

"THE RYE MAN"

by  
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Property of:  
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CHARACTERS

DOG

STUBB

FAWCETT

FLAMING ETHEL

AMY

A tavern-hall where the audience is seated at tables, with drinks being served. There is a small raised stage with piano fitted with percussion, wash-board, bass-drum, trumpet etc. The entire hall is the acting area, and the stage should be considered mostly as an area for the musical numbers. There are a few pelts lying about, and a shooting-gallery gun, and a rusty frying pan with a chord tied to it. There is also a table on which FLAMING ETHEL can sit or lean during her numbers.

STUBB is small and round, FAWCETT slim and clean-shaven. FAWCETT's long, thin face always seems startled. STUBB looks round in a gingerly way, sometimes like a man on the run.

STUBB and FAWCETT are moving among the tables taking orders. They exchange pleasantries with the customers, according to the mood of the evening. Since it will get around among the public that two actors are playing WAITERS, there should be other WAITERS available, so that at least there is some question in the audience's mind as to which of them are the actors.

FLAMING ETHEL and AMY are also among the customers, helping out and showing their charms.

STUBB and FAWCETT are without jackets, dressed casually but not hippy -- certainly no jeans. Their clothes may be dated, may even suggest a past working-class elegance, but they should not contrast too strongly with the customers, unless it is a contrast which suggests the waiter.

They have to be convincing as waiters, which may be difficult if their faces are well-known to the public. They should be polite but matter-of-fact and firm, without condescension, so that their transference from the waiter-role to the scripted character should arouse the maximum curiosity,

as if we were suddenly looking deep into the lives of people we had just begun to take for granted.

When, in the course of the scripted action, the actor speaks directly to the customers round him, he should not engage any one customer too long with his eyes. Audience-participation of the obvious kind is not looked for. The actor, who already has a most difficult job, must suggest a balance to the customers which is early understood by them, otherwise a difficult job will become an impossible one.

Any order for drinks that comes to STUBB or FAWCETT after the scripted action has begun should be conveyed by them to one of the other waiters standing by.

AMY is an attractive girl in frills and black stockings. FLAMING ETHEL has a rough and vulgar attraction. She is full of beans. She challenges the customers with hands on hips. She too is dressed for the curves, as naked as possible. Tucked into her right stocking, close to the crutch, is a miniature revolver.

STUBB: (to the customers) This is Amy! She's our one-woman band, there's no instrument she can't play! Is that right, Amy?

AMY: (as she goes to the piano, without showing much interest in replying to STUBB) That's right.

STUBB: (still to the customers) Wait till Flaming Ethel gives you the works!

(FLAMING ETHEL follows AMY to the stage and addresses the customers from there, as AMY settles at the piano)

ETHEL: (pointing to the revolver in her stocking, with legs astride) That's always there, ready to go off any minute, it keeps the men alert. They all want to lay, but never to pay! (with a wink) I'm a terrible woman. But lovely at my work.

(With piano and percussion accompaniment she goes into a lively, saucy number to get the customers in the right mood.

STUBB and FAWCETT continue in their function of waiters, but now transfer orders to other waiters standing by, and give most of their attention to FLAMING ETHEL, with admiring side-glances to the customers.

FLAMING ETHEL ends her song and is taking her bow when she notices someone at the back of the hall)

ETHEL: Oh no!

STUBB: What's the trouble, girl?

ETHEL: It's the rye man again!

STUBB: Oh blimey! (to the customers) He brings us hooch and calls it Canadian Rye. We never buy it, so that's no danger of it getting into your glasses!

(FAWCETT conveys the same thing to the customers round him in other words, until it gets all round who DOG is.

There is some disturbance at the back as DOG pushes through)

FAWCETT: Here we go! It's Canadian night tonight! The North-West Territories again, eh, Stubb?

STUBB: (to the customers) Now don't buy his liquid whatever you do, it'll set you alight!

FAWCETT: (still to STUBB, conversational) You know, he must have been there! I mean, you can't make it ALL up, not a whole country!

STUBB: He could!

ETHEL: Anyway, tell him I'm at the rifle range shooting cardboard targets! (going off) It's more than he'll ever shoot! I've had him in bed, so I know!

(AMY continues playing the piano.

DOG struggles in from the back carrying an ammunition chest which is apparently full of bottles, from the way it clatters.

DOG is an enormous figure of a man, with a wild beard and bushy red hair. He has a wild yet abashed look which makes him squint up his eyes frequently)

DOG: (gasping) Make way please! (pushing between the tables) What did she say? (to the customers) What's she been saying? Did you see her little revolver?

STUB B: Hullo Dog, mate.

(DOG nods grudgingly, sideways, moving forward towards the piano)

DOG: (half to customers, half to himself) Don't listen to these two buggers either. And watch what they put in your glasses. They're a couple of con-men, from the chemical industry. Grapes and hops never got near anything they're serving you tonight. Nor malt! (puffing and heaving) That's for sure. What did she say, she's out there shooting? I've got a name for her and it ain't lady! (putting the chest down) There!

(He sits on the chest, wiping his brow. He looks round at the customers as he does so. STUBB and FAWCETT go on with their work, clearing ashtrays and taking used glasses. They watch him continually, and clearly hang on his words)

(to the customers) Can you all see me? I'm sitting on value. (tapping the chest) Which is more than you've got in those glasses. Take it or leave it. This lot came all the way from Port Douglas. That's right, give me the bloody-liar look! Everybody does. Nothing new about that. (making a sudden mock-grin face and leer at FAWCETT) You should have been a tap. On a barrel of piss. (to the customers again) His name's Fawcett. He's always dripping. (FAWCETT laughs, carefully on the customer side of the fence for the moment) And look at the other one. (to STUBB) You I mean. You could stub him out like a bad cigar. There's a lot in a name eh Stubb? (STUBB smiles cordially, looking round at the customers) Now if you go to a couple of tripehounds like these for information about me, what kind of truth are you going to get? (again tapping the chest under him) Value I said! (to himself) Waiters!

DOG: Who'd be a waiter? (to STUBB and FAWCETT)  
(contd) You've been waiting too long! It's never goin' to happen now, whatever you dreamed!

STUBB: (to AMY) Don't let him get started, girl, come on, give us something hot!

DOG: (catching sight of AMY as if for the first time) There she is! Hands on the keys! Not the keys of good fortune are they, sweetheart? Didn't come your way did it, otherwise you wouldn't be here! Not since your mother took money down at Prince George for that little experience in an upstairs bedroom, when you was sixteen, and him a married man from down the valley! The first of many eh?

AMY: Oh shut up! You're always making it up aren't you?

(SECOND NUMBER:

AMY plays the percussion and piano and anything else that serves as loud as possible.

DOG moves among the customers as she plays, trying to get clients for his 'Canadian Rye', by the glass or by the bottle. STUBB and FAWCETT meanwhile do what they can to discourage people from ordering anything from him. A row starts)

DOG: (to STUBB and FAWCETT) Look, just keep out of this!

STUBB: The landlord don't allow it -- !

DOG: (going for him) Listen -- !

FAWCETT: Watch it, Dog!

(They start shouting and struggling with each other)

AMY: (banging on the keys) I give up! (she slams down the piano lid) I'm going to the rifle range!

