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A NIGHT AT AN INN

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

BY

LORD DUNSANY



THE SUNWISE TURN, *Inc.*

2 EAST 31ST STREET NEW YORK

1916

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**THE DRAWING ON THE COVER IS FROM
A SILVER SEAL CUT BY LORD DUNSANY**

2nd Printing

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

A. E. SCOTT-FORTESQUE (The Toff), *A dilapidated gentleman*
WILLIAM JONES (Bill) }
ALBERT THOMAS } *merchant sailors*
JACOB SMITH (Sniggers) }
First Priest of Klesh
Second Priest of Klesh
Third Priest of Klesh
Klesh

A NIGHT AT AN INN

(The curtain rises on a room in an inn. Sniggers and Bill are talking, the Toff is reading a paper. Albert sits a little apart.)

SNIGGERS

What's his idea, I wonder?

BILL

I don't know.

SNIGGERS

And how much longer will he keep us here?

BILL

We've been here three days.

SNIGGERS

And 'aven't seen a soul.

BILL

And a pretty penny it cost us when he rented the pub.

SNIGGERS

'Ow long did 'e rent the pub for?

BILL

You never know with him.

SNIGGERS

It's lonely enough.

BILL

'Ow long did you rent the pub for, Toffy?

(The Toff continues to read a sporting paper; he takes no notice of what is said.)

SNIGGERS

'E's *such* a toff.

BILL

Yet 'e's clever, no mistake.

SNIGGERS

Those clever ones are the beggars to make a muddle. Their plans are clever enough, but they don't work, and then they make a mess of things much worse than you or me.

BILL

Ah!

SNIGGERS

I don't like this place.

BILL

Why not?

SNIGGERS

I don't like the looks of it.

BILL

He's keeping us here because here those niggers can't find us. The three heathen priests what was looking for us so. But we want to go and sell our ruby soon.

ALBERT

There's no sense in it.

BILL

Why not, Albert?

ALBERT

Because I gave those black devils the slip in Hull.

BILL

You give 'em the slip, Albert?

ALBERT

The slip, all three of them. The fellows with the gold spots on their foreheads. I had the ruby then and I give them the slip in Hull.

BILL

How did you do it, Albert?

ALBERT

I had the ruby and they were following me. . . .

BILL

Who told them you had the ruby? You didn't show it.

ALBERT

No. . . . But they kind of know.

SNIGGERS

They kind of know, Albert?

ALBERT

Yes, they know if you've got it. Well, they sort of mouched after me, and I tells a policeman and he says, O, they were only three poor niggers and they wouldn't hurt me. Ugh! When I thought of what they did in Malta to poor old Jim.

BILL

Yes, and to George in Bombay before we started.

SNIGGERS

Ugh!

BILL

Why didn't you give 'em in charge?

ALBERT

What about the ruby, Bill?

BILL

Ah!

ALBERT

Well, I did better than that. I walks up and down through Hull. I walks slow enough. And then I turns a corner and I runs. I never sees a corner but I turns it. But sometimes I let a corner pass just to fool them. I twists about like a hare. Then I sits down and waits. No priests.

SNIGGERS

What?

ALBERT

No heathen black devils with gold spots on their face. I give 'em the slip.

BILL

Well done, Albert!

SNIGGERS

(After a sigh of content.)

Why didn't you tell us?

ALBERT

'Cause 'e won't let you speak. 'E's got 'is plans and 'e thinks we're silly folk. Things must be done 'is way. And all the time I've give 'em the slip. Might 'ave 'ad one o' them crooked knives in him before now but for me who give 'em the slip in Hull.

BILL

Well done, Albert!

Do you hear that, Toffy? Albert has give 'em the slip.

THE TOFF

Yes, I hear.

SNIGGERS

Well, what do you say to that?

THE TOFF

O. . . . Well done, Albert!

ALBERT

And what a' you going to do?

THE TOFF

Going to wait.

ALBERT

Don't seem to know what 'e's waiting for.

SNIGGERS

It's a nasty place.

