrs Sedley**

Good morning, your worship, Mr Swallow.

**Auntie**

*(to Keene)*

You jeer, but if they wink you're eager to follow.

*The Rector and Mrs Sedley continue towards the church.*

**Chorus**

For us sea-dwellers, this sea-birth can be  
Death to our gardens of fertility.  
Yet only such contemptuous spring tide can  
Tickle the virile impotence of man.

**Ned**

*(shouts across to Auntie)*

I'm coming tonight to see your nieces.

**Auntie**

*(dignified)*

The Boar is at its patron's service.

**Boles**

God's storm will drown your hot desires!

**Balstrode**

God stay the tide, or I shall share your fears.

**Peter**

*(calls off)*

Hi. Give us a hand.

*(Chorus stops.)*

Haul the boat!

**Boles**

*(shouts back)*

Haul it yourself, Grimes.

**Peter**

*(off)*

Hi! Somebody bring the rope.

*Nobody does. Presently, Peter appears and takes the capstan rope himself and pulls it after him (off) to the boat. Then he returns. The Fishermen and WOMEN turn their backs on him and slouch away awkwardly.*

**Balstrode**

*(going to capstan)*

I'll give a hand. The tide is near the turn.

**Keene**

*(also going to capstan)*

We'll drown the gossips in a tidal storm.

*Grimes goes back to the boat. Balstrode and Keene turn the capstan.*

**Auntie**

*(at the door of The Boar)*

Parsons may moralise and fools decide,  
But a good publican takes neither side.

**Balstrode**

O haul away! The tide is near the turn.

**Keene**

Man invented morals, but tides have none.

**Nieces**

O pairing's all to blame

For awkwardness and shame,

And all these manly sighs and tears

Which wouldn't be expended

If people condescended

Always to have their t...te's in threes.

**Swallow**

Assign your prettiness to me.

We'll make an absolute decree

Of quiet enjoyment which you'll bless

By sending sister somewhere else.

**Second niece**

Ned Keene is chasing me, gives me no peace.

Swallow

He went to The Boar to have a glass;

Sister and I will join him there.

If you don't want Ned you'd better stay here.

*He opens the door of The Boar for the First Niece, who hesitates.*

**First niece**

They're all watching. I must wait

Till Auntie's turned her back.

*She runs back to her sister, leaving Swallow holding the door.*

**Swallow**

Bah!

*(goes into the pub)*

*The dancing stops in the Moot Hall, followed by applause. The Nieces are climbing the steps back up to the Moot Hall when Ned Keene comes out. The Nieces fly down the steps, giggling, and hide behind a boat on shore.*

**Keene**

*(calling as he follows them)*

Ahoy! Ahoy! Ahoy!

**Mrs Sedley**

*(following Keene)*

Mr Keene! Mr Keene! Mr Keene!

Can you spare a moment?

I've something to say that's more than urgent

About Peter Grimes and that boy.

Neither of them was seen yesterday.

It's more than suspicion now, it's fact.

The boy's disappeared.

**Keene**

Do you expect me to act

Like a Bow Street runner or a constable?

**Mrs Sedley**

At least you can trouble to hear what I've got to say.

For two days I've kept my eyes open,

For two days I've said nothing;

Only watched and taken notes,

Pieced clue to clue and bit by bit,

Reconstructed all the crime.

Everything points to Peter Grimes.

He is the murderer.

**Keene**

Old woman, you're far too ready

To yell blue murder.

If people poke their noses

Into other people's business,

No! They won't get me to help them.

They'll find there's merry hell to pay.

You just tell me where's the body.

**Mrs Sedley**

In the sea the 'prentice lies

Whom nobody has seen for days.

Murder most foul it is.

Eerie I find it,

My skin's a prickly heat,

Blood cold behind it.

In midnight's loneliness

And thrilling quiet

The history I trace,

The stifling secret.

Murder most fouls it is...

Murder most foul it is,

And I'll declare.

**Rector**

There's no point certainly in staying here,  
And will the last to go please to close the door.

*Exeunt, except Balstrode, who hesitates, looks around the hut, closes the street door, then opens the cliff door, looks out, and quickly climbs down the way Peter and John went.*

**CURTAIN.****ACT THREE**

*Scene 1 Scene as in Act One, a few days later. The time is summer evening. One of the season's subscription dances is taking place in the Moot Hall, which is brightly lit and from which we can hear the band playing a polka, and the rhythm of the dancers' feet. The Boar, too, is brightly lit and as the dance goes on there will be a regular flow of men from the Moot Hall to the pub. The stage is empty when the CURTAIN RISES. Soon, a little squeal, and one of the Nieces scampers down the outside staircase of the Moot Hall, chased by Swallow. The other NIECE appears at the top of the Moot Hall steps.*

**Swallow**

Assign your prettiness to me,  
I'll seal the deed and take no fee.  
My signature, your graceful mark,  
Are witnessed by the abetting dark.

**Nieces**

Together we are safe  
As any wedded wife,  
For safety in numbers lies.  
A man is always lighter,  
His conversation's brighter  
Provided that the tete-a-tete's in threes.

**Swallow**

Assign your prettiness to me,  
I'll call it real property:  
Your sister shan't insist upon  
Her stay of execution.

**Nieces**

Save us from lonely men;  
They're like a broody hen  
With habits but with no ideas;  
They show their coloured feathers  
Provided that the tete-a-tete's in threes.