(She stamps out. They watch her)

DOG: There, you've offended Amy, you two. The last guys who did that had to sleep with her as a penance. She don't carry a revolver between her legs but it's just as explosive. You go into the secondary stage before you've left the building!

(FAWCETT makes as if to open the ammunition chest. DOG races up and sits down on it, holding the lid, with a childish pouting look at FAWCETT)

FAWCETT: (with glances at the customers) Go on, Dog, that's not rye, that's gunshot!

DOG: You're dead right it's gunshot! So keep your hands off!

(FAWCETT leans over him with a slightly unctious expression but at the same time ribbing him, with a wink at STUBB and the customers)

FAWCETT: It's the fifteenth, Dog. I worked it out.

STUBB: (who has sat down at one of the tables, with the customers) He says it's election day. I said I thought the eighteenth.

DOG: (suspiciously, to FAWCETT) Why -- you anxious to step into my boots?

FAWCETT: (mock-startled) Me?

STUBB: Is he right, Dog?

DOG: Sure it's election day! (again to FAWCETT) You never miss do you?

FAWCETT: (with a quick smile over the tables at STUBB) It's our constitution! We agreed on it!

DOG: That's not why you remember!

FAWCETT: Why, then?

DOG: (turning away, blinking) Jealousy!

(STUBB and FAWCETT find this a great joke)

FAWCETT: (with a burlesque sniff) I smell grizzly bear!

DOG: (half to himself) Like hell you do!

STUBB: (going on with FAWCETT's burlesque) They was round last night, Dog! They near on climbed the cache!

STUBB: (to the customers round him) Cache means a food store on a pole, in trappers' language. Eh, Fawcett?

FAWCETT: That's right!

DOG: The cache is for Fawcett to mend! (without looking at FAWCETT) He'll be fixing a ladder for 'em next!

STUBB: They can stamp you to pulp, Fawcett!

DOG: (harshly, to FAWCETT) And how many nights are you goin' to barricade us in with snowshoes?

(STUBB and FAWCETT grin at the customers, shrug)

STUBB: Remember that summer we saw steam comin' up from a 'ole, it was after the thaw, it must have been the spring, come to think on it, and Dave fell inside, straight into a grizzly's lap?

DOG: (suddenly enthusiastic) And the grizzly didn't even wake up!

FAWCETT: (still communicating with STUBB with his eyes) Well, so Dave says, but Dave's a bloody liar (then, cupping his hand over his mouth, to STUBB) If he exists!

DOG: (rhetorical) He's kept you in provisions for a couple or three years, sweetheart, and hasn't overcharged. You take the name of the Provider in vain and he might not provide any more!

(STUBB and FAWCETT make signs to the customers while DOG is talking, and even repeat some of his lines with him, with the pauses between each sentence exact, like a lesson repeated in class)

ALL: He showed you how to make a cache. He taught you all you know. How to stretch the pelts. Lay the traps. Clean your guns. Keep a smudge against mosquitoes. What's wrong with that -- did you want his blood as well?

(STUBB and FAWCETT roll up with the fun.)

DOG turns and looks at FAWCETT from top to toe)

DOG: OK! (rising from the ammunition chest) Let's get it done with!

STUBB : (getting up from his table and coming forward) As if we didn't know the result -- !

DOG : (cutting him short angrily as he stands on the ammunition chest) Well, if you know, waive the formalities -- but there's him (indicating FAWCETT) to contend with!

STUBB : OK, OK! (with a quick wink at FAWCETT)

(All three of them stand on the ammunition chest, squeezing themselves together and almost falling off. Balancing seems to be one of the election formalities. It takes some time to get their positions straight, with DOG standing stolidly in the centre of the box and the others losing their balance partly through the effort of controlling their laughter and partly through the smallness of the surface. They cling to DOG and get glares in return)

DOG : Well get it done with -- who's chairman?

STUBB : Fawcett.

FAWCETT : (clinging and swinging) It's always me. Because I get no votes. OK -- a show of confidence for me, by raising the hand!

(He waits but neither of the other two raises his hand)

FAWCETT : (threatening, so that they all nearly topple off the box) Why, you mean couple of -- !

DOG : Get on with it!

FAWCETT : (grudgingly) For Stubb -- a show of hands!

(DOG raises his hand)

(and with great reluctance) For last year's Dog! A show of hands!

(STUBB raises his hand but FAWCETT keeps his firmly down, with tight lips)

DOG : (glowering at him) That's one for Stubb and one for me -- so you decide! Stubb's our dog, is that it?

(FAWCETT hesitates)

DOG: Well, come on -- ! (they almost topple off again with  
(contd) the emotion at close quarters) It's Stubb you want!

(DOG and FAWCETT glare into each other's faces, noses touching)

I'll give you ten seconds! What's it to be?

(At last FAWCETT raises his hand, under the compulsion of DOG's galvanising glare)

Thank you!

STUBB: (stepping down) Just what I said!

FAWCETT: (also stepping down, to DOG) Well was I going to vote  
him Dog?

DOG: (taking his time to step down, with dignity, when the others are clear of the ammunition chest, as if to emphasise the gravity of his office) Don't blame me! It's circumstances!

FAWCETT: (to DOG) I've never seen you raise your hand for me, that's all!

DOG: (mildly) You're power-hungry, Fawcett, that's why! You'd be starving us of fires at night, and keeping the pelts to yourself, if we made you Dog.

FAWCETT: And where did you get your education -- at the whore-house reading room down at Pas?

DOG: (to the customers) Oh listen to that! He's bitter! (turning on FAWCETT) Listen, if you want to be Dog take it -- I'll call you Dog a hundred times a day -- but that wouldn't be free election would it?

FAWCETT: (quietly) OK, OK!

STUBB: The same every year!

DOG: (with sudden fury) So what keeps you here? (as STUBB and FAWCETT wander back among the customers to continue their work) You're a couple of lame ducks! You sit at a table with a couple of pints of rye in your guts and because the dice says six you -- ucch!

(STUBB and FAWCETT make signs to the customers, and smile at them, to indicate that DOG is round the bend)

- STUBB : You did the same!
- FAWCETT: In fact, you laid the bet. (to the customers, under his breath): I'd like to know what bet!
- DOG: (moving down to one of the tables, and sitting with the customers) 'You laid the bet, you laid the bet' ! (looking round at the customers with irritation) I always get that! You had it in your faces, you couple of white-trapping lice -- you asked for that six!
- FAWCETT: (to STUBBS) Listen to that!
- DOG: Anyway, bring me a glass of that black piss you're serving!
- (STUBB with a nod of his head transfers the order to one of the other waiters)
- Electing me 'Dog' ! What a name! 'Dog' !
- STUBB : (with a laugh) It was your name! We'll spell God the wrong way round, you said!
- FAWCETT: (to STUBB and the customers) He's certainly that! God the wrong way round!
- DOG: (suddenly dangerous) Meaning I'm the devil?
- FAWCETT: (backing up) I didn't mean exactly that!
- DOG: (furious) You think you're strong -- what's strong about signing up for voluntary imprisonment in a place like this for five years -- (rhetorically) without a prison, without a sentence, without a crime! (looking to the customers to share his exasperation)
- STUBB: (with mock seriousness) It takes strength -- don't it?
- DOG: No, it's just pigheaded and proud, that's what! It's just conceit! And when you get back to Pas and plant yourself in Amy's whorehouse and don't need your trousers for a week -- !
- STUBB : (laughing with the customers) That's good!

