

John (to Maggie) Is he gaunna lie aside Bertie stinkin o stale beer?

Maggie Whit else can we dae, John!

John Bertie's nae weel. (He looks at his sprawling son) Whit I'd like tae dae is kick him oot o the hoose.

Isa Aye, pit him oot on the stairheid.

Maggie starts to cry

Maggie It's terrible! Whit's tae be done!

Isa He's usefless. I'm seeck fed up wi him.

Maggie You hevna helped him ony.

Isa Ach, he wis a rotten tattie lang afore I was daft enough tae get landed wi him. If ye ask me, I've improved him. He'll dae whit I tell him, that's mair than you can say. I can twist him roon ma little finger. Come on, pimple! (She takes him with a practised hand by the back of his collar and jerks him off his chair) Well? Are ye gaunna let me cairry him mase? Gie's a haun ... I'm wantin ma bed.

Isa and John take Alec off, R

(As they go) Nighty night. Sleep tight.

Maggie Haud yer row! The bairns is sleepin.

She stands looking at the bedroom door, hands working nervously

John comes out

They look long at each other without speech: then John comes to Maggie: he takes her in his arms and "pets" her

John You get intae bed, Maggie, and rest yersel. (Pause) If ye can.

Maggie doesn't move: she watches him sit down and light a Woodbine

Ma son! (Pause) I used tae think, when he was wee, it'd be rare when he grew up. He'd go tae the night-school an learn a trade — we'd be rare pals, hum an me ... (Pause) An look at whit I've got!

Maggie (bursting into tears) I've din ma best wi him! I have! I have!

John I'm no blamin you, Maggie. If I'm blamin onybody, I'm blamin mase! A man's got nae right tae bring weans intae the world if he canna provide for them. (Turning to her) It's a winner ye don't hate me.

Maggie (wiping her cheeks with her hands) Don't talk daft. It's because things have aye been right atween you an me that I can struggle on.

John Struggle! Aye, ye've hit on the right word — struggle... Weans! They roast the heart and liver oot o ye!

Maggie Aye... but it's as if they wis tied on tae — ye they'll tug awa till the day ye dee.

John Ye're right. I can get that mad at Jenny I could... then she looks up at me wi that wee smile o hers an I can feel — I can *actually feel* ma heart turnin intae butter.

Maggie Jenny's your pet.

John (smiling) Aye. Canna deny it. Didna see her the night. I suppose she was in bed time I got back wi that pair in there.

He nods towards the door. Maggie doesn't answer: she puts a hand up to her mouth, afraid he'll pursue the question: then she gets into the bed

Well, I don't know whit's done it, the excitement or the vexation, but I'm damned hungry. Is there onythin tae eat? Hey! Whit about Lily's beans? **Maggie** Whit about tomorrow?

John (hunting in the drawer) Ach, tomorrow! Whaur's the tin-opener? Goad! It's never twice in the same place, Maggie.

Maggie I've nae system. (She giggles)

He finds the tin-opener, opens the tin, find a pan and heats the beans, stirring and tasting

Maggie Pit some o them aside for the weans the morn.

John Aye right. A wee bit Ayrshire bacon would go great wi these.

They exchange a look of greedy longing and lick their lips

Maggie It says on the tin: beans wi pork.

John Pork? (He lifts out a cube of something) Could be onythin. Blubber. (He eats it) Aw, I've ett it a Maggie! The hale square-inch o it!

Maggie Aw, ye greedy thing! Fancy no haufin it wi me. (She giggles)

He hands her a plate of the beans

That's ower much, John! I said keep some for the weans.

John You eat the lot, I've kept some.

They eat. In the silence, there is a prolonged fit of Bertie's coughing: they look at each other

Maggie ye'll need tae —

Maggie I ken. I ken. I wull go; but I'll hae tae bother Mrs Harris tae mind Granny and the weans ... an I had words wi her the night.

John Yous women! Whit wis it this time?

Maggie She said I didnae tak ma turn o the dunny stairs, an I said her Mary had somethin in her heid.

John I've tellt ye and tellt ye! Can ye no keep yersel tae yersel?

Maggie No, I canna. It's only rich folks can keep theirselves tae theirselves. Folks like us hev tae depend on their neighbours when they're needin help.

He finishes his beans and takes away the plates. Maggie lies back with a sigh

John (*looking at her*) Ye're dead beat, Maggie. It's been too much for ye ... Isa and Alec ...

Maggie Aye — I'm gey tired right enough.

John Some day we'll hae a real bed, Maggie.

Maggie On legs? I hevnae been on a bed since I wis in the Maternity wi Marina.

John Here that'll dae! I'm no wantin nightmares ... I'd better lock up.

Maggie Och, never heed ... y're no needin tae lock the door.

John (*turning quickly towards her*) So ... she's no in?

Maggie shakes her head

Whaur is she? Who's she wi?

Maggie She disnae say; she disnae tell me onythin noo.

John By Goad, she'll tell me somethin! I'm for nane o this traipsin roon the toon till a oors.

He opens the window. A crowd of drunks are rolling homewards singing "I'm alone because I love yew, love yew with all my heart" with mouth-organ accompaniment

Listen tae that! Goad knows whit sort o scum's on the streets at this time o night. She's no gettin aff wi this.

Maggie Whit's the use? She pays nae attention when ye speak.

John She'll pay attention tae me!

He looks out of the window, left and right, then closes it

Nae sign o her.

Maggie It's they lassies she's got pals wi since she went tae the Sauchiehall Street branch. She'll no bring me naethin frae the shop noo ... that feart the girls'll think onythin o gettin hame a few bashed tomaties an some ower-

ripe bananas. I miss them; it wis a rare wee help ... Marina loves a chipped apple.