**Swallow**

I shall take steps to change her mind,  
She has first option on my love.  
If my appeal should be ignored  
I'll take it to the House of Lords.

**Boles**

*(with arms akimbo, watches their labour)*  
This lost soul of a fisherman must be  
Shunned by respectable society.

Oh let the captains hear, let the scholars learn:  
Shielding the sin, they share the people's scorn.

**Auntie**

I have my business. Let the preachers learn  
Hell may be fiery, but the pub won't burn.

**Balstrode and Keene**

The tide that floods will ebb,  
The tide, the tide will turn.

*The boat is hauled up. Grimes appears.*

**Keene**

Grimes, you won't need help from now.  
I've got a 'prentice for you.

**Balstrode**

A workhouse brat?

**Keene**

I called at the workhouse yesterday.  
All you do now is fetch the boy.  
We'll send the carter with a note.  
He'll bring your bargain on his cart.  
*(shouts)*  
Jim Hobson, we've got a job for you.

**Hobson**

*(enters)*  
Cart's full, sir. More than I can do.

**Keene**

Listen, Jim. You'll go to the workhouse  
And ask for Mr Keene his purchase.  
Bring him back to Grimes.

**Hobson**

Cart's full, sir. I have no room.

**Keene**

Hobson, you'll do what there is to be done.

*It is near enough to an argument to attract a crowd. Fishermen and WOMEN gather round. Boles takes his chance.*

**Boles**

Is this a Christian country?  
Are pauper children so enslaved  
That their bodies go for cash?

**Keene**

Hobson. Will you do your job?

*Ellen ORFORD has come in. She is a widow of about 40. Her children have died, or grown up and gone away, and in her loneliness she has become the Borough schoolmistress. A hard life has not hardened her. It has made her the more charitable.*

**Hobson**

I have to go from pub to pub  
Picking up parcels, standing about.  
My journey back is late at night.  
Mister, find some other way  
To bring your boy back.

**Chorus**

He's right. Dirty jobs!

**Hobson**

Mister, find some other way...

**Ellen**

Carter! I'll mind your passenger.

**Chorus**

What? And be Grimes's messenger?

**Ellen**

Whatever you say, I'm not ashamed.

**Chorus**

You'll be Grimes's messenger!

**Ellen**

Somebody must do the job.

**Chorus**

You!

**Ellen**

The carter goes from pub to pub  
Picking up parcels, standing about.  
The boy needs comfort late at night.  
He needs a welcome on the road.  
Coming here strange, he'll be afraid.  
I'll mind your passenger.

**Keene**

Mrs Orford is talking sense -

**Chorus**

Ellen - you're leading us a dance,  
 Fetching boys for Peter Grimes,  
 Because the Boro' is afraid  
 You who help will share the blame.

**Ellen**

Whatever you say  
 Let her among you without fault  
 Cast the first stone,  
 And let the Pharisees and Saducees  
 Give way to none.  
 But whosoever feels his pride  
 Humbled so deep  
 There is no corner he can hide  
 Even in sleep!  
 Will have no trouble to find out  
 How a poor teacher  
 Widowed and loney finds delight  
 In shouldering care.  
*(as she moves up the street)*  
 Mr. Hobson, where's your cart? I'm ready.

**Hobson**

Up here, ma'am. I can wait.

*The crowd stands round and watches. Some follow Ellen and Hobson. On the edge of the crowd are other activities.*

**Mrs Sedley**

*(whispers to Keene)*  
 Have you my pills?

**Keene**

I'm sorry, ma'am?

**Mrs Sedley**

My sleeping draught.

**Keene**

The laudanum  
 Is out of stock and being brought  
 By Mr Carrier Hobson's cart.  
 He's back tonight.

**Mrs Sedley**

Good Lord, good Lord, good Lord.

**Keene**

Meet us both in the pub, The Boar,  
 Auntie's we call it. It's quite safe.

**Mrs Sedley**

I've never been in a pub in my life.

**Keene**

You'll come?

**Mrs Sedley**

All right.

**Keene**

Tonight?

**Mrs Sedley**

All right.  
*(She moves off up the street.)*

**Keene**

If the old dear takes much more laudanum  
 She'll land herself one day in Bedlam!

**Balstrode**

*(looking seaward through his glass)*  
 Look! the storm cone!  
 The wind veers  
 In from the sea  
 At gale force.

*John doesn't move. Peter throws open the cliff-side door, then turns on John.*

Wait. You've been talking.

You and that bitch were gossiping.

What lies have you been telling?

The Borough's climbing up the hill.

To get me! To get me. Me! Me, me! O, I'm not scared

I'll send them off with a flea in their ear.

I'll show them, I'll show them. Grimes ahoy! Grimes ahoy!

**Chorus**

Or are shouted in the wind

Sweeping furious through the land.

Now confronted by the fact.

Bring the branding iron and knife.

What's done now is done for life.

Now the liars shiver for

Now, if they've cheated, we shall know.

We shall strike and strike to kill

At the slander or the sin.

Now!

**Peter**

You sit there watching me

And you're the cause of everything.

Your eyes, like his, are watching me

With an idiot's drooling gaze.

Will you move

Or must I make you dance?

Step boldly, step boldly, boldly. For

Here's the way we go to sea:

Down the cliff

To find that shoal, to find that shoal

That's boiling in the sea.

Careful, or you'll break your neck

Down the cliff-side to the deck.

*Rope in hand, Peter drives the boy towards the cliff-side door.*

I'll pitch the stuff down. Come on!

