

SCENE: A SHINGLE & MONTY

ACT ONE SCENE 1

~~At rise, we find MONTY NAVARRO in a Prison Cell. The ninth, and current, Earl of Highhurst, HE is youthful and quite dashing, even under such circumstances. HE sits down at a writing desk and takes a sheaf of papers out of the drawer. HE lifts a pen and begins to write. MUSIC continues under.~~

~~#1B "OUR STORY BEGINS" (UNDERScore)~~

~~MONTY (Recorded V-O)~~

~~(As HE writes.)~~

~~Pentonville Prison. Nineteenth of October, nineteen hundred and nine. This is the memoir, and perhaps final confession, of Lord Navarro, ninth Earl of Highhurst. It is a fact of life that no one ever really tells the truth about himself. But in the event of my execution, while I still have time, I have decided to leave behind a purely factual record of events. I suppose one could call it "A Gentleman's Guide ... To Murder."~~

~~(After a moment.)~~

~~Or should I say – "Love and Murder." My story begins, as stories often do, with a quite unexpected visitor.~~

SCENE 1A

~~(MONTY enters a small, sad Parlor, decorated to make the most of meager means. His affect is much younger, his manner far less assured. Grieving, HE gazes at a portrait of his mother. The doorbell clangs rather insistently. MONTY opens the door and MARIETTA SHINGLE, an eccentric woman of a certain age, barges in from the cold. MUSIC fades out.)~~

MISS SHINGLE

If there's a sorrier street in all of Clapham, I'm sure I've never seen it.

MONTY

Pardon me, madam, but do we know one another?

~~(MISS SHINGLE makes herself quite at home.)~~

MISS SHINGLE

Only since the moment you were given birth by your sweet mother.

MONTY

You knew Mother? I ... I've only just returned from her funeral.

MISS SHINGLE

My poor dear Isabel, bless her soul.

(Grabs his face affectionately.)

Look at himself, all grown up and handsome as the devil.

(MISS SHINGLE takes a seat, exhausted from her journey.)

MONTY

How is it you knew Mother, Missus...?

MISS SHINGLE

Miss. Shingle. Marietta Shingle...?

MONTY

Of course! Miss Shingle! She spoke of you often – and how she looked forward to your letters!

MISS SHINGLE

And I hers, I assure you.

(A beat.)

You were going to offer me a spot of tea, were you?

MONTY

You must forgive my manners, Miss Shingle. Mother always had a kettle on.

MISS SHINGLE

And if you could spare a biscuit or two, I'm sure I wouldn't mind.

(MISS SHINGLE takes in the faded gentility of the parlor for the first time and shakes her head sadly.)

I knew you and your mother were having a rough time of it, but I didn't know it had come to this. Have you any prospects, love?

MONTY

Mother always dreamt I should go to Oxford or Cambridge somehow.

(Realizing sadly:)

It seems rather unlikely now.

MISS SHINGLE

There's nothing your mother wouldn't have done for you.

MONTY

I hardly know how I shall go on without her.

MISS SHINGLE

(SHE eyes him admiringly.)

You rather favor your father ... physically, I mean.

MONTY

Did you know my father? He died when I was but seven.

MISS SHINGLE

Only met him once, love. Castilian, you know. As dashing a face and figure as you will ever see.

(A heavy sigh.)

Tell me, love, what do you know of your *mother's* family?

MONTY

Mother never spoke of them. Must've been curs and mountebanks. Horse thieves, at the very least.

MISS SHINGLE

Well, not exactly. Have you heard of the D'Ysquith family?

#2	"YOU'RE A D'YSQUITH"
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MONTY

The D'Ysquiths? Why, yes, of course, hasn't everyone?

MISS SHINGLE

Then you've heard of Highhurst Castle?

MONTY

Of course.

MISS SHINGLE

You're aware, then, of their position? Their vast wealth and influence?

MONTY

Yes, yes, what's it got to do with me?

~~**MISS SHINGLE**~~

~~*(Singing:)*~~

~~YOU'RE A D'YSQUITH!~~

~~**MONTY**~~

~~What?~~

~~**MISS SHINGLE**~~

~~YOU'RE A D'YSQUITH!~~

~~**MONTY**~~

~~No...~~

~~**MISS SHINGLE**~~

~~OH, THE D'YSQUITH BLOOD IS FLOWING THROUGH YOU!~~

SCENE: B SIBELLA & MONTY

~~MONTY~~

~~Of course, and I should like to tell you about—~~

~~SIBELLA~~

~~I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO WITHOUT YOU!~~

~~MONTY~~

~~Sibella...~~

~~SIBELLA~~

~~I HAVE NEVER MET ANOTHER MAN
WHO'S HALF AS DEAR AS YOU.
YOU'RE SO CLEVER, TOO.
AND YOU MAKE ME LAUGH
MORE THAN ANYBODY.~~

