

Under Milk Wood : Audition Pieces (1)

1ST VOICE AND BUTCHER BEYNON

1st Voice : One of the two narrators, who set the scene, giving us additional detail about the characters we meet in Llareggub.

Butcher Beynon: A terrible tease who tells his wife tall stories about chopping up cats and wild animals to sell in his butcher's shop.

1st VOICE: To begin at the beginning:

It is spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black, the cobblestreets silent and the hunched, courters'-and-rabbits' wood limping invisible down to the sloeblack, slow, black, crowblack, fishingboat-bobbing sea. The houses are blind as moles (though moles see fine to-night in the snouting, velvet dingles) or blind as Captain Cat there in the muffled middle by the pump and the townclock, the shops in mourning, the Welfare Hall in widows' weeds. And all the people of the lulled and dumbfound town are sleeping now.

Hush, the babies are sleeping, the farmers, the fishers, the tradesmen and pensioners, cobbler, school-teacher, postman and publican, the undertaker and the fancy woman, drunkard, dressmaker, preacher, policeman, the webfoot cocklewomen and the tidy wives. Young girls lie bedded soft or glide in their dreams, with rings and trousseaux, bridesmaided by glow-worms down the aisles of the organplaying wood. The boys are dreaming wicked or of the bucking ranches of the night and the

jollyrodgered sea. And the anthracite statues of the horses sleep in the fields, and the cows in the byres, and the dogs in the wetnosed yards; and the cats nap in the slant corners or lope sly, streaking and needling, on the one cloud of the roofs.

You can hear the dew falling, and the hushed town breathing. Only *your* eyes are unclosed to see the black and folded town fast, and slow, asleep. And you alone can hear the invisible starfall, the darkest- before-dawn minutely dewgrazed stir of the black, dab-filled sea where the *Aresthusa*, the *Curlew* and the *Skylark*, *Zanzibar*, *Rhiannon*, the *Rover*, the *Cormorant*, and the *Star of Wales* tilt and ride.

Listen. It is night moving in the streets, the processional salt slow musical wind in Coronation Street and Cockle Row, it is the grass growing on Llareggub Hill, dewfall, starfall, the sleep of birds in Milk Wood.

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MRS BEYNON: She likes the liver, Ben.

MR BEYNON: She ought to do, Bess. It's her brother's.

MRS BEYNON: Oh, d'you hear that, Lily? *(screams)*

LILY S: Yes, mum.

MRS BEYNON: We're eating pussycat.

LILY S: Yes, mum.

MRS BEYNON: Oh, you cat-butcher!

MR BEYNON: It was doctored, mind.

MRS BEYNON: What's that got to do with it? *(hysterical)*

MR BEYNON: Yesterday we had mole.

MRS BEYNON: Oh, Lily, Lily!

MR BEYNON: Monday, otter. Tuesday, shrews.

(Mrs Beynon screams)

LILY S: Go on, Mrs Beynon. He's the biggest liar in town.

MRS BEYNON: Don't you dare say that about Mr Beynon.

LILY S: Everybody knows it, mum.

MRS BEYNON: Mr Beynon never tells a lie. Do you, Ben?

MR BEYNON: No, Bess. And now I am going out after the corgis with my little cleaver.

MRS BEYNON: Oh, Lily, Lily!

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