

Scene Seven

Thomas is alone in a new area of the stage. He has an old wooden church pew and is dismantling its heavy joints. Laying the sections aside in an orderly manner. He has a brown wood-working apron on. He speaks as he works.

They've taken out the first three rows. Laid carpet. Put in low stools and cushions for the children. I can't bare to see good wood go to waste. I can't leave it uncut. I'm not sure yet... but I think I'll make a bed. (Smiles) And when I've made it.... maybe I'll lie in it. (He works) You'll notice skilled hands. I had begun an appreticeship. Two years. My father had secured the postion for me over a few pints in the pub. He thought he might divert my wayward leanings by putting money in my pocket. He was a suspicious man. Right to the end. I was only able to administer last rites to him because he was too weak to resist.

He has trouble with the final heavy joint. He takes heavier and heavier hammers to it.

Damn, bloody thing. It's held some backsides in it's time. Ancient as Hell. It doesn't... want.... to.... give.... in. Come on ! (He splits the wood.) Well. There's the bed idea done with. I'll have to make a crucifix after all. Anyone can do a crucifix. Though it probably couldn't hold the full weight of a man. I fancy a huge one by the roadside. There's a million a day pass here.

As he straightens himself he has a sharp pain.

I wonder if there's enough to make a long, thin box. About this size. A person is lucky to be in a position to make his own coffin. Dig his own grave.

Quiet.

I can't comfort myself. How can I comfort another? A child? I know the words. But my mouth is raw as vinegar. Carpentry couldn't hold me. My father let me leave. I burnt with holy fire. Sacred passion. **(Wait)** Now look at what I am. A collection of dark clothes, high words and practiced moves. And the horror is... without faith... they still work. Concepts, high enough, drive themselves. **(Wait)** I have been forsaken. **(Wait)** So what comfort can come? Should we be hard and see what follows our weakness may be our love. (How do I think this?) **(Wait)** She trusts. Her flowered face turns to mine. Her petal eyes plead. For the comfort words. For faith. What is a priest to do ? What is a person to do?

He hammers again.

These beams are heavy oak. They are the weight upon my back. The needy, angry pious. Whose knees have cut and smoothed this solid wood. **(Looking up)** Why "shepherd"? Why "sheep"? Were those your words? The sheep will lead themselves. The head of the herd. Calling to be meat.

His exertion gives him a further sharp pain. It draws his breath. He sits. The hammer falls.

Black.