

# **Lydia Shears**

A play for radio by Jim Driscoll

*'The Tisbury Mop' played once through by fiddle and accordion. The sound of a crowd having fun, the hum of conversation, laughter, whoops, clinking of glasses and mugs, in the background, to invoke a country fair.*

CHARLES Charles Shears, who lived from 1825 until just before the outbreak of the First World War was born at Winterslow in the county of Wiltshire, of a family of woods-men and labourers. He was a noted singer of folk songs in the area, but the most celebrated of the family was his great aunt Lydia Shears, who was born some time in the late seventeenth century and died in 1795. She was a reputed witch who could turn herself into a hare, (*background sound suddenly stops*) a reputation that led to her being shot and killed with a silver bullet by a person or persons unknown.

### Scene I

*A village hall. The present day. Someone (Chris) is tuning up a guitar. The door opens.*

BOB Hi there.

CHRIS Alright mate.

BOB Is this the, uh,

CHRIS Folk music.

BOB Great. I've come to the right place then.

CHRIS Yes you have. If you want to play folk music anyway.

BOB (*chuckles*) Sure. Well, I've brought my, uh

CHRIS Fiddle, is that?

BOB That's it.

CHRIS Nice one.

BOB So you're, a, uh, guitarist, I see.

CHRIS Yep. Hi. Chris.

BOB Oh, hi Chris. Bob.

CHRIS Nice to meet you Bob.

BOB And you. So you, uh

CHRIS I put the advert up, yes.

BOB I was going to say, so you like folk music, yes?

CHRIS Yes. Sure. *(pause)* Not that I'm an expert. I haven't played too much. English folk. Any actually. I played in an Irish band for a while.

BOB Oh right. *(sounds of the violin case being opened)* Bluegrass, me. Appalachian stuff, you know. A bit of Cajun. *(Bob begins tuning)* That's when I play with my mate on accordion. I said he should come along as well. He should be here in a bit. He said he'd be here at eight. *(pause)* I thought the advert looked interesting.

CHRIS I got a book.

BOB *(reads the title)* Wiltshire Folk Song. Nice. *(Bob idly plays some bluegrass licks)* Specific. You know what I mean? Not 'English Folk'. Or 'West Country Folk'. 'Wiltshire Folk'. That's good that. I live in Dorset, mind. Is that OK?

CHRIS *(draws in his breath)* Oh, well, I'm not sure about that. Over the border, eh? You got your passport?

BOB I got a letter giving me permission. Not that any of you lot can read it of course.

CHRIS No, there's some good stuff in here. Some interesting songs. I've been mucking about with them for a while and I thought other people might be interested too. I thought we could start at the beginning and just work our way through. Here's the first one.

BOB 'The Swallow'. Right. Let's have a look.

*Bob plays the melody in D minor, hesitantly, reading it for the first time.*

CHRIS That's it.

BOB Quite nice that.

CHRIS Want to try it together?

BOB Sure.

*Chris and Bob play the melody and chords in D minor, not perfectly.*

CHRIS Words are a bit dodgy though. 'The zwallow twitters on the barn'. It's a bit oo-aar, you know what I mean?

BOB Course it is. It's Wiltshire folk innit? It's gotta be oo-aar. There's some kind of law about that, I'm sure there is.

CHRIS           *(clears his throat)* It gets really high too. *(begins trying to sing – he is right, it is very high)* ‘The rook is cawing on the tree’.

BOB             What’s it in? D minor? Perhaps we could transpose it down.

CHRIS           Yes. C minor won’t help very much. To A minor perhaps?

BOB             Yes, let’s try that.

*Chris and Bob discuss and begin trying to play it in the new key. Sound of door.*

JO               Hello. Am I in the right place?

BOB             That all depends what you’re looking for.

CHRIS           Folk music.

JO               Yes, that’s me. Well, I don’t mean ‘I am folk music’, that would be a bit presumptuous, you know I’m not, um, Sandy Denny or June Tabor or anything, I mean, you know, I’m looking for the folk music group and, well, here you are and here I am. Would one of you lovely men be able to help me with the door?

BOB             Oh, yes, sure. *(banging about)* That must be a big violin you’ve got in there.

JO               It’s a cello.

CHRIS           Cello. Wow. Nice.

BOB             I did know that by the way.

JO               Is it alright? I mean, it’s not very folk is it. But I figured it could be alright.

CHRIS           No, no, it’ll be fine. I love the sound of a cello. We’re not purists here. Anyway, it’s very English, isn’t it, the cello?

JO               That’s the Elgar thing I suppose. I’m not Jacqueline du Pre I’m afraid.

CHRIS           I’m sure it will be fine.

*Jo plays a few notes to warm up.*

CHRIS           Wow. Lovely.

BOB             “That’s a beautiful instrument you’ve got between your legs and all you can do is scratch at it”.

JO           What?

BOB         It's a quote.

CHRIS       Bit inappropriate.

BOB         Thomas Beecham I think. Don't you know it?

JO           No, sorry.

BOB         It's a classic. One of those unintentional double entendres. You know, like "The batsman's Holding, the bowler's Willy". That kind of thing.

*Awkward pause.*

CHRIS       I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name.

JO           Jo.

CHRIS       Nice to meet you, Jo. I'm Chris, this here is Bob.

BOB         Hi.

*Sound of the door opening again.*

JOHNNY     Sorry I'm late.

BOB         Johnny. Alright mate?

JOHNNY     Hey man, just about. Bloody traffic on the 303 was a nightmare.

BOB         Yeah, right.

CHRIS       Hi, I'm Chris.

JOHNNY     Alright, man. Johnny. Friend of Bob's here. He said I should come along.

CHRIS       This is Jo.

JO           Hi.

JOHNNY     Hi.

CHRIS       Well, it's good to see you. Accordion right? You come far?

JOHNNY     Marlborough. I play Cajun stuff mainly. But I do a bit of stuff for the Morris now and again.

BOB         Alright, mate, you can keep that quiet.

JOHNNY This is English folk, right?

CHRIS Yes sure, but ... I mean, nothing wrong with Morris dancing I guess. It's just not our thing. My thing. Whatever.

BOB Admit it. You just forgot the hankies, right?

*Johnny plays a Cajun lick on the accordion. Bob joins in. They high five and laugh.*

CHRIS I got this book.

JOHNNY Oh right.

CHRIS We were just starting with this one.

JOHNNY 'The Swallow'. Right.

CHRIS You know it?

JOHNNY No.

BOB It's very high for him to sing though.

CHRIS Do you read at all?

JOHNNY Course I bloody read. I come from Marlborough, not Swindon.

CHRIS *(embarrassed)* I mean music ...

JOHNNY I know.

CHRIS Right. Um, we were going to transpose it down a bit to A minor. Can you, er, do that in your head?

