

Pc11/8/13

ACT TWO - SCENE THREE.
VISITORS ROOM



(ELIZABETH is sitting in the Visitors' Room. She is tensely waiting for somebody or something. WALTER comes to the door and looks at her insolently. He sits down and takes out a home-made cigarette.)

WALTER

So you're Spike's girl?

ELIZABETH

Yes

WALTER

You look too pretty for Spike.

ELIZABETH

(resolutely)
I want to talk to you.

WALTER

Talk away.

ELIZABETH

Who are you? - who do you think you are? - what has our marriage got to do with you?

WALTER

~~Oh~~ I'm ^{just} a friend.

ELIZABETH

W is this George to give us permission to marry?
(he is busy preparing his cigarette).

WALTER

Why don't you ask him?

ELIZABETH

(taking a note out of her bag and showing it to him)
Is that the letter of a friend?

WALTER

(looking at the note)
I know nothing about it.
(he hands it back).

ELIZABETH

(she takes it)
~~Who stands around the house? One night one, the next night another? What are they wanting?~~

WALTER

~~Why do you ask me?
(he asks insolently)
Aren't there any other bad people in Victoriatown?~~

ELIZABETH

Do you know what they are doing to Spike? Do you know that when the wind blows ^{round} the ^{house} benches, he stops and listens?
(she is angry when she tells this)
Do you know that if there's any noise in the house, or the street, or only in his own head, he stops and listens?

rewrite

WALTER

Well Well, is that so? Wind blows - he stops and listens.
Head rings - he stops and listens. ~~Hullo, hullo, who's~~
speaking there? George who?

ELIZABETH

You devil

WALTER

You know, that ^{Billy} boy of yours is sick. He ought to see a
doctor.

ELIZABETH

He wasn't sick before. It's you who are making him sick.
Ah, but you are devils. Pity - mercy - ~~ther was never any~~
~~in your hearts. You don't know what~~

WALTER (*interrupting*)

That's enough. We've got enough preachers here already.
So you've come to see the Principal, eh? ~~You've come~~
~~to tell him about the gang that hangs around the house,~~
And you're going to show him your silly letter. If
you've got any sense, you'll go back to Victoriatown and
look after your sick boy, because if you dont look after
him, he might die!

(Enter SPONONO)

SPONONO

(who is in a reckless mood after the loss of his
freedom)

Who's talkin'? Oh it's the Big Goat!

(~~WALTER looks surprised; SPONONO does not usually~~
~~talk to him in this fashion)~~

In here with my girl, eh? I tell you I don't like goats
hanging after my girl!

(he looks at ELIZABETH)

Do I?

WALTER

I thought she was marrying Spike,

(SPONONO is still looking amorously at ELIZABETH)

Didn't you know we gave permission for her to marry Spike?

SPONONO

She's still my girl.

(he goes and stands close by her, and puts his arm
round her shoulders, at which she smiles a little.)

How is my girl today? Has the Big Goat been worrying you?

If he worries you, I'll fix him.

(He looks bold and smiling)

I'm in a killing mood today.

(He fondles her shoulder)

ELIZABETH

Have you seen Spike?

SPONONO

Where?

ELIZABETH

I was hoping he would be here.

SPONONO

What for?

ELIZABETH

To see the Principal.

SPONONO

(sitting down next to her)

What's he want to see the ~~lanie~~ for?

(But she makes no reply)

Only a fool would want to see ~~the Principal~~. ^{him}.

(he makes ELIZABETH and WALTER his pupils)

Do you know what it says in the Bible? You ask him for ^{fish}
~~bread~~ and he gives you a ^{scorpion}. ~~Do you understand how do you like~~
~~that? You ask a man for bread and he gives you a bloody~~
~~stone! What kind of man is that? It's a man like the~~
~~Principal.~~ ~~ant~~

~~ELIZABETH~~

~~Once you said he was good.~~

~~SPONONO~~

~~(suddenly sober)~~

~~Ja, he used to be good. But he's no good any more. Punish,~~
~~punish, punish, that's all he wants. Do you know what it~~
~~says in the Bible? You ask him for fish, and he gives~~
~~you a scorpion.~~

~~(to WALTER)~~

How would you like that? You open your mouth to take a
piece of fish from him, and he puts in a bloody scorpion.

WALTER

(to ELIZABETH) ^{lanie?}

You know ^{why} he hates the ~~Principal~~? Because the lanie took
his freedom, the nice pretty badge, the bumsucker's badge.
The lanie took the bumsucker's badge from the biggest
bumsucker of them all.

ELIZABETH

Oh Sponono, why?

