



## *Vinegar Tom* (Scenes 1-7)

by Caryl Churchill

This file contains a downloaded copy of the first seven scenes from Caryl Churchill's *Vinegar Tom*. The play was written for Monstrous Regiment, who produced and toured it from October 1976 to June 1977. Further information about the production, including audio clips from Helen Glavin's music for the show, is provided in its Production page on this website.

Altogether there are twenty-one scenes in the play. A copy of the complete script, as performed by Monstrous Regiment, is held in the company's archive at the V&A's Theatre and Performance Archives.

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# Vinegar Tom

Caryl Churchill

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



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**FOR PRODUCTION ENQUIRIES**

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[Info@SamuelFrench.com](mailto:Info@SamuelFrench.com)

1-866-598-8449

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[Theatre@SamuelFrench-London.co.uk](mailto:Theatre@SamuelFrench-London.co.uk)

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*Vinegar Tom* was written for Monstrous Regiment and was first presented at the Humberside Theatre, Hull, on 12 October 1976 with the following cast:

JOAN ..... Mary McCusker  
SUSAN..... Sue Todd  
ALICE ..... Gillian Hanna  
GOODY ..... Helen Glavin  
BETTY ..... Josefina Cupido  
MARGERY..... Linda Broughton  
ELLEN..... Chris Bowler  
JACK..... Ian Blower  
MAN, DOCTOR, BELLRINGER,  
PACKER ..... Roger Allam  
KRAMER and  
SPRENGER ..... Chris Bowler and Mary McCusker

Directed by Pam Brighton  
Designed by Andrea Montag  
Music by Helen Glavin

# VINEGAR TOM

## SCENE ONE

MAN. Am I the devil?

ALICE. What, sweet?

MAN. I'm the devil. Man in black, they say, they always say, a man in black met me in the night, took me into the thicket and made me commit uncleanness unspeakable.

ALICE. I've seen men in black that's no devils unless clergy and gentlemen are devils.

MAN. Have I not got great burning eyes then?

ALICE. Bright enough eyes.

MAN. Is my body not rough and hairy?

ALICE. I don't like a man too smooth.

MAN. Am I not ice cold?

ALICE. In a ditch in November.

MAN. Didn't I lie on you so heavy I took your breath? Didn't the enormous size of me terrify you?

ALICE. It seemed a fair size like other men's.

MAN. Didn't it hurt you? Are you saying I didn't hurt you?

ALICE. You don't need be the devil, I been hurt by men. Let me go now, you're hurting my shoulder.

MAN. What it is, you didn't see my feet.

ALICE. You never took off your shoes. Take off your shoes if your feet's cloven.

MAN. If you come with me and give me body and soul, you'll never want in this world.

ALICE. Are you saying that as a man?

MAN. Am I saying it as the devil?

ALICE. If you're saying it as a man I'll go with you. There's no one round here knows me going to marry me. There's no way I'll get money. I've a child, mind, I'll not leave the child.

MAN. Has it a father?

ALICE. No, never had.

MAN. So you think that was no sin we did?

ALICE. If it was I don't care.

MAN. Don't say that.

ALICE. You'd say worse living here. Any time I'm happy someone says it's a sin.

MAN. There's some in London say there's no sin. Each man has his own religion nearly, or none at all, and there's women speak out too. They smoke and curse in the tavern and they say flesh is no sin for they are God themselves and can't sin. The men and women lie together and say that's bliss and that's heaven and that's no sin. I believe it for there's such changes.

ALICE. I'd like to go to London and hear them.

MAN. But then I believe with Calvin that few are saved and I am damned utterly. Then I think if I'm damned anyway I might as well sin to make it worthwhile. But I'm afraid to die. I'm afraid of the torture after. One of my family was burnt for a Catholic and they all changed to Protestant and one burnt for that too. I wish I was a Catholic and could confess my sins and burn them away in candles. I believe it all in turn and all at once.

ALICE. Would you take me to London? I've nothing to keep me here except my mother and I'd leave her.

MAN. You don't think I'm sent you by the devil? Sometimes I think the devil has me. And then I think there is no devil. And then I think the devil would make me think there was no devil.

ALICE. I'll never get away from here if you don't take me.

MAN. Will you do everything I say, like a witch with the devil her master?

ALICE. I'll do like a wife with a husband her master and that's enough for man or devil.

