The Devil's Disciple - Act III

di George Bernard Shaw (1897)

ACT III

Early next morning the sergeant, at the British headquarters in the Town Hall, unlocks the door of a little empty panelled waiting room, and invites Judith to enter. She has had a bad night, probably a rather delirious one; for even in the reality of the raw morning, her fixed gaze comes back at moments when her attention is not strongly held.

The sergeant considers that her feelings do her credit, and is sympathetic in an encouraging military way. Being a fine figure of a man, vain of his uniform and of his rank, he feels specially qualified, in a respectful way, to console her.

SERGEANT: You can have a quiet word with him here, mum.

JUDITH: Shall I have long to wait?

SERGEANT: No, mum, not a minute. We kep him in the Bridewell for the night; and he's just been brought over here for the court martial. Don't fret, mum: he slep like a child, and has made a rare good breakfast.

JUDITH: *incredulously.* He is in good spirits!

SERGEANT: Tip top, mum. The chaplain looked in to see him last night; and he won seventeen shillings off him at spoil five. He spent it among us like the gentleman he is. Duty's duty, mum, of course; but you're among friends here. *The tramp of a couple of soldiers is heard approaching.* There: I think he's coming. *Richard comes in, without a sign of care or captivity in his bearing. The sergeant nods to the two soldiers, and shows them the key of the room in his hand. They withdraw.* Your good lady, sir.

RICHARD: *going to her.* What! My wife. My adored one. *He takes her hand and kisses it with a perverse, raffish gallantry.* How long do you allow a brokenhearted husband for leave-taking, Sergeant?

SERGEANT: As long as we can, sir. We shall not disturb you till the court sits.

RICHARD: But it has struck the hour.

SERGEANT: So it has, sir; but there's a delay. General Burgoyne's just arrived—Gentlemanly Johnny we call him, sir—and he won't have done finding fault with everything this side of half past. I know him, sir: I served with him in Portugal. You may count on twenty minutes, sir; and by your leave I won't waste any more of them. *He goes out, locking the door. Richard immediately drops his raffish manner and turns to Judith with considerate sincerity.*

RICHARD: Mrs. Anderson: this visit is very kind of you. And how are you after last night? I had to leave you before you recovered; but I sent word to Essie to go and look after you. Did she understand the message?

JUDITH: *breathless and urgent.* Oh, don't think of me: I haven't come here to talk about myself. Are they going to—to—[meaning "to hang you"]?

RICHARD: *whimsically.* At noon, punctually. At least, that was when they disposed of Uncle Peter. *She shudders.* Is your husband safe? Is he on the wing?

JUDITH: He is no longer my husband.

RICHARD: *opening his eyes wide.* Eh!

JUDITH: I disobeyed you. I told him everything. I expected him to come here and save you. I wanted him to come here and save you. He ran away instead.

RICHARD: Well, that's what I meant him to do. What good would his staying have done? They'd only have hanged us both.

JUDITH: *with reproachful earnestness.* Richard Dudgeon: on your honour, what would you have done in his place?

RICHARD: Exactly what he has done, of course.

JUDITH: Oh, why will you not be simple with me—honest and straightforward? If you are so selfish as that, why did you let them take you last night?

RICHARD: *gaily.* Upon my life, Mrs. Anderson, I don't know. I've been asking myself that question ever since; and I can find no manner of reason for acting as I did.

JUDITH: You know you did it for his sake, believing he was a more worthy man than yourself.

RICHARD: *laughing.* Oho! No: that's a very pretty reason, I must say; but I'm not so modest as that. No: it wasn't for his sake.

JUDITH: *after a pause, during which she looks shamefacedly at him, blushing painfully.* Was it for my sake?

RICHARD: *gallantly.* Well, you had a hand in it. It must have been a little for your sake. You let them take me, at all events.

JUDITH: Oh, do you think I have not been telling myself that all night? Your death will be at my door. *Impulsively, she gives him her hand, and adds, with intense earnestness* If I could save you as you saved him, I would do it, no matter how cruel the death was.

RICHARD: *holding her hand and smiling, but keeping her almost at arm's length.* I am very sure I shouldn't let you.

JUDITH: Don't you see that I can save you?

RICHARD: How? By changing clothes with me, eh?

JUDITH: *disengaging her hand to touch his lips with it.* Don't *meaning "Don't jest".* No: by telling the Court who you really are.

RICHARD: *frowning.* No use: they wouldn't spare me; and it would spoil half of his chance of escaping. They are determined to cow us by making an example of somebody on that gallows to-day. Well, let us cow them by showing that we can stand by one another to the death. That is the only force that can send Burgoyne back across the Atlantic and make America a nation.

JUDITH: *impatiently.* Oh, what does all that matter?

RICHARD: *laughing.* True: what does it matter? what does anything matter? You see, men have these strange notions, Mrs. Anderson; and women see the folly of them.

JUDITH: Women have to lose those they love through them.

RICHARD: They can easily get fresh lovers.

JUDITH: *revolted.* Oh! *Vehemently* Do you realise that you are going to kill yourself?

RICHARD: The only man I have any right to kill, Mrs. Anderson. Don't be concerned: no woman will lose her lover through my death. *Smiling* Bless you, nobody cares for me. Have you heard that my mother is dead?

JUDITH: Dead!

RICHARD: Of heart disease—in the night. Her last word to me was her curse: I don't think I could have borne her blessing. My other relatives will not grieve much on my account. Essie will cry for a day or two; but I have provided for her: I made my own will last night.

JUDITH: *stonily, after a moment's silence.* And I!

RICHARD: *surprised.* You?

JUDITH: Yes, I. Am I not to care at all?

RICHARD: *gaily and bluntly.* Not a scrap. Oh, you expressed your feelings towards me very frankly yesterday. What happened may have softened you for the moment; but believe me, Mrs. Anderson, you don't like a bone in my skin or a hair on my head. I shall be as good a riddance at 12 today as I should have been at 12 yesterday.

JUDITH: *her voice trembling.* What can I do to show you that you are mistaken?

RICHARD: Don't trouble. I'll give you credit for liking me a little better than you did. All I say is that my death will not break your heart.