JOHNNY Do I look like bloody Einstein?

BOB I don't think Einstein was a musician.

CHRIS Sure he was. A fiddle player actually.

BOB I thought he was a scientist.

CHRIS *(to Johnny)* I'll write it out for you in A minor.

JOHNNY Sure. While you're doing that, I'll just warm up.

*Johnny fiddles about on the accordion. The tune of 'Salisbury Union' slowly emerges.*

## Scene II

*The Salisbury Union. Low hubbub in the background.*

CHARLES *(speaks the words over the accordion, which has continued, in time to the tune)* Well it's funny how the world grows cold / With the setting of the sun / And now I come to the end of my life / In the Salisbury Union.

COLLECTOR *(writing in notebook)* Salisbury Union, September 1909.

CHARLES *(singing the tune this time)* Well it's funny how the years go by / Disappearing one by one / Now I do come to the end of my life / In the Salisbury Union.

*Music stops, low hubbub continues*

COLL. Perhaps, sir, you could state your name.

CHARLES Charles Shears. Eighty four years old I am. Born in 1825, least that's what my mother said. My family was all woodsmen and labourers. Working people.

COLL. Thank you, Mr Shears. I wonder if you know any songs at all.

CHARLES Songs?

COLL. Yes. That you might like to sing for me.

CHARLES What's that for then?

COLL. I'm collecting folk songs. Writing them down. The tunes and the words. Before they get lost forever.

CHARLES You're not one of them fancy composers are you? What likes to steal our tunes and make 'em all pretty like?

COLL. I'm a collector. I just write down what I hear.

CHARLES 'Cos I got some songs. But they ent pretty. Nor are they meant to be. They're honest. Can't say I've ever known anything that was pretty that was honest too. But that maybe is another story.

COLL. If you sing it, sir, I will just write it down.

CHARLES Well all right. Just mind you don't make it pretty though. *(begins to sing 'The Labouring Man')* You English men of each degree / A moment listen unto me / To please you ...

COLL. Wait a moment. Excuse me. Could you just tell me a little about this song?

CHARLES Like what?

COLL. What is it called?

CHARLES Don't know that it's got a name.

COLL. I see. The opening is a little generic, I could take the first line of the chorus perhaps. As a title.

CHARLES You do what you like. I learnt it from my father. He never called it nothing.

COLL. Thank you Mr Shears. I am sorry. Please do begin.

*Charles sings, with accordion, cello, guitar, and fiddle slowly joining in.*

In former days you all do know / A poor man cheerful used to go /  
Neat and clean upon my life / With his children and his wife / And for  
his labour it was said / A fair day's wages he was paid / But now to  
live he hardly can / May God protect the labouring man

Now England do the best she can / She can't do wi'out the labouring  
man / Old England always leads the van / But never wi'out the  
labouring man

When Bonaparte and Nelson too / And Wellington at Waterloo / Were  
fighting both by land and sea / The poor man gained the victory / Their  
hearts were cast in honour's mould / The soldiers and the sailors bold /  
And every battle understand / Was carried by the labouring man

Now England do the best she can / She can't do wi'out the labouring  
man / Old England always leads the van / But never wi'out the  
labouring man

COLL. Thank you. That was very nice.

CHARLES It's not nice. It's a bitter song.

COLL. Yes, of course. I mean, you delivered it well. Are there any more verses?

CHARLES More verses? Now you're asking. Let me see. Oh yes, I remember.

*Charles sings the last verse, slower and quieter, with full accompaniment*

CHARLES Now if wars do rise again / And England be in want of men / They'll  
have to search the country round / To find the lads that plough the



ground / Who harrow the ground and till the wheat / And every danger  
boldly meet / For England always leads the van / But never without the  
labouring man

CHARLES It's always the same, don't you think? All them fine gentlemen and  
fancy composers too I dare say. Sitting on top of the heap, and  
underneath 'em all the labouring classes who actually do the bloody  
work.

COLL. (*amused*) 'Labouring classes'? Do I sense some schooling in radical  
politics?

CHARLES Politics my arse. And I ain't never been to school neither. But I know  
the way it is. And always has been. And always will be I'll warrant.  
Like it is for the poor bloody miners up north, that's how it is for the  
farm labourers down here.

COLL. (*cutting off what threatens to become a speech*) Do you have any more  
songs? A love song perhaps.

CHARLES A love song? Fiddle-dee-dee and the queens of May, fair damsels with  
flowers in their hair, Roger the ploughboy, that kind of thing, do you  
mean?

COLL. Well, yes, if you know any.

CHARLES Love's too sad to sing about.

COLL. Well that's quite an intriguing statement.

CHARLES I know some drinking songs. 'Then drink boys drink and zee that you  
do not spill'

COLL. Perhaps later.

CHARLES 'Vor if you do you shall drink two, vor 'tis our master's will'

COLL. Yes I already have that one written down.

CHARLES (*angry*) These songs are not your playthings.

COLL. I assure you sir

CHARLES And you can stop that bloody 'sir' business too. You don't mean it. It's  
just to soften me up. My name is Charles Shears. I come from a family  
of woodsmen and labourers. I've never been a sir in my life. We never  
had nothing. Nothing but our hands and the woods and the soil.

COLL. I think you are romanticising.

CHARLES Oh I ain't romantycising. I leaves that to you lot. You fancy composers and collectors. Like all that folk dance nonsense. Prancing about in frilly shirts and handkerchiefs. 'The Vly be on the Turmit'. Bollocks. (*snatches notebook*) What you got there? What's this one?

COLL. 'Where Beest Gwyng'. Collected at Britford. He couldn't remember all the words. Do you know it perhaps?

CHARLES Britford, you say? That'll be Albert. He can't never remember nothing. He just sings one verse and then he clams up. Says sorry and sits back down. You were lucky to get so much out of him. He can't make it up as he goes along, that's his trouble. That's how these things happen. Someone gets pissed and sings whatever comes into their heads. You lot write it down and then you say it shouldn't never be changed. Bollocks. These songs. They're changing all the time.

COLL. Yes of course. I know that. I just want to record one moment in time. That's all. Preserve it. Before it's gone for ever.

CHARLES Now it's you who's romantycising. Course the old songs are dying. And so what. There'll be new ones. Songs are like the people what sing 'em. They comes and goes.

COLL. But the tradition

CHARLES Tradition is just a bunch of blokes drinking and singing.

COLL. And women too of course.

CHARLES Aye. And women too.

COLL. And why shouldn't that be remembered?

CHARLES All right. I got another one for you. And you makes sure you got your pen ready 'cos I'm making this one up.

*Charles sings the first two verses of 'The Swallow', unaccompanied and high*

CHARLES The zwallow twitters on the barn / The rook is cawin' on the tree / And in the wood the ring dove coos / But my valse love hath vled from me / Like tiny pipes of whaten straw / The wren his leetle note doth swell / And every livin' thing that vlies / Ov his true love doth vondly tell

COLL. Is there any more?

