

Act I

Expanse of scorched grass rising centre to low mound. Gentle slopes down to front and either side of stage. Back an abrupt fall to stage level. Maximum of simplicity and symmetry.

Blazing light.

Very pompier trompe-l'oeil backcloth to represent unbroken plain and sky receding to meet in far distance.

Imbedded up to above her waist in exact centre of mound, WINNIE. About fifty, well preserved, blond for preference, plump, arms and shoulders bare, low bodice, big bosom, pearl necklet. She is discovered sleeping, her arms on the ground before her, her head on her arms. Beside her on ground to her left a capacious black bag, shopping variety, and to her right a collapsible collapsed parasol, beak

*Delicate
L.S.*

of handle emerging from sheath.

To her right and rear, lying asleep on ground, hidden by mound, WILLIE.

Long pause. A bell rings piercingly, say ten seconds, stops. She does not move. Pause. Bell more piercingly, say five seconds. She wakes. Bell stops. She raises her head, gazes front. Long pause. She straightens up, lays her hands flat on ground, throws back her head and gazes at zenith. Long pause.

? WINNIE

△ →

(gazing at zenith). Another heavenly day. (Pause. Head back level, eyes front, pause. She clasps hands to breast, closes eyes. Lips move in inaudible prayer, say ten seconds. Lips still. Hands remain clasped. Low.) For Jesus Christ sake Amen. (Eyes open, hands unclasp, return to mound. Pause. She clasps hands to breast again, closes eyes, lips move again in inaudible addendum, say five seconds. Low.) World without end Amen. (Eyes open, hands unclasp, return to mound. Pause.) Begin, Winnie. (Pause.) Begin your day, Winnie. (Pause. She turns to bag, rummages in it without moving it from its place, brings out toothbrush, rummages again, brings out

flat tube of toothpaste, turns back front, unscrews cap of tube, lays cap on ground, squeezes with difficulty small blob of paste on brush, holds tube in one hand and brushes teeth with other. She turns modestly aside and back to her right to spit out behind mound. In this position her eyes rest on WILLIE. She spits out. She cranes a little further back and down. Loud.) Hoo-oo! (Pause. Louder.) Hoo-oo! (Pause. Tender smile as she turns back front, lays down brush.) Poor Willie – (examines tube, smile off) – running out – (looks for cap) – ah well – (finds cap) – can't be helped – (screws on cap) – just one of those old things – (lays down tube) – another of those old things – (turns towards bag) – just can't be cured – (rummages in bag) – cannot be cured – (brings out small mirror, turns back front) – ah yes – (inspects teeth in mirror) – poor dear Willie – (testing upper front teeth with thumb, indistinctly) – good Lord! – (pulling back upper lip to inspect gums, do.) – good God! – (pulling back corner of mouth, mouth open, do.) – ah well – (other corner, do.) – no worse – (abandons inspection, normal speech) – no better, no worse – (lays down mirror) – no change – (wipes fingers on

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grass) — no pain — (looks for toothbrush) — hardly any — (takes up toothbrush) — great thing that — (examines handle of brush) — nothing like it — (examines handle, reads) — pure . . . what? — (pause) — what? — (lays down brush) — ah yes — (turns towards bag) — poor Willie — (rummages in bag) — no zest — (rummages) — for anything — (brings out spectacles in case) — no interest — (turns back front) — in life — (takes spectacles from case) — poor dear Willie — (lays down case) — sleep for ever — (opens spectacles) — marvellous gift — (puts on spectacles) — nothing to touch it — (looks for toothbrush) — in my opinion — (takes up toothbrush) — always said so — (examines handle of brush) — wish I had it — (examines handle, reads) — genuine . . . pure . . . what? — (lays down brush) — blind next — (takes off spectacles) — ah well — (lays down spectacles) — seen enough — (feels in bodice for handkerchief) — I suppose — (takes out folded handkerchief) — by now — (shakes out handkerchief) — what are those wonderful lines — (wipes one eye) — woe woe is me — (wipes the other) — to see what I see — (looks for spectacles) — ah yes — (takes up spectacles)

Q?

