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Gycklarnas afton

By Ingmar Bergman

1

SAWDUST AND TINSEL

- You see the wife and kids tomorrow.

- It's been three years.

Did you ever hear about Frost the clown
and his wife Alma?

- Was that in this town?

- Yes, I was there. A nasty business.

- Tell me about it.

- Poor old Frost.

It was a hot day, seven years ago.

The regiment had firing practice.

The officers lay on the grass, hot and bored.

They were drinking.

The soldiers in the quarry were cursing
because of the awful heat.

Then, along came Alma.

She was a handsome woman,

though a bit past her prime.

- The captain sends his greetings.

- What's his message?

- Your wife Alma...

- My wife Alma!

..is bathing naked with the regiment!

- Show you're a man, Theodore!

- We'll help you to give her a dressing-down!

Man the cannons!

Alma accused us

of destroying her husband.

We got angry and told her

it was her own fault.

We picked him up

and carried him back.

There's women for you.

Are you crazy?

Come here.

None of us have been paid,

and we have nothing to eat.

We had to leave the costumes.

Now we have nothing to perform in.

We know how hard it is for you.

You can't help the weather.

The Ekbergs, Asta

and all the kids have worms.

And there are fleas in the wagons.
I could start my own menagerie!
Bear steak is a delicacy.
Let's kill the bear before it starves to death.
We'd kill you before we'd do that!
Well, what do you think, Albert?
You haven't said a word.
You try hard to do the right thing.
Then it turns out to be foolish.
- But in America...
- This isn't America, it's Sweden.
In America circus folk ride through town,
bands play, elephants trumpet.
Everyone is merry, people cheer
and line the streets.
Then someone announces the programme.
Why don't we take the wagon,
dress up in our best costumes...
- The ones we left behind?
- Those we have.
The Ekbergs play,
and Anton does the announcing!
Not a bad idea!
- I'll wear my green costume!
- I'll not stand beside the dwarf!
I'll shout,
"Here comes the Alberti Circus!"
I have another idea.
Sjuberg's theatre company is in town.
I'll ask them to lend us costumes.
There'll be a grand gala tonight!
Then we'll throw a supper party -
schnapps, chateaubriand, caviar!
It's clearing up!
Dress up, curl your hair and put on make-up.
- We're going to pay Sjuberg a visit.
- The theatre director? You're mad.
Look what I've found.
You'd better wash behind your ears.
You won't leave me, will you?
- What do you mean?
- If the circus goes bust.
Then you make a plan.
- You won't leave me? You promised!

- Don't worry, Anne.
- You're going to see your wife.
- And my boys. It's been three years.
I'm scared you'll go back to them.
Don't worry.
May I shave now?
- Our luck will change.
- You think so?
Some circus owners are very rich.
They have houses, diamonds, cars.
That's in America, of course.
- That costume wasn't left behind!
- Nor was the parasol!
- What's wrong?
- Nothing.
- You seem worried.
- Me? Remember, I'll do the talking.
You just sit and smile.
Sjuberg fancies pretty girls.
Breathe deep to enhance your bosom
and show him your legs if he asks.
I won't abandon you.
If he tries it on, I'll slug him.

THE BETRAYAL:

THE MAD COUNTESS

A pure heart
is a woman's dearest possession.
It withstands all temptation.
Your words of warning, Father,
will bear fruit in my heart.
Your mother, lady,
would speak with you.

- My lord!

- Madame?

Leave us alone...

- Mr Fallander!

- Sir?

Please repeat from page 36.

- With pleasure, sir.

- Who do you want?

- The director.

- We're rehearsing! He's busy.

- Might we wait?

- No point. He's too busy.

What's all this babbling?

- A lady and a gent to see you, sir.

- Tell them to go to hell...

No! Bring them here.

- The director will see you.

- We can come back another day...

Good morning, Mr Sjuberg.

Isn't it a beautiful day?

I am Albert Johansson,
owner of the Alberti Circus,
presently in town.

My wife, Anne.

Drop a curtsy.