CHARLES I might have another verse in me.

COLL. It sounds familiar.

CHARLES Mebbe it does.

COLL. You made it up you say?

CHARLES Or I might have heard it once. A long time ago.

COLL. Tell me more.

CHARLES You collect stories do you? Writes them down?

COLL. Sometimes. It sounds as if you have a story of lost love to tell.

CHARLES Well, I don't want to tell you that story. Could tell you another one though. About me grandmother's sister. My great aunt. Lydia.

COLL. You knew her?

CHARLES No. She died before I was born.

COLL. So this happened when?

CHARLES I don't rightly know. Let's see. Mother was about twenty when she had me. And grandmother was quite young too. And she were younger than Lydia by a little way. Lydia would have been about sixteen. Which would have made Annie, what, ten.

COLL. About 1795 then?

CHARLES If you say so.

COLL. Your mother told you this story?

CHARLES No she did not. Ashamed she was. Never talked about it. Not that it did any good. It was the most exciting thing that had ever happened in the village. Just about the only exciting thing that had ever happened. She got shot, see, Lydia did.

COLL. Shot? My goodness.

CHARLES With a silver bullet. For being a witch. Though the ways I hear it, there was a bit more to it than that.

COLL. Go on.

CHARLES She were a beautiful girl, Lydia, by all accounts. And young too of course. So naturally everyone was after her. But she had her man. Maybe he loved her, after his fashion, but he was a restless soul, could see a world beyond the horizon. He ran away to sea. Before he went, though, they was engaged. There's a song, why don't I ...

COLL. Please do.

CHARLES All right.

*(first line of 'Adieu My Lovely Nancy)*

CHARLES Adieu, my lovely Nancy / Ten thousand times adieu ...

COLL. Excuse me, I thought you said her name was Lydia.

CHARLES Course it was. Nancy's just what you call a woman in a song. And not all ploughboys are called Roger neither. Mind if I carry on?

COLL. I'm sorry. Please.

CHARLES Adieu my lovely Nancy / Ten thousand times adieu / I am going to cross the ocean / For to seek for something new / Come change a ring with me my love / Come change a ring with me / And that will be a token / When I am on the sea

When I am on the sea dear girl / And you know not where I am / Letters I will send to you / From every foreign land / With the secrets of my heart dear girl / And the best of my good will / And let my body be where it may / My heart is with you still

*Instrumental music carries on behind the dialogue. Sounds of birdsong etc get louder.*

COLL. So what happened?

CHARLES He left like he said.

COLL. And did he write to her?

CHARLES Did he bugger. It was all talk. To get his way if you catch my drift. But look, this here's Lydia. *(sounds of two girls laughing)* And that's her friend, Polly. I knew her. Later. We used to be scared of her, us kids, she were so severe. She wasn't always like that though. By all accounts.

### Scene III

*Sounds of the outside and 'The Tisbury Mop' playing in the background*

POLLY So did he kiss you, Lydia Shears, before he went away?

LYDIA Yes he did.

POLLY He never.

LYDIA He did. Polly, can you keep a secret?

POLLY        Why, yes, I do believe I can.

LYDIA        You must promise.

POLLY        Why, what is this secret?

LYDIA        Promise not to tell a soul.

POLLY        I promise. Now what is it? Tell me.

LYDIA        We did rather more than kiss before he went away.

POLLY        You never.

LYDIA        We did.

POLLY        But what if you ...

LYDIA        Oh I won't.

POLLY        How's that?

LYDIA        'Cos we did it standing up.

*Polly shrieks with delight*

LYDIA        And then we did it laying down too, but I don't think that counts 'cos it was after. Anyway, I shan't be. I just know. That ent my story.

POLLY        You are a saucy devil, Lydia Shears.

LYDIA        I don't love him.

POLLY        You don't?

LYDIA        No. And I know I'll never see him again. But I don't care. (*pause*) Don't you look at me like that Polly Read. I just wanted to know what it was like. And so do you.

POLLY        And what was it like?

LYDIA        I can't tell you. I'm not *that* kind of girl.

POLLY        Who does it standing up you mean?

LYDIA        Don't you tell a soul.

POLLY        *And* laying down.

LYDIA        You promised.

POLLY        That's twice that is. Two whole times.

*Polly and Lydia both run off laughing.*

#### Scene IV

*Noisy pub. An instrumental version of 'John Barleycorn'.  
Then chorus sings 'The Harvest Home'.*

CHORUS      Here's a health unto our master / The vounder o' the veast / I hopes to  
God wi' all my heart / His zowl in heav'n may rest / And all his works  
may prosper / Whatever he takes in hand / For we are all his zarvants /  
And all at his command. / Then drenk, bwoys, drenk / And zee that  
you do not spill / Vor if you do you shall drenk two / Vor 'tis our  
master's will.

*general laughter and drunken noise*

JOSEPH      Ah, here's a health unto our master, eh, William.

WILLIAM     I'll drink to his health right enough, but I'd rather be master of myself.

JOSEPH      That there is dangerous talk I think.

WILLIAM     'We are all his zarvants / And all at his command'.

JOSEPH      That's the way it is.

WILLIAM     Don't mean that we have to like it.

JOSEPH      I suppose you would have the King's head off his shoulders like they  
did in France, eh?

WILLIAM     And we did here a hundred and fifty years before them, don't you  
forget it. But no, Joseph, I did not say that, and I won't have it said that  
I did.

JOSPEH      Don't worry, William, your secret's safe with me. (*William begins to  
protest*) But enough I say of the politicking. What say you we talk  
about summat else.

WILLIAM     Like what?

JOSEPH      Daughters.

WILLIAM     And what about 'em?

JOSEPH Well, they's young women now, not girls no more.

WILLIAM Ar, true enough.

JOSEPH There's some as of got their eye on 'em I shouldn't wonder. Especially your Lydia.

WILLIAM She can do as she pleases, I reckon, as long as she hurts no-one as she's doing it.

JOSEPH That's just it. I hear she has been doing as she pleases if you get my meaning.

WILLIAM And where have you heard that from?

JOSEPH Oh the word's about if you have the ears to hear it.

WILLIAM Well let me tell you something. If you have the ears to hear it. If she got led anywhere, it was him that did the leading. Before he buggered off without looking back. And we'll not see him again I'll warrant. You having a word with his father are you? No, I didn't think so. My Lydia's the only one's been hurt by this business.

JOSEPH I'm not sure she's that hurt neither. Anyways, what I wanted to say was, I don't want my Polly consorting with your daughter, however wronged she may be.

WILLIAM Because she had it off with that stupid lad? Joseph, it won't be long before your Polly does just the same, if she ent already.

