



Scripts.com

# The Final Test

By Terence Rattigan

Announcing on Track 12,

**the 2:**

Steve!

Extra specials here.

- Here you are, sir.

- Thanks

- Senator Baumbacher?

- That is so.

Would you mind a moment, sir?

Is this your first visit to England, Senator?

That is so.

Have you any special purpose for you visit?

No sir. My visits purely exploratory.

While here, I hope to have the opportunity ...

... of observing as many aspects as possible  
of the British way of life.

I shall study closely the present  
crisis and the settling of it.

Heard the news?

Englands finished.

Hasnt got a ruddy chance.

Thats it.

Little Hope for England.

England May Collapse Today. The Crisis.

Well, I dont know.

I still think Englands got sort of a chance.

Ah, thank heaven, you at least  
have not been ...

... bitten by this bug of defeatism.

I beg your pardon, sir?

You said, you still think that England  
have a chance?

Oh well, if it doesnt rain,

I think well pull through.

Ah, you mean the harvest.

No sir, I mean the Oval wicket.

Weve 550 odd runs to make in the first innings.

- And if those Aussies ...

- Be so good, sir, as to inform me ...

... what the blazes youre talking about.

Cricket guvnor.

The final test.

England versus Australia at the Oval.

Cricket?

Now that is illuminating.

Ive heard these stories about

the passionate excitement cricket ...

... arouses over here, but I never

did realise it could drive a grave ...

... financial crisis off the national headlines.

Well, you see, sir, since the war we've

had quite a few of these financial crises.

One a year on average.

And we only get the Aussies over

here once in four.

Perhaps thats what it is.

But of course a war, I grant you, is different.

But a crisis ...

Oh, thank you. Thank you very much.

- Where to, sir?

- The cricket game.

Oh, you mean the Oval.

Excuse me, sir, please.

-Good morning.

-Morning.

Going to be an exciting day?

-I hope not.

-Oh?

All I want is to see the boys piling up

the runs quietly and not getting out.

I dont want any excitement, thanks.

Pardon me, sir, but as a stranger in these

parts, may I ask a question?

Go ahead.

This, I gather is the fourth day

of this particular game.

I also gather that during the past few weeks,

there have been four other games.

... each of five days, between these same teams.

Correct.

I also gather that this particular game

cannot possibly decide anything ...

... whichever team wins.

Thats right.

It is also, I am told, very possible that

neither side will in fact win this game.

Well lets hope so.

Now, looking around this field,  
I'd say at a rough estimate ...  
... there are 30,000 people here.  
About that.  
Now you hope there will be no excitement  
That is, you would say ...  
... a fairly general view among  
all these spectators.  
Well, of course ... if they're English.  
I see.  
Yes, I see.  
Well, what was your question?  
There's plainly no point in asking.  
Perhaps you'd be kind enough to tell me  
something about the state of the game.  
Well on Thursday and Friday,  
the Australians batted and ...  
... they made that score you see over there:  
Is it important that I should  
know what declared means?  
No... But on Saturday, we had a spot of rain  
so there was only about 10 minutes play.  
And the crowd all got rain checks.  
Good Lord, no. There's no guarantee of play.  
Look on your ticket, it's very clearly marked.  
In those 10 minutes, Hutton and Washbrook,  
the English opening pair made 7 runs ...  
... for no wickets. So in the next two  
days, it's up to England to try and ...  
... avoid getting beaten.  
I see. Couldn't they go further  
and try and win?  
Oh Good Lord, no.  
There's no hope of that.  
By Jove, there's something happening.  
-What?  
-Well, they're taking the rain covers off.  
Yes, that certainly is something.  
You mean they may actually be going to play.  
Well, if it doesn't rain in the next half hour.  
Of course, it might rain,  
and that would wash play out altogether.  
That would be fine.  
You don't, I gather, then feel completely

confident of your players skill.  
Weve got some good opening batting.  
Thats our weak spot there, No 5.  
- Five, S Palmer  
- Mmm. Old Sam Palmer  
He used to be good, but hes  
just about had it now.  
Who are you looking for, Sam?  
My youngster and his Auntie.  
Theyre not there yet.  
Your Reggie?  
I thought he was away to school camp.  
No, he got back last night.  
Listen Frank, if Cyril arrives early  
I dont want to see ...  
- ... any square cutting off the fast bowlers.  
- No.  
At any rate, not at the start.  
And if theyre bouncing ...  
... be careful. Dont try and hit them for six.  
Okay. Youre the boss.  
- Nervous as a kitten, isnt he?  
- Well, you cant blame him, can you?  
How did you feel, your first test?  
Like him, I suppose.  
Didnt know whether it was Christmas or Easter.  
Have a word to the lad, Sam.  
Alright skipper.  
Hows your Reggie getting on?  
Oh, wonderful. Really wonderful.  
His last report said that I ought to send him  
for a scholarship to Oxford.  
I meant his cricket.  
Oh. Oh well. He can bowl a bit, you know  
and he does make a few runs, now and then ...  
... for his ...  
Well, its his schools third XI, he plays for.  
Still, I cant say, mind you after what  
Ive seen that hes likely to be...  
Another Sam Palmer.  
Well, we cant expect everything, can we?  
Hes keen, skipper, mind you.  
Keen as mustard, he is.  
Dreamy night.

Turgid night.

Umbrous night.

Umbrous night!

Ebon night?

Ebon night!

Reggie, you still here?

I told you to go out to the Oval  
and Id meet you out there.

Okay Aunt, what is the time?

Its 20 past eleven, and youll be late now.

Oh, they probably wont start on time.

Oh yes they will.

Its a lovely sunny day outside.

Well, that doesnt mean theyll  
start on time, Auntie.

The wickets probably drenched.

I dont know anything about that  
but your Dad spent a lot of money ...

... for your seat, and Im not  
having you wasting it.

What have you been doing, anyway.

Oh.

Well, Ill just go put my new hat on.

- Are you ready?

- Yes

Well, it doesnt look like it to me.

What about your hair.

Oh Aunt, whos going to worry about  
my hair at a beastly cricket match.

Beastly cricket match?

Ill thank you, Reggie Palmer,  
to remember that youre the son ...

... of a very famous cricketer ...

... whos playing in probably  
his last test match ever.

And its up to you, to say the least of it ...

... to show him enough respect

not to sit in the expensive ...

... reserve seats at the Oval  
looking like a Dervish.

Now you go up to your room

this minute and comb your hair.

Sibidus had fled, another new night  
had locked the satyrs of my ...

... locked the satyrs of my heart.  
And when Auroras opal light ...  
... through open portals ...  
Oh no, whats it, the ruddy suckers.  
Reggie  
Well, thats a nice way to comb  
your hair, I must say.  
Come here.  
Auntie, are you sure you want  
to go and see the whole days play?  
Of course Im sure.  
Why?  
Well, you know you are as bored  
by cricket as I am.  
Reg, you mustnt say that.  
Its wicked.  
But you admitted it, Auntie.  
Dont you remember. We were at ...  
- ... Lords that day you said ...  
- Well, I wasnt myself at Lords that day.  
My feet were terrible.  
- Anyway, this is a test match.  
- Thats worse. Five ruddy days.  
Reggie Palmer, how dare you talk like that.  
This is cricket.  
Like an institution.  
Its historical. Its ...  
Well, its been going on for hundreds of years.  
Well, were going to the Oval now  
and thats flat.  
- Come along.  
- Oh dear.  
I was so near finishing it too.  
Whats so special about it?  
Well, its for Alexander Whitehead.  
You see, when he sent me this photo,  
he also said that my Famine to Despair...  
... showed promise.  
Only the last of these last few stanzas  
let down the rest of it.  
So Im rewriting it.  
And the trouble is, I have to  
send it off to him tonight,  
... because hes flying to

New York on Wednesday.

Please Auntie.

- Alright Reg, you can finish it.

- Oh Auntie, thanks awfully.

But mind, as soon as its done,

you're to come up to the Oval.

Half an hour or so should be safe.

Your Dads not in until third wicket down.

Still, I wouldnt put it past those

Australian fast bowlers to do ...

... hat tricks and things.

That reminds me.

What do you think of this?

Oh, I think its marvellous.

Its ... Its sort of ...

Well, it fits your style so well.

Yes, I thought so.

Thank you dear.

- Your Dad was funny about it, you know.

- Oh?

Well, he doesnt know the difference

between a Paris model and a plastic pixie hood.

Very well then, half an hour.

And mind, if your Dad finds out ...

I dont know a thing about it.

Dont worry, Ill read up the papers.

Anything, I miss he wont catch me on.

Ive often done it before.

- Hey Sam, Syd Thompson wants you.

- Right.

- Whats the weather going to be like, Syd?

- Proper scorcher.

Am I having supper with you tonight?

Thats right. Half past 7.

My Reggies back.

Fine.

And dont forget to watch out for Roy Wilson

dragging his feet today.

I dont need you to tell me how

to umpire young Sam.

Young Sam?

Oh, he used to coach me when I was a fatted colt.

Still thinks of me as a kid.

- How old are you, Sam?



- None of your business.

Too old to seem in the spit now anyway.