~~WHY ARE OTHER MEN SO DREARY, MONTY,
AND SO DEADLY DULL?
NO ONE HOLDS A CONVERSATION
HALF AS BEAUTIFULLY AS YOU!~~

START

~~MONTY~~

~~Well, actually, there is a matter of some urgency I should like to discuss...~~

~~SIBELLA~~

~~YOU HAVEN'T SAID A WORD ABOUT MY DRESS!
YOU'RE A BRUTE!
SEE HOW IT MOVES WHEN I TURN?
TWO-THREE-ONE-TWO.~~

~~IT'S A BIT MUCH FOR CLAPHAM,
BUT NEVERTHELESS.
MAYBE JUST A BITE.
JUST TO BE POLITE.
MONTY, THAT'S TOO TIGHT.
MONTY, THAT'S JUST RIGHT.~~

~~OH, WHAT I PUT YOU THROUGH!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO,
I DO NOT HAVE A CLUE,
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO WITHOUT YOU!~~

#3A “PRETTY IN PINK” (UNDERScore)
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~~MONTY~~

~~Sibella, something miraculous has happened.~~

SIBELLA

What?

MONTY

It's too fantastic. I have just learned that I am in the line of succession to become Earl of Highhurst.

SIBELLA

Earl? Of Highhurst?!

MONTY

Yes! It seems Mother was a D'Ysquith! Which means *I* am a D'Ysquith, too!

SIBELLA

My mother is the Queen of Sheba. I believe that makes me Princess of Babylon.

MONTY

You shouldn't make fun. It's true. And there are only eight people before me in succession. Which means, I could be Earl someday.

SIBELLA

(Laughing:)

And pigs might fly! As if you could've been a D'Ysquith all your life and not know it.

MONTY

I realize how it sounds –

SIBELLA

As if you could ever be an Earl. *Eight* people would have to *die* for that to happen! How likely is that?

(MONTY starts to leave. SIBELLA doesn't want him to go.

MUSIC fades out.)

Oh, now don't go yet ... your Lordship.

MONTY

Where are you off to, in your pink dress?

SIBELLA

To meet a friend. With a motorcar.

MONTY

Does this friend have a name?

SIBELLA

Lionel Holland.

(MONTY'S jaw tightens.)

You're jealous of him, I can tell. Because he has a motorcar. And he's rich. And good looking. Is it really true, about you being a D'Ysquith?

MONTY

Of course it is. I'll show you the papers, if you like.

SIBELLA

No, no, if you say it's true, of course I'll believe you.

(Tenderly:)

Darling, we barely spoke at the funeral. Are you quite all right? I should be inconsolable if I'd lost my mother.

(HE leans forward, pulls her face to his, and kisses her passionately. MUSIC under. SIBELLA'S arms go around his neck. After a moment, THEY release each other.)

MONTY

Sibella, I think it's time you took me seriously.

SIBELLA

Oh, Monty. The man I marry will have wealth and position.

MONTY

I will have wealth and position.

SIBELLA

And what would we live on until then?

MONTY

Sibella, has it never occurred to you to marry for love?

SIBELLA

Now you're being cruel.

(Suddenly, a MAID enters. THEY separate immediately.)

SIBELLA'S MAID

Miss Hallward, Mr. Lionel Holland is here for you.

SIBELLA

And right on time. If only he weren't so predictable.

~~#3B "I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO WITHOUT YOU (TAG)"~~

~~**SIBELLA** *(Cont'd.)*~~

~~*(Singing:)*~~

~~MONTY, WHERE'S MY GLOVE?~~

~~YOU REALLY ARE A LOVE!~~

~~MONTY, DON'T LOOK SO BLUE!~~

SCENE: C

TOUR GUIDE

ACT ONE

SCENE 3

The entrance to Highhurst Castle, the feudal home of the D'Ysquiths. MONTY catches up with a group of TOURISTS.

TOUR GUIDE

(A bit pompous.)

Welcome to Visitors Day at Highhurst Castle, ancestral home of Lord Adalbert D'Ysquith, Eighth Earl of Highhurst.

(The Great Hall of Highhurst is dominated by ancestral portraits, suits of armor, and medieval weaponry.)

It is from these very walls that D'Ysquiths past defended themselves against King John...

~~TOURISTS~~

~~Ooooh!~~

TOUR GUIDE

Who was to meet his rebellious Barons at Runnymede...

~~TOURISTS~~

~~Ahhhh!~~

TOUR GUIDE

In the banqueting hall, you will note a coat of mail worn by Richard, the Lion Heart...