MAN. Will you kiss my arse like the devil makes his witches?

ALICE. I'll do what gives us pleasure. Was I good just now?

MAN. In Scotland I saw a witch burnt.

ALICE. Did you? A real witch? Was she a real one?

MAN. She was really burnt for one.

ALICE. Did the spirits fly out of her like black bats? Did the devil make the sky go dark? I've heard plenty tales of witches and I've heard some called witch, there's one in the next village some say and others say not, but she's nothing to see. Did she fly at night on a stick? Did you see her flying?

MAN. I saw her burnt.

ALICE. Tell then. What did she say?

MAN. She couldn't speak, I think. They'd been questioning her. There's wrenching the head with a cord. She came to the stake in a cart and men lifted her out, and the stake held her up when she was tied. She'd been in the



boots you see that break the bones.

ALICE. And wood was put round? And a fire lit just like lighting a fire? Oh, I'd have shrieked, I cry the least thing.

MAN. She did shriek.

ALICE. I long to see that. But I might hide my face. Did you hide your face?

MAN. No, I saw it.

ALICE. Did you like seeing it then?

MAN. I may have done.

ALICE. Will you take me with you, to London, to Scotland? Nothing happens here.

MAN. Take you with me?

ALICE. Please, I'd be no trouble.

MAN. A whore? Take a whore with me?

ALICE. I'm not that.

MAN. What are you then? What name would you put to yourself? You're not a wife or a widow. You're not a virgin. Tell me a name for what you are.

ALICE. You're not going? Stay a bit.

MAN. I've stayed too long. I'm cold. The devil's cold. Back to my warm fire, eh?

ALICE. Stay with me!

MAN. Get away, will you.

ALICE. Please.

MAN. Get away. *(He pushes her and she falls.)*

ALICE. Go to hell then, go to the devil, you devil.

MAN. Cursing is it? I can outcurse you.

ALICE. You foul devil, you fool, bastard, damn you, you devil!

MAN. Devil take you, whore, whore, damned strum-

pet, succubus, witch!

ALICE. But come back. I'll not curse you. Don't you curse. We were friends just now.

MAN. You should have behaved better.

ALICE. Will I see you again?

MAN. Unless I see you first.

ALICE. But will I see you? How can I find you?

MAN. You can call on me.

ALICE. How? Where? How shall I call on you?

MAN. You know how to curse. Just call on the devil.

ALICE. Don't tease me, you're not the devil, what's your name?

MAN. Lucifer, isn't it, and Beelzebub.

ALICE. No, what's your name?

MAN. Darling was my name. and sweeting till you called me devil.

ALICE. I'll not call you devil, come back, what's your name?

MAN. You won't need to know it. You won't be seeing me.

## SCENE TWO

JACK. The river meadow is the one to get.

MARGERY. I thought the long field up the hill.

JACK. No, the river meadow for the cattle.

MARGERY. But Jack, for corn. Think of the long field

full of wheat.

JACK. He's had a bad crop two years. That's why he can't pay the rent.

MARGERY. No, but he's got no cattle. We'd be all right.

JACK. If we took both fields.

MARGERY. Could we? Both?

JACK. The more we have the more we can afford.

MARGERY. And we'll pray God sends us sunshine.

JACK. Who's that down by the river?

MARGERY. That Alice, is it, wandering about?

JACK. I'm surprised Mother Noakes can pay her rent.

MARGERY. Just a cottage isn't much.

JACK. I've been wondering if we'll see them turned out.

MARGERY. I don't know why she's let stay. If we all lived like her it wouldn't be the fine estate it is. And Alice...

JACK. You can't blame Alice.

MARGERY. You can blame her. You can't be surprised. She's just what I'd expect of a girl brought up by Joan Noakes.

JACK. If we rent both fields, we'll have to hire a man to help with the harvest.

MARGERY. Hire a man?

JACK. That's not Alice.

MARGERY. It's not Miss Betty out by herself again?

JACK. I wouldn't be her father, not even to own the land.

MARGERY. That's a fine idea, hire a man.

JACK. She's coming here.

MARGERY. What we going to do?

JACK. Be respectful.

MARGERY. No, but shall we take her home? She's not meant to. She's still shut up in her room, everyone says.

JACK. I won't be sorry to see her.

