

---

CHRISTINA  
ALBERTA'S FATHER

---

*book, music & lyrics by Polly Pen*

*based on the novel by H G Wells*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Polly Pen is a 1996 Obie Award winner for the score of *BED AND SOFA*, which premiered at The Vineyard Theatre and received seven Drama Desk nominations. Her first off-Broadway production as both composer and co-author, *GOBLIN MARKET*, received five Drama Desk nominations and the *Best Plays* Special Citation for Musical Composition and Adaptation. Other works include *THE NIGHT GOVERNESS* (McCarter Theater), *THE DUMB CAKE* (a radio musical for N P R), and *CHRISTINA ALBERTA'S FATHER* (Vineyard Theatre) which received a Richard Rodgers Award, an Obie and a Drama Desk nomination for Outstanding Music. Polly is a National Theater Artist-in Residence at McCarter Theater as a recipient of a Pew/T C G grant and is the 1998 winner of the Gilman & Gonzalez-Falla Award for Musical Theater. Two of Polly's works that originated at The Vineyard Theatre are recorded on C D: *GOBLIN MARKET* (Jay Productions) and *BED AND SOFA* (Fynsworth Alley).

CHRISTINA ALBERTA'S FATHER was partially developed and received readings at the O'Neill Theater Center during the 1992 National Music Theater Conference.

It opened at the Vineyard Theatre on 4 May 1994. The cast and creative contributors were as follows:

ALBERT EDWARD PREEMBY .....	Henry Stram
CHRIS HOSSETT <i>and others</i> .....	Alma Cuervo
CHRISTINA ALBERTA PREEMBY .....	Marla Schaffel
TEDDY <i>and others</i> .....	John Lathan
FAY <i>and others</i> .....	Tina Johnson
MISS REWSTER <i>and others</i> .....	Marceline Hugot
MAJOR BONE <i>and others</i> .....	Don Mayo
MRS BONE <i>and others</i> .....	Jan Neuberger
MASTER BONE <i>and others</i> .....	Richard Holmes
BOBBY <i>and others</i> .....	Andy Taylor
Director .....	André Ernotte
Music director/conductor .....	Paulette Haupt
Choreographer .....	Lynne Taylor-Corbett
Set design .....	William Barclay
Lighting design .....	Michael Lincoln
Costume design .....	Gail Brassard
Orchestrations .....	Lawrence Yurman

## CHARACTERS

ALBERT EDWARD PREEMBY, *age twenty and beyond, lyric baritone. A laundryman much given to reverie. He becomes the reincarnation of Sargon, an ancient Sumerian king, and sets out to save the world.*

CHRIS HOSSETT, *age twenty and beyond, soprano. Becomes the wife of PREEMBY. She owns and operates the Limpid Stream Laundry. She is a woman of great decision of character. (Also plays SHEPHERDESS, E SOLBÉ, STUDIO GUEST, PASSERBY in ACT ONE, Scene Five, DOWNTRODDEN PASSERBY, DISCIPLE)*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA PREEMBY, *twenties, soprano. The feisty and independent daughter of the PREEMBYS. She has little or no tact, redeemed by a pitiless conscience.*

TEDDY WINTERTON, *twenties, tenor. A seductive young man with a quality of candid insincerity. (Also plays WILFRED [BATHER], PASSERBY [EX-SOLDIER], DISCIPLE, POET)*

FAY CRUMB, *twenties, soprano. An artistic young lady with carelessly bobbed hair and an absent-minded face. (Also plays TINA [BATHER], LAUNDRY WORKER, SHEPHERDESS, Y SOLBÉ, PASSERBY, DISCIPLE)*

MISS REWSTER, *forties or beyond, alto in ensemble parts. The hovering proprietress of the Petunia Boarding House. She has frankly dyed chestnut hair and an air of genteel savoir-faire. (Also plays GWEN [BATHER], LAUNDRY WORKER, TEACHER, DARK UNTIDY GIRL, PASSERBY, LANDLADY, WOMAN WITH CONCERTINA or PROSTITUTE)*

MAJOR BONE, *forties or beyond, bass-baritone. He once lived in a forest in Burma. In his retirement he amuses himself by causing mischief. (Also plays PAUL LAMBONE, PASSERBY, LANDLORD OF B & B, KAMA MOBAMBA, DISCIPLE, RESTAURANT MANAGER, SANE POET)*

MRS BONE, *forties or beyond, mezzo soprano. Her tyranny is relieved by her enthusiasm. (Also plays MAVIS [bather], HEADMISTRESS, LAUNDRY WORKER, SHEPHERDESS, LITTLE LADY, LANDLADY OF APARTMENTS, WOMAN WITH CONCERTINA or PROSTITUTE, DISCIPLE, MISS MEANS)*

MASTER BONE, *younger than his parents, baritone in ensemble parts. His simpleness is relieved by annoyance at his parents. (Also plays BATHER, YOUNG MAN IN JESTER COSTUME, MAP SELLER, SENTINEL, MR GODFREY, DISCIPLE, BUXTON, GUARD, GUARD #2)*

BOBBY, *late twenties, tenor. A kind and earnest young man. He believes that the real business of life is to fight evil things. (Also plays WENDELL [BATHER], STUDIO GUEST, PASSERBY, DISCIPLE)*

## SETTING

*Time: 1899 through the early 1920s*

*Place: England*

*The Vineyard production used a unit set with added pieces to indicate various locations.*

## MUSICAL NUMBERS

### ACT ONE

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 <i>Greetings from the Paddlers on the Sheringham Front</i> | CHRIS, PREEMBY, bathers   |
| 2 <i>Sleep, Little Red Object</i>                            | CHRIS, PREEMBY, CHRISTINA ALBERTA                                     |
| 3 <i>The Laundry</i>   | CHRIS, PREEMBY, CHRISTINA ALBERTA<br>laundry workers                  |
| 4 <i>Court of Conscience</i>                                 | CHRISTINA ALBERTA   |
| 5 <i>Alone in the World</i>                                  | CHRIS   |
| 6 <i>Boarding Houses</i>                                     | CHRISTINA ALBERTA, PREEMBY  |
| 7 <i>Tunbridge Wells</i>                                     | SHEPHERDESSES   |
| 8 <i>A Rock and a Body</i>                                   | CHRISTINA ALBERTA, TEDDY, PREEMBY                                     |
| 9 <i>Waiting</i>   | TEDDY   |
| 10 <i>Dances in the Studio</i>                               | ensemble  |
| 11 <i>Early Amphibians</i>                                   | CHRISTINA ALBERTA, PREEMBY  |
| 12 <i>I Am Reclining</i>                                     | PREEMBY, MAJOR, MRS, & MASTER BONE<br>the SOLBÉ sisters, MISS REWSTER |
| 13 <i>My World</i>   | PREEMBY   |

### ACT TWO

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 14 <i>Running About</i>                          | PASSERBY, CHRISTINA ALBERTA, PREEMBY |
| 15 <i>Where is the Lost and Found of London?</i> | FAY, PAUL, TEDDY                     |
| 16 <i>Uneasy Armchairs</i>                       | PASSERBY                             |
| 17 <i>Slow't Dow</i>                             | FAY, CHRISTINA ALBERTA               |
| 18 <i>Fricassee of Chicken</i>                   | PROSTITUTE, PREEMBY, DISCIPLES       |
| 19 <i>Later Amphibians</i>                       | CHRISTINA ALBERTA                    |
| 20 <i>Christina Alberta and I</i>                | BOBBY                                |
| 21 <i>Tra-La-La</i>                              | POET, PREEMBY                        |
| 22 <i>Here Is Love</i>                           | BOBBY, CHRISTINA ALBERTA             |
| 23 <i>Alone In the World (reprise)</i>           | CHRIS, CHRISTINA ALBERTA             |
| 24 <i>First Night of Summer</i>                  | CHRISTINA ALBERTA                    |

## ACT ONE

### Scene One

*(The beach front at Sheringham, England. It is 1899. In the dark we hear scattered sounds of beach activity. Lights up as ALBERT EDWARD PREEMBY enters. He is twenty-eight years old and is wearing a grey suit; he twirls his stick and glances at the lady bathers. Suddenly, he is run into by MISS CHRISTINA HOSSETT on a bicycle. She falls off her machine into PREEMBY's arms.)*

CHRIS: I did all I could to avoid you. I rang my bell.

PREEMBY: Awkward of me, I was lost in a daydream.

CHRIS: You aren't hurt?

PREEMBY: Startled. Especially where the wheel got me. The world is so full of corners.

CHRIS: I can't ride it at all now.

PREEMBY: Allow me. Albert Edward Preemby. *(He guides bicycle.)*

CHRIS: Chris Hossett. Here for the summer?

PREEMBY: Yes. Sheringham is such a dear little backward-forward place. It's a real treat to come to for a breath of sea air. I don't like regular smart places. I'm too absent-minded.

*(PREEMBY trips over bicycle and CHRIS sits him down onto the sand. Several BATHERS [MAVIS, TINA, GWEN, WILFRED, and WENDELL] are paddling nearby.)*

*Song: Greetings from the Paddlers on the Sheringham Front*

CHRIS: It's lovely—

PREEMBY: The sand is hot.

CHRIS: The way you squeeze me. Squeeze me.

*(PREEMBY gives CHRIS a tentative squeeze.)*

CHRIS: See the poppies nodding 'gainst the blue grey

Grass—

Now stop it!

See the pebbles glisten when the waves give them a

Bath—

BATHERS: Ahh!

CHRIS: Go on now! Spoon...

BATHERS: Paddle, paddle, paddle, paddle...

CHRIS: Spooning, spooning, spooning, spooning.

BATHERS: Greetings from the paddlers on the Sheringham Front.  
Greetings from the paddlers on the Sheringham Front.

CHRIS: On the Sheringham Front  
There are two things to do;  
You paddle or you spoon  
And that's it.

WILFRED: *(Spoken)* Come on, Mavis, give us a kiss.

MAVIS: *(Spoken)* All right.

WENDELL: *(Spoken)* Me, too. Longer!

CHRIS: It's lovely—

PREEMBY: The air is dry.

CHRIS: The way you hold me. Hold me.

BATHERS: Hold her.

CHRIS: See the cliffs all chalky white  
Against the bright blue sky—  
Now stop it!  
See a fish jumped  
You missed it—pity!

BATHERS: Aww.

CHRIS: Go on now! Spoon.

BATHERS: Paddle, paddle, paddle, paddle...

CHRIS: Spooning, spooning, spooning, spooning.