Come here both of you (He sits them down)

SPONONO

Because of [↓] something I never did. It was here in this
very room. [↓] The man was sitting there and the woman was
sitting here. And I came in and I said

WALTER *(getting up & bowing to Elizabeth)*

Uncle and Auntie, how nice to see you! Has anyone atten-
ded to you? Because if no one has, I'll attend to you!

SPONONO

I said, who do you want to see, and they said, Henry
Makatini. So I went to look for Henry, and while I was
looking, some bad fellow came in ~~here~~.....

WALTER *(interrupting)*

Ag, it was terrible. A good fellow goes out, and a bad
fellow comes in. One minute you are in here with a good
fellow, and next minute in comes a bad fellow who knocks
you on the clock and takes all your bloody shelt.

SPONONO

He robbed them of twenty pounds. The Auntie said this
fellow was much ^{more} bigger than me, but the lanie took my badge

(WALTER gives a great hearty sarcastic laugh)

You didn't laugh when I forgave you for hurting my eye.

ELIZABETH

Sponono, how is yor eye?

CHARLES says THE HYMN -

ELIZABETH (cont)

(She turns his head towards her and gently fingers his eye)

Am I hurting you?

SPONONO

Your hands are soft, Elizabeth.

(he becomes amorous again, but she tries to pull away)

Why aren't you marrying me?

(MR. MABASO enters unnoticed)

WALTER

Because she's not crazy, that's why.

SPONONO

You should be marrying me, Elizabeth.

(he puts his arm around her and becomes sentimental)

I'd work for you Elizabeth. I'd give you all the money, and ~~and I'd give up the drinking. I'd keep out of the troubles.~~

(she is trying to free herself, and he is trying to retain his hold on her. Both are becoming a bit breathless)

Don't you believe me?

(then with a detectable note of urgency)

Don't you believe me?

ELIZABETH

(she has at last broken away and has retreated to the other side of the table)

No, I don't believe you. You'd promise anything, and you'd do nothing. You never will

SPONONO

Don't say it! Haven't I told you before, never to say it?

~~(he sees MABASO)~~

MABASO

(to ELIZABETH)

The Principal is ready to see you.

(he goes, followed by ELIZABETH. SPONONO sits at the table in a black mood. *The HORUS slips*)

WALTER

(slapping SPONONO on the back)

So you lost your freedom, eh? You lost the pretty little bumsuckers' badge. Don't be a bloody fool. What kind of freedom is that, that a lanie can give to you today and take away tomorrow? My kind of freedom, no one can give it to me, no one can take it away.

(he points to his chest)

It's here. And it's mine. I give my own badges. I don't stand up in front of any bloody lanie and promise to obey the laws. ~~And I don't take any bumsuckers' badge and hear a lot of other bumsuckers clapping. D'you know what you ought to do? Y'ought to hold a meeting of your damned silly Court, and get them to ask for your bumsuckers' badge back again.~~

of any bloody school.

~~(he adopts a servile manner of speaking)~~

~~Mencer, please give Sponono back his badge. He was only playing a game with the Uncle and the Auntie. He didn't know they'd fall over so easily. And the ~~shelt~~ Mencer? Ag mencer, he saw the ~~shelt~~ lying on the floor, and he thought I'd better pick it up and take it to the lanie.~~

(he mimics the PRINCIPAL)

Boys, this afternoon Sponono is standing here for his freedom. I am confident he will be worthy of this great honour. I am confident He will never break any promise

WALTER (CONT.)

he has made, He will get better and better from day to day, and when he dies he will go straight to heaven.

(SPONONO listens to the mimicing with fascination which turns to admiration)

SPONONO

(jumping to his feet and raising his hand to his head in an electric quivering salute and speaking in an honest ringing voice)

Meneer, I promise I'll be a good boy. When I work in the kitchen, I promise not to steal the food)

WALTER

(piously)
My brothers' food.

*WALTER & SPONONO
My brothers' food. Amen
(both laugh. Two boys
come in)*

SPONONO

My brothers' food, meneer. And when I work in the store, meneer, I promise not touch my brothers' tobacco.

WALTER

Meneer, I promise when I work in the latrines, never to hold my nose!

(SPONONO is overcome by laughter)

Meneer, I promise to be kind to all living creatures.

SPONONO

Even all the bed-bugs in ~~the yard!~~ *the yard!* ~~Number 1 - Dormitory No. 11~~

(both laugh uproariously. SPONONO now takes his turn at mimicking the PRINCIPAL)

Boys, today Walter iss standing here for his freedom.

There has never been such a good boy in the whole reformatory.

He was once in a gang but he will never do such a thing again.

