

CD 1

PROLOGUE

Interior of the Moot Hall, arranged as for a coroner's inquest. Coroner, Mr. Swallow, at table on dais, clerk at table below. A crowd of townspeople in the body of the hall is kept back by Hobson acting as constable. Mr. Swallow is the leading lawyer of the Borough and at the same time its Mayor and its Coroner. A man of unexceptionable career and talents, he nevertheless disturbs the burgesses by his air of a man with an arrière pensée.

Hobson (*shouts*)

1 Peter Grimes!

(Peter Grimes steps forward from among the crowd.)

Swallow (*reading*)

Peter Grimes, we are here to investigate the cause of death of your apprentice William Spode, whose body you brought ashore from your boat, "The Boy Billy", on the 26th ultimo. Do you wish to give evidence?

(Peter nods.)

Will you step into the box. Peter Grimes!
Take the oath! After me!
I swear by Almighty God.

Peter

"I swear by Almighty God."

Swallow

That the evidence I shall give.

Peter

"That the evidence I shall give."

Swallow

Shall be the truth.

Peter

"Shall be the truth."

Swallow

The whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Peter

"The whole truth and nothing but the truth."

Swallow

Tell the court the story in your own words.

(Peter is silent.)

2 You sailed your boat round the coast with the intention of putting in to London. Why did you do this?

Peter

We'd caught a huge catch, too big to sell here.

Swallow

And the boy died on the way?

Peter

The wind turn'd against us, blew us off our course.
We ran out of drinking water.

Swallow

How long were you at sea?

Peter

Three days.

Swallow

What happen'd next?

Peter

He died lying there among the fish.

Swallow

What did you do?

Peter

Threw them all overboard, set sail for home.

Swallow

You mean you threw the fish overboard?
When you landed, did you call for help?

Peter

I called Ned Keene.

Swallow

The apothecary here?
(indicating Ned)
Was there anybody else called?

Peter

Somebody brought the parson.

Swallow

You mean the Rector, Mr. Horace Adams?

(The Rector steps forward. Swallow waves him back.)

All right, Mr. Adams.
(He turns back to Peter.)
Was there a certain amount of excitement?

Peter

Bob Boles started shouting.

Swallow

There was a scene in the village street, from which you were rescued by our landlady?

Peter

Yes. By Auntie.

Swallow

We don't call her that here!...
You then took to abusing a respectable lady?

(Peter glares.)

Answer me!...You shouted abuse at a certain person?

(Mrs. Sedley pushes forward. Mrs. Sedley is the widow of a retired factor of the East India Company and is known locally as "Mrs. Nabob". She is 65, self-assertive, inquisitive, unpopular.)

Mrs. Sedley

Say who! Say who! Say who!

Swallow

Mrs. Sedley here.

Peter *(fiercely)*

I don't like interferers!

(A slight hubbub among the spectators resolves itself into a chorus which is more like the confused muttering of a crowd than something fully articulate.)

Chorus of Townspeople

When women gossip the result is someone doesn't sleep at night!

Hobson *(shouting)*

Silence!

Swallow

Now tell me this.
Who help'd you carry the boy home?

The schoolmistress, the widow,
Mrs. Ellen Orford?

Women of the town

O when you pray you shut your eyes and then can't tell the truth from lies!

Hobson *(shouting)*

Silence!

Swallow

Mrs. Orford, as the schoolmistress, the widow, how did you come into this?

Ellen

I did what I could to help.

Swallow

Why should you help this kind of fellow, callous, brutal, and coarse?

(to Grimes)

There's something here perhaps in your favour. I am told you rescued the boy from drowning in the March storms.

(Peter is silent.)

Have you something else to say?
No? Then I have.

3 Peter Grimes, I here advise you!
Do not get another boy apprentice.
Get a fisherman to help you, big enough to stand up for himself. Our verdict is that William Spode, your apprentice, died in accidental circumstances. But that's the kind of thing people are apt to remember.

Chorus of Townspeople

But when the crowner sits upon it, who can dare to fix the guilt?

Hobson *(shouting)*

Silence! Silence!

(Peter has stepped forward and is trying to speak.)

Peter

Your honour! Like ev'ry other fisherman I have to hire an apprentice. I must have help!

Swallow

Then get a woman help you look after him.

Peter

That's what I want, but not yet!

Swallow

Why not?

Peter

Not till I've stopp'd people's mouths.

(The hubbub begins again.)

Swallow *(making a gesture of dismissal)*

Stand down! Clear the court! Stand down!

Peter

Stand down you say, you wash your hands.

The case goes on in people's minds.

The charges that no court has made
will be shouted at my head.

Then let me speak, let me stand trial,
bring the accusers into the hall.

Let me thrust into their mouths,
the truth itself, the simple truth.

Chorus of Townspeople

When women gossip, the result
is someone doesn't sleep at night!
But when the crowner sits upon it,
who can dare to fix the guilt?

Hobson

Clear the court!

(Swallow rises with slow dignity. Everybody stands up while he makes his ceremonial exit. The crowd then begins to go out. Peter and Ellen are left alone.)

Peter

4 The truth... the pity... and the truth.

Ellen

Peter, come away!

Peter

Where the walls themselves
gossip of inquest!

Ellen

But we'll gossip, too,
and talk and rest...

Peter

While Peeping Toms

nod as you go.

You'll share the name
of outlaw, too!

Ellen

Peter, we shall restore your name,
warmed by the new esteem
that you will find...

Peter

Until the Borough hate
poisons your mind.

Ellen

There'll be new shoals to catch,
life will be kind.

Peter

Ay! only of drowning ghosts!
Time will not forget,
the dead are witness
and fate is blind.

Ellen

Unclouded,
the hot sun
will spread his rays around.

Both

Your (my) voice out of the pain,
is like a hand
that I (you) can feel and know:
here is a friend.

(They walk off slowly as the curtain falls.)

5 **Interlude I**

ACT ONE**Scene 1**

Street by the sea: Moot Hall exterior with its outside staircase, next door to which is "The Boar." Ned Keene's apothecary's shop is at the street corner. On the other side breakwaters run down to the sea. It is morning, before high tide, several days later. Two fishermen are turning the capstan, hauling in their boat. Prolonged cries as the boat is hauled ashore. Women come from mending nets to take the fish from other fishermen who now disembark. Captain Balstrode sits on the breakwater looking out to sea through his glass. Balstrode is a retired merchant sea-captain, shrewd as a travelled man should be, but with a general sympathy that makes him the favourite rentier of the whole Borough. He chews a plug of tobacco while he watches.

Chorus**Women and Fishermen**

- 6 Oh, hang at open doors the net, the cork,
while squalid sea-dames at their mending work
welcome the hour when fishing through
the tide
the weary husband throws this freight aside.

Fishermen

O cold and wet and driven by the tide,
beat your tired arms against your tarry side.
Find rest in public bars where fiery gin
will aid the warmth that languishes within.

(Several fishermen cross to "The Boar" where Auntie stands in the doorway.)

Fisherman

Auntie!

Auntie

Come in, gentlemen, come in!

Boles

Her vats flow with poison'd gin.
(Boles the Methodist fisherman stands aside from all this dram drinking.)

Fisherman

Boles has gone Methody!

Auntie

A man should have hobbies to cheer his
private life!

(Fishermen go into "The Boar." Others remain with their wives at the nets and boats.)

Women's Chorus

Dabbling on shore half-naked sea-boys crowd,
swim round a ship, or swing upon a shroud.
Or in a boat purloin'd with paddles play
and grow familiar with the wat'ry way.

(While the second boat is being hauled in, boys are scrambling over the first.)