BATHERS: Greetings from the paddlers on the Sheringham Front.  
Greetings from the paddlers on the Sheringham Front.

CHRIS: On the Sheringham Front  
There are two things to do;  
You paddle or you spoon  
And that's it.

GWEN: *(Spoken)* Stop splashing!

TINA: *(Spoken)* I like to splash.

GWEN: *(Spoken)* Go splash Wendell, he adores it.

TINA: *(Spoken)* You're wet enough, anyway.

CHRIS: It's lovely—

PREEMBY: It's getting late.

CHRIS: The way you kiss me. Kiss me.

BATHERS: Kiss her.

*(CHRIS draws PREEMBY into a long thorough kiss.)*

LADY BATHERS: La, la, la, la...

CHRIS: *(Spoken)* I love you.

PREEMBY: *(Spoken)* It's awfully late.

BATHERS: Marry her!

CHRIS: *(Spoken)* You've got to marry me now. And then we can really make love. 'Soften as we like.

PREEMBY: *(Spoken)* I can't rightly say that I'm exactly in a position to keep a wife just at present.

CHRIS: *(Spoken)* It's got to be and there you are.

*(PREEMBY kisses CHRIS.)*

PREEMBY: *(Spoken)* Oh dear, I've got to go back to Norwich next Tuesday.

CHRIS: *(Spoken)* You ought to have thought of that before.

PREEMBY: *(Spoken)* But I'll lose my situation.

CHRIS: *(Spoken)* No need to be scared.

BATHERS: Paddle, paddle, paddle, paddle...

CHRIS: *(Spoken)* Father will find you something better. There's the Limpid Stream Laundry at Woodford—needs an assistant manager.

BATHERS: Assistant manager. A laundry.

PREEMBY: *(Spoken)* It's all very puzzling...and exalting.

BATHERS: Here comes the bride.

*(Spoken)* Do you, Christina...?

Do you, Albert...?

PREEMBY: *(Spoken)* But I don't really think—

CHRIS: *(Spoken)* I do.

BATHERS: Congratulations from the paddlers on the Shearingham Front.

*(End of song)*

## Scene Two

*(The parlor at the house at Woodford. MR and MRS PREEMBY stand over a cradle.)*

PREEMBY: She has large, indeterminate features.

CHRIS: Large feet and hands.

PREEMBY: She's quite ugly. I have a feeling I've met her somewhere before and didn't like her.

*Song: Sleep, Little Red Object*

CHRIS & PREEMBY: Sleep now, sleep just  
Sleep, little red object.

*(CHRISTINA ALBERTA appears.)*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: I'll be brown-eyed,  
Agile and sly—  
Wiser than my parents  
Humming, shouting, throwing, punching.

*(At the same time:)*

CHRIS & PREEMBY: Sleep now, sleep just  
Sleep, little red object.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: With a loud voice,  
Somewhat pretty,  
And a deep vein of  
Anxious biology  
Bubbling about inside me.

CHRIS & PREEMBY: Together raising a daughter;  
Together restraining her,  
Together—

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Whatever, just find me a name.

*(End of song)*

CHRIS: Mary?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: No.

CHRIS: Prudence?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Oh, come on now.

CHRIS: Christina.

PREEMBY: Alberta.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: I'll take both. *(She begins to dismember a doll.)*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Being raised in a laundry, it became my obligation to provide a mess.

CHRIS: What is she doing now?

PREEMBY: Killing toys, I believe.

CHRIS: Oh.

PREEMBY: My dear, I've been thinking....

CHRIS: Yes?

PREEMBY: About the business...

CHRIS: Really?

PREEMBY: Possible expansion. I've noted several large, comfortable-looking houses nearby and I thought I might ascertain whether they were, in fact, occupied. If so, I could find out whether we could get the washing from such establishments. I could invent several attractive circulars. Perhaps colored a bright blue. It might be possible to send such a circular and even follow it up with a personal letter.

CHRIS: Very good, dear. Forge on!

PREEMBY: Certainly. I will. Presently.

*Song: The Laundry*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: The laundry.

CHRIS: My laundry  
I love it more and more. To see the  
Starched shirts and collars piled clean and packed;  
The sheets, folded, squarely, neatly stacked.  
I love the creak

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Creak

CHRIS: Of its machinery; the squeak

CHRISTINA ALBERTA & PREEMBY: Squeak

CHRIS: And suddy

CHRIS, PREEMBY, CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Bustle of the washing room.

CHRIS: Very soon, The Limpid Stream Laundry will expand.

*(Several LAUNDRY WORKERS enter.)*

CHRIS: All I've planned will be  
Orderly and right;  
Whisking through the tubs and wringers  
Everything a sea of white.

Nothing goes astray  
Everything will pay  
Nothing goes awry  
When you give it a try.

PREEMBY: I'm trying.

CHRIS: (*Spoken*) Look sharp!  
When I walk

LAUNDRY WORKERS: When she walks

CHRIS: About the place

LAUNDRY WORKERS: About the place

CHRIS: Voices are hushed and scrubbing earnest  
When I walk

LAUNDRY WORKERS: When she walks

CHRIS: About the place

LAUNDRY WORKERS: About the place

PREEMBY: I feel an urge to hide

CHRIS: I feel a certain pride that

CHRIS & LAUNDRY WORKERS:  
Everything's going on  
Orderly and right;  
Whisking through the tubs and wringers  
Everything a sea of white.  
Nothing goes astray  
Nothing goes awry

CHRIS: And there's nothing missing at

ALL: The end.

(*End of song*)

(CHRIS and LAUNDRY WORKERS exit. CHRISTINA ALBERTA sits on PREEMBY's lap.)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Daddy, tell me about the great lost continent.

PREEMBY: Oh, yes. Atlantis.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: That's it. If it was lost, how do you know about it?

PREEMBY: Studied it for years.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: What sort of people were they?

PREEMBY: Very wonderful people, my dear.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: How did they dress?

PREEMBY: They walked about in long white robes.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Good for the laundries, Daddy.

PREEMBY: All we know of astrology is just fragments of what they knew.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: What did they know?

PREEMBY: They knew the past and future.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Could they fly?

PREEMBY: They understood it.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Motors cars? That sort of thing?

PREEMBY: If they wanted to. Less motoring—more meditation.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Pity they were all drowned.

PREEMBY: Some may have escaped. Descendants may be nearer than you suppose. We may have Atlantic blood!

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Still we don't know we're Atlantics.

(CHRIS reappears. CHRISTINA ALBERTA has draped a sheet over PREEMBY and herself.)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: We are Atlantics.

(CHRIS gives a small scream.)

CHRIS: Christina Alberta, I have two words for you. Be have. (*She exits.*)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: (*To audience*) At my first school, I was extremely unpopular and then extremely popular and then I was expelled.

(HEAD MISTRESS and TEACHER enter: they are meeting with CHRIS and CHRISTINA ALBERTA.)

HEAD MISTRESS: We are divided but there is a general desire to get her out of this school.

TEACHER: She might try for a university scholarship.

HEAD MISTRESS: Perhaps you could just take her away.

TEACHER: There's always murder.

(HEAD MISTRESS and TEACHER exit as CHRISTINA ALBERTA places her hand on her heart.)

*Song: Court of Conscience*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: (*Spoken*) I call the Court of my Conscience in session.  
I am completely irreligious;  
Theoretically anti-social and amoral.



I do not believe in respectability,  
Christian morality,  
The institution of the family.  
And I do not find the  
Prince of Wales ravishing.

(CHRIS *re-enters.*)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: I shall win a scholarship to  
The London School of Economics  
And have my hair bobbed.

(*End of song*)

CHRIS: I wish you could only see yourself. (*She exits.*)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: I saw myself in the pitiless mirror of my conscience  
and in the eyes of my new London friends, Fay Crumb and Teddy  
Winterton.

(*There is a brief musical bridge as FAY and TEDDY enter.*)

TEDDY: But how do you see yourself in relation to mankind—and the  
animals—and the stars?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Well...what I'm really hoping for is a worldwide social  
revolution.

FAY: Chop 't all up. Snip. Snip. 'S 'ly way.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: That's it!—something entirely destructive...and  
cleansing.

TEDDY: Right.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: I suppose I'm a communist.

FAY: D'y've card? 'S pretty. Red.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Well, no. But I believe that enthusiasm for an ideal  
communist state isn't nearly so important as the question of immediate  
communist tactics in a decaying society.

TEDDY: Has there ever been a society that is not actively in decay?

FAY: 'Gain s'time. Ga' go. Toddle-pip. (*She exits.*)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Oh, it's wonderful to talk to anyone like this.

(CHRISTINA ALBERTA and TEDDY *dance, smoke, and kiss.* CHRIS *enters.*)

CHRIS: That ends it.

(TEDDY *exits.* CHRIS *exits.*)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: (*To audience*) This was around the time of the end of the  
Great War and the opening year of the Disappointing Peace. Mother was

particularly annoyed by Peace. She was in rather bad health and in a very  
bad temper.

(CHRIS *enters.*)

CHRIS: Christina Alberta! What is this?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Mother. That's one of my schoolbooks. It's Darwin's  
*Origin of Species.*

CHRIS: That's a nice book for a girl to be prying into.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Daddy! Help!

PREEMBY: Now, now. What's the trouble?

CHRIS: Just look at this picture.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: It's a dissection of a frog.

PREEMBY: (*To CHRIS*) Now really, my dear. There's nothing improper here.  
It's Science. And after all, it is only a frog.

CHRIS: When I was a girl if I'd asked what was inside any animal, I'd have  
been slapped and slapped hard. There's things rightly hid from us. No need  
to open animals. (*She feels a sudden sharp pain.*)

PREEMBY: Are you alright?

CHRIS: It hurts. My side hurts.

PREEMBY: We ought to take advice or see someone about it.

CHRIS: No, doctors put you to bed and give you things to keep you there.

(PREEMBY and CHRISTINA ALBERTA *lead CHRIS to a chair.* PREEMBY *exits.*)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: (*To audience*) And then mother's face became smaller  
and prettier. She was no longer hard or angry...but rather...friendly.

*Song: Alone in the World*

CHRIS: Take care of your daddy.  
He's gentle and good  
And not to be trusted alone  
In the world.

I've never been all  
A mother should be to you  
But you've been so difficult.  
I've had a great respect for you.

(*Spoken*) Weakness.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: (*Spoken*) Mother?

CHRIS: It never entered my head  
I wasn't good for twenty years yet.