DOG: Who's going to look at you? Who's going to remember? Who'll even know your name? Can you tell me that? Will Amy be there? They'll all be dead! The saloon won't be there where you threw the dice! 'Five years'!

(DOG's red wine arrives)

FAWCETT: (putting it before him) That's the beauty of it. Our names are writ in water, like they used to say down at Pas.

(DOG stares at the wine as if insulted, then takes hold of the glass)

DOG: That's right -- talk to me about beauty!

(He drains the glass in several gulps)

(gasping as he lays down the empty glass) **Piss!** A sick man's piss! (to himself) 'Five years'! Five years of pelt-trapping! Where's it going to get you? I'll tell you where! Where it got the boys at Gillis' s Grave, down at Manson Creek!

FAWCETT: What's that?

DOG: Never hear?

FAWCETT: No!

DOG: (talking to the customers now, at his own table and sometimes all round, telling them the tale confidentially) There was a couple of trappers -- they'd been trapping ten years or more. Found dead, sitting up against a tree, side of a dead fire, froze stiff, covered over with autumn leaves, they 'd been sitting there a long time, all winter long --

FAWCETT: Yes, I think I heard ...

DOG: There was a rusty frying pan by the fire. A few yards on there was the other guy --

FAWCETT: (as if to help the customers get the story) Another trapper? There was three?

DOG: That's right. He was leaning against a tree, too. His gun was cocked, none of the bullets was fired. Not a mark on their faces. Just sitting there. (nodding seriously to the customers round him) Their hut was

DOG: fifteen miles down the valley. The door was swinging open. There was a bundle of letters nailed to the table.  
 (contd)

STUBB: What did the letters say?

DOG: They was eaten by rats.

STUBB: How did they get nailed to the table?

FAWCETT: The guys didn't have any rat-food and the rats had to eat something! (cackling with laughter)

DOG: (with disgust) That's why you're never Dog!

FAWCETT: Why?

DOG: Because you can't be damned-well serious. You've got that cackle at the end of everything -- (imitating him) ha, ha, ha! If I do go bushed it'll be your long face sent me!

FAWCETT: You was bushed before you ever set foot in here, mate!

DOG: I was bushed to set foot in Amy's whorehouse and get to know you!

STUBB: (smiling at the customers as he moves among them, clearing ashtrays etc.) You and Long Martin had just sold two hundred fox at Eskimo Point for eighteen hundred dollars, remember, Dog?

DOG: (relaxing) We could have got double the price at Churchill!

STUBB: (with a wink) But you was in a hurry wasn't you, mate?

DOG: Yes!

STUBB: That's right!

DOG: The biggest let-down I ever had was when they found radium at Echo Point. (involving the customers round him, confidentially) I must have walked over that ground about fifty thousand times! It took five pounds sterling to have a bit of pitchblend ore assayed in them days and I didn't have it -- I didn't even have a couple of cents! That was a big rush!

(FAWCETT and STUBB join in)

ALL: Eldorado Gold Mine Shares went up to eighteen shillings a share! They all came in aeroplanes, all the de luxe prospectors!

(As STUBB and FAWCETT say this with DOG they make precisely the same expression of face and intonation. DOG is unaware of them and nods to himself before he speaks again, still supported vocally by the other two)

That's right!

STUBB: (still ribbing) And how's Dave over at the shop, Dog?

DOG: He's O.K.

STUBB: Did you see Mrs. Dave?

DOG: No!

STUBB: Where'd you kip down, Dog?

DOG: (with disgust) In the shop. Behind the grain. Where he keeps the rats!

FAWCETT: And you didn't even glimpse her?

DOG: Disappearing round the side of the hut. Least, I thought so. He just calls her Mrs. Dave I reckon.

FAWCETT: They're not married?

DOG: Married? He said she was a schoolteacher, come from Winnipeg, to help him with the kids. He never clapped eyes on her before!

STUBB: But he calls her Mrs. Dave.

DOG: She didn't come out and shake me by the hand, that's all I know! That's just like him -- keep her back like that! And she wears the trousers, that's for sure. She calls the price, too, and it's double what I ought to pay, I swear. I don't go across that valley often. It's a twenty-mile hike! And if you don't keep to the path -- !

(A shot, off)

DOG: (jumping up furiously) She's shootin' for Christ sake! Dave's whore! Like a man! (turning to STUBB like a

DOG: huge child) She's laying trap-lines like a man --  
 (contd) but she couldn't come and shake me by the hand -- !

STUBB: (laughing) OK, OK, take it easy!

(STUBB and FAWCETT shake their heads  
 at each other)

DOG: What's she shootin' at -- can you tell me that?

STUBB: (with a wink at FAWCETT) A timber-wolf.

DOG: A timber-wolf my arse! So that's how it's going to  
 be from now on -- showin' us she's there! A woman!  
 In trousers! Talkin' with a gun!

STUBB: You're bushed! (among the customers) Bushed!

DOG: 'Woman' ! It's nowhere I can see! It's just rolls  
 of fat!

FAWCETT: (with burlesque interest) Is that how she looks?  
 (as DOG shrugs) I think she's thin, with glasses on --  
 (gazing before him)

STUBB: (joining in) And I agree with Dog -- I think she's fattish  
 -- fattish with lovely big tits --

DOG: That's enough! (contemptuously) Stop thinking --  
 thinkers! (striding up and down) That's no woman! A  
 woman carries her flesh, well, like a kind of angel.  
 Like we was reading about, remember?

FAWCETT: (to STUBB) It's always angels or something! Angels  
 are men!

DOG: Angels are any sex!

FAWCETT: Angels? They're boys!

DOG: Tell him, Stubb!

STUBB: I seem to remember they're both. Gabriel, like we was  
 reading -- was he a he or a she?

FAWCETT: A he.

STUBB: The two fallen angels, that started up hell, was women.  
 I seem to remember.

DOG: (striding again) Women! I've seen women in my day -- !

- DOG: (to FAWCETT) Remember Flaming Ethel down at Pas ?  
(contd)
- FAWCETT: (encouraging him) Do I!
- DOG: (to STUBB) She used to keep the most miniaturest revolver you've ever seen in her stocking, and she never took it out, it was there all the time and you had the feeling it might go off if you rocked about too much -- ! Remember that ?
- FAWCETT: (side-smiles at STUBB) That's right.
- DOG: But as for Dave's whore! - she lays white traps!
- STUBB: You're bushed!
- DOG: I've seen white traps in the valley in wintertime, who else would lay 'em but a schoolteacher from Winnipeg ?
- (STUBB and FAWCETT laugh together, shake their heads)
- STUBB: (to irritate DOG) What's wrong with a white trap anyway ?
- DOG: (stopping) What, using strychnine ? you approve of that ?
- STUBB: (for the argument, with a wink to FAWCETT) You know it yourself, mate -- the animals suffer in a normal clean trap, they bite off their own legs, they starve to death, they're eaten alive by their own kind, sitting in a trap like that for days. I reckon a real man don't do that, for money or anything else.
- DOG: (with sudden suspicion, stiffening) So that's it ? I've heard you use them words before -- ! (squinting across at STUBB, tensed) Should we all be sitting down in Montreal writing accounts -- is that it ?
- STUBB: What are you talking about, Montreal ?
- DOG: (approaching him) I'm not quite a real man -- is that it ? Because I lay normal traps, I don't lay strychnine traps for the other animals to pick up, the husky dogs and the mooses and the bears!
- FAWCETT: He didn't mean that!