JUDITH: *almost in a whisper.* How do you know? *She puts her hands on his shoulders and looks intently at him.*

RICHARD: *amazed—divining the truth.* Mrs. Anderson!!! *The bell of the town clock strikes the quarter. He collects himself, and removes her hands, saying rather coldly* Excuse me: they will be here for me presently. It is too late.

JUDITH: It is not too late. Call me as witness: they will never kill you when they know how heroically you have acted.

RICHARD: *with some scorn.* Indeed! But if I don't go through with it, where will the heroism be? I shall simply have tricked them; and they'll hang me for that like a dog. Serve me right too!

JUDITH: *wildly.* Oh, I believe you WANT to die.

RICHARD: *obstinately.* No I don't.

JUDITH: Then why not try to save yourself? I implore you—listen. You said just now that you saved him for my sake—yes *clutching him as he recoils with a gesture of denial* a little for my sake. Well, save yourself for my sake. And I will go with you to the end of the world.

RICHARD: *taking her by the wrists and holding her a little way from him, looking steadily at her.* Judith.

JUDITH: *breathless—delighted at the name.* Yes.

RICHARD: If I said—to please you—that I did what I did ever so little for your sake, I lied as men always lie to women. You know how much I have lived with worthless men—aye, and worthless women too. Well, they could all rise to some sort of goodness and kindness when they were in love. *The word love comes from him with true Puritan scorn.* That has taught me to set very little store by the goodness that only comes out red hot. What I did last night, I did in cold blood, caring not half so much for your husband, or *ruthlessly* for you *she droops, stricken* as I do for myself. I had no motive and no interest: all I can tell you is that when it came to the point whether I would take my neck out of the noose and put another man's into it, I could not do it. I don't know why not: I see myself as a fool for my pains; but I could not and I cannot. I have been brought up standing by the law of my own nature; and I may not go against it, gallows or no gallows. *She has slowly raised her head and is now looking full at him.* I should have done the same for any other man in the town, or any other man's wife. *Releasing her.* Do you understand that?

JUDITH: Yes: you mean that you do not love me.

RICHARD: *revolted—with fierce contempt.* Is that all it means to you?

JUDITH: What more—what worse—can it mean to me? *The sergeant knocks. The blow on the door jars on her heart.* Oh, one moment more. *She throws herself on her knees.* I pray to you—

RICHARD: Hush! *Calling* Come in. *The sergeant unlocks the door and opens it. The guard is with him.*

SERGEANT: *coming in.* Time's up, sir.

RICHARD: Quite ready, Sergeant. Now, my dear. *He attempts to raise her.*

JUDITH: *clinging to him.* Only one thing more—I entreat, I implore you. Let me be present in the court. I have seen Major Swindon: he said I should be allowed if you asked it. You will ask it. It is my last request: I shall never ask you anything again. *She clasps his knee.* I beg and pray it of you.

RICHARD: If I do, will you be silent?

JUDITH: Yes.

RICHARD: You will keep faith?

JUDITH: I will keep—*She breaks down, sobbing.*

RICHARD: *taking her arm to lift her.* Just—her other arm, Sergeant.

They go out, she sobbing convulsively, supported by the two men.

Meanwhile, the Council Chamber is ready for the court martial. It is a large, lofty room, with a chair of state in the middle under a tall canopy with a gilt crown, and maroon curtains with the royal monogram G. R. In front of the chair is a table, also draped in maroon, with a bell, a heavy inkstand, and writing materials on it. Several chairs are set at the table. The door is at the right hand of the occupant of the chair of state when it has an occupant: at present it is empty. Major Swindon, a pale, sandy-haired, very conscientious looking man of about 45, sits at the end of the table with his back to the door, writing. He is alone until the sergeant announces the General in a subdued manner which suggests that Gentlemanly Johnny has been making his presence felt rather heavily.

SERGEANT: The General, sir.

Swindon rises hastily. The General comes in, the sergeant goes out. General Burgoyne is 55, and very well preserved. He is a man of fashion, gallant enough to have made a distinguished marriage by an elopement, witty enough to write successful comedies, aristocratically-connected enough to have had opportunities of high military distinction. His eyes, large, brilliant, apprehensive, and intelligent, are his most remarkable feature: without them his fine nose and small mouth would suggest rather more fastidiousness and less force than go to the making of a first rate general. Just now the eyes are angry and tragic, and the mouth and nostrils tense.

BURGOYNE: Major Swindon, I presume.

SWINDON: Yes. General Burgoyne, if I mistake not. *They bow to one another ceremoniously.* I am glad to have the support of your presence this morning. It is not particularly lively business, hanging this poor devil of a minister.

BURGOYNE: *throwing himself onto Swindon's chair.* No, sir, it is not. It is making too much of the fellow to execute him: what more could you have done if he had been a member of the Church of England? Martyrdom, sir, is what these people like: it is the only way in which a man can become famous without ability. However, you have committed us to hanging him: and the sooner he is hanged the better.

SWINDON: We have arranged it for 12 o'clock. Nothing remains to be done except to try him.

BURGOYNE: *looking at him with suppressed anger.* Nothing—except to save our own necks, perhaps. Have you heard the news from Springtown?

SWINDON: Nothing special. The latest reports are satisfactory.

BURGOYNE: *rising in amazement.* Satisfactory, sir! Satisfactory!! *He stares at him for a moment, and then adds, with grim intensity* I am glad you take that view of them.

SWINDON: *puzzled.* Do I understand that in your opinion—-

BURGOYNE: I do not express my opinion. I never stoop to that habit of profane language which unfortunately coarsens our profession. If I did, sir, perhaps I should be able to express my opinion of the news from Springtown—the news which YOU *severely* have apparently not heard. How soon do you get news from your supports here?—in the course of a month eh?

SWINDON: *turning sulky.* I suppose the reports have been taken to you, sir, instead of to me. Is there anything serious?

BURGOYNE: *taking a report from his pocket and holding it up.* Springtown's in the hands of the rebels. *He throws the report on the table.*

SWINDON: *aghast.* Since yesterday!

BURGOYNE: Since two o'clock this morning. Perhaps WE shall be in their hands before two o'clock to-morrow morning. Have you thought of that?

SWINDON: *confidently.* As to that, General, the British soldier will give a good account of himself.

BURGOYNE: *bitterly.* And therefore, I suppose, sir, the British officer need not know his business: the British soldier will get him out of all his blunders with the bayonet. In future, sir, I must ask you to be a little less generous with the blood of your men, and a little more generous with your own brains.