ALBERT

It's getting silly, Bill. Our money's gone and we want to sell the ruby. Let's get on to a town.

BILL

But 'e won't come.

ALBERT

Then we'll leave him.

SNIGGERS

We'll be all right if we keep away from Hull.

ALBERT

We'll go to London.

BILL

But 'e must 'ave 'is share.

SNIGGERS

All right. Only let's go. *(To the Toff)* We're going, do you hear? Give us the ruby.

THE TOFF

Certainly.

(He gives them a ruby from his waistcoat pocket; it is the size of a small hen's egg.

He goes on reading his paper.)

ALBERT

Come on, Sniggers.

(Exeunt Albert and Sniggers.)

BILL

Good-by, old man. We'll give you your fair share, but there's nothing to do here—no girls, no halls, and we must sell the ruby.

THE TOFF

I'm not a fool, Bill.

BILL

No, no, of course not. Of course you ain't, and you've helped us a lot. Good-by. You'll say good-by?

THE TOFF

Oh, yes. Good-by.

(Still reads his paper. Exit Bill. The Toff puts a revolver on the table beside him and goes on with his papers. After a moment the three men come rushing in again, frightened.)

SNIGGERS

(Out of breath.)

We've come back, Toffy.

THE TOFF

So you have.

ALBERT

Toffy. . . . How did they get here?

THE TOFF

They walked, of course.

ALBERT

But it's eighty miles.

SNIGGERS

Did you know they were here, Toffy?

THE TOFF

Expected them about now.

ALBERT

Eighty miles!

BILL

Toffy, old man . . . what are we to do?

THE TOFF

Ask Albert.

BILL

If they can do things like this, there's no one can save us but you, Toffy. . . . I always knew you were a clever one. We won't be fools any more. We'll obey you, Toffy.

THE TOFF

You're brave enough and strong enough. There isn't many that would steal a ruby eye out of an idol's head, and such an idol as that was to look at, and on such a night. You're brave enough, Bill. But you're all three of you fools. Jim would have none of my plans, and where's Jim? And George. What did they do to him?

SNIGGERS

Don't, Toffy!

THE TOFF

Well, then, your strength is no use to you. You want cleverness; or they'll have you the way they had George and Jim.

ALL

Ugh!

THE TOFF

Those black priests would follow you round the world in circles. Year after year, till they got the idol's eye. And if we died with it, they'd follow our grand-children. That fool thinks he can escape from men like that by running round three streets in the town of Hull.

ALBERT

God's truth, *you* 'aven't escaped them, because they're *'ere*.

THE TOFF

So I supposed.

ALBERT

You *supposed*!

THE TOFF

Yes, I believe there's no announcement in the Society papers. But I took this country seat especially to receive them. There's plenty of room if you dig, it is pleasantly situated, and, what is more important, it is in a very quiet neighborhood. So I am at home to them this afternoon.

BILL

Well, *you're* a deep one.

THE TOFF

And remember, you've only my wits between you and death, and don't put your futile plans against those of an educated gentleman.

ALBERT

If you're a gentleman, why don't you go about among gentlemen instead of the likes of us?

THE TOFF

Because I was too clever for them as I am too clever for you.

ALBERT

Too clever for them?

THE TOFF

I never lost a game of cards in my life.

BILL

You never lost a game!

THE TOFF

Not when there was money in it.

BILL

Well, well!

THE TOFF

Have a game of poker?

ALL

No, thanks.

THE TOFF

Then do as you're told.

BILL

All right, Toffy.

SNIGGERS

I saw something just then. Hadn't we better draw the curtains?

THE TOFF

No.

SNIGGERS

What?

THE TOFF

Don't draw the curtains.

SNIGGERS

O, all right.

BILL

But, Toffy, they can see us. One doesn't let the enemy do that. I don't see why. . . .

THE TOFF

No, of course you don't.

BILL

O, all right, Toffy.

(All begin to pull out revolvers.)

THE TOFF

(Putting his own away.)

No revolvers, please.

ALBERT

Why not?