Washing basket. Something to keep it together.  
To open me like those frogs in your book...  
Never get it back again.

Take care...  
Be gentle and good...  
Alone in the world.

*(End of song)*

*(CHRIS has died and CHRISTINA ALBERTA steps forward.)*

### Scene Three

*(PREEMBY enters with a black shawl for CHRISTINA ALBERTA.)*

PREEMBY: You can't imagine what all this means to me. It was a pure love match. Pure romance. We just met and it seemed that it had to be.

*(A brief pause)*

PREEMBY: Now that I shall be in mourning, I believe I'll get myself one of those soft grey felt hats—with a black band.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Yes, Daddy.

PREEMBY: We must leave the laundry. We could sell it or let it...

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Or burn it or blow it up!

PREEMBY: We must go away—right away.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Where do you think of going, Daddy?

PREEMBY: I don't rightly know. I keep thinking of—different places.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: London.

*Song: Boarding Houses*

PREEMBY: *(Spoken)* London, possibly.  
Have you ever heard of—  
Boarding houses?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: *(Spoken, uneasily)* Yes.

PREEMBY: Have you ever thought it might be possible for us to go and live in—  
Boarding houses?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: *(Spoken)* In London?

PREEMBY: Almost anywhere you look,  
There's a boarding house.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: *(Spoken)* Boarding house?

PREEMBY: Boarding house.  
All sorts of fascinating people go to  
Boarding houses.  
Yes, we could really live  
Sometimes in a  
Boarding house here.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Boarding house here.

PREEMBY: And sometimes in a  
Boarding house there.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Boarding house.  
*(Spoken)* Where, exactly?

PREEMBY: *(Spoken)* Well...one place that attracts me is Tunbridge Wells.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: *(Spoken)* Tunbridge Wells?

PREEMBY: *(Spoken)* Yes!

At this Tunbridge Wells  
There are hills with names  
That refer to the ancient world.

There's a Toad Rock  
And mystical forms  
And nobody knows how it happened.

I was told by a man  
At the British Museum,  
I might see them at Tunbridge Wells.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: *(Spoken)* Daddy! Perhaps we ought to find a permanent headquarters first. In London.

PREEMBY: *(Spoken)* Oh. Of course.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: *(Spoken)* I've some friends in Chelsea, Fay and Teddy.  
They have a sort of converted coach house. We might settle into the spare studio.

PREEMBY: *(Spoken)* A studio?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: *(Spoken)* Yes!

At a studio, there's a gramophone,  
Paintings and people and noise.  
You can stay up late  
Do whatever you like  
In a studio in Chelsea.

PREEMBY: A studio, a studio

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: A studio in Chelsea.

*(Following two stanzas are sung simultaneously)*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: There's a pewter jug full of cigarettes,  
A brown-glazed bowl  
Filled with bunches of sunflowers,  
A blue painted table, parts of plates.  
No need to say grace,  
One just begins.

PREEMBY: I could read  
And look at things  
And make memorandums  
About some theorems I've thought of.  
I could examine artifacts,  
Determine their origin.

Boarding house, Tunbridge Wells.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: A studio in Chelsea.  
A studio in Chelsea.

PREEMBY: These days I've been thinking no  
End about living in—  
Boarding houses.

I keep thinking about it,  
Turning it over in my mind—

BOTH: It would be a new life;  
Like beginning again.  
Jerked forward into freedom  
Out in the open where  
Anything might happen  
(Might insist upon going on happening)

We'll move about and  
See all sorts of  
Things and  
Different people:  
Chinese and Indians,  
Vegetarians,  
Actors and Bolsheviks—  
I want to—forget!

*(End of song)*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: *(To audience)* Daddy became unusually interesting.  
He reminded me of an experiment in Practical Biology. You take a dried-up  
bean. You put it in a jar with water. Then, you observe it under the influence

of warmth and moisture. It germinates. Nobody could tell what sort of thing  
he might become.

#### Scene Four

*(Sound of sheep. CHRISTINA ALBERTA and PREEMBY are on their way to Tunbridge  
Wells. SHEPHERDESSES accompanied by several SHEEP gambol by.)*

*Song: Tunbridge Wells*

SHEPHERDESSES: Tunbridge Wells:  
Nothing like it  
Upon our planet  
Dry under foot,  
Breezy yet dignified,  
Tinged with culture  
And something  
Evangelical in the air.

*(End of song)*

PREEMBY: I think my instinct has guided me aright to this place.

*(SHEPHERDESSES and SHEEP exit as CHRISTINA ALBERTA and PREEMBY arrive at  
the Boarding House. MISS EMILY REWSTER mysteriously appears at the reception  
desk. She is a small elderly lady with a great deal of lace and frankly dyed chestnut  
hair.)*

MISS REWSTER: Yes?

PREEMBY: Miss Rewster? Albert Edward Preemby. I wrote....

MISS REWSTER: Yes.

PREEMBY: And this is my daughter, Christina Alberta, who'll be staying—

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Intermittently. I'm studying comparative architectural  
ornamentation. In London.

MISS REWSTER: How nice. Well, if you're not too particular about having the  
same room, or exactly the same sort of room every time you come, we shall  
certainly manage.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Long as the window opens.

MISS REWSTER: We've been very full this season. Very full. Nearly thirty  
sitting at dinner. But of course the season is drawing in now. At present,  
we're down to nine at breakfast and five at dinner. People come, people go.  
We've been on the separate table system every since the war. So much more  
pleasant. You can keep yourself quite to yourself if you wish, or you can be  
friendly. People often speak in the sitting room or in the smoking room—

(To CHRISTINA ALBERTA, coyly) where the gentlemen smoke. And they bow. Sometimes people get quite friendly. Play Games. Quite pleasant. At present we have very pleasant people indeed. There's Major Bone and Mrs Bone and their son Master Bone.

(The BONES enter and bow.)

MISS REWSTER: They once lived in a forest in Burmah. And the Solbé sisters. Lovely. Retired maiden ladies.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: (To PREEMBY) How does one retire from being a maiden?

PREEMBY: I've always been attracted to Tunbridge Wells.

MISS REWSTER: Royal Tunbridge Wells if you please. The "Royal" was added in nineteen-nine you know, by gracious command of his Majesty.

PREEMBY: I didn't know. Royal Tunbridge Wells.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Makes it rather a mouthful.

MISS REWSTER: A very pleasant mouthful for us, I can assure you.

BOARDING HOUSE RESIDENTS: (Sung) Welcome to the Petunia Boarding House in Royal Tunbridge Wells.

E & Y SOLBÉ: (Spoken) We had a lovely ride.

E SOLBÉ: So picturesque. So open and pleasant.

Y SOLBÉ: So many wet dead leaves.

MASTER BONE: Did you see...the sea?

E SOLBÉ: Oh, plainly!

Y SOLBÉ: Ever so far away.

E SOLBÉ: Just as if the sky had a steel edge.

Y SOLBÉ: Exactly like a little silver line.

(A pause. MISS REWSTER suddenly runs off.)

MAJOR BONE: Supper must be escaping.

MRS BONE: Cards!

(The SOLBÉS join MRS BONE at the card table.)

Y SOLBÉ: Oh, yes!

E SOLBÉ: I believe it was my turn.

Y SOLBÉ: It usually is, dear.

MRS BONE: (To PREEMBY) Does your daughter play Patience?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: I'm practicing it.

MRS BONE: Splendid. Then we shall anticipate your joining us very soon.

(CHRISTINA ALBERTA is isolated in light.)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: (Sung) Imagine—thrown to the wolves. Think of it! They are alive....

(The card game continues.)

Y SOLBÉ: (Spoken) Ooh, yes! Getting it out, dear?

E SOLBÉ: The spades are wicked tonight. And so are you.

Y SOLBÉ: Such a good sister and such a bad loser.

E SOLBÉ: Patience is patience. I often get it out. But not the way you've dealt the cards.

(E SOLBÉ slams her cards down and weeps. Distant sound of sheep.)

MRS BONE: I wonder if we might have lamb for supper?

MAJOR BONE: Hard to tell lamb from mutton if it weren't for the mint sauce.

MASTER BONE: Mutton is older.

MRS BONE: (Wistfully) We never had lamb or mutton in Burmah.

SOLBÉS: No, not really!

MRS BONE: Once, I requested a boiled fowl. The cookboy refused.

SOLBÉS: Imagine!

MRS BONE: I tried to show him how to do it. Just a plain boiled fowl with a nice white sauce, a few plain potatoes and vegetables. He went quite mad. He said that if he cooked a fowl like that he would lose caste, be perpetually defiled and outcast. Why he would not say. When I persisted he rushed up and down, pulling at his hair, his eyes rolling frightfully—

SOLBÉS: Oh, dear.

MRS BONE: There I stood quietly boiling my fowl while all this bother went on. I believe the wretched man really did believe that if he was to boil a fowl in the plain, simple way nice people in England do daily, he would be hung in the air and the great Jays of Burmah would come and peck—peck at his entrails, just his insides you know, for a Thousand, Thousand Years.

SOLBÉS: No! Not really!

MRS BONE: And then, I said....

MASTER BONE: Mother, must we listen to that story again?

(MRS BONE composes herself. MISS REWSTER walks through with a large fish on a platter.)

MASTER BONE: Was that the same fish we had yesterday?

MAJOR BONE: It looked like a very similar fish.

MASTER BONE: I hate fish.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Perhaps some day, we will eat nothing but aromas and electricity.

*(A brief pause. CHRISTINA ALBERTA is isolated in light.)*

*Song*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: I am caught  
Like a moth under a glass  
In this magic box of atmosphere  
Where nothing can possibly be done  
By anyone.

*(End of song)*

PREEMBY: I understand there are certain celebrated rocks in the vicinity.

SOLBÉS: *Oooh, yes.*

E SOLBÉ: The High Rocks.

Y SOLBÉ: The Low Rocks.

MISS REWSTER: *(Briefly appearing again)* Toad Rock.

MRS BONE: Just a short walk.

MAJOR BONE: It's rather far....

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: We'd best hurry. Come along, Daddy.

*(MISS REWSTER rings a bell and BOARDING HOUSE RESIDENTS exit.)*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Oh God.

PREEMBY: Christina Alberta, I think I'd best face the rocks alone. Sometimes you say things, you don't mean to say them of course—but they put me off,...

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: I'll be heading off to London, then. Daddy, what do you expect to find at these Rocks?

PREEMBY: I go with an Open Mind. Perhaps all of Atlantis was not lost. Some of it may be hidden. Who knows? It may be here. It may be in Africa. I have a notebook and several colored pencils.

