

Earwigs

SET: Black drapes with two sitting appurtenances painted black.

LIGHTS: A spot pointed to each stool and a general wash. The wash is up during the scenes and the spots during the interludes. Use cross fades. At no time should the stage be in darkness.

PROPS: All properties, other than the above, to be mimed.

CAST:

RED: A female of any age. Dressed in white with a red mask which will be donned when indicated.

BLACK: A male of any age. Dressed in white with a black mask to be donned when indicated.

COSTUME: The drapes and the costumes and masks may be of any contrasting colours. The names of the characters, as they appear in the programme, may be changed to the alternative colour. The costumes, make-up and masks must be elaborate and contrast with the simplicity of the set. I had imagined formal evening wear as being appropriate, (but don't feel restricted). The masks need not cover the mouth unless this can be achieved without impeding delivery. The play may be presented as a one act play or with *Peace*, and *Magpies* and *Clownes*. (Related plays.)

NOTE: The play consists of nine short scenes representing an evolution. Each scene is separated by a short narrative description of the state of the universe at the time of the scene. These scenes are then enfolded within another short play which has an independent existence as a short piece entitled *We're Here*. Each scene requires a different acting style, although the characters are still the same "people" throughout. Each scene bears a relationship to one of a series of paintings which are described in the play *Magpies*, to which this play is related. The title is a synonym of Everyman.

Enter red and black.

BLACK: Where are we?

RED: We're here.

BLACK: Do you know where we're from?

RED: *(pause)* No.

BLACK: You'll have to find that out first, before we do anything.

RED: Why?

BLACK: If you don't know where you've come from how do you know who you are, and if you don't know who you are how can you act a part?

RED: I don't know.

BLACK: You see you have to know.

RED: Yes. Where are we from then?

BLACK: No-where.

RED: No-where?

BLACK: No-where in particular.

RED: I see. *(Pause)* That means we don't know who we are.

BLACK: Correct.

RED: We don't know who we are because we don't know where we're from.

BLACK: In a way.

RED: In a way?

BLACK: Yes. we're not from anywhere in the normal sense because we're not people in the normal sense.

RED: Not normal?

BLACK: No.

RED: Abnormal?

BLACK: No.

RED: What are we then?

BLACK: Different.

RED: Different? I don't understand.

BLACK: It's the sound of a different music.

RED: I thought we were talking about ourselves, not music.

BLACK: We are music. Can't you hear it?

RED: What?

BLACK: The sound of the music.

RED: *(listens)* No.

BLACK: You can't hear it?

RED: I strain to hear.

BLACK: Elves music?

RED: I can't hear it?

BLACK: Tinkling bells?

RED: I can't hear it.

BLACK: Just beneath the thresh-hold of thought?

RED: I can't hear it. Perhaps it's an illusion.

BLACK: Perhaps everything is an illusion.

RED: Who knows?

Lights down. Black sits on stool in spot.

SCENE 1

BLACK: It was a perfect day. We went for a ride in the country and stopped at an inn by the wayside. After we had refreshed ourselves we decided to take a walk along the path beside the river. The willows grew gracefully over the bank and their slender fingers trailed in the water. We climbed the hill and, as the murmur of the river faded, silence hung over the land. I looked down at the earth and at the river and at the fire of the sun in the heavens, and I said to my partner; "This is the source of all beings..."

Lights up. (the big bang.)

The actors walk around the stage silently miming a big explosion. To be creatively choreographed by the director and cast.

SCENE 2.

RED: It was a fine day. We went for a ride in the country and stopped at an inn by the wayside. After we had refreshed ourselves we decided to take a walk along the path beside the river. The willows arched gracefully over the bank and the buds at the tips of their fingers trailed in the water. We climbed the hill and, as the murmur of the river faded, silence hung over the land. In the distance I thought I heard the sound of a baby cry...

This scene describes the creation of duality. (the movements are slow and deliberate. There is very little expression.)

Black moves to one side of the stage.

BLACK: I am One.

Red moves to the other side of the stage.

RED: I am One.

They both move towards each other and meet at the centre of the stage.

BLACK: We are Two.

RED: Two.