DOG: (stealthily taking a shot-gun from near the piano)  
Keep your mouth shut!

(DOG moves towards STUBB, staring at him all the time, among the customers)

DOG: (close to STUBB) I know what's in your mind! You mean I'm a pouf eh?

FAWCETT: (behind them) Drop that!

(STUBB has his eyes fixed on the gun, in doubt as to whether to laugh or run)

STUBB: (backing) Dog!

FAWCETT: (as DOG points the gun) Drop it! I'll call the landlord!

(DOG breaks the gun open and feeds it with a shell in his pocket. He then begins to sight the gun calmly on to STUBB)

STUBB: (wide-eyed at the muzzle of the gun) Now then, Dog ... Make him put it down, Fawcett!

FAWCETT: It's only a spoof --

DOG: (whipping round) What's that? Did you say pouf?

FAWCETT: (terrified too) I said spoof! Spoof!

(Meanwhile STUBB tries to get away between the tables. DOG chases him. STUBB falls on his face and DOG kneels, then aims the gun up his arse)

DOG: Right now (bending to fire) here it comes! Try to stub this one out!

(He is about to pull the trigger when another shot is fired, off.

DOG and FAWCETT stare at each other, then behind them at the area of the shot. It looked just as if DOG had fired that shot.

STUBB remains absolutely motionless on the floor, as before, in a crouched position. They stare down at his form with a certain fascination. Then STUBB begins letting out a strange choked cry which gradually becomes a desperate yell.

FLAMING ETHEL and AMY dash in)

ETHEL: What the hell's the matter ?

(STUBB's yells subside into spasmodic sobbing sounds, but he remains exactly where he was on the floor. They all stare at him.

DOG touches STUBB gingerly on the backside with the tip of his toe, experimentally)

STUBB: (starting) No! No! No more, mate, for Christ sake!

FAWCETT: (bending over STUBB and speaking quietly) Get up, mate. Everybody's watching. He didn't fire.

ETHEL: (to DOG) Just you give me back that gun, it belongs to the landlord!

(DOG hands her the gun sheepishly)

STUBB: (feeling himself) I've got a scorching sensation in my arse!

AMY: You might have killed him!

ETHEL: It's got no firing pin let alone bullets! Like the man himself! (glaring at DOG) (taking out the blank and throwing it towards STUBB) It's a blank, like he's a blank! Come on, (to AMY) let's give 'em a number, or we'll lose all our custom! (to the customers) All right, sweethearts, this is one about guns, I mean real ones, ones that shoot to kill or at least to wound, but they have to be in the hands of REAL MEN, like the one who wounded me ...

(THIRD NUMBER, about a gun-man who broke ladies' hearts.

DOG returns glumly to his table among the customers, to watch the number, while STUBB and FAWCETT return to their duties as waiters.

During the ensuing dialogue, while the number is on, AMY and FLAMING ETHEL frequently try to drown the men's voices,

make faces at them, show their back-sides to them, blow raspberries)

FAWCETT: (to STUBB) I'll never forget that! (imitating STUBB and cackling with laughter) 'Oh Christ! Oh Christ, he's done it, mate!' 'Oh Christ, Oh Christ!'

STUBB: There's no need to mock.

DOG: (turning his gaze from FLAMING ETHEL to STUBB) I just raise my gun and you go like that!

(DOG looks round among the customers for support)

STUBB: (also looking for support) A gun's a gun, you know. (to the customers) I thought that was the end of Joe Stubb all right! (to FAWCETT) And I had this scorching sensation in my arse!

DOG: (appeasing) You're suggestible, that's all, mate.

STUBB: But you was pointing a gun at me!

DOG: I wouldn't have fired! Of course I wouldn't! (giving this to the customers as a shared absurdity)

FAWCETT: Your finger was on the trigger!

(They watch the last bars of the number and FLAMING ETHEL takes her bow.

AMY goes on playing quietly while FLAMING ETHEL comes among the customers and exchanges pleasantries with them, confides in them that 'these t hree nutcases' get on her nerves, she can't even get through a number, with them in the audience etc. She takes an order or two, gives herself a sip or two of a customer's glass)

FAWCETT: (to DOG) Nobody'd say you was a pouf if they'd seen you with Flaming Ethel down at Pas, eh, Stubb? (with a wink)

STUBB: That's right!

FAWCETT: I heard she nearly pulled her pistol on you in the act!

- FAWCETT: And she said, 'Do you want my blood as well?'  
(contd) Do you want my blood!
- DOG: (delighted with the bogus memory) That's right!
- FAWCETT: That was the time Long Martin jumped over a cubicle and landed on May and a de luxe prospector from Winnipeg! He was blind that night! He said the prospector had her knickers and high-heeled shoes on and was painting his cock with her rouge-stick!
- DOG: (chuckling) With her rouge stick!
- FAWCETT: They used to charge all-night prices there! Rose never would take an all-night customer if she could help it. Remember that? She said you had to be a wife every time -- and she wasn't that unfaithful, not to change husbands six times a week!
- DOG: She had a kind of a wit, don't you think so -- Rose?
- FAWCETT: She did!
- STUBB: Remember the guy who used to sit her on his knees for a couple of hours and then go away? They say he had it shot away in the war!
- FAWCETT: He was scared of clap, that's all! He was pale, you remember? His eyes moved a lot, they seemed to be floating all the time -- very dark, very soft!
- DOG: (quietly, eyeing him in a perplexed way) You're talking about Long Martin.
- FAWCETT: Am I?
- DOG: That's how the pimps start. No interest in sex!
- FAWCETT: I remember -- !
- DOG: (with a dismissing gesture) Stop remembering -- !

(STUBB and FAWCETT laugh together)

I want to talk about something serious. (as they give him their attention again) Did you notice something? She's getting to see my side of things.

(They gaze at him in silence)

STUBB: Who?

DOG: Dave's whore.

FAWCETT: What do you mean?

DOG: She fired off that gun just when she should have -- did you notice that?

(They stare at him)

(to the customers, with a confidential smile) They just don't want to understand. (to STUBB and FAWCETT again) All right, look at me if I'm crazy!

FAWCETT: What are you talking about?

DOG: She fired to stop me firing!

STUBB: You are bushed you know --

FAWCETT: Who's the thinker now?

DOG: It's plain facts, not thinking!

FAWCETT: (to the customers) Oh!

DOG: (to STUBB) She fired to stop me killing you.

FAWCETT: (with an amused glance at STUBB) Well ...

DOG: I'm not sure, mind you --

STUBB: You're better in the wintertime, mate -- not so jumpy!

DOG: Well, that's true. (to the customers round him) It's the angekok in me, I suppose. (seeming to hope that someone will ask him what this means) That means ...

STUBB: (mechanically) 'Medicine man'.

