

**MCP Audition Packet  
For the Murderously Funny Musical**

**A  
GENTLEMAN'S GUIDE  
TO  
LOVE AND MURDER**

**Auditions will be held at Magic Circle Theatre  
420 South 12th Street, Montrose, CO 81401**

**Sunday, July 14th @ 1:30 pm  
Monday, July 15th @ 6:30 pm  
Tuesday, July 16th Call-Backs @ 6:30 pm**

**For important audition details see page 4!**

# A GENTLEMAN'S GUIDE TO LOVE AND MURDER

*A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* was the most-nominated musical comedy of the 2014 Tony Award season. With ten Tony nominations and four wins, including Best Musical, Book, Direction, and Costumes, it also earned seven Drama Desk Awards (including best Musical), four Outer Critics Circle Awards and one Drama League Award (Best Musical).

Filled with unforgettable music and non-stop laughs, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* is a murderous romp! Plus there is a scene-stealing opportunity for one or two actors to play all eight of the doomed heirs who meet their ends in the most creative and side-splitting ways. With soaring ballads and fabulous music, this production offers endless opportunities for singers to explore their vocal talent and comedic skills.

## Synopsis

Set in 1907 London, the low-born Monty Navarro finds out that he's eighth in line for an earldom in the lofty D'Ysquith family. He figures his chances of outliving his predecessors are slight and so he sets off down a far more ghoulish path. With a few tricks up his sleeve, he plots to speed up the line of succession all the while juggling the affections of two beautiful women, dodging suspicions and relying on fortunate twists of fate. This Tony Award winning musical tells the hilarious story of wrongfully getting what is rightfully yours.

## Cast:

5 Lead Roles: \* 2 Male, 3 Female, Ensemble of 6-8

\*There is an option for one or two actors to portray all eight of the D'Ysquith heirs.

## Performance Dates

Friday Evenings: November 1, 8, 15, 22

Saturday Evenings: November 2, 9, 16, 23

Matinees: November 3, 10, 17

## Character Breakdown

### Montague “Monty” Navarro

Handsome, clever, charismatic, vulnerable and endearing. Discovers he is in line to become the Earl of Highhurst, and intends to kill off the family that stands in his way.

Age Range: 20’s-40’s; GENDER: MALE

### The D’Ysquith Family

\*Asquith D’Ysquith, Jr., a dandy

\*Lord Adalbert D’Ysquith, Eighth Earl of Highhurst

\*Reverend Lord Ezekiel D’Ysquith, a clergyman

\*Henry D’Ysquith, a country squire

\*Lady Hyacinth D’Ysquith, a benefactress

\*Major Lord Bartholomew D’Ysquith, a bodybuilder

\*Lady Salome D’Ysquith Pumphrey, an actress

\*Chauncey D’Ysquith, a janitor

**\*These roles all may be played by one or two actors.**

Age Range: 20’s-70’s; GENDER: MALE

### Phoebe D’Ysquith

Monty’s cousin

Age Range: 20’s-40’s; GENDER: FEMALE

### Sibella Hallward

The girl Monty loves.

Age Range: 20”s-40’s; GENDER: FEMALE

### Miss Shingle

Monty’s unexpected visitor.

Age Range: 50’s-70’s; GENDER: FEMALE

## **Ensemble/Singers**

### **Woman #1:**

Mourner; Tour guide; Ancestral Portrait; Skater; Bridesmaid, Pub Owner's Wife; Mrs. Pebworth; Phoebe's Maid; 3rd Newsboy; Tailor, Selina Chard (Servant); Flower Girl

### **Woman #2:**

Mourner; Tour Guide; Ancestral Portrait; Skater; Bridesmaid; Mrs. Hetherington; 4th Newsboy; Tailor; Lady Eugenia D'Ysquith; Flower Girl

### **Woman #3**

Mourner; Sibella's Maid; Tourist; Ancestral Portrait; Miss Evangeline Barley; Bridesmaid; Miss Hayes; Tailor; Hilda (Servant); Flower Girl

### **Man #1:**

Mourner; Tourist; Ancestral Portrait; 2nd Clerk; Skater; Groomsman; Tom Copley; Dr. Brownlee; 1st Newsboy; Weight Lifter; 3rd Actor; Ancestral Bust; Walter (Servant); Dr. Pettibone (Medical Examiner); Prison Guard

### **Man #2:**

Mourner; Tourist; ancestral Portrait; 1st Clerk; skater; tailor; Groomsman; Pub Owner; Mr. Cross; 2nd Newsboy; Weight Lifter; 1st actor; Lord Asquith's Physician; Ancestral Bust; Mr. Waters (Servant); Chief Inspector Pinckney

### **Man #3**

Mourner; Tourist; Ancestral Portrait; Skater; Groomsman; Pub Patron; Henry's Employee; Mr. Goodsall; 2nd Actor; Alfred Gorby (Butler); Lord High Steward (voiceover); Magistrate