- How can I help you?

- We...

A chair for the lady.

Allow me, your ladyship.

- Well, Mr Alberti?

- The fact is...

an unfortunate mishap
ruined half our costumes.

Could you come to our rescue
and lend us cloaks, breeches, hats?

- As a colleague.

- What if our costumes get infested?

Lice, strange diseases, who knows?

I know nothing about circuses.

- I assure you, sir...

- How much can you pay?

Well, tonight we were thinking of...

How much do you want?

- More than you can pay.

- Why are you insulting me?

Why?

Because we're part of the same riff-raff
and because you allow it.

You live in wagons, we in sleazy hotels.

We make art, you artifice.

The humblest of us

despises the best of you. Why?

You risk your lives, we our vanity.

Your attire is ridiculous.

And the lady would look better

without her finery.

You could mock our shabby elegance,
painted faces and studied speech.

- Why shouldn't I insult you?

- I don't understand.

That's your strength.

- What about the costumes?

- You may borrow them.

- But as payment...?

- Invite us to the circus tonight.

- The honour would be too great...

- You're right.

Blom, show them the wardrobe.

Goodbye.

Let's do that scene again.

You've driven me mad.

Will you marry me?

How can you stay with that old ass?

Do you sleep with him?

Whisper sweet words in his ear?

Come with me.

Don't torture me.

I love you.

I want you now.

Come, or I'll ravish you

in front of your asinine circus director!

- Let me go!

- I won't let you go!

Don't say that to me!

Don't say that about my husband.

If we were alone...

I'd slap you.

I'd flatten your resistance
into a scrap of smudged paper.

What play is that from?

You snort like a bull.

I'm not your cow!

Try one of those pale, flat-chested
little actresses who swoon over you!

What is your ladyship's price?

Tactless of me not to mention that.

You're too pretty, you poor thing.

You could be a girl.

I'll bet you've never satisfied a woman.

Mind what you say, you little ass.
You're not so pretty with red ears.
If you touch me, I'll bite you again.
I'll make mincemeat of your mouth.
I may not be beautiful, but you are.
Forgive me for what I said.
You must love me. I beg you!
On your knees then.
Bang your head on the floor.
Again. Harder.
I'll kiss you - just once.
Go away! You've hurt me!
Magnificent! The Alberti Circus
is holding a grand gala tonight!
Blom's become our friend.
He's offering us schnapps!
Ladies and gentlemen!
Listen and marvel!
At great cost and sacrifice,
the Alberti Circus now visits your town.
Tonight it will present a gala show
the likes of which you never saw!
Beauty and thrills...
to say nothing of laughter!
The greatest laugh of your life!
Magnificent costumes and dcors.
Artists who have gained renown
in the major capitals of the world!
Hush!
Do you hear?
What's going on?
Don't you know this is illegal?
- We're just advertising a bit...
- Do you have a permit?
- Permit? We thought...
- It doesn't matter what you thought!
Climb down from there and get back
to the fairground, where you belong.
- Yes, but...
- Shut your mouth, circus ape!
Do I have to read you the law?
Get down and clear out.
Cop! Cop! Stupid fop!
Unharness the horses!

We'll keep them until tomorrow.
That'll teach you to be impudent!
Damned buskers!
You can't play here when we're playing!
- Why do that?
- So she can't say they're dirty.
Oh, to hell with them!
You shouldn't drink in the morning.
What time will you be back,
or are you staying the night with her?
I haven't seen my boys in three years.
Then why bother now?
You don't understand.
Your wife's just waiting for you
to go back to her.
- And to help out in her shop.
- Shut up!
You don't deny it,
because you want to give it all up.
You're getting old and rickety,
and scared!
I'll be back for the show.
Please don't go!
Don't go! I beg you.
Crying? Are you jealous?
Is that so strange?
You'll go off and you won't come back.
You're sick of the circus and of me.
What'll I do without you?
But I love you.
Then you wouldn't visit your wife.
- I do love you.
- No, you don't.
All right, I don't!
I won't be here when you get back.
Where will you go?
I won't be here, anyway.
Don't blame me.
I won't be here!
- Can I help you?
- I'd like...
- Don't you recognise me?
- No, sir.
- Can I help you?