Anything on your mind, Sam?

Oh, I was just wishing I was

I shouldnt worry. Youre just

as good as ever you were.

Come on Cyril, lets get out there.

And good luck.

See you both at lunch.

And in a few moments time,

the batsmen ought to be coming out.

Ill just run through the batting

order quickly for you.

Hutton and Washbrook will open of course.

And then Weller at number ...

Talk about jitters.

Oh, youll be alright when

you get out there.

I was nearly sick just now.

You should have been sick.

I was my first test.

- How many did you make?

- 106

- Gosh, I envy you.

- Envy me?

Well, youve done it all.

Its all behind you.

Whatever you do out there wont

make any difference.

Theyll just say, Good old Sam. Pity you  
got out, but you cant make runs every time.

Thats all you know. Did you read

Ned Algy in the Record this morning.

No, what did he say?

Oh, about how that Englands been carrying a  
passenger for the last four tests, and ...

... how we shouldnt let sentiment

blind ourselves to the fact that ...

... S Palmer has just about had it.

Oh, you shouldnt listen to those writing baskets.

Its the people out there who count.

Looking for Cora?

No my youngster and his aunt.

- You married, Sam?

- No. Widower.

How did you know about Cora?

Oh, Ive been to the Stag and Hounds too.

She told me, you and she were pals.

She didnt tell me about you.

Why should she?

Ive only been there twice.

Funny her not telling me about meeting you.

Mad on cricket like she is.

... 4 to Hutton then makes him 7.

England 12 ...

- ... for no wicket.

- What makes me sick is that before the war ...

... you could walk in there and get six for  
a twin, and youd be ...

- Quiet.

- Moves in fast, and he bowls to Washbrook ...

... and Washbrook plays it straight  
into second slips hands.

- Washbrooks out.

- No ball.

No hes not. Hes alright

England want a quiet morning.

Time and wickets are as important as runs.

- Small Scotch, Cora.

- ... but with England 12 for no wicket ...

... then we return light programme  
listeners to the studio.

Oh look, I cant take these test matches.

Its just about killing me.

Sorry dear, what was it you said?

Small Scotch please.

Ah, doesnt make any difference.

Doesnt sound as if hes going to stay long.

England all out before lunch, if you ask me.

You dont want to talk like that Mr Coleshaw.

Thats defeatist talk that is.

Well I mean, who have we got

to come after these two.

Theres a lot to come, if you ask me.

Thatll be two shillings, dear.

Oh of course, theres always Denis.

But this new chap, this Frank Weller ...

... this one thats coming in next,

I reckon he wont make many runs.  
Oh, and why do you reckon that?  
Well, I mean, after all, what do we know about him?  
Quite enough, I should have thought.  
Third in the batting averages, and ...  
... and a hundred for Lancashire against the Aussies.  
Ah, but a test match thats different.  
Its temperament you want in a test match.  
At least, thats the way I see it.  
I expect thats the way we all see it, Mr Willis dear.  
But, theres nothing to say he hasn't got temperament til we see, is there?  
He was in here last Thursday, Cora.  
Did you know?  
He was in here again Saturday, as it happens.  
Nice looking young chap, dont you think?  
Oh well, depends what you call nice looking doesnt it.  
Shes blushing. Coras blushing.  
I dont know what you mean, Im sure.  
Oh Cora, we thought you only had eyes for one test cricketer.  
- Hes gone up in the batting order.  
- And down in age group.  
Very funny Im sure. All of you.  
There they are in the box going to.  
Can I have these a moment, Sam?  
- Who are you looking for?  
- Oh, just a girl I know.  
- Oh, Im so sorry.  
- Not at all, maam. Think nothing of it.  
What was that applause for?  
The batters just hit a high fly off a foul ball.  
- The batsman has just hit a four off a no-ball.  
Oh.  
Can I have a look, Frank?  
When did you say, you met Cora?  
Sure, I thought he was out.  
What did you say?  
Cora. When did you say you met her?  
Oh, about a week ago.

Cant get over her not telling me  
anything about it.

- You courting, Sam?

- Courting? Me with a boy of seventeen?

What does that prove?

That Im too old for those sort of larks.

- Huh.

- Just because I go into the old Stag now and then ...  
... and Cora and I ...

Im a sort of uncle to her, if you know what I mean.

And she tells me ...

Gosh, this is it.

- Good luck, Frank.

- Thank you.

Frank, dont try and get off the mark too quick.

If you cant keep them too well,

the first couple of overs ...

... just play them back, or cover up  
and watch them go by.

Thanks, Sam.

Youll be alright, son.

See you at lunch.

Good luck, Frank.

Lets have one of your best hundreds, Frank.

Whats it like out there, Cyril?

Theres nothing in it at all.

I played a bad shot.

- Good luck, Frank.

- Thanks.

The time is 12 oclock. We are now  
taking light programme listeners ...

... back to the Oval for a further  
report on the days play.

And here at the Oval, England  
are 40 for 1 wicket.

Blast, we lost a wicket.

- What did I tell you.

- Washbrook caught bowled Lindwall - 22.

Here comes young Frank Weller.

Out to play his first test innings.

- Brilliant young Lancashire left-hander.

- Cora!

- Coming dear.

- You better hurry ducky, your beaus in.

Who knows, he mightnt last so long.  
- Frank?  
- Might be Frank to you ...  
... but its Doctor Weller, to me.  
Now heres his first ball from Lindwall.  
Left outside his off-stump, and he  
thrashes at it, and ...  
... he was lucky not to get a touch on that one.  
Ruddy young fool.  
He plays forward and pops it up ...  
... just short of short leg, and  
Cornes almost made a catch out of that.  
Its no good. I cant stand it.  
You can listen, if you like and  
let me know whats happening ...  
... after its happened.  
I prefer it that way.  
You know, Fred, I dont think this is such a joke.  
I really believe our Cora has gone off  
the deep end good and proper ...  
- ... about that young chap.  
- ... he bowls. Its a good length ...  
- ... ball outside the off-stump.  
- Poor old lass.  
... and there he is. Weller off the mark.  
A characteristic rolling ...  
... cover drive off his back foot.  
Another homer! Hot dog!  
Could you tell me the right time, please.  
Why certainly, maam.  
My gosh, its only 5 minutes after 12.  
- Thanks.  
- This goes on until half past six?  
Say, dont those guys out there  
ever get tired standing around ...  
... for seven hours solid?  
Theres a lunch interval at half past one.  
Oh, am I glad to hear it.  
The time is just two minutes short  
of half past one.  
Before the next programme, heres ...  
- ... a record of a Chopin prelude.  
- Half past one! Gosh!  
Yes yes, of course.

Got it now. Ive got it now ...

... or have I?

- Say, somethings happening.

- Lunch.

Tell me, is there a quick lunch counter at this stadium.

Well there is a place where you can get sandwiches, I think, ...

... but its not exactly quick.

- There is a restaurant.

- Fine.

Would you care to join me, maam?

- Well done, skip.

- Good show, Frank.

- The bowling looked good from here.

- Yes.

- Frank had a sticky time, didnt he.

- Well, hes still out there anyway.

Hell be right this afternoon.

Youll see.

Nice work, young fellow.

Youve got over your nerves now.

Yes, youll be hitting them all over the field, this afternoon.

Yes, Frank, I will.

I forgot to ask you, Sam.

Are you taking that coaching job at Eton?

No. Ive turned it down, skipper.

I thought you liked the idea.

Well, I did in a way. Yes.

Good job, mind you. Not saying it isnt.

I like coaching youngsters, and

Id still be with cricket, but ...

... we cant always do what we want to do, can we?

I dont see why not in this case.

Well, look at it this way, skipper.

If Reggies going to get on and perhaps ...

... go to Oxford. He might be meeting some of these young lads from Eton ...

... and making friends with them perhaps. And

then, if hes got to say who his Dad is well ...

- You see my point, dont you

- Not entirely, Sam.

I think you forget the worlds moved  
on a bit since you were Reggies age.  
I dont know. Young chaps are  
much the same today, Id say, skipper.  
Still rather sensitive about their Dads  
having the right sort of job and all that.  
No. Ive bought myself a sports goods business.  
Youre going to be a big business man are you?  
Oh no, I cant have much to do with it.  
Ive no head for business.  
Never have.  
No, it looks as though Im going to do  
a lot of gardening for the rest of my life.  
Sam, I ... Id like to meet your Reggie.  
Would you really, skipper?  
Well, Ill bring him up to the ...  
... dressing room at lunch time tomorrow if you like.  
- That would be grand.  
- Hed be really thrilled to meet you.  
The nights young,  
and I let her slip  
My crushed heart bleeding  
Gosh. Just about perfect.  
Just about perfect.  
Lovely talk and no error.  
- Oh hello, Auntie  
- Hello Auntie indeed.  
I thought youd got yourself run over or something.  
Im awfully sorry.  
I got stuck again.  
In fact, I got stuck several times.  
I quite forgot the time. What is it?  
Seven oclock.  
Oh Lord. It isnt.  
You mean its over.  
As if you didnt know.  
Oh, I didnt honest I didnt.  
What happened?  
Whats the close of play, Auntie.  
Quick. Dadll be back in a second.  
If you think, Im going to help you  
lie to your father, my boy ...  
... youre very much mistaken.  
Youll take your medicine from him.