JOSEPH It's not that.

WILLIAM What is it then?

JOSEPH They say she has a power over people that ent entirely natural.

WILLIAM You listen too much to gossip.

JOSEPH Mebbe I do. Even so.

WILLIAM Now, you listen and you listen good. Talk of unnatural powers is just superstition, that's all it is. Ignorant superstition. You may be a lot of things, Joseph Read, but ignorant ent one of them. And anyway. My daughter will consort with whoever she likes, and so will yours no matter what you say.

JOSEPH There's some men as can control their womenfolk, William, and there's some that can't. Never been the same since Mary died have you? Poor soul, she's better off out of it I reckon.

WILLIAM     Why don't you just bugger off.

JOSEPH       I'll give you bugger off you bloody bastard.

*The background noise dies as they begin to fight.  
The landlord pushes through the crowd.*

L'LORD       You two. There's no fighting in here.

*Landlord pulls Joseph and William apart.*

JOSEPH       You ent got no friends here William Shears. Just you remember that when you find you need 'em.

WILLIAM     I'll teach you to threaten me.

L'LORD       Bwoys. Just because you're all grown up and ugly it don't mean that I can't wallop you meself. Or perhaps I just won't sell you any beer. How about that then? (*disgruntled silence, a few stray jeers from the crowd*) I didn't think so. Now keep close hold of your tempers both of you, else I'll throw you out. And then what ever will you do with all your money, eh? (*to everyone*) All right you lot. It's all over. You can get back to your drinking now.

## Scene V

*Outside noises. Instrumental 'Where Beest Gwyng?' in background.*

ANNIE        What were mother like Lydia?

LYDIA        Oh, Annie. She were kind. And very pretty. And always singing.

ANNIE        She sounds nice.

LYDIA        Yes she was. Very nice. And she were very clever too. She knew all about herbs and that so that if you were ill, she could brew something up and make you feel better.

ANNIE        Why did she die?

LYDIA        She just started to feel sad. And kept on feeling sadder and sadder. No reason why. She couldn't help it any more than she could help being kind. Or singing. And then one day she decided she didn't want to live any more.

ANNIE        Is it a sin, to feel like that?



LYDIA           Some people will say it is, Annie. But I say you can't help feeling the way you do, and anything you can't help can't be a sin. But it ain't fair on the ones who are left behind.

*The Lawyer pulls up on his horse.*

LAWYER       Whoa. *(comes to a halt. Patting the horse's neck)* There there. *(sighs)* I say my friend, who have we here? She looks a fine one and no mistake. *(calls out)* Hello there. Hello. No please, come here. I just want to talk to you. Hello, my dear.

LYDIA         *(mumbles)* Good morning sir.

LAWYER       And where is a pretty maid like you going on such a beautiful morning?

LYDIA         We're going to the Wilson's field, sir, to help our father mow the barley.

LAWYER       Is that so?

LYDIA         Yes. He's there now, so we must go not to be late for him.

LAWYER       What's your name?

ANNIE         I'm Annie.

LAWYER       Not you. You.

LYDIA         *(mumbles)* Lydia.

LAWYER       I'm sorry, I didn't hear you.

LYDIA         *(stronger now)* Lydia.

LAWYER       Lydia what? *(pause)* Come now, don't be afraid.

LYDIA         Lydia Shears. And what's yours?

LAWYER       *(chuckles)* You're a bold one aren't you Lydia Shears? I like 'em bold, that I do. Why don't I go with you? To Wilson's field.

*The lawyer gets off his horse.*

LYDIA         Oh that's very kind of you, sir, but that won't be necessary. Annie, why don't you run along just now to Wilson's field and fetch father?

ANNIE         Yes Lydia.

LAWYER But I insist. You don't know what kind of rough fellows you might meet. You could do with someone to protect you.

LYDIA Thank you sir but I am sure I will be quite safe.

LAWYER Really? The woods can be quite a dangerous place. If you won't let me go with you, perhaps it would be best if we tarry here a while.

LYDIA I won't be going to ruin.

LAWYER No? You look like the kind of girl who would enjoy a bit of ruin.

LYDIA Let go of me.

LAWYER Don't worry. I have money if that's what you want. What say you to a handful of coins? For one sweet kiss and, well, perhaps a little more. Come now, there's a good girl.

LYDIA You take your hands off of me or I shall scream like I was being murdered.

LAWYER Don't be such a tease, you little tart. I always get what I want and I will have you.

*Lydia slaps the lawyer.*

LAWYER Why you little bitch. Who do you think you are?

LYDIA I've already told you my name and if you're too stupid to listen that's not my fault. See this knife that I've got here? I have to keep it very sharp see, 'cos I uses it to cut the balls off the pigs, you understand? I does it very quick, but even so, they do squeal ever such a lot. So why don't you get back on your horse and go back where you came from. There's a good bwoy.

*Pause. Finally the lawyer relents and climbs back on his horse.*

LYDIA Go home little piggie.

LAWYER You haven't heard the last of this. Lydia Shears.

*The lawyer rides off.*

*Lydia gasps and gulps, a mixture of fear and relief.*

*'Where Beest Gwyning?', from 'The lawyer he got off of his horse ...'*

Scene VI

*The pub, Joseph and the landlord.*

JOSEPH        *(a little drunk)* And then I says to him, if you ever do that again I will punch you right on the nose.

L'LORD        It's no good talking to him, he never takes no notice. Another one, Joseph?

JOSEPH        Why not I reckon.

*The door opens*

LAWYER        Good afternoon.

JOSEPH        Afternoon.

L'LORD        What can I get you, sir?

LAWYER        Is your ale good?

L'LORD        Best in the village, sir.

LAWYER        It had better be. I have a righteous thirst on me. It has been quite a morning's ride.

L'LORD        There you go sir.

LAWYER        *(drinks)* Ah. Do you know, that is pretty good. The best I have had since I left London, I may say.

JOSEPH        You come from London have you sir? That is a long way.

LAWYER        What's your name?

JOSEPH        Joseph Read, sir.

LAWYER        Put his drink on my tab, landlord.

L'LORD        Your tab, sir?

LAWYER        Don't worry. I have money.

L'LORD        Of course, sir, I didn't mean ...

LAWYER        And bring me some food. Your best cold meats. Cheese if you have it.

L'LORD        Yes, sir. Right away sir.

*Landlord hurries off to fetch food.*

LAWYER (to Joseph) Your health.

JOSEPH Thank you, sir. Here's to strangers who may soon be friends.

LAWYER Would you care to join me at one of the tables?

JOSEPH Don't mind if I do.

*The lawyer sits at a table*

LAWYER Please, come, sit.

JOSEPH Thank you sir. *(Joseph sits)*

LAWYER So, Joseph Read, what is your trade?