- Is your mum here?
- May I speak with her?
- She's making our dinner.

May I wait?

- Nice weather we're having.
- Are you my father?

Yes.

- How are you and Albert?
- He lost a tooth yesterday.

You help mother in the shop, eh?

That's a good boy.

I mean... Good boy.

- How old are you?
- Nine.

A young man. Join the circus.

No! Mum's coming now.

Hello, Agda.

I was in town
and thought I'd drop in.

- Hungry?
- Do I look it?

I didn't mean that.

Yes, please.

Come in, then.

Mind the shop.

- All I can offer you is pancakes.
- That'll be fine.
- Things are going well for you.
- I took over the other tobacco shop.

So we're the only ones in town
selling tobacco now. It's profitable.

- You've kept the old shop?
- Of course.
- Take off your coat if you're hot.
- I'm all right.

Take off your coat,
I'll sew on your button.

- What happened to all your shirts?
- That's my business.
- You could buy one, then.
- I'm broke!

Don't shout.

Leave, if you're going to quarrel.

- You can borrow from me.

- How dare you!

- Watch your mouth!

- My mouth?

Keep your nose out of my affairs.

I will not be patronised.

Why so sensitive?

Why shouldn't you borrow from me?

- You want to get even now, eh?

- Why should I?

Stop acting. You're terrible at it.

You mean because you left me?

Don't you understand that I'm grateful?

- What?

- I'm grateful that you left me.

I finally found peace,

and my life became my own.

No more of that dreadful circus

that I always loathed and feared.

All the shouting and swearing,

insecurity, misery, lice and illness.

No, I'm happy now. And grateful.

- Shall we go in the other room?

- Of course.

- You're damned capable, Agda.

- That's nice to hear.

We had good times, too,

before you inherited the shop.

I didn't like you training the boys.

I was always afraid.

Those were hard years.

- Why did you come?

- I was in love.

- But that passed?

- Need we speak of that?

- Maybe not.

- I was really in love with you.

But when you left me,

my love died almost overnight. Strange.

I didn't leave you.

You stayed here, I moved on again.

Why talk about it?

Unlike you, I'm always in a muddle.

- Are you in trouble financially?

- Need you ask?

- Cheers, Albert.

- Cheers, Agda.

Thanks for the meal.

It's always the same and so silent,
summer and winter.

Yes, it's a quiet street.

Year in, year out.

- Life stands still.

- To me, it's fulfilment.

To me, emptiness.

I am but a poor jester
in this farce of shadows.

Her deceitful heart, her frailty,
even her provoking indifference
changes my world,

from day to day, from hour to hour.

Am I the Count of Chamballe...

or the most miserable of wretches?

Therefore, dagger,

leap from thy hiding place -

and find a place where thou

canst slake thy thirst.

How gladly I greet thee, sweet mistress...

and press thee to my breast.

Let us celebrate our union

in this quiet park,

where first my cruel goddess

granted me her favour.

Farewell, oh world.

Farewell, my sovereign!

May thy tears water my poor grave.

I die.

Curtain!

Everyone on stage!

That's it for today.

You were all dreadful.

You're an idiot, Blom!

I want to leave the circus.

- You're laughing at me.

- I'm smiling, because you're beautiful.

You needn't marry me,

just take care of me.

You smell of stables,

cheap perfume and sweat.

I'll lick you like a dog.

What make-up! I'll teach you.

Give me your mouth.

- Do I smell of sweat?

- I was only teasing.

- My perfume is cheap.

- Use some of mine.

You have nice hands.

- It must be expensive!

- Take it, it's yours.

I can't help but smell.

Everything in our wagon smells of stables.

Make up my face.

No need.

- Who gave you that?

- It's for luck.

From a woman!

I'll be gone when he returns.

No Spanish rider for his decrepit horses.