Of all the disgraceful things to do.  
And your Dads last match, too.  
Did he ... did he bat?  
Well, luckily for you, he didnt.  
Whats the score, Auntie?  
Whats the score?  
Ive got to make sense, when he comes in.  
Oh please Auntie. I really didnt  
know what I was doing. I promise you.  
I dont want to upset him.  
You dont either, do you, Auntie?  
Youre a wicked naughty boy.  
England made 320 something ...  
- ... for 2 wickets.  
- Alright.  
- Did you bring the paper in?  
- No I didnt.  
Oh Lord. Youll have to tell it to me then.  
- Who made the runs?  
- O Lord, my feet.  
- Who made the runs, Auntie?  
- This new chap, Weller.  
- He made 120.  
- Uh huh. Not out?  
- No, he was out.  
- How?  
- Here take this.  
- How was he out, Auntie?  
- He was caught.  
- Where?  
Silly boy. How do I know where?  
By that chap who stands right of ...  
- ... the bowler, I think.  
- Mid off.  
- Was it a good catch?  
- Well, he caught it.  
- Anything sort of thrilling happened?  
- Thrilling? In a test match?  
Dont think it will rain tonight, do you Syd?  
Shouldnt think so.  
Winds from the north.  
Drinks. Drinks.  
Shall I tell him, Im ill or something?  
Youll do no such thing, Reggie Palmer.



You'll have supper with your Dad and Mr Thompson and make the best of it.

See.

- You didn't have any lunch, I suppose.

- No Auntie.

- Oh yes you did.

- But ...

You had it with me and an American gentleman.

In that restaurant across the road.

Remember?

It was tomies and salad and a very nasty trifle.

And it cost the American gentleman

- It was just about 8 and 4 pence too much.

- Yes Auntie.

Reggie.

Are you there, Reg?

O Lord, I hope I can make sense.

Hello Dad. I'm sorry you didn't

get a chance to bat.

I wasn't.

How did you get back so quick?

Oh, we caught a bus alright.

You must have been lucky. When

I left there were still queues a mile long.

- Oh.

- Come and meet Syd Thompson.

- Syd, this is my Reg.

- Glad to meet you.

- Yes he looks like you, Sam.

- Oh I can't see it myself.

More like his mother, I'd say.

- Enjoy the game today?

- Yes yes, very much.

- What's this, Reg?

- Oh just something I wrote ...

... this morning before I went to the cricket.

- What's ebrown?

- Ebon

It's nothing, just taken for ebony in poetry.

Can you now?

Well this is quite something.

Do you want to read it, Syd?

It's a poem.

Eh? No not me.

Not unless its about cricket.

Cricket?

Poets dont write about cricket.

Come and help me lay the table.

Have a drink, Syd.

That I do.

- Skipper batted well, didnt he?

- Yes. So did Weller.

- Yes, after lunch.

- No wasnt so good before lunch, was he.

Nervous as a kitten.

Just like me 24 years ago, practically to the day.

And you made a hundred in your

first test match too, didnt you Dad?

- Thats right.

- And youll make a hundred tomorrow ...

... in your last, I bet.

Hutton and Crocketts too when Weller got out like that.

If Denis had gone six I wouldnt have

fancied going in tonight, just before the end.

- It was a good catch, wasnt it.

- Good catch?

The one Weller got out to at mid-off.

If thats what you call a good catch

now I know whats wrong with your fielding.

A child of six couldnt have missed it.

Besides it wasnt mid-off it was mid-on.

Oh yes, thats right. Mid-on.

Oh for heavens sake, Reg. Havent

you learned the difference between ...

... mid-off and mid-on yet?

Well, it was a bit difficult to see

from where we were, you know Dad.

Well, they were good seats.

They cost good money.

- Oh youre back dear, thats good.

- Yes.

- What was wrong with the seats, Ethel?

- Nothing was wrong with them, why?

Well, Reg said he couldnt see very well.

Oh well, ah, now you come to mention it.

He did have rather a big man ...

... sitting in front of him.

Well, that shouldnt have made any difference.  
That stand is tiered.  
Well this man was very big.  
He was almost a giant.  
Ooh, damn, my feet, theyre terrible.  
What with the heat and the crowds ...  
... and queuing for that tube  
for half an hour ...  
... Im fair worn out.  
- You said bus, didnt you Reg?  
- I meant to.  
Youve been giving me the tail, Reg?  
You or your aunt.  
- Me, Dad.  
- You didnt go?  
- No.  
- What was the matter?  
- Didnt feel well or something.  
- No. I was writing, you see Dad ...  
... and I forgot the time.  
- Forgot the time?  
- Well, thats true.  
When youre writing, I cant explain it,  
but you get so worked up and so ...  
... oh I dont know. Its like being  
drunk as I imagine it.  
And its as if, as if there isnt  
just isnt ... time.  
Do you understand what I mean, Dad.  
I might have been batting today, you know.  
- Yes, I know.  
- For the last time in a test match.  
And I wouldnt like you to have missed that Reg.  
Even if it was only just the one ball,  
I wouldnt like you to have missed it.  
Stupid, I know, but thats the way it is.  
- You coming tomorrow?  
- Well yes of course I am.  
Well, youve only missed Frank Weller then.  
And youll have plenty of chances  
seeing him in the future.  
Dad, Im awfully sorry. Really I am.  
Its alright Reg.  
Only the next time anything like this

happens, dont tell me any more stories.

Makes me think youre scared of me,

and I dont like that.

I dont like it a bit.

Sorry Dad.

Remember that.

- Arent you having one?

- No. Ive got to think of tomorrow.

This is good, is it Reg?

Well, I think so Dad.

Im sending it to Alexander Whitehead.

Arent you troubling, Mr Whitehead a bit too much?

Well, hes always saying in the papers

how he wants to help young poets.

Oh that reminds me. Do you mind

if we look at the television tonight?

Were doing a one act play of his,

and I do want to see it.

Yes. Oh, I like a good play ...

... especially when its short.

Suppers ready.

Good evening, Syd.

Evening, Ethel.

And if Mr Whitehead does buy that poem

of yours for 100 or so ...

Id trouble you for 15 shillings of it,

because thats what you owe me ...

... for your seat.

I hope theres enough, Sam.

Anyway, you at least had a good lunch ...

... which is more than Reggie and I did.

And what did you and Reggie have for lunch?

Tell him, Reggie. Tell him.

Well go on, silly. Tell.

You havent forgotten have you?

- Oh Auntie.

- Oh.

So youve found out have you?

Well dont blame me ...

... for having whatsoever to do with it.

Oh no. I know Ethel.

I can see that.

- Find out what?

- Never you mind.

And what was the tale you wanted  
him to tell me about lunch.

- Will you be quiet.

- Fine pair.

Conspiracy in my own family.

You silly boy.

How did you give it away?

- You did.

- I did?

- Well, I like that I must say.

- You said Weller was caught by ...

... the chap who stood to the  
right of the bowler.

Well, Ethel never could tell her  
left hand from her right ...

... isnt that so, Ethel?

And hows the world been treating you these days?

By kind permission of the third  
programme of the BBC ...

... we are presenting tonight

a comedy in one act by Alexander Whitehead ...

... entitled Follow the Turtle to my Fathers Tomb.

The cast is as follows: the part of  
Godfrey is played by Valentine Dyall ...

- Alright Ethel? Make yourself at home, Syd.

- ... the part of Antonia by ...

... and before we begin I would like  
to warn you that we do not consider ...

... this play suitable for children.

Oh good.

The scene in limbo.

The time is now ...

... or perhaps yesterday,

... or possibly even tomorrow.

Limbo? Wheres that?

Sort of hell.

Oh, how nice.

Come. Come.

Who are you?

Jocasta!

Clythenope!

Antonia. What do you want with me?

An answer. An answer.

We await your faithful answers.

Just as the hinge of fate ...  
... wings the future like an undimmed brain.  
Which of us do you allow?  
Antonia? Jocasta? Clythenope? Which?  
Ah. How came I here?  
I suppose the surgeons knife slipped.  
Somewhere in the neighbourhood of my gall bladder ...  
... dividing all the gall into three parts ...  
... which is now the bright sword  
of the archangel Michael.  
... poised over my dead skull like  
a single blade of the aurora borealis.  
And the swabs, which the theatre sisters  
littered on the dunes of my belly ...  
- Well.  
- ... now litter the sky ...  
... like bellying clouds.  
The hiss of the anaesthetic ...  
... is the whisper of an eternal wind  
in the great conch of God the earth.  
- Oh.  
- Where am I? In hell or in heaven?  
Heaven is hell, and hell is heaven.  
- Such is life in death ...  
- Thats the 45 bus going past.  
... where one is dead but no living,  
where one is alive but not dying ...  
... what is anything but nothing.  
Nothing. Nothing.  
I thought you said this was a comedy?  
Yes Auntie, of course it is.  
Oh ... well, it probably  
gets more comedy later on.  
The scene now changes to a graveyard  
in Adrian Evan.  
I dont think Ill come in, Sam.  
Ill say goodnight.  
Alright, Syd. Im sorry about the play.  
Bit above our heads, Im afraid.  
I can see why they said not for children.  
- Goodnight, Sam. Thanks for supper.  
- Youre welcome.  
- Good evening Mr Palmer.  
- Evening.