*(picking up ropes and nets)*

Now

Shut your eyes and down you go.

*The Rector knocks at the street door. Peter turns towards it, then retreats. JOHN climbs out. Pause. JOHN screams and falls out of sight. Peter runs to the cliff door, feels for his grip, then swings out after the boy. The Rector continues knocking on the street door, then opens it and pokes his head in.*

**Rector**

Peter Grimes! Peter Grimes! Nobody here?

**Swallow**

What about the other door?

*They enter the hut, open the cliff-side door, and look out. Pause.*

**Rector**

Was this a recent landslide?

**Swallow**

Yes.

**Rector**

It makes almost a precipice.  
 How deep?

**Swallow**

Say forty feet.

**Rector**

Dangerous to leave the door open.

**Keene**

He used to keep his boat down there.  
 Maybe they've both gone fishing.

**Rector**

Yet  
 His hut is reasonably kept.  
 Here's order. Here's skill.

**Swallow**

The whole affair gives Borough talk its - shall I say quietus? Here we come pell-mell, Expecting to find out we know not what, And all we find is a neat and empty hut. Gentlemen, take this to your wives: Less interference in our private lives.



## ACT TWO

### Scene 2

*Grimes's hut is an upturned boat. It is on the whole shipshape, though bare and forbidding. Ropes coiled, nets, kegs, and casks furnish the place. It is lighted by a skylight. There are two doors, one opens out onto the cliff, the other opens onto the road. John staggers into the room as if thrust from behind. Peter follows. He pulls down the boy's fishing clothes, which were neatly stacked on a shelf.*

#### Grimes

Go there! Go there! Go there!  
(*throwing sea boots down at John's feet*)  
Here's your sea boots. Take those bright  
And fancy buckles off your feet.  
There's your oilskin and sou'wester.  
Stir your pins, we must get ready.  
There's the jersey that she knitted  
With the anchor that she patterned.

*Peter throws clothes at John; they fall around him to the floor. John weeps. Peter shakes him.*

I'll tear the collar off your neck.  
Steady. Don't take fright, boy. Stop.

*Peter opens the cliff-side door, looks out.*

Look. Now's our chance.  
The whole sea is boiling. Get the nets.  
Come boy.  
They listen to money  
These Borough gossips,  
Listen to money,  
Only to money.  
I'll fish the sea dry,  
Flood the market.  
And now is our chance to get a good catch,  
Get money to choke  
Down rumour's throat.  
I will set up -  
With house and home and shop.  
I'll marry Ellen, I'll...  
I'll marry Ellen, I'll...

*Peter sees that the boy is still weeping. Gentler than before, he helps John off with his coat, and picks up the jersey.*

Coat off. Jersey on.  
My boy...we're going to sea!  
In dreams I've built myself some kindlier home,  
Warm in my heart, and in a golden calm  
Where there'll be no more fear and no more storm.  
And she will soon forget her schoolhouse ways,  
Forget the labour of those weary days,  
Wrapped round in kindness like September haze.  
The learned at their books have no more store  
Of wisdom than we'd close behind our door.  
Compared with us, the rich man would be poor.  
I've seen in stars the life that we might share:  
Seen in stars the life we'd share  
Fruit in the garden, children by the shore,  
A whitened doorstep, and a woman's care.  
And a woman's care.  
But dreaming builds what dreaming can disown.  
Dead fingers stretch themselves to tear it down.  
I hear those voices that will not be drowned,  
Calling. There is no stone  
In earth's thickness to make a home,  
That you can build with and remain alone.

*John watches Peter in fascinated horror. Peter turns on him suddenly.*

Sometimes I see that boy here in this hut.  
He's there now, I can see it, he is there  
His eyes are on me as they were that evil day.  
Stop moaning boy. Water?  
There's no more water. You had the last yesterday.  
You'll soon be home  
In harbour calm and deep.

#### Chorus

(*in the distance*)  
Now! Now!

*Peter goes to the street door, looks out.*

#### Peter

There's an odd procession here.  
Parson and Swallow growing near.

#### All

Look out for squalls  
The wind veers  
In from sea  
At gale force.  
Make your boat fast!

Shutter your windows  
And bring in all the nets  
Now the flood tide  
And sea-horses  
Will gallop across  
The eroded coast,  
Flooding, flooding  
Our seasonal fears.  
Look! The storm cone  
The wind veers.  
A high tide coming  
Will eat the land  
A tide no breakwaters can withstand  
Fasten your boats. The spring tide's here  
With a gale behind.

#### Chorus

Is there much to fear?

#### Keene

Only for the goods you're rich in:  
It won't drown your conscience,  
it might flood your kitchen.

#### Boles

(*passionately*)  
God has His ways which are not ours:  
His high tide swallows up the shores.  
Repent!

#### Keene

And keep your wife upstairs.

#### All

O Tide that waits for no man  
Spare our coasts.

*Exeunt except for Peter and Balstrode - mostly through the swinging doors of The Boar. Dr. Crabbe's hat blows away, and is rescued for him by Keene, who bows him into the pub. Finally only Peter and Balstrode are left, Peter gazing seaward, Balstrode hesitating at the pub door.*

#### Balstrode

And do you prefer the storm  
To Auntie's parlour and the rum?

#### Peter

I live alone. The habit grows.

#### Balstrode

Grimes, since you're a lonely soul  
Born to blocks and spars and ropes  
Why not try the wider sea  
With merchantman or privateer?