*(CHRISTINA ALBERTA kisses her father goodbye. They separate into split scenes of dual examinations played simultaneously. To music, CHRISTINA ALBERTA and TEDDY are making love in the studio while PREEMBY carefully examines the Toad Rock.)*

*(Song: A Rock and a Body)*

PREEMBY: A rock

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: A body

PREEMBY: Toad Rock

TEDDY: Your body

PREEMBY: I need a plan, a sign.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: I want you.

TEDDY: I want you. Come closer.

PREEMBY: Look closer.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA & TEDDY: I need to discover you.

PREEMBY: I need to discover  
What it is, where it came from,  
What it's doing here,  
What it means to me.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA & TEDDY:  
Who you are,  
What you mean to me.

PREEMBY: Speak now.

Nothing.

No inscriptions.  
No decorations.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: A bed

PREEMBY: A rock

TEDDY: I'm waiting for you.

PREEMBY: It's just a rock.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: It's just a bed.

PREEMBY: It appears to be  
Simply natural.

TEDDY: It's simply natural.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: There's something that scares me.

PREEMBY: Very difficult.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Something I'm not sure of.

PREEMBY: Almost impossible.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Our bodies.

TEDDY: Our bodies?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Especially the legs.

TEDDY: The legs?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: They just seem to move—

PREEMBY: Do something.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Without will or discretion.

PREEMBY: No instructions.  
No declarations.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: They move

TEDDY: Lie still with me.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: But what will become  
Of our legs?  
Will they get shriveled and queer,  
Dead and funny-shaped,  
Afraid of the light?

TEDDY: Fine. I'll turn the light out.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: We must make love.

PREEMBY: Isn't life a riddle?  
Could my choice really be  
Between boiled fowl or mutton or fish? What will it be?  
Will I be just a plain boarder  
In a boarding house  
While my life is passing away?

Clearly, there is something more.  
Things can't be what they seem;  
That at any rate is obvious.  
It would be too absurd.

Infinite space;  
Stars and so forth—  
Just for running about in  
In between meals.

(CHRISTINA ALBERTA rises leaving TEDDY asleep.)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: I have made love.  
It's something you go through  
And return just the same  
As you were before.  
More restless, perhaps, but no further on.

PREEMBY: So many corners...  
I don't know where to turn.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: It leaves me just where I had been.

PREEMBY: Left just where I'd been before.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA & PREEMBY: Still face to face  
With the unsolved darkness  
And that mysterious call  
To come out of it all and really live.

PREEMBY: A rock—

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: A body, asleep—

CHRISTINA ALBERTA & PREEMBY:  
Surrounded by wonder.

(End of song)

(CHRISTINA ALBERTA and PREEMBY clasp hands and exit.)

### Scene Five

(The studio in Chelsea. It is filled with vaguely improper but highly decorative art. FAY and TEDDY are dancing; a sort of jiggety walking with backswipes of the legs. PAUL LAMBONE, an indolent and intelligent man of forty or so, observes. CHRISTINA ALBERTA and PREEMBY enter.)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Uncle!

PAUL: How's my Ultimate Modern Girl—my Life Force?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: You've got to meet my father.

PAUL: Has it got a father? I thought it just sprang forth autogenously.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Daddy, this is my friend, Paul Lambone. He's written all sorts of things.

PAUL: Books of Good Advice, mostly.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: And here's Fay.

FAY: We'll 'f sum t'drink 'n then we'll set lup thins. 'Dabit f'work to do. Bres no' clear d'way. Late las 'ni.

PREEMBY: (Aside to CHRISTINA ALBERTA) What's wrong with her?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: She just crunches words together.

PAUL: But when she thinks carefully about anything truly original, she's absolutely articulate.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Fay, what was that you just said?

FAY: We'll 'f sum t'drink'n then we'll set lup thins.

PREEMBY: *(He translates.)* We're going to have something to drink and settle up things.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Right. And this is Teddy.

PREEMBY: I've never been in a studio before. I suppose these are originals. *(He notices a painting, which looks like a lot of fruit and human legs.)* Of course, it's Art.

TEDDY: That's called "Passion in Solitude."

PREEMBY: Ah, symbolical.

FAY: C'mon Chrisbert. Chianti. B'ind loo.

*(CHRISTINA ALBERTA and FAY exit. A brief pause)*

TEDDY: *(With an expansive gesture)* All this is like something out of Dostoyevsky.

PAUL: In a different scheme of coloring of course.

TEDDY: Different.

PAUL: But the same. Don't you think so, Mister Preemby?

PREEMBY: It is a bit like that.

*Song: Waiting*

TEDDY: *(Spoken)* I've written a poem called "Waiting." It goes like this:

After every minute  
Comes another minute  
And then, rest assured,  
Another.  
Like drips from a ledge in the rain.  
You may not want to go on;  
But they will  
Oh! Endlessly  
Taking your life away, death, not final and complete,  
But death in the midst of life.  
Drip on old death—in life!  
Slow, dull, implacable, unendurable!  
Drip on.

*(End of song)*

I haven't really finished it yet, but that "Drip on" part is great. Perhaps you don't like modern poetry?

PREEMBY: I don't mind it.

*(CHRISTINA ALBERTA and FAY enter with Chianti.)*

FAY: Chianti!

PREEMBY: Chianti...sounds like a sort of challenge.

FAY: It will indeed be a challenge when business machines begin to speak.

TEDDY: I'll start the gramophone.

*(Immediately, additional characters enter. There is a fierce-looking young MAN in a jester's costume, a dark, untidy GIRL and a LITTLE LADY like a china doll who pirouettes around by herself. The music is an imitation Russian peasant dance.)*

PREEMBY: *(After dance)* What was that?

PAUL: It just seems to happen.

FAY: Chianti.

PAUL: Let's run for cover. We could sit and observe.

*(TEDDY and CHRISTINA ALBERTA cross away as PREEMBY watches.)*

TEDDY: Tomorrow, then?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: No.

TEDDY: I don't believe you.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: I don't want to.

TEDDY: But you do.

*(CHRISTINA ALBERTA is isolated in light.)*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: *(Sung)* Caught like a moth  
Under a glass  
In this magic box  
Of atmosphere.

PAUL: *(Spoken)* Oh what a handful a daughter is! Even the best of them.

PREEMBY: She's a good daughter to me, sir. Have you any children?

PAUL: Only dream children. I've not had your courage to realize things. I've married a hundred times in theory and here I am just a sort of bachelor uncle to everybody. Poking in among the younger people and observing their behavior with admiration and terror.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Getting on alright, Daddy?

PREEMBY: Oh yes.

TEDDY: Chrissy!

*(TEDDY and CHRISTINA ALBERTA begin an Apache dance. It is carried off with intimacy and a fierce defiance. At the conclusion of the dance, a sort of poetry game commences. TEDDY supplies lines to which the studio crowd provides improvised responses.)*

TEDDY: "She walks in beauty like... "When I have fears... "With a shriek...  
"Let us roll all our strength...

*(A pause as the studio crowd collapses)*

PAUL: They are all so active.

PREEMBY: I can't help but think of how the good wise people of Atlantis might have spent their evenings.

PAUL: Differently, I suspect.

PREEMBY: Yes. Philosophical discourse. The lute, the lyre.

YOUNG MAN: At the motor races! How too, too awful.

UNTIDY GIRL: Too, too sick-making.

FAY: Chianti.

PREEMBY: Just half a glass more. Oh! You've filled it!

UNTIDY GIRL: Anyone for dress up?

FAY: No! Las' wee' s'body tore m'only 'jamas limby-limb.

UNTIDY GIRL: Limby-limb! How sick-making. Charades?

YOUNG MAN: Absolutely not. Conventional to the n'th.

*(A rather tipsy waltz is heard. Everything becomes rather swimmy. The men begin to do feats of strength and dexterity with chairs. The LITTLE LADY continues to twirl. PREEMBY rises and begins to twirl also, rather slowly.)*

PAUL: *(To FAY, looking at his watch)* Half-past one. I'll start the go.

FAY: Limby-limb ti. Ni' ni'.

LITTLE LADY: Let's all go swimming!

*(PAUL leads out followed by YOUNG MAN, UNTIDY GIRL, and TEDDY. CHRISTINA ALBERTA goes to PREEMBY [who is still twirling] and leads him to the sofa.)*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Daddy, I'm afraid this may be too noisy for you.

PREEMBY: I hope, my dear, that among all these artists and people you are not getting Ram Shackle.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Daddy—what makes you think I may be getting—Ram Shackle?

PREEMBY: Oh...just one or two little things I noticed. Of course, it's not what we've been accustomed to. It's—different. But it is—Experience.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: It is that.

*Song: Early Amphibians*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA & PREEMBY:

We are like early amphibians;  
Struggling, crawling  
Out of the water  
And into the swamp.  
Gasping at the air—  
Learning to breathe  
In a new way  
In a new world.

Then our scales turn to skin;  
We are stretching, rising  
Up on our four unfamiliar feet.  
Opening our eyes,  
Amazed by the light—  
Then waiting for  
Something else  
To happen.

*(End of song)*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Something else did happen. To Daddy. And in the most unlikely place.

*(Sound of sheep as PREEMBY moves to the Petunia Boarding House.)*

PREEMBY: My dearest Christina Alberta, I think it only right to tell you that Communications have been made to me of the Utmost Importance. These communications seem to alter all our lives...

## Scene Six

*(CHRISTINA ALBERTA meets PREEMBY in the sitting room of the Petunia Boarding House.)*

PREEMBY: The scales have fallen from my eyes.

*(CHRISTINA ALBERTA waits for more.)*

PREEMBY: I shall tell you the story in due order. I want you to see it as I saw it—in due order.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: How did it begin?

PREEMBY: Please! In my own way. I do not think that I am a very easy man to deceive. And it is to be noted that I started the whole affair.

*(MISS REWSTER, the MISS SOLBÉS, and the BONES enter as though telepathically summoned.)*



PREEMBY: It all began one rainy evening. We gathered together here and I saw Miss Solbé—the one with the glasses—looking at her Patience cards, which she had just put out. Then, almost without thinking, I said—

(To E SOLBÉ) Why, Miss Solbé, the way you are holding your hands is just the way they do when they are going to do table-turning.

(MAJOR BONE *puts down his paper.*)

MAJOR BONE: You don't believe in that sort of thing, Mr Preemby, surely?

MRS BONE: I do. We did it at home dozens of times before I was married.