- Goodnight, Sam. Good luck.

- Thank you.

Good evening Sam. Going to beat  
your own record tomorrow?

I hope so.

Last orders, Ladies and Gentlemen, please.

Last orders, please.

- There you are, dear.

- Thank you.

- Hello, Sam.

- Hello.

- Another guinness, dear?

- No, Ive had my two, dear.

Well, have this one on the house  
to celebrate Franks hundred.

Oh, I dont mind if I do.

Here, put a little something in  
that to take home, will you dear.

Youre just in time.

Mild and bitter?

No, Im off it tonight.

Ill have a lemonade or something.

Not on the house either.

Did I love you or you or you?

Or all three equally?

A direct question demands an answer after it.

Say. Say. Say!

And so as my soul flies, rocket pure,  
through that great dome of discovery ...  
... that men call the sky, and as  
the scarlet thread of my tangled life ...  
... is rewound on the remorseless looms  
of the Gods, so do I give you my answer.

My answer is ... Yes.

Oh that was wonderful, Auntie.

Yes dear. Wonderful.

Imagine his answer being Yes.

Oh, I think that mans a genius.

- Time please.

- Goodnight Cora. Goodnight all.

There you are, dear.

Have it on the house.

Watch your step, Daisy.

Oh, Mr Harbolt will see me home.

Won't you, ducky?

Not tonight, Daisy.

- Goodnight Cora.

- Goodnight.

- Goodnight Mr Sefton.

- Goodnight dear.

Time gentlemen please.

Not you dear, of course.

I didnt know you met Frank Weller.

- Didnt you?

- Goodnight, Cora.

- Goodnight, dear.

- I thought Id told you.

- You didnt, you know.

Didnt I?

Must have forgotten.

Goodnight, Mr Burrows.

- Goodnight Mrs Pepper, come again.

- Goodnight Cora.

- Goodnight Cora.

- Goodnight Tony. See you tomorrow.

- Goodnight.

- Come on Bill, youre always last. Theres a good boy.

Cora.

- Oh Fred, you can lock up now.

- Okay.

- Mmm?

- About this chap, Frank Weller.

Oh? What about him?

I wouldnt see to much of him, if I were you.

- Oh? Why not?

- You know why not, Cora.

You know his reputation

... with the girls.

Well, like he was involved in a divorce case?

Nothing in that except bad luck.

- How often have you seen him.

- Twice. Why?

Well, did he ... Has he ...

Well, I mean, did he suggest that ...

Of course he did.

He suggested I fly to Bagdad

with him next Tuesday.

Oh, talk sense Sam Palmer, do.



No need to take that tone, Cora.  
What Im telling you is for your own good.  
Not for yours, I presume.  
I dont know what you mean about that either.  
Well, its a funny thing. You said  
exactly the same thing about ...  
... Matt Parsons and Mr Hardy.  
Well, it was two of both of them.  
You know what they were after.  
Of course I know what they were after.  
How do you know I didnt want them to get it.  
- Cora!  
- Id like to know why you think ...  
... you've got the right to manage  
my life, Sam Palmer.  
Its not as if there was ... as if  
there was anything between us.  
For the last two years, youve just  
stood at that bar gooping away ...  
... and making goats eyes every  
night of your blasted life ...  
... whenever you were in town.  
And apart from a few kisses ...  
... under the mistletoe at Christmas  
and some mushy letters that dont say ...  
... anything more definite than  
I wish I was back at the old stud again ...  
... nothings happened. Nothing at all.  
Nothing.  
And yet, if I so much as look at  
another man, you talk as if ...  
... I was tottering on the brink  
of a bottomless pit or something.  
Well, I dont know, Im sure.  
Id just like to know what ...  
... Im supposed to be doing while youre  
waiting around there to make up your mind.  
Put a veil over me face?  
Crack a bottle over the head ...  
... of the first man who tries  
to be a bit friendly with me?  
You behave as if we were married or something.  
Well, were not married and were  
not or something either.

And if you want to know where  
Im going next Tuesday after hours ...  
... Im going to the Spotted Dog with Frank Weller.  
And I shall go anywhere else he wants to take me.  
Perhaps even to the bottomless pit.  
Who knows.  
And my time was up 5 minutes ago.  
And I dont need any more help, thank you.  
And if you dont want to get me  
into trouble, youd better buzz off.  
Well, I dont know what to say, Cora.  
I dont think theres anything to say.  
Well, I suppose youre right.  
Im ... Im nearly old enough ...  
... to be your father.  
Thats no reason why you should behave like one.  
That thing you said just now about ...  
that thing about or something.  
That was a joke wasnt it?  
Oh, I gave myself a stitch laughing.  
Id like to think it was a joke.  
Im a bit old fashioned, you see.  
And well, the girl I ask to ...  
... to marry me. You see I want to be  
well you know sure about.  
Very interesting, Im sure.  
I really dont see what your views  
on marriage have got to do with me.  
Oh ... Goodnight Cora.  
Goodnight.  
How many runs exactly did Frank Weller make today?  
A hundred and twenty.  
Im going to double that, tomorrow.  
Well, well see wont we.  
Yes. Well see.  
- Auntie ...  
- Mmm?  
Do you think, I dare ring him up?  
Ring him up? But theyd never  
give you his number.  
I know the number. It was on his letter.  
But you cant go ringing up famous  
authors in the middle of the night, love.  
But its not the middle of the night,

and Im sure he wouldnt mind.  
After all, I only want to tell  
him how much I enjoyed his play.  
No one could object to that.  
Well, I know I wouldnt.  
And then I could just slip it in  
about sending him the poem, and ...  
... and then I could be sure hed  
read it couldnt I.  
I dont know, Im sure.  
But Henleys only a toll like this ...  
only about ninepence.  
Reg, Im not at all sure about this.  
Four of the one card in the universe  
that gives him the pack ...  
... you have to play.  
Well, if youd given me some  
indication as to what you wanted ...  
... instead of sitting there goggling at me.  
Are you suggesting that I should  
have cheated, is that it?  
Well you usually do.  
What an absurd idea.  
Pay no attention to my secretary.  
Her sense of humour ...  
... is roughly as acute as Neros.  
- Partner, may I go out.  
- No. Yes.  
Damn, answer it will you, Sammi.  
You answer it. Youre nearer.  
My secretary.  
Hullo. Yes this is Alexander Whitehead speaking.  
This is Reginald Palmer ...  
Reginald Palmer.  
Yes, I sent you some poems the other week.  
I just rang up to tell you how  
much I enjoyed your play ...  
... Follow the Turtle to My Fathers Tomb  
Yes, it was on television tonight.  
This is entirely your fault.  
Im in the clutches of a ...  
... hysterical fan.  
Oh, thank you so much. No, Im afraid  
I didnt see it myself.

I was working.  
Did you know they were televising  
Turtle tonight?  
- No. Were they?  
- Youre sacked.  
You sent me some poems?  
Oh yes yes, of course I remember.  
Yes, I thought they were excellent.  
Oh thank you so much Mr Whitehead.  
For heavens sake, rescue me Sammi.  
As a matter of fact, the one you  
told me to rewrite ...  
... Im sending down to you  
first thing tomorrow morning.  
Yes, Im afraid I missed the last post.  
Oh, thats splendid.  
Ill tell you what Ill do.  
To be quite sure that I get it.  
Ill have my secretary ...  
... Miss Fanshaw pick it herself up from  
the post office on her bicycle.  
No no, she wont mind at all.  
Its only two miles.  
- Not all of its uphill.  
- Hurry up, Alex.  
Yes, well, this moment I must  
get back to work now.  
It was most kind of you to call.  
We must meet some time.  
Oh, Id love to, Mr Whitehead.  
Yes. Yes, I could come down to Henley any time.  
Um how about Wednesday morning?  
Your plane doesnt leave ...  
... until 4pm does it?  
This juvenile delinquent seems to  
know more about my movements ...  
... than I do myself. I think  
I shall engage him as my secretary.  
Well, Im afraid Wednesday wont be any good.  
It will have to be tomorrow.  
Alex what are you doing?  
I must see him now. If I dont  
hell start a ...  
... Down with Alexander Whitehead

club or something.

I shall be coshed coming out of the Atheneum.

Im afraid the evening wont be any good.

Better make it the morning about 11:00.

Hes rung off.

I think this must be the most awful thing thats ever happened.

Well, you cant go dear, and thats flat.

But if I dont, hell think Im terribly rude.

Ring him up again. Tell him you made a mistake and youve ...

... got another engagement.

To go to a cricket match.

He would think I was mad.

Dont you realise, Auntie, this man is the greatest poet since Shakespeare?

I cant insult him, just like that.

I dont care who he is, dear, or what he is.

But Auntie, I ...

- Hello Sam.

- Hello.

- You alright, dear?

- Yes, why?

I dont know. You look a bit worried.