~~TOURISTS~~

~~Ooooh!~~

TOUR GUIDE

Come along! Come along!

(Stopping MONTY.)

That'll be sixpence, please.

~~*(MONTY pays his sixpence. Alone now, MONTY is particularly struck by the family portraits. One by one, their eyes seem to meet his, and HE can almost hear them whispering his name.)*~~

~~ANCESTRAL PORTRAITS~~

~~*(Recorded.)*~~

~~Monty ... Monty ... Monty...~~

~~*(MONTY looks around the room, unnerved. Suddenly, the ANCESTRAL PORTRAITS come alive and sing.)*~~

SCENE: D

D'YSQUITH -REV

& MONY

ACT ONE

SCENE 4

~~A very old country Church in the Village of Lye, in
Lincolnshire.~~

~~#6A "MEET LORD EZEKIEL" (UNDERScore)~~

~~MONTY (Recorded V-O)~~

~~Perhaps emboldened by my visit to Highhurst, I was compelled to make one more attempt to connect with my Mother's kin. The Reverend Lord Ezekial D'Ysquith was the one Parson in the family and I envisioned that he, more than anyone, might receive me with sympathy.~~

SCENE 4A

(MONTY stands in the church courtyard with the REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL D'YSQUITH, a man of limited intellect, rather too fond of his port. MUSIC fades out.)

REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL

Why yes, of course I remember Isabel. Charming girl. Broke her father's heart. He and I spent our childhood summers together at Highhurst, you know. Glorious days, glorious days...

MONTY

I'm afraid there's a great deal of family history I haven't been privy to.

REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL

The chancel was added in 1621 by the first Earl himself. It contains three late twelfth century windows depicting the Martyrdom of St. Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins.

MONTY

Ah, yes.

REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL

Notice how the attenuated shafts sweep unbroken from floor to ceiling. Perpendicular period, of course.

MONTY

Of course.

REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL

I must show you the tower!

(LORD EZEKIEL waves his hand upwards as HE leads MONTY up the steps of the bell tower.)

MONTY

So then I may count on you, Lord Reverend? To put in a good word for me, with the D'Ysquiths? Perhaps with the Earl, himself?

REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL

Oh, I really couldn't. No, no. I make it my business to stay out of family intrigue. Much better that way, for everyone concerned.

MONTY

(Taken aback:)

Oh.

REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL

The Carolingian arches of my groin vault are pointed instead of round, recalling Palladio's Palazzo della Ragione in Vincenza.

(THEY have reached the top now, high up on the belfry.)

You will note that our belfry is early Romanesque, which retains a bit of the Byzantine influence.

MONTY

What a marvelous view, your lordship. Are you certain you couldn't make an exception, in this one case? For the sake of my charming Mother, your cousin? Or perhaps out of loyalty to my Grandfather, your childhood playmate?

REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL

Well, that's it, isn't it? If Isabel's own father saw fit to disinherit her for her sins, who am I to deny his wishes?

(Gesturing to MONTY:)

Now, you'll have to move closer to the edge to truly appreciate the architectural significance of the flying buttresses. They're said to be influenced by the cathedral at Chartres...

MONTY

Have you no ... Christian charity, then?

REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL

Pardon?!

MONTY

What was her great sin, after all? Only love!

(At the edge of the tower, LORD EZEKIAL leans back with an alarming lack of concern for his safety.)

REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL

Yes ... Now, lean backward, as I do! There – have you ever seen such horizontal thrust?! Isn't it splendid –

(LORD EZEKIAL loses his balance.)

Oh ... ah ... I'm ... I'm afraid I shall need your hand, please...

SCENE: E
D'YSQUITH
-ASQUITH JR,
MISS BARLEY,
& MONTY

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ACT ONE
SCENE 6

A Lakeside Hotel at Chizzlemere. ASQUITH JR. and MISS BARLEY are bundled up in fashionable winter wear. MUSIC continues under.

MISS BARLEY

Just fancy, Asquith, three whole days at the lake together! It will be perfect, won't it?

(MONTY follows at a discreet distance.)

ASQUITH JR.

Chizzlemere is extraordinary out of season and quite private – the hotel register has an unrivalled list of false names. I trust you don't mind our being discreet.

MISS BARLEY

I've never known a man to take such care with my reputation...

(MONTY approaches the couple.)

MONTY

Pardon me, Miss, but don't I know you from somewhere?

ASQUITH JR.

(Mortified:)

Certainly not! What are you insinuating, you insignificant upstart?!

(ASQUITH JR. steers MISS BARLEY away from MONTY as MUSIC fades out.)

MONTY

I meant no offense, I assure you.

ASQUITH JR.