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— wouldn't miss it — (starts polishing spectacles, breathing on lenses) — or would I? — (polishes) — holy light — (polishes) — bob up out of dark — (polishes) — blaze of hellish light. (Stops polishing, raises face to sky, pause, head back level, resumes polishing, stops polishing, cranes back to her right and down.) Hoo-oo! (Pause. Tender smile as she turns back front and resumes polishing. Smile off.) Marvellous gift — (stops polishing, lays down spectacles) — wish I had it — (folds handkerchief) — ah well — (puts handkerchief back in bodice) — can't complain — (looks for spectacles) — no no — (takes up spectacles) — mustn't complain — (holds up spectacles, looks through lens) — so much to be thankful for — (looks through other lens) — no pain — (puts on spectacles) — hardly any — (looks for toothbrush) — wonderful thing that — (takes up toothbrush) — nothing like it — (examines handle of brush) — slight headache sometimes — (examines handle, reads) — guaranteed . . . genuine . . . pure . . . what? — (looks closer) — genuine pure . . . — (takes handkerchief from bodice) — ah yes — (shakes out handkerchief) — occasional mild migraine — (starts wiping

handle of brush — it comes — (wipes) — then
 goes — (wiping mechanically) — ah yes —
 (wiping) — many mercies — (wiping) — great
 mercies — (stops wiping, fixed lost gaze,
 brokenly) — prayers perhaps not for naught —
 (pause, do.) — first thing — (pause, do.) —
 last thing — (head down, resumes wiping, stops
 wiping, head up, calmed, wipes eyes, folds
 handkerchief, puts it back in bodice, examines
 handle of brush, reads) — fully guaranteed . . .
 genuine pure . . . — (looks closer) — genuine
 pure . . . (Takes off spectacles, lays them and
 brush down, gazes before her.) Old things.
 (Pause.) Old eyes. (Long pause.) On, Winnie.
 (She casts about her, sees parasol, considers it
 at length, takes it up and develops from sheath
 a handle of surprising length. Holding butt of
 parasol in right hand she cranes back and down
 to her right to hang over WILLIE.) Hoo-oo!
 (Pause.) Willie! (Pause.) Wonderful gift.
 (She strikes down at him with beak of
 parasol.) Wish I had it. (She strikes again.
 The parasol slips from her grasp and falls
 behind mound. It is immediately restored to
 her by WILLIE's invisible hand.) Thank you,
 dear. (She transfers parasol to left hand, turns

back front and examines right palm.) Damp.
 (Returns parasol to right hand, examines left
 palm.) Ah well, no worse. (Head up,
 cheerfully.) No better, no worse, no change.
 (Pause. Do.) No pain. (Cranes back to look
 down at WILLIE, holding parasol by butt as
 before.) Don't go off on me again now dear
 will you please, I may need you. (Pause.)
 No hurry, no hurry, just don't curl up on me
 again. (Turns back front, lays down parasol,
 examines palms together, wipes them on grass.)
 Perhaps a shade off colour just the same.
 (Turns to bag, rummages in it, brings out
 revolver, holds it up, kisses it rapidly, puts it
 back, rummages, brings out almost empty
 bottle of red medicine, turns back front, looks
 for spectacles, puts them on, reads label.) Loss
 of spirits . . . lack of keenness . . . want of
 appetite . . . infants . . . children . . . adults . . .
 six level . . . tablespoonfuls daily — (head up,
 smile) — the old style! — (smile off, head down,
 reads) — daily . . . before and after . . . meals . . .
 instantaneous . . . (looks closer) . . . improve-
 ment. (Takes off spectacles, lays them down,
 holds up bottle at arm's length to see level,
 unscrews cap, swigs it off head well back, tosses