Oh, Im alright.

Well, Im off to bed, and youd better do likewise.

A lot depends on tomorrow.

- Goodnight, love.

- Goodnight, Ethel

- Goodnight, Reg.

- Goodnight, Auntie.

Reg, you know Cora dont you?

At the Stag, I mean.

Oh yes, you had her to tea one day.

What do you think of her?

Oh, I dont know, Dad. She seemed a bit ... sort of ... well ... ordinary

Hm, which is another way of saying common, I suppose.

- Well, I ...

- Alright alright.

Bed.

Thanks Dad.

- Dad.

- Yes, Reg?

I ... um ... rang up

Alexander Whitehead tonight.

- Did you?

- Yes.

Yes, he was awfully kind. He asked me to go over to Henley and see him.

Did he really? When.

Oh, some time.

- Dad.

- Yes, Reg?

Oh, doesnt matter.

By the way, I want you to come up

To the dressing room ...

... in the luncheon interval, tomorrow.

Theyll let you through with a note from me.

Oh, why Dad?

Mr Hutton wants to meet you.

Mr Hutton?

Oh yes, the English captain.

Thats a thrill for you, isnt it?

Yes Dad. Quite a thrill.

- Reg.

- Yes.

What would you say if I was to tell you that ...

What Dad?

Mmm. It doesnt matter.

Itll keep.

- Goodnight.

- Goodnight, Dad.

- Morning Reg.

- Morning Auntie.

Oh, I glad youve got some blue on.

Makes you look almost human.

- You telephoned that Mr Whitehead yet?

- No.

Well it is a bit early.

You can do it after breakfast.

- Morning Ethel.

- Morning love.

Oh.

You didnt sleep well did you?

What makes you think that?

Well you dont look as if you did.

Well, I did anyway.

You should have taken one of those pills.

How do you expect to make runs  
if you dont get to sleep?

Stop it Ethel, do you mind.

- Well, I was only saying.

- I know what you were saying ...

... but I said stop it, if you dont mind.

I dont want to be reminded of  
what Ive got to do today.

Im sorry dear, Im sure.

Well, Im glad youve got the new suit on.

This is what youve got to hand  
in at the door, Reg.

- The door?

- Yes, at the pavilion to send up to the dressing room.

- Oh yes, thank you.

- Dad. Ive got to tell you something.

- Yes Reg?

Last night, you said I wasnt to tell  
you any more stories.

You said, I wasnt to be scared of you.

Didnt you Dad?

- Yes.

- Well then, its this.

Im not going to the Oval this morning, Dad.

Ive got to go to Henley.

Dont listen to him, Sam. Hes talking nonsense.

It isnt true.

Did you know about this?

Well, I knew it was in his mind,  
but I never thought ...

How can you go upsetting your Dad like that.

This morning of all mornings.

I shouldnt have let you do something  
you know is out of the question.

Im not asking him to let me do something, Auntie.

Im telling him Im going to do something.

- Oh you wicked boy. How dare ...

- Let me handle this, Ethel, if you dont mind.

Lets get this straight.

Why have you got to go to Henley?

To see Alexander Whitehead.

Oh. Do you remember promising me  
you'd come to the Oval today?  
I didn't promise Dad.  
I only said I would.  
You only said you would.  
You happen to remember why you said  
you would, or ...  
... have you forgotten me telling you  
it was important to me ...  
... that you should be there?  
Today of all days.  
No Dad, I haven't forgotten.  
Alright, then. Well there's no more  
to be said then, is there.  
- Have you got your fare?  
- Yes.  
- Do you know how much it is?  
- Yes, I've got enough to get there, anyway.  
And how are you proposing to get back?  
Well, you know, I thought I might  
hitchhike, or perhaps Mr Whitehead might ...  
You can give me the change this evening.  
Thanks Dad.  
I think it's the most disgraceful wicked  
cruel thing I've ever heard.  
- Yesterday was bad enough, but this ...  
- Alright Ethel.  
Off you go, Reg.  
Go on catch your train.  
Dad, I ... I've got to try and explain.  
I know you think it's terrible of me  
not to put off Mr Whitehead ...  
... and come and see you bat.  
But crickets been your life and  
of course you see there's something ...  
... awfully important.  
That's perfectly natural.  
But one's got to keep some sort  
of sense of values, Dad.  
After all, it is only a game, and  
you can't compare it to ...  
... well to the more serious  
things of life, like ...  
... like the things Mr Whitehead stands for.



Oh gosh. Im making it worse, I suppose.  
What I mean is, Dad, whatever you  
think about this game, it ...  
... it just resolves itself into  
banging a bit of red leather ...  
... about a field with a piece of wood.  
You do it well and I do it badly and Im sorry.  
But I dont see why I have to give  
up the chance of my life ...  
... just to go and watch you doing it.  
Oh, Im sorry. Ive said a lot of  
things I didnt mean to say.  
Someday, when my mind is ...  
Ill get back from Henley as  
quick as I can ...  
... and Ill go straight to the Oval.  
I hope Ill be in time to see you bat.  
Thanks for the pound.  
Ill pay you back.  
Well, Sam Palmer. How you could just  
sit there and let him say that I ...  
Answer that, will you Ethel.  
Itll be Syd Thompson.  
Im giving him a lift up to the ground.  
- Morning Ethel.  
- Morning Syd.  
What was your Reggie doing,  
running out of the house like that?  
He nearly knocked me down.  
Dreadful things happened.  
Im that upset, Syd, really I am.  
Do you know what that wicked boys  
gone and done now?  
- Hes ...  
- Ethel, if youre coming with us ...  
... youd better go up and get ready.  
Alright dear.  
Is it going to rain, Syd?  
- About tea time, Id say.  
- Better get my mac Syd.  
Trouble?  
Yes, our Reggie just gave us a  
piece of his mind. Thats all.  
- What about?

- Cricket.

Said it was just banging a bit of red leather round a field with a piece of wood.

Hit him for a six?

Why not?

Oh, because hes right I suppose.

After all when you get down to it

thats all it is, isnt it?

Sammy, are you feeling alright?

Oh, its a good game alright.

Im not saying it isnt.

Best in the world, I think but then Im good at it.

Or at least, I used to be.

You know Syd, my father never wanted me to go in for cricket.

Wanted me in the building trade, like him.

Well, shows how wrong he was, doesnt it.

- Does it?

- Well, youve made a bit, havent you.

Oh, Ive made a bit, alright.

Cricket has been good to me ...

... and Im not complaining, but the trouble with making a game ...

... your profession is that youre at the top too young.

The rest of way is a gentle slide down.

Not so gentle sometimes.

It makes one feel so ruddy useless and old.

Well, at least you reached the top Sam.

More than I did.

Your names known to millions.

Yes, Syd, and Im grateful for that I suppose.

But it isnt enough.

It isnt nearly enough.

A mans got to feel that hes justified himself in his life somehow ...

... and well building things is different.

What youve built is there when youve done and you can look at it ...

... and say thats what Ive done and then call it useful and ...

... Ive served a good purpose doing it.

Writing, thats the same I suppose.

What youve written is there ...

... on paper and people can read  
it and act it ...  
... even if a lot of people dont  
understand it or appreciate it.  
But banging a bit of leather around a field.  
Ill bang his bit of leather when I see him.  
Oh, it isnt only Reg.  
Ive been thinking it a long time.  
Only, I had hoped that Reg wasnt thinking it too.  
Thats not how it is with your kids?  
- I dont expect he meant it.  
- Oh he meant it alright.  
Oh well. Syd, I want runs today  
more than Ive ever wanted them before.  
Youll get them. Only, if youre  
going to be out LBW ...  
... dont do it my end, theres a fellow.  
Now dont look at my feet.  
I know Ive got the wrong shoes on ...  
... but Im not killing myself for anyone today.  
- Thats quite a hat, Ethel.  
- Oh, thanks Syd.  
Some people dont like it you know.  
Some people think it looks silly.  
I didnt say it looks silly.  
I simply said I thought you had ...  
- ... it on the wrong way round, thats all.  
- Oh.  
Shell never forgive me for that, you know.  
Now youre not going to let what  
Reg said upset you, are you.  
- Reggie? Ive forgotten all about him.  
- I dont think.  
Well, heres my lucky farthing.  
It always works.  
Put it in your pocket before you go in to bat.  
Thanks love.  
- Yes?  
- My name is Palmer. I have an appointment ...  
- ... with Mr Whitehead.  
- I think there must be some mistake.  
Im his secretary and make all  
Mr Whiteheads appointments for him.  
Oh, but Ive come all the way from London especially.

- When did you make this appointment?

- Last night on the telephone.

Oh ... oh yes, I think he told me something about it.

- Would you come in, Mr Palmer.

- Thank you.

What time did Mr Whitehead say he would see you?

- Eleven oclock.

- Was it about anything special?

Well, he asked me to show him this poem of mine.

A poem. I see. Thank you.

Well, if you wouldnt mind sitting down.

Ill go and see Mr Whitehead and tell him youre here.

The only thing is, hes really busy at the moment.

It may be just a little bit difficult to disturb him.

I shant be a minute.

- Go away.

- Time to surface, Alex. Alex!