MARGERY. I love to see her. She was always so soft on your lap, not like ours all hard edges. I could sit all afternoon just to smell her hair. But she's not a child, now, you can have run in and out and touch her. She's in trouble at home and we shouldn't help her do wrong.

JACK. We can't stop her, can we, if she walks in? (*They wait and in a moment BETTY does come in.*)

MARGERY. Miss Betty, how nice.

BETTY. I came to see you milking the cows.

JACK. We finished milking, miss. The cows are in.

BETTY. Is it that late?

MARGERY. You want to get home before dark.

BETTY. No, I don't. I want to be out in the dark. It's not late, it's dark in the day time. I could stay out for hours if it was summer.

JACK. If you want to come and see the farm, Miss Betty, you should ask your father to bring you one morning when he's inspecting the estate.

BETTY. I'm not let go where I like.

JACK. I've business with your father.

MARGERY. We're going to take on the river meadow for the cattle.

JACK. And the long field up the hill.

BETTY. I used to play here all day. Nothing's different. Have you still got Betty's mug?

MARGERY. That's right, she had her special mug.

BETTY. I milked the red cow right into it one day. I got milk in my eye.

JACK. She died, that red cow. But we've four new cows you've not seen.

MARGERY. Died last week. There's two or three cows died in the neighbourhood.

BETTY. I wish she hadn't.

JACK. That don't matter, losing one, we're doing well enough.

MARGERY. And you're doing well, I hear, miss.

BETTY. What?

MARGERY. I hear you're leaving us for better things.

BETTY. No.

MARGERY. I was only saying yesterday, our little Miss Betty that was and now to be a lady with her own house and—

BETTY. They lock me up. I said I won't marry him so they lock me up. Don't you know that?

MARGERY. I had heard something.

BETTY. I get out the window.

MARGERY. Hadn't you better have him, Betty, and be happy? Everyone hopes so. Everyone loves a wedding.

BETTY. Margery, can I stay here tonight?

MARGERY. They'd worry for you.

BETTY. Can I? Please?

JACK. There's no bed fit for you, miss.

BETTY. On my way here I climbed a tree. I could see the whole estate. I could see the other side of the river. I wanted to jump off. And fly.

MARGERY. Shall Jack walk home with you, miss, now it's getting dark?

## SCENE THREE

JOAN. Alice?

ALICE. No need wake up, mum.

JOAN. You'll catch cold out all night in this weather.

ALICE. Don't wake up if it's only to moan at me.

JOAN. Who were you with?

ALICE. Did he wake up?

JOAN. No, not a sound.

ALICE. He's sleeping better. Not so much bad dreams.

JOAN. Come on, child, there's some broth left.

ALICE. I couldn't eat.

JOAN. You stay out half the night, you don't even enjoy it. You stay in with the boy. You sit by the fire with no one to talk to but old Vinegar Tomcat. I'll go out.

ALICE. You go out?

JOAN. Funny, isn't it? What would I do going out?

ALICE. I'll stay in if you like.

JOAN. Where would I go? Who wants an old woman?

ALICE. You want me to stay with you more?

JOAN. An old woman wandering about in the cold.

ALICE. Do you want some broth, mum?

JOAN. Who were you with this time? Any one I know?

ALICE. Oh mum, I'm sick of myself.

JOAN. If we'd each got a man we'd be better off.

ALICE. You weren't better off, mum. You've told me often you're glad he's dead. Think how he used to beat you.

JOAN. We'd have more to eat, that's one thing.

## NOBODY SINGS

I met an old old woman  
Who made my blood run cold  
You don't stop wanting sex, she said,  
Just because you're old.

Oh nobody sings about it,  
but it happens all the time.

I could be glad of the change of life,  
But it makes me feel so strange.  
If your life is being wanted  
Do you want your life to change?

Oh nobody sings about it,  
but it happens all the time.

Do you want your skin to wrinkle  
And your cunt get sore and dry?  
And they say it's just your hormones  
If you cry and cry and cry.

Oh nobody sings about it,  
but it happens all the time.

Nobody ever saw me,  
She whispered in a rage.  
They were blinded by my beauty, now

They're blinded by my age.  
Oh nobody sings about it.  
but it happens all the time.

## SCENE FOUR

*MARGERY is churning.*

JACK. Hurry up with that butter, woman.

MARGERY. Butter won't come.

JACK. There's other work to do.