cap and bottle away in WILLIE's direction. Sound of breaking glass.) Ah that's better! (Turns to bag, rummages in it, brings out lipstick, turns back front, examines lipstick.) Running out. (Looks for spectacles.) Ah well. (Puts on spectacles, looks for mirror.) Musn't complain. (Takes up mirror, starts doing lips.) What is that wonderful line? (Lips.) Oh fleeting joys — (lips) — oh something lasting woe. (Lips. She is interrupted by disturbance from WILLIE. He is sitting up. She lowers lipstick and mirror and cranes back and down to look at him. Pause. Top back of WILLIE's bald head, trickling blood, rises to view above slope, comes to rest. WINNIE pushes up her spectacles. Pause. His hand appears with handkerchief, spreads it on skull, disappears. Pause. The hand appears with boater, club ribbon, settles it on head, rakish angle, disappears. Pause. WINNIE cranes a little further back and down.) Slip on your drawers, dear, before you get singed. (Pause.) No? (Pause.) Oh I see, you still have some of that stuff left. (Pause.) Work it well in, dear. (Pause.) Now the other. (Pause. She turns back front, gazes

She turns
down to
legs

before her. Happy expression.) Oh this is going to be another happy day! (Pause. Happy expression off. She pulls down spectacles and resumes lips. WILLIE opens newspaper, hands invisible. Tops of yellow sheets appear on either side of his head. WINNIE finishes lips, inspects them in mirror held a little further away.) Ensign crimson. (WILLIE turns page. WINNIE lays down lipstick and mirror, turns towards bag.) Pale flag.

WILLIE turns page. WINNIE rummages in bag, brings out small ornate brimless hat with crumpled feather, turns back front, straightens hat, smooths feather, raises it towards head, arrests gesture as WILLIE reads.

WILLIE His Grace and Most Reverend Father in God
Dr Carolus Hunter dead in tub.

Pause.

WINNIE (gazing front, hat in hand, tone of fervent reminiscence). Charlie Hunter! (Pause.) I close my eyes — (she takes off spectacles and does so, hat in one hand, spectacles in other, WILLIE turns page) — and am sitting on his knees again, in the back garden at Borough

Worked lipstick
Romeo

Green, under the horse-beech. (*Pause. She opens eyes, puts on spectacles, fiddles with hat.*) Oh the happy memories!

Pause. She raises hat towards head, arrests gesture as WILLIE reads.

WILLIE Opening for smart youth.

Pause. She raises hat towards head, arrests gesture, takes off spectacles, gazes front, hat in one hand, spectacles in other.

WINNIE My first ball! (*Long pause.*) My second ball! (*Long pause. Closes eyes.*) My first kiss! (*Pause. WILLIE turns page. WINNIE opens eyes.*) A Mr Johnson, or Johnston, or perhaps I should say Johnstone. Very bushy moustache, very tawny. (*Reverently.*) Almost ginger! (*Pause.*) Within a toolshed, though whose I cannot conceive. We had no toolshed and he most certainly had no toolshed. (*Closes eyes.*) I see the piles of pots. (*Pause.*) The tangles of bast. (*Pause.*) The shadows deepening among the rafters.

Pause. She opens eyes, puts on spectacles, raises hat towards head, arrests gesture as WILLIE reads.

WILLIE Wanted bright boy.

Pause. WINNIE puts on hat hurriedly, looks for mirror. WILLIE turns page. WINNIE takes up mirror, inspects hat, lays down mirror, turns towards bag. Paper disappears. WINNIE rummages in bag, brings out magnifying-glass, turns back front, looks for toothbrush. Paper reappears, folded, and begins to fan WILLIE's face, hand invisible. WINNIE takes up toothbrush and examines handle through glass.

WINNIE Fully guaranteed... (*WILLIE stops fanning*) ... genuine pure... (*Pause. WILLIE resumes fanning. WINNIE looks closer, reads.*) Fully guaranteed... (*WILLIE stops fanning*) ... genuine pure... (*Pause. WILLIE resumes fanning. WINNIE lays down glass and brush, takes handkerchief from bodice, takes off and polishes spectacles, puts on spectacles, looks for glass, takes up and polishes glass, lays down glass, looks for brush, takes up brush and wipes handle, lays down brush, puts handkerchief back in bodice, looks for glass, takes up glass, looks for brush, takes up brush and examines handle through glass.*) Fully guaranteed... (*WILLIE stops fanning*) ... genuine pure...