JOSEPH Blacksmith.

LAWYER A noble trade. And why are you not working at your forge now?

JOSEPH I got a bunch of horses coming in later. I ain't got nothing else to do right now, sir. I haven't been here long. This is only my second.

LAWYER Joseph, you don't have to explain yourself to me. You look like a good man. A good honest worker. Salt of the earth.

JOSEPH Why, thank you sir. That I am. Haven't had no complaints anyways. Not from the wife and daughter at least. And if I did I'd smack 'em for it. *(laughs)*

LAWYER Hm. It seems you know how to control your womenfolk.

JOSEPH Ar, that I do, sir. A good stout stick, that does the job sir.

LAWYER A man must be master of his own home, must he not?

JOSEPH Ar. That he must.

LAWYER You may not credit it, Joseph, but there are many in London who let their wives rule the household. Don't shake your head, I have seen it. And what does it lead to? Nothing but misery and drunkenness. And why should it not, something so utterly against nature as that. It was God that created men so that they aspire always to be lord and master. Whereas, as we all know, He created woman with a quite different nature, filling her with a longing to accept man as her lord and master. *(drinks)* I have a theory about women. It has been received quite well in the salons of London. I even hope to present it to the Royal Society one day. Would you like to hear it?

JOSEPH        It would be an honour sir.

LAWYER        Two facts, Joseph, that are undeniable. One, women have less judgement and intellect than do men, agreed? Two, women are more opposed to atheism and dedicated to God than are the male sex. Yes? Yes. But do these two facts together create a problem. For do they not suggest that piety is in some way feminine and thus foolish? No, Joseph, do not look shocked, for this is just the inference that my theory is designed to block. First, I observe that women are naturally more moderate in their passions than are men, and less inclined to study. So, I conclude, a woman's limited understanding should not be regarded as foolishness, but rather as a gift from God. It is indeed a wondrous treasure that allows women to end up, spiritually, both wiser and more sensible than men. You see, Joseph, women are free of the arrogance and pride that so afflicts us men, and consequently they are more devout, God-fearing, and submissive to authority. I have discussed this with many learned gentlemen and they all concur. What do you think Joseph?

JOSEPH        I wouldn't know, sir, I don't have no learning like you do.

LAWYER        Of course, how foolish of me.

JOSEPH        It must be a fine thing to know so much about people, what makes 'em tick and all. Begging your pardon, but is that what you spends your time doing?

LAWYER        In a way.

JOSEPH        *(as if this was the most illuminating answer there could have been)* Ah.

LAWYER        *(laughs)* I'm a lawyer, Joseph. I have been employed by his lordship to work on a case of his. A boundary dispute.

JOSEPH        I can show you up to the big house if you like, sir. I mean, I'm sure you know the way, but if you needed ...

LAWYER        Joseph, that is very kind of you, but I have adequate directions. There is perhaps another way you could help me however.

JOSEPH        You name it, sir, and I will do the best I can.

LAWYER        A few miles back down the road, I came across a girl. Quite striking in looks, but most impertinent in manner. Do you know who I mean?

JOSEPH        Ar, that'll be Lydia Shears, sir.

LAWYER        Yes, that is what she said her name was.

JOSEPH She lives here in the village with her father and her sister. Mother passed away when she were little. There's some that say she killed herself. There's some even say she was a witch. I'd believe anything of that family. They've always been an odd lot. I won't let my daughter near her. Lydia that is. Anyways, Charles, that's her father, he's always let her do what she wants to do, and it ent had a good effect on her character if you knows what I mean. It'll end up spoiling little Annie too I reckon. Bit too full of herself that Lydia. Needs taking down a peg or two.

LAWYER Yes, that's what I thought.

JOSEPH Mind you, Charles is a bad'un hisself. The things he was saying in here the other day about the King, well ...

LAWYER You see this coin, Joseph?

JOSEPH Yes sir.

LAWYER I want you to keep an eye on Lydia Shears for me. I may have to take a professional interest in her activities, do you understand me? I would like to know what she does and when she does it. I'm sure she is up to no good. Find out for me and this coin will be yours.

JOSEPH You can count on me, sir.

LAWYER Good. Don't let me down. Ah, here's my lunch. Take your coin. You may leave. I will eat alone.

## Scene VII

*'The Queen of May', suddenly and loudly, Polly and Roger singing*

BOTH When the winter has gone and the summer has come / The meadows are pleasant and gay / The lark in the morning so sweetly she sings / And the small birds are on each green spray

POLLY Young Roger the ploughboy is fresh as a rose / He cheerfully sings at his plough / The blackbirds and thrushes sing in the green grove / And the dairy maid milks her sweet cow

ROGER As I walked through the fields to take the fresh air / The flowers were blooming and gay / I heard a young damsel come singing along / And her cheeks were like blossom in May

I said 'Pretty maid why do you come here / In the meadow this morning so soon?

POLLY        The maid she replied ‘To gather some May / For the trees they are in full bloom

ROGER        I said ‘Pretty maid, may I go with you / To help you gather your May?

POLLY        But the maid she replied ‘I must be excused / For I fear you will lead me astray’

ROGER        Then I took this maid by the lily-white hand / On a green mossy bank we sat down / I planted a kiss on her sweet, rosy lips / And the small birds were singing around

BOTH         And when we arose from the green, mossy bank / Through the meadows we wandered away

ROGER        I placed my love on a primrose bank / And plucked her a handful of May.

*Roger and Polly laughing together as the music fades*

### Scene VIII

*Sounds of night.*

POLLY        The moon looks beautiful don’t you think Lydia? (*pause*) If my bloody father knew I was out here in the middle of the night, with you, I think he’d thrash me again. (*pause*) He’s forbidden me to see you, you know. I had to wait until he was asleep. He went out like a light though. He’d had a few. Don’t think I could have woken him up if I’d tried.

LYDIA        Sssh.

POLLY        I met a boy and we done it. Down by the river. He gave me some flowers after. It was nice I suppose. I didn’t know it was so quick though. What are we doing here anyway?

LYDIA        There’s something I want you to see.

POLLY        What’s that?

LYDIA        There in the field, look.

POLLY        The hares.

LYDIA        Looking at the moon.

POLLY        They look funny.

LYDIA           It's like they're waiting for something. To come from the sky.

POLLY           Like what?

LYDIA           I don't know. But something.

POLLY           Is it bad?

LYDIA           Don't know that it's bad or good. Some things just are, aren't they, and they're not bad and they're not good, they just are what they are. Is he a good lad?

POLLY           Who?

LYDIA           This lad you did it with? Is he gentle and kind?

POLLY           I don't know. We only did it. We're not getting married or anything. Why?

LYDIA           You're pregnant.

POLLY           What? How do you know that?

LYDIA           I don't know. I just do.