SWINDON: I am sorry I cannot pretend to your intellectual eminence, sir. I can only do my best, and rely on the devotion of my countrymen.

BURGOYNE: *suddenly becoming suavely sarcastic.* May I ask are you writing a melodrama, Major Swindon?

SWINDON: *flushing.* No, sir.

BURGOYNE: What a pity! WHAT a pity! *Dropping his sarcastic tone and facing him suddenly and seriously* Do you at all realize, sir, that we have nothing standing between us and destruction but our own bluff and the sheepishness of these colonists? They are men of the same English stock as ourselves: six to one of us *repeating it emphatically,* six to one, sir; and nearly half our troops are Hessians, Brunswickers, German dragoons, and Indians with scalping knives. These are the countrymen on whose devotion you rely! Suppose the colonists find a leader! Suppose the news from Springtown should turn out to mean that they have already found a leader! What shall we do then? Eh?

SWINDON: *sullenly.* Our duty, sir, I presume.

BURGOYNE: *again sarcastic—giving him up as a fool.* Quite so, quite so. Thank you, Major Swindon, thank you. Now you've settled the question, sir—thrown a flood of light on the situation. What a comfort to me to feel that I have at my side so devoted and able an officer to support me in this emergency! I think, sir, it will probably relieve both our feelings if we proceed to hang this dissenter without further delay *he strikes the bell,* especially as I am debarred by my principles from the customary military vent for my feelings. *The sergeant appears.* Bring your man in.

SERGEANT: Yes, sir.

BURGOYNE: And mention to any officer you may meet that the court cannot wait any longer for him.

SWINDON: *keeping his temper with difficulty.* The staff is perfectly ready, sir. They have been waiting your convenience for fully half an hour. PERFECTLY ready, sir.

BURGOYNE: *blandly.* So am I. *(Several officers come in and take their seats. One of them sits at the end of the table furthest from the door, and acts throughout as clerk to the court, making notes of the proceedings. The uniforms are those of the 9th, 20th, 21st, 24th, 47th, 53rd, and 62nd British Infantry. One officer is a Major General of the Royal Artillery. There are also German officers of the Hessian Rifles, and of German dragoon and Brunswicker regiments.)* Oh, good morning, gentlemen. Sorry to disturb you, I am sure. Very good of you to spare us a few moments.

SWINDON: Will you preside, sir?

BURGOYNE: *becoming additionally, polished, lofty, sarcastic and urbane now that he is in public.* No, sir: I feel my own deficiencies too keenly to presume so far. If you will kindly allow me, I will sit at the feet of Gamaliel. *He takes the chair at the end of the table next the door, and motions Swindon to the chair of state, waiting for him to be seated before sitting himself.*

SWINDON: *greatly annoyed.* As you please, sir. I am only trying to do my duty under excessively trying circumstances. *He takes his place in the chair of state.*

Burgoyne, relaxing his studied demeanor for the moment, sits down and begins to read the report with knitted brows and careworn looks, reflecting on his desperate situation and Swindon's uselessness. Richard is brought in. Judith walks beside him. Two soldiers precede and two follow him, with the sergeant in command. They cross the room to the wall opposite the door; but when Richard has just passed before the chair of state the sergeant stops him with a touch on the arm, and posts himself behind him, at his elbow. Judith stands timidly at the wall. The four soldiers place themselves in a squad near her.

BURGOYNE: *looking up and seeing Judith.* Who is that woman?

SERGEANT: Prisoner's wife, sir.

SWINDON: *nervously.* She begged me to allow her to be present; and I thought—

BURGOYNE: *completing the sentence for him ironically.* You thought it would be a pleasure for her. Quite so, quite so. *Blandly* Give the lady a chair; and make her thoroughly comfortable.

The sergeant fetches a chair and places it near Richard.

JUDITH: Thank you, sir. *She sits down after an awe-stricken curtsy to Burgoyne, which he acknowledges by a dignified bend of his head.*

SWINDON: *to Richard, sharply.* Your name, sir?

RICHARD: *affable, but obstinate.* Come: you don't mean to say that you've brought me here without knowing who I am?

SWINDON: As a matter of form, sir, give your name.

RICHARD: As a matter of form then, my name is Anthony Anderson, Presbyterian minister in this town.

BURGOYNE: *interested.* Indeed! Pray, Mr. Anderson, what do you gentlemen believe?

RICHARD: I shall be happy to explain if time is allowed me. I cannot undertake to complete your conversion in less than a fortnight.

SWINDON: *snubbing him.* We are not here to discuss your views.

BURGOYNE: *with an elaborate bow to the unfortunate Swindon.* I stand rebuked.

SWINDON: *embarrassed.* Oh, not you, I as—

BURGOYNE: Don't mention it. *To Richard, very politely* Any political views, Mr. Anderson?

RICHARD: I understand that that is just what we are here to find out.

SWINDON: *severely.* Do you mean to deny that you are a rebel?

RICHARD: I am an American, sir.

SWINDON: What do you expect me to think of that speech, Mr. Anderson?

RICHARD: I never expect a soldier to think, sir.

Burgoyne is boundlessly delighted by this retort, which almost reconciles him to the loss of America.

SWINDON: *whitening with anger.* I advise you not to be insolent, prisoner.

RICHARD: You can't help yourself, General. When you make up your mind to hang a man, you put yourself at a disadvantage with him. Why should I be civil to you? I may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb.

SWINDON: You have no right to assume that the court has made up its mind without a fair trial. And you will please not address me as General. I am Major Swindon.

RICHARD: A thousand pardons. I thought I had the honor of addressing Gentlemanly Johnny.

Sensation among the officers. The sergeant has a narrow escape from a guffaw.

BURGOYNE: *with extreme suavity.* I believe I am Gentlemanly Johnny, sir, at your service. My more intimate friends call me General Burgoyne. *Richard bows with perfect politeness.* You will understand, sir, I hope, since you seem to be a gentleman and a man of some spirit in spite of your calling, that if we should have the misfortune to hang you, we shall do so as a mere matter of political necessity and military duty, without any personal ill-feeling.

RICHARD: Oh, quite so. That makes all the difference in the world, of course.