THE TOFF

Because I don't want any noise at my party. We might get guests that hadn't been invited. *Knives* are a different matter.

(All draw knives. The Toff signs to them not to draw them yet. Toffy has already taken back his ruby.)

BILL

I think they're coming, Toffy.

THE TOFF

Not yet.

ALBERT

When will they come?

THE TOFF

When I am quite ready to receive them. Not before.

SNIGGERS

I should like to get this over.

THE TOFF

Should you? Then we'll have them now.

SNIGGERS

Now?

THE TOFF

Yes. Listen to me. You shall do as you see me do. You will all pretend to go out. I'll show you how. I've got the ruby. When they see me alone they will come for their idol's eye.

BILL

How can they tell like this which of us has it?

THE TOFF

I confess I don't know, but they seem to.

SNIGGERS

What will you do when they come in?

THE TOFF

I shall do nothing.

SNIGGERS

What?

THE TOFF

They will creep up behind me. Then, my friends, Sniggers and Bill and Albert, who gave them the slip, will do what they can.

BILL

All right, Toffy. Trust us.

THE TOFF

If you're a little slow, you will see enacted the cheerful spectacle that accompanied the demise of Jim.

SNIGGERS

Don't, Toffy. We'll be there, all right.

THE TOFF

Very well. Now watch me.

(He goes past the windows to the inner door R. He opens it inwards, then under cover of the open door, he slips down on his knee and closes it, remaining on the inside, appearing to have gone out. He signs to the others, who understand. Then he appears to re-enter in the same manner.)

THE TOFF

Now, I shall sit with my back to the door. You go out one by one, so far as our friends can make out. Crouch very low to be on the safe side. They mustn't see you through the window.

(Bill makes his sham exit.)

THE TOFF

Remember, no revolvers. The police are, I believe, proverbially inquisitive.

(The other two follow Bill. All three are now crouching inside the door R. The Toff puts the ruby beside him on the table. He lights a cigarette.)

(The door at the back opens so slowly that you can hardly say at what moment it began. The Toff picks up his paper.)

(A native of India wriggles along the floor ever so slowly, seeking cover from chairs. He moves L. where the Toff is. The three sailors are R. Sniggers and Albert lean forward. Bill's arm keeps them back. An arm-chair had better conceal them from the Indian. The black Priest nears the Toff. Bill watches to see if any more are coming. Then he leaps forward alone—he has taken his boots off—and knifes the Priest.)

(The Priest tries to shout but Bill's left hand is over his mouth.)

(The Toff continues to read his sporting paper. He never looks around.)

BILL

(Sotto voce.)

There's only one, Toffy. What shall we do?

THE TOFF

(Without turning his head.)

Only one?

BILL

Yes.

THE TOFF

Wait a moment. Let me think. *(Still apparently absorbed in his paper.)* Ah, yes. You go back, Bill. We must attract another guest. . . . Now, are you ready?

BILL

Yes.

THE TOFF

All right. You shall now see my demise at my Yorkshire residence. You must receive guests for me.

(He leaps up in full view of the window, flings up both arms and falls to the floor near the dead Priest.)

Now, be ready. *(His eyes close.)*

(There is a long pause. Again the door opens, very, very slowly. Another priest creeps in. He has three golden spots upon his forehead. He looks round, then he creeps up to his companion and turns him over and looks inside of his clenched hands. Then he looks at the recumbent Toff. Then he creeps toward him. Bill slips after him and knifes him like the other with his left hand over his mouth.)

BILL

(Sotto voce.)

We've only got two, Toffy.

THE TOFF

Still another.

BILL

What'll we do?

THE TOFF

(Sitting up.)

Hum.

BILL

This is the best way, much.

THE TOFF

Out of the question. Never play the same game twice.

BILL

Why not, Toffy?

THE TOFF

Doesn't work if you do.

BILL

Well?

THE TOFF

I have it, Albert. You will now walk into the room. I showed you how to do it.

ALBERT

Yes.

THE TOFF

Just run over here and have a fight at this window with these two men.

ALBERT

But they're . . .