DOG: That's right. It was the longest apprenticeship I ever served. The hardest too. When the Eskimo feels he's been 'called' he retires to a lonely place -- (still to the customers) I chose Carlyle Street, Winnipeg -- I didn't hardly speak to a living soul for two years or more -- I prayed and fasted until the Torngarsoak appeared --

(STUBB and FAWCETT both recite the next sentences with him, knowing it all by heart)

ALL: That's the Great White Bear. It came up in front of the iron bedstand.

(STUBB and FAWCETT repeat DOG's expressions of face and intonations exactly)

Yet I wasn't surprised. He did everything they said he would too. He ate me up and vomited out the pieces, and these formed together again, and the Great White Bear disappeared. They gave me a wife, and I used to do all their healing after that. I swear I had healing powers.

STUBB: (after a pause, and with a smile to the customers)  
Did you use the wife?

DOG: Not me. (to the customers round him) I've seen a few white men go native. I didn't want the lice picked out of my hair! And the stench of those pelts in the igloos -- I never really got used to it --

STUBB: As long as you don't go into that Eskimo trance again, eh Fawcett?

FAWCETT: I'll say! (to the customers) He looked like dead last time.

STUBB: (also to the customers) Scared the balls off me! He sat there all day.

FAWCETT: (for the customers) How do you fast at Carlyle Street, Winnipeg, Dog?

STUBB: He means he didn't eat, only drank!

DOG: (disregarding STUBB) If you eat nothing first thing it shrinks the stomach. I did a few days like that, no food and no drink, just living on cosmic rays, you don't believe me do you? Then I went on a jag Saturday and Sunday, they were the finest jags I ever had, I got so pissed you could see through my legs. (to the customers at his own table) It's true. It used to take thirty hours sleep to bring me round, and for a week I couldn't say my name. But a jag never had less effect on me in my life. That was the fasting. I'll tell you something about fasting.

(Again STUBB and FAWCETT recite with him)

ALL: All your diseases come out backwards.

DOG: That's right. You get a touch of all the diseases you ever had, starting from the last one you had to the first one when you was a baby. I started with a dose of clap and ended up with a nappy rash!

FAWCETT: (cackling) That's difficult to believe!

DOG: (his fun spoiled by FAWCETT's cackle) It's true. Ask anybody who's fasted. It purges you right through. Ask any of the shipwrecked fellows, they'll tell you they didn't even want to eat afterwards. The trouble's eating again, you don't want it!

(Another shot, off)

(flaring up as if the shot was a personal insult) Now -- !

(DOG stands up, staring in the direction of the shot.)

STUBB and FAWCETT shrug towards each other)

DOG: (to himself) Well I did want to eat I suppose. I wanted a jag, how's that? (as if addressing the shot) Not exactly food, but a prolonged jag. Now is that all right?

STUBB: Listen to it!

DOG: I wanted a jag -- to -- purge myself. It was part of the fast, really. It's true!

(Another shot)

You bitch!

FAWCETT: (ribbing him) Is it true?

DOG: (wearily, letting himself down on his seat at the table again, and addressing the customers round him, wearily) No. I just wanted a jag, that's all. Just to get disgusting drunk and flop out on a bed. Like suicide for half a day. (gazing round at the customers closest to him with sad eyes)

(No shots this time)

FAWCETT: That seemed like the truth!

STUBB: You're bushed!

DOG: (eagerly, jumping out of his seat) I'll try and experiment, I'll -- ! (staring towards the shot-area)

STUBB: Keep your hand off them guns, that's all!

DOG: I'll see if we're tuned!

FAWCETT: (to STUBB) What's he on about?

DOG: Fire -- in ten seconds!

FAWCETT: (quickly reading his watch) Five -- six --

(They wait. A shot)

DOG: (jumping up and down) What was that -- was that ten seconds? God above! Who's bushed now, eh? I told you I had powers!

STUBB: Oh Christ!

DOG: Wake up, Stubb! (again addressing the shots) Fire when I say (turning to FAWCETT) Who was that in the bible-reading last night -- ?

FAWCETT: What?

DOG: The guardian angel -- you said he was a man and Stubb said she was a woman --

FAWCETT: Oh, Gabriel!

(An immediate shot)

DOG: That's it! (wildly excited again) By Christ, I didn't mean her to be that exact -- I -- !

STUBB: (shaking his head towards the customers) Look at it, just look at it -- !

DOG: That's the name I meant -- I meant her to fire on Gabriel -- !

(Another shot)

STUBB: (converted) Blimey!

DOG: (beyond himself) That's it! That's it! Oh Christ that's it!

FAWCETT: (wary) Listen you'd better stop -- !

DOG: Gabriel! (a shot) Gabriel! (a shot)

FAWCETT: (frightened) Now shut up!

DOG: Gab -- !

FAWCETT: Shut up! Do you hear? You'll have the landlord in!

DOG: (panting with excitement) OK but don't say I'm wrong. (to STUBB) Who's wrong about the shots eh?

FAWCETT: Just calm down! If it's true or not don't make any difference -- just calm down!

(DOG settles in his seat again, puffing, wiping his forehead.)

Silence, and STUBB and FAWCETT are a little more thoughtful as they work now)

(almost to himself) That's -- impossible ...

DOG: Impossible? I told you the story of Gillis's Grave -- strange things happen here -- !

FAWCETT: OK, OK!

DOG: (still excited) Letters eaten away by rats -- not a mark on their bodies -- door leaning open! Rusty frying pan!

STUBB: Funny we should have talked about Gab -- !

FAWCETT: Ssssh!

DOG: What?

STUBB: G -- !

FAWCETT: Stubb!

STUBB: (almost whispering) Gabriel!

(A shot. He jumps)

Blimey!

DOG: There!

STUBB: (again, this time to himself) Blimey!

DOG: (to FAWCETT) Don't talk to me about impossible after that!

(FAWCETT steels himself)

FAWCETT: Gabriel!

(A shot)

(to DOG, excited) You may be right -- she's over there looking after us! Sending us messages!

DOG: That's right! What did I say? (to STUBB) You wouldn't believe me! (shouting) Gabriel!

(A shot)

FAWCETT: Gabriel!

(A shot)

DOG: (hilariously) Gabriel!

(A shot)

STUBB: Gabriel!

(Silence. STUBB looks round suspiciously)

Gabriel!

(Silence again)

(turning on them) You rats! Trying to edge me out! (shouting at the top of his voice) Gabriel! Gabriel! Gabriel!

(A shot)

DOG: At last! (encouragingly) How's that, Stubb, eh? I knew you could do it!

STUBB: (exhausted) Thank Christ! Thank Christ for that!

DOG: She means us all -- get that into your nuts! Now sit down! (going to the ammunition chest and tapping it, as he sits down squarely in the centre of it himself, leaving little or no room for anyone else) Here! (as the other two squeeze on to it at his side, so that the very slightest struggle for position starts for a moment) We can leave these other buggers to drink their piss for a minute -- this is for you! News for you! (looking from one to the other closely) Do you get it?

(STUBB and FAWCETT are no longer in a

ribbing mood, but to all intents and purposes in DOG's world, separate from the customers now)

DOG: Now it's begun to be clear to me that -- this name, this name -- I won't say it -- means something. (STUBB and FAWCETT nod assent) Now I've got a suggestion -- I don't know how you two'll take it.