#### Peter

I am native, rooted here.

#### Balstrode

Rooted by what?

#### Peter

By familiar fields,  
Marsh and sand,  
Ordinary streets,  
Prevailing wind.

#### Balstrode

You'd slip these moorings if you had the mind.

#### Peter

By the shut faces  
Of the Borough clans;  
And by the kindness  
Of a casual glance.

#### Balstrode

You'll find no comfort there.  
When an urchin's quarrelsome,  
Brawling at his childish games,  
Mother stops him with a threat,  
"You'll be sold to Peter Grimes!"

#### Peter

Selling me new apprentices,  
Children taught to be ashamed  
Of the legend on their faces -  
"You've been sold to Peter Grimes!"

**Balstrode**

Then the Crowner sits to  
Hint, but not mention crimes,  
And publishes an open verdict  
Whispers about this Peter Grimes.  
Your boy was workhouse starved -  
Maybe you're not to blame he died.

**Peter**

Picture what that day was like  
That evil day.  
We strained into the wind  
Heavily laden,  
We plunged into the waves  
Shuddering challenge,  
Then the sea rose to a storm  
Over the gunwales,  
And the boy's silent reproach  
Turned to illness.  
Then home  
Among fishing nets  
Alone, alone, alone  
With a childish death!

**Balstrode**

This storm is useful. You can speak your mind  
And never mind the Borough commentary.  
There is more grandeur in a gale of wind  
To free confession, set a conscience free.

**Peter**

They listen to money,  
These Borough gossips.  
I have my visions,  
Fiery visions.  
They call me dreamer,  
They scoff at my dreams  
And my ambition.  
But I know a way  
To answer the Borough.  
I'll win them over.

**Balstrode**

With the new 'prentice?

**Peter**

We'll sail together.  
These Borough gossips  
Listen to money,  
Only to money:  
I'll fish the sea dry,  
Sell the good catches.  
That wealthy merchant  
Grimes will set up  
Household and shop;  
You will all see it!  
I'll marry Ellen.  
I'll marry Ellen.  
I'll marry Ellen!

**Balstrode**

Man - go an ask her  
Without your booty,  
She'll have you now.

**Peter**

No - not for pity!...

**Balstrode**

Then the old tragedie  
Is in store:  
New start with new 'prentice  
Just as before.

**Peter**

What Peter Grimes decides  
Is his affair.

**Balstrode**

You fool, man, fool!

*The wind has risen, Balstrode is shouting above it.  
Peter faces him angrily.*

**Peter**

Are you my conscience?

**Balstrode**

Might as well  
Try to shout the wind down as to tell  
The obvious truth.

**Peter**

Take your advice -  
Put it where your money is.

**Nieces**

From the gutter, why should we  
Trouble at their ribaldries?

**Auntie**

And shall we be ashamed because  
We comfort men from ugliness?

**All**

Do we smile or do we weep,  
Or wait quietly till they sleep?

**Auntie**

When in storm they shelter here,  
When the shelter here,  
And we smooth their fears away.

**Nieces**

We know they'll whistle their goodbyes,  
Yes, they'll whistle their goodbyes  
Next fine day, and put to sea.

**Ellen**

On the manly calendar  
We only mark heroic days.

**All**

Do we smile or do we weep,  
Or wait quietly till they sleep?

**Ellen**

They are children when they weep.  
We are mothers when we strive,  
Schooling our own hearts to keep  
The bitter treasure of their love.

**All**

Do we smile or do we weep,  
Or wait quietly till they sleep?

**CURTAIN.**

**Keene**

But thanks to flinty hearts  
Even quacks can make a profit.

**Swallow**

You planned to heal sick souls  
With bodily care.

**Nieces**

Perhaps his clothes you mended  
But you work his bones bare!

**Auntie**

You meant just to be kind  
And avert fear!

**Balstrode**

You interfering gossips, this  
Is not your business!

**Hobson**

Pity the boy!

**Ellen**

O pity those who try to bring  
A shadowed life into the sun.

**Ellen, Auntie, Balstrode**

O hard, hard hearts!

**Chorus**

Who lets us down must take the rap;  
The Borough keeps its standards up.

**All (except Ellen, Auntie, and Balstrode)**

Ha-Ha!  
Tried to be kind!  
Murder!  
Tried to be kind and to help.  
Murder!

**Rector**

Swallow - shall we go and see Grimes in his hut?

**Swallow**

Popular feeling's rising.

**Rector**

Balstrode. I'd like you to come.

**Balstrode**

I warn you. We shall waste our time.

**Rector**

I'd like your presence just the same.

**Mrs Sedley**

Little do the suspects know,  
I've the evidence. I've a clue.

**Chorus**

Now we shall find out the worst.

**Swallow**

*(indicating the Nieces)*  
No ragtail, no bobtail, if you please.

**Boles**

Back to the gutter - you keep out of this.

**Rector**

Only the men. The women stay.

**Swallow**

Carter Hobson, fetch the drum.  
Summon the Boro' to Grimes's hut.

**Chorus**

To Grimes's hut!  
To Grimes's hut!

*Swallow leads the way. Hobson sounds his drum.  
Mrs Sedley and Swallow follow. Balstrode lags  
behind. Behind them, the rest of the crowd.*

Now is gossip put on trial,  
Now the rumours either fail  
Or are shouted in the wind  
Sweeping furious through the land.  
Now the liars shiver for  
Now, if they've cheated, we shall know.  
We shall strike and strike to kill  
At the slander or the sin.  
Now the whisperers stand out  
Now confronted by the fact.  
Bring the branding iron and knife:  
What's done now is done for life.  
Now.