BLACK: I am One.

RED: I am Two.

BLACK: Two?

RED: Yes. Apart from you.

BLACK: Different?

RED: Number two .

They walk to the sides of the stage

BLACK: I am One.

RED: You are One?

BLACK: Number One .

RED: I am Two.

BLACK: You are two?

RED: Number Two.

They walk to the centre of the stage where they meet.

BLACK: I am One.

RED: I am Two.

BLACK: But we are two.

RED: We are two ?

BLACK: Yes.

RED: But I am T wo.

BLACK: Together We are two.

RED: Together?

BLACK: Yes.

RED: Of course. I see. Together we are two.

They dance a short elegant waltz.

SCENE 3.

BLACK: It was a clear day. We went for a ride in the country and stopped at a hotel by the wayside. After we had refreshed ourselves we decided to take a walk along the path beside the river. The willows arched gracefully over the bank and trailed their slender fingers in the water. We climbed the hill and, as the murmur of the river faded, silence hung over the land. I looked down over the fields of wheat below, burnished by the caress of the sun...

This scene is presented in the manner of childish innocence.

BLACK: Vermouth.

RED: Vermouth?

BLACK: Vermouth.

RED: What is Vermouth?

BLACK: Don' know.

RED: Can't have something it doesn't know.

BLACK: Will be.

RED: What?

BLACK: Vermouth.

RED: What about Vermouth?

BLACK: It will be. Sometime in future.

RED: What is future?

BLACK: It will come.

RED: I don't understand.

BLACK: Just a drink. Vermouth. Nothing complicated.

RED: I'll have a Dry Martini, with a little ice.

BLACK: Not now. In future.

RED: And I'll have an olive on a stick?

BLACK: An olive on a stick?

RED: Yes.

BLACK: I can't do that yet.

RED: Can't do it yet?

BLACK: No.

RED: When can he do it?

BLACK: When he grows up.

RED: I can't wait...

BLACK: What?

RED: ...'till I grow up.

BLACK: No. None of us can.

They sit on their stools. Spot on red.

SCENE 4.

RED: It was a fine day. We went for a ride in the country and stopped at a mik-bar for a glass of lemonade. After we had refreshed ourselves we decided to take a walk along the path beside the river. A young willow grew on the bank trailing its slender fingers in the water. We walked across the meadow

and, as the murmur of the river faded, silence hung over the land. I noticed that the flowers growing in the carpet of grass were of the purest white...

This scene should be performed with simplicity. They are a little older than in the previous scene. But still virginal.

BLACK: Are our friends coming to visit us?

RED: I don't know.

BLACK: They said they would.

RED: What?

BLACK: Come and visit us.

RED: I didn't see them.

BLACK: Didn't you?

RED: No.

BLACK: No-one ever comes to visit us.

RED: That's because we're never home.

BLACK: No.

RED: How can people visit us if we are never home?

BLACK: They can't.

RED: Exactly.

BLACK: Perhaps we should visit other people more often, then they might come and visit us.

RED: I don't think so.

BLACK: Why?

RED: Because we are never home.

BLACK: No.

RED: Perhaps people do visit us, when we are not here.

BLACK: Perhaps. We will never know.

RED: (PAUSE) You used to visit me.

BLACK: Did I?

RED: Yes.

BLACK: When?

RED: Before we...

BLACK: What?

RED: Before we, came together.

BLACK: Came together? Did we, come together?

RED: Yes, I think so.

BLACK: What is 'together'?

RED: 'Together'? It's being in the same place.

BLACK: I thought so. And we are together?

RED: Yes.

BLACK: In the same place?

RED: Yes.

BLACK: I thought so. (Pause) And we are together?

RED: Yes.

BLACK: Before we came together?

RED: Yes?

BLACK: We were not together?

RED: No.

BLACK: I thought so. We were apart.

RED: Yes, that's it. Apart.

BLACK: Apart.

RED: Yes. Now we are together.
BLACK: Together?
RED: Yes.
BLACK: I see. Why are we together?
RED: I don't know.
BLACK: Were you never told?
RED: No.
BLACK: I see. Perhaps we should find out why.
RED: Yes.
BLACK: It is important I think.
RED: Yes. It is important.