THE TOFF

Yes, they're dead, my perspicuous Albert. But Bill and I are going to resuscitate them. . . . Come on.

(Bill picks up a body under the arms.)

THE TOFF

That's right, Bill. *(Does the same.)* Come and help us, Sniggers. . . . *(Sniggers comes.)* Keep low, keep low. Wave their arms about, Sniggers. Don't show yourself. Now, Albert, over you go. Our Albert is slain. Back you get, Bill. Back, Sniggers. Still, Albert. Mustn't move when he comes. Not a muscle.

(A face appears at the window and stays for some time. Then the door opens and, looking craftily round, the third Priest enters. He looks at his companions' bodies and turns round. He suspects something. He takes up one of the knives and with a knife in each hand he puts his back to the wall. He looks to the left and right.)

THE TOFF

Come on, Bill.

(The Priest rushes to the door. The Toff knifes the last Priest from behind.)

THE TOFF

A good day's work, my friends.

BILL

Well done, Toffy. Oh, you are a deep one!

ALBERT

A deep one if ever there was one.

SNIGGERS

There ain't any more. Bill, are there?

THE TOFF

No more in the world, my friend.

BILL

Aye, that's all there are. There were only three in the temple. Three priests and their beastly idol.

ALBERT

What is it worth, Toffy? Is it worth a thousand pounds?

THE TOFF

It's worth all they've got in the shop. Worth just whatever we like to ask for it.

ALBERT

Then we're millionaires now.

THE TOFF

Yes, and, what is more important, we no longer have any heirs.

BILL

We'll have to sell it now.

ALBERT

That won't be easy. It's a pity it isn't small and we had half a dozen. Hadn't the idol any other on him?

BILL

No, he was green jade all over and only had this one eye. He had it in the middle of his forehead and was a long sight uglier than anything else in the world.

SNIGGERS

I'm sure we ought all to be very grateful to Toffy.

BILL

And, indeed, we ought.

ALBERT

If it hadn't been for him. . . .

BILL

Yes, if it hadn't been for old Toffy. . . .

SNIGGERS

He's a deep one.

THE TOFF

Well, you see I just have a knack of foreseeing things.

SNIGGERS

I should think you did.

BILL

Why, I don't suppose anything happens that our Toff doesn't foresee. Does it, Toffy?

THE TOFF

Well, I don't think it does, Bill. I don't think it often does.

BILL

Life is no more than just a game of cards to our old Toff.

THE TOFF

Well, we've taken these fellows' trick.

SNIGGERS

(Going to window.)

It wouldn't do for any one to see them.

THE TOFF

Oh, nobody will come this way. We're all alone on a moor.

BILL

Where will we put them?

THE TOFF

Bury them in the cellar, but there's no hurry.

BILL

And what then, Toffy?

THE TOFF

Why, then we'll go to London and upset the ruby business. We have really come through this job very nicely.

BILL

I think the first thing that we ought to do is to give a little supper to old Toffy. We'll bury these fellows to-night.

ALBERT

Yes, let's.

SNIGGERS

The very thing!

BILL

And we'll all drink his health.

ALBERT

Good old Toffy!

SNIGGERS

He ought to have been a general or a premier.

(They get bottles from cupboard, etc.)

THE TOFF

Well, we've earned our bit of a supper.

(They sit down.)

BILL

(Glass in hand.)

Here's to old Toffy, who guessed everything!

**ALBERT
SNIGGERS**

Good old Toffy!

BILL

Toffy, who saved our lives and made our fortunes.

**ALBERT
SNIGGERS**

Hear! Hear!

THE TOFF

And here's to Bill, who saved me twice to-night.

BILL

Couldn't have done it but for your cleverness, Toffy.

SNIGGERS

Hear, hear! Hear! Hear!

ALBERT

He foresees everything.

BILL

A speech, Toffy. A speech from our general.

ALL

Yes, a speech.

SNIGGERS

A speech.

THE TOFF

Well, get me some water. This whiskey's too much for my head, and I must keep it clear till our friends are safe in the cellar.

BILL

Water? Yes, of course. Get him some water, Sniggers.