Were you raised in a shanty town by some chee-chee punkah wallah?!

MISS BARLEY

(Noticing something:)

Oh, Asquith, look – ! There are people skating on the lake! Doesn't it look fun?!

ASQUITH JR.

(Uninterested:)

What a shame we didn't bring our skates.

MISS BARLEY

We can rent them, right on the dock!

ASQUITH JR.

It's getting a bit late, don't you think?

(Suggestively:)

Nearly time for beddy-bye.

MISS BARLEY

Oh, Assie, please, please, please let's!

ASQUITH JR.

Oh, all right, crumpet. I say, may I warm my hands in your muff?

~~*(THEY quickly put on skates before stepping onto the ice.)*~~

#8 "POISON IN MY POCKET"

~~**ASQUITH JR. (Cont'd.)**~~

~~*(Singing:)*~~

~~YOU AND I GO SAILING BY,
AND NO ONE WILL KNOW WHERE TO FIND US.
UNSEEN, UNKNOWN, AND BLISSFULLY ALONE,
WE'RE LEAVING THE RIFF-RAFF BEHIND US.~~

~~ALL AFTERNOON IN OUR SWEET COCOON,
OUR CARES, FOR THE MOMENT, AT BAY,
SIDE BY SIDE,
WHO KNOWS HOW FAR WE'LL GLIDE?~~

~~BID THE WORLD GOOD-BYE,
EAGERLY WE FLY
AWAY.~~

~~*(As THEY glide onto the ice, MONTY is left behind, frustrated.)*~~

~~**MONTY**~~

~~I AM STANDING HERE WITH POISON IN MY POCKET,
STANDING ON THIS FROZEN LITTLE DOCK, IT
SEEMS THAT I'VE JUST LET THEM
SKATE MY OPPORTUNITY AWAY.~~

~~IF I'D HAD THE POISE TO PUT THE POISON IN
A POT OF TEA OR ELSE A SHOT OF GIN,
I WOULD BE BACK AMID THE NOISE OF LONDON
BY THE END OF DAY.~~

~~BUT,
I AM STANDING HERE WITH POISON IN MY POCKET,
ONE EYE ON THE TARGET, ONE EYE ON THE CLOCK, IT~~

SCENE: F

D'YSQUITH - SR & MONTY

ACT ONE SCENE 7

~~MONTY is seen in half-light, suggesting mystery.~~

~~#8A "HAUNTING TERROR" (UNDERScore)~~

~~MONTY (Cont'd.) (Recorded V-O)~~

~~I returned to town late that night, plagued by the haunting terror that I had left a clue and sooner or later someone would come across it. I consoled myself by reading one of Mother's unanswered letters to Lord Asquith, Senior, in which she pleaded with him to take pity on a woman alone with a son to raise. So it was a bit of a shock that not long after I should receive a letter from that very same man.~~

~~(Reading, live voice:)~~

~~"Dear Mr. Navarro..."~~

~~(A spot hits LORD ASQUITH D'YSQUITH, a grief-stricken elderly banker. MUSIC fades out.)~~

LORD ASQUITH

"Some time ago you wrote claiming a relationship to the D'Ysquith family and asking us to help you to some situation in which you might earn your living. I must apologize for our unsympathetic attitude on that occasion. Should you still be in need of a post, I shall be very glad if you will pay me a call..."

LORD ASQUITH & MONTY

"...Yours very truly..."

MONTY

(Rather amazed:)

"Lord Asquith D'Ysquith." Senior.

SCENE 7A

(D'Ysquith Banking House. LORD ASQUITH D'YSQUITH is revealed to be sitting at his ornate desk.)

LORD ASQUITH

Do come in, Mr. Navarro.

(LORD D'YSQUITH looks at MONTY carefully.)

You are not like the D'Ysquiths, and yet there is something.

(MONTY takes a small photograph out of his breast pocket and hands it to LORD D'YSQUITH.)

MONTY

This is my Mother.

LORD ASQUITH

We were not well acquainted. It is a very sweet face. Have you ever seen the family portraits at Highhurst?

MONTY

(Lying:)

Never.

LORD ASQUITH

Your mother is extraordinarily like some of the women. And some of the men, for that matter. Perhaps you are wondering why I should suddenly come to write to you.

MONTY

Yes, frankly, I am.

LORD ASQUITH

I don't know whether you heard that I lost my only son recently under somewhat tragic circumstances. A skating accident.

MONTY

Yes. My sincerest condolences.

LORD ASQUITH

Thank you. You know, of course, I was grooming him to succeed me.

MONTY

(Truthfully:)

I did not.

(This is difficult for his lordship, as HE is not usually given to public displays of emotion.)

LORD ASQUITH

Well, it is over. The past cannot be recalled. I should like to know if you would care to come into my firm.