*Exeunt, except for Auntie, Nieces, and Ellen.*

**Balstrode**

The storm is here. O come away.

**Peter**

The storm is here and I shall stay.

*The storm is rising. Auntie comes out of The Boar to  
fasten the shutters, in front of the windows.  
Balstrode goes to help her. He looks back towards  
Peter, then goes into the pub.*

What harbour shelters peace?  
Away from tidal waves, away from storms,  
What harbour can embrace  
Terrors and tragedies?  
With her there'll be no quarrels,  
With her the mood with stay,  
Her breast is harbour too  
Where night has turned to day.

*The wind rises. Peter stands a moment, as if leaning  
against the wind.*

**CURTAIN.**

## ACT ONE

### Scene 2

*Interior of The Boar. Typical main room in a country pub. No bar. Upright settles, tables, log fire. When the curtain rises, Auntie is admitting Mrs Sedley. The gale has risen to hurricane force and Auntie holds the door with difficulty against the wind, which rattles the windows and howls in the chimney. Both women push the door closed.*

#### Auntie

Past time to close.

#### Mrs Sedley

He, he, he said half-past ten.

#### Auntie

Who?

#### Mrs Sedley

Mr Keene.

#### Auntie

Him and his women!

#### Mrs Sedley

You referring to me?

#### Auntie

Not at all, not at all.

What do you want?

#### Mrs Sedley

Room from the storm.

#### Auntie

That is the sort of weak politeness

Makes a publican lose her clients.

Keep in the corner out of sight.

*Balstrode and a Fisherman enter. They struggle with the door.*

#### Balstrode

Phew, that's a bitch of a gale all right.

#### Auntie

*(nods her head towards Mrs Sedley)*

Sh-h-h.

#### Balstrode

Sorry. I didn't see you missus.

You'll give the regulars a surprise.

#### Auntie

She's meeting Ned.

#### Balstrode

Which Ned?

#### Auntie

The quack.

He's looking after her heart attack.

#### Balstrode

Bring us a pint.

#### Auntie

It's closing time.

#### Balstrode

You fearful old female - why should you mind?

#### Auntie

The storm.

*BOB Boles and other Fishermen ENTER. The wind howls through the door and again there is difficulty in closing it.*

#### Boles

Did you hear the tide

Has broken over the Northern Road?

*Boles leaves the door open too long with disastrous consequences. A sudden gust howls through the door. The shutters of the window fly open, and a pane of glass blows in.*

#### Balstrode

*(shouts)*

Get those shutters!

#### Auntie

*(screams)*

O-o-o-o-o!

#### Balstrode

You fearful old female, why do you

Leave your windows naked?

#### Balstrode

When the Borough gossip starts

Somebody will suffer.

#### Chorus

What is it? What do you suppose?

Grimes is at his exercise.

#### Boles

*(climbing halfway up steps of Moot Hall)*

People - No. I will speak...

This thing here concerns you all.

#### Chorus

*(crowding around Boles)*

Whoever's guilty gets the rap;

The Borough keeps its standards up.

#### Balstrode

Tub-thumping.

#### Boles

This 'prentice system's

Uncivilised, uncivilised and un-Christian.

#### Balstrode

Something of the sort befits

Brats conceived outside the sheets.

#### Boles

Where's the parson in his black?

Is he here or is he not

To guide a sinful, straying flock?

#### Chorus

Where's the parson?

#### Rector

Is it my business?

#### Boles

Your business to ignore,

Growing at your door,

Evils, like your fancy flowers?

#### Chorus

Evils!

#### Rector

Calm now, tell me what it is.

*Ellen enters. She is met by Auntie, who has picked up her abandoned work-basket and its contents.*

#### Auntie

Ellen dear, see I have gathered

All your things. Come rest inside.

#### Boles and Chorus

She can tell you, Ellen Orford.

She helped him at his cruel games.

#### Rector

*(holding up his hand for silence)*

Ellen, please.

#### Ellen

What am I to do?

#### Boles and Chorus

Speak out in the name of the Lord.

#### Ellen

We planned that their lives should

Have a new start,

That I, as a friend, could

Make the plan work

By bringing comfort where

Their lives were stark.

#### Rector

You planned to be worldly-wise,

But your souls were dark.

#### Ellen

We planned this time to

Care for the boy;

To save him from danger

And hardship sore,

And mending his clothes and giving him

Regular meals.

#### Mrs Sedley

O little care you for the 'prentice

Or his welfare!

#### Boles

Call it danger, call it hardship

Or plain murder!

**Boles**

What he fears is that the Lord  
Follows with a flaming sword.

**Auntie**

You see all tho' crazy eyes.

**Keene**

Grimes is at his exercise.

**Boles**

Where's the pastor of this flock,  
Where's the guardian shepherd's hook?

**Together**

Parson, lawyer, all at prayers.

*The Benediction is spoken in church, then the  
congregation emerges.*

Now the church parade begins,  
Fresh beginning for fresh sins,  
Ogling with a pious gaze,  
Each one at his exercise.

*Dr Crabbe approaches.*

**Auntie**

Doctor!

**Keene**

Leave him out of this.

**Mrs Sedley**

What is it?

**Keene**

Private business.