They all smile in spite of themselves: and some of the younger officers burst out laughing.

JUDITH: *her dread and horror deepening at every one of these jests and compliments.* How CAN you?

RICHARD: You promised to be silent.

BURGOYNE: *to Judith, with studied courtesy.* Believe me, madam, your husband is placing us under the greatest obligation by taking this very disagreeable business so thoroughly in the spirit of a gentleman. Sergeant: give Mr. Anderson a chair. *The sergeant does so. Richard sits down.* Now, Major Swindon: we are waiting for you.

SWINDON: You are aware, I presume, Mr. Anderson, of your obligations as a subject of His Majesty King George the Third.

RICHARD: I am aware, sir, that His Majesty King George the Third is about to hang me because I object to Lord North's robbing me.

SWINDON: That is a treasonable speech, sir.

RICHARD: *briefly.* Yes. I meant it to be.

BURGOYNE: *strongly deprecating this line of defence, but still polite.* Don't you think, Mr. Anderson, that this is rather—if you will excuse the word—a vulgar line to take? Why should you cry out robbery because of a stamp duty and a tea duty and so forth? After all, it is the essence of your position as a gentleman that you pay with a good grace.

RICHARD: It is not the money, General. But to be swindled by a pig-headed lunatic like King George.

SWINDON: *scandalised.* Chut, sir—silence!

SERGEANT: *in stentorian tones, greatly shocked.* Silence!

BURGOYNE: *unruffled.* Ah, that is another point of view. My position does not allow of my going into that, except in private. But *shrugging his shoulders* of course, Mr. Anderson, if you are determined

to be hanged *Judith flinches,* there's nothing more to be said. An unusual taste! however *with a final shrug—!*

SWINDON: *to Burgoyne.* Shall we call witnesses?

RICHARD: What need is there of witnesses? If the townspeople here had listened to me, you would have found the streets barricaded, the houses loopholed, and the people in arms to hold the town against you to the last man. But you arrived, unfortunately, before we had got out of the talking stage; and then it was too late.

SWINDON: *severely.* Well, sir, we shall teach you and your townspeople a lesson they will not forget. Have you anything more to say?

RICHARD: I think you might have the decency to treat me as a prisoner of war, and shoot me like a man instead of hanging me like a dog.

BURGOYNE: *sympathetically.* Now there, Mr. Anderson, you talk like a civilian, if you will excuse my saying so. Have you any idea of the average marksmanship of the army of His Majesty King George the Third? If we make you up a firing party, what will happen? Half of them will miss you: the rest will make a mess of the business and leave you to the provo-marshal's pistol. Whereas we can hang you in a perfectly workmanlike and agreeable way. *Kindly* Let me persuade you to be hanged, Mr. Anderson?

JUDITH: *sick with horror.* My God!

RICHARD: *to Judith.* Your promise! *To Burgoyne* Thank you, General: that view of the case did not occur to me before. To oblige you, I withdraw my objection to the rope. Hang me, by all means.

BURGOYNE: *smoothly.* Will 12 o'clock suit you, Mr. Anderson?

RICHARD: I shall be at your disposal then, General.

BURGOYNE: *rising.* Nothing more to be said, gentlemen. *They all rise.*

JUDITH: *rushing to the table.* Oh, you are not going to murder a man like that, without a proper trial—without thinking of what you are doing—without—*She cannot find words.*

RICHARD: Is this how you keep your promise?

JUDITH: If I am not to speak, you must. Defend yourself: save yourself: tell them the truth.

RICHARD: *worriedly.* I have told them truth enough to hang me ten times over. If you say another word you will risk other lives; but you will not save mine.

BURGOYNE: My good lady, our only desire is to save unpleasantness. What satisfaction would it give you to have a solemn fuss made, with my friend Swindon in a black cap and so forth? I am sure we are greatly indebted to the admirable tact and gentlemanly feeling shown by your husband.

JUDITH: *throwing the words in his face.* Oh, you are mad. Is it nothing to you what wicked thing you do if only you do it like a gentleman? Is it nothing to you whether you are a murderer or not, if only you murder in a red coat? *Desperately* You shall not hang him: that man is not my husband.

The officers look at one another, and whisper: some of the Germans asking their neighbors to explain what the woman has said. Burgoyne, who has been visibly shaken by Judith's reproach, recovers himself promptly at this new development. Richard meanwhile raises his voice above the buzz.

RICHARD: I appeal to you, gentlemen, to put an end to this. She will not believe that she cannot save me. Break up the court.

BURGOYNE: *in a voice so quiet and firm that it restores silence at once.* One moment, Mr. Anderson. One moment, gentlemen. *He resumes his seat. Swindon and the officers follow his example.* Let

me understand you clearly, madam. Do you mean that this gentleman is not your husband, or merely—I wish to put this with all delicacy—that you are not his wife?

JUDITH: I don't know what you mean. I say that he is not my husband—that my husband has escaped. This man took his place to save him. Ask anyone in the town—send out into the street for the first person you find there, and bring him in as a witness. He will tell you that the prisoner is not Anthony Anderson.

BURGOYNE: *quietly, as before.* Sergeant.

SERGEANT: Yes sir.

BURGOYNE: Go out into the street and bring in the first townsman you see there.

SERGEANT: *making for the door.* Yes sir.

BURGOYNE: *as the sergeant passes.* The first clean, sober townsman you see.

SERGEANT: Yes Sir. *He goes out.*

BURGOYNE: Sit down, Mr. Anderson—if I may call you so for the present. *Richard sits down.* Sit down, madam, whilst we wait. Give the lady a newspaper.

RICHARD: *indignantly.* Shame!

BURGOYNE: *keenly, with a half smile.* If you are not her husband, sir, the case is not a serious one—for her. *Richard bites his lip silenced.*

JUDITH: *to Richard, as she returns to her seat.* I couldn't help it. *He shakes his head. She sits down.*

BURGOYNE: You will understand of course, Mr. Anderson, that you must not build on this little incident. We are bound to make an example of somebody.

RICHARD: I quite understand. I suppose there's no use in my explaining.

BURGOYNE: I think we should prefer independent testimony, if you don't mind.

The sergeant, with a packet of papers in his hand, returns conducting Christy, who is much scared.