*He looks
down*

(pause, WILLIE resumes fanning) . . . hog's
(WILLIE stops fanning, pause) . . . setae.
(Pause. WINNIE lays down glass and brush,
paper disappears, WINNIE takes off
spectacles, lays them down, gazes front.) Hog's
setae. (Pause.) That is what I find so wonder-
ful, that not a day goes by — (smile) — to speak
in the old style — (smile off) — hardly a day,
without some addition to one's knowledge
however trifling, the addition I mean, provided
one takes the pains. (WILLIE's hand reappears
with a postcard which he examines close to
eyes.) And if for some strange reason no
further pains are possible, why then just close
the eyes — (she does so) — and wait for the
day to come — (opens eyes) — the happy day
to come when flesh melts at so many degrees
and the night of the moon has so many hundred
hours. (Pause.) That is what I find so com-
forting when I lose heart and envy the brute
beast. (Turning towards WILLIE.) I hope
you are taking in — (She sees postcard, bends
lower.) What is that you have there, Willie,
may I see? (She reaches down with hand and
WILLIE hands her card. The hairy forearm
appears above slope, raised in gesture of giving,

Winn
has a 2.2

The happy Day

the hand open to take back, and remains in this
position till card is returned. WINNIE turns
back front and examines card.) Heavens what
are they up to! (She looks for spectacles, puts
them on and examines card.) No but this is just
genuine pure filth! (Examines card.) Make any
nice-minded person want to vomit! (Im-
patience of WILLIE's fingers. She looks for
glass, takes it up and examines card through
glass. Long pause.) What does that creature in
the background think he's doing? (Looks
closer.) Oh no really! (Impatience of fingers.
Last long look. She lays down glass, takes edge
of card between right forefinger and thumb,
averts head, takes nose between left forefinger
and thumb.) Pah! (Drops card.) Take it away!
(WILLIE's arm disappears. His hand reappears
immediately, holding card. WINNIE takes off
spectacles, lays them down, gazes before her.
During what follows WILLIE continues to
relish card, varying angles and distance from
his eyes.) Hog's setae. (Puzzled expression.)
What exactly is a hog? (Pause. Do.) A sow of
course I know, but a hog . . . (Puzzled
expression off.) Oh well what does it matter,
that is what I always say, it will come back,

that is what I find so wonderful, all comes back.
(Pause.) All? (Pause.) No, not all. (Smile.)
 No no. *(Smile off.)* Not quite. *(Pause.)* A part.
(Pause.) Floats up, one fine day, out of the
 blue. *(Pause.)* That is what I find so wonderful.
*(Pause. She turns towards bag. Hand and card
 disappear. She makes to rummage in bag, arrests
 gesture.)* No. *(She turns back front. Smile.)*
 No no. *(Smile off.)* Gently Winnie. *(She
 gazes front. WILLIE's hand reappears, takes
 off hat, disappears with hat.)* What then?
*(Hand reappears, takes handkerchief from
 skull, disappears with handkerchief. Sharply,
 as to one not paying attention.)* Winnie!
(WILLIE bows head out of sight.) What is
 the alternative? *(Pause.)* What is the al —
*(WILLIE blows nose loud and long, head and
 hands invisible. She turns to look at him. Pause.
 Head reappears. Pause. Hand reappears with
 handkerchief, spreads it on skull, disappears.
 Pause. Hand reappears with boater, settles it on
 head, rakish angle, disappears. Pause.)* Would
 I had let you sleep on. *(She turns back front.
 Intermittent plucking at grass, head up and
 down, to animate following.)* Ah yes, if only I
 could bear to be alone, I mean prattle away