MARGERY. Butter won't come.

JACK. You don't churn. You sit gossiping.

MARGERY. Who would I talk to?

JACK. I heard your voice now.

MARGERY. Mother Noakes.

JACK. Always hanging about.

MARGERY. Her girl's no better.

JACK. Was her girl here? No.

MARGERY. I told her be on her way. Mother Noakes.

JACK. You tell her.

MARGERY. I told her.

JACK. Get on now with the butter and don't be always gossiping. (*He goes.*)

MARGERY. (*Churns and sings very quietly.*)

Come butter come, come butter come. Johnny's standing  
at the gate waiting for a butter cake. Come butter come,  
come butter come. Johnny's standing at the gate waiting  
for a butter cake. Come butter come, come butter come.



Johnny's standing at the gate... (*She stops as she realizes JOAN NOAKES has come in and is standing behind her.*)

JOAN. Just passing by.

MARGERY. Again.

JOAN. I wonder could you lend me a little yeast? I've no yeast, see. I'm fresh out of yeast. I've no bread in the house and I thought, I thought ... I'll do a little baking now and brew a little beer maybe ... and I went to get some yeast and I've no yeast. Who'd have thought it? No yeast at all.

MARGERY. You'd be better without beer.

JOAN. I thought a little yeast as I was passing.

MARGERY. You get drunk. You should be ashamed.

JOAN. To bake a couple of little small loaves.

MARGERY. I've no yeast.

JOAN. A couple of little small loaves wouldn't take much yeast. A woman comfortable off with a fine man and a nice field and five cows and three pigs and plenty of apples that makes a good cider, bless you, Margery, many's the time ... you'd not grudge a neighbour a little loaf? Many's the good times, eh, Margery? I've my own flour, you know, I'm not asking for flour.

MARGERY. I gave you yeast last week.

JOAN. A little small crumb of yeast and God will bless you for kindness to your old neighbour.

MARGERY. You're not so badly off, Joan Noakes. You're not on the parish.

JOAN. If I was I'd be fed. I should be on relief, then I'd not trouble you. There's some on relief, better off than me. I get nothing.

MARGERY. What money you get you drink.

JOAN. If you'd my troubles, Margery, you'd be glad of a drink, but as you haven't, thank God, and lend me a little yeast like a good woman.

MARGERY. I've no yeast.

JOAN. I know you, Margery.

MARGERY. What do you know?

JOAN. I know you've got yeast. My eyes are old, but I see through you. You're a cold woman and getting worse and you'll die without a friend in this parish when if you gave yeast to your good neighbours everyone would bless you...

MARGERY. I've no yeast.

JOAN. But you don't give and they say what a mean bitter woman and curse you.

MARGERY. There's nobody curses me. Now get out of my dairy. Dirty old woman you are, smelling of drink, come in here day after day begging, and stealing, too, I shouldn't wonder...

JOAN. You shouldn't say that.

MARGERY. ....and your great ugly cat in here stealing the cream. Get out of my dairy.

JOAN. You'll be sorry you spoke to me like that. I've always been your friend, Margery, but now you'll find I'm not.

MARGERY. I've work to do. Now get out. I'm making my butter.

JOAN. Damn your butter to hell.

MARGERY. Will you get out?

JOAN. Devil take you and your man and your fields and your cows and your butter and your yeast and your beer and your bread and your cider and your cold face...

MARGERY. Will you go? (*JOAN goes. MARGERY churns.*)  
Come butter come, come butter come. Johnny's stand-  
ing at the gate waiting for a butter cake. Come butter...  
It's not coming, this butter. I'm sick of it.

(*JACK enters.*)

JACK. What's all this? You're a lazy woman, you know  
that? Times are bad enough. The little black calf don't  
look well.

MARGERY. Butter won't come. Mother Noakes said  
damn the butter to hell.

JACK. Lazy slut, get on with it.

MARGERY. Come butter come. Come butter come.  
Come butter come. Come butter come. Come butter  
come. Come butter ... Mother Noakes come begging and  
borrowing. She still got my big bowl I give her some eggs  
in that time she was poorly. She makes out I've treated  
her bad. I've been a good neighbour to that woman years  
out of mind and no return. We'll get that bowl back off  
her. Jack, do you hear me? Go over Mother Noakes and  
get my bowl. And we'll heat a horseshoe red hot and put  
it in the milk to make the butter come.