SERGEANT: *giving Burgoyne the packet.* Dispatches, Sir. Delivered by a corporal of the 53rd. Dead beat with hard riding, sir.

Burgoyne opens the dispatches, and presently becomes absorbed in them. They are so serious as to take his attention completely from the court martial.

SERGEANT: *to Christy.* Now then. Attention; and take your hat off. *He posts himself in charge of Christy, who stands on Burgoyne's side of the court.*

RICHARD: *in his usual bullying tone to Christy.* Don't be frightened, you fool: you're only wanted as a witness. They're not going to hang YOU.

SWINDON: What's your name?

CHRISTY: Christy.

RICHARD: *impatiently.* Christopher Dudgeon, you blatant idiot. Give your full name.

SWINDON: Be silent, prisoner. You must not prompt the witness.

RICHARD: Very well. But I warn you you'll get nothing out of him unless you shake it out of him. He has been too well brought up by a pious mother to have any sense or manhood left in him.

BURGOYNE: *springing up and speaking to the sergeant in a startling voice.* Where is the man who brought these?

SERGEANT: In the guard-room, sir.

Burgoyne goes out with a haste that sets the officers exchanging looks.

SWINDON: *to Christy.* Do you know Anthony Anderson, the Presbyterian minister?

CHRISTY: Of course I do. *Implying that Swindon must be an ass not to know it.*

SWINDON: Is he here?

CHRISTY: *staring round.* I don't know.

SWINDON: Do you see him?

CHRISTY: No.

SWINDON: You seem to know the prisoner?

CHRISTY: Do you mean Dick?

SWINDON: Which is Dick?

CHRISTY: *pointing to Richard.* Him.

SWINDON: What is his name?

CHRISTY: Dick.

RICHARD: Answer properly, you jumping jackass. What do they know about Dick?

CHRISTY: Well, you are Dick, ain't you? What am I to say?

SWINDON: Address me, sir; and do you, prisoner, be silent. Tell us who the prisoner is.

CHRISTY: He's my brother Dudgeon.

SWINDON: Your brother!

CHRISTY: Yes.

SWINDON: You are sure he is not Anderson.

CHRISTY: Who?

RICHARD: *exasperatedly.* Me, me, me, you—

SWINDON: Silence, sir.

SERGEANT: *shouting.* Silence.

RICHARD: *impatiently.* Yah! *To Christy* He wants to know am I Minister Anderson. Tell him, and stop grinning like a zany.

CHRISTY: *grinning more than ever.* YOU Pastor Anderson! *To Swindon* Why, Mr. Anderson's a minister—-a very good man; and Dick's a bad character: the respectable people won't speak to him. He's the bad brother: I'm the good one, *The officers laugh outright. The soldiers grin.*

SWINDON: Who arrested this man?

SERGEANT: I did, sir. I found him in the minister's house, sitting at tea with the lady with his coat off, quite at home. If he isn't married to her, he ought to be.

SWINDON: Did he answer to the minister's name?

SERGEANT: Yes sir, but not to a minister's nature. You ask the chaplain, sir.

SWINDON: *to Richard, threateningly.* So, sir, you have attempted to cheat us. And your name is Richard Dudgeon?

RICHARD: You've found it out at last, have you?

SWINDON: Dudgeon is a name well known to us, eh?

RICHARD: Yes: Peter Dudgeon, whom you murdered, was my uncle.

SWINDON: Hm! *He compresses his lips and looks at Richard with vindictive gravity.*

CHRISTY: Are they going to hang you, Dick?

RICHARD: Yes. Get out: they've done with you.

CHRISTY: And I may keep the china peacocks?

RICHARD: *jumping up.* Get out. Get out, you blithering baboon, you. *Christy flies, panicstricken.*

SWINDON: *rising—all rise.* Since you have taken the minister's place, Richard Dudgeon, you shall go through with it. The execution will take place at 12 o'clock as arranged; and unless Anderson surrenders before then you shall take his place on the gallows. Sergeant: take your man out.

JUDITH: *distracted.* No, no—

SWINDON: *fiercely, dreading a renewal of her entreaties.* Take that woman away.

RICHARD: *springing across the table with a tiger-like bound, and seizing Swindon by the throat.* You infernal scoundrel.

The sergeant rushes to the rescue from one side, the soldiers from the other. They seize Richard and drag him back to his place. Swindon, who has been thrown supine on the table, rises, arranging his stock. He is about to speak, when he is anticipated by Burgoyne, who has just appeared at the door with two papers in his hand: a white letter and a blue dispatch.

BURGOYNE: *advancing to the table, elaborately cool.* What is this? What's happening? Mr. Anderson: I'm astonished at you.

RICHARD: I am sorry I disturbed you, General. I merely wanted to strangle your understrapper there. *Breaking out violently at Swindon* Why do you raise the devil in me by bullying the woman like that? You oatmeal faced dog, I'd twist your cursed head off with the greatest satisfaction. *He puts out his hands to the sergeant* Here: handcuff me, will you; or I'll not undertake to keep my fingers off him.

The sergeant takes out a pair of handcuffs and looks to Burgoyne for instructions.

BURGOYNE: Have you addressed profane language to the lady, Major Swindon?

SWINDON: *very angry.* No, sir, certainly not. That question should not have been put to me. I ordered the woman to be removed, as she was disorderly; and the fellow sprang at me. Put away those handcuffs. I am perfectly able to take care of myself.

RICHARD: Now you talk like a man, I have no quarrel with you.

BURGOYNE: Mr. Anderson—

SWINDON: His name is Dudgeon, sir, Richard Dudgeon. He is an impostor.

BURGOYNE: *brusquely.* Nonsense, sir; you hanged Dudgeon at Springtown.

RICHARD: It was my uncle, General.

BURGOYNE: Oh, your uncle. *To Swindon, handsomely* I beg your pardon, Major Swindon. *Swindon acknowledges the apology stiffly. Burgoyne turns to Richard* We are somewhat unfortunate in our relations with your family. Well, Mr. Dudgeon, what I wanted to ask you is this: Who is *reading the name from the letter* William Maindeck Parshotter?

RICHARD: He is the Mayor of Springtown.

BURGOYNE: Is William—Maindeckand so on—aman of his word?

RICHARD: Is he selling you anything?

BURGOYNE: No.

RICHARD: Then you may depend on him.