PREEMBY: I'd really like to try some of this table-turning.

E SOLBÉ: As it happens, I've been reading a little occult literature lately and I'd very much like to try it.

Y SOLBÉ: Oh yes, let's.

MAJOR BONE: This is nonsense.

MRS BONE: Now Henry, don't be a toad. Come and help with the table. Miss Rewster, bring us a candle.

MISS REWSTER: A candle...

MRS BONE: Dickie! The table, there.

Y SOLBÉ: Oh Sister, this is too exciting!

E SOLBÉ: Who would have thought we'd be doing such a thing.

MRS BONE: Henry, there. Come gather 'round. Thumbs and little fingers touching. Open yourselves. Silence!

MAJOR BONE: I don't think there's anything in it. We shall just waste our time.

MRS BONE: Please Henry, we must be very silent.

MAJOR BONE: This is so silly.

MRS BONE: Persevere.

MAJOR BONE: All right, have it your own way.

MRS BONE: Now the lights shall be turned out.

(*There are two sharp raps and the table begins to move; shifting then raising about two feet.*)

PREEMBY: (To CHRISTINA ALBERTA) It was very weird and impressive.

(*The table falls hitting MAJOR BONE's shin.*)

MAJOR BONE: Damn!

(MAJOR BONE *stoops to rub his leg and hits his head on the table. MRS BONE turns on lamp and attends to MAJOR BONE.*)

MAJOR BONE: I don't like this.

PREEMBY: Do try just once more.

E SOLBÉ: Yes, please!

Y SOLBÉ: So exciting!

MAJOR BONE: I don't like the table riding up like this, it's such a bad example for the chairs. This time, I shall press down.

(*They reassemble. MRS BONE turns out the lamp. There is a volley of cracks, then the table rocks and flies up, knocking E SOLBÉ off her chair. Y SOLBÉ falls onto the floor in an hysterical fit of laughter. MAJOR BONE is holding down the table.*)

MAJOR BONE: Damn you. Damn you, keep down.

MRS BONE: Silence, please! Now, it is evident that some very strong spirit is present and wishes to communicate with us. There is a simple and safe method to do this, well understood by the spirit world. We shall recite the alphabet and the spirit will respond with one rap for no and two raps for yes.

MASTER BONE: One rap for no

MRS BONE: And two raps for yes. Yes (*She raps twice.*) dear, very good. Let us begin.

(*They begin to recite the alphabet through the letter "D".*)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: What did you spell out, Daddy?

BONES & SOLBÉS: Sargon

PREEMBY: Sargon

BONES & SOLBÉS: King of kings

PREEMBY: King of kings

PREEMBY, BONES, SOLBÉS:

Awake, Sargon! Arise or be forever fallen!

MRS BONE: Is the spirit communicating with us called Sargon?

(*One rap*)

E SOLBÉ: Is Sargon present?

(*Two raps*)

PREEMBY: (To CHRISTINA ALBERTA) I knew it.

MISS REWSTER: (*Indicating MAJOR BONE*) Is it this gentleman?

(*One loud rap*)

PREEMBY: (*Indicating MASTER BONE*) No. Could it be this gentleman?

(*One rap*)

PREEMBY: Is it me?

(*Two raps*)

Y SOLBÉ: Why, Mister Preemby.

E SOLBÉ: Imagine!

MAJOR BONE: Oh! I can't stand any more of this. My head feels quite muzzy. I am heavy and strange.

MRS BONE: (*Aside to others*) I have seen this before. (*To MAJOR BONE*) Don't struggle against it. Let yourself go. Just lean back in your chair. Let the influence work. (*Whispered to PREEMBY*) Trance.

(*MRS BONE goes to MAJOR BONE and begins moving her hands in front of his face.*)

MRS BONE: (*To others*) This is called "making passes."

(*MAJOR BONE, with eyes shut and head lolling, begins muttering as "Oujah."*)

MAJOR BONE: Oodja Woojer Boojer. I am Oujah the Wise Man, Sargon's servant. Oujah comes to serve Sargon; to awaken him.

MRS BONE: (*To MASTER BONE*) We'll need a writing-pad and pencil.

MASTER BONE: Right-o.

MAJOR BONE: Why is a mouse when it spins? Awake child of the sea and desert.

MRS BONE: I always knew the living talked rot, but it's nothing to the nonsense the dead talk.

MAJOR BONE: Arise Sargon of the blue waters and the desert sand.

PREEMBY: That must be an allusion to Sheringham where I spent my youth.

MAJOR BONE: You, Sargon, who have come from the cascades and great waters. With the thing like a wheel...

PREEMBY: The big washers at the laundry.

MAJOR BONE: Send your armies with their white garments fluttering; armies of delivery.

PREEMBY: The laundry vans! It's like one thing becoming transparent and your seeing the other behind it.

MAJOR BONE: Awake from the long sleep. Come again to a world that has fallen into disorder.

PREEMBY: Yes, yes I understand.

MAJOR BONE: Oh Lord! Where am I?

MRS BONE: I'm here, Henry... Are you much exhausted?

MAJOR BONE: Yes. I must go to bed.

MRS BONE: Is this the end of your message?

MAJOR BONE: What message? Have I been talking?

MRS BONE: Henry, I have never seen anyone with such promise of great psychic power.

MAJOR BONE: I'm sorry to hear that. Goodnight.

PREEMBY: Yes. Yes, I am beginning to remember.

MISS REWSTER: Remember what?

PREEMBY: Things from my other life. Memories stored up. I begin to realize what I really was and what I can really be.... I have never actually believed I was myself—not even as a schoolboy. Now I know and understand that I am somebody else. I have always been somebody else. I was Sargon—Sargon the King of Kings. It is his memories that have been returning to me. It is he who has returned in me.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Daddy, you don't really believe all this?

PREEMBY: Believe! I know. Why, I can remember days in Sumeria just as clearly as I remember the laundry; I almost doubt whether there was laundry; it seems so far away. I was in bed when these memories began to come. I was in bed, and then suddenly I was not in bed—

*Song: I Am Reclining*

PREEMBY: I am reclining on a couch beneath a canopy  
A canopy of pure white wool.  
And I am drifting on my royal barge upon a river  
The river, Euphrates.  
While two king's daughters

SOLBÉS: Sisters, with slender necks

PREEMBY: Fan me

SOLBÉS: With eagle feathers dyed a royal purple.

PREEMBY: And at the bow stands the high priestess

MRS BONE: In a gown of woven gold.

PREEMBY: And at my feet sits my councilor

MAJOR BONE: Making memoranda on a tablet of wet clay.

PREEMBY: And there are officers

MISS REWSTER: In leather with helmets of brass.

PREEMBY: And rowers

MASTER BONE: Chained to their oars.

MISS REWSTER: Pull! Pull!

PREEMBY: On either side spreads the broad brown river

MISS REWSTER, BONES, SOLBÉS:

The river, Euphrates

Just crinkled by a breeze

PREEMBY: The smaller boats flee to make way for us

MISS REWSTER, BONES, SOLBÉS:

Turning their sails at precisely the same time.

PREEMBY: It was all so pretty to see!

It was all so pretty!

Along the banks are

Little villages

MAJOR BONE: Of mud brick houses

Clumps of palm trees

PREEMBY: And all my people are

Crowded on the water's edge

Bowing and crying

MISS REWSTER, BONES, SOLBÉS:

Sargon the Conquerer,

Sargon, King of kings.

Sargon, Sargon,

Sargon, Sargon,

Sargon, Sargon.

(As CHRISTINA ALBERTA interrupts, all freeze in tableau except PREEMBY.)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: (Spoken) Daddy! This was a dream!

PREEMBY: (Spoken) How could I dream of things I had never seen nor heard of before?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: (Spoken) One does.

PREEMBY: (Spoken) One does not. In dreams absurd things happen; dreams, when you think them over afterwards are all at sixes and sevens, but this is all sane and orderly.

(CHRISTINA ALBERTA regards PREEMBY for some seconds in silence.)

PREEMBY: (Spoken) Sargon is my true self; Preemby was just a very simple, unpretending wrapping that for some purpose, at present inexplicable to me, hid me from the world.

(PREEMBY crosses to Sumerian tableau with a new amplitude of gesture.)

MISS REWSTER, BONES, SOLBÉS:

Sargon, Sargon

Sargon, Sargon

PREEMBY: Here I am and this is my world,

My world!

I nursed it in its infancy.

I taught it law and obedience;

Yet here I am

The most ancient of monarchs—

Sleeping as the time goes by.

I'm sleeping while the pharaohs, Greece and Rome,

The kingdoms and empires march on.

MISS REWSTER, BONES, SOLBÉS:

Sargon the Warrior,

Sargon the Savior,

Sargon the Conquerer,

Sargon the King of kings.

PREEMBY: I awake to find a great and crowded world

In a sad state of disorder.

People are not happy now.

They are not happy as they were

Under my rule in Sumeria

Thousands of years ago.

In the sunshine and abundance of Sumeria.

(PREEMBY breaks out of tableau and comes towards CHRISTINA ALBERTA as other boarders roll out a carpet before his advance.)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: (Spoken) What are you going to do, Daddy?

PREEMBY: (Spoken) Dear Princess, my child, you must serve and help me.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: (Spoken) I helped Daddy back to the studio. Then he disappeared.

MISS REWSTER, BONES, SOLBÉS:

Sargon, Sargon,

Sargon, Sargon...

(End of song)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Daddy!

END OF ACT ONE

## ACT TWO

## Scene One

*(Music, as: a disorganized panorama of London is revealed. PASSERSBY [which include slightly disguised inhabitants of the Boarding House] rush about. PREEMBY wanders through and arrives at a row of stores indicated by representative objects that are flown in. Hats fly in and perform a sort of aerial ballet.)*

PREEMBY: I shall need an extraordinary hat.

*Song: Running About*

PASSERSBY: You cannot rule the world  
Without the proper hat.  
You cannot rule the world  
Without a hat.

*(PREEMBY moves on to "Map Store.")*

PREEMBY: *(Spoken)* And a map!

MAP SELLER: *(Spoken)* What sort of map?

PREEMBY: *(Spoken)* I'm not sure.

MAP SELLER: *(Spoken)* Of London?

PREEMBY: *(Spoken)* Of the whole world.

MAP SELLER: *(Spoken)* How 'bout a globe?

PREEMBY: *(Spoken)* Not a globe. Not yet.

PASSERSBY: You cannot rule the world  
Without a map of it.  
You cannot rule the world  
Without a map.