SCENE 5.

BLACK: It was a still day. We went for a ride in the country and stopped at an temple by the wayside. After we had worshipped we decided to take a walk along the path beside the river. The willows grew gracefully, their trunks like columns of stone. As we walked along the river-bank a hush fell over the land. I thought I saw petals afloat on the water...

In this scene they come more like real people. They are both quite excited about going out. Black tends to hide this under an air of casualness.

RED: *(goes to the mirror to do her make-up etc.)* I think the Leader of the Set will be there.

BLACK: *(crosses his legs picks up magazine)* Who?

RED: Her Highness The Marquess of Pompadour.

BLACK: Oh yes, Her Highness.

RED: And His Blackness from Nabataeans.

BLACK: Of course, His Blackness.

RED: Have you seen my stole?

BLACK: *(goes to the bar)* In the wardrobe. *(Pours a drink.)*

RED: *(goes to the wardrobe. Takes out stole and dons it)* You haven't lost the invitation?

BLACK: *(pats pocket)* No.

RED: It's our first night out.

BLACK: Yes.

RED: Don't sound so uninterested.

BLACK: *(comes down.)* Glass gems of a glittering chandelier. Lush red satin dress. Voluptuous flower growing in a vase. Purple prose. Finely carved white alabaster. The sweet song of music. Viola da gamba, hautboy, sackbut, golden voiced tenor. Soft voice of poetry from the honey tongue. Perfumed red wine. All this sweet sin of pleasure for our delight. *(he puts on his mask.)*

RED: Where are my ear-rings?

BLACK: You put them on the pouncet-box.

RED: Oh yes, so they might be scented. *(Puts on her ear-rings and her mask.)*

BLACK: We may wish to swim.

RED: Swim?

BLACK: Yes.

RED: Why?

BLACK: It is often done. It is one of the conventions that the young people swim in the pool.

RED: Are we of the young set?
BLACK: That is a matter of conjecture.
RED: We shall swim in the pool if we have to.
BLACK: Yes.
RED: Will you bring a towel?
BLACK: Yes.
RED: Call for the carriage. I am ready to go.
BLACK: The carriage awaits.

SCENE 6.

RED: It was an overcast day. We took a taxi to the park and stopped at the tea-house. After we had refreshed ourselves we decided to take a walk along the path beside the canal. The willows growing on the bank were dropping their yellow autumn leaves into the water. We walked across an empty field and, as the murmur of the river faded, silence hung over the land. In the distance I thought I heard a strange keening...

In this scene they are young adults.

BLACK: Do we have any seltzer?
RED: In the cabinet.
BLACK: (*goes to the cabinet, gets seltzer, goes to sink & gets glass of water, swills down seltzer.*) That's better.
RED: You took too much wine.
BLACK: I know.
RED: Why did you do that?
BLACK: It was there.
RED: So now you know how to drink, and get hangovers, and all that sort of thing.
BLACK: Yes.
RED: I was invited to visit Lord Mithral on his pleasure yacht.
BLACK: Will you go?
RED: Of course.
BLACK: But what about us?
RED: What do you mean?
BLACK: I thought we were, together.
RED: We were, when there were only two of us. Now there are more, people. I shall be 'together' with the others.
BLACK: But I shall not be...
RED: What?
BLACK: ...together.
RED: That is your concern. You should not have spent last night drinking alone in a corner, you should have spent some of your time with, others.
BLACK: I feel terrible.
RED: It's all your own fault, don't ask me for sympathy.
BLACK: It was supposed to be a marvellous occasion. Going to the ball. Streamers and tinsel in our hair. I thought that I might become a more rounded person, some-one with knowledge and flair. But then the clock struck twelve...
RED: You certainly learnt something.
BLACK: Yes that is true.

RED: Then what are you complaining about? You see, you will go on, and you will learn, and you will become a sophisticated person.

BLACK: But I have lost something.

RED: What is that?

BLACK: My innocence.

RED: That is because you must go the way of all children.

BLACK: And the days that were green and golden?

RED: Store them in a casket, in a forgotten corner of your mind.