POLLY           You can't possibly. Surely not. Really? When?

LYDIA           Wait, here they go. You see 'em Polly? Running about the field. Aren't they beautiful?

*Music begins, 'Three Hares in the Moonlight'*

POLLY           What do you mean, Lydia? How do you know?

LYDIA           *(laughs with delight)* They're dancing, that's what they're doing. That's what I think. You know, sometimes I feel that I understand them, that the same kind of blood flows in my veins as flows in theirs. When they run like that, I know, I know exactly what they're doing. They're celebrating. Giving thanks for their freedom. It's a clear night and a big fat old moon and they're dancing and they're free. Free, Polly, that's what they are. And so are we. When I see 'em dancing like that, it's like everything else just melts away and I feel free too. Do you feel like that too?

POLLY           No.

LYDIA           Do you understand what I'm saying?

POLLY           You're saying you feel like a hare.



LYDIA No Polly, it's more than that. I'm saying I am a hare. That I have become a hare. I am free like a hare. We are all free like the hares Polly. We can do anything that we want to do. Polly, do you understand? Anything.

POLLY I think the moonlight's done more to you than you realise.

LYDIA Don't you feel it too?

POLLY No, I do not. It's getting cold.

LYDIA I'm sorry to have to tell you that Polly. But you are pregnant. Trust me. But things will turn out all right for you, just you wait and see.

POLLY I want to go back now. Are you coming?

LYDIA I'm going to stay and watch them just a little longer.

POLLY Do what you like. I'm off.

*Polly leaves. Music increases in volume.*

## Scene IX

*Indoors at the big house.*

LORD And as you know, sir, I am sure, since you will have studied the documents, the bridle way has run across their land for generations. In no way can they claim, as they seek to, that it is a recent imposition. Really, it is quite intolerable, the way these nabobs carry on. No pedigree that's the problem. Just jumped up little clerks and sergeants who went half bloody native in Hindoostan and came back home with a fortune. And now they think they can rule the roost. I say, are you getting all this down?

LAWYER Your lordship, I am noting all the, er, legally salient points.

LORD Well make sure you do. I want to bankrupt this bastard, do you understand? Bankrupt him. Bloody cheek of it.

*There is a knock at the door.*

LORD Come.

SERVANT Excuse me, sir, but there's a problem downstairs.

LORD Well, what is it? Come on woman, out with it.

SERVANT Begging your pardon, but it's the bill for clearing the paddock last month.

LORD What about it? Pay it and be done. You don't need to involve me. I am in conference with my lawyer. He's from London don't you know.

SERVANT I'm sorry, sir, but she says, beg your pardon, but she says the bill is wrong.

LORD What?

SERVANT She says it's less than half what it should be. Begging your pardon, but she just won't go.

LORD Damn it. Is it that Shears girl?

SERVANT Shears, Lydia Shears. Yes, that's right sir.

LORD Cheek of it. Running her father's errands again. I'll give her mistake, you just see that I don't.

LAWYER Excuse me, your lordship, perhaps I might be permitted to handle this?

LORD What?

LAWYER Let me deal with the girl.

LORD No, I won't hear of it, you don't have to involve yourself with these matters. I'm afraid this is the countryside, a little different from London, what?

LAWYER I would be happy to. With your lordship's permission of course.

LORD Well, if you insist. Be my guest. Bloody cheek of it. *(to servant)* Well, what are you waiting for? Take the bloody man downstairs.

### Scene X

*Lydia is waiting.*

LYDIA *(muttering to herself under her breath)* There's nothing to be afraid of. It's quite simple. Just a mistake on the hours that's all. It's quite fair enough. It will be alright...

LAWYER Hello Lydia.

LYDIA What are you doing here?

LAWYER I might with more justice ask you the same question.

LYDIA I live here.

LAWYER What, in this house?

LYDIA No. In the village. And you?

LAWYER Such impertinence. For a village girl. That is no way, you know Lydia, to be talking to your betters.

LYDIA You ent no better than me. Darn sight worse I wouldn't wonder.

LAWYER Do you think, Lydia, that our little dalliance in the woods gives you some power over me? I wouldn't delude yourself. In fact, I would say the opposite. You pulled a knife on me. Or has that slipped your mind?

LYDIA I was defending myself. Sir. From your unwonted advances.

LAWYER Unwonted advances? You threw yourself at me Lydia and when I wouldn't play ball you brandished that knife and demanded money.

LYDIA But that's not true.

LAWYER It's your word against mine, Lydia. And who do you think his Lordship will believe? A lawyer all the way from London who is solving his pathetic little boundary problems, or a village girl who is incidentally trying to swindle more money than she is owed out of the estate?

LYDIA I have to go.

*Lydia begins to leave.*

LAWYER *(just as Lydia is at the door)* I can get you your money.

LYDIA I thought you didn't believe me.

LAWYER Oh Lydia, whatever gave you that impression? I believe you alright. Remember, I am working for the old sod too. The first bill I sent him, he disputed every item. I know exactly what he is like. I'm not surprised if he has underpaid you by ... by what?

LYDIA Three shillings.

LAWYER Three shillings? Is that all? Oh my.

LYDIA It might not be much to the likes of you and him, but it's the difference between eating and not eating for us.

LAWYER You will have it.

LYDIA           And how will you persuade him to pay it?

LAWYER        I won't. I will give it to you.

LYDIA           And why would you do that?

LAWYER        Let us say for services rendered.

LYDIA           I would rather starve.

*Lydia slams the door.*

LAWYER        I'm sure that can be arranged, if need be.

### Scene XI

*Night. Polly is sleeping in bed. There is a tap at the window.*

LYDIA           *(whispering)* Polly. Polly.

POLLY          What is it?

LYDIA           Polly. Polly open the window. It's me, Lydia.

*Polly open the window*

POLLY          *(whispering too)* What do you want? It's the middle of the night. You'll wake me Dad.

LYDIA           Really? My Dad says he was drinking all night again.

POLLY          What do you want Lydia?

LYDIA           Polly, I need to talk to you. Will you come?

POLLY          Lydia, I don't know.

LYDIA           Please, Polly. You're the only friend I got.

POLLY          Oh sod it. *(climbing through the window)* Honestly, Lydia Shears, I don't know why I let you persuade me to do this kind of thing, I really don't.

Scene XII

*Outside. Night time noises.*

POLLY        Is there anyone looking down on us do you think?

LYDIA        What do you mean?

POLLY        I mean, here we are, looking up at the stars. Is there anyone looking down on us?

LYDIA        Like God you mean?

POLLY        Well, no, not really, I mean ... Do you know sometimes, when you're staring into a pool and it's really still and you can see your reflection, and it's like it's staring back at you. And you think sometimes, least I do anyway, I think sometimes, I wonder if my reflection is staring up at me thinking the same thing. Or maybe. Perhaps I'm the reflection and I only think I'm thinking and really it's the other me that's really real. I dunno. I'm just being daft.