**Mrs Sedley**

I heard two voices during psalms  
One was Grimes's, the other more calm.

**Boles**

While you worshipped idols there  
The Devil had his Sabbath here.

**Mrs Sedley**

Maltreating that poor boy again.

**Balstrode**

Grimes is weatherwise and skilled  
In the practice of his trade.  
Let him be, let us forget  
What slander can invent.

Chorus

What is it?

**Auntie, Keene, Boles**

What do you suppose?  
Grimes is at his exercise.

*The people, led by Swallow and another lawyer,  
continue coming out of church, two by two, and  
circulate around the village green singing their  
couplets as they reach the centre.*

**Chorus**

What is it? What do you suppose?  
Grimes is at his exercise.

**Lawyer**

Dullards build their self-esteem  
By inventing cruelties.

**Swallow**

Even so, the law restrains  
Too-impetuous exercise.

**Woman**

Fishing's a lonely trade  
Single men have much to bear.

**Nieces**

If a man's work cannot be made  
Decent, let him stay ashore.

**Chorus**

What is it? What do you suppose?  
Grimes is at his exercise.

**Rector**

My flock - oh what a weight is this  
My burden pastoral.

**Mrs Sedley**

But what a dangerous faith is this  
That gives souls equality!

**Auntie**

O-o-o-o-o!

**Balstrode**

Better strip a niece or two  
And clamp your shutters.

*The two 'Nieces' run in. They are young, pretty  
enough though a little worn, conscious that they are  
the chief attractions of The Boar. At the moment they  
are in mild hysterics, having run downstairs in their  
night clothes, though with their unusual instinct for  
precaution each has found time to done a wrap. It is  
not clear whether they are sisters, friends, or simply  
colleagues: but they behave like twins, as though  
each has only half a personality, and they cling  
together always to sustain their self-esteem.*

**Nieces**

Oo! Oo!

It's blown our bedroom windows in.  
Oo! we'll be drowned.

**Balstrode**

Perhaps in gin.

**Nieces**

I wouldn't mind if it didn't howl.  
It gets on my nerves.

**Balstrode**

D'you think we  
Would stop our storm for such as you -  
Coming all over palpitations!  
Oo! Oo!  
Auntie, get some new relations.

**Auntie**

*(takes this badly)*  
Loud man, I never did have time  
For the kind of creature who spits in his wine.  
A joke's a joke and fun is fun.  
A joke's a joke and fun is fun,  
But say your grace and be polite for all that we have  
done.

**Nieces**

For his peace of mind.

**Mrs Sedley**

This is no place for me.

**Auntie**

Loud man, you're glad enough to be  
Playing your cards in our company.  
A joke's a joke and fun is fun,  
A joke's a joke and fun is fun,  
But say your grace and be polite for all that we have  
done.

**Nieces**

For his peace of mind.

**Mrs Sedley**

This is no place for me.

**Auntie**

Loud man - !

*Two Fishermen ENTER. Usual struggle with the  
door.*

**First Fisherman**

There's been a landslide up the coast.

**Boles**

*(rising unsteadily)*  
I'm drunk. Drunk.

**Balstrode**

You're a Methody wastrel.

**Boles**

*(stagers to one of the Nieces)*  
Is this a niece of yours?

**Auntie**

That's so.

**Boles**

Who's her father?

**Auntie**

Who wants to know?

**Boles**

I want to pay my best respects  
To the beauty and misery of her sex.

**Balstrode**

Old Methody, you'd better tune  
Your piety to another hymn.

**Boles**

I want her.

**Balstrode**

Sh-h-h.

**Boles**

I want her.

**Auntie**

*(cold)*

Turn that man out.

**Balstrode**

He's the local preacher.

He's lost the way of carrying liquor.

He means no harm.

**Boles**

No, I mean love!

**Balstrode**

Come on, boy!

*Boles hits him. Mrs Sedley screams. Balstrode quietly overpowers Boles and sits him in a chair.*

**Balstrode**

We live and let live

And look, we keep our hands to ourselves.

*Boles stuggles to his feet. Balstrode sits him down again, laying down the law.*

Pub conversation should depend

On this eternal moral;

So long as satire don't descend

To fisticuff or quarrel.

We live and let live, and look

We keep our hands to ourselves.

*And while Boles is being forced into his chair again, the bystanders comment.*

**Chorus**

We live and let live, and look

We keep our hands to ourselves.

**Balstrode**

We sit and drink the evening through,

Not deigning to devote a

Thought to the daily cud we chew,

But buying drinks by rota.

**Chorus**

We live and let live, and look

We keep our hands to ourselves.

*Door opens. The struggle with the wind is worse than before as Ned Keene gets through.*

**Keene**

Have you heard? The cliff is down

Up by Grimes's hut.

**Auntie**

Where is he?

**Mrs Sedley**

Thank God you've come.

**Keene**

You won't blow away.

**Mrs Sedley**

The carter's over half an hour late.

**Balstrode**

He'll be later still: the road's under flood.

**Mrs Sedley**

I can't stay longer. I refuse.

**Keene**

You'll have to stay if you want your pills.

**Mrs Sedley**

With drunken females and in brawls!

**Keene**

They're Auntie's nieces, that's what they are,

And better than you for kissing, ma.

Mind that door!

**Balstrode**

Mind that door!

All

Mind that door!

**Ellen**

Hush, hush! Peter, Peter!

Hush, Peter! Hush, Peter! Hush, Peter!