Balstrode

Shoo, you little barnacles!
Up your anchors! Hoist your sails! Shoo!
Shoo!

(Balstrode chases them from the boat. A more respectable figure now begins, with much hat-raising, his morning progress down the High Street. He makes straight for "The Boar.")

Fisherman (touching his cap)

Dr. Crabbe.

Boles (pointing as the swing door closes)

He drinks! "Good Health" to all diseases!

Another Fisherman

Storm?

A few Fishermen

Storm?

(They shade their eyes looking out to sea.)

Balstrode (glass to his eye)

A long way out, sea-horses.
The wind is holding back the tide...
if it veers round, watch for your lives.

Chorus of Fishers

And if the spring-tide eats the land again
till e'en the cottages and cobbled walls
of fishermen
are billets for the thievish waves which take
as if in sleep, thieving for thieving's sake.

(The Rector comes down the High Street. He is followed as always by the Borough's second most famous rentier, the widow, Mrs. [Nabob] Sedley. From "The Boar" come the two "nieces" who give Auntie her nickname. They stand in front of the pub taking the morning sun. Ned Keene, seeing Mrs. Sedley, pops out of his shop door.)

Rector (*right and left*)

Good morning, good morning!

Nieces

Good morning!

Mrs. Sedley

Good morning, dear Rector!

Keene

Had Auntie no nieces we'd never respect her!

Swallow

Good morning, good morning!

Nieces

Good morning!

Mrs. Sedley

Good morning, your worship, Mr. Swallow!

Auntie (*to Keene*)

You jeer, but if they wink you're eager to follow!

(The Rector and Mrs. Sedley continue towards the church.)

Chorus of Women and Fishermen

For us sea-dwellers, this sea-birth can be death to our gardens of fertility.

Yet only such contemptuous spring-tide can tickle the virile impotence of man.

Keene (*shouts across to Auntie*)

I'm coming tonight to see your nieces!

Auntie (*dignified*)

The Boar is at its patron's service.

Boles

God's storm will drown your hot desires!

Balstrode

God stay the tide, or I shall share your fears.

Peter (*calling offstage*)

7 Hi! Give us a hand!

Haul the boat!

Boles (*shouting back*)

Haul it yourself, Grimes!

Peter (*off*)

Hi! Somebody bring the rope!
(Nobody does. Presently he appears and takes the capstan rope himself and pulls it after him [off] to the boat. Then he returns. The fishermen and women turn their backs on him and slouch away awkwardly.)

Balstrode (*going to capstan*)

I'll give a hand, the tide is near the turn.

Keene

We'll drown the gossips in a tidal storm.

(Balstrode and Keene turn the capstan.)

Auntie (*at the door of "The Boar"*)

Parsons may moralise and fools decide, but a good publican takes neither side.

Balstrode

O haul away, the tide is near the turn!

Keene

Man invented morals but tides have none.

Boles (*with arms akimbo, watching their labour*)

This lost soul of a fisherman must be

shunned by respectable society!

O let the captains hear, let the scholars learn: shielding the sin, they share the people's scorn.

Auntie

I have my business. Let the preachers learn.

Hell may be fiery, but the pub won't burn!

Balstrode and Keene

The tide that floods will ebb,

the tide, the tide will turn.

(The boat is hauled up. Grimes appears.)

Keene

Grimes, you won't need help from now.

I've got a prentice for you.

Balstrode

A workhouse brat?

Keene

I called at the workhouse yesterday.

All you do now is fetch the boy.

We'll send the carter with a note.

He'll bring your bargain on his cart!

(He calls Hobson.)

Jim Hobson, we've a job for you!

Hobson (*entering*)

Cart's full, sir, more than I can do.

Keene

Listen, Jim, you'll go to the workhouse

and ask for Mr. Keene his purchase.

Bring him back to Grimes!

Hobson

Cart's full, sir. I have no room.

Keene

Hobson, you'll do what there is to be done!

(It is near enough to an argument to attract a crowd. Fishermen and women gather round. Boles takes his chance.)

Boles

Is this a Christian country?
Are pauper children so enslaved
that their bodies go for cash?

Keene

Hobson, will you do your job?

(Ellen Orford has come in. She is a widow of about 40. Her children have died, or grown up and gone away, and in her loneliness she has become the Borough schoolmistress. A hard life has not hardened her. It has made her the more charitable.)

Hobson

- 8 I have to go from pub to pub,
picking up parcels, standing about.
My journey back is late at night,
Mister, find some other way
to bring your boy back.

Chorus of Fishermen and Women

He's right! Dirty jobs!

Ellen

Carter! I'll mind your passenger.

Chorus of Fishermen and Women

What! And be Grimes's messenger?

Ellen

Whatever you say, I'm not ashamed.
Somebody must do the job.

Chorus of Fishermen and Women

You'll be Grimes's messenger! You!

Ellen

The carter goes from pub to pub,
picking up parcels, standing about.
The boy needs comfort late at night.
He needs a welcome on the road.
Coming here strange he'll be afraid.
I'll mind your passenger!

Keene

Mrs. Orford is talking sense.

Chorus of Fishermen and Women

Ellen — you're leading us a dance,
fetching boys for Peter Grimes,
because the Borough is afraid,
you who help will share the blame!

Ellen

Whatever you say...

- 9 Let her among you without fault
cast the first stone.
And let the Pharisees and Sadducees
give way to none.
But whosoever feels his pride
humbled so deep,
there is no corner he can hide,
even in sleep!
Will have no trouble to find out
how a poor teacher
widow'd and lonely finds delight
in should'ring care.
(as she moves up the street)
Mr. Hobson, where's your cart?
I'm ready.

Hobson

Up here, ma'am. I can wait.

(The crowd stands round and watches. Some follow Ellen and Hobson. On the edge of the crowd are other activities.)

Mrs. Sedley *(whispers to Ned)*

Have you my pills?

Keene

I'm sorry, ma'am.

Mrs. Sedley

My sleeping draught?

Keene

The laudanum
is out of stock, and being brought
by Mr. Carrier Hobson's cart.
He's back tonight.

Mrs. Sedley

Good Lord! Good Lord!

Keene

Meet us both in the pub, "The Boar",
Auntie's, we call it. It's quite safe.

Mrs. Sedley

I've never been in a pub in my life.

Keene

You'll come?

Mrs. Sedley

All right.

Keene

Tonight?

Mrs. Sedley

All right!

(She moves off up the street.)

Keene

If the old dear takes much more laudanum
she'll land herself one day in Bedlam!

Balstrode *(looks seaward through his glass)*

10 Look, the storm cone!

The wind veers
in from sea
at gale force.

Chorus of Fishermen and Women

Look out for squalls.

It's veering
in from sea!
Look, the storm cone!
The wind veers in
at gale force.

Make your boat fast!
Shutter your windows!
And bring in all the nets!

Flooding, flooding
our seasonal fears.
Fasten your boats!

The spring-tide's here
with a gale behind.

Soloists *(variously)*

Now the flood tide
and the sea-horses
will gallop over
the eroded coast.

The wind veers
in from sea
at gale force.

Look, the storm cone!
A high tide coming
will eat the land.

A tide no breakwaters can withstand.

All

Look! The Storm come!
The wind veers
in from sea
at gale force.

Chorus of Fishermen and Women

Is there much to fear?

Keene

Only for the goods you're rich in!
It won't drown your conscience, it might flood
your kitchen.

Boles *(passionately)*

God has His ways which are not ours.
His high tide swallows up the shores.
Repent! Repent!

Chorus of Fishermen and Women

Look out for squalls, etc.