LYDIA        No, no you're not.

POLLY        Well, I feel the same thing looking up at the stars. Perhaps there's someone up there, looking down on us and we're just as small as the stars are and there's just as many of us and they're there wondering if there's anyone looking at them. And there is. There's us.

LYDIA        Polly, that's beautiful.

POLLY        No it ent. I don't know what I'm saying.

LYDIA        Sometimes that's the best way.

POLLY        I ent pregnant you know.

LYDIA        What?

POLLY        I ent pregnant. You said I was.

LYDIA        You ent? Are you sure?

POLLY        Course I'm sure. I had a, you know, I started bleeding.

LYDIA        I could have sworn.

POLLY        That's the thing, Lydia. You were so sure. I knew there was no way you could know, any more than me. But you sounded so sure I thought you must be right.

LYDIA I just get these feelings sometimes. I did feel sure, but. I'm sorry Polly.

POLLY That's alright. I mean, I could have killed you. I shit myself, I really did, I mean, can you imagine, me with that Roger for the rest of my life.

LYDIA Is his name really Roger?

POLLY Yes. Can you believe it?

LYDIA You don't love him then?

POLLY God no. I mean he looks alright, but he's thick as two short planks. And he, well, finished, you know, almost before he put it in. That's not right is it?

LYDIA No it's not. (*pause as Lydia decides to cross the Rubicon*) Do you ever do it yourself?

POLLY Do what? Lydia. What an awful thing to ask.

LYDIA Well, do you?

POLLY Sometimes.

LYDIA And does it feel nice?

POLLY Lydia, what are you doing?

LYDIA And does it feel nice?

POLLY Lydia, we shouldn't ...

LYDIA Says who?

POLLY But it's wrong.

LYDIA And does it feel nice?

POLLY Yes, yes it does.

*Polly and Lydia kiss.*

JOSEPH (*shouting*) Polly!

POLLY Oh my goodness. My Dad.

JOSEPH Jesus Christ, Polly Read. What the hell is going on here?

### Scene XIII

*Banging on the door. Polly in the background, Lydia too. There is also the sound of others being woken up by the commotion as the scene progresses.*

LYDIA        You let go of me. (*etc*)

POLLY        What are you doing? (*etc*)

JOSEPH       (*banging on the door*) Open up William Shears. I know you're in there.

WILLIAM      (*finally comes to the door*) Joseph. What are you doing? It's the middle of the night. Lydia? What's going on?

LYDIA        He won't let go of me.

JOSEPH       She's gone and shown her true colours now, William. That she has.

WILLIAM      What do you mean, Joseph? What has happened here?

LYDIA        He's just grabbed me and hauled me about that is what is going on here.

POLLY        Just leave her alone. Leave her alone.

JOSEPH       I always said she had an un-natural power over people. And this proves it.

WILLIAM      What does? What has happened? Lydia?

ANNIE        What is it Dad? Lydia, what's going on?

LYDIA        Annie, nothing's going on. Why don't you just go back inside sweetheart?

JOSEPH       You just keep quiet Lydia Shears.

LYDIA        Oh Dad, get him off me, make him let me go.

JOSEPH       I'll not let go of you now you little bitch.

WILLIAM      Joseph! Whatever has happened here, she is my daughter.

JOSEPH       She's put some kind of spell on my Polly, that's what she's done.

WILLIAM      Ridiculous. And you know it.

JOSEPH       They was kissing. And. Well I don't want to say what else but it ain't right.

WILLIAM Lydia, is this true?

LYDIA I ent put no spell on no-one.

JOSEPH I forbade my daughter to see her so I did. Polly is a good girl, she wouldn't disregard my wishes. And she is innocent. She don't know nothing about boys and all that. None of that stuff. She has had a spell put on her. By this one here. Your daughter. A spell. (*louder now, for the benefit of the growing audience*) She must have learnt it from her mother. That's what I reckon. We all know what Mary Shears was, though we don't like to say it.

WILLIAM I'll not have the good name of my wife dragged through the mud by the likes of you. Nor my daughter's.

JOSEPH Good name? Good name? Neither of 'em have a good name William and if you think they do then you must be deaf and blind. Bewitched my Polly, that's what she's done. Forced her into all sorts of filthy and un-natural goings on. I have seen it with my own eyes.

WILLIAM I will take her back now Joseph. Or do you plan keeping hold of her all night?

JOSEPH You haven't heard the last of this. I will take it up with his Lordship.

WILLIAM I am sure you will. But we moved past all this nonsense about bewitching a long time ago.

JOSEPH You may prefer your ignorance William Shears. But it won't protect your daughter from justice.

WILLIAM The law will not help you in this matter.

JOSEPH The law and justice are not always the same thing.

WILLIAM Give her to me. Now.

(*Joseph shoves Lydia to William. Lydia cries as she holds her father.*)

WILLIAM Get inside Lydia. Take Annie back to bed. Now. (*to Joseph*) I do not appreciate being threatened by the likes of you. Whatever has gone on between our daughters, it has far more to do with youthful folly than witchcraft. I suggest you get going and leave us alone.

JOSEPH I'll get going. But you won't be left alone. Trust me. (*to Polly*) And you stop your snivelling. Come on, we are going home.



#### Scene XIV

*Inside. We can here Lydia crying as William closes the door and locks it. He walks to the table and sits down. He sighs.*

WILLIAM Oh, Lydia. What have you done?

#### Scene XV

*The sounds of the blacksmith's forge. Joseph is hard at work.*

LAWYER Joseph. It is very good to see you at your place of work.

JOSEPH Sir. You got my message that I wished to see you.

LAWYER Yes. Allow me to take you to the tavern and buy you a drink.

JOSEPH Thank you, sir, that is most welcome.

LAWYER Wait until you hear what I have to say before you thank me. I do not think you will like it.

JOSEPH Then perhaps you should tell me here and now.

LAWYER Very well. She has committed no crime Joseph.

JOSEPH No crime?

LAWYER Nothing that she can be charged with in a court of law.

JOSEPH No crime? What do you mean? She cast a spell on my daughter and committed all kinds of filthiness on her. How can you say that no crime has been committed?

LAWYER On the matter of the, er, filthiness, there is I am afraid no tradition in the English courts of treating such actions, un-natural as they may be, as criminal. I understand that is far from the case in France, where they can attract the severest penalty. In that one matter, if in no others, perhaps we should seek to emulate the French. But the simple fact is we do not. There is undoubtedly immorality. Licentiousness. Yes. But there is no crime. As to the purported witchcraft, I am afraid the offence in these enlightened times is to make the accusation. Do not fear, Joseph, I will not be seeking your prosecution. But there is no crime under the law that Lydia Shears is guilty of.