**Chorus**

O ye Servants of the Lord, bless ye the Lord.

O ye Holy and Humble, bless ye the Lord.

Ananias, Azarias, and Misael, bless ye the Lord.

Praise Him and magnify Him forever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the

Holy Ghost,

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

Amen.

*The sounds from the church die down. The lesson is being read.*

**Ellen**

The unrelenting work

This grey, unresting industry,

What aim, what future,

What peace will your hard profits buy?

**Peter**

Buy us a home, buy us respect,

And buy us freedom from pain

Of grinning at gossip's tale.

Believe in me, we shall be free.

**Chorus**

I believe in God, the Father almighty,

Maker of heaven and earth,

And in Jesus Christ, His only son...

Our Lord who was conceived...

*(fades into the background)*

**Ellen**

Peter, tell me one thing, where

The youngster got that ugly bruise.

**Peter**

Out of the hurly burly...

**Ellen**

O your ways

Are hard and rough beyond his days

Peter, were we right, were we right in what we

planned

To do. Were we right, were we right?

**Peter**

Take away your hand.

*(quietly)*

My only hope depends on you.

If you - take it away - what's left?

**Ellen**

Were we mistaken when we schemed

To solve your life by lonely toil?

Were we mistaken when we dreamed

That we'd come through and all be well?

**Peter**

*(angry)*

Wrong to plan?

Wrong to try?

Wrong to live?

Right to die?

Wrong to struggle?

Wrong to hope?

Then the Borough's

Right again?

**Ellen**

Peter, you cannot buy your peace

You'll never stop the gossips' talk

With all the fish from out the sea.

We were mistaken to have dreamed,

Peter. We've failed. We've failed.

*He cries out, as if in agony. Then he strikes her. Her basket falls.*

**Chorus**

Amen.

**Peter**

So be it! - And God have mercy upon me!

*John runs from him. Peter follows. Ellen watches, then goes out the other way. Behind closed doors and half-open windows, neighbours have been watching. Three now emerge: first Auntie, then Keene, finally Boles.*

**Auntie**

Fool to let it come to this,

Wasting pity, squandering tears.

**Keene**

See the glitter in his eyes.

Grimes is at his exercise.

*Ellen undoes the neck of John's shirt.*

**Ellen**

A bruise.  
Well...it's begun.

**Chorus**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.  
As it was in the beginning, is now...

**Ellen**

Child, you're not too young to know  
Where the roots of sorrow are  
Innocent, you've learned how near  
Life is to torture.

**Rector**

Praise ye the Lord.

**Chorus**

The Lord's name be praised.

**Ellen**

Let this be a holiday  
Full of peace and quietness  
While the treason of the waves  
Glitters like love.  
Glitters like love.  
Storm and all its terrors are  
Nothing to the heart's despair.  
After the storm will come a sleep  
Like oceans deep, like oceans deep.

**Chorus**

O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord.  
O ye Sun and Moon, bless ye the Lord.  
O ye Winds of God, bless ye the Lord.  
Praise Him and magnify Him forever.

*Peter Grimes enters.*

O ye Light and Darkness, bless ye the Lord.  
O ye Nights and Days, bless ye the Lord.  
O ye Lightnings and Clouds, bless ye the Lord.  
Praise Him and magnify Him forever.

**Peter**

Come boy.

**Ellen**

Peter - what for?

**Chorus**

O ye Wells, bless ye the Lord.  
O ye Seas and Floods, bless the Lord.  
O ye Whales and all that move in the waters  
Praise Him and magnify Him forever.

**Peter**

I've seen a shoal. I need his help.

**Ellen**

But if there were, then all the boats  
Would fast be launching.

**Peter**

I can see  
The shoals to which the rest are blind.

**Chorus**

O all ye Fowls of the Air, bless ye the Lord.  
O all ye Beasts and Cattle, bless ye the Lord.  
O all ye Children of Men, bless ye the Lord.  
Praise Him and magnify Him forever.

**Ellen**

This is Sunday, his day of rest.

**Peter**

This is whatever day I say it is!  
Come boy!

**Ellen**

You and John have fished all week,  
Night and day without a break,  
Painting boat, mending nets, cleaning fish.  
Now let him rest.

**Peter**

Come boy!

**Ellen**

But your bargain...

**Peter**

My bargain?

**Ellen**

His weekly rest.

**Peter**

He works for me. Leave him alone. He's mine.

*The door opens again. Peter Grimes has come in. Unlike the rest, he wears no oilskins. His hair looks wild. He advances into the room, shaking the rain from his hair. Mrs Sedley faints. Keene catches her as she falls.*

**Keene**

Get the brandy, aunt.

**Auntie**

Who'll pay?

**Keene**

Her. I'll charge her for it.

**Chorus**

Talk of the devil and there he is.  
A devil he is. A devil he is.  
Grimes is waiting his apprentice.

*Peter sits down. The others move away from that side of the table.*

**Keene**

This widow's as strong as any two  
Fishermen I have met.  
Everybody's very quiet.

*No-one answers. The silence is broken by Peter.*

**Peter**

*(as if thinking aloud)*  
Now the Great Bear and Pleiades where earth moves  
Are drawing up the clouds of human grief,  
Breathing solemnity in the deep night.  
Who can decipher  
In storm or starlight  
The written character of a friendly fate -  
As the sky turns, the world for us to change?  
But if the horoscope's bewildering  
Like a flashing turmoil of a shoal of herring,  
Who can turn skies back and begin again?