Keene

And keep your wife upstairs!

All

O tide that waits for no man,
spare our coasts!

*(There is a general exeunt, mostly through the
swing doors of "The Boar." Dr. Crabbe's hat
blows away, is rescued for him by Ned Keene,
who bows him into the pub. Finally only Peter
and Balstrode are left, Peter gazing seaward,
Balstrode hesitating at the pub door.)*

Balstrode

11 And do you prefer the storm
to Auntie's parlour and the rum?

Peter

I live alone. The habit grows.

Balstrode

Grimes, since you're a lonely soul,
born to blocks and spars and ropes,
why not try the wider sea
with merchantman or privateer?

Peter

I am native, rooted here.

Balstrode

Rooted by what?

Peter

By familiar fields,
marsh and sand,
ordinary streets,
prevailing wind.

Balstrode

You'd slip these moorings if you had the mind.

Peter

By the shut faces
of the Borough clans,
and by the kindness
of a casual glance.

Balstrode

You'll find no comfort there!
When an urchin's quarrelsome
brawling at his little games,
mother stops him with a threat,
"You'll be sold to Peter Grimes!"

Peter

Selling me new apprentices,
children taught to be ashamed
of the legend on their faces:
"You've been sold to Peter Grimes!"

Balstrode

Then the Crowner sits to hint,
but not to mention crimes,
and publishes an open verdict
whispered about this "Peter Grimes":
Your boy was workhouse starved,
maybe you're not to blame he died.

Peter

Picture what that day was like
that evil day!
We strained into the wind,
heavily laden.
We plunged into the wave's
shuddering challenge.
Then the sea rose to a storm
over the gunwales,
and the boy's silent reproach
turned to illness.
Then home
among fishing nets
alone, alone, alone
with a childish death.

Balstrode

This storm is useful. You can speak your mind
and never mind the Borough comment'ry.
There is more grandeur in a gale of wind
to free confession, set a conscience free.

Peter

They listen to money
these Borough gossips.
I have my visions,
fiery visions.
They call me dreamer,
they scoff at my dreams
and my ambition.
But I know a way
to answer the Borough.
I'll win them over.

Balstrode

With the new prentice?

Peter

We'll sail together.
These Borough gossips
listen to money,
only to money.
I'll fish the sea dry,
sell the good catches.
That wealthy merchant
Grimes, will set up
household and shop,
you will all see it!
I'll marry Ellen!

Balstrode

Man, go and ask her,
without your booty.
She'll have you now.

Peter

No, not for pity!

Balstrode

Then the old tragedy
is in store.
New start with new prentice
just as before.

Peter

What Peter Grimes decides
is his affair.

Are you my conscience?

Balstrode

You fool, man, you fool!

New start with new prentice just as before!

*(The wind has risen. Balstrode is shouting
above it. Peter faces him angrily.)*

Balstrode

Might as well

try shout the storm down,

as to tell the obvious truth!

Peter

Take your advice,

put it where your money is.

Balstrode

The storm is here, o come away!

Peter

The storm is here and I shall stay!

*(The storm is rising. Auntie comes out of "The
Boar" to fasten the shutters, in front of the
windows. Balstrode goes to help her. He looks
back towards Peter, then goes into the pub.)*

Peter

12 What harbour shelters peace,
away from tidal waves, away from storms?

What harbour can embrace
terrors and tragedies?

With her there'll be no quarrels,
with her the mood will stay,
a harbour ever more
where night is turned to day.

*(The wind rises. He stands a moment as if
leaning against the wind.)*

(Curtain.)

13 Interlude II**Scene 2**

*Interior of "The Boar," typical main room of a
country pub. No bar. Upright settles, tables,
log fire. When the curtain rises Auntie is
admitting Mrs. Sedley. The gale has risen to
hurricane force and Auntie holds the door with*

*difficulty against the wind which rattles the
windows and howls in the chimney. They both
push the door closed.*

Auntie

14 Past time to close!

Mrs. Sedley

He said half-past ten.

Auntie

Who?

Mrs. Sedley

Mr. Keene.

Auntie

Him and his women!

Mrs. Sedley

You referring to me?

Auntie

Not at all, not at all!

What do you want?

Mrs. Sedley

Room from the storm.

Auntie

That is the sort of weak politeness
makes a publican lose her clients.
Keep in the corner out of sight.

*(Balstrode and a Fisherman enter. They
struggle with the door.)*

Balstrode

Phew, that's a bitch of a gale all right!

Auntie (nods her head towards Mrs. Sedley)

Sh-h-h.

Balstrode

Sorry. I didn't see you, Missis.

You'll give the regulars a surprise.

Auntie

She's meeting Ned.

Balstrode

Which Ned?

Auntie

The quack! He's looking after her heart attack.

Balstrode

Bring us a pint.

Auntie

It's closing time.

Balstrode

You fearful old female, why should you mind?

Auntie

The storm!

(Bob Boles and other fishermen enter. The wind howls through the door and again there is difficulty in closing it.)

Boles

Did you hear the tide
has broken over the Northern Road?
*(He leaves the door open too long with
disastrous consequences. A sudden gust
howls through the door, the shutters of the
window fly open, a pane blows in.)*

Balstrode (shouts)

Get those shutters!

Auntie (screams)

O-o-o-o-o!

Balstrode

You fearful old female, why do you
leave your windows naked?

Auntie

O-o-o-o-o!

Balstrode

Better strip a niece or two
and clamp your shutters!

*(The two "nieces" run in. They are young,
pretty enough though a little worn, conscious
that they are the chief attractions of "The
Boar." At the moment they are in mild
hysterics, having run downstairs in their night
clothes, though with their unusual instinct for
precaution they have found time to don each a
wrap. It is not clear whether they are sisters,
friends, or simply colleagues: but they behave
like twins, as though each has only half a
personality, and they cling together always to
sustain their self-esteem.)*

Nieces

Oo! Oo!
It's blown our bedroom windows in.
Oo! we'll all be drowned.

Balstrode

Perhaps in gin!

Nieces

I wouldn't mind if it didn't howl.
It gets on my nerves!

Balstrode

D'you think we should stop our storm for such
as you?
Coming all over palpitations! Oo! Oo!
Auntie, get some new relations!

Auntie (taking it ill)

Loud man, I never did have time
for the kind of creature who spits in his wine!
A joke's a joke and fun is fun!
But say your grace and be polite
for all that we have done.

Nieces

For his peace of mind.

Mrs. Sedley

This is no place for me!

Auntie

Loud man, you're glad enough to be
playing your cards in our company.
A joke's a joke and fun is fun!
But say your grace and be polite
for all that we have done.

Nieces

For his peace of mind.

Mrs. Sedley

This is no place for me!

Auntie

Loud man!

*(Two fishermen enter. Usual struggle with
the door.)*

Fisherman

There's been a landslide up the coast!

Boles (rising unsteadily)

I'm drunk. Drunk!

Balstrode

You're a Methody wastrel!

Boles (*staggers to one of the nieces*)

Is this a niece of yours?

Auntie

That's so.

Boles

Who's her father?

Auntie

Who wants to know?

Boles

I want to pay my best respects
to the beauty and misery of her sex.

Balstrode

Old Methody, you'd better tune
your piety to another hymn!

Boles

I want her!

Balstrode

Sh-h-h!

Boles

I want her!

Auntie (*cold*)

Turn that man out.

Balstrode

He's the local preacher.
He's lost the way of carrying liquor.
He means no harm.

Boles

No, I mean love!

Balstrode

Come on, boy!