## **Production Team**

Director: Kathy Murdoch

Assistant Director/Music Director: Everett Gregory

Production Assistant: Ruthie Rich

Costumes: Missy Siders

Set Design: Bob Dietrich

Set Builder: Kevin Cohenour, cast

Sound: Kenny Easton

Lighting Design: Kat Govan

Stage Manager: Jessica Vergari

Vocal Coach: Kenny Easton

Accompanist: Rebecca Northey

\*Costumes for this production will be rented



## **Audition Information**

Auditions will be held at Magic Circle Theatre Phone: (970) 249-7838

420 South 12th Street, Montrose, CO 81401 Website: [magiccircleplayers.com](http://magiccircleplayers.com)

Sunday, July 14th @ 1:30 pm

Monday, July 15th @ 6:30 pm

Tuesday, July 16th, @ 6:30 pm-Call-Backs

Saturday, July 20th: Pick Up Scripts & Measured for Costumes

Arrive any time between 10 am and Noon in the Theatre Lobby

\*If unable to attend on the above dates, contact Kathy Murdoch to schedule an audition appointment. Email: [kathryn.murdoch1231@gmail.com](mailto:kathryn.murdoch1231@gmail.com) or (970) 596-9007

Be prepared to sing a song of your choice that shows you at your best. Bring your own (1) accompanist, (2) recorded music, or (3) sheet music. If you use recorded music, there should be no vocals (in other words: no sing-a-longs) An accompanist will be available for those who need one. You are welcome and encouraged to sing any song from the show. Music will be available on the website by May 25th.

Actors will be asked to read parts from the play in various groupings. Cuttings from the script as well as sheet music will be made available on the website by May 25th.

Anyone wishing to see the libretto, contact Kathy Murdoch.

There are no choreography requirements for this production.

For this production, we will be using OrchExtra, a sound enhancing system that provides a full, live orchestra sound allowing us to include live instruments as needed.

**Proposed Rehearsals:** Beginning July 29th from 6-9 pm

Rehearsals will potentially be scheduled for Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

A detailed rehearsal schedule for music and blocking will be provided to the cast weekly as we progress. Rehearsals are mandatory unless actors are not called for in the schedule or if arrangements have been made prior to rehearsal with the director.

We will be respectful of the actor's time by scheduling as needed.

Rehearsals will be held at: CASA, 147 N Townsend Ave, Montrose, CO 81401

# A GENTLEMAN'S GUIDE TO LOVE & MURDER

## ACTOR INFORMATION

# \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ Do you text? \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday: Mo \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_

Parts for which you wish to audition:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

A Short list of theatre experience:

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Please list other commitments or out-of-town travel that will conflict with our rehearsal schedule or performances:

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Would you be willing to accept a role other than what you audition for or chorus/ensemble?

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Would you be interested in helping with any technical aspects of this performance? (ex: lights, sound, stage crew, costumes, prompting, etc.)

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**ACT ONE****SCENE 1**

*At rise, we find MONTY NAVARRO in a Prison Cell. The ninth, and current, Earl of Highhurst, HE is youthful and quite dashing, even under such circumstances. HE sits down at a writing desk and takes a sheaf of papers out of the drawer. HE lifts a pen and begins to write.*

**#1b - Our Story Begins****MONTY (Recorded V-O)**

*(As HE writes:)*

Pentonville Prison. Nineteenth of October, nineteen hundred and nine. This is the memoir, and perhaps final confession, of Lord Navarro, ninth Earl of Highhurst. It is a fact of life that no one ever really tells the truth about himself. But in the event of my execution, while I still have time, I have decided to leave behind a purely factual record of events. I suppose one could call it "A Gentleman's Guide... To Murder."

*(After a moment:)*

Or should I say—"Love and Murder." My story begins, as stories often do, with a quite unexpected visitor.

**SCENE 1A**

*(MONTY enters a small sad Parlor, decorated to make the most of meager means. His affect is much younger, his manner far less assured.)*

*Grieving, HE gazes at a portrait of his mother. The doorbell clangs rather insistently. MONTY opens the door and MARIETTA SHINGLE, an eccentric woman of a certain age, barges in from the cold. MUSIC fades out.)*

**MISS SHINGLE**

If there's a sorrier street in all of Clapham, I'm sure I've never seen it.

**MONTY**

Pardon me, madam, but do we know one another?

*(MISS SHINGLE removes her outer garments, making herself quite at home.)*

**MISS SHINGLE**

Only since the moment you were given birth by your sweet mother.

**MONTY**

You knew Mother? I... I've only just returned from her funeral.

MISS SHINGLE

My poor dear Isabel, bless her soul.