with not a soul to hear. *(Pause.)* Not that I
 flatter myself you hear much, no Willie, God
 forbid. *(Pause.)* Days perhaps when you hear
 nothing. *(Pause.)* But days too when you
 answer. *(Pause.)* So that I may say at all times,
 even when you do not answer and perhaps hear
 nothing, Something of this is being heard, I am
 not merely talking to myself, that is in the
 wilderness, a thing I could never bear to do —
 for any length of time. *(Pause.)* That is what
 enables me to go on, go on talking that is.
(Pause.) Whereas if you were to die — *(smile)*
 — to speak in the old style — *(smile off)* — or go
 away and leave me, then what would I do, what
could I do, all day long, I mean between the
 bell for waking and the bell for sleep? *(Pause.)*
 Simply gaze before me with compressed lips.
*(Long pause while she does so. No more
 plucking.)* Not another word as long as I drew
 breath, nothing to break the silence of this
 place. *(Pause.)* Save possibly, now and then,
 every now and then, a sigh into my looking-
 glass. *(Pause.)* Or a brief . . . gale of laughter,
 should I happen to see the old joke again.
*(Pause. Smile appears, broadens and seems
 about to culminate in laugh when suddenly*

replaced by expression of anxiety.) My hair!
 (Pause.) Did I brush and comb my hair?
 (Pause.) I may have done. (Pause.) Normally
 I do. (Pause.) There is so little one *can* do.
 (Pause.) One does it all. (Pause.) All one can.
 (Pause.) Tis only human. (Pause.) Human
 nature. (She begins to inspect mound, looks
 up.) Human weakness. (She resumes inspection
 of mound, looks up.) Natural weakness. (She
 resumes inspection of mound.) I see no comb.
 (Inspects.) Nor any hairbrush. (Looks up.
 Puzzled expression. She turns to bag, rummages
 in it.) The comb is here. (Back front. Puzzled
 expression. Back to bag. Rummages.) The
 brush is here. (Back front. Puzzled expression.)
 Perhaps I put them back, after use. (Pause.
 Do.) But normally I do not put things back,
 after use, no, I leave them lying about and put
 them back all together, at the end of the day.
 (Smile.) To speak in the old style. (Pause.)
 The sweet old style. (Smile off.) And yet
 . . . I seem . . . to remember . . . (Suddenly
 careless.) Oh well, what does it matter, that
 is what I always say, I shall simply brush and
 comb them later on, purely and simply, I have
 the whole — (Pause. Puzzled.) Them? (Pause.)

Or it? (Pause.) Brush and comb it? (Pause.)
 Sounds improper somehow. (Pause. Turning a
 little towards WILLIE.) What would you say,
 Willie? (Pause. Turning a little further.) What
 would you say, Willie, speaking of your hair,
 them or it? (Pause.) The hair on your head, I
 mean. (Pause. Turning a little further.) The
 hair on your head, Willie, what would you say
 speaking of the hair on your head, them or it?
 Long pause.

WILLIE It.

WINNIE (turning back front, joyful). Oh you are going
 to talk to me today, this is going to be a happy
 day! (Pause. Joy off.) Another happy day.
 (Pause.) Ah well, where was I, my hair, yes,
 later on, I shall be thankful for it later on.
 (Pause.) I have my — (raises hands to hat) — yes,
 on, my hat on — (lowers hands) — I cannot take
 it off now. (Pause.) To think there are times
 one cannot take off one's hat, not if one's life
 were at stake. Times one cannot put it on, times
 one cannot take it off. (Pause.) How often I
 have said, Put on your hat now, Winnie, there
 is nothing else for it, take off your hat now,
 Winnie, like a good girl, it will do you good,