BLACK: You understand?

RED: Yes, I understand.

SCENE 7.

BLACK: It was a day of rain and sleet. We took a bus to the suburbs and stopped at a restaurant. After we had refreshed ourselves we decided to take a walk along the railroad tracks beside the canal. The willows grew leafless and their gnarled fingers cut wounds in the sky. We passed through the boondocks and, as the murmur of traffic faded, silence hung over the city. In the distance I thought I heard the hum of a dynamo...

In this scene they are quite sophisticated and world-wise.

RED: *(on the telephone)* Will you send up two ham on rye, two organic salads and a bottle of Ninety-eight Chablis? *(Pause)* What do you mean, you don't have Ninety-eight? *(pause)* Well the Ninety-nine will have to do then. *(hangs up)* They don't have Ninety-eight.

BLACK: We should go out for lunch.

RED: They don't have Ninety-eight.

BLACK: I'm in prison in this room. *(goes to window)* There's a new advertising sign. "Kwik Snax for Klik Klax." What are "Klik Klax"?

RED: A clique of clattering housewives. That's women like me.

BLACK: Chained to the telephone and the microwave.

RED: Will you turn on television?

Black turns on the television. They stare in silence.

BLACK: She's dancing on the table top.

RED: Sssshh.

BLACK: The waltz of the hours.

RED: What's on the other channels?

BLACK: *(he uses the remote control to change channels.)* A quiz show. A torture mystery. A soap opera. The daily news. The current affairs. A wild-life programme. A dating game. The arts calendar. Country life. Peace, Magpies, Clownes, Earwigs, Peace. I'm bored. Why don't we go out? Why don't we do something?

RED: We have everything here that we need. We can sit in this room and everything comes to us.

BLACK: Through the television.

RED: The telephone.

BLACK: The telegram.

RED: The facsimile.

BLACK: The express courier.

RED: The newspaper.

BLACK: The letter.

RED: The electronic mail.

BLACK: The computer network.
RED: The teletext.
BLACK: The radio news.
RED: The BBC.
BLACK: The ITV.
RED: The BBloodyCNZ.
BLACK: The meals on wheels.
RED: The repair man.
BLACK: The dumb waiter.
RED: The electric wires.
BLACK: The water pipes.
RED: The radio waves.
BLACK: The molecular vibrations.
RED: The unexpected intrusion.
BLACK: The etheric manifestations.
RED: The vivid imagination.
BLACK: The satisfactory adjudication.
RED: (PAUSE) Well hardly that.
BLACK: Can't we go out?
RED: Why would we want to go out?
BLACK: To feel the air.
RED: We have an air conditioner.
BLACK: To see the sky.
RED: We have a double-glazed window.
BLACK: To feel the earth.
RED: Don't be silly.
BLACK: We are in a womb.
RED: Why shouldn't we have the advantages of modern technology?
BLACK: I don't feel satisfied.
RED: Why?
BLACK: There is something missing.
RED: Missing?
BLACK: This life is pleasant, but there is something, wrong.
RED: I don't understand.
BLACK: Neither do I.
RED: You are an incurable romantic.
BLACK: Yes, an incurable romantic.

SCENE 8.

RED: Black smoke from fires had clouded the sun. We took our protected vehicle into the desert and stopped at a canteen by the wayside. After we had refreshed ourselves we decided to take a walk along the path beside the burning river. There were no trees to be seen. We climbed the hill and, as the roar of the conflagrations faded, silence hung over the land. I looked up and saw vapour trails high in the sky...

In this scene they are mature adults, with adult feelings. Anger and frustration.

BLACK: There is going to have to be an escalation.
RED: Do you have to be part of it then?
BLACK: I can't really avoid it.

RED: Why?

BLACK: I have to do my duty.

RED: I don't believe you, you just want to go to war.

BLACK: It's my patriotic duty.

RED: You just want the glory and the fame. You want to carry a gun in your hand and create carnage. Great way of getting rid of your pent up hostilities..

BLACK: That's hardly fair.

RED: And they give you decorations. *(Pause)* You really want to take part of it?

BLACK: Yes.