*(Grabs his face affectionately.)*

Look at himself, all grown up and handsome as the devil.

*(MISS SHINGLE takes a seat, exhausted from her journey.)*

MONTY

How is it you knew Mother, Missus... ?

MISS SHINGLE

Miss. Shingle. Marietta Shingle... ?

MONTY

Of course! Miss Shingle! She spoke of you often and how she looked forward to your letters!

MISS SHINGLE

And I hers, I assure you.

*(Removing her hat.)*

You were going to offer me a spot of tea, were you?

MONTY

You must forgive my manners, Miss Shingle. Mother always had a kettle on.

MISS SHINGLE

And if you could spare a biscuit or two, I'm sure I wouldn't mind.

*(MISS SHINGLE takes in the faded gentility of the parlor for the first time and shakes her head sadly.)*

I knew you and your mother were having a rough time of it, but I didn't know it had come to this. Have you any prospects, love?

MONTY

Mother always dreamt I should go to Oxford or Cambridge somehow.

*(Realizing sadly.)*

It seems rather unlikely now.

MISS SHINGLE

There's nothing your mother wouldn't have done for you.

MONTY

I hardly know how I shall go on without her.

MISS SHINGLE

*(SHE eyes him admiringly.)*

You rather favor your father... physically, I mean.

MONTY

Did you know my father? He died when I was but seven.

MISS SHINGLE

Only met him once, love. Castilian, you know. As dashing a face and figure as you will ever see.

*(A heavy sigh.)*

Tell me, love, what do you know of your mother's family?

MONTY

Mother never spoke of them. Must've been curs and mountebanks. Horse thieves, at the very least.

MISS SHINGLE

Well, not exactly. Have you heard of the D'Ysquith family?

*(MUSIC starts under scene.)*

## #2 - You're a D'Ysquith

MONTY

The D'Ysquiths? Why, yes, of course, hasn't everyone?

MISS SHINGLE

Then you've heard of Highhurst Castle?

MONTY

Of course.

MISS SHINGLE

You're aware, then, of their position? Their vast wealth and influence?

MONTY

Yes, yes, what's it got to do with me?

#3a - *Pretty in Pink (Underscore)*

MONTY

Sibella, something miraculous has happened.

SIBELLA

What?

MONTY

It's too fantastic. I've just learned that I am in the line of succession to become Earl of Highhurst.

SIBELLA

Earl? Of Highhurst?!

MONTY

Yes! It seems that Mother was a D'Ysquith! Which means I am a D'Ysquith, too!

SIBELLA

My mother is the Queen of Sheba. I believe that makes me Princess of Babylon.

MONTY

You shouldn't make fun. It's true. And there are only eight people before me in succession. Which means, I could be Earl someday.

SIBELLA

*(Laughing:)*

And pigs might fly! As if you could've been a D'Ysquith all your life and not know it.

MONTY

I realize how it sounds—

SIBELLA

As if you could ever be an Earl. *Eight* people would have to *die* for that to happen! How likely is that?*(MONTY takes his hat as if to leave. SIBELLA doesn't want him to go.)**MUSIC fades out.)*

Oh, now don't go yet... your Lordship.

MONTY

Where are you off to, in your pink dress?

SIBELLA

To meet a friend. With a motorcar.

MONTY

Does this friend have a name?

SIBELLA

Lionel Holland.

*(MONTY'S jaw tightens.)*

You're jealous of him, I can tell. Because he has a motorcar. And he's rich. And good looking. Is it really true, about you being a D'Ysquith?

MONTY

Of course it is. I'll show you the papers, if you like.

SIBELLA

No, if you say it's true, of course I'll believe you.

*(Tenderly:)*

Darling, we barely spoke at the funeral. Are you quite all right? I should be inconsolable if I'd lost my mother.

*(HE leans forward, pulls her face to his, and kisses her. MUSIC under. SIBELLA'S arms go around his neck. After a moment, THEY release each other.)*

MONTY

Sibella, I think it's time you took me seriously.

SIBELLA

Oh, Monty. The man I marry will have wealth and position.

MONTY

I will have wealth and position.

SIBELLA

What would we live on until then?

MONTY

Sibella, has it never occurred to you to marry for love?

SIBELLA

Now you're being cruel.

*(Suddenly, a MAID enters. THEY separate immediately.)*

SIBELLA'S MAID

Miss Hallward, Mr. Lionel Holland is here for you.

SIBELLA

And right on time. If only he weren't so predictable.

~~#3b - I Don't Know What I'd Do Without You (Tag)~~

*(Singing:)*

MONTY, WHERE'S MY GLOVE?