- Did you pinch me?

- Yes.

- Youre sacked.

- I cant be. You sacked me last night.

I dont remember doing anything so sensible last night.

What idiotic game, Canasta is.

- Did I really lose 8 and ten pence?

- Yes.

Oh dear. Too much sun. Take it away.

What about your Ode to the Sun in the Listener last year?

I hadnt been playing Canasta til 5 in the morning.

Its only 11. I havent had my eight hours.

Fanshaw, you horrible woman go away.

Im going to sleep again.

Youll do nothing of the kind.

Youve got a lot on hand today.

Later, dear, later.

Besides, Master Palmer is downstairs waiting for you.

Who might Master Palmer be, as if anybody cared.

The character you invited down to see you last night.

I did nothing of the ki...

I did.

How dare you let me do a thing like that.

What else do I pay you for except to stop me inviting beastly little boys ...

- ... to my country retreat?

- A few other things.

- Well, cope with him dear.

- How?

Ive developed a very serious illness in the night.

It doesnt prevent you flying to America tomorrow.

No. It only lasts 24 hours.

Tropical origin. Very rare.

- Hes come all the way from London.

- Then he can go all the way back to London.

Hell go when youve seen him and not before.

Oh bother.

That was his poem.

He wanted you to comment on it.

I have commented.

Now read it properly and come down and be sweet to the poor boy.

Remember, you were his age ... once.

I very much doubt it.

How long will you be? Youve got an awful lot of letters to do today.

I should think about 2 hours.

Ive come to remember, I cant see anyone at all this morning.

As for the letters. Out of the question.

- Why?

- I have my poem to write for the New Statesman.

- Well you can do that this afternoon.

- It will take me all day.

- When are you going to see this boy then.

- In the spring.

Alex, youve got to see him.

I wont have you, behaving like this.

- Do you understand?

- Very well then I shall see him ...

- ... at lunch time.

- Do you want him to stay for lunch?

Are absolutely insensible to human suffering?  
I shall see him for 5 minutes at 1:30 precisely.

- I may give him a cocktail.

- Cocktail?

Well ginger pop then. Do go away Jess.

How can I enjoy my breakfast with ...

... you fluttering round me like an expectant vulture.

Shoo!

Ebon Night

TS Ella Willer Eliot.

Oh, its rather good.

Oh, Mr Palmer. Im so sorry.

Im afraid theres been a little mistake.

Mr Whitehead is quite sure that

the time he arranged with you ...

... on the telephone last night was

for half past one.

Half past one. But he said 11.

He did really.

Well perhaps you misheard him.

- Oh gosh. How awful. Couldnt he possibly ...

- No. Im afraid not.

Hes very busy at the moment. Would you

like me to make another appointment for you?

Well, how long is he going to be in New York?

- Rather a long time, Im afraid.

- Oh, I think Ill stay.

- The harms done now, anyway.

- The harm?

Well you see, I shouldnt really be here at all.

- Where should you be?

- Oh, it doesnt matter.

- Is it important?

- Well, it depends rather on how ...

... you look at it.

- Good morning.

- Oh, morning.

Good morning, Maam.

- Oh, good morning.

My word, I am surprised to see

you here again today.

Well, maam, I said to myself this

morning, if they can take it ...

... I guess I can too.

- Hello Sam.  
- Oh, hello.  
- Well, youre not windy are you?  
- Yes.  
I thought you old chaps got over that.  
You never get over it.  
Oh theres nothing to it, Sam.  
Its easy stuff.  
Youre taking Cora out on Tuesday, aren't you?  
- Thats right. She tell you?  
- Yes.  
Would you do something for me Frank, if I asked you?  
- Oh, I expect so. What?  
- Tell her you cant go.  
- Why?  
- Never mind. Tell her.  
I thought you said you werent interested.  
I didnt say that.  
I said we werent courting.  
I get you.  
- Well?  
- Well, its a bit up to her, isnt it?  
Its up to you too.  
Oh I wouldnt like to be rude to a lady, Sam.  
Of course, if she likes to tell me  
the dates off, well ...  
... thats a different matter.  
I see. It may mean you and I  
having a bit of a quarrel, Frank.  
Oh, we wouldnt quarrel, Sam.  
You and me? What an idea.  
Dont do that, do you mind.  
Clean shirt.  
Okay, Sammy boy. If thats the way you want it.  
Let battle commence.  
In half an hours play this morning, then  
England have scored 23 more runs ...  
... without losing a wicket. So with  
England 286, were returning to the studio.  
- Thank heavens.  
- Poor old Sam, hes having to wait ...  
... for his knock isnt he.  
Bet hes twittering up there on  
that balcony, poor old chap.

- What. Sam Palmer?

- Thats right.

He such an underdog he shouldnt be playing at all by rights. Should he?

I mean look what hes done so far this season.

Hes past it, no doubt about that.

I reckon hes got a pal ...

... on the selection board alright.

Can I have another gin and tonic please?

Isnt that funny. Were right out of gin.

But that bottle up theres nearly full.

I said, were right out of gin.

Why dont you try the Red Lion.

They serve anybody there.

Good morning.

Oh Mr Palmer, would you like me to get you some ginger beer or something.

No thank you.

These notices are wonderful arent they.

Yes. Do you see what they said about him when he won the Peabody Prize?

Oh yes yes, I did. The ...

The grand young man of English poetry.

Yes. That was quite a long while ago.

I say, arent you ever scared of being his secretary?

- Scared?

- I know I would be.

Id be scared to even talk to him at all, in case I was ...

... interrupting some inspiration of his.

Youve read a new terror in my job.

I can assure you, it has ...

... quite enough terror already.

- Do you keep a dog?

- Yes.

Oh, just a minute.

Hello?

Oh, good morning Mr Ponsonby.

I expect youre ringing up about the poem hes working on.

What?

When did you tell him this?

Are you sure, Mr Ponsonby? Because he told me this morning that ...



... he had to finish it before  
he left for America.

I see. And youre quite sure you dont  
need it until the Christmas edition.

I see. Its just that you wanted him  
to lunch tomorrow, is it?

Oh well, I happen to know he cant.

He has a date already. Yes.

Yes. Thank you so much Mr Ponsonby.

Goodbye.

- Can you hear voices?

- Well, I thought I did a moment ago.

I can hear them now.

What on earth can the brute be up to?

... and that one went past gullys left hand.

- Shut the door.

- ... and Porrit chasing it out there ...

... at third man. I dont think  
hes going to save the second.

- No he wont save it.

- Alex, really.

Oh Im just testing out my television  
set to see that ...

... its still working properly.

Do go away, dear ...

Ive got my poem to write for the New Statesman.

You know perfectly well you havent  
got to finish your poem.

Mr Ponsonby just rung up and let the  
cat clean out of the bag.

- Go away.

- This is Mr Palmer.

Hes been waiting a long time to see you.

How do you do.

Very nice meeting you.

- How is Bathingstoke?

- Well ... I dont know.

Ive never been there.

How extraordinary. I quite thought  
you came from Bathingstoke.

Who do we know then who comes  
from Bathingstoke?

A quite a different boy called Arkwright.

This is Mr Palmer.

He comes from London.

Oh really. How fascinating.

Well now what can we do for you, Mr Palmer?

- My poem.

- Your poem?

- Yes.

- Oh yes, your poem. Oh, of course yes.

Yes, Ive got it.

No I havent.

Oh well, I must have filed it.

Miss Fanshawe, fetch me Mr Arkwrights  
poem from the file.

Where exactly would the file be  
in which you put Mr Palmers poem?

The poetry file, dear. Its always kept in the study.  
Dreadful old muddler.

- Have a cigarette.

- No thank you.

No no, of course not.

Well now, I read your poem.

I liked it very much.

I thought it more effective ...

Oh thank you.

I thought it more effective of the near ...

- Is that a wicket?

- No a boundary.

Oh thank heaven.

Hitting about like that over the field ...  
... as if it wasnt a test match at all.

Were only two wickets down, you know  
but we can still lose this match.

- Two wickets? Dads not been in then.

- No.

Now...

What did you say?

- I didnt say anything, Mr Whitehead.

- Yes you did. I heard you distinctly.

You said Dad.

Palmer?!

Youre Sam Palmers son?

Dear fellow. Oh my dear fellow.

Do sit down please.

What must you think of me keeping  
you waiting like that.

Its all that idiotic Fanshawes fault.  
Fanshawe. Fanshawe!  
What on earth do you mean by not  
telling me who Mr Palmer was?  
- But I did.  
- You did nothing of the kind, dear.  
You never said he was Sam Palmers son.  
Here we have Mr Palmer coming all  
the way down from London ...  
Why have you come down from London?  
What on earth ...  
... are you doing here with your  
father going in ...  
- ... to bat any moment at the Oval.  
- I thought ...  
I thought it was more important to  
see you Mr Whitehead.  
More important to see me?  
Are you out of your senses?  
Couldnt your father get you a ticket?  
Oh yes, Ive got a ticket alright.  
You dont mean to say youre going  
to waste it. Do you realise ...  
Do you realise that I applied over  
... and if it hadnt been for that  
idiotic Fanshawe bungling ...  
... the whole thing, I should  
be at the Oval now.  
You wouldnt see me for dust.  
I didnt bungle it. You were  
unlucky in the draw. Thats all.  
Well its a very funny thing that  
Christopher Fry got his ticket  
Thats all I can say.  
Very funny indeed.  
My dear young fellow,  
you mustnt waste another moment.  
You must rush back to London at once,  
and pray youll be in time ...  
... to see your father bat. You  
couldnt give me a ticket, I suppose.  
Well, I have got a letter to get  
me into the pavilion.  
I know. Ill use that and you can have my seat.