FAWCETT: What?

DOG: She -- the name -- she's bringing us closer -- she's guiding us all the time -- to -- (he stops)

FAWCETT: Where?

DOG: It might be something -- rich -- and marvellous -- I don't know! We've just got to wait and see.

(The enthusiasm of STUBB and FAWCETT subsides. They look at each other across DOG, and then at the customers, without changing expression, simply using their eyes.

Slowly they get up and go back to their work among the customers, leaving DOG on his ammunition chest still glowing with enthusiasm.

There is suddenly a shot)

(jumping up, excited again) By Christ!

(FLAMING ETHEL appears)

ETHEL: I got it! I got the bullseye!

DOG: (still in his world) I didn't say the word -- but I was thinking it -- (softly) by Christ!

(FLAMING ETHEL is joined by AMY. They take no notice of DOG.

FIFTH NUMBER:

FLAMING ETHEL goes into her number straight from her last word 'bullseye', and this is a saucy song on a 'target' theme.

In this number FLAMING ETHEL is joined by STUBB and FAWCETT as 'targets'.

DOG goes slowly to his ammunition box and, taking a pelt and covering his shoulders with it, sits down, cross-legged, and closes his eyes, with the same radiance as before.

The number comes to an end and they take their bow)

DOG: (opening his eyes slowly during the applause) Thank you, ladies and gentlemen! I asked a parson once --

STUBB: Oh Christ!

FLAMING ETHEL: (to the customers as she comes down among them) 'We was sitting in church one afternoon' -- !

DOG: The sun was coming through the stained glass --

ALL: And I said, 'Isn't God's face in the moon, if so, where's his feet?'

DOG: That's right. And he said, 'That's the face of man, that's your face, son -- !' (livid) Trust a cockroach to take the guts out of life!'

(He turns this on to FAWCETT, who is also on his way back to the customers, and FAWCETT seems to expect it)

AMY: (to DOG) You shouldn't call clergymen cockroaches -- even defrocked ones - it's bad luck!

DOG: They're both black (glaring across at FAWCETT) and they always live where the stink is!

ETHEL: ( with a sigh) I wish there were real theatres to work in! (to the customers round her, earnestly) Do you think I'd be working among these madmen? It's only because the world came to an end. It did, you know. You don't think I'd be sitting here, two feet from you, do you? I'd have a dressing room, there'd be naked light-bulbs all round the mirror, and I'd have a middle-aged woman pinning me up and taking flowers in for me, and champagne after the show.

DOG: But you can't fool the Indians! I saw the White Bear OK!

- ALL: (including FLAMING ETHEL and AMY) He ate me up. In Carlyle Street, Winnipeg! And he spewed me out again! For five years I told them all about their gods -- I sat in their igloos!
- DOG: I knew more about their gods than they knew themselves! I was the first white angekok -- and the last more likely!
- FAWCETT: Then the stink of moose got you down!
- DOG: I used to sit and talk about the sky. (to FAWCETT) You've got nothing so peaceful in your life, you cockroach! I used to talk about the Eskimo heavens -- !
- FAWCETT: (with sudden anger, whirling round) You could take that away from an Indian just by snapping your fingers! But you couldn't take away what I learned!
- DOG: About Jesus ?
- FAWCETT: That's it!
- DOG: It's God I'm talking about -- not the King of the Cockroaches -- !
- FAWCETT: You're a blasphemer!
- DOG: Blasphemer, my arse! If you want to have a peep at Dave's whore why don't you slip across the valley tonight and feast your eyes till dawn comes through? But don't expect us to burn your hands with flaming logs this time! Or tie your hands and whip your backside! Sling soil all over your face! Eh Stubb? Remember that time he put a sack over his head and sprinkled ash in his beer? He thought that's what sackcloth and ashes was!
- FAWCETT: (to STUBB) What's he talking about?
- ETHEL: (to the customers round her) The same every bloody night! And they wonder why I carry a water-pistol in my stocking! To cool the men off! I tell you all men are crazy! Something happened in the world to drive all men crazy! I squirt this little jet of water on them and it goes down at once, and they get such a funny look in their eyes! You can play with men how you want to, if you know how to! I've played with so many I've lost the spirit of the game. I never even trouble to fill my pistol any more, is that right, Dog? Because what don't go up can't come down, can it? Look at him, he'll be in his trance soon, then the landlord'll be in!

- DOG: (to STUBB) You can talk to me about white-fox farms, but it's them brought your prices down. Not so long back beaver-pelts took thirty dollars a piece, know that? All you get for the best prime pelt of silver fox is seventy dollars nowadays! And I remember selling two hundred low-grade dark pelts one year for near on five thousand dollars at Eskimo Point -- myself! Don't talk to me about white-fox farms!
- STUBB: (with a wink at FAWCETT) Why; Dog -- you thinking of going back to the pelt trade?
- FAWCETT: (joining in) Where would you go?
- DOG: (after eyeing them both for a moment) Little place by the Peace River --
- STUBB: He's got it all worked out!
- DOG: I figured it out like this. A place like Fort St. John or Hudson's Hope, along the Peace River Valley. You've got the whole of that boiling water --
- STUBB: Yes!
- DOG: All that power in the Peace River Canyon, you've got prospects -- it's rich country -- you've got coal, you've got timber, fur, bog iron, copper -- they say there's still placer gold in the gravel-bars of the river -- !
- STUBB: So what? What about the dredging firms that lost their money back before the war?
- DOG: What I say is there's prospects -- there's riches all round -- in the sky -- the water -- the earth --! Remember Fort St. John? The Port Douglas Hotel? Barkerville? Kelly's Hotel?
- (STUBB and FAWCETT join in mechanically, together with FLAMING ETHEL and AMY)
- ALL: Remember the tailings along Williams creek? I reckon they turned that gravel over a million times -- polished and bright it was, with turning over!
- DOG: That's 'right! Barker took six hundred thousand dollars in gold, they say --
- ALL: And laid the seed of British Columbia!

- DOG: Richfield -- Walker's Gulch -- nuggets as big as your hand! -- Antler Creek -- Low Hee -- !
- ALL: Conklin's Gulch -- Antler Creek -- Low Hee -- Roger's Restaurant -- the tin shop -- the Occidental Hotel -- the Brewery Saloon! Remember the old telegraphic trail in the Arctic? And the flowers? The blue lupins, the saxifrage, the forget-me-nots, the yellow Arctic poppies?
- FAWCETT: There's be people too!
- DOG: That's right! People you can talk to! Not people swilling black piss for the hell of it! And no more of this Gabriel stuff -- !
- (A shot. They all stop. FLAMING ETHEL leans forward at her table. AMY, still at the piano, looks across the tables towards her with a certain fear)
- ETHEL: There's nobody out there!
- FAWCETT: (to DOG) Get off that bloody ammunition box, go on! You'll drive us up the wall! You're too fond of that kind of thing! It's like a black fuckin' hood over your head!
- DOG: (with a peculiar glint of triumph in his eyes) We'll go down and be among people -- we'll go in the saloons, play cards, we'll be luxury prospectors again -- !
- STUBB: 'Again' ! We was never that even once!
- DOG: Like Fawcett said down at Pas, when we laid the bet, our names are writ in water, remember that?
- FAWCETT: (blinking) Did I say that?
- DOG: Thank God for a little guidance, that's all! Something's there -- call it a she -- call it Gabriel!
- (A shot. FLAMING ETHEL gets to her feet)
- ETHEL: (quietly, to DOG) You play with fire, you do. Amy, come out this way, come on.
- (AMY comes down among the customers)
- (as AMY joins her) Let's get out before the landlord comes.