**ACT ONE****SCENE 4**

*A very old country Church in the Village of Lye, in Lincolnshire.*

**#6a - Meet Lord Ezekiel (Underscore).****MONTY (Recorded V-O)**

Perhaps emboldened by my visit to Highhurst, I was compelled to make one more attempt to connect with my Mother's kin. The Reverend Lord Ezekial D'Ysquith was the one Parson in the family and I envisioned that he, more than anyone, might receive me with sympathy

**SCENE 4A**

*(MONTY stands in the church courtyard with the REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL D'YSQUITH, a man of limited intellect, rather too fond of his port. MUSIC fades out.)*

**REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL**

Why yes, of course I remember Isabel. Charming girl. Broke her father's heart. He and I spent our childhood summers together at Highhurst, you know. Glorious days, glorious days.

**MONTY**

I'm afraid there's a great deal of family history I haven't been privy to.

**REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL**

The chancel was added in 1621 by the first Earl himself. It contains three late twelfth century windows depicting the Martyrdom of St. Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins.

**MONTY**

Ah, yes.

**REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL**

Notice how the attenuated shafts sweep unbroken from floor to ceiling. Perpendicular period, of course.

**MONTY**

Of course.

**REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL**

I must show you the tower!

*(LORD EZEKIEL waves his hand upwards as HE leads MONTY up the steps of the bell tower.)*



MONTY

So then I may count on you, Lord Reverend? To put in a good word for me, with the D'Ysquiths? Perhaps with the Earl, himself?

REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL

Oh, I really couldn't. No, no. I make it my business to stay out of family intrigue. Much better that way, for everyone concerned.

MONTY

*(Taken aback:)*

Oh.

REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL

The Carolingian arches of my groin vault are pointed instead of round, recalling Palladio's Palazzo della Ragione in Vincenza.

*(THEY have reached the top now, high up on the belfry.)*

You will note that our belfry is early Romanesque, which retains a bit of the Byzantine influence.

MONTY

What a marvelous view, your lordship. Are you certain you couldn't make an exception, in this one case? For the sake of my charming Mother, your cousin? Or perhaps out of loyalty to my Grandfather, your childhood playmate?

REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL

Well, that's it, isn't it? If Isabel's own father saw fit to disinherit her for her sins, who am I to deny his wishes?

*(Gesturing to MONTY:)*

You'll have to move closer to the edge to truly appreciate the architectural significance of the flying buttresses. They're said to be influenced by the cathedral at Chartres...

MONTY

Have you no... Christian charity, then?

REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL

Pardon?!

MONTY

What was her great sin, after all? Only love!

*(At the edge of the tower, LORD EZEKIAL leans back with an alarming lack of concern for his safety.)*

REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL

Yes... Now, lean backward, as I do! There—have you ever seen such horizontal thrust?! Isn't it splendid—

*(LORD EZEKIAL loses his balance.)*

**(REVEREND LORD EZEKIAL)**

Oh... ah... I'm... I'm afraid I shall need your hand, please...

**MONTY**

Yes, of course, my Lord!

*(MONTY takes his hand. Then a light goes on in MONTY'S head and, suddenly, time stands still. LORD EZEKIAL freezes in a precarious position. MONTY'S hand appears to be the only obstacle between the Parson and certain death.)*

**ACT ONE**

**SCENE 6**

*A Lakeside Hotel at Chizzlemere. ASQUITH JR. and MISS BARLEY are bundled up in fashionable winter wear. MUSIC continues under.*

**MISS BARLEY**

Just fancy, Asquith, three whole days at the lake together! It will be perfect, won't it?

*(MONTY follows at a discreet distance.)*

**ASQUITH JR.**

Chizzlemere is extraordinary out of season and quite private—the hotel register has an unrivalled list of false names. I trust you don't mind our being discreet.

**MISS BARLEY**

I've never known a man to take such care with my reputation...

*(MONTY approaches the couple as MUSIC fades out.)*

**MONTY**

Pardon me, Miss, but don't I know you from somewhere?

**ASQUITH JR.**

*(Mortified:)*

Certainly not! What are you insinuating, you insignificant upstart?!

*(ASQUITH JR. steers MISS BARLEY away from MONTY)*

**MONTY**

I meant no offense, I assure you.

**ASQUITH JR.**

Were you raised in a shanty town by some chee-chee punkah wallah?!

**MISS BARLEY**

*(Noticing something:)*

Oh, Asquith, look—! There are people skating on the lake! Doesn't it look fun?!

**ASQUITH JR.**

*(Uninterested:)*

What a shame we didn't bring our skates.

**MISS BARLEY**

We can rent them, right on the dock!

ASQUITH JR.

It's getting a bit late, don't you think?

*(Suggestively:)*

Nearly time for beddy-bye.

MISS BARLEY

Oh, Assie, please, please, please let's!

ASQUITH JR.

Oh, all right, crumpet. I say, may I warm my hands in your muff?

## ACT ONE

## SCENE 7

MONTY is seen in half-light, suggesting mystery.