- Wonderful. Come along.  
- Alex, for heavens sake.  
- Alex your letters.  
- Dont talk to me about letters, dear.  
Ive got a ticket to the Oval.  
Pull that stick will you.  
Youll kill yourself.  
Remember it's only a game.  
Philistine!  
Fool!  
Really, the way some people drive.  
- So you want to be a poet, do you.  
- Yes Mr Whitehead.  
- More than anything else.  
- Very commendable.  
Far too little poetry in the world.  
Tell me Mr Whitehead.  
Do you prefer Keats to Wordsworth?  
My dear boy, you mustnt expect me  
to talk about literature ...  
... when theres a test match on.  
My brain doesnt function properly.  
Ask me if I prefer your father to  
Don Bradman. Ill give you the answer.  
Ive got something to confess to you Mr Whitehead.  
Im afraid I dont awfully like cricket.  
Dont you really?  
I have heard of such people.  
Excuse me, Mr Whitehead, but isnt  
this a built up area?  
I should think so.  
Why dont you like cricket?  
Well the fact of the matter is  
I find it so frightfully dull.  
Frightfully dull?  
Well of course its frightfully dull.  
Thats the whole point.  
Any game can be exciting -  
... football, dirt track racing, roulette.  
The measure of the vast superiority  
of cricket over any other game ...  
... is that it simply refuses to cater to this ...  
... boorish craving for excitement.  
To go to cricket to be enthralled ...

... is as stupid as to go to a  
Chekhov play in search of melodrama.

- Oy!

- Did that policeman shout something.  
I think he was holding up the traffic Mr Whitehead.  
Oh how frightfully kind of him.

- What was I talking about?

- Um Chekhov.

Oh yes. Chekhov and cricket.

Great similarity you know.

Same sense of shapeless pattern, form, design.

Hes down to that superbly satisfied  
art which conceals art.

Having the same passion for a  
beautifully inconclusive ...

Your father would know what I was  
talking about.

- Great artist your father.

- Do you really think ...

... hes that Mr Whitehead?

- My dear boy, there are ...

... two innings of his that I  
shall remember to my dying day.

One was when Surrey needed runs fast.

He made 103 in just under an hour ...

... without a single vulgar or bucolic stroke.

The other was an occasion at Lords  
in a test match ...

Get out of the way!

When in the two hours between ...

... lunch and tea, he made with  
consummate elegance exactly ...

... 6 runs and broke the Australians hearts.

Oh a great man.

Man to be remembered.

We must be through the limit now, mustnt we.

- Well, I think thats ...

- Good we can open it up a bit.

Oh good shot, sir. Good shot.

- Row O? Row O.

- I beg ... - What the heck!

- Here! That seats taken.

- It is indeed madam, by me.

You cant come barging in taking

any vacant place you see.

- You ought to know better.

- Shh.

I will not hush and Id still like to know ...

... what youre doing in someone else's seat.

Its a very long story, Madam,

and though I should tell it ...

... to you quite beautifully this is not ...

Ahhh! Fool! Get back! Get back!

Dont get upset about it.

Well, they must come in now.

They cant make him ...

... face that last over.

Why dont those beastly umpires

call the luncheon interval?

Well, if thats what youre all

want to, why dont you shout ...

... at the beastly umpires.

Shout at the umpires?!

An interesting idea.

I must try it some time.

Too late now.

Lets hope they send in somebody else.

- Good luck, Sam.

- Thanks Jim.

Best of luck, Sam.

Good luck, Sam and dont worry

its a nice easy paced wicket.

Thanks Denis.

Oh its him Im afraid.

Excuse me.

Now here comes Sam Palmer to face  
these anxious last 4 balls before lunch.

Looking as trim and as competent  
as he did when he first came ...

... to test cricket 25 years ago.

A bit thicker perhaps, but ...

... just as reliable and reassuring looking.

Looks around the field.

Plots the fieldsmen in that ...

... experienced cricket brain of his.

And heres his first bowl from

Lindwall on the Pavilion end.

- Catch!

- Not out.

Hes hit him on the pad and an appeal for LBW.

Not out.

But it was a very close thing.

It was a very confident appeal.

Nevertheless, he gives another tug  
at that cap of his ...

... pulling it further down over  
his right ear as if it needed it.  
And settles down to this next ball  
from Lindwall.

... who comes in bowls to him  
on a length from the leg stump.  
He pushes it safely down there to  
forward short leg.

Just two balls to go.

Heres the first of them.

Lindwall from the Pavilion end  
bowls to him and ...

... he shoulders arms and lets  
it go through outside the off-stump.  
And now the last ball before lunch.  
Catch!

Hes out.

Sams out.

Poor Sam Palmer. LBW Lindwall nought.

You can feel the ...

... disappointment for him all  
the way around the ground.

That then is England 316 for 4  
and we return you to ...

But wait! Wait. Just a moment.

Look at this.

The entire Australian side is  
lined up in a corridor ...

... down from the wicket and theyre  
cheering Palmer ...

... as he walks back to the pavilion.  
And all the way around the ground ...

... people are standing up cheering.

Hutton stands back to let him  
go up the pavilion steps first.

Good old Sam.

Good old Sam.

Get up, madam.

But he didnt score.

Ive never seen a crowd swarm over  
the ground like this ...

... before the end of the match.

If hed made 300 runs, they couldnt  
have given him a grander reception.

And now, although hes gone into  
the pavilion ...

... the applause is still going on  
as fiercely as ever.

- I dont think any of us here are ...

- Rum and orange Cora, please.

... ever going to forget the last couple of minutes.

- Beg your pardon, dear. You said rum and orange.

- Yes please.

- Bad luck, Sam.

- Oh well.

You should have done that, you know skipper,  
standing back like that.

Its you they wanted to see.

Is that the way it sounds to you out there, Sam?

- Someone to see you, Sam.

- Right.

I dont believe you were out, Dad.

It didnt look out to me.

I was out alright.

Syd doesnt make mistakes.

Now skipper, this is my Reggie.

- Delighted to meet you.

- How do you do, sir.

- Looks like a cricketer, Sam.

- I know. Pity.

- Why pity?

- Well, hes going to be a poet ...

... and he ought to look like a poet.

Deceptive appearance, eh?

Come back 5 minutes before ...

... start of play, and well have  
a little chat about thold man.

- What about thold man?

- Never you mind.

Dad. Ive got to ask someone to dinner.

Well, your aunt wont like that.



It wont give her time ...

... to do her shopping.

Who?

Alexander Whitehead.

- You dont mean it.

- Yes.

- He isnt coming.

- Yes, he is.

What? You mean he liked your poem so much?

Oh he hasnt even read my poem.

At least, I dont think he has.

He wants to meet you.

He must be crackers.

Oh and heres your pound back.

I didnt need to use it after all.

I beheld today an astonishing spectacle.

It was no less than the personal

Dunkirk of an ageing cricketer.

But, a crowd of many thousands

with the wildest enthusiasm ...

... hailed it as his greatest triumph, no less.

- Oh dear, theyre the wrong colour.

- Well, its the best I could get, Auntie.

Well, it will have to do, I suppose.

Really Reggie ...

... I do wish we could have had

a bit more warning.

Well, he wont mind. Hes very bohemian.

Bohemian?

Ha! That means caviar and champagne.

Auntie, Mr Hutton told me today that

Dad had given up that ...

... coaching job because of me.

Is that true?

Well, he did say something about

it being a bit awkward ...

... with you going to Oxford and everything.

I see. Well, youve got to get

him to take that job, Auntie.

And how, I should like to know.

You know what its like getting

your Dad to do anything.

Mules arent in it.

But you and I can manage it together.

A conspiracy, Auntie.  
Probably end like that little  
conspiracy of ours last night, eh?  
- Do help me, Auntie. Will you?  
- Alright.  
Its very important to me, you know.  
Its important to my amour propre.  
And whats that when its at home?  
Do me up, Ethel, will you?  
Blasted things.  
Alright dear, dont get over excited.  
Youll choke yourself.  
Of all the evenings to invite a  
ruddy poet to supper.  
Well, thats what Ive been telling him.  
Now look, Reg, if I get a bit  
stammering, and get myself ...  
... into a sentence, and dont know  
how the blazes to get out of it ...  
... and thats very likely mind you,  
you chip in quickly, you understand.  
Rescue work is what I want from you tonight.  
And anyway, I expect you to do  
You and Ethel.  
Oh Lord, here we go.  
I havent done this blooming tie yet.  
Well, I never. If it isnt you again.  
What are you doing?  
Are you following me about?  
No no. This is Balmoral isnt it?  
Of course, its Balmoral.  
Now you be off or Ill call the police.  
- But Ive been invited.  
- Oh. Oh it isnt. It couldnt be.  
Mr Whitehead.  
Oh do come in please.  
How dreadful. What ever must you think of me.  
Id no idea.  
Oh, youre dressed.  
Will the great man be dressed too?  
- You mean my brother?  
- Hello, Mr Whitehead.  
You wretched boy. Why didnt you warn me?  
Look what Im wearing.