(They leave by the back)

DOG: (continuing to talk to STUBB and FAWCETT) Call it Dave's whore -- !

FAWCETT: Dave's whore don't exist!

DOG: What does it matter, Fawcett? -- somehins talkin' to us! Now come on, get the lamps ready, Fawcett -- steam ahead -- you want us in darkness tonight?

(They both stare at him)

FAWCETT: What's he talkin' about -- lamps?

DOG: (to STUBB) Have a look at the cache -- we don't want the whole grizzly population up them poles tonight -- it seems Fawcett can't use grease!

STUBB: (drifting back to the customers) Uccch!

DOG: Anyway Mrs. Dave do exist! She come from Winnipeg, so Dave said. She's so brainy she's evil, he said, and very handy with a gun. Now there was another school-teacher down at Pas too -- had a big let-down in love, so Long Martin said --

FAWCETT: (cynically) Maybe they're the same bird in different disguises!

DOG: But Long Martin's a liar, as we all know. He's also the biggest pimp in the North West Territories. He runs three whorehouses in Fort Churchill alone, to my knowledge. He found trapping was slow money -- he needed a lot of hot money, illegal. Flaming Ethel says he pulled out a wad of fifty-dollar bills one night -- threw it across the table -- said keep it. You don't get that trapping! He didn't even want to lay her. She says he didn't even have the rocks. (trying to hold their attention as FAWCETT too drifts back to his work) At Carlyle Street Winnipeg I got forty Christmas cards one year! Remember that? Kept them on my dresser for three more Christmasses! Remember that time we danced all night -- a new moon -- when some mail came up? We got double price for our pelts and nobody could tell us why! (to STUBB) Remember when Fawcett brought that moose-ram down and you hadn't even seen it?

(His eyes show a slow dawning disappointment as the others take no notice of him)

DOG: (with sudden fury) Ever since you elected me Dog you've been giving me the glass eye! So find yourselves another Dog, realists! And some other dreams! (he closes his eyes deliberately, sitting on the chest) It's time to recollect, boys!

FAWCETT: Oh no! He's going into that bloody Eskimo trance! It must be 10.20! (he consults customers' watches)

STUBB: (going up to DOG) Come on, mate, get off your box of poison, the landlord'll be round soon. And if he finds that box he'll chew my balls off, not yours!

DOG: (as if he hadn't heard) No Gabriel any more. (he waits, and the others turn to see if there will be a shot) Gabriel? (silence) No Gabriel. Nothing there any more. See that boys? Nothing there!

(He closes his eyes again)

FAWCETT: (to the customers) He's on the White Bear stuff again. He's got to be spewed out in bits and then put together again. And he's supposed to be sane! But I'll tell you this. He's got more money in his pocket than you or me. (sitting at one of the tables) He'll sell all that poison before the night's out. And nobody even knows his name.

STUBB: One week he's Crampton. Then Bailly. Last week it was Wickham. And Haines! Stornford! Stornford's a favourite one. (to FAWCETT) Remember what he said? 'The Eskimo trance is the death of the Torn-garsock, which means the death of names!'

FAWCETT: Who gives a damn?

(STUBB gazes at the motionless DOG. He returns to his work but turns round to look at him again. He stands stock still. Then he walks a couple of steps towards him. Silence)

STUBB: (softly) 'Ere.

FAWCETT: What's up?

STUBB: He's not breathin'.

FAWCETT: Don't talk tripe!

STUBB: He's not!

(FAWCETT joins STUBB. Together they stand staring at DOG)

FAWCETT: Of course he's breathing!

STUBB: Maybe that's how the boys at Gillis's Grave went out! Just -- sat and died -- !

(FAWCETT turns and stares at STUBB with open mouth)

FAWCETT: What you talkin' about ?

STUBB: It's too quiet, mate. I don't like it.

FAWCETT: He's spoofin' ! -- like he always does! About Gabriel too. Gabriel! Can you hear the shots ?

STUBB: Take his pulse!

FAWCETT: His pulse ?

STUBB: I'm not touchin' 'im'!

FAWCETT: (drawing back) Nor me!

STUBB: (grabbing FAWCETT urgently) You must have done the last offices -- to the dead!

FAWCETT: What are you talking about ? Are you all right ?

STUBB: Was you a cockroach ?

FAWCETT: A cockroach ?

STUBB: A priest!

FAWCETT: I -- er -- I -- think so!

STUBB: You're bushed!

FAWCETT: Er -- put a glass under his nose -- I done that to -- Bailly.

STUBB: (screwing up his face) What ?

FAWCETT: A glass.

(STUBB gazes round in a gingerly way, and then stealthily takes a glass from one of the tables. He polishes it carefully on his shirt. He approaches DOG with some fear)

FAWCETT: (whispering) Careful, Stubb! The last offices has got to be careful!

(STUBB puts the glass under DOG's nose with fear. Then he studies the glass carefully, though he is afraid to get too close)

STUBB: He's -- dead!

FAWCETT: Christ!

STUBB: Dog! Dog!

FAWCETT: Dog!

(But they do not attempt to touch DOG. They talk softly, intimately, close together)

STUBB: Suppose the landlord comes ?

FAWCETT: We split!

STUBB: And lose a job! It's not the job I'm struck on, it's the perks that go with it.

FAWCETT: But didn't he tell us he only dies for a time? Then he puts the bits together again!

STUBB: Yes I think he did. (angrily) Now come on wake up, you bugger!

(STUBB goes and shakes DOG violently. As he does so he hears the chink of keys. He stops. They are in DOG's pocket)

FAWCETT: What's that?

(STUBB seizes the bunch of keys from DOG's pocket and holds them up before him)

STUBB: The gunshot keys!

(With sudden resolve they both heave DOG off the chest and prop him up against the piano, which sets the bass drum and one or two other percussive instruments in action. This alarms them and they stand for a moment in terror. But he slumps back and seems to continue in his trance.)

STUBB unlocks the chest and pulls out  
a bottle of 'rye')

STUBB: It's poison (holding it up to the light) but it's quick!  
(contd)

(He wrenches off the cork and takes a  
long swig)

(gasping) God save the King!

FAWCETT: (seizing the bottle) Gimme! (taking a long swig too)  
Sing your prohibition song!

STUBB: (with great relish, an enormous smile on his face,  
as he stands on the ammunition chest, grabbing the  
bottle again) Four and twenty Yankees, feeling very dry,  
Went across the border to get a drink of rye,  
When the rye was opened, the Yanks began  
to sing --

BOTH: God bless America but God save the King!

FAWCETT: (peeping at DOG) 'Mrs. Dave's over there!' Mrs. Dave  
don't exist! And last week it was Young Dave coming  
up with a contract from Prince George to make us rich!  
Talk about dreams! The week before that there was  
radium in the valley! Then he was on the run -- every  
time Flaming Ethel came in he said, 'It's the cops,'  
and jumped into an ashcan!