## #8a - Haunting Terror (Underscore)

MONTY(Recorded V-O)

I returned to town late that night, plagued by the haunting terror that I had left a clue and sooner or later someone would come across it. I consoled myself by reading one of Mother's unanswered letters to Lord Asquith, Senior, in which she pleaded with him to take pity on a woman alone with a son to raise. So it was a bit of a shock that not long after I should receive a **letter** from that very same man.

(Reading, live voice:)

"Dear Mr. Navarro..."

(A spot hits LORD ASQUITH D'YSQUITH, a grief-stricken elderly banker.)

LORD ASQUITH

"Some time ago you wrote claiming a relationship to the D'Ysquith family and asking us to help you to some situation in which you might earn your living. I must apologize for our unsympathetic attitude on that occasion. Should you still be in need of a post I shall be very glad if you will pay me a call..."

LORD ASQUITH & MONTY

"... Yours very truly..."

MONTY

(Rather amazed:)

"Lord Asquith D'Ysquith." Senior.

## SCENE 7A

(D'Ysquith Banking House. LORD ASQUITH D'YSQUITH is revealed to be sitting at his ornate desk.)

LORD ASQUITH

Do come in, Mr. Navarro.

(LORD D'YSQUITH looks at MONTY carefully.)

You are not like the D'Ysquiths, and yet there is something.

(MONTY takes a **small photograph** out of his breast pocket and hands it to LORD D'YSQUITH.)

MONTY

This is my Mother.

LORD ASQUITH

We were not well acquainted. It is a very sweet face. Have you ever seen the family portraits at Highhurst?

MONTY

*(Lying:)*

Never.

LORD ASQUITH

Your mother is extraordinarily like some of the women. And some of the men, for that matter. Perhaps you are wondering why I suddenly came to write to you.

MONTY

Yes, frankly, I am.

LORD ASQUITH

I don't know whether you heard that I lost my only son recently under somewhat tragic circumstances. A skating accident.

MONTY

Yes. My sincerest condolences.

LORD ASQUITH

Thank you. You know, of course, I was grooming him to succeed me.

MONTY

I did not.

*(This is difficult for his lordship, as HE is not usually given to public displays of emotion.)*

LORD ASQUITH

Well, it is over. The past cannot be recalled. I should like to know if you would care to come into my firm.

*(MONTY is stunned.)*

You could have no greater education in the business of stockbroking. Beyond that, I can make no promises.

MONTY

Lord D'Ysquith, I hardly know what to say.

LORD ASQUITH

To begin with, you shall have two hundred and fifty pounds a year.

MONTY

It is a generous offer, especially since you'd be paying for the trouble of teaching me.

**LORD ASQUITH**

Here is a cheque for twenty pounds. You may want to enhance your wardrobe.  
I will expect you here at nine o'clock tomorrow.

**ACT ONE****SCENE 8**

MONTY'S back in his Prison Cell.

**#9a - Monty Matriculates (Underscore)**

**MONTY** (Recorded V-O)

I believed I had lost Sibella forever. In my heartbreak, I returned to Mother's letters. "As you have the good fortune, as a D'Ysquith, to attend Cambridge," Mother wrote to her young cousin Henry, "I know you can appreciate the disadvantages my son Montague will have if he is not permitted to matriculate."

(HENRY D'YSQUITH [30], a landowner and country squire, rides on a scooter toward the Village Inn, in Salisbury.)

**HENRY**

Hello, birds!... Hello, sky!

**MONTY** (Recorded V-O)

Of course, for Henry D'Ysquith, a Cambridge education was a mere formality, as he was born into a life of leisure.

**SCENE 8A**

(MONTY enters the Inn in time to witness a fight which has broken out between TOM COPLEY, a local farmer, and HENRY)

**COPLEY**

Just 'cause you and your sister already own half the county doesn't give you the right to buy up my land out from under me, what's been in my wife's family for generations!

(MUSIC out.)

**HENRY**

I'm afraid you lost your land to the bank, my friend, not to me.

(COPLEY grabs HENRY by the collar.)

**COPLEY**

I ain't no friend of yours, you selfish toff!

**HENRY**

I say, why don't we calm ourselves down—

(Just as COPLEY is about to take a punch at HENRY, MONTY gallantly steps between them.)



MONTY

Unhand this man, or I shall call for a constable—

*(MONTY now finds himself the recipient of a terrible blow, which sends him reeling to the floor.)*

HENRY

Now look what you've done!

*(The PUB OWNER and another PATRON grab COPLEY and hold him, while HENRY slaps him harshly across his face with a glove.)*

Now leave here, before I have you brought up on charges!

PUB OWNER

Go along, Tom.

*(COPLEY yells at HENRY as HE is thrown out of the inn.)*

COPLEY

I'm not through with you, D'Ysquith! I'll see you come a cropper, I will!