*Silence again. Then muttering in undertones.*

**Chorus**

He's mad or drunk. Why's that man here?

**Nieces**

His song alone would sour the beer.

**Chorus**

His temper's up. O chuck him out.

**Nieces**

I wouldn't mind if he didn't howl.

**Chorus**

He looks as though he's nearly drowned.

**Boles**

*(staggering up to Grimes)*  
You've sold your soul, Grimes.

**Balstrode**

Come away.

**Boles**

Satan's got no hold on me.

**Balstrode**

Leave him alone, you drunkard.  
*(goes to get hold of Boles)*

**Boles**

I'll hold the gospel light before  
The cataract that blinds his eyes.

**Peter**

*(as Boles stumbles up to him)*  
Get out.

*Grimes thrusts Boles aside roughly and turns away.*

**Boles**

His exercise  
Is not with men but killing boys.

*Boles picks up a bottle and is about to bring it down on Grimes's head when Balstrode knocks it out of his hand and it crashes, shattering, to the floor.*

**Auntie**

For God's sake, help me keep the peace.  
D'you want me up at the next Assize?

**Balstrode**

For peace's sake, someone start a song.

**All**

Old Joe has gone fishing and  
Young Joe has gone fishing and

**Auntie**

(That's right, Ned!)

**All**

You Know has gone fishing and  
Found them a shoal.  
Pull them in in handfals,  
And in canfuls,  
And in panfuls,  
Bring them in sweetly,  
Gut them completely,  
Pack them up neatly,  
Sell them discreetly,  
Oh, haul a-way.

**Peter**

*(enters round, silencing the others)*  
When I had gone fishing  
When he had gone fishing  
When You Know'd gone fishing  
He found us Davy Jones.  
Bring him in with horror,  
Bring him in with terror,  
And bring him in with sorrow!  
Oh, haul a-way.

*After he finishes, the others resume their singing. At the climax of the round, the door opens to admit Ellen ORFORD, the boy JOHN, and Hobson. They are soaked, muddy, and bedraggled.*

**Hobson**

The bridge is down, we half swam over.

**Keene**

And your cart? Is it seaworthy?

*The WOMEN go to Ellen and JOHN. Auntie fusses over them. Boles reproaches them.*

**Ellen**

We're chilled to the bone.

**Boles**

*(to Ellen)*  
Serves you right, woman.

**Auntie**

My dear  
There's brandy and hot water to spare.

**Nieces**

Let's look at the boy.

**Ellen**

*(rising)*  
Let him be.

**Nieces**

Nice sweet thing.

**Ellen**

Not for such as you.

**Peter**

Let's go. You ready?

**Auntie**

Let them warm up.  
They've been half drowned.

**Peter**

Time to get off.

**Auntie**

Your hut's washed away.

**Peter**

Only the cliff.  
Young 'prentice, come.

*John hesitates. Ellen leads him to Peter.*

**Ellen**

Goodbye, my dear, God bless you.  
Peter will take you home.

**Others**

Home? Do you call that home?

*Peter takes the boy out the door into the storm.*

**CURTAIN.****ACT TWO****Scene 1**

*Scene as in Act One. The Street. A fine, sunny morning, some weeks later. The street is deserted until Ellen and the boy JOHN ENTER. Ellen is carrying a work basket. She sits down between a boat and a breakwater and takes her knitting from the basket. One or two latecomers cross and hurry into the church.*

**Ellen**

Glitter of waves  
And glitter of sunlight  
Bid us rejoice  
And lift our hearts on high.  
Man alone  
Has a soul to save  
And goes to church  
To worship on a Sunday.

*The organ starts a voluntary in the church.*

Shall we not go to church this Sunday  
But do our knitting by the sea?  
I'll do the work. You talk.

*A hymn starts in church.*

**Chorus**

*(off, in church)*  
Now that the daylight fills the sky  
We lift our hearts to God on high  
That He in all we do or say  
Would keep us free from harm to-day.

**Ellen**

Nothing to tell me.  
Nothing to say? Then shall I  
Tell you what your life was like!  
See if I'm right. I think  
You liked your workhouse with its grave,  
Empty look. Perhaps you weren't  
So unhappy in your loneliness.  
When I first started teaching  
The life at school to me seemed bleak and empty,  
But soon I found a way of knowing children -  
Found the woes of little people  
Hurt more, but are more simple.

**Chorus**

May He restrain our tongues from strife  
Shield from anger's din our life  
And guard with watchful care our eyes  
From earth's absorbing vanities.

**Ellen**

John, you may have heard the stories  
Of the 'prentice Peter had before.

**Chorus**

So we, when this day's work is done  
And shades of night return once more.  
Amen.

**Ellen**

But when you came, I  
Said, Now this is where we  
Make a new start. Every day  
I pray it may be so.

**Rector**

Wherefore, I pray and beseech you, as many as are  
here present, to accompany me with a pure heart  
and humble voice, saying after me, Almighty...

**Chorus**

Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred  
and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep.  
And we have done those things which  
We ought not to have  
And grant, O most merciful Father...

**Ellen**

There's a tear in your coat. Was that done  
Before you came?  
Badly torn.  
That was done recently.  
Take your hand away.  
Your neck is it? John, what  
Are you trying to hide?

**Chorus**

O, Lord open Thou our lips  
And our mouths shall show forth Thy praise.

**Rector**

O God make speed to save us.

**Chorus**

O Lord make haste to help us.