## SCENE FIVE

SUSAN. Don't always talk of men.

ALICE. He knew what he was doing.

SUSAN. You'll know what he was doing in a few months.

ALICE. No, it never happens. The cunning woman put a charm inside me.

SUSAN. Take more than a charm to do me good.

ALICE. Not again? Does he know?

SUSAN. He wants it. I know the night it was. He said, 'Let's hope a fine child comes of it.'

ALICE. And what did you say?

SUSAN. Devil take it.

ALICE. What he say to that?

SUSAN. He don't like me swearing.

ALICE. But the baby's not a year.

SUSAN. Two weeks late, so.

ALICE. But the baby's not weaned.

SUSAN. The boy wasn't weaned when I fell for the baby.

ALICE. You could go see the cunning woman.

SUSAN. What for?

ALICE. She's a good midwife.

SUSAN. I don't want a midwife. I got my mother, anyway. I don't want to think about it. Nearly died last time. I was two days.

ALICE. Go and see the cunning woman. Just go see.

SUSAN. What for?

ALICE. She could say for certain.

SUSAN. I'm sure for certain.

ALICE. She could give you a charm.

SUSAN. They do say the pain is what's sent to a woman for her sins. I complained last time after churcing, and he said I must think on Eve who brought the sin into the

world that got me pregnant. I must think on how woman tempts man, and how she pays God with her pain having the baby. So if we try to get round the pain, we're going against God.

ALICE. I hate my body.

SUSAN. You mustn't say that. God sent his son—

ALICE. Blood every month, and no way out of that but to be sick and swell up, and no way out of that but pain. No way out of all that till we're old and that's worse. I can't bear to see my mother if she changes her clothes. If I was a man I'd go to London and Scotland and never come back and take a girl under a bush and on my way.

SUSAN. You could go to the cunning woman.

ALICE. What for?

SUSAN. Charm.

ALICE. What for?

SUSAN. Love charm bring him back.

ALICE. I don't want him back.

SUSAN. Did he look wonderful, more than anyone here, that he's got you so low?

ALICE. It was dark. I wouldn't know him again.

SUSAN. Not so much how he looked as how he felt.

ALICE. I could do with it now, I can tell you. I could do with walking across that field again and finding him there just the same. I want a man I can have when I want, not if I'm lucky to meet some villain one night.

SUSAN. You always say you don't want to be married.

ALICE. I don't want to be married. Look at you. Who'd want to be you?

SUSAN. He doesn't beat me.

ALICE. He doesn't beat you.

SUSAN. What's wrong with me? Better than you.

ALICE. Three babies and what, two, three times miscarried and wonderful he doesn't beat you.

SUSAN. No one's going to marry you because they know you here. That's why you say you don't want to be married — because no one's going to ask you round here, because they know you. *(They move apart.)*

JACK. *(He has been lingering in the background a while, and now comes up to ALICE.)* It's not you I've come to see.

ALICE. Never thought it was.

JACK. You should have done then.

ALICE. Why?

JACK. You know why.

ALICE. You've come to see my mum, have you?

JACK. I've business with her, yes. That's why I came.

ALICE. She's somewhere around. I'll get her.

JACK. No hurry. Wait a bit. Never seem to talk.

ALICE. Nothing to talk about.

JACK. I'm forgetting. I brought something. *(He gives her two apples.)*

ALICE. Thank you. What then?

JACK. Am I not handsome enough, is that it?

ALICE. I don't want trouble.

JACK. No one's to know.

ALICE. If I say you're not handsome enough, will you go away?

JACK. Alice, you must. I have dreams.

ALICE. You've a wife.

JACK. I'm no good to my wife. I can't do it. Not these three months. It's only when I dream of you or like now talking to you—

ALICE. Mum. There's someone to see you.

JACK. Alice, have some pity—

ALICE. Do you hear me? Mum? She'll be out to see you. *(She moves away.)*

*(JOAN enters.)*

JOAN. What's the matter?

JACK. I've come for the bowl.

JOAN. Bowl? Bowl?

JACK. Bowl my wife gave you some eggs in, you ungrateful old hag.

JOAN. You're asking for the bowl? You think I wouldn't give you back your bowl? You think I'm stealing your bowl? When have I ever kept anything? Have your bowl. I'll get your bowl and much good may it do you.