HENRY

Threats will get you nowhere, sir!

*(To no one in particular:)*

I'll foreclose on the whole county if it suits me! It's time these peasants took responsibility for their own lives.

*(HENRY helps MONTY up.)*

Are you quite all right?

MONTY

Yes, I believe I'll live.

*(HENRY gives MONTY his handkerchief to place against his wound.)*

HENRY

I must say, chum, that was awfully good of you to step in like that.

MONTY

It was nothing, really.

HENRY

You've come from town, haven't you?

MONTY

How did you guess?

HENRY

Oh, one can always tell. It's the way town men put on their clothes. A touch of exaggerated fashion, which betrays a pleasure in personal appearance. Fellows who live in the country don't feel it's good form to wear your clothes too well, but that's all rot.

(HENRY)

(HENRY gestures to his table.)

What say we have us a round, shall we... ?

PUB OWNER'S WIFE

Coming up.

HENRY

It's the least I can offer in return for your gallantry in the aid of a total stranger.

MONTY

Any man would have done the same.

HENRY

My name's D'Ysquith, by the way.

(MUSIC starts.)

#10 - Better With a Man

MONTY

Mine is Navarro.

(MONTY sprays lavender into HENRY'S beekeeping hat, and emerges from the honey shack to find himself face to face with PHOEBE D'YSQUITH [20's, earnest and lovely]. SHE has been gathering rosebuds in the garden.)

PHOEBE

Oh...!

(Love at first sight?)

MONTY & PHOEBE

(At the same time:)

Oh...

(MUSIC fades out.)

MONTY

Do pardon me...

(Courtlly:)

Miss D'Ysquith, I presume... ?

PHOEBE

You are...?

MONTY

Mr. Navarro. But please, do call me Monty.

PHOEBE

My brother tells me you are a cousin?

MONTY

Yes. My mother was Isabel D'Ysquith.

PHOEBE

Isabel. Forgive me, but I don't recall ever hearing about her.

MONTY

Shall I tell you why?

PHOEBE

I wish you would.

MONTY

You see, my father was considered... unsuitable. Because my mother married for love and not for money or property—

PHOEBE

They cut her off.

MONTY

Without a schilling. They ever after behaved as if she and I had never even been born.

## PHOEBE

Why, Mr. Navarro...

## MONTY

I warned your brother you... may not care to receive me...

## PHOEBE

On the contrary, I am most intrigued. What a beautiful story. Horrid, yes, I'm certain, but still beautiful: she dared to marry for love! Tell me, did your father have his own fortune, or were you quite penniless?

*(HE hesitates.)*

You must forgive me; Henry often scolds me for being indelicate.

## MONTY

Not at all. My father left no legacy; he died when I was quite young. But we managed to scrape by, Mother and I.

## PHOEBE

When I think of the indignities you've suffered. It must have inspired an awful resentment of the upper classes.

*(Admonishing herself:)*

Oh no! There I go again! And now I'm making *assumptions* about you, when there's nothing I despise more than people making assumptions about *me*.

*(PHOEBE sits on a vine and flower bedecked swing.)*

I know they talk about me in the village. They see a girl who's rich and from an important family and not unattractive and they assume... well, they assume a lot of things.

*(MUSIC starts under.)*

The truth is... none of them know me at all. Not who I truly am.

**ACT TWO****SCENE 4**

*The Great Hall, Highhurst Castle. The rather grand LADY EUGENIA D'YSQUITH [50's] straightens the medals on the jacket of her husband, LORD ADALBERT. MUSIC fades out.*

**LORD ADALBERT**

I'm famished. What are we eating?

**LADY EUGENIA**

Everything to drive you to an early grave.

**LORD ADALBERT**

It can't be soon enough, as long as you're living.

**LADY EUGENIA**

You'd better hope I die before you. Otherwise, I shall feed your remains to the hounds.

**LORD ADALBERT**

I'm counting on you having a prolonged illness, every inch of you covered with leeches. And I shall savor the act of applying each of them myself. Speaking of leeches, who the devil have you invited to sponge off us *this* weekend?

*(MR. GORBY, a butler, announces the guests.)*

**MR. GORBY**

Miss Phoebe D'Ysquith and Mr. Montague D'Ysquith Navarro.

*(MONTY enters, with PHOEBE on his arm, looking spectacular. It's a rather different entrance than the one HE made as a tourist.)*

**LADY EUGENIA**

Adalbert, you remember Miss D'Ysquith, of course.

*(PHOEBE curtsies to LORD and LADY D'YSQUITH.)*

**LORD ADALBERT**

Which one are you?

**PHOEBE**

Phoebe, sister of the late Henry D'Ysquith.

**LORD ADALBERT**

They're all named Henry!

**LADY EUGENIA**

It's been far too long, my dear. I trust your trip was tolerable?