*(Boles hits him. Mrs. Sedley screams.
Balstrode quietly overpowers Boles and sits
him in a chair.)*

Balstrode

15 We live and let live, and look
we keep our hands to ourselves.

*(Boles struggles to his feet. Balstrode sits him
down again, laying the law down.)*

Pub conversation should depend
on this eternal moral;
So long as satire don't descend
to fisticuff or quarrel.
We live and let live, and look
we keep our hands to ourselves.

Chorus of Townspeople and Fishermen

We live and let live, and look
we keep our hands to ourselves.

Balstrode

We sit and drink the evening through
not deigning to devote a thought
to the daily cud we chew
but buying drinks by rota!

All

We live and let live, and look!...

*(The door opens. The struggle with the
wind is worse than before as Ned Keene
gets through.)*

Keene

16 Have you heard? The cliff is down
up by Grimes's hut?

Auntie

Where is he?

Mrs. Sedley

Thank God you've come!

Keene

You won't blow away.

Mrs. Sedley

The carter's over half an hour late!

Balstrode

He'll be later still: the road's under flood.

Mrs. Sedley

I can't stay longer. I refuse!

Keene

You'll have to stay if you want your pills.

Mrs. Sedley

With drunken females and in brawls!

Keene

They're Auntie's nieces, that's what they are,
and better than you for kissing, ma!
Mind that door!

Balstrode then Chorus of Townspeople and Fishermen

Mind that door!

(The door opens again. Peter Grimes has come in. Unlike the rest he wears no oilskins. His hair looks wild. He advances into the room, shaking off the raindrops from his hair. Mrs. Sedley faints. Ned Keene catches her as she falls.)

Keene

Get the brandy, Aunt!

Auntie

Who'll pay?

Keene

Her! I'll charge her for it.

Nieces and Chorus of Townspeople and Fishermen

Talk of the devil and there he is.
And a devil he is, a devil he is!
Grimes is waiting his apprentice.

(Peter sits down. The others move away from that side of the table)

Keene

This widow's as strong as
any two fishermen I have met.
Everybody's very quiet!

(No-one answers. Silence is broken by Peter, as if thinking aloud.)

Peter

- 17 Now the Great Bear and Pleiades
where earth moves
are drawing up the clouds
of human grief
breathing solemnity in the deep night.
Who can decipher
in storm or starlight
the written character
of a friendly fate —
as the sky turns, the world for us to change?
But if the horoscope's
bewildering like a flashing turmoil

of a shoal of herring
who can turn skies back and begin again?

(Silence again. Then muttering in undertones.)

Chorus of Townspeople and Fishermen

He's mad or drunk!
Why's that man here?

Nieces

His song alone would sour the beer.

Chorus of Townspeople and Fishermen

His temper's up.
O chuck him out!

Nieces

I wouldn't mind if he didn't howl!

Chorus of Townspeople and Fishermen

He looks as if he's nearly drowned.

Boles *(staggering up to Grimes)*

You've sold your soul, Grimes!

Balstrode

Come away!

Boles

Satan's got no hold on me.

Balstrode

Leave him alone, you drunkard!
(Goes to get hold of Boles.)

Boles

I'll hold the Gospel light before
the cataract that blinds his eyes.

Peter *(as the drunk stumbles up to him)*

Get out!
(Grimes thrusts Boles aside roughly and turns away.)

Boles

His exercise is not with men but killing boys!

(Boles picks up a bottle and is about to bring it down on Grimes's head when Balstrode knocks it out of his hand and it crashes in fragments on the floor.)

Auntie

For God's sake, help me keep the peace.
D'you want me up at the next assize?

Balstrode

For peace sake, someone start a song.

Keene

- 18 Old Joe has gone fishing and
Young Joe has gone fishing and
You Know has gone fishing and
found them a shoal.

Auntie

That's right, Ned!

Keene and Auntie then Others

Old Joe has gone, *etc.*

Pull them in han'fuls,
and in canfuls,
and in panfuls.
Bring them in sweetly,
gut them completely,
pack them up neatly,
sell them discreetly,
oh, haul a-way!

*(Peter comes into the round, upsetting
its course.)*

Peter

When I had gone fishing
when He had gone fishing
when You Know'd gone fishing
we found us Davy Jones.
Bring him in with horror!
Bring him in with terror!
And bring him in with sorrow!
Oh, haul a-way.

(The others recover.)

All

Old Joe has gone fishing, *etc.*

*(At the climax of the round the door opens to
admit Ellen Orford, the boy, and the carrier.
All three are soaking, muddy, and bedraggled.)*

Hobson

The bridge is down, we half swam over.

Keene

And your cart? Is it seaworthy?

*(The women go to Ellen and the boy. Auntie
fusses over them.)*

Ellen

We're chilled to the bone.

Boles (to Ellen)

Serves you right, woman.

Auntie

My dear, there's brandy and hot water to
spare.

Nieces

Let's look at the boy.

Ellen (rising)

Let him be.

Nieces (admiring)

Nice sweet thing!

Ellen (protecting him)

Not for such as you.

Peter

Let's go. You ready?

Auntie

Let them warm up, they've been half
drowned.

Peter

Time to get off.

Auntie

Your hut's washed away.

Peter

Only the cliff. Young prentice, come!

(The boy hesitates, Ellen leads him to Peter.)

Ellen

Goodbye, my dear, God bless you.
Peter will take you home.

All

Home! Do you call that home!

*(Peter takes the boy out the door into the
howling storm.)*

(Curtain.)

ACT TWO

19 Interlude III

Scene 1

Scene as in Act One. The street, some weeks later. A fine sunny morning with church bells ringing. Ellen and the boy, John, enter. Ellen is carrying a work-basket. She sits down between a boat and a breakwater and takes her knitting from the basket. One or two late-comers cross and hurry into the church.

Ellen

20 Glitter of waves
and glitter of sunlight
bid us rejoice
and lift our hearts on high.
Man alone
has a soul to save,
and goes to church
to worship on a Sunday.
Shall we not go to church this Sunday
but do our knitting by the sea?
I'll do the work, you talk.

(In church the hymn starts.)

Chorus of Townspeople (off)

Now that the daylight fills the sky
we lift our hearts to God on high
that he in all we do or say
would keep us free from harm to-day.

Ellen

Nothing to tell me,
nothing to say? Then shall I
tell you what your life was like?
See if I'm right. I think
you liked your workhouse with its grave,
empty look. Perhaps you weren't
so unhappy in your loneliness?
When first I started teaching
the life at school to me
seem'd bleak and empty...
But soon I found a way of knowing children,
found the woes of little people
hurt more, but are more simple.

(She goes on with her work. John says nothing.)

Chorus of Townspeople (off)

May he restrain our tongues from strife
shield from anger's din our life

and guard with watchful care our eyes
from earth's absorbing vanities.
So we, when this day's work is done
and shades of night return once more. Amen!

Ellen

John, you may have heard the stories
of the prentice Peter had before.
But when you came,
I said: Now this is where we
make a new start.
Ev'ry day I pray it may be so.

Rector (off)

Wherefore, I pray and beseech you, as many
as are here present, to accompany me with
a pure heart and humble voice, saying
after me...

Rector and Chorus of Townspeople (off)

Almighty and most merciful Father, we have
erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost
sheep. And we have done these things which
we ought not to have done. And grant, O most
merciful Father...

Ellen

There's a tear in your coat. Was that done
before you came? Badly torn.
That was done recently.
Take your hand away.
Your neck, is it?
John, what are you trying to hide?

Rector (off)

O Lord, open Thou our lips.

Chorus of Townspeople (off)

And our mouth shall show forth Thy praise.

Rector (off)

O God, make speed to save us.