RED: To even die?

BLACK: Yes.

RED: You don't have to.

BLACK: I want to.

RED: Well just go away and do it then. don't expect me to give you any support.

BLACK: What do you mean, no support?

RED: You heard what I said.

BLACK: Yes I did. You mean to say you are going to desert your husband because he is doing his duty.

RED: Something like that.

BLACK: I shall report you to the patriotic board. I shall see that you are correctly punished.

RED: And this time we have spent together. Does that count for nothing?

BLACK: You are my wife. You have your responsibilities. Our agreement is quite plain.

RED: But where does your affection lie.

BLACK: I think, I think I had, affection once. Now I do not. Only children have true feelings. Love is not practical.

RED: The flower withered a long time ago. You desire the power of the gods with your weapons and thunderbolts. You create with fire and destroy with fire. You strut with petty arrogance.

BLACK: Hup, two three, hup.

RED: Look at the horizon. Do you see the red glow?

BLACK: It's just the fires from the air-raids.

RED: Always coming closer.

BLACK: That's why we have to defeat the enemy. That's why we have to destroy that perversion.

RED: You never see the enemy.

BLACK: Of course I do. they have a green cross on their uniform.

RED: You never know the enemy.

BLACK: Why do you say that traitor?

RED: Because the enemy is yourself.

SCENE 9.

BLACK: It was a cloudy day with occasional sun. We went for a ride in the country and stopped at an inn by the wayside. After we had refreshed ourselves we decided to take a walk along the path beside the river. The willows growing on the bank allowed their slender leafless fingers to trail in the

water. We climbed the hill and, as the murmur of the river faded, silence hung over the land. I saw the trees and the things of the world shimmer in the haze...

General wash

RED: We've collected so many things in this room.

BLACK: Yes.

RED: Pictures on the walls.

BLACK: Nine impressions of the world.

RED: Guns, clothes, beds, television sets, ear-rings, empty wine bottles.

All these things are ours.

BLACK: Yes.

RED: All these things are us.

BLACK: Yes.

RED: We have become them.

BLACK: Throw them out the window.

RED: Yes.

BLACK: Guns, clothes, beds, television sets, ear-rings.

RED: Empty wine bottles.

BLACK: Can we can dismantle the weight that we attach to the remembrance of things done?

RED: Yes.

BLACK: If we abandon these things then nothing will remain.

RED: Not even the barely realised thread of a thought.

BLACK: No.

RED: And we can discard our illusions?

BLACK: The mirage which obscures reality.

RED: This outward show.

BLACK: The dull tapestry of delusion.

RED: Will we then see the sun?

BLACK: The whole of this universe shall be mantled by a bright bloom of a glorious blossom of chaos. It shall hold all existence in its benevolent arms. And there shall be a moment when all is dissolved and in the wrack all is reborn.

RED: And where shall we be?

BLACK: Nowhere.

RED: Nowhere?

BLACK: No.

RED: I understand. That is when we shall find our self.

BLACK: Naturally.

RED: And to do this?

BLACK: Yes?

RED: We should take off our masks.

BLACK: Naturally.

They remove their masks

BLACK: It was a perfect day. We went for a ride in the country and stopped at an inn by the wayside. After we had refreshed ourselves we decided to take a walk along the path beside the river. The willows grew gracefully over the bank and their slender fingers trailed in the water. We climbed the hill and, as the murmur of the river faded, silence hung over the

land. I looked down at the land and at the river and at the fire of the sun in the heavens, and I said to my partner; "This is the source of all beings...".

RED: Listen.

BLACK: What?

RED: I think I can hear sounds, in my mind's ear...

BLACK: What do you hear?

RED: Elves music.

BLACK: I thought you would hear it.

RED: Tinkling bells.

BLACK: Of course.

RED: The music of the spheres

BLACK: I knew you could hear it.

RED: *(pause)* I'd still like to know...

BLACK: What?

RED: Why we are here. Where we are from.

BLACK: It doesn't matter.

RED: Doesn't it?

BLACK: No. We are here.

RED: Yes.

BLACK: We've arrived.

RED: Yes. We've arrived.

THE END