No lady in tights for the drunk

conjurer to saw in two. I'll be gone!

- And when you tire of me?

- I'll kill you.

- If I don't kill you first.

- I'm strong! Feel my muscles.

Oh, my.

- I crack nuts with my teeth.

- I'm frightened.

I can ride bareback at full gallop,

gripping only with my thighs.

- Can you do that?

- I don't think so.

You're a weakling.

You have a nice body,

but you need exercise. You're flabby.

Shame on you.

Let's arm wrestle. I bet I'll win.

You eat too much.

Let me go! I don't want to!

You want me to let go of you?

I can't! Leave me be!

Give me the key!

How do you make the bears dance?

- Do you use hot irons?

- Give me the key.

- Do you hate me?

- Give me the key!

You do.

I prefer you that way.

- Give me the key.

- You'll get it. Later.

- The key.

- Finish the game first.

This amulet is very valuable.

The gift of a grateful lady.

If you're good, you shall have it.

You can live on it for a whole year.

You can leave the circus.

It will bring you good luck.

Sell it to the corner goldsmith.

I can live on it?

At least a year. Real pearls.

See for yourself.

And you'll give me the key?

I promise.

And never tell?

Never tell.

- That's done now. I've done what I could, but...

- That's kind of you.

As I was saying...

- How do you do?

- What do you want?

Mummy, there's an old man with a barrel organ
and a monkey does tricks for a penny.

That's a lot of money.

Please, Mummy!

I'll give you one.

- Thank him properly.

- Thank you.

- Run along now.

- Goodbye.

- Tired?

- From the brandy and all the food...

- Agda...

- Yes?

I don't quite know how to say this.

- Don't say it, then.

- You won't get angry?

I can't promise.

Very well - I promise.

I want to stay here with you.

I'm too old for the circus.

I want to stay quietly here with you
and watch my boys grow up.

I could help out in your shops.

I have a pleasant manner when I try.

Let me stay. You won't regret it.

- I won't let you down.

- Don't act like a beggar.

I am one.

But it's not because of the money.

I'll sell the tent and horses
and put the money into the shop.

- You talk a lot.

- You say nothing.

- What am I to say?

- That I can stay.

- No, you can't stay.

- Is there someone else?

And what if there were?

I can't live alone forever.

But no one is going to take away
my peace and my freedom.

Do you hear? No one.

Yes.

- Where have you been?

- Why do you ask?

- Can't I ask a question?

- You said it so strangely.

Not at all.

- I went for a walk in town.

- Alone?

- Why not?

- Was that all you did?

And what about you?

Mind your own business.

You know already.

I don't know the details.

- We were discussing you.

- Do you have a guilty conscience?

- You should.

- I was just window shopping.

At the goldsmith's?

- Have you been spying on me?

- No.

But I saw you leave the theatre
and go into the goldsmith's.

So what if I did?

Why the theatre?

I was watching a rehearsal.

Why make such a fuss?

- Who was there?

- I don't know them.

- Frans?

- Maybe.

- You spoke to him?

- No.

- Are you sure?

- We didn't utter a word.

Why did you look so dishevelled
when you left?

I fell on the stairs.

Why this interrogation?!

- Have you been unfaithful?

- You're mad! You've no right to...

- Frightened?

- Don't hit me.

- Not if you tell the truth.

- I did talk to Frans.

- Were you in his dressing room?

- I had a quick look.

- You slept with him.

- No! I Swear!

The truth!

Or I'll smash your face in.

- You force me to tell lies!

- I can see in your eyes you're lying!

He gave me an amulet,
and said that I could sell it.

- Where is it?

- It was worthless.

And you slept with him?

You're lying!

Don't yell! No one will help you.

I wasn't unfaithful! I wasn't!

I could beat the life out of you.