PREEMBY: *(Spoken, examining the map)* "Europe after the Great War."  
It will probably have to be altered again.

PASSERSBY: You cannot rule the world  
Without the proper hat.  
You cannot rule the world  
Without a map of it.

PREEMBY: And a telescope...may be useful for astrological purposes.

PASSERSBY: Telescope. Telescope. Telescope.  
You can rule the world  
With a telescope  
You can rule the world  
With a hope and a hat and a  
Hope and a hat and a  
Hope and a hat and a map.

*(PREEMBY arrives at a guardhouse in front of Buckingham Palace.)*

PASSERSBY: Greetings from the  
Strollers 'round Buckingham Palace.  
Greetings from the masses  
Passing by the palace.

SENTINEL: *(Spoken)* You'll have to write for 'n 'pointment.

PREEMBY: *(Spoken)* All this must be altered. It's the duty of every King to  
give audience to everyone, every day.

SENTINEL: *(Spoken)* Very likely it is, sir. But we aren't in any position to 'elp  
it.

*(PREEMBY hurries off as CHRISTINA ALBERTA arrives at the Victoria Memorial.)*

PASSERSBY: *(With handkerchiefs)*  
See the weepers weeping  
At Victoria's Memorial.  
See the weepers weep.

*(It is growing dark. Pinpoints of light begin to appear as London begins to light  
itself up.)*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Take care of your daddy  
He's gentle and good  
And not to be trusted alone  
In the world.

Home had always seemed  
An indestructible thing;  
A place where you started out  
For adventure—  
And returned like a sea-rover  
To rest.

Home. Where you went to bed  
And slept as you had always slept.  
But now, the two of us—  
Out in the open—broken apart—  
No controls.

*(PREEMBY appears out of CHRISTINA ALBERTA's sight.)*

PREEMBY: Infinite space,

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: (*In an undertone*) Take care of your daddy

PREEMBY: Stars and so forth

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: He's gentle and good  
And not to be trusted

PREEMBY: All for running about in...

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Alone in the world.

Somewhere there must be a clue  
In this dark, limitless city—  
Somewhere—  
He's walking about  
In a dream of glory  
With wretchedness  
Hanging over him

(*At the same time:*)

PREEMBY: Infinite space  
Stars and so forth  
All for running about in  
Running about in.  
(*End of song*)  
It's late; I must prepare.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: He won't go back for ages. Nobody would on an evening like this. He's gone. He's just gone.

## Scene Two

(*At the studio. PAUL, FAY, and TEDDY pace nervously. CHRISTINA ALBERTA enters.*)

PAUL: Any luck?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: No.

TEDDY: We've been looking.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Have you Teddy? Where have you looked?

TEDDY: Here...

FAY: An' here 'bouts.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Oh god. Please sit down, Paul.

PAUL: I won't sit in that chair, thanks. It's too comfortable and at any moment I may have to leap up and act. Are those things coconut cakes? Spartan.

FAY: Wah?

PAUL: Spartan. My doctor tells me to say it before every meal. I don't know why. Magic or something. Let us all sit down. Now then, when last you saw him—was he coherent?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Oh, he was perfectly logical. He's just possessed by this one grand impossible idea.

PAUL: I don't see that a man is insane because he believes he is a King—if someone tells him he is. After all, George V has no other grounds for imagining he is a King. The only difference is that rather more people have told him so. Fancying yourself a King isn't lunacy.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: But I'm afraid people will think that it is!

PAUL: Is there any particular place where we might go and look for him?

TEDDY: London is so vast. So vast! I always feel that when I see anyone go out anywhere. There is a tremendous courage in going out.

PAUL: Might he have gone back to the boarding house?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: He's much more likely to have gone to Canterbury or Rome or Mesopotamia—or anywhere.

PAUL: Let us think carefully.

(*A pause*)

(*Song: Where Is the Lost and Found of London?*)

FAY: (*Spoken*) T'ink 'fly. T'ink 'fly. T'ink. (*She discovers PREEMBY's hat.*)  
He left his hat.

A hat. He must have bought a hat.  
I ought to have thought of that.  
I was so busy thinking of what was going on  
Inside his head  
I never bothered to think what was going on  
Outside of it.

(*FAY and PAUL sing at the same time.*)

FAY: A hat. He must have bought a hat.  
I ought to have thought of that.  
I was so busy thinking of what was going on  
Inside his head.  
I never bothered to think what was going on  
Outside of it.

PAUL: A call to act.  
I have been called upon to act.  
I have been called away from my tea  
And hot tea cake  
To hunt a slightly demented  
Comparative stranger  
All over London.

TEDDY: London must be full of lost people.  
I've always been afraid of London.  
I could be sucked up side streets  
To God knows where  
And kept going round corners  
Into longer and longer streets forever.

*(The following three verses are sung at the same time:)*

FAY: A hat. He must have bought a hat.  
I ought to have thought of that.  
I was so busy thinking of what was going on  
Inside his head.  
I never bothered to think what was going on  
Outside of it.

PAUL: A call to act.  
I have been called upon to act.  
I have been called away from my tea  
And hot tea cake  
To hunt a slightly demented  
Comparative stranger  
All over London.

TEDDY: London must be full of lost people.  
I've always been afraid of London.  
I could be sucked up side streets  
To God knows where  
And kept going round corners  
Into longer and longer streets forever.

TEDDY: Then I think of the last street of all—endless, endless—  
Oh, where is the lost and found of London?  
Where is the lost and found?  
Why do we get lost?  
Where can we be found?  
And how do we run ourselves aground?  
And how do we run ourselves aground?

PAUL: What crawling things we are—

FAY: We are.

PAUL: Content to be puppets,

FAY: Pawns.

PAUL: Nothing but drops of water

FAY: And grains of sand

PAUL & FAY:  
In the multitudinous  
Unmeaning muddle of human affairs.

TEDDY: While he soars above it—  
He soars beyond.

PAUL, FAY, & TEDDY:  
Oh, where is the lost and found of London?  
Where is the lost and found?  
Why do we get lost?  
Where can we be found?  
And how do we run ourselves aground, aground, aground  
And how do we run ourselves aground.

PAUL: The more we think of our missing friend,

TEDDY: The more we admire and envy him,

FAY: And the more we sit,

ALL: *(Except CHRISTINA ALBERTA)*  
The more we drink.

Oh, who is in charge of the lost and found?  
Is it a god or a king?  
The thing of it is,  
We haven't a clue.  
So what is there for us all to do?

So what can we ever really do?

PAUL: Wherever Sargon is tonight  
And whatever fate awaits him,

FAY: He is a, he is a  
He is a, he is a,

PAUL, FAY, & TEDDY:  
He is a happy man.

*(End of song)*

## Scene Three

(Music under as PREEMBY wanders through a dismal London Street. A clothesline of dirty white lace curtains descends. The curtains are accompanied by signs reading "flats," "Bed and Breakfast," and "Private Hotel." Several DOWNTRODDEN PASSERSBY hover about: One begs from PREEMBY.)

PREEMBY: I must find quarters. Some lonely hermitage. Perhaps I shouldn't have slipped away from the Princess Royal but I must be absolutely alone for a time. Always in the history of great saviors there has been this opening phase of withdrawal and self-communion. (He weaves in and out of curtains.)

LANDLADY OF APARTMENTS: Where's your luggage?

Song: *Uneasy Armchairs*

DOWNTRODDEN PASSERSBY: Uneasy armchairs  
Windows to let in the light  
Dark curtains to keep it out.

LANDLORD OF BED AND BREAKFAST: (Spoken) Any references?

DOWNTRODDEN PASSERSBY: Uneasy armchairs  
Rusty engravings of the monarch  
Spotted by remote ancestral flies.

LANDLORD OF BED AND BREAKFAST: (Spoken) What's your occupation?

PREEMBY: (Spoken) I'm not sure.

LANDLADY OF APARTMENTS: (Spoken) Yes?

DOWNTRODDEN PASSERSBY: Uneasy armchairs  
Plates hung on the walls  
Like vermin nailed up on a barn.

(End of song)

PREEMBY: Does anyone ever stay here?

LANDLADY OF APARTMENTS: My last gentleman stayed here fifteen years. He was a copying clerk. Died in hospital this June. Dropsy. He always found this very satisfactory. I never knew him to complain. He was a very good friend to me.

PREEMBY: I must think it over.

LANDLADY OF APARTMENTS: If it's too much—if you made an offer, sir—

PREEMBY: I must think about it.

(PREEMBY moves on to last curtain.)

PREEMBY: Why do people get so dirty and dismal and broken down? Surely in Sumeria there were never lives like that. It will all have to be altered.

(PREEMBY enters final curtain that has a sign reading "A Room to Let." He discovers BOBBY, a slender young man.)

PREEMBY: You have a room to let...

BOBBY: Yes, there is.

(BOBBY motions PREEMBY in.)

BOBBY: Is that a map, sir?

PREEMBY: It is a map of the world.

BOBBY: Very helpful I should think, sir. And so you found your way here.... (He indicates room.) It's rather plain.

PREEMBY: I like it. I have no use for superfluities. I'd be willing to pay in advance if I could take up my quarters at once. But, I must warn you, my position in the world is peculiar. I have no reference, I bring no luggage.

BOBBY: Except of course—the map. Do you have—a toothbrush?

PREEMBY: No. I must get myself a toothbrush.

BOBBY: I think it would look better. Have you—traveled far, sir?

PREEMBY: In space, no.

BOBBY: But in time, perhaps?

PREEMBY: In time, yes. But I would rather not go into explanations at present.

BOBBY: Might I look at your map?

PREEMBY: Willingly. (He unrolls map and points to London.) We are here.

BOBBY: Exactly. By the by, sir, might I ask your name?

PREEMBY: For the time being, I think Mr—Mr Sargon.

BOBBY: Of course, for the time being. Sargon...wasn't that an Assyrian King?

PREEMBY: It is not the Assyrian Sargon in this case, it is the Sumerian Sargon, his predecessor.

BOBBY: How did you leave the folks in—Sumeria?

PREEMBY: My People were happy.

BOBBY: I've been in that part of the world since. Quite recently, during the war. I got knocked about by a shell and had a nasty time as a wounded prisoner. Hot. Crowded. Nothing cool to drink... I've a sort of horror of cages.

PREEMBY: I understand.

BOBBY: But in your time it was different.

PREEMBY: Very.

BOBBY: Well, you must be fatigued after your long journey and I should love—I should dearly love to let you the room. I'm just temporarily the house agent. Actually, I'm a sort of writer.