LORD ADALBERT

Half the family's named Henry! Lack of imagination.

PHOEBE

Oh, quite, Ma'am. With Mr. Navarro as my companion, it seemed to take no time at all. Mr. Navarro, I don't believe you've yet met the Earl and his Countess, Lady D'Ysquith.

LORD ADALBERT

So you're the young ragger they're all talking about. I suppose your name is Henry, too!

LADY EUGENIA

It's Montague.

LORD ADALBERT

Oh, that's a first.

*(MONTY bows respectfully.)*

SIBELLA

It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Countess.

LADY EUGENIA

Of course it is.

*(Nervous, SIBELLA talks too much.)*

SIBELLA

My husband so wanted to be here, but he was called away at the last moment — something about a meeting at Newmarket. I am hopeless when it comes to horses, aren't you?

LADY EUGENIA

Actually, no. I breed.

SIBELLA

Mr. Holland asked me to express his sincerest regrets. I hope you don't mind that I've arrived alone.

LADY EUGENIA

*(Styly mocking:)*

How very enterprising of you.

*(LADY EUGENIA pulls PHOEBE toward her.)*

Mrs. Holland, I wonder if you've met my husband's cousin, Miss D'Ysquith?

*(SIBELLA is taken aback. SHE stares at PHOEBE intently.)*

Phoebe, dear, this is Mrs. Holland.

*(LADY D'YSQUITH leaves them. PHOEBE has no idea who SIBELLA is. SHE graciously extends her [gloved] hand.)*

PHOEBE

Mrs. Holland, I am so pleased to know you.

*(SIBELLA takes her hand and curtsies.)*

SIBELLA

The pleasure is mine. Entirely. Miss D'Ysquith.

PHOEBE

How lovely you look.

SIBELLA

I've been admiring your gown. Your flawless complexion. Your sparkling eyes.

PHOEBE

*(A bit embarrassed.)*

Oh, you are too kind.

SIBELLA

Oh, no. I'm really not.

*(LORD ADALBERT re-enters the room, with MONTY. SIBELLA can't see him from where SHE is standing, and HE has no idea the woman with her back to him is anyone HE knows.)*

I do believe we may know someone in common...

PHOEBE

Oh... ?

*(Before SIBELLA can say another word, LORD ADALBERT taps a glass, making it ring.)*

LORD ADALBERT

Gather round, won't you? Lady D'Ysquith informs me I'm to ask you to raise a glass to my cousin, Miss D'Ysquith...



(PHOEBE blushes. MR. GORBY and MR. WATERS, a servant, pass out drinks for the toast.)

(LORD ADALBERT)

On the occasion of her engagement to Mr. Henry D'Ysquith—

LADY EUGENIA

(Correcting him:)

Montague.

(SIBELLA turns around, stunned to see MONTY. HE nods, as if meeting her for the first time.)

LORD ADALBERT

Mr. D'Ysquith Montague.

LADY EUGENIA

Navarro.

LORD ADALBERT

Mr. Navarro D'Ysquith Montague! A splendid chap, far as I can tell. And a cousin of mine, strangely enough. His mother was a bit of an embarrassment—

(LADY EUGENIA elbows him.)

Water under the bridge, of course. Lady D'Ysquith tells me he's next in the succession—funny that! With everyone else dropping like flies, I shouldn't wonder if he'll smother me in my sleep tonight—what?!

(Silence. LADY EUGENIA glares at her husband.)

Well, I'm getting the evil eye, so do let's go into dinner. If there's anything I can't abide—

(To his WIFE, pointedly:)

—it's cold hen. Don't you agree, Nirvana?

LADY EUGENIA

Navarro!

LORD ADALBERT

(Muttering:)

You wrinkled old kumquat.

(As the EARL exits to the dining room, MONTY gallantly allows the OTHERS to follow. SIBELLA hangs back for a moment alone with him. MONTY betrays no particular familiarity.)

**SCENE 4A**

**MONTY**

This is rather a coincidence, Mrs. Holland.

**SIBELLA**

Don't "Mrs. Holland" me! Just when were you planning to tell me this happy news?

**MONTY**

I should think you would want to keep your voice down.

**SIBELLA**

You're always telling me to keep quiet, aren't you?

**MONTY**

*(With a sigh:)*

I would have sent you and Mr. Holland an announcement in due course.

**SIBELLA**

An announcement?! I won't be treated like a—

*(SHE hesitates for a moment.)*

**MONTY**

Yes...?

**SIBELLA**

You are despicable!

**MONTY**

Perhaps it is a very good thing we did not marry, Sibella.

**SIBELLA**

You didn't use to think so.

**MONTY**

You can't really imagine you have cause to complain of my marrying Miss D'Ysquith.

