

ACT II

Scene Twenty-One

Jones, Mathilda

Mathilda and Jones enter from the back of the house, having just completed a tour.

MATHILDA

But do tell me of Australia, Bishop. It is, I am sure, a beautiful country.

JONES

Ah, yes, Australia. A very hilly land...

MATHILDA

Really? Australia? Hilly?

JONES

Oh yes, and flat, too. First I must speak of the hilly parts, then I mention the flat. The hills being the more noticeable.

MATHILDA

And what grows there, principally?

JONES

Lager and kangaroos are the chief output.

MATHILDA

Ah, kangaroos! How charming!

JONES

Oh, yes. Charming creatures kangaroos. Carry their young... in pouches...

MATHILDA

Oh, yes.

JONES

... on their backs, don't you know.

MATHILDA

On their backs?

JONES

In backpacks, but worn in the front. Like Eskimos. We have *them*, too, you know.

MATHILDA

Eskimos?

JONES

That's where the pies come from. Extreme northern Australia, near the pole.

MATHILDA

The pole? To the north?

JONES

Yes, there is a large, gigantic pole placed in the north there by the Abor-gines.

MATHILDA

Oh, I thought you were referring to Antarctica.

JONES

No, she passed on some years ago.

MATHILDA

She... passed on?

JONES

You didn't know? Yes, she was carried off by a severe chill.

MATHILDA

A severe..? (*thinking she finally got his joke*) Oh! Really, you are quite the wit!

JONES

I'm so relieved you think so.

MATHILDA

Come now, call me Mathilda, we are family.

JONES

Mathilda. We have a saint in our country by that name.

MATHILDA

A saint?

JONES

Patron of waltzing, if I recall correctly.

MATHILDA

Waltzing?

JONES

Yes, but to bring the subject closer to home. Your lovely daughters?

MATHILDA

Oh yes, our pride and joy. But you know, your Bishopship, we are a bit concerned over our ward, Cecilia, we call her Cissy.

JONES

She attracted my attention as well.

MATHILDA

Did she? Well, I don't wonder, she was very close to being rude to you!

JONES

She never came quite close enough as far as I'm concerned.

MATHILDA

You are kind. That girl needs a talking to by someone of unquestioned spiritual authority.

JONES

Why, that's right up my alley...

MATHILDA

Right up your alley?

JONES

Speaking to young women. With unquestioned authority. Especially when there are spirits involved.

MATHILDA

Oh, dear Bishop, would you?

JONES

I could find it in my heart.

MATHILDA

May I take your hand in gratitude?

JONES

Be my guest!

MATHILDA

She used to be so good, until she went to San Francisco in search of her health.

Scene Twenty-Two

Jones, Mathilda, Ebenezer

Eben enters to see his wife and Jones holding hands. He positions himself where he cannot be seen by Mathilda and signals to Jones to stop.

JONES

Well, she seems to have found it, all right.

MATHILDA

Yes, but since she has returned she has remained restless and dissatisfied.

JONES

I know just how to treat that.

MATHILDA

You do!?

JONES

And treating her will be a treat for me.

MATHILDA

Oh, dear Bishop.

JONES

Dear Mathilda.

*He goes to kiss her. Eben lets out a growl.
Mathilda looks around.*

MATHILDA

Ebenezer, was that you?

JONES

When might I speak with dear Cissy?

MATHILDA

Oh, perhaps in the morning?

JONES

The sooner the better, you never know when I might suddenly leave.

MATHILDA

You're leaving us, so soon?

JONES

You know, life is short. Sunrise, sunset. Let me speak to her now.

MATHILDA

You are so right...

*She turns to call for Cissy and catches Eben
in mid-scowl.*

MATHILDA

Ebenezer, are you ill?

JONES

You're so right, he is! Why, he looks dreadful!

EBENEZER

Why you...

MATHILDA

Ebenezer, your eye? What happened to your eye?

JONES

Yes, Eben, brother of mine, what exactly did happen to your eye?

EBENEZER

My eye? Well, I... what would you suggest, Mr. ... uh... Bishop?

JONES

he takes her hand again, Eben seethes

My dear Mathilda, I'm afraid the malady is all too familiar to me. Odd behavior, discoloration about the visual occipital. It could be serious.

MATHILDA

Serious, oh dear.

EBENEZER

Now, wait...

JONES

Hold his hand. I will take his pulse.

MATHILDA

Perhaps his temperature, too, the Professor always carries a thermometer.

She offers it over Eben's objections, Jones places it in Eben's mouth with his free hand.