(MONTY is stunned.)

You could have no greater education in the business of stockbroking. Beyond that, I can make no promises.

MONTY

Lord D'Ysquith, I hardly know what to say.

LORD ASQUITH

To begin with, you shall have two hundred and fifty pounds a year.

SCENE: G MONTY & PHOEBE

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~~MONTY (Recorded V-O)~~

~~(To AUDIENCE:)~~

~~I had so ingratiated myself to the beekeeper that I was soon invited back as a weekend guest. Just enough time for me to educate myself as to the extraordinary attraction of English lavender to your average honeybee.~~

~~(MONTY sprays some lavender.)~~

~~Upon my return to Salisbury, I paid a discreet visit to the honey shack as soon as I saw an opportunity.~~

~~(MONTY sprays lavender into HENRY'S beekeeping hat, and emerges from the honey shack to find himself face to face with PHOEBE D'YSQUITH [20's, earnest and lovely]. SHE is reading a book of poetry.)~~

PHOEBE

Oh...!

(Love at first sight?)

MONTY & PHOEBE

(At the same time:)

Oh...

(MUSIC fades out.)

MONTY

Do pardon me...

(Courtly:)

Miss D'Ysquith, I presume...?

PHOEBE

You are...?

MONTY

Mr. Navarro. But please, do call me Monty.

PHOEBE

My brother tells me you are a cousin?

MONTY

Yes. My mother was Isabel D'Ysquith.

PHOEBE

Isabel. Forgive me, but I don't recall ever hearing about her.

MONTY

Shall I tell you why?

PHOEBE

I wish you would.

MONTY

You see, my father was considered ... unsuitable. Because my mother married for love and not for money or property –

PHOEBE

They cut her off.

MONTY

Without a schilling. They ever after behaved as if she and I had never even been born.

PHOEBE

Why, Mr. Navarro...

MONTY

I warned your brother you ... may not care to receive me...

PHOEBE

On the contrary, I am most intrigued. What a beautiful story. Horrid, yes, I'm certain, but still beautiful: she dared to marry for love! Tell me, did your father have his own fortune, or were you quite penniless?

(HE hesitates. SHE admonishes herself.)

Oh! You must forgive me; Henry often scolds me for being indelicate.

MONTY

No, no, not at all. My father left no legacy; he died when I was quite young. But we managed to scrape by, Mother and I.

PHOEBE

When I think of the indignities you've suffered. It must have inspired an awful resentment of the upper classes.

(Admonishing herself again:)

Oh no! There I go again! And now I'm making *assumptions* about you, when there's nothing I despise more than people making assumptions about *me*.

(PHOEBE sits on a vine-and-flower bedecked swing.)

I know they talk about me in the village. They see a girl who's rich and from an important family and not unattractive and they assume ... well, they assume a lot of things.

#11 "INSIDE OUT"

PHOEBE (Cont'd.)

The truth is ... none of them know me at all. Not who I truly am.

~~*(Singing:)*~~

~~AN OYSTER SHELL ITSELF IS UNASSUMING,
BUT LOOK INSIDE, YOU'LL FIND A PEARL.~~

SCENE: I
D'YSQUITH -
ADALBERT, LADY
EUGENIA, PHOEBE,
SIBELLA, MONTY,
GORBY

ACT TWO
SCENE 4

The Great Hall, Highhurst Castle. The rather grand LADY EUGENIA D'YSQUITH [50's] straightens the medals on the jacket of her husband, LORD ADALBERT. MUSIC out.

LORD ADALBERT

I'm famished. What are we eating?

LADY EUGENIA

Everything to drive you to an early grave.

LORD ADALBERT

It can't be soon enough, as long as you're living.

LADY EUGENIA

You'd better hope I die before you. Otherwise, I shall feed your remains to the hounds.

LORD ADALBERT

I'm counting on you having a prolonged illness, every inch of you covered with leeches. And I shall savor the act of applying each of them myself. Speaking of leeches, who the devil have you invited to sponge off us *this* weekend?

(MR. GORBY, a butler, announces the guests.)

MR. GORBY

Miss Phoebe D'Ysquith and Mr. Montague D'Ysquith Navarro.

(MONTY enters, with PHOEBE on his arm, looking spectacular. It's a rather different entrance than the one HE made as a tourist.)

LADY EUGENIA

Adalbert, you remember Miss D'Ysquith, of course.

(PHOEBE curtsies to LORD and LADY D'YSQUITH.)

LORD ADALBERT

Which one are you?

PHOEBE

Phoebe, sister of the late Henry D'Ysquith.

LORD ADALBERT

They're all named Henry!

LADY EUGENIA

It's been far too long, my dear. I trust your trip was tolerable?