Why, boys? Because his whole life has been changed by this ^{bloody} reformatory?

(he wipes away a tear) *Now when he snatches a bag in the street, he'll say, excuse me, lady (they laugh)*

Walter, my dear, dear fellow, here is your

(he is overcome by laughter, because now he too is going to use the liberating word)

Here is your bumsuckers' badge. *He takes the cap from one the boys' heads. He places it on WALTER'S face. The boys cheer)*

WALTER

(now he gives the electric salute)

Meneer, I promise to lick Meneer's boots

SPONONO

(interrupting)

With a brown lick for brown boots, or a black lick for black boots.

(they are both overcome with laughter)

(SPONONO begins a little song, ^{with a tune} which presumably has a well-known ~~to them~~ *to them*, because WALTER joins in)

Boys join in it, & the chorus) The OTHER

SPONONO AND WALTER *(trillamente?)*

With a brown lick for brown boots

And a black lick for black boots

And a ~~white~~ ^{red} lick for ~~white~~ ^{red} boots

And a ~~green~~ ^{green} lick for ~~green~~ ^{green} boots.

SPONONO

And a brown lick for black boots

SPONONO AND WALTER

And a black lick for brown boots

And a ~~white~~ ^{white} lick for green boots

And a green lick for ~~white~~ ^{white} boots

SPONONO
And a black kick for ~~M~~ Babaso

WALTER
And a ~~white~~ kick for the lanie.

SPONONO
And a - krkk krkk - (he draws his hand across his throat)
- for Mabaso

SPONONO AND WALTER
And a - krkk krkk - for the lanie.

(they laugh a bit more, but now they are exhausted.)

~~WALTER draws SPONONO aside~~
One more time. (they say again. WALTER finishes, WALTER draws SPONONO aside)

Tell me, man, (seriously)
Are you coming back to the gang?

SPONONO
(laughing, but with a slight note of articiality)
Sure, sure. What do you think?

WALTER
I thought you wanted to work for the lanie.

SPONONO
Well, if I wanted to work for the lanie, I don't want to work for him now.

WALTER
Why don't you run away from here?
(when SPONONO does not reply, he continues)
Because you promised the lanie?

SPONONO
(sullenly, because what WALTER says is true, but SPONONO does not wish to admit it)

No!
(boastfully)
I can get away from here any time, I like! *And I can get back too.*

~~WALTER~~
(genuinely interested)
~~You can?~~

~~SPONONO~~
~~Yes. And I can get back too.~~

WALTER
How?
(coming closer)
Let's hear it.

SPONONO
(lowering his voice)
You know the boxes in the Games Room? *(SPONONO tells him)* WALTER *(laughing)*
(we donot hear the rest of it. SPONONO suddenly sees two small REFORMATORY boys, JANTJIE AND TOM at the door of the Visitors' Room, watching the older boys fascinated. He stands up)

What do you want?
(no reply)

*Smart
guy, eh?*

SPONONO (cont.)

Come here both of you.

(the two boys approach terrified. SPONONO catches one by the arm and twists it brutally, so that the FIRST SMALL BOY cries out. WALTER walks away unobtrusively; he is interested in the Games Room.)

What did you hear, eh?

(he twists again).

FIRST SMALL BOY

I heard you didn't want to work for the lanic any more.

SPONONO

(twisting)

What else?

FIRST SMALL BOY

I heard you could get away any time.

SPONONO

(twisting)

What else?

FIRST SMALL BOY

(crying)

Nothing else, Sponono.

SPONONO

(twisting the arm of the other)

And you?

SECOND SMALL BOY

Nothing else, Sponono.

SPONONO

You didn't hear about the promises?

BOTH SMALL BOYS

No Sponono.

SPONONO

You didn't hear anyone - er - making fun of the promises?

BOTH SMALL BOYS

No Sponono.

(they look very innocent in their tear-stainedness)

SPONONO

Get out then, before I get you again!

(They go off as quickly as possible and SPONONO sits down with his chin in his hand. Lights out)

Spon

Get out then, before I get you again. Get out!
(THEY go SPO drives out the others) When they are gone, he sits for a moment, his mind full of conflicting thoughts. Then he gets on the red circle. He stands up. The Chorus starts to sing softly, inyanga he dances. The Chorus gets louder. He takes the part of the imbongi, & the Chorus sing the praises. Then he gets another idea. He piles up the seats to make a kind of throne. He mounts the throne. Inevitably he summons an unseen person with his right hand. Chorus grows louder. They are helping SPONONO to feel secure & powerful. ~~He~~ ~~he~~ Then he collapses. The Chorus stop. SPO is sobbing. lights dim)