BURGOYNE: Thank you, Mr.—'m—Dudgeon. By the way, since you are not Mr. Anderson, do we still—eh, Major Swindon? *meaning "do we still hang him?"*

RICHARD: The arrangements are unaltered, General.

BURGOYNE: Ah, indeed. I am sorry. Good morning, Mr. Dudgeon. Good morning, madam.

RICHARD: *interrupting Judith almost fiercely as she is about to make some wild appeal, and taking her arm resolutely.* Not one word more. Come.

She looks imploringly at him, but is overborne by his determination. They are marched out by the four soldiers: the sergeant, very sulky, walking between Swindon and Richard, whom he watches as if he were a dangerous animal.

BURGOYNE: Gentlemen: we need not detain you. Major Swindon: a word with you. *The officers go out. Burgoyne waits with unruffled serenity until the last of them disappears. Then he becomes very grave, and addresses Swindon for the first time without his title.* Swindon: do you know what this is *showing him the letter?*

SWINDON: What?

BURGOYNE: A demand for a safe-conduct for an officer of their militia to come here and arrange terms with us.

SWINDON: Oh, they are giving in.

BURGOYNE: They add that they are sending the man who raised Springtown last night and drove us out; so that we may know that we are dealing with an officer of importance.

SWINDON: Pooh!

BURGOYNE: He will be fully empowered to arrange the terms of—guess what.

SWINDON: Their surrender, I hope.

BURGOYNE: No: our evacuation of the town. They offer us just six hours to clear out.

SWINDON: What monstrous impudence!

BURGOYNE: What shall we do, eh?

SWINDON: March on Springtown and strike a decisive blow at once.

BURGOYNE: *quietly.* Hm! *Turning to the door* Come to the adjutant's office.

SWINDON: What for?

BURGOYNE: To write out that safe-conduct. *He puts his hand to the door knob to open it.*

SWINDON: *who has not budged.* General Burgoyne.

BURGOYNE: *returning.* Sir?

SWINDON: It is my duty to tell you, sir, that I do not consider the threats of a mob of rebellious tradesmen a sufficient reason for our giving way.

BURGOYNE: *imperturbable.* Suppose I resign my command to you, what will you do?

SWINDON: I will undertake to do what we have marched south from Boston to do, and what General Howe has marched north from New York to do: effect a junction at Albany and wipe out the rebel

army with our united forces.

BURGOYNE: *enigmatically.* And will you wipe out our enemies in London, too?

SWINDON: In London! What enemies?

BURGOYNE: *forcibly.* Jobbery and snobbery, incompetence and Red Tape. *He holds up the dispatch and adds, with despair in his face and voice* I have just learnt, sir, that General Howe is still in New York.

SWINDON: *thunderstruck.* Good God! He has disobeyed orders!

BURGOYNE: *with sardonic calm.* He has received no orders, sir. Some gentleman in London forgot to dispatch them: he was leaving town for his holiday, I believe. To avoid upsetting his arrangements, England will lose her American colonies; and in a few days you and I will be at Saratoga with 5,000 men to face 16,000 rebels in an impregnable position.

SWINDON: *appalled.* Impossible!

BURGOYNE: *coldly.* I beg your pardon!

SWINDON: I can't believe it! What will History say?

BURGOYNE: History, sir, will tell lies, as usual. Come: we must send the safe-conduct. *He goes out.*

SWINDON: *following distractedly.* My God, my God! We shall be wiped out.

As noon approaches there is excitement in the market place. The gallows which hangs there permanently for the terror of evildoers, with such minor advertizers and examples of crime as the pillory, the whipping post, and the stocks, has a new rope attached, with the noose hitched up to one of the uprights, out of reach of the boys. Its ladder, too, has been brought out and placed in position by the town beadle, who stands by to guard it from unauthorized climbing. The Websterbridge townsfolk are present in force, and in high spirits; for the news has spread that it is the devil's disciple and not the minister that the Continentals so they call Burgoyne's forces are about to hang: consequently the execution can be enjoyed without any misgiving as to its righteousness, or to the cowardice of allowing it to take place without a struggle. There is even some fear of a disappointment as midday approaches and the arrival of the beadle with the ladder remains the only sign of preparation. But at last reassuring shouts of Here they come: Here they are, are heard; and a company of soldiers with fixed bayonets, half British infantry, half Hessians, tramp quickly into the middle of the market place, driving the crowd to the sides.

SERGEANT: Halt. Front. Dress. *(The soldiers change their column into a square enclosing the gallows, their petty officers, energetically led by the sergeant, hustling the persons who find themselves inside the square out at the corners.)* Now then! Out of it with you: out of it. Some o' you'll get strung up yourselves presently. Form that square there, will you, you damned Hoosians. No use talkin' German to them: talk to their toes with the butt ends of your muskets: they'll understand that. GET out of it, will you? *He comes upon Judith, standing near the gallows.* Now then: YOU'VE no call here.

JUDITH: May I not stay? What harm am I doing?

SERGEANT: I want none of your argufying. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, running to see a man hanged that's not your husband. And he's no better than yourself. I told my major he was a gentleman; and then he goes and tries to strangle him, and calls his blessed Majesty a lunatic. So out of it with you, double quick.

JUDITH: Will you take these two silver dollars and let me stay?

The sergeant, without an instant's hesitation, looks quickly and furtively round as he shoots the money dexterously into his pocket. Then he raises his voice in virtuous indignation.

SERGEANT: ME take money in the execution of my duty! Certainly not. Now I'll tell you what I'll do, to teach you to corrupt the King's officer. I'll put you under arrest until the execution's over. You just stand there; and don't let me see you as much as move from that spot until you're let. *With a swift wink at her he points to the corner of the square behind the gallows on his right, and turns noisily away, shouting* Now then dress up and keep 'em back, will you?