Lie, if it suits you.
I did sleep with Frans.
He forced me to.
He locked me in
and I was afraid I'd be late for the show.
He promised me the amulet,
and I was scared of him.
I didn't dare refuse.
Say something!
You want me to say you're lying?
I overheard him this morning
proposing to you.
I think you went to see him...
because you're as sick of the circus and me...
as I am of the circus and you.
Stop laughing!
Now we're stuck! Stuck fast as hell.
The show tonight will be a sensation.
I'll make "no groans" about it.
With horn music, for horned cattle...
- Your health, brother!
- Cheers!
Now that I come to think of it,
I don't hate a soul.
Not even the policeman
on the square today.
Not even Anne,
though she is unfaithful.
You despise me, you despise everybody,
most of all yourself!
But I like people, I want to cuddle them.
I'm not afraid of them.
I don't want to trail around
with this lousy circus.
I want to be an honest citizen
with a bank account
and a respectable wife.
Anne, you'll never be a respectable wife.
I'll never marry you,
because you have been unfaithful, you wretch!
Isn't it nice to be maudlin and sentimental?
Poor Anne, poor Agda, my poor boys.
And you, you poor devil,
and your wretched wife.

A pity people must live.
I feel sorry for them.
Everyone is so frightened.
- It's a shame.
- Yes, it's a shame to be Albert!
It's a shame! Shame, shame!
But now I'm going to do something
worthy of a human being.
- Not kill yourself?
- I didn't say that!
I got it from the tiger trainer.
You ought to shoot the bear,
he's in a bad way.
- I ought to shoot the bear...
- Don't forget to shoot my wife, too.
It would be merciful.
Shoot everyone you feel sorry for,
five or six of them.
- I should shoot you, Frost!
- I have my old father to care for!
- Are you afraid?
- No.
- Afraid to die?
- Yes.
- I'm not afraid.
- Then kill yourself.
No!
- It's hot in here.
- Open the door!
Look at the life all around us!
I love it! Love it!
Why try to squeeze the truth out of Anne?
I wouldn't mind being a cuckold
if I didn't know!
- And now you're jealous.
- I'll strangle her.
I'll beg her forgiveness.
Ask her to tell me everything.
Every detail of what they did.
Isn't that mad? Do you understand?
No, but what the hell?
Anne! Sweet little Anne!
My sweet girl!
Why should that bitch leave me?

I'll do likewise!
- Get it off your chest!
- You're cold as an icicle.
Let's get up!
Quiet, everyone!
We must start getting ready!
Albert's drunk!
Get ready for the performance!
The show starts in an hour!
- Have the lamps been filled?
- We're nearly out of oil.
We'll shorten the programme!
Hurry up! Don't dawdle!
And you, you damned midget,
I'll sack you or else kill you!
Off with you, and be funny!
We start in one hour!
But no lewdness,
this is a respectable town!
You got a kick in the backside.
I think I'll leave them.
The actors are coming!
The actors are here!
Silence!
Now for the highlight of the evening!
A fiery Spanish rider
on an Andalusian thoroughbred!
An act you'll never forget!
Our escapade didn't tire you?
Shall we ride tonight?
That settles it. The gentlemen
have insulted each other.
Let us judge the duel.
Lay aside your whip, sir.
Alfredo, fetch!
No snuffboxes and knives allowed.
Begin.
That's it, Albert!
I'll get him!
Where is he?
I'll get him!
The show's over.
Thank you all for coming.
Look what I brought you, Dorothy.

Albert, open the door!

Let me in!

Are you dead?

Won't you open up?

Go to hell!

To hell? Right, OK.

- Can we strike the tent?

- Do as you like.

- Good takings.

- Split them between you!

Shoe Prince before we leave.

- We're leaving?

- Of course.

This afternoon,

when I was sleeping off the booze,

I dreamt that Alma said to me,

"Poor Frost, you look tired and sad,
how about a rest?"

"Yes," I said.

"I'll make you tiny as a foetus."

"You can sleep in peace in my womb."

So I crept inside,

and I slept soundly there

as though rocked in a cradle.

I got smaller and smaller,

till I was only a seed.

- And then I was gone.

- Stop trudging along. Come inside!

She can't sleep if I'm not beside her.

- Good night!

- Good night.

SAWDUST AND TINSEL