Chorus of Townspeople (off)

O Lord, make haste to help us.

(Ellen undoes the neck of his shirt.)

Ellen

A bruise... Well, it's begun!

Rector (off)

Glory be to the Father and to the Son.

Chorus of Townspeople (*off*)

And to the Holy Ghost.

Rector (*off*)

As it was in the beginning, is now...

Ellen

Child, you're not too young to know
where roots of sorrow are.
Innocent you've learn'd how near
life is to torture!

Rector (*off*)

Praise ye the Lord!

Chorus of Townspeople (*off*)

The Lord's name be praised.

Ellen

21 Let this be a holiday,
full of peace and quietness
while the treason of the waves
glitters like love.

Storm and all its terrors are
nothing to the heart's despair.
After the storm will come a sleep
like oceans deep.

Chorus of Townspeople (*off*)

O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord.
O ye Sun and Moon, bless ye the Lord.
O ye Winds of God, bless ye the Lord.
Praise Him and magnify Him for ever.

(*Peter Grimes enters.*)

O ye Light and Darkness, bless ye the Lord.
O ye Nights and Days, bless ye the Lord.
O ye Lightnings and Clouds, bless ye the Lord.
Praise Him and magnify Him for ever.

Peter

Come boy!

Ellen

Peter, what for?

Peter

I've seen a shoal. I need his help.

Chorus of Townspeople (*off*)

O ye Wells, bless ye the Lord.
O ye Seas and Floods, bless the Lord.

O ye Whales and all that move in the waters.
Praise Him and magnify Him for ever.

Ellen

But if there were then all the boats
would fast be launching.

Peter

I can see the shoals
to which the rest are blind.

Chorus of Townspeople (*off*)

O all ye Fowls of the air, bless ye the Lord.
O all ye Beasts and Cattle, bless ye the Lord.
O ye Children of Men, bless ye the Lord.
Praise Him and magnify Him for ever.

Ellen

This is a Sunday, his day of rest!

Peter

This is whatever day I say it is!
Come boy!

Ellen

You and John have fished all week,
night and day without a break,
painting boat, mending nets, cleaning fish.
Now let him rest.

Chorus of Townspeople (*off*)

O ye Servants of the Lord, bless ye the Lord.
O ye holy and humble, bless ye the Lord.
Ananias, Azarias, Misael,
bless ye the Lord.
Praise Him and magnify Him for ever.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and
ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Peter

Come boy!

Ellen

But your bargain...

Peter

My bargain?

Ellen

His weekly rest.

Peter

He works for me, leave him alone, he's mine!

Ellen

Hush, Peter!

- 22 This unrelenting work,
this grey, unresting industry,
what aim, what future,
what peace will your hard profits buy?

Peter

Buy us a home, buy us respect
and buy us freedom from pain
of grinning at gossip's tales.
Believe in me, we shall be free!

Chorus of Townspeople *(off)*

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ His only Son,
our Lord, who was conceived...

Ellen

Peter, tell me one thing,
where the youngster got that ugly bruise?

Peter

Out of the hurly burly!

Ellen

O your ways are hard
and rough beyond his days!
Peter, were we right in what we planned
to do? Were we right, were we right?

Peter

Take away your hand!
My only hope depends on you.
If you take it away, what's left?

Ellen

Were we mistaken when we schemed
to solve your life by lonely toil?

Peter

Wrong to plan!
Wrong to try!
Wrong to live!
Right to die!

Ellen

Were we mistaken when we dreamed
that we'd come through and all be well?

Peter

Wrong to struggle!
Wrong to hope!
Then the Borough's
right again!

Ellen

Peter! You cannot buy your peace.
You'll never stop the gossips' talk
with all the fish from out the sea.
We were mistaken to have dreamed...
Peter! We've failed, we've failed!

*(Peter cries out as if in agony. Then strikes her.
The basket falls.)*

Chorus of Townspeople

Amen!

Peter

So be it! And God have mercy upon me!

*(The boy runs from him. Peter follows. Ellen
goes out the other way, weeping. Behind
closed doors and half-open windows
neighbours have been watching. Three
now emerge. First Auntie, then Ned Keene,
finally Boles.)*

CD 2**Auntie**

- 1 Fool to let it come to this!
Wasting pity, squand'ring tears.

Keene

See the glitter in his eyes!
Grimes is at his exercise!

Boles

What he fears is that the Lord
follows with a flaming sword!

Auntie

You see all thro' crazy eyes...

All

... Grimes is at his exercise!

Boles

Where's the pastor of this flock?
Where's the guardian shepherd's hook?

All three

Parson, lawyer, all at prayers!

*(After the Benediction in church, the
congregation emerges.)*

Now the church parade begins.
Fresh beginning for fresh sins.
Ogling with a pious gaze,
each one's at his exercise.

(Doctor Crabbe comes first.)

Auntie

Doctor!

Keene

Leave him out of it!

Mrs. Sedley What is it?

Keene

Private business!

Mrs. Sedley

I heard two voices during psalms.
One was Grimes, and one more calm.

Boles

While you worshipped idols there,
the Devil had his Sabbath here.

Mrs. Sedley

Maltreating that poor boy again!

Balstrode

Grimes is weatherwise and skilled
in the practice of his trade.
Let him be. Let us forget
what slander can invent.

Chorus of Townspeople

What is it?

Auntie, Boles and Keene

What do you suppose?
Grimes is at his exercise.

(As people come out two by two, they circulate the village green singing their couplets as they reach the centre. First come Swallow and a fellow lawyer.)

Chorus of Townspeople

- 2 What is it? What do you suppose?
Grimes is at his exercise.

A Lawyer

Dullards build their self-esteem
by inventing cruelties.

Swallow

Even so, the law restrains
too impetuous enterprise.

Fisherwoman

Fishing is a lonely trade,
single men have much to bear.

Nieces

If a man's work cannot be made decent,
let him stay ashore.

Rector

My flock — ah, what a weight is this,
my burden pastoral.

Mrs. Sedley

But what a dang'rous faith is this
that gives souls equality!

(Balstrode pauses by Keene as he walks round.)

Balstrode

When the Borough gossip starts
somebody will suffer.

Chorus of Townspeople

What is it? What do you suppose?
Grimes is at his exercise.
Grimes! Grimes!

(During the hubbub Boles climbs a little way up the steps of the Moot Hall. Keene tries to stop him.)

Boles

- 3 People!... No! I will speak!...
This thing concerns you all.

Chorus of Townspeople

(crowding round Boles)
Whoever's guilty gets the rap.

Balstrode

Tub-thumping.

Boles

This pretence system's
uncivilised and unchristian.

Balstrode

Something of the sort befits
brats conceived outside the sheets.

Chorus of Townspeople

The Borough keeps its standards up.

Boles

Where's the parson in his black?
Is he here or is he not
to guide a sinful, straying flock?

Chorus of Townspeople

Where? Where's the parson?

Rector

Is it my business?

Boles

Your business? To ignore
growing at your door
evils, like your fancy flowers?

Chorus of Townspeople

Evils!

Rector

Calm now! Tell me what it is.

(Ellen comes in. She is met by Auntie who has picked up Ellen's abandoned basket and its contents.)

Auntie

Ellen dear, see I've gather'd
all your things. Come rest inside!

Boles and Chorus of Townspeople

She can tell you, Ellen Orford.

Chorus of Townspeople

Ellen Orford!

Boles

She help'd him in his cruel games.

Chorus of Townspeople

She help'd him!

Rector *(holding his hand up for silence)*

Ellen, please!

Ellen

What am I to do?

Boles and Chorus of Townspeople

Speak out in the name of the Lord!