JACK. Then get it, damn you, and quick or you'll feel my hand. *(JOAN goes.)*

ALICE. Why treat her like that?

JACK. Don't speak to me. Let me get the bowl and go.

ALICE. And don't come back.

JACK. Alice, I'd be good to you. I'm not a poor man. I could give you things for your boy...

ALICE. Go away to hell.

*(JOAN enters.)*

JOAN. Here's your bowl, Jack, and the devil go with it. Get away home and I hope you've more trouble there than I have here.

JACK. I'll break your neck if you speak to me.

JOAN. You lift your hand to me, may it drop off.

ALICE. Go home away to hell, man. (*JACK goes.*)

JOAN. Away to hell with him. Never liked the man. Never liked the wife.

ALICE. Don't think on them, mum. They're not worth your time. Go in by the fire, go on, go in and be warm. (*JOAN goes. SUSAN approaches.*) Nobody likes my mother. That's what it is why nobody wants me.

SUSAN. I'm sorry for what I said, Alice.

ALICE. Going to see the cunning woman then?

SUSAN. Are you going for a love charm?

ALICE. It's something to do, isn't it? Better than waiting and waiting for something to happen. If I had a charm I could make him just appear in front of me now, I'd do anything. Will you come? (*ALICE gives SUSAN an apple.*)

SUSAN. I'll keep you company then. Just tell her my trouble. There's no harm.

## OH DOCTOR

Oh, doctor, tell  
me, make me well.  
What's wrong with me  
The way I am?  
I know I'm sad  
I may be sick.



I may be bad.  
Please cure me quick,  
oh doctor.

## SCENE SIX

*BETTY tied to a chair. The DOCTOR is about to bleed her arm.*

BETTY. Why am I tied? Tied to be bled. Why am I bled? Because I was screaming. Why was I screaming? Because I'm bad. Why was I bad? Because I was happy. Why was I happy? Because I ran out by myself and got away from them and— 'Why was I screaming? Because I'm bad. Why am I bad? Because I'm tied. Why am I tied? Because I was happy. Why was I happy? Because I was screaming.

DOCTOR. Hysteria is a woman's weakness. Hysteron, Greek, the womb. Excessive blood causes an imbalance in the humours. The noxious gasses that form inwardly every month rise to the brain and cause behaviour quite contrary to the patient's real feelings. After bleeding you must be purged. Tonight you shall be blistered. You will soon be well enough to be married.

## OH DOCTOR

Where are you taking my skin?

Where are you putting my bones?  
I shut my eyes and I opened wide,  
But why is my heart on the other side?  
Why are you putting my brain in my cunt?  
You're putting me back all back to front.

Stop looking up me with your metal eye.  
Stop cutting me apart before I die.  
Stop. put me back.  
Stop, put me back.  
Put back my body.

Who are you giving my womb?  
Who are you showing my breath?  
Tell me what you whisper to nurse.  
Whatever I've got, you're making it worse.  
I'm wide awake, but I still can't shout.  
Why can't I see what you're taking out?

Stop looking up me with your metal eye.  
Stop cutting me apart before I die.  
Stop, put me back.  
Stop, put me back.  
Put back my body.

Oh, doctor, tell  
me, make me well.  
What's wrong with me  
the way I am?  
I know I'm sad  
I may be sick

I may be bad.  
Please cure me quick,  
oh doctor,  
What's wrong with me the way I am?  
What's wrong with me?

I want to see myself.  
I want to see inside myself.  
Give me back my head.  
I'll put my heart in straight.  
Let me out of bed now.  
I can't wait  
To see myself.  
Give me back my body.  
I can see myself.

## SCENE SEVEN

MARGERLY. Jack, Jack, come quick — Jack.

JACK. What's the matter now?

MARGERLY. The calves. Have you seen the calves?

JACK. What's the woman on about?

MARGERLY. The calves are shaking and they've a terrible stench, so you can't go near them and their bellies are swollen up. (*JACK goes off.*) There's no good running. There's nothing you can do for them. They'll die like the red cow. You don't love me. Damn this stinking life to hell. Calves stinking and shaking there. No good you

going to see, Jack. Better stand and curse. Everything dying on us. Aah. What's that? Who's there? Get out, you beast, get out. (*She throws her shoe.*) Jack, Jack.

JACK. (*Comes back.*) Hold your noise.