John Oh, so she'll no bring hame ony bashed fruit noo? I'll see aboot that! Ma word! Wait till ma lady shows up the night!

Maggie (*alarmed*) Ye've no tae be rough wi her, John.

John It strikes me it's *past* time tae be rough wi her. She's changed a lot, Maggie! Jenny was never impident ... (*Remembering the old Jenny*) Jenny was aye a kind wee lassie, aye ready for a laugh — for a she'd be a bit cheeky at times ... but nae — nae yon hard look she's got aboot her this last while back.

Maggie I didnae tell ye, but ... she's wantin tae leave hame.

John turns slowly, absolutely shocked.

John *Leave hame?* (*Pause*) Leave — us? Naw, she wouldna dae that. No Jenny. It's jist talk ... (*Pause*) She *couldna* leave us! Whaur would she gae?

Maggie shakes her head

Maggie Aye, it'll jist be talk. She'll be in soon, John. Come tae bed.

John D'ye think mebbe I should gae oot lookin for her?

Maggie No! Ye'll only vex her. Come tae bed.

John *Goad!* Time she was feart on angerin *me!* (*Strongly*) She's ma lass, and it's up tae me — aye and you — tae see that she behaves hersel! Vex her? I'll vex her a right! (*Pause*) Sh! Whit was that?

Maggie Bertie. I'd better awa through wi another dose ...

John I thought I heard someone at the close-mouth.

Bertie starts to cough: intermingled with it is Jenny's laugh, distant

Maggie (*struggling up*) Oh, I'm that tired! Every bloomin night I've got tae rise ...

John Stay whaur ye are; I'll see tae Bertie.

Maggie The bottle's on the dresser, tak ben a spoon wi it.

John goes

As soon as he has gone out, there is the sound of Jenny and a man talking softly, laughing together. Maggie goes quickly to the window and listens. When she hears John returning, she scuttles back to bed

John comes in, sets down the bottle and spoon, opens the door and stands, listening

Maggie Come tae bed, John.

John Jenny's doon there wi a fella.

Maggie If she's safe hame, ye needna worry ...

John I'm gaun doon. (*He puts on his jacket*)

Maggie Don't go doon, John — ye'll only vex her, I tell ye! Speak tae her in the mornin.

John Whit's the matter wi ye, Maggie? Are ye no carin whit sort o a life Jenny's leadin?

Maggie I'm no wantin her tae leave hame! I'm no wantin ony trouble atween the three o us.

John She's got tae be spoke tae.

He goes out

Maggie sits up straight, her eyes straining at the door through which presently come angry voices

John comes in holding Jenny by the arm. She is about eighteen, made up boldly (for the 1930s): her lipstick is spread over her mouth, her coat and blouse undone, her hair tousled

Jenny (*furious*) Leave me go!

She shakes herself free and she and John stand glaring at each other. Maggie is watching fearfully

Makin a bloom in fool o me in front o ma friend!

John Where hae you been till this time o night?

Jenny That's nane o your business. I'm grown up noo.

John Don't you speak tae me like that. I asked ye whaur ye'd been.

Jenny An I tellt ye! Nane o your damned interferin business!

Maggie Jenny! John!

John takes Jenny by the shoulders and shakes her

John Where wis ye? Answer me!

Jenny At the pickshers.

John The pickshers comes oot at hauf ten. Where wis ye efter?

Jenny (*sullen*) Wi Nessie Tait an a coupla friends.

He lets her go and she flops into a chair, glaring sullenly at him and rubbing her shoulder

John I don't approve o yon Nessie Tait.

Jenny That's a peety. I dae.

John Ye impident little bitch! What I ought tae dae is tak ma belt tae ye.

Jenny Jist you try it!

John The next time you come in here at this time o night wi yer paint smeared a ower yer face, I wull! Look at yersel!

He drags her over to a mirror, then propels her, resisting, to the sink, where, holding her head under his arm, he scrubs off her make-up

There! And in future, you'll let yer hair grow tae the colour God meant it tae be an leave it that way.

Jenny Mebbe I wull — an mebbe I'll no. It jist depends.

John I'm wantin nae mair sauce frae you, Jenny. I'm speakin tae ye for yer ain good. Whit'll the neighbours think, you comin hame at this time o night an staundin in the close wi a man.

Jenny Whit dae I care whit the neighbours thinks? An I suppose you never stood in a close yersel?

Ernest appears at the door of the back parlour and stands there in his bare feet and wearing an old coat over tattered pyjamas, taking everything in

John I ken ma ain sex, Jenny, an it's you I'm thinkin about.

Jenny Ye can save yer breath, well. I ken how to look efter mase! I'm no as green as I'm cabbage lookin an talkin about cabbages — I'm chuckin the shop.

John Ye're daein whit?

Jenny You heard. I'm done wi the fruit an veg. Look whit they done tae ma hauns! Scoopin up clarty tatties an carrots the rats has been at, forbye yon aul skinfint that's the boss aye gaun on at ye, an aye checkin the takins. Naw, I've had enough o that.

John And whit, may I ask, dae ye propose tae dae, my lady?

Jenny I've got a job.

Maggie (*eagerly*) Oh whit kind, Jenny? Whit kind?

Jenny In a joolers. Yon wis ma new boss I wis wi the night.

John and Maggie look at each other, disturbed

John Is that so? Whaur's his shop? I'm yer fayther an it's ma right tae have a word wi this ... new boss.

Jenny (*rather scared, but determined*) You've a fat chance o that, for I'm no tellin ye.

He takes her by the shoulders