Ellen

4 We plann'd that their lives
should have a new start,
that I, as a friend could
make the plan work
by bringing comfort where
their lives were stark.

Rector

You plann'd to be worldly-wise
but your souls were dark.

Ellen

We plann'd this time to
care for the boy...

Mrs. Sedley

O little care you for the prentice
or his welfare!

Ellen

... To save him from danger
and hardship sore...

Boles

Call it danger, call it harship
or plain murder!

Ellen

...And mending his clothes and giving him
regular meals.

Keene

But thanks to flinty hearts
e'en quacks can make a profit!

Swallow

You planned to heal sick souls
with bodily care!

Nieces

Perhaps his clothes you mended
but you work his bones bare!

Auntie

You meant just to be kind
and avert fear!

Balstrode

You interfering gossips,
this is not your business!

Ellen

O pity those who try to bring
a shadow'd life into the sun.

Hobson

!Pity the boy!

Ellen, Auntie and Balstrode

!O hard hearts!

Chorus

Who lets us down must take the rap!

The Borough keeps its standards up.

All (*except Ellen, Auntie and Balstrode*)

Ha-ha! Tried to be kind!

Murder!

Ha-ha! Tried to be kind and to help!

Murder!

Rector

- [5] Swallow! Shall we go and see Grimes in his hut?

Swallow

Popular feeling's rising.

Rector

Balstrode, I'd like you to come.

Balstrode

I warn you, we shall waste our time.

Rector

I'd like your presence just the same.

Mrs. Sedley

Little do the suspects know,

I've the evidence. I've a clue.

Nieces, Keene, Hobson and Chorus of Townspeople

Now we will find out the worst!

Swallow (*to the Nieces*)

No ragtail, no bobtail if you please!

Boles (*pushes the Nieces away*)

Back to the gutter — you keep out of this.

Rector

Only the men, the women stay!

Swallow

Carter Hobson, fetch the drum.

Summon the Borough to Grimes's hut.

Mrs. Sedley, Boles, Rector, Keene, Chorus of Townspeople

To Grimes's hut!

To Grimes's hut!

(Swallow and the Rector lead the way.

Balstrode stays hesitating.)

Mrs Sedley, Boles, Rector, Keene, Swallow, Chorus of Townspeople

- [6] Now is gossip put on trial,
now the rumours either fail
or are shouted in the wind,
sweeping furious thro' the land.
Now the liars shiver, for
now if they've cheated we shall know!
We shall strike and strike to kill
at the slander or the sin!

(Ellen motions to Balstrode to follow the procession.)

Now the whisperers stand out
now confronted by the fact,
Bring the branding iron and knife:
what's done now is done for life.
Now...

(Auntie, the Nieces and Ellen remain.)

Nieces

- [7] From the gutter, why should we
trouble at their ribaldries?

Auntie

And shall we be ashamed because
we comfort men from ugliness?

All

Do we smile or do we weep
or wait quietly till they sleep?

Auntie

When in storm they shelter here
and we smoothe their fears away.

!

!

Nieces

!We know they'll whistle their good-byes
!next fine day and put to sea.

!

!

Ellen

!On the manly calendar
!we only mark heroic days.

All

Do we smile or do we weep
or wait quietly till they sleep?

Ellen

They are children when they weep,
we are mothers when they strive.
Schooling our own hearts to keep
the bitter treasure of their love.

All

Do we smile or do we weep
or wait quietly till they sleep?

(Curtain.)

8 Interlude IV (Passacaglia)**Scene 2**

Grimes's hut is an upturned boat. It is on the whole shipshape, though bare and forbidding. Ropes coiled, nets, kegs, and casks furnish the place. It is lighted by a skylight. There are two doors, one (back center) opens on the cliff, the other, downstage, opens on the road. The boy staggers into the room as if thrust from behind. Peter follows, in a towering rage. He pulls down the boy's fishing clothes which were neatly stacked on a shelf.

Peter

- 9** Go there! Here's your sea boots.
Take those bright and fancy buckles off your feet.
There's your oilskin and sou'wester.
Stir your pins, we must get ready!
There's the jersey that she knitted,
with the anchor that she patterned.
(He throws the clothes to the boy. They fall on the floor around him.)
I'll tear the collar off your neck.

(The boy is crying silently. Peter shakes his shoulder.)

Steady! Don't take fright, boy! Stop!
(Peter opens the cliff-side door and looks out.)
Look. Now is our chance!
The whole sea's boiling! Get the nets!
Come, boy!
They listen to money
these Boro' gossips,
listen to money,
only to money.

I'll fish the sea dry,
flood the market.
Now is our chance to get a good catch,
get money to choke
down rumour's throat!
I will set up
with house and home and shop.
I'll marry Ellen.
I'll...

(He turns to see the boy still sitting on the rope coil, weeping. He tears off his coat and throws the jersey at him.)

Coat off! Jersey on!
My boy, we're going to sea!
(He gives the boy a shove, which knocks him over; he lies sobbing miserably.)
In dreams I've built myself some kindlier home
warm in my heart and in a golden calm,
where there'll be no more fear and no
more storm.

And she will soon forget her schoolhouse ways
forget the labour of those weary days,
wrapp'd round in kindness like September haze.

The learned at their books have no more store
of wisdom than we'd close behind our door.
Compar'd with us the rich man would be poor.

I've seen in stars the life that we might share:
fruit in the garden, children by the shore,
a whiten'd doorstep, and a woman's care.

But dreaming builds what dreaming can disown.
Dead fingers stretch themselves to tear it down.
I hear those voices that will not be drowned.

Calling, there is no stone
in earth's thickness to make a home,
that you can build with and remain alone.

(Hobson's drum can be heard in the distance. Peter doesn't notice.)

Sometimes I see that boy here in this hut.
His eyes are on me as they were that evil day,
in harbour still and deep.

Boles, Rector, Swallow, Keene, Chorus of Townspeople (off)

- 10** Now!... Now!...

(Peter goes to the street door and looks out.)

Peter

There's an odd procession here.
 Parson and Swallow coming near.
 Wait! You've been talking!
 You and that bitch were gossiping.
 What lies have you been telling?
 The Borough's climbing up the hill
 to get me. Me! Oh, I'm not scared.
 I'll send them off with a flea in their ear.
 I'll show them. Grimes ahoy!

Grimes ahoy!

Boles, Rector, Swallow, Keene, Chorus of Townspeople (off)

...Or are shouted in the wind,
 weeping furious thro' the land.
 Now!

Peter

You sit there watching me
 and you're the cause of everything.
 Your eyes, like his, are watching me
 with an idiot's drooling gaze!

Boles, Rector, Swallow, Keene, Chorus of Townspeople (off)

... Now confronted by the fact.
 Bring the branding iron and knife,
 what's done now is done for life!

Peter

Will you move
 or must I make you dance!
 Step boldly! For here's the way we go to sea,
 down the cliff to find that shoal
 that's boiling in the sea!

Boles, Rector, Swallow, Keene, Chorus of Townspeople (off)

Now the liars shiver, for
 now if they've cheated we shall know.
 We shall strike and strike to kill
 at the slander or the sin.

(The boy climbs through the cliff door.)

Peter

Careful, or you'll break your neck!
 Down the cliff-side to the deck!
 I'll pitch the stuff down. Come on!...
 Now, shut your eyes and down you go!

Boles, Rector, Swallow, Keene, Chorus of Townspeople (off)

Now!