MARGERY. That nasty old cat of Mother Noakes. I'll kill that cat if I get it, stinking up my clean dairy, stealing my cream. Where's it gone?

JACK. Let it go.

MARGERY. What you think of those calves then? Nothing to be done is there? What can we do? Nothing. Nothing to be done. Can't do nothing. Oh. Oh.

JACK. Now what is it?

MARGERY. Jack!

JACK. What is it? Don't frighten me, woman.

MARGERY. My head, oh, my stomach. Oh, Jack, I feel ill. (*She sits on the ground.*)

JACK. Get up, woman. It's no time. There's things to do.

MARGERY. Nothing.

JACK. Lie there a bit then. You'll maybe feel better. I can hardly stir myself. What have I done to deserve it? Why me? Why my calves shaking? Why my wife falling down?

MARGERY. It's passing now.

JACK. Why me?

MARGERY. That was a terrible pain. I still feel it. I'm shaking, look.

JACK. Other people sin and aren't punished so much as we are.

MARGERY. We must pray to God.

JACK. We do pray to God, and he sends afflictions.

MARGERY. It must be we deserve it somehow, but I don't know how. I do my best. I do my best, Jack, God knows, don't I, Jack? God knows I do my best.

JACK. Don't other people sin? Is it just me?

MARGERY. You're not a bad man, Jack.

JACK. I must be the worst man.

MARGERY. No, dear.

JACK. Would God send all this to a good man? Would he? It's my sins those calves shaking and stinking and swelling up their bellies in there.

MARGERY. Don't talk so.

JACK. My sins stinking and swelling up.

MARGERY. Unless it's not God.

JACK. How can I bear it?

MARGERY. If it's not God.

JACK. What?

MARGERY. If it's not God sends the trouble.

JACK. The devil?

MARGERY. One of his servants. If we're bewitched, Jack, that explains all.

JACK. If we're bewitched...

MARGERY. Butter not coming. Calves swelling. Me struck in the head.

JACK. Then it's not my sins. Good folk get bewitched.

MARGERY. Good folk like us.

JACK. It can happen to anyone.

MARGERY. Rich folk can have spells against them.

JACK. It's good people the witches want to hurt.

MARGERY. The devil can't bear to see us so good.

JACK. You know who it is?

MARGERY. Who?

JACK. The witch. Who it is.

MARGERY. Who?

JACK. You know who.

MARGERY. She cursed the butter to hell.

JACK. She cursed me when I got the bowl.

MARGERY. She said I'd be sorry I'd spoken to her.

JACK. She wished me trouble at home.

MARGERY. Devil take your man and your cows, she said that, and your butter. She cursed the calves see and she's made them shake. She struck me on the head and in the stomach.

JACK. I'll break her neck.

MARGERY. Be careful now, what she might do.

JACK. I'm not afraid of an old witch.

MARGERY. You should be. She could kill you.

JACK. I'll kill her first.

MARGERY. Wait, Jack. Let's meet cunning with cunning. What we must do is get the spell off.

JACK. She's not going to take it off for asking. She might for a few hard knocks.

MARGERY. No, wait, Jack. We can take the spell off and never go near her. Serve her right.

JACK. What we do then? Burn something?

MARGERY. Burn an animal alive, don't we? Or bury it alive. That takes witchcraft off the rest.

JACK. Burn the black calf then shall we? We'll get some straw and wood and put it in the yard and the calf on top and set it on fire.

MARGERY. Will it walk?

JACK. Or I'll carry it.

MARGERY. It stinks terrible.

JACK. Stink of witchcraft it is. Burn it up.

MARGERY. We must pray to God to keep us safe from the devil. Praying's strong against witches.

JACK. We'll pray God help us and help ourselves too.

MARGERY. She'll see the fire and smell it and she'll know we're fighting her back, stinking old witch, can't hurt us.

## SOMETHING TO BURN

What can we do, there's nothing to do,  
about sickness and hunger and dying.

What can we do, there's nothing to do,  
nothing but cursing and crying.

Find something to burn.

Let it go up in smoke.

Burn your troubles away.

Sometimes it's witches, or what will you choose?

Sometimes it's lunatics, shut them away.

It's blacks and it's women and often it's jews.

We'd all be quite happy if they'd go away.

Find something to burn.

Let it go up in smoke.

Burn your troubles away.