Oh please, Mr Whitehead.

Dont you worry one bit.

My brother and I often slip into something decent for dinner.

It makes us feel more relaxed.

You know.

Now would you just excuse me while

I nip into the kitchen ...

... because its our maids night out, see?

Now Reggie, look after Mr Whitehead, dear.

- Come in here, Mr Whitehead.

- Shhh. Hold still.

- Can I get you a glass of sherry or something?

- No thank you.

- A cigarette, Mr Whitehead?

- No thank you.

Reggie, its quite on the cards that

Im going to make ...

... an embarrassing spectacle of myself tonight.

Im absolutely paralysed with nerves.

I once met Jack Hobbs, you know ...

... and for 10 minutes, I could do nothing but make incoherent clicking noises ...

... which luckily he took to be my observations on the weather.

If anything like that should happen tonight, I want you to help me out.

Oh. This is my father.

Dad, Mr Alexander Whitehead.

How do you do.

Bad luck it raining this afternoon, wasnt it.

Yes, very bad luck.

Of course, there wouldnt have been a finish to the game anyway, would there.

I suppose not.

Pardon me, Mr Whitehead.

Reg would you come and help me, dear.

Alright, Auntie.

Excuse me.

We saw a play of yours, last night on television.

Did you?

- Yes, quite remarkable I thought.

- Did you indeed?

Quite remarkable.

- I saw you bat this morning.  
- Did you?  
- Bad luck, your getting out like that.  
- Oh, I dont know.  
Tell me, Mr Palmer.  
Did the ball go with his arm?  
Well, Mr Whitehead, quite frankly thats  
the sort of thing ...  
... we say in the pavilion, afterwards.  
Between you and me ...  
... it didnt do a blooming thing.  
It was straight and I missed it. Thats all.  
Oh, thats wonderful. Thats exactly  
what I thought youd say.  
You see, I think I ought to tell you,  
Mr Palmer. Youve been a hero of mine ...  
... ever since I was at school.  
- Really?  
- Yes.  
And this morning, when you were out  
like that and the ...  
... crowd stood for you, well I blubbed  
just as if ...  
- ... I was at school again.  
- Well, I never.  
At the same time, I dont mind  
telling you, I envied you a bit.  
- Envied me?  
- Your choice of profession.  
You see, others arent quite so rewarding.  
Well, take my own for instance.  
I mean, when the time comes for me  
to retire and I write my last play ...  
... if Im bowled for a duck on the  
first night, I dont quite see ...  
... the audience standing and cheering  
me for five minutes.  
Yes, but your profession ...  
well, I mean it is a profession.  
After all, what you do lasts.  
What I do ... what I have done rather ...  
Well, theres nothing to show.  
Nothing to show?! But youre out of your mind.  
I beg your pardon, Mr Palmer

Its just that I always get so excited about this.  
You see its the old argument of the  
non-creative artist being forgotten ...  
... while the creative artist lives on.  
Well, am I a, what was it, a non-creative artist?  
Of course you are, but now tell me Mr Palmer,  
do you think Paganini is forgotten?  
Is Pavlova? Is Nijinsky? Is Garrick?  
Of course, theyre not.  
The non-creative artist has it over  
the creative artist all the time.  
Because what hes done or has done  
must go on getting better and better ...  
... as the years go by, until a  
legend of greatness is built up ...  
... which goes far beyond the actual truth.  
Do you think Paganini was as good as all that?  
Of course he wasnt.  
Its just that his legend has grown up  
with the years , , ,  
... just as your legend will grow up  
until in 50 years time , , ,  
... youll be enthroned on Olympus  
between Don Bradman and W G  
There wont be any legend about me Mr Palmer.  
Because Ive left ...  
... record behind for posterity to read  
and probably sneer at.  
They cant sneer at you, Mr Palmer.  
Thats why I envy you so deeply.  
Well, I cant say that Ive understood  
everything youve said, Mr Whitehead ...  
... and one or two of those names  
youve mentioned just now ...  
... I have to confess I wasnt too sure of myself.  
Still, coming from a man like you  
that's quite a comfort.  
Quite a comfort.  
Because I dont mind telling you,  
Ive been worrying a bit lately.  
- Damn collars too tight.  
- Take it off.  
I think I will.  
Mr Palmer, I want to ask you something

really important.

Do you hold your hand further over  
for the hook?

Oh no.

Never move your hands for any stroke.

Now look, Ill show you.

Now this is my grip.

I suppose it isnt what you call classical ...  
... but still it works.

Now for the hook, I put my foot across ...

- ... and hit into it. Like that.

- I wonder if I might try that while ...

- ... its still fresh in my mind.

- Yes do.

Now then, get the grip right. Thats right.

Thumb over. Thats right.

Now foot across and ...

Thats not bad. Now try again.

Thumb over. Get that grip right. Thats right.

Now put ... Now hit right into it.

- Im frightfully sorry.

- Oh, thats alright never mind ...

I always hated it.

Now, I dont think you got that quite right.

- Just let me show you that again.

- Dinners quite ready.

Oh. My best Chinese vase.

Sam Palmer, how could you.

- Im afraid I did it.

- Oh.

Oh well, Mr Whitehead, it doesnt matter a bit really.

- Wheres your collar?

- I took it off. Its more comfortable.

Well, shall we go in?

I still dont see how you get any force  
into the stroke without changing the grip.

- Well its all a question of timing.

- Excuse me.

- You mean like this.

- Oh thats alright Mr Whitehead.

Now watch my hand.

- Oh hello Cora dear.

- Could I see Sam a moment please, Miss Palmer.

Were having a guest to dinner, and

weve got rather an important guest.

- I only want a word, just one word.

- Alright dear, Ill tell him.

Sam, its Cora. Can you see her for a minute, dear.

- Hello Cora.

- I dont want to interrupt you, Sam.

I just wanted to ask if you were coming to the Stag as usual tonight.

- No Im sorry weve got a guest.

- Well, tomorrow then?

I dont know Cora. Not sure that I like the idea of standing at a bar ...

- ... gooping away when Im not wanted.

- Who says youre not wanted?

- You did, last night.

- I didnt.

I said thats all you ever did. Thats all.

I never said I didnt want you to do it.

- Oh.

- Well, thats all I have to say, except ...

... I was sorry about your innings, Sam.

I dont mind telling you, when you got out ...

... I was that cut up, I cried.

Seems to be a lot of crying around here this morning.

Ruddy Niagara all over the country.

The chap on the wireless said it was the same as if youd made 300.

Well, I want you to know Sam, thats the way I felt about it.

Only, you didnt need 300, only 240.

You remember. You said youd double 120.

Cora, what you said about me last night, that's alright.

Its what you said about yourself thats been worrying me.

- What was that?

- Well, you said ...

Well, you implied ... well, perhaps you mightnt always have been all you should have been.

You dont know an awful lot about things do you, Sam.

Well, I promise you that in that respect

Im no better and no worse than 99 percent ...

- ... of the rest of the whole human race.

- Dont quibble, Cora.

Would you like to swear to me this very minute that theres never been anybody else.

Well, I dont know if youve got the right, Sam.

Go on. Yes or no.

Which is it?

No.

- Swear?

- Swear.

Oh, my dear.

Mr Palmer, Ive got it.

I really believe Ive got it.

Its Cora, isnt it?

How are you, Cora my love?

Im very well thank you, Mr Whitehead dear.

Are you staying for dinner. I do hope so.

So my cup of bliss will be full.

No. Im afraid not, Mr Whitehead.

I have to get back to the Stag.

Oh what a shame.

Now look Mr Palmer ...

- ... if I hold my hand like this ...

- Do you mind going back in the ...

... dining room, Mr Whitehead.

My sister will be getting a bit fussed.

Im just coming in and Ill show you in a minute.

- You know Mr Whitehead?

- Yes, he used to come into the ...

... Green Man in Chelsea quite a bit.

- How well do you know him?

- Sam Palmer!

Arent you two going to come, because ...

because theres ... the soup.

Oh Reggie. Well there it is, Reg, for better or for worse. What do you think?

For better.

Good night, Sam.

Ill see you at closing time to help you with the washing up.

- Well, its been quite a day, hasnt it.

- It certainly has.

Dad, Im awfully sorry about the things

I said this morning.

Thats alright.



Cant help the things we feel, can we.  
Yes Dad, but you know Im not so sure  
I do feel them any more.  
You know, its a funny thing Reg, when  
Syd Thompson lifted his finger this morning ...  
I thought to myself, This is it, Sam Palmer.  
This is the finish.  
Well, you know, Im just wondering  
if it wasnt really the beginning.  
- Oh, I am most awfully sorry.  
- Oh, it doesnt matter