PREEMBY: You write books?

BOBBY: Not books, not yet. I'm a journalist really. I answer love letters for Wilkins Weekly.

PREEMBY: You're Aunt Suzannah?

BOBBY: I'm afraid so. You can't imagine the things they ask me. I have started a novel but it's so difficult to get a lot of time to oneself to really let it rip.

PREEMBY: Inspiration.

BOBBY: Right. But there's always something one must do cropping up to prevent inspiration.

PREEMBY: With me also. That is why I am withdrawing into this solitude. To collect my forces. In Sumeria it was always the practice, before any great undertaking, to go out into the wilderness for a certain tale of days.

BOBBY: If I go out into the wilderness I get so lonely in the evenings. It's so dark in the wilderness.

PREEMBY: Friendly darkness. All visible things are limiting things. But the darkness—the darkness goes out and beyond everything to God. (*More to himself*) I must look. I must watch and observe. But not for too long. There is action: action gives life. (*To BOBBY*) Do you have a razor?

#### Scene Four

(CHRISTINA ALBERTA, FAY, and TEDDY at the studio.)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Could we just try one more place. Please.

TEDDY: For weeks now, Chrissy, we've been to every hospital and nearly every police station.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: We haven't tried Scotland Yard.

FAY: Nevah thaw of g'wing Scotin' Yar' fra los' fa'. F'was a lost umbelly, I'd unnerstan'.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: So we should just wait—

TEDDY: It's all about waiting.

(*Sung*) After every minute

Comes another minute

And then, rest assured,

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: (*Spoken*) Oh stop. You know, sheep have this disease called gid—where they wander alone, after years of trotting about with other sheep. Suddenly, they wander off by themselves and die. Daddy has gid.

TEDDY: And you're getting it.

(*TEDDY exits, leaving FAY and CHRISTINA ALBERTA alone.*)

FAY: He didn' mean 'ting. How t'elp. How t'elp.

*Song: Slow 't Dow*

Ting ill ove is, Chrisbert.

(You're getting ill over this, Christina Alberta)

Head spinny, ning about

(Head spinning, running about)

Slowt dow,

Slowt dow.

(Slow it down)

S'busy loo'ing owsi,

(So busy looking outside)

Na hinking insi

(Not thinking inside)

Slowt dow,

Slowt dow.

(Slow it down)

(*FAY and CHRISTINA ALBERTA do a brief pas de deux.*)

FAY & CHRISTINA ALBERTA:

Slowt dow,

Slowt dow.

(Slow it down)

FAY: S'love ou

(I love you)

Mus'n geh gid.

(You mustn't get gid)

(*End of song*)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Thank you, Fay.



## Scene Five

*(A crystal clear October day. Music, as PREEMBY and BOBBY look out from the dome of Saint Paul's Cathedral.)*

PREEMBY: Look, you can see the hills.

BOBBY: Such wide sunlit stretches.

PREEMBY: And down there—they look like little toys.

BOBBY: All hats and hurrying legs.

PREEMBY: How fair it might be!

BOBBY: How great it could be.

PREEMBY: How fair and great it shall be. *(He rehearses his first speech to the multitudes.)*

PREEMBY: First, let there be Peace! I, Sargon, command it. I, Sargon, have come back after many ages to give Peace to the Whole World.

BOBBY: All canaries shall be released! And all those iron fences around public parks and squares shall be ripped out!

PREEMBY: *(After a brief pause)* That's very good. It shall be done.

BOBBY: I must go post your letter to President Harding now. Still having a bit of bother finding Lenin's address.

PREEMBY: You are being very helpful to me.

BOBBY: You may need some followers.

PREEMBY: They will come.

BOBBY: When's all this to begin?

PREEMBY: Soon now. Very soon.

*(BOBBY exits. PREEMBY remains for a moment.)*

PREEMBY: Now!

*(PREEMBY descends to the front of Saint Paul's. He approaches MR GODLEY, a student of biology. As DISCIPLES join, a confused and sinuous course is followed.)*

PREEMBY: I think it is you.

MR GODLEY: It certainly is me.

PREEMBY: I have need of your help. The great task is beginning.

MR GODLEY: Happy to help, sir, but I've a class at the Science Institute.

PREEMBY: *(Taking his arm)* Ah! A man of science. You will be needed. I don't know if you recognize me—but I recall your face.

MR GODLEY: Not sure I follow you.

*(Music as they encounter a WOMAN WITH CONCERTINA and an intoxicated EX-SOLDIER.)*

WOMAN WITH CONCERTINA & EX-SOLDIER: *(Sung)*

We want work, not charity  
We want work, not charity...

MR GODLEY: Where are we going?

PREEMBY: *(To GODLEY)* Trust me. Keep with me. Now look at that! Is it not time the new age began? *(To WOMAN WITH CONCERTINA & EX-SOLDIER)* I have work for you to do.

WOMAN WITH CONCERTINA: What sort of work?

EX-SOLDIER: We'll take it.

WOMAN WITH CONCERTINA: Shilling an hour?

PREEMBY: Much more than that. You shall be leaders of men. Follow after me.

*(Music as they continue on)*

EX-SOLDIER: Is it far?

*(PREEMBY gestures vaguely ahead.)*

WOMAN WITH CONCERTINA: Lead on, maestro.

*(An African gentleman, MR KAMA MOBAMBA approaches PREEMBY. Music out.)*

MR MOBAMBA: Excuse—

*(He hands PREEMBY a piece of paper.)*

PREEMBY: *(Reading)* Lean and McKay 329 Leadenhall Street. *(Regarding MR MOBAMBA)* The Elamite King!

MR MOBAMBA: Non spik English. Portugaish.

PREEMBY: No. Providence. Follow after me.

*(Music begins again.)*

MR GODLEY: But he just wants to go to that address!

EX-SOLDIER: This must be the beginning of the social revolution.

*(A PROSTITUTE in a magenta hat joins in.)*

PROSTITUTE: Oo, a revolution! Where is it?

EX-SOLDIER: He knows.

(PREEMBY indicates a restaurant. Music out.)

PREEMBY: Here—we will rest and have a meal, and I will talk, and all things shall be explained. (To beggar) I have things to tell you that will change your whole life.

WOMAN WITH CONCERTINA: A free feed!

PROSTITUTE: I want the fricassee of chicken!

(Restaurant MANAGER appears.)

PREEMBY: Set a table here for a great company. The day of separate tables and separate lives is at an end. All may join.

MANAGER: We don't have banquets in this restaurant, sir.

PREEMBY: Then we shall have it out here.

(A large tablecloth is spread out in front of Saint Paul's. The PROSTITUTE sings accompanied by the WOMAN WITH CONCERTINA.)

Song: Fricassee of Chicken

PROSTITUTE: I want the fricassee of chicken, chicken.

Just a fricassee of chicken, chicken.

I want the fricassee of chicken,

So bring it on, bring it on now.

PREEMBY: Give her the fricassee of chicken,

PROSTITUTE: Chicken.

PREEMBY: Just a fricassee of chicken,

PREEMBY & PROSTITUTE: Chicken.

PREEMBY: She wants the fricassee of chicken,

PROSTITUTE: Chicken.

So bring it on, bring it on now.

ALL: We all want the fricassee of chicken, chicken,

Just a fricassee of chicken, chicken.

We all want the fricassee of chicken, chicken.

So bring it on, bring it on now!

(Action freezes in "Last Supper" tableau. Meanwhile, in the studio, CHRISTINA ALBERTA discovers TEDDY making love to FAY.)

TEDDY: There you are!

FAY: D'in tink. Sl'y.

TEDDY: Sorry. I say, Chrissy, might I have a word with you?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: I don't want a word.

TEDDY: Give me a chance—

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: You've had your chance. And taken it.

TEDDY: I took it with you. Chrissy, listen. There's nothing more you can do for your father. You've become just like him. Lop-sided.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Lop-sided...? Damn you. Damn both of you.

TEDDY: Where are you going?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: To church. I want to scream somewhere that has a good echo.

(CHRISTINA ALBERTA runs to Saint Paul's Cathedral.)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: LOP-SIDED!!

(Suddenly, CHRISTINA ALBERTA sees PREEMBY speaking to the disciples. She stops to listen. PREEMBY is unaware of her presence.)

PREEMBY: The poor rulers and politicians of this age have no wisdom. No instinct for the fundamentally right thing.

DISCIPLES: Hear, hear.

PREEMBY: Everywhere there is suffering. Everywhere injustice and disorder. Vast, terrible—strikes—hoardings—adulterations—profiteers. Nevertheless, people that once lived bravely and did their duty...who may do it again.... Once they hear the call. Awake! Remember!

DISCIPLES: Awake! Remember!

PREEMBY: The distinction between rich and poor must be abolished altogether. Women must be freed from all disadvantages.

FEMALE DISCIPLES: Awake! Remember!

PREEMBY: There will be no more War.

OTHER DISCIPLES: Awake! Remember!

PREEMBY: But it is not enough just to say these things. No one wants to be poor. No one wants to be hurt or worried by war. But that's not the same as wanting to end these things. I want to end them. Hear the call.

The High Path. Simple Honor. Sargon the Magnificent calls you.

ALL DISCIPLES: Awake! Remember!

(All freeze except CHRISTINA ALBERTA and PASSERBY.)

PASSERBY: (To CHRISTINA ALBERTA) He is magnificent.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Yes, he is.

PASSERBY: Oh, do you know him?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: No. I don't know him.

(PASSERBY joins disciples.)

Song: *Later Amphibians*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: There were once two amphibians

Father, daughter

They did things and tried things

In water, on sand

Learning to compare

Trying to decide

Which realm to inhabit

Then disregarding habit

One starts to fly—

My father becomes a bird

Rising, soaring

Out in the sky that seems suddenly near

On a wild ride

Enjoying the view

Powerfully strange, certainly new.

I stay on the ground

Stricken, staring

Off into space

And considering—chase.

Casting that aside,

I turn and I hide.

I wonder why I know nothing.

(End of song)

(CHRISTINA ALBERTA remains in a kind of daze as focus is shifted to Saint Paul's.)

DISCIPLES: Awake! Remember! Awake! Remember! Awake! Remember!

PREEMBY: Now. This moment. Sargon calls you to light, to nobility, to Freedom!

DISCIPLES: Awake! Remember! Awake!

(Suddenly, BUXTON, a policeman, enters. The DISCIPLES gradually disperse.)

BUXTON: Alright, you. Name and address please.