STUBB: That's where you belong, Dog, in an ashcan. (to the  
customers) Shall I tell you something about Dog? He --  
went native with the Indians. Ate moose-meat with his  
hands, had the lice picked out of his hair. Lived in  
their stink and liked it. He -- he -- (lowering his  
voice) came to my door in South London and said, 'I  
hear you've bin getting rough with the wife again!'  
'The wife?' I says. And the tears started pouring  
down my face! He took me down the station and I told  
him about -- the reverend Fawcett -- and he said --

FAWCETT: (screwing up his face and peering into STUBB's) What  
you talkin' about, mate?

STUBB: (turning to FAWCETT with an imploring look) What did  
you do it for, Fawcett?

FAWCETT: Do what for Christ sake?

STUBB: (with sudden fury) You dirty cassocky rat!

FAWCETT: (backing up) What?

STUBB: There was a cassock upstairs -- behind the door -- it gave you a thrill with your cassock on -- you -- !

FAWCETT: Eh ?

STUBB: You was the lodger! Go on, deny it! The wife used to say, I'll get that long black coat of his cleaned, that funny black coat that reaches down to his feet. (pushing his face into FAWCETT's) I notice you don't say no! The same long face! The way you used to come downstairs, very soft -- ! You was the lodger, wasn't you?

(FAWCETT hesitates)

FAWCETT: I -- er --!

STUBB: (more quietly) I knew it was you. I knew we'd meet up again. It makes us brothers in a way!

FAWCETT: Brothers ?

STUBB: 'Ere, Fawcett (taking his arm, glancing round secretively) -- what was she like ?

FAWCETT: Who ?

STUBB: My wife!

(FAWCETT stands there, perplexed)

Get on with it!

FAWCETT: (with dry lips) Well -- er -- I used to come in --

STUBB: (fascinated) Yes!

FAWCETT: Start walking up the stairs -- (with a helpless look at the customers)

STUBB: Go on!

FAWCETT: She'd say, let me have your cassock for the cleaners, I'll come and get it -- ! And -- she used to -- come and get it! Under the cassock!

STUBB: (breathless) Blimey!

(To find some relief STUBB takes a long swig from the bottle. FAWCETT grabs it and follows suit)

Come on, let's go and do some shootin' ! He can sleep a week if he wants to.

FAWCETT: (going with him) Or a couple of years!

(They leave via the stage area.

DOG remains motionless. Silence.

There are suddenly two shots. DOG wakes with a start)

DOG: There, it's Gabriel back again!

(Another shot.

He looks round for STUBB and FAWCETT, meaning to go on talking to them, and finds they are not there.

STUBB and FAWCETT dash back, panic-stricken)

STUBB: 'Ere! Dog -- ! (stopping) Thank Christ! He's awake, Fawcett! Did you hear them shots? There's nobody out there!

FAWCETT: Not a living bloody soul!

DOG: (with a smile) You don't have to worry. You need a drink! (feeling in his pocket) Let me give you some of my poison. (finding no keys) Why, you stinking lice! (leaping up) Where's my keys? (grabbing STUBB by the neck) Where's the keys to my gunshot?

STUBB: I got 'em!

(STUBB pulls them out and throws them on the floor. DOG grabs them, examines them carefully. Then he looks at them both)

DOG: (imitating STUBB) 'Four and twenty Yankees!' Why don't you do something new for a change? 'God save the King!' Uch!

(He takes out a bottle from the ammunition chest and tears off the cork. He then takes an enormous long swig)

FAWCETT: (suddenly) You big fat bearded pouf, it was you got us into this! Suppose the landlord comes?

DOG: (smacking his lips) If this is poison, let me die tonight! (taking another swig)

FAWCETT: Something's got to come out of the silence, you said! But what? What?

- STUBB: It was you said that, mate!
- FAWCETT: (staring at him) Me ?
- STUBB: That's right! You'd just been offered a job on road-haulage and it scared the shit out of you!
- FAWCETT: Dog was offered the job -- !
- STUBB: Dog was working at the municipal -- !
- DOG: (throwing the bottle away) Shut up!
- STUBB: (persisting as he backs away) Sewage department -- !
- DOG: To hell with your stories! 'Manson Creek' -- 'Gillis's Grave' -- how long are you going to cling to that one ?
- FAWCETT: It's your story! The rusty frying pan, the letters nailed to the table eaten by rats -- that's all yours!
- DOG: And you believe it! You put your own lying stories in my mouth and then say they're true! By God I'm going to cast you two in the truth and leave you stinking of it -- like men in a bog! Come 'ere! (grabbing them both close) Shall I tell you what happened to the guys at Gillis's Grave? They just sat down and thought they was dead -- and so they died -- and one of the guys -- I'll never forget it! -- he was trailing a frying pan -- he ran maybe ten or fifteen miles along the rim of a hill, up the trap-line, behind the other guys, I remember this frying pan clanging against the trees, it clanged for ten or fifteen miles, along the rim of the hill -- he must have been strong -- he must have had some constitution -- it was fear that gave him the strength maybe -- his eyes was popping out of his head -- ! You'd say they died of cold -- but they died of joy -- they reached the snowline -- I'll never forget that frying pan clanging along --- in the woods, on the rim of the hill, and everything so clean, so cool, the further up you went, the sounds so clear -- ! For fifteen miles! And then the snowline!
- (A shot, close by)
- STUBB: Jesus!
- (They stand huddled together)
- FAWCETT: It's somebody moving!
- DOG: Ssssh!

(Another shot, closer)

FAWCETT: It's the landlord! Split!

DOG: He's come to shoot us! (at the top of his voice)  
Come out you son-of-a-bitch, come on out!

STUBB: They're surrounding us! He's brought the cops!

(A third shot, this time at very close quarters)

DOG: Let's get out of here! Come on!

(DOG and STUBB make a dash for it, via the stage area.)

FAWCETT is left shivering with terror, alone.

STUBB dashes back and grabs hold of him)

STUBB: (pulling him out) The frying pan! The frying pan!

(FAWCETT manages to grab the frying pan by its cord as they rush out. We hear it clanging along for quite a while. Then there is silence.)

FLAMING ETHEL appears from the same exit carrying a bunch of letters. She puts them down on the table as AMY goes to the piano, and a BALLAD NUMBER begins, telling a similar story to that of Gillis's Grave, the only downbeat number of the evening. At the end she takes a long nail from between her breasts and picks up the mail again, seeming bored by the whole procedure)

ETHEL: (to the customers) Why the fuck do I do this every night? A woman shouldn't be like that. A man said to me once, just put this what I've got in my hand in a warm place, girl, and I did, and so I never made it, not what I was after, the dressing rooms and the flowers. I just went on obliging men, like I am now. Amy? Have you got the hammer? (taking the hammer from AMY) You see, them last shots never come from anywhere! There's nobody in the shooting gallery, I swear that, I look every night, so does Amy! And it scares me! And Dog gets that little glint in his eye, as if he knows all about it. So when he says put a nail through them

ETHEL:  
(contd)

letters girl, I do it, because you never know.

(She drives the nail firmly through the  
letters on to the table.

BLACKOUT)

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