*(SHE looks at him with frightened eyes.)*

**SIBELLA**

You don't have to, Monty. You could call it off. You must.

*(For the first time in their relationship, MONTY appears to have the upper hand... and HE quite likes it.)*

**MONTY**

There was a time you and I might have fulfilled our natural destiny and married each other.

## SIBELLA

(Sarcasmic:)

That would have been a very pleasant arrangement. We should have been so comfortably off, shouldn't we?

## MONTY

Well, I've no doubt we could've scraped along.

## SIBELLA

I can't imagine either of us, Monty, scraping along. We should have hated each other in a week.

## MONTY

We should never have done that, Sibella. We know each other perfectly, better than anyone else could. We should have always loved each other. That is, if you loved me as I love you.

(SIBELLA'S eyes tear up.)

## SIBELLA

Monty, I *do* love you. And if I had not been so sure that you loved me, I should not have risked marrying Lionel.

## MONTY

I won't even try to make sense of that convoluted statement.

(HE pulls his arm away as gallantly as HE can, and exits into dinner.)

## SIBELLA

Monty, please—

(SIBELLA takes a moment to compose herself before SHE follows him.)

#18a – A Convoluted Abomination (Scene Change)

## LORD ADALBERT

The venison is too rich. Take it away!

*(Belching.)*

This cook will kill me yet.

*(MONTY nearly chokes on his food.)*

So—what do you make of the castle, Novello?

## MONTY

Oh, it's magnificent. Don't you think so, Phoebe?

## PHOEBE

Oh, yes, marvelous!

## LADY EUGENIA

It's falling apart and reeks of mildew.

*(A beat.)*

Not unlike my husband.

## LORD ADALBERT

The men who have defended these walls! And brought honour to the name of D'Ysquith!

*(LORD ADALBERT gestures to the medieval weaponry in the room.)*

You see that broadsword over there? Roland, the second Earl, eviscerated his very own brother!

## LADY EUGENIA

Really, Adalbert!

## LORD ADALBERT

That crossbow? Belonged to my grandfather Charles. The details of the accident remain rather vague...

## LADY EUGENIA

Let's leave it at that, shall we?

*(LORD ADALBERT gets up from the table and takes a rifle off the wall.)*

## LORD ADALBERT

And I must show you the weapon I used to defend the Empire during the Boer War.

## LADY EUGENIA

Really, Adalbert, *must* you?

*(To her GUESTS:)*

I beg you, I beg you not to encourage him!

**LORD ADALBERT**

It was the battle of Majuba Hill back in '81. The Boers stormed the mountain, we were completely surrounded.

*(Reliving it:)*

In the panic, Jurgen, my loyal young Transvaalian valet, suddenly revealed himself as a Boer. He was a turncoat, cornering me with my own weapon...

*(HE handles it lovingly.)*

Martini-Henry Mark II! Ever fired one?

*(HE points it at EVERYONE around the table.)*

**LADY EUGENIA**

Adalbert, sit down at once.

*(HE does.)*

**LORD ADALBERT**

Yes, I have looked death in the face. And death looked right back.

*(MUSIC starts under.)*

**LADY EUGENIA**

Here we go again...

**#22a - A Bit of a Bind (Underscore)**

*(Leaving the TWO WOMEN alone in their rooms, the INSPECTOR and the MAGISTRATE each walk out into the hall at the same time. MUSIC continues under scene.)*

**MAGISTRATE**

Inspector, you are not going to believe who's come to see me! And quite in the nick of time !

**INSPECTOR**

I was about to tell you the same thing!

**MAGISTRATE**

**INSPECTOR**

It seems Mrs. Holland did it!

It seems Mrs. Navarro did it!

*(THEY are both confused.)*

**MAGISTRATE**

**INSPECTOR**

Mrs. Navarro?!

Mrs. Holland?!

**MAGISTRATE & INSPECTOR**

*(In unison:)*

I've got evidence!

*(A beat, then simultaneously:)*

It's quite convincing!

**INSPECTOR**

Well, they can't *both* have done it!

*(THEY exchange letters.)*

**MAGISTRATE**

*(Reading:)*

"Dear Monty... "

**INSPECTOR**

*(Reading:)*

"Monty darling... "

**MAGISTRATE**

"It was *I* who poisoned the Earl."

INSPECTOR

"It was time you took your rightful place."

MAGISTRATE

This is astonishing!

INSPECTOR

She says she intercepted the letter...

MAGISTRATE

... before it was to be handed to Lord Navarro.

INSPECTOR

We can't arrest one woman, if we believe the other one guilty.

MAGISTRATE

The law won't allow it.

INSPECTOR

No jury would convict.

INSPECTOR & MAGISTRATE

*(In unison:)*

Reasonable doubt.

MAGISTRATE

Seems we're in a bit of a bind.

*(THEY each go into the other's interrogation room.)*