Cries of Hush and Silence are heard among the townsfolk; and the sound of a military band, playing the Dead March from Saul, is heard. The crowd becomes quiet at once; and the sergeant and petty officers, hurrying to the back of the square, with a few whispered orders and some stealthy hustling cause it to open and admit the funeral procession, which is protected from the crowd by a double file of soldiers. First come Burgoyne and Swindon, who, on entering the square, glance with distaste at the gallows, and avoid passing under it by wheeling a little to the right and stationing themselves on that side. Then Mr. Brudenell, the chaplain, in his surplice, with his prayer book open in his hand, walking beside Richard, who is moody and disorderly. He walks doggedly through the gallows framework, and posts himself a little in front of it. Behind him comes the executioner, a stalwart soldier in his shirtsleeves. Following him, two soldiers haul a light military waggon. Finally comes the band, which posts itself at the back of the square, and finishes the Dead March. Judith, watching Richard painfully, steals down to the gallows, and stands leaning against its right post. During the conversation which follows, the two soldiers place the cart under the gallows, and stand by the shafts, which point backwards. The executioner takes a set of steps from the cart and places it ready for the prisoner to mount. Then he climbs the tall ladder which stands against the gallows, and cuts the string by which the rope is hitched up; so that the noose drops dangling over the cart, into which he steps as he descends.

RICHARD: *with suppressed impatience, to Brudenell.* Look here, sir: this is no place for a man of your profession. Hadn't you better go away?

SWINDON: I appeal to you, prisoner, if you have any sense of decency left, to listen to the ministrations of the chaplain, and pay due heed to the solemnity of the occasion.

CHAPLAIN: *gently reproving Richard.* Try to control yourself, and submit to the divine will. *He lifts his book to proceed with the service.*

RICHARD: Answer for your own will, sir, and those of your accomplices here *indicating Burgoyne and Swindon:* I see little divinity about them or you. You talk to me of Christianity when you are in the act of hanging your enemies. Was there ever such blasphemous nonsense! *To Swindon, more rudely* You've got up the solemnity of the occasion, as you call it, to impress the people with your own dignity—Handel's music and a clergyman to make murder look like piety! Do you suppose I am going to help you? You've asked me to choose the rope because you don't know your own trade well enough to shoot me properly. Well, hang away and have done with it.

SWINDON: *to the chaplain.* Can you do nothing with him, Mr. Brudenell?

CHAPLAIN: I will try, sir. *Beginning to read* Man that is born of woman hath—

RICHARD: *fixing his eyes on him.* "Thou shalt not kill."

The book drops in Brudenell's hands.

CHAPLAIN: *confessing his embarrassment.* What am I to say, Mr. Dudgeon?

RICHARD: Let me alone, man, can't you?

BURGOYNE: *with extreme urbanity.* I think, Mr. Brudenell, that as the usual professional observations seem to strike Mr. Dudgeon as incongruous under the circumstances, you had better omit them until—er—until Mr. Dudgeon can no longer be inconvenienced by them. *Brudenell, with a shrug, shuts his book and retires behind the gallows.* YOU seem in a hurry, Mr. Dudgeon.

RICHARD: *with the horror of death upon him.* Do you think this is a pleasant sort of thing to be kept

waiting for? You've made up your mind to commit murder: well, do it and have done with it.

BURGOYNE: Mr. Dudgeon: we are only doing this—

RICHARD: Because you're paid to do it.

SWINDON: You insolent—*He swallows his rage.*

BURGOYNE: *with much charm of manner.* Ah, I am really sorry that you should think that, Mr. Dudgeon. If you knew what my commission cost me, and what my pay is, you would think better of me. I should be glad to part from you on friendly terms.

RICHARD: Hark ye, General Burgoyne. If you think that I like being hanged, you're mistaken. I don't like it; and I don't mean to pretend that I do. And if you think I'm obliged to you for hanging me in a gentlemanly way, you're wrong there too. I take the whole business in devilish bad part; and the only satisfaction I have in it is that you'll feel a good deal meaner than I'll look when it's over. *(He turns away, and is striding to the cart when Judith advances and interposes with her arms stretched out to him. Richard, feeling that a very little will upset his self-possession, shrinks from her, crying)* What are you doing here? This is no place for you. *She makes a gesture as if to touch him. He recoils impatiently.* No: go away, go away; you'll unnerve me. Take her away, will you?

JUDITH: Won't you bid me good-bye?

RICHARD: *allowing her to take his hand.* Oh good-bye, good-bye. Now go—go—quickly. *She clings to his hand—will not be put off with so cold a last farewell—at last, as he tries to disengage himself, throws herself on his breast in agony.*

SWINDON: *angrily to the sergeant, who, alarmed at Judith's movement, has come from the back of the square to pull her back, and stopped irresolutely on finding that he is too late.* How is this? Why is she inside the lines?

SERGEANT: *guiltily.* I dunno, sir. She's that artful can't keep her away.

BURGOYNE: You were bribed.

SERGEANT: *protesting.* No, Sir—

SWINDON: *severely.* Fall back. *He obeys.*

RICHARD: *imploringly to those around him, and finally to Burgoyne, as the least stolid of them.* Take her away. Do you think I want a woman near me now?

BURGOYNE: *going to Judith and taking her hand.* Here, madam: you had better keep inside the lines; but stand here behind us; and don't look.

Richard, with a great sobbing sigh of relief as she releases him and turns to Burgoyne, flies for refuge to the cart and mounts into it. The executioner takes off his coat and pinions him.

JUDITH: *resisting Burgoyne quietly and drawing her hand away.* No: I must stay. I won't look. *She goes to the right of the gallows. She tries to look at Richard, but turns away with a frightful shudder, and falls on her knees in prayer. Brudenell comes towards her from the back of the square.*

BURGOYNE: *nodding approvingly as she kneels.* Ah, quite so. Do not disturb her, Mr. Brudenell: that will do very nicely. *Brudenell nods also, and withdraws a little, watching her sympathetically. Burgoyne resumes his former position, and takes out a handsome gold chronometer.* Now then, are those preparations made? We must not detain Mr. Dudgeon.

By this time Richard's hands are bound behind him; and the noose is round his neck. The two soldiers take the shaft of the wagon, ready to pull it away. The executioner, standing in the cart behind Richard, makes a sign to the sergeant.

SERGEANT: *to Burgoyne.* Ready, sir.

BURGOYNE: Have you anything more to say, Mr. Dudgeon? It wants two minutes of twelve still.

RICHARD: *in the strong voice of a man who has conquered the bitterness of death.* Your watch is two minutes slow by the town clock, which I can see from here, General. *The town clock strikes the first stroke of twelve. Involuntarily the people flinch at the sound, and a subdued groan breaks from them.* Amen! my life for the world's future!