(There is a knocking at the other door. Peter turns towards it, then retreats. Meanwhile the

boy climbs out. While Peter is between the two doors the boy screams and falls. Peter runs to the cliff door, feels for his grip, and then swings after him. The cliff-side door is open. The street door still resounds with the Rector's knock. Then it opens and the Rector puts his head round the door.)

Rector

ii Peter Grimes! Nobody here?

Swallow

What about the other door?

(They go and look out.)

Rector

Was this a recent landslide?

Swallow

Yes.

Rector

It makes almost a precipice.
 How deep?

Swallow

Say forty feet.

Rector

Dangerous to leave the door open!

Keene

He used to keep his boat down there.
 Maybe they've both gone fishing.

Rector

Yet his hut is reasonably kept.
 Here's order, here's skill.

Swallow

The whole affair gives Boro' talk its,
 shall I say, quietus? Here we come pell-mell,
 expecting to find out we know not what.
 But all we find is a neat and empty hut.
 Gentlemen, take this to your wives:
 less interference in our private lives.

Rector

There's no point certainly in staying here,
 and will the last to go please close the door.

(They all leave except Balstrode, who hesitates, looks round the hut, sees the boy's Sunday clothes lying around, examines them,

then goes to the path door to shut it. He goes up to the cliff-side door, looks out, and hurriedly climbs down the way Peter and the boy went. Curtain.)

ACT THREE

12 Interlude V

Scene 1

Scene as in Act One, a few days later. It is a summer evening. One of the season's subscription dances is taking place in the Moot Hall, which is brightly lit and from which we can hear the band playing. "The Boar" too is brightly lit and, there is a regular passage — of the males, at any rate — between the Moot Hall and the inn. There is a squeal and the First Niece scampers down the exterior staircase of the Moot Hall closely followed by Swallow. A Barn Dance is being played in the Moot Hall.

Swallow (to the First Niece)

- 13 Assign your prettiness to me,
I'll seal the deed and take no fee;
my signature, your graceful mark
are witness'd by the abetting dark.

(The Second Niece joins the First arm in arm.)

Both Nieces

Together we are safe
as any wedded wife
for safety in number lies.
A man is always lighter,
his conversation brighter,
provided that the tête-à-tête's in threes.

Swallow

Assign your prettiness to me,
I'll call it real property.
Your sister shan't insist upon
her stay of execution.

Nieces

Save us from lonely men,
they're like a broody hen
with habits but with no ideas.
But in their choice of pleasures
they show their coloured feathers,
provided that the tête-à-tête's in threes.

Swallow

I shall take steps to change her mind;
she has first option on my love.
If my appeal should be ignored
I'll take it to the House of Lords!

Nieces

O pairing's all to blame
for awkwardness and shame,
and all these manly sighs and tears,
which wouldn't be expended
if people condescended
always to have their tête-à-tête's in threes!

Swallow

Assign your prettiness to me,
we'll make an absolute decree
of quiet enjoyment which you'll bless
by sending sister somewhere else!

Second Niece

Ned Keene is chasing me, gives me no peace!

Swallow

He went to The Boar to have a glass.
Sister and I will join him there.
If you don't want Ned you'd better stay here.
(He opens the inn door.)

First Niece (aside to Swallow)

They're all watching. I must wait
till Auntie's turned her back.
(She runs away to join her sister and leaves Swallow holding the door open.)

Swallow

- 14 Pah!

(He goes into "The Boar" alone. The sisters are halfway upstairs when Ned Keene comes out of the Moot Hall at the top of the stairs. They fly, giggling, and hide behind one of the boats on the shore.)

Keene (calling after them)

Ahoy!

(He is halfway to their hiding-place when Mrs. Sedley stops him. A slow Waltz starts from the Moot Hall.)

Mrs. Sedley

Mr. Keene! Can you spare a moment?
I've something to say that's more than urgent!
About Peter Grimes and that boy!
Neither of them was seen yesterday.
It's more than suspicion now, it's fact!
The boy's disappeared.

Keene

Do you expect me to act
like a Bow Street runner or a constable?

Mrs. Sedley

At least you can trouble to hear
what I've got to say!
For two days I've kept my eyes open;
for two days I've said nothing.
Only watch'd and taken notes,
piec'd clue to clue, and bit by bit
reconstructed all the crime.
Everything points to Peter Grimes:
he is the murderer!

Keene

Old woman, you're far too ready
to yell "Blue murder!"
If people poke their noses into others'
business —
No! They won't get me to help them.
They'll find there's merry hell to pay!
You just tell me where's the body?

Mrs. Sedley

In the sea the prentice lies
whom nobody has seen for days!
Murder most foul it is,
eerie I find it.
My skin's a prickly heat,
blood cold behind it!
In midnight's loneliness
and thrilling quiet
the history I trace,
the stifling secret.
Murder most foul it is,
and I'll declare it!

Keene

Are you mad old woman,
or is it too much laudanum?

Mrs. Sedley

Has Peter Grimes been seen?

Keene

He's away.

Mrs. Sedley

And the boy?

Keene

They're fishing, likely.

Mrs. Sedley

Has his boat been seen?

Keene

Why should it?

Mrs. Sedley

His hut's abandoned.

Keene

I'm dry. Good night.

(The Waltz ends. He breaks away from her grasp, goes into "The Boar," and bangs the door after him. Dr. Crabbe, the Rector, and other burgesses emerge from "The Boar." Mrs. Sedley retires into the shadow of the boats. A hornpipe starts from the Moot Hall.)

First Burgess

¹⁵ Come along, Doctor!
(indicating "The Boar")

We're not wanted here, we oldsters.

Burgesses (*variously*)

Good night! It's time for bed.
Good night! Good sirs, good night!
Good night! Good people, good night!

Rector

I look'd in a moment, the company's gay,
with pretty young women and youths on the spree,
so parched like my roses, but now the sun's down
I'll water my roses and leave you the wine!

Burgesses

Good night! Good night!
Good night, good people, good night!

Rector

Good night, Dr. Crabbe, all good friends good night.
Don't let the ladies keep company too late!
My love to the maidens, wish luck to the men!
I'll water my roses and leave you the wine!

(They go out waving.)

Burgesses

Good night! Good night!
Good night, good people, good night!

(The hornpipe fades out. Mrs. Sedley, still in the boat shadow, goes on with her brooding.)

Mrs. Sedley

Crime, which my hobby is
sweetens my thinking;
men who can breach the peace
and kill convention —
so many guilty ghosts,
with stealthy body,
trouble my midnight thoughts...

(Ellen and Balstrode come up slowly from the beach. It is clear they have been in earnest talk. As they approach, Balstrode shines his lantern on the name of the nearest boat: "The Boy Billy." Mrs. Sedley doesn't show herself.)

Ellen

Is the boat in?

Balstrode

Yes! For more than an hour.
Peter seems to have disappeared.
Not in his boat, not in his hut.

Ellen *(holding out the boy's jersey)*

This I found,
down by the tide-mark.

(It is getting dark. To see the garment properly Balstrode holds it to his lantern.)

Balstrode

The boy's!...

Ellen

My broider'd anchor on the chest!

16 Embroidery in childhood was
a luxury of idleness.

A coil of silken thread giving
dreams of a silk and satin life.
Now my broidery affords
the clue whose meaning we avoid!
My hand remembered its old skill —
these stitches tell a curious tale.
I remember I was brooding
on the fantasies of children...
and dreamt that only by wishing
I could bring some silk into their lives.
Now my broidery affords
the clue whose meaning we avoid!

(The jersey is wet. Balstrode wrings the water out.)

Balstrode

We'll find him, maybe give a hand.

Ellen

We have no power to help him now.
We have no power...