and did not. (Pause.) Could not. (Pause. *She raises hand, frees a strand of hair from under hat, draws it towards eye, squints at it, lets it go, hand down.*) Golden you called it, that day, when the last guest was gone — (*hand up in gesture of raising a glass*) — to your golden . . . may it never . . . (*voice breaks*) . . . may it never . . . (*Hand down. Head down. Pause. Low.*) That day. (Pause. *Do.*) What day? (Pause. *Head up. Normal voice.*) What now? (Pause.) Words fail, there are times when even they fail. (*Turning a little towards WILLIE.*) Is that not so, Willie? (Pause. *Turning a little further.*) Is not that so, Willie, that even words fail, at times? (Pause. *Back front.*) What is one to do then, until they come again? Brush and comb the hair, if it has not been done, or if there is some doubt, trim the nails if they are in need of trimming, these things tide one over. (Pause.) That is what I mean. (Pause.) That is all I mean. (Pause.) That is what I find so wonderful, that not a day goes by — (*smile*) — to speak in the old style — (*smile off*) — without some blessing — (*WILLIE collapses behind slope, his head disappears, WINNIE turns towards event*) — in disguise. (*She cranes*

back and down.) Go back into your hole now, Willie, you've exposed yourself enough. (Pause.) Do as I say, Willie, don't lie sprawling there in this hellish sun, go back into your hole. (Pause.) Go on now, Willie. (*WILLIE invisible starts crawling left towards hole.*) — That's the man. (*She follows his progress with her eyes.*) Not head first, stupid, how are you going to turn? (Pause.) That's it . . . right round . . . now . . . back in. (Pause.) Oh I know it is not easy, dear, crawling backwards, but it is rewarding in the end. (Pause.) You have left your vaseline behind. (*She watches as he crawls back for vaseline.*) The lid! (*She watches as he crawls back towards hole. Irritated.*) Not head first, I tell you! (Pause.) More to the right. (Pause.) The right, I said. (Pause. *Irritated.*) Keep your tail down, can't you! (Pause.) Now. (Pause.) There! (*All these directions loud. Now in her normal voice, still turned towards him.*) Can you hear me? (Pause.) I beseech you, Willie, just yes or no, can you hear me, just yes or nothing.

Pause.

WILLIE Yes.

WINNIE (*turning front, same voice*). And now?

WILLIE (*irritated*). Yes.

WINNIE (*less loud*). And now?

WILLIE (*more irritated*). Yes.

WINNIE (*still less loud*). And now? (*A little louder.*)
And now?

WILLIE (*violently*). Yes!

WINNIE (*same voice*). Fear no more the heat o' the sun.
(*Pause.*) Did you hear that?

WILLIE (*irritated*). Yes.

WINNIE (*same voice*). What? (*Pause.*) What?

WILLIE (*more irritated*). Fear no more.

Pause.

WINNIE (*same voice*). No more what? (*Pause.*) Fear
no more what?

WILLIE (*violently*). Fear no more!

WINNIE (*normal voice, gabbled*). Bless you Willie I do
appreciate your goodness I know what an
effort it costs you, now you may relax I shall
not trouble you again unless I am obliged to, by

that I mean unless I come to the end of my own
resources which is most unlikely, just to know
that in theory you can hear me even though in
fact you don't is all I need, just to feel you
there within earshot and conceivably on the
qui vive is all I ask, not to say anything I would
not wish you to hear or liable to cause you
pain, not to be just babbling away on
trust as it is were not knowing and something
gnawing at me. (*Pause for breath.*) Doubt.
(*Places index and second finger on heart area,*
moves them about, brings them to rest.) Here.
(*Moves them slightly.*) Abouts. (*Hand away.*)
Oh no doubt the time will come when before
I can utter a word I must make sure you heard
the one that went before and then no doubt
another come another time when I must learn
to talk to myself a thing I could never bear to
do such wilderness. (*Pause.*) Or gaze before me
with compressed lips. (*She does so.*) All day
long. (*Gaze and lips again.*) No. (*Smile.*) No
no. (*Smile off.*) There is of course the bag.
(*Turns towards it.*) There will always be the
bag. (*Back front.*) Yes, I suppose so. (*Pause.*)
Even when you are gone, Willie. (*She turns a*
little towards him.) You are going, Willie, aren't