ANDERSON: *shouting as he rushes into the market place.* Amen; and stop the execution. *He bursts through the line of soldiers opposite Burgoyne, and rushes, panting, to the gallows.* I am Anthony Anderson, the man you want.

The crowd, intensely excited, listens with all its ears. Judith, half rising, stares at him; then lifts her hands like one whose dearest prayer has been granted.

SWINDON: Indeed. Then you are just in time to take your place on the gallows. Arrest him.

At a sign from the sergeant, two soldiers come forward to seize Anderson.

ANDERSON: *thrusting a paper under Swindon's nose.* There's my safe-conduct, sir.

SWINDON: *taken aback.* Safe-conduct! Are you—!

ANDERSON: *emphatically.* I am. *The two soldiers take him by the elbows.* Tell these men to take their hands off me.

SWINDON: *to the men.* Let him go.

SERGEANT: Fall back.

The two men return to their places. The townsfolk raise a cheer; and begin to exchange exultant looks, with a presentiment of triumph as they see their Pastor speaking with their enemies in the gate.

ANDERSON: *exhaling a deep breath of relief, and dabbing his perspiring brow with his handkerchief.* Thank God, I was in time!

BURGOYNE: *calm as ever, and still watch in hand.* Ample time, sir. Plenty of time. I should never dream of hanging any gentleman by an American clock. *He puts up his watch.*

ANDERSON: Yes: we are some minutes ahead of you already, General. Now tell them to take the rope from the neck of that American citizen.

BURGOYNE: *to the executioner in the cart—very politely.* Kindly undo Mr. Dudgeon.

The executioner takes the rope from Richard's neck, unties has hands, and helps him on with his coat.

JUDITH: *stealing timidly to Anderson.* Tony.

ANDERSON: *putting his arm round her shoulders and bantering her affectionately.* Well what do you think of you husband, NOW, eh?—eh??—eh???

JUDITH: I am ashamed—*She hides her face against his breast.*

BURGOYNE: *to Swindon.* You look disappointed, Major Swindon.

SWINDON: You look defeated, General Burgoyne.

BURGOYNE: I am, sir; and I am humane enough to be glad of it. *Richard jumps down from the cart, Brudenell offering his hand to help him, and runs to Anderson, whose left hand he shakes heartily, the right being occupied by Judith.* By the way, Mr. Anderson, I do not quite understand. The safe-conduct was for a commander of the militia. I understand you are a—[he looks as pointedly as his good manners permit at the riding boots, the pistols, and Richard's coat, and adds] a clergyman.

ANDERSON: *between Judith and Richard.* Sir: it is in the hour of trial that a man finds his true

profession. This foolish young man *placing his hand on Richard's shoulder* boasted himself the Devil's Disciple; but when the hour of trial came to him, he found that it was his destiny to suffer and be faithful to the death. I thought myself a decent minister of the gospel of peace; but when the hour of trial came to me, I found that it was my destiny to be a man of action and that my place was amid the thunder of the captains and the shouting. So I am starting life at fifty as Captain Anthony Anderson of the Springtown militia; and the Devil's Disciple here will start presently as the Reverend Richard Dudgeon, and wag his pow in my old pulpit, and give good advice to this silly sentimental little wife of mine *putting his other hand on her shoulder. She steals a glance at Richard to see how the prospect pleases him.* Your mother told me, Richard, that I should never have chosen Judith if I'd been born for the ministry. I am afraid she was right; so, by your leave, you may keep my coat and I'll keep yours.

RICHARD: Minister—I should say Captain. I have behaved like a fool.

JUDITH: Like a hero.

RICHARD: Much the same thing, perhaps. *With some bitterness towards himself* But no: if I had been any good, I should have done for you what you did for me, instead of making a vain sacrifice.

ANDERSON: Not vain, my boy. It takes all sorts to make a world —saints as well as soldiers. *Turning to Burgoyne* And now, General, time presses; and America is in a hurry. Have you realized that though you may occupy towns and win battles, you cannot conquer a nation?

BURGOYNE: My good sir, without a Conquest you cannot have an aristocracy. Come and settle the matter at my quarters.

ANDERSON: At your service, sir. *To Richard* See Judith home for me, will you, my boy? *He hands her over to him.* Now General. *He goes busily up the market place towards the Town Hall, Leaving Judith and Richard together. Burgoyne follows him a step or two; then checks himself and turns to Richard.*

BURGOYNE: Oh, by the way, Mr. Dudgeon, I shall be glad to see you at lunch at half-past one. *He pauses a moment, and adds, with politely veiled slyness* Bring Mrs. Anderson, if she will be so good. *To Swindon, who is fuming* Take it quietly, Major Swindon: your friend the British soldier can stand up to anything except the British War Office. *He follows Anderson.*

SERGEANT: *to Swindon.* What orders, sir?

SWINDON: *savagely.* Orders! What use are orders now? There's no army. Back to quarters; and be d— *He turns on his heel and goes.*

SERGEANT: *pugnacious and patriotic, repudiating the idea of defeat.* 'Tention. Now then: cock up your chins, and show 'em you don't care a damn for 'em. Slope arms! Fours! Wheel! Quick march!

The drum marks time with a tremendous bang; the band strikes up British Grenadiers; and the sergeant, Brudenell, and the English troops march off defiantly to their quarters. The townsfolk press in behind, and follow them up the market, jeering at them; and the town band, a very primitive affair, brings up the rear, playing Yankee Doodle. Essie, who comes in with them, runs to Richard.

ESSIE: Oh, Dick!

RICHARD: *good-humoredly, but wilfully.* Now, now: come, come! I don't mind being hanged; but I will not be cried over.

ESSIE: No, I promise. I'll be good. *She tries to restrain her tears, but cannot.* I—I want to see where the soldiers are going to. *She goes a little way up the market, pretending to look after the crowd.*

JUDITH: Promise me you will never tell him.

RICHARD: Don't be afraid.

They shake hands on it.

ESSIE: *calling to them.* They're coming back. They want you.

Jubilation in the market. The townsfolk surge back again in wild enthusiasm with their band, and hoist Richard on their shoulders, cheering him.

CURTAIN.

Le note di scena sono tra parentesi *quadre* o *(tonde).*

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