Balstrode

We have the power. We have the power.
In the black moment
when your friend suffers
unearthly torment,
we cannot turn our backs.
When horror breaks one heart
all hearts are broken.

Ellen and Balstrode

We shall be there with him, we shall be there.

Balstrode

Nothing to do but wait
since the solution
is beyond life,
beyond dissolution...

(They go out together. Mrs. Sedley goes quickly to the inn door.)

Mrs. Sedley *(calling through the door)*

17 Mr. Swallow, Mr. Swallow!
I want the lawyer Swallow!

Auntie *(coming to the door)*

What do you want?

Mrs. Sedley

I want the lawyer Swallow!

Auntie

He's busy.

Mrs. Sedley

Fetch him please, this is official.
Bus'ness about the Borough criminal.
Please do as I tell you!

Auntie

My customers come here for peace,
for quiet, away from you
and all such nuisances!

Mrs. Sedley

This is an insult!

Auntie

You'll find as long as I am here,
you'll find that I always speak my mind!

Mrs. Sedley

I'll have you know your place,
you baggage!

Auntie

My customers come here for peace,
they take their drink, they take their ease!
As long as I am here,
you'll find that I will speak my mind.

Swallow (*coming out*)

Hi! What's the matter?
Tell me what's the matter.
What is it? What's all this noise about? Hi!

Auntie (*going in and banging door*)

Good night!

Mrs. Sedley (*points dramatically*)

Look!

Swallow

I'm short-sighted, you know.

Mrs. Sedley

Look! It's Grimes's boat, back at last!

Swallow

That's different! Hey!
(*shouting into "The Boar"*)
Is Hobson there?

Hobson (*appearing*)

Ay, ay, sir!

Mrs. Sedley

Good, now things are moving, and about time
too!

Swallow

You're constable of the Borough,
Carter Hobson.

Hobson

Ay, ay, sir!

Swallow

As the mayor,
I ask you to find Peter Grimes!
Take whatever help you need.

Hobson

Now what I claims
is he's out at sea.

Swallow (*points*)

But here's his boat.

Hobson

Oh! We'll send a posse to his hut.

Swallow

If he's not there, you'll search the shore,
the marsh, the fields, the streets, the
Borough.

Hobson

Ay, ay, sir!
(*He goes into "The Boar" hailing.*)

Hey there! Come out and help!
Grimes is around! Hey there!

Mrs. Sedley

Crime, that's my hobby,
is by cities hoarded.
Rarely are country minds
lifted to murder,
the noblest of the crimes
which are my study.
And now the crime is here
and I am ready!

(*Hobson comes out with Boles and other
fishermen. When the news reaches the Moot
Hall and the pub, the people crowd on to the
beach.*)

Chorus of Fishermen and Townspeople

18 Who holds himself apart,
lets his pride rise.
Him who despises us
we'll destroy!

And cruelty becomes
his enterprise.
Him who despises us
we'll destroy!

(*The Nieces, Mrs. Sedley, Boles, Keene, and
Swallow join in.*)

Our curse shall fall on his evil day.
We shall tame his arrogance!
Who holds himself apart, *etc.*
Our curses shall fall on him!
Him who despises us,
we'll destroy!
Ha, ha, ha!

**Swallow, Hobson, Chorus of Fishermen
and Townspeople**

We'll make the murd'rer pay,
we'll make him pay
for his crime!

All

Peter Grimes! Peter Grimes!

(The people scatter in all directions. Curtain.)

19 Interlude VI**Scene 2**

Scene as in Scene 1. Some hours later. The dance is over. Peter is alone by his boat in the changeful light of a cloud-swept moon. There is a distant fog-horn.

Chorus (off)

20 Grimes! Grimes!

Peter

Steady! There you are! Nearly home!
What is home? Calm as deep water.
Where's my home? Deep in calm water.
Water will drink my sorrows dry
and the tide will turn.

Chorus (off)

Grimes!

Peter

Steady! There you are! Nearly home!
The first one died, just died...
The other slipped, and died...
and the third will...
"Accidental circumstances."
Water will drink his sorrows, my sorrows dry,
and the tide will turn.

Chorus (off)

Grimes! Peter Grimes!

Peter

Peter Grimes! Here you are! Here I am!
Hurry, hurry!
Now is gossip put on trial.
Bring the branding iron and knife
for what's done now is done for life!
Come on! Land me!
"Turn the skies back and begin again!"

Chorus (off)

Peter Grimes!

Peter

"Old Joe has gone fishing and
Young Joe has gone fishing and
you'll know who's gone fishing when
you land the next shoal!"

Chorus (off)

Peter Grimes! Grimes!

Peter

Ellen! Give me your hand.
There now, my hope is held by you.
If you leave me alone, if you...
Take away your hand!
The argument's finished,
friendship lost,
gossip is shouting,
everything's said.

Chorus (off)

Peter Grimes!

Peter

To hell with all your mercy!
To hell with your revenge.
And God have mercy upon you!

Chorus (off)

Peter Grimes! Peter Grimes!

Peter

Do you hear them all shouting my name?
D'you hear them?
Old Davy Jones shall answer:
Come home, come home!
Chorus (close at hand)
Peter Grimes! Peter Grimes!

Peter (roaring back at them)

Peter Grimes! Grimes! Peter Grimes!

(Ellen and Balstrode have come in and stand watching. Then Ellen goes up to Peter.)

Ellen

21 Peter, we've come to take you home.
Oh, come home out of this dreadful night.
See, here's Balstrode. Peter, don't you
hear me?

(Peter does not notice her. The voices are now distant.)

Chorus

Peter Grimes! Grimes!
Peter! Peter!

Peter

What harbour shelters peace,
away from tidal waves,
away from storms?
What harbour can embrace

terrors and tragedies?
Her breast is harbour too,
where night is turned to day.

Balstrode (*going up to Peter*)

Come on, I'll help you with the boat.
Sail out till you lose sight of the Moot Hall.
Then sink the boat.

Ellen

No!

Balstrode

D'you hear? Sink her. Goodbye, Peter.

(Together they push the boat down the slope of the shore. Balstrode comes back and leads Ellen away. Dawn comes to the Borough by a gentle sequence of sights and sounds. A candle is lighted and shines through a bare window. A shutter is drawn back. Hobson and his posse meet severally on the green. Some turn home, others go to the boats. Nets are brought down from the houses by fisherwives. Cleaners open the front door of the inn and begin to scrub the step. Dr. Crabbe comes from a confinement case with his black bag. He yawns and stretches. Nods to the cleaners. The Rector comes to early morning prayer. Mrs. Sedley follows. Ned Keene draws the shutters of his shop.)

Chorus

- 22 To those who pass the Borough sounds betray
the cold beginning of another day.
And houses sleeping by the waterside
wake to the measured ripple of the tide.

(Mr. Swallow comes out and speaks to the fishermen.)

Swallow

There's a boat sinking out at sea,
coastguard reports.

Fisherman

Within reach?

Swallow

No.

Fisherman

Let's have a look thro' the glasses.

Chorus

Or measured cadence of the lads who tow
some entered hoy to fix her in their row.
Or hollow sound that from the passing bell
to some departed spirit bids farewell.

(Auntie comes out of the pub door.)

Auntie

What is it?

Boles

Nothing I can see.

Auntie

One of those rumours!

(The Nieces emerge and begin to polish the brasses outside "The Boar.")

All

In ceaseless motion comes and goes the tide
flowing it fills the channel broad and wide.
Then back to sea with strong majestic sweep
it rolls in ebb yet terrible and deep.

(During the chorus the curtain slowly falls.)

*Libretto © Boosey & Hawkes
Music Publishers Limited
All rights reserved*