LORD ADALBERT

Half the family's named Henry! Lack of imagination.

PHOEBE

Oh, quite, Ma'am. With Mr. Navarro as my companion, it seemed to take no time at all. Mr. Navarro, I don't believe you've yet met the Earl and his Countess, Lady D'Ysquith.

LORD ADALBERT

So you're the young ragger they're all talking about. I suppose your name is Henry, too!

LADY EUGENIA

It's Montague.

LORD ADALBERT

Oh, that's a first.

(MONTY bows respectfully.)

MONTY

An honour to meet you, at last.

~~#18 "FINAL WARNING"~~

~~*(Two ANCESTRAL BUSTS come alive and sing to MONTY.)*~~

~~**ANCESTRAL BUST 1**~~

~~MONTY NAVARRO!
YOU'RE HERE BY INVITATION!~~

~~**MONTY**~~

~~*(To LADY EUGENIA:)*~~

~~Delighted, Countess.~~

~~**ANCESTRAL BUST 2**~~

~~MONTY NAVARRO!
YOU'VE WORMED YOUR WAY BACK IN!~~

~~**LADY EUGENIA**~~

~~Charmed.~~

~~**BOTH ANCESTRAL BUSTS**~~

~~BUT PLEASE RESIST THE SLIGHTEST INCLINATION
TO FEEL AT HOME!~~

~~THE ICE IS THIN!~~
~~ANCESTRAL BUST 2~~

~~WIPE OFF THAT GRIN!~~
~~ANCESTRAL BUST 1~~

~~LORD ADALBERT~~

~~(To MONTY.)~~

~~Come, Henry, let me show you some of the weapons that killed our ancestors!~~

~~BOTH ANCESTRAL BUSTS~~

~~OH, YOU MAY BE CLEVER
BUT MONTY YOU'LL NEVER
WIN!~~

~~MONTY~~

~~Thank you, I'd love to!~~

~~BOTH ANCESTRAL BUSTS~~

~~YOU'LL NEVER WIN!~~

~~(MONTY gladly disappears into the next room with LORD
ADALBERT.)~~

MR. GORBY

Mrs. Lionel Holland.

(SIBELLA enters, overdressed in her eagerness to impress. SHE curtsies. This is the highest SHE has risen on her upward climb to respectability. LADY D'YSQUITH apparently views her as an arriviste.)

SIBELLA

It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Countess.

LADY EUGENIA

Of course it is.

(Nervous, SIBELLA talks too much.)

SIBELLA

My husband so wanted to be here, but he was called away at the last moment – something about a meeting at Newmarket, but then I am hopeless when it comes to horses, aren't you?

LADY EUGENIA

Actually, no. I breed.

SIBELLA

Mr. Holland asked me to express his sincerest regrets. I do hope you don't mind that I've arrived alone.

LADY EUGENIA

(Slyly mocking:)

How very enterprising of you.

(LADY EUGENIA pulls PHOEBE toward her.)

Mrs. Holland, I wonder if you've met my husband's cousin, Miss D'Ysquith?

(SIBELLA is taken aback. SHE stares at PHOEBE intently.)

Phoebe, dear, this is Mrs. Holland.

(PHOEBE has no idea who SIBELLA is. SHE graciously extends her (gloved) hand.)

PHOEBE

Mrs. Holland, I am so pleased to know you.

(SIBELLA takes her hand and curtsies.)

SIBELLA

The pleasure is mine. Entirely. Miss D'Ysquith.

PHOEBE

How lovely you look.

SIBELLA

I've been admiring your gown. Your flawless complexion. Your sparkling eyes.

PHOEBE

(A bit embarrassed.)

Oh, you are too kind.

SIBELLA

Oh, no. I'm really not.

(LORD ADALBERT re-enters the room, with MONTY. SIBELLA can't see him from where SHE is standing, and HE has no idea the woman with her back to him is anyone HE knows.)

SIBELLA (Cont'd.)

I do believe we may know someone in common...

PHOEBE

Oh...?

(Before SIBELLA can say another word, LORD ADALBERT taps a glass, making it ring.)

LORD ADALBERT

Gather round, won't you? Lady D'Ysquith informs me I'm to ask you to raise a glass to my cousin, Miss D'Ysquith...

(PHOEBE blushes. MR. GORBY and MR. WATERS, a servant, pass out drinks for the toast.)

On the occasion of her engagement to Mr. Henry D'Ysquith –

LADY EUGENIA

(Correcting him:)

Montague.

(SIBELLA turns around, stunned to see MONTY. HE nods, as if meeting her for the first time.)

LORD ADALBERT

Mr. D'Ysquith Montague.

LADY EUGENIA

Navarro.