JONES

Yes, he has a pulse.

counting very slowly

One. Two. Three. Four. I don't know if we have time for that.

reading the temperature

One hundred twenty-seven. Feeling hot, professor?

EBENEZER

Extremely.

JONES

Just as I thought!

MATHILDA

What is it?

JONES

When the petaluma comes in contact with the chappiqua, the manitoba presses against the teaneck which causes a sudden rush of blood to the carpathia and settles in the eyes.

MATHILDA

Oh dear. But can we be grateful that it is only in one eye, perhaps?

JONES

Ah, but the left one. The left eye is the one closest to the heart. Very serious. If the discoloration extends from here to here... well... my dear brother may be in the market for a golden harp.

MATHILDA

Oh dear, oh dear!

EBENEZER

This is ridiculous.

JONES

Dearest Brother, do you have a better explanation for how you got it?

EBENEZER

You miserable coward...

MATHILDA

Mr. Goodly!

JONES

Come now, you can be nicer than that.

EBENEZER

I should give you one to match. (*Mathilda yelps in alarm*)

JONES

Really, brother, and at our reunion!

EBENEZER

Reunion, my foot.

MATHILDA

Mr. Goodly, I have never heard such words from you in all my life!

JONES

One of the usual symptoms.

Eben can contain himself no longer and leaves the room with mutters and growls.

Scene Twenty-Three
Jones, Mathilda

MATHILDA

The usual symptoms?

JONES

Along with the eye. The blacker the eye, the angrier the tone, the cruder the language, the closer to... well...

MATHILDA

Oh, dear. Whatever can I do?

JONES

Application of ice and plenty of rest.

MATHILDA

Ice and rest.

JONES

Right now, no time to waste.

MATHILDA

No time to waste, oh dear.

JONES

But dear sister, what of our other little family crisis. Your ward?

MATHILDA

Oh yes! Cissy.

JONES

There is no better time than now, when we can meet here, undisturbed.

MATHILDA

A very good idea, Bishop. I will send her down.

JONES

Excellent. But before you do, make sure that my brother is in his room with the door locked. From the outside.

MATHILDA

Yes, yes, I will be certain of it.

JONES

For his own good.

*Mathilda runs off calling for Cissy. Jones
decides to celebrate with a quick shot from*

his flask which is still in his jacket in the window seat. He retrieves it just as Cissy comes in, as yet unseen by him.

Scene Twenty-Four

Jones, Cissy

JONES

Yum, yum, yummy, it's fire in the tummy.

he takes a swig

CISSY

Some light refreshment, your Grace?

JONES

Yes, refreshing indeed! Oh, this you mean.

CISSY

May I have some?

JONES

No! No, no. You wouldn't find it good.

CISSY

What is it?

JONES

Cold tea.

CISSY

I love cold tea.

JONES

Not this kind.

CISSY

No?

JONES

No. An Australian blend. Dark, bitter tea mixed with... platypus milk.

CISSY

Milk?

JONES

Which is clear.

JONES
 What's wrong.

CISSY
 I lost my brooch!

JONES
 Your brooch?

CISSY
 Yes. It must have been this afternoon when I was cleaning under the sofa. But I am so weary from the day, would you be a gentleman and look for me?

JONES
 Gladly.

He kneels behind the sofa and Cissy dashes for the window seat. Before she can...

JONES
 No.

CISSY
 How strange. Well, perhaps it is under the table, I was polishing the legs. Would you please?

JONES
 Certainly.

The same business as before.

JONES
 No.

CISSY
 I know! Upstairs in the hall! I am sure of it! I would go myself, but I am feeling a bit of a chill -- it must be for the reasons you put forth just now -- and as it is always colder upstairs, won't you please do a girl a little, little favor and go up for me? Please.

JONES
 Only if you convince me further.

CISSY
 Please, please, please.

JONES
 Okay.

Same business, this time Jones reenters in time to see her attempt to get into the window seat.

Nothing. JONES

How odd. I know...! CISSY

How about the window seat? JONES

No! No, I mean, let me look instead. CISSY

You shouldn't be doing that. JONES

It's not becoming to allow a guest to pry into private storage areas. CISSY

I have heard that in America window seats are preferred habitats for snakes. JONES

Sitting on top yes, but only late at night and with company. Please allow me. CISSY

I would rather do it myself. JONES

We are well matched, you and I. CISSY

Concerning your fireplace... JONES

I will step away if you do so before me. CISSY

Agreed. Join me here, won't you? JONES

At a distance, perhaps. CISSY

All right for starters. JONES

He moves away, Cissy moves cautiously towards him. They stand side by side for awhile. Then Cissy moves a half step at a time towards him. When she is next to him, at last, her head drops towards his