JOSEPH But she is a witch. She must be, to have made my daughter do that.

LAWYER Your daughter may have been led astray, but there was no witchcraft involved. I am afraid I cannot support such superstitious nonsense.

JOSEPH Yes, well, it's always the same isn't it, with you lot. With your learning and your fancy manners. You think you know it all. Do you know how to shoe a horse. Well? Do you? You know how to make a pair of tongs? No, of course you don't. You think we are ignorant, but there's so much that we know that you don't. I don't care what the law says, I know a witch when I see one, and I know that when I look at Lydia Shears I'm looking at a witch. Nothing you can say is going to change that.

LAWYER I am sorry I cannot help you. Believe me, there is no-one would like to see Lydia Shears brought down a peg or two more than me. But she is no witch. There is nothing that the law can do. Good day to you, Joseph.

*The Lawyer leaves. Joseph yells in fury.*

*We hear the sound of various items being thrown around.*

POLLY *(she has run at the noise)* What is it father? Is everything alright?

JOSEPH That bastard lawyer has just told me that there is nothing to be done. There is no crime that witch Lydia has committed.

POLLY And what do you think you're going to do?

## Scene XVI

*Outside. The sound of pigs squealing.*

LYDIA Here, little piggie. Here we are.

POLLY *(running up the lane)* Lydia! Lydia!

LYDIA Well, here's a surprise. What's going on here then?

POLLY *(out of breath)* Lydia. Thank goodness I've found you. I need to talk to you.

LYDIA Polly, what is it?

POLLY Can we talk?

LYDIA Of course.

POLLY Not here. *(seductively)* Please, Lydia, what I got to say, it's private.

LYDIA Well, Polly, if you are trying to get me on my own ... Why don't we walk into the woods a little?

Scene XVII

*The woods. Birds singing.*

LYDIA Polly, what is it? How much further are we going to walk? You haven't said a word.

POLLY The lawyer. He told my father there is nothing that can be done. Under the law.

LYDIA Oh, thank God. But Polly, that is good news, isn't it?

POLLY My father.

LYDIA What about him?

POLLY He was pretty angry.

LYDIA And? What is he going to do? Polly, tell me. What is he going to do?

*Pause*

POLLY Nothing.

*Lydia laughs with relief.*

POLLY Oh, he shouted and threw some things about. Said he would kill you. But he didn't mean it. He was just angry. When he had finished throwing things he just started crying. Can you imagine that Lydia? My father. Crying. I put him to bed and he just rolled up into a ball. A big man like that. Sobbing his heart out.

LYDIA But that's good, isn't it?

POLLY Good?

LYDIA It means nothing will happen to us.

POLLY To us? To us? There is no 'us' Lydia.

LYDIA Polly, you know that's not true.

POLLY I don't know what spell you put me under last night Lydia. But I don't like it.

LYDIA            You weren't complaining last night.

POLLY           Bewitched I was.

LYDIA           Oh come on Polly, you know that's a load of nonsense. We weren't even drunk.

POLLY           Everything is a big joke for you ent it? Well, I'll show you.

LYDIA           Polly, what have you got there?

POLLY           That lawyer's pistol.

LYDIA           How did you get that?

POLLY           I stole it off him. I had to distract him first, not that that was too hard, the saucy old goat.

LYDIA           Why don't you put it down? You don't know if it is loaded.

POLLY           Oh, but I do. See, father was given a silver coin from that lawyer. Payment for keeping an eye on you. I knew where he had hidden it so I took that and all. Then I went into the forge and I melted it down. Oh, father has no idea I can do that, I'm just a woman after all, right, but I've grown up around that forge, I take notice. I made a bullet. Out of silver.

LYDIA           Why?

POLLY           Silver bullet's what you need to kill a shape shifter.

LYDIA           I'm not a shape shifter Polly. What are you talking about?

POLLY           You told me yourself. 'I am a hare, Polly' that's what you said.

LYDIA           Oh come on Polly. I didn't mean it literally. You know that, right?

POLLY           I've got to live here! In this village. With everyone knowing what we did. The gossip. The looks and the laughing. Whispering behind my back. I know what it will be like. I seen it all with your mother. How can I live here if I haven't been bewitched?

LYDIA           You don't have to do this Polly. They'll hang you.

POLLY           Don't reckon they'll catch me. It's not my gun. And where would I get a silver bullet from? No-one saw us come out here.

LYDIA           Polly, I love you.

POLLY           I don't think you know what love is.

LYDIA Polly! Polly, please no!

POLLY I'm sorry.

*Polly fires the gun.*

### Scene XVIII

*'The Dance of the Three Hares' playing in the background.*

CHARLES She was right, Polly were. No-one looked too hard for the killer of a witch. They suspected Joseph. Course they did. Over time, even he came to think he had done it. Helped him feel better about himself I reckon. Some thought the lawyer did it. He buggered off pretty quickly back to London. But no-one really cared. Lydia Shears were a witch and she were dead. That's all there was to it. But it didn't stop the gossip. All her life she were known as the witch's lover. *(he sighs)* That's village life for you. Cruel and ignorant people can be.

COLL. I'm sorry.

CHARLES Don't be. Happened a long time ago. Nothing to do with you. She told me. On her death bed. That she had done it. I said I knew. I'd known for years. Worked it out see. Not as dumb as I look. I managed to ruin her confession. That's some consolation I suppose.

COLL. And what is your story, Mr Shears?

CHARLES My story?

COLL. You hinted at some ... unluckiness ... in love.

CHARLES Aye you could say that. But my story don't matter. I'm just some old bloke in the workhouse. Soon I'll be dead and it'll all be forgotten.

### Scene XIX

*Chris, Bob, Jo, and Johnny play 'The Swallow' in Am.*

Note: Almost all the details in this play are of course invented, with the sorry exception of the theory expounded by the Lawyer in Scene VI, which is taken from the writings of Theodore Underreyck (1635-93), a prominent German Calvinist pastor based in Bremen. Not that the Lawyer would have seemed out-of-date even in the late eighteenth century, when more enlightened views on women were still viewed as dangerously radical. (See Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, Chapter 4 for more details and context.) *Wiltshire Folk Song* is a real book, by Celia Cologne and Jean Morrison, and most of the songs in this play are taken from it. ('Salisbury Union', 'Three Hares in the Moonlight', and 'The Tisbury Mop' are by the author.) 'Adieu My Lovely Nancy' is listed in the book as sung by a certain Charles Shears in the Salisbury Union in 1909. The notes to the song say that "[t]he most celebrated of the family was Lydia Shears, a reputed witch who could turn herself into a hare. She was eventually shot and killed with a silver bullet", just as Charles himself tells us at the beginning of the play.