LORD ADALBERT

Mr. Navarro D'Ysquith Montague! A splendid chap, far as I can tell. And a cousin of mine, strangely enough. His mother was a bit of an embarrassment –

(LADY EUGENIA elbows him.)

Water under the bridge, of course. Lady D'Ysquith tells me he's next in the succession – funny that! With everyone else dropping like flies, I shouldn't wonder if he'll smother me in my sleep tonight – what?!

(Silence. LADY EUGENIA glares at her husband.)

LORD ADALBERT (Cont'd.)

Well, I'm getting the evil eye, so do let's go into dinner. If there's one thing I can't abide –

(To his WIFE, pointedly:)

– it's cold hen. Don't you agree ... Nirvana?

LADY EUGENIA

Navarro!

LORD ADALBERT

(Muttering, under his breath:)

You wrinkled old kumquat.

(As the EARL exits to the dining room, MONTY gallantly allows the OTHERS to follow. SIBELLA hangs back for a moment alone with him. MONTY betrays no particular familiarity.)

SCENE: J
SIBELLA & MONTY

SCENE 4A

MONTY

This is rather a coincidence, Mrs. Holland.

SIBELLA

Don't you "Mrs. Holland" *me!* Just when were you planning to tell me this happy news?

MONTY

I should think you would want to keep your voice down.

SIBELLA

You're always telling me to keep quiet, aren't you?

MONTY

(With a sigh:)

I would have sent you and Mr. Holland an announcement in due course.

SIBELLA

An *announcement?! I will not be treated like a –*

(SHE hesitates for a moment.)

MONTY

Yes...?

SIBELLA

You are despicable!

MONTY

Perhaps it is a very good thing we did not marry, Sibella.

SIBELLA

You didn't use to think so.

MONTY

You can't really imagine you have cause to complain of my marrying Miss D'Ysquith.

(SHE looks at him with frightened eyes.)

SIBELLA

You don't have to, Monty. You could call it off. You must.

(For the first time in their relationship, MONTY appears to have the upper hand ... and HE quite likes it.)

MONTY

There was a time you and I might have fulfilled our natural destiny and married each other.

SIBELLA

(Sarcastic:)

That would have been a very pleasant arrangement. We should have been so comfortably off, shouldn't we?

MONTY

Well, I've no doubt we could've scraped along.

SIBELLA

I can't imagine either of us, Monty, scraping along. We should have hated each other in a week.

MONTY

We should never have done that, Sibella. We know each other perfectly, better than anyone else could. We should have always loved each other. That is, if you loved me as I love you.

(SIBELLA'S eyes tear up.)

SIBELLA

Monty, I *do* love you. And had I not been so sure that you loved me, I should never have risked marrying Lionel.

MONTY

I won't even try to make sense of that convoluted statement.

(HE pulls his arm away as gallantly as HE can and exits into dinner.)

SIBELLA

Monty, please –

(SIBELLA follows him.)

~~#18A “A CONVOLUTED ABOMINATION” (SCENE CHANGE)~~

SCENE: K
SIBELLA, PHOEBE,
SHINGLE, LADY EUGENIA,
INSPECTOR, MAN #1,
MAN #3, WOMAN #1,
WOMAN #3

ACT TWO
SCENE 7

MONTY steps into the Prisoner's Box in Westminster Hall. MUSIC underscores scene.

#21A "THE TRIAL" (UNDERScore)

~~LORD HIGH STEWARD (Recorded V-O)~~

~~(Heard from the rear.)~~

~~On the charge of "willful murder", in the death by poison of Lord Adalbert D'Ysquith, eighth Earl of Highhurst, how do you plead, my lord?~~

MONTY

~~Not guilty!~~

~~(MUSIC out as a spot hits each individual WITNESS, one by one, as THEY testify. THEY each begin their testimony by stating their names.)~~

INSPECTOR

Chief Inspector Pinckney, Scotland Yard. No one was allowed in or out of the castle until each of the guests and all of the staff had been interviewed thoroughly.

MAN #1

Dr. Pettibone, Medical Examiner. At the post-mortem, I examined what Lord D'Ysquith ingested that night, and determined there was poison in the port.

WOMAN #3

Hilda, sir. It was my job to fetch the wine from the cellar. I gave it to Mrs. Chard.

WOMAN #1

Selina Chard. Before dinner began, I poured the port into a decanter, to allow the nuttiness to blossom.

MAN #3

Alfred Gorby. No one drank the port but his Lordship. I'd stake my life on it.

MISS SHINGLE

Poison? In the port? Poppycock! I was in a position to know that the Earl was dyspeptic and quite liverish. That's what killed him.

(An afterthought.)

Miss Marietta Shingle.