SNIGGERS

We don't use water here. Where shall I get it?

BILL

Outside in the garden.

(Exit Sniggers.)

ALBERT

Here's to future!

BILL

Here's to Albert Thomas, Esquire.

ALBERT

And William Jones, Esquire.

(Re-enter Sniggers, terrified.)

THE TOFF

Hullo, here's Jacob Smith, Esquire, J. P., alias Sniggers, back again.

SNIGGERS

Toffy, I've been thinking about my share in that ruby. I don't want it, Toffy; I don't want it.

THE TOFF

Nonsense, Sniggers. Nonsense.

SNIGGERS

You shall have it, Toffy, you shall have it yourself, only say Sniggers has no share in this 'ere ruby. Say it, Toffy, say it!

BILL

Want to turn informer, Sniggers?

SNIGGERS

No, no. Only I don't want the ruby, Toffy. . . .

THE TOFF

No more nonsense, Sniggers. We're all in together in this. If one hangs, we all hang; but they won't outwit me. Besides, it's not a hanging affair, they had their knives.

SNIGGERS

Toffy, Toffy, I always treated you fair, Toffy. I was always one to say, Give Toffy a chance. Take back my share, Toffy.

THE TOFF

What's the matter? What are you driving at?

SNIGGERS

Take it back, Toffy.

THE TOFF

Answer me, what are you up to?

SNIGGERS

I don't want my share any more.

BILL

Have you seen the police?

(Albert pulls out his knife.)

THE TOFF

No, no knives, Albert.

ALBERT

What then?

THE TOFF

The honest truth in open court, barring the ruby. We were attacked.

SNIGGERS

There's no police.

THE TOFF

Well, then, what's the matter?

BILL

Out with it.

SNIGGERS

I swear to God. . . .

ALBERT

Well?

THE TOFF

Don't interrupt.

SNIGGERS

I swear I saw something *what I didn't like*.

THE TOFF

What you didn't like?

SNIGGERS

(In tears.)

O Toffy, Toffy, take it back. Take my share. Say you take it.

THE TOFF

What has he seen?

(Dead silence, only broken by Sniggers's sobs. Then steps are heard. Enter a hideous idol. It is blind and gropes its way. It gropes its way to the ruby and picks it up and screws it into a socket in the forehead. Sniggers still weeps softly, the rest stare in horror. The idol steps out, not groping. Its steps move off, then stop.)

THE TOFF

O, great heavens!

ALBERT

(In a childish, plaintive voice.)

What is it, Toffy?

BILL

Albert, it is that obscene idol *(in a whisper)* come from India.

ALBERT

It is gone.

BILL

It has taken its eye.

SNIGGERS

We are saved.

A VOICE OFF

(With outlandish accent.)

Meestaire William Jones, Able Seaman.

(The Toff has never spoken, never moved. He only gazes stupidly in horror.)

BILL

Albert, Albert, what is this?

(He rises and walks out. One moan is heard. Sniggers goes to the window. He falls back sickly.)

ALBERT

(In a whisper.)

What has happened?

SNIGGERS

I have seen it. I have seen it. O, I have seen it!

(He returns to table.)

THE TOFF

(Laying his hand very gently on Sniggers's arm, speaking softly and winningly.)

What was it, Sniggers?

SNIGGERS

I have seen it.

ALBERT

What?

SNIGGERS

O!

VOICE

Meestaire Albert Thomas, Able Seaman.

ALBERT

Must I go, Toffy? Toffy, must I go?

SNIGGERS

(Clutching him.)

Don't move.

ALBERT

(Going.)

Toffy, Toffy. *(Exit.)*

VOICE

Meestaire Jacob Smith, Able Seaman.

SNIGGERS

I can't go, Toffy. I can't go. I can't do it.

(He goes.)

VOICE

Meestaire Arnold Everett Scott-Fortescue, late Esquire, Able Seaman.

THE TOFF

I did not foresee it.

(Exit.)

CURTAIN

[End of *A Night at an Inn* by Lord Dunsany]