LADY EUGENIA D'YSQUITH

Lady Eugenia D'Ysquith. Adalbert, the Earl, my late husband, said that he feared Mr. Navarro was so eager to succeed him, he might smother him in his sleep!

SIBELLA

Mrs. Lionel Holland. Monty had every right to resent the D'Ysquiths! They disinherited his mother! They denied his very existence! Why shouldn't he feel he deserved to take his place among them – wouldn't you?

PHOEBE

Lady Phoebe D'Ysquith Navarro, Countess of Highhurst. My husband, the present Earl, is the kindest, the gentlest, the noblest of men, with the purest intentions, I can assure you!

~~**MONTY**~~

~~I submit to you that the entirety of this prosecution is but a fragile tissue of circumstantial evidence with no proof whatsoever of my guilt!~~

~~(MUSIC under.)~~

~~I appeal to your common decency, my Lords, and implore you to end this appalling charade at once!~~

#21B "AN APPALLING CHARADE" (UNDERSCORE)

**SCENE: L
D'YSQUITH -
CHAUNCEY,
MONTY, GUARD,
PHOEBE**

**ACT TWO
SCENE 8**

Monty's Prison Cell. It is the night before his verdict and MONTY is finishing his memoir.

CHAUNCEY, a janitor, enters.

CHAUNCEY

Mind if I tidy up a bit, your lordship? Just a quick once around and I'll be out of your way.

MONTY

(Gracious, as ever:)

By all means, my man. Do what you must.

(MUSIC fades out.)

CHAUNCEY

If I might, my lord, they're saying you gave quite an impressive speech at the trial today.

MONTY

Is that what they're saying, then?

CHAUNCEY

Oh, yes. I was proud to hear of it, I was, being a D'Ysquith myself, you know.

#21C "YOU'RE A D'YSQUITH" (REPRISE)

MONTY

Pardon? Did you say ... you're a D'Ysquith?

CHAUNCEY

Yes, my lord. Chauncey D'Ysquith. Me father was Nesmith D'Ysquith, maybe you've heard of him? Bit of a black sheep, he was. The family never wanted nothing to do with him. Can't say as I blame them. Wasn't much of a father, neither.

MONTY

(Softly, amazed:)

YOU'RE A D'YSQUITH...

YOU'RE A D'YSQUITH...

(Spoken:)

This is ... quite remarkable. Have you never felt ... ill-treated, by the D'Ysquith family?

(MUSIC gradually fades out.)

CHAUNCEY

Why no, how could I? They don't even know me. It's true, I ain't got none of the advantages of being a D'Ysquith, but I ain't got none of their troubles, neither.

MONTY

And I've seen you every day for the past six weeks, yet you've not said a thing.

CHAUNCEY

Bit of a shy sort, really. But tonight, I didn't know as I'd be seeing you again. Whatever happens, I wish you good luck, my Lord.

*(In a gesture of respect, MONTY offers his hand and THEY shake.
As a GUARD enters, CHAUNCEY steals away.)*

GUARD

Lady Navarro, Countess of Highhurst, is here to see you, my lord.

(PHOEBE enters the cell, as in love with MONTY as ever.)

PHOEBE

How are you, my darling?

MONTY

I am happy, now that you've come to see me.

*(THEY kiss passionately. Overcome, the GUARD quickly exits.
PHOEBE struggles to keep from crying. MUSIC underscore.)*

#21D "MEMOIR'S END" (UNDERSCORE)

PHOEBE

Monty ... oh, Monty.

MONTY

Phoebe, I beg you not to worry about the outcome tomorrow. I have come to believe that an unseen Providence is watching over me.

PHOEBE

I, too, believe that. I do.

MONTY

Yet I see the agony in your face and it torments me.

(PHOEBE is determined to control her emotions.)

PHOEBE

I do have ... one thing to ask.

MONTY

Anything, Phoebe, darling.

PHOEBE

That woman ... Mrs. Holland.

MONTY

(A beat.)

Yes?

PHOEBE

That awful night at Highhurst. And then again, at the trial. The way she looked at you.

MONTY

Looked at me? How?

PHOEBE

I am asking but one thing of you, Monty, and I must have the truth.

(MONTY swallows hard.)

Is she in love with you?

(MONTY hesitates, unsure how to respond.)

PHOEBE (Cont'd.)

(After a beat:)

No need to speak. You've just given me your answer.

(PHOEBE exits, leaving MONTY immeasurably sad. MUSIC resumes under scene.)

MONTY

And so I have no more of this memoir to write. The ending will be revealed in the morning, one way or the other, with the verdict of the jury. For now, I must try to sleep, though I should think it will be unlikely.

(Lights go slowly down in the Prison Cell, as MONTY lies down on his cot.)