PREEMBY: Sargon. Sargon the First.

BUXTON: No Christian name?

PREEMBY: Pre-Christian.

BUXTON: No given name, I mean?

PREEMBY: No.

BUXTON: And the address?

PREEMBY: None at present.

BUXTON: Just anywhere?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: (To audience) I decided to do something. Something ridiculous.

BUXTON: Come on!

(BUXTON leads PREEMBY off stage. CHRISTINA ALBERTA begins to write a letter.)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Dear Aunt Suzannah, This is not a love letter. It concerns my father and most of it you will find almost unbelievable.

(At BOBBY'S. Having received CHRISTINA ALBERTA'S letter, BOBBY reads the end.)

BOBBY: "This is not for publication. Yours sincerely, Christina Alberta Preemby, 8 Lonsdale Mews, Chelsea." (He begins to compose his reply.) Dear Miss Preemby, You may find this remarkable, but I know your father and have been trying to track him down. He took a room where I lodge and there was something innocent and delightful about him. I've a weakness, a sympathy perhaps, with absurdity...

Song: *Christina Alberta and I*

She'll be blue-eyed,

Fragile and shy—

Taller

Than her father,

With a soft voice,

Rather dreamy,

And a sweet vein

Of gentle fantasy

Hidden away within her.

(He returns to writing his letter.)

Perhaps we might meet and discuss this further...

She'll be blue-eyed,

Fragile and shy.

Christina Alberta and I,

Together—

Protecting her father.

Together—

Resurrecting him.

Together—

Christina Alberta and I.

She'll be blue-eyed,

Fragile and...

(End of song)

Damned nonsense! I haven't even met the girl!

### Scene Six

(Saint Paul's façade opens up into Cummerdown Hill Asylum. A heartless great dingy room. Harsh, naked electric light. The inmates include one YOUNG MAN who recites an interminable poem and another who is sane but sunken in despair. PREEMBY, in a dirty grey nightgown, sits on a bed trying to think.)

POET: Atoms!

Burning atoms—exactly like stars. See?

Stars in the void and all over the place.

Atoms galore and God can't show his face. (Triumphant discovery)

He hasn't a face. (Laughs, then turns suddenly serious)

Want and be hurt, want and be hurt,

Out of the dirt you came, back to the dirt.

Hunger for dirt and dirty regretting

Dirty our feeding and dirty begetting.

Smear yourself, paint yourself, wear a fine shirt

Put a brave face on it, Yech!—you are dirt.

PREEMBY: Dirt? What is dirt? No. Don't listen.

Song: Tra-La-La

POET: Tra-la-la. Tra-la-la.

That is the note of it.

Get the full gloat of it.

Tra-la-la. Tra-la-la.

All times and places

For gods without faces.

Tra-la-la...

(During previous stanza:)

PREEMBY: (Spoken) Please stop! Don't listen to it, Sargon! Concentrate!

POET: Tra-la-la, tra-la-la,

Life is a hiccup and life is a sneeze,

A smell from a dunghill borne on the breeze,

A thing of no moment—so do as you please!

Tra-la-la. Tra-la-la.

PREEMBY: (Spoken) You are wrong!

(POET's previous stanza is repeated against:)

PREEMBY: Life is real.

Life is immense.

Full of meaning and order.

I, too, was a lost thing like you

'Til I heard the call, "awake, remember."

Serve and suffer.

POET: Eat, drink, and kiss 'em and at it again.

Tra-la-la. Tra-la-la.

Eat 'em and eat 'em and at it again.

Tra-la-la...

Tra-la-la, sunshine or

Tra-la-la, rain.

Gods without faces

And men without names.

PREEMBY: I have seen the world

As one who awakens from a long sleep.

All things are joined together

And work together

And continue forever.

(Spoken) Does anyone ever sleep here?

GUARD: (Spoken) Shuddup!

(As soon as GUARD leaves:)

POET: Tra-la-la, tra-la-la...

(PREEMBY kneels in prayer.)

PREEMBY: (Spoken) O Supreme Power, the task thou hast put upon me is hard. I see now that I am unworthy and all I have done is folly. But O Great Power, thou hast called me knowing my folly. Forgive thou my folly and help thou my faith. (A pause) Help thou my unbelief.

(POET's "Tra-La-La" continues through PREEMBY's next stanza.)

PREEMBY: I deserted my proper life

For this horror of nothingness.

I deserted my daughter

To fend for herself.

If I could just see her—

(POET suddenly directs his focus on PREEMBY.)

POET: You could. Tra-la-la.

PREEMBY: Coming to rescue me—

POET: To release. Tra-la-la.

PREEMBY: But could I?

POET: What is your name?

What is your name?

What is your name?

PREEMBY: (*Spoken*) My name...Preemby.

POET: That proves you're sane. Tra-la-la...

PREEMBY: Albert Edward Preemby.

Sensibly, Preemby.

Preemby the bystander, Preemby the onlooker

No more wonder in my life.

(*Spoken*) No. I am Sargon. Sargon, the servant of God

Here I am

And this is my world.

My world!

This dank, bleak, hideous place,

This infinite space;

This whole world is mine.

POET: Tra-la-la, tra-la-la...

(*End of song*)

### Scene Seven

(CHRISTINA ALBERTA *at the studio*. BOBBY *enters*.)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: You're Aunt Suzannah?

BOBBY: Yes.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: I see. Do you enjoy masquerading as a woman?

BOBBY: In print, it's convenient.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Convenient to be a woman?

BOBBY: It could be—but I hope you'll call me Bobby.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: No, Aunt Suzannah. I won't.

BOBBY: I have news of your father.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Where is he?

BOBBY: It's difficult. There's much to explain. Might we sit down? (*A pause*) He was arrested and taken to the Workhouse Infirmary for observation. After three days, he was certified as a lunatic and sent to Cumberdown Hill Asylum. The next visiting day isn't for two weeks. (*A pause*) How old are you?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Twenty. What does that matter?

BOBBY: It matters. Since you're underage, there's nothing you can do to release him. Being a relation, you could visit him—but I don't think you should see him there. Have you any other relatives?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: No.

BOBBY: Except your Aunt Suzannah.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: I see...

BOBBY: Please understand. Your father has lost nearly every right he possessed as a human being. There is no trial by jury for the insane. No one to whom he may appeal.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Why should I trust you?

BOBBY: Because I care for your father, Christina Alberta. Because I hate the idea of sane people being locked up. And even if he is mad, I believe that there is a real and important purpose in madness. It's really about simplification; a removal of controls, a sort of natural experiment.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: The secret things of the mind laid bare.

BOBBY: Yes. The world will never learn anything until it listens to ridiculous people.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: But it's a world of people who don't care. It's a world of people who haven't the guts to care. It's a dust heap of a world.

BOBBY: Christina Alberta. I have a plan to get him out of there. Meet me in two weeks from today, outside Cumberdown Hill Asylum at daybreak.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: I'll be there, Aunt Suzannah.

BOBBY: The real business of life is to fight evil things.

### Scene Eight

(*Interiors and exterior of the Cumberdown Hill Asylum. Within the asylum, PREEMBY is made to undress by guard, put into a tub and scrubbed down. He offers no resistance and is clearly ill. Outside the asylum: BOBBY [dressed as Aunt Suzannah] and CHRISTINA ALBERTA meet.*)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Bobby! You look much more like yourself now.

BOBBY: Thank you.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Now what do we do?

BOBBY: Well...I thought we might just go in at the gates and say, "There is a sane man here and we have come to set him free."

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Bobby, this is ridiculous.

BOBBY: Exactly!

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: But it won't...

BOBBY: Now!

*(Music as BOBBY and CHRISTINA ALBERTA head off in different directions.*

*BOBBY enters the Asylum reception room. A GUARD leads BOBBY in.)*

GUARD: *(To BOBBY)* Alright, missus. Not too long, now. 'E's got a nasty cold.  
*(To PREEMBY)* You finally got a visitor. It's your Aunt Suzannah.

*(PREEMBY's spirits rise as he recognizes BOBBY. He holds out both his hands to him.)*

PREEMBY: You have come to see me, me—Sargon?

BOBBY: Yes, the King out of the Past.

PREEMBY: *(Whispered)* They would have me deny it. How is one to know? I cannot understand this madness...this riddle. What becomes of Justice when men go mad?

BOBBY: I want to get you out of this—

PREEMBY: Everyone here is always thinking about what their friends outside are doing for them. It is very painful. You cannot help but see... *(A pause, then abruptly:)* There can be no doubt that I am Sargon?

BOBBY: I call you by no other name.

PREEMBY: *(Feverishly)* Are my disciples doing anything? What is Christina Alberta doing? Is she well?

BOBBY: She is splendid.

*(We hear.)*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: *(Screaming)* FIRE

*(A loud fire bell goes off as she runs into the reception room with a laundry cart. In the ensuing confusion, BOBBY and CHRISTINA ALBERTA lift PREEMBY into the cart, cover him and head outside. Music begins under. When they are a ways off, GUARD #2 approaches.)*

GUARD #2: Hullo! Wot's that ya got there?

BOBBY: Dead leaves.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: And laundry, sir.

GUARD #2: Laundry is it? That's all right then. Got an inmate astray. You seen 'im?

BOBBY: No.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Was he in a sort of robe and slippers—nothing on his head?

GUARD #2: That's the one.

BOBBY: Ooh, right! He was making off along the edge of a field...

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Must be five minutes ago.

BOBBY: About a mile off—

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: A bit more.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA & BOBBY: Away from here.

BOBBY: Running.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Sort of limping.

BOBBY: Along a hedge to the right.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Left, I think—near a chestnut plantation.

GUARD #2: That's 'im all right. Thank you, ladies.

BOBBY: Don't mention it.

*(GUARD #2 runs off.)*

BOBBY: Christina Alberta, whether or not I'm in love with you yet, I don't know. But it's evidently going to be a difficult series of exercises.

*(BOBBY heads off with PREEMBY as CHRISTINA ALBERTA steps forward.)*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: *(To audience)* We took Daddy to Paul Lambone's cottage in Udmere. To recuperate.

### Scene Nine

*(Outside PAUL LAMBONE's cottage in Udmere, PREEMBY reclines on the terrace; CHRISTINA ALBERTA and BOBBY sit on deck chairs beside him. They look out over the marsh to the sea.)*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Feeling better, Daddy?

PREEMBY: I'm getting used to the tonic. Not as good as Chianti, though.

BOBBY: You'll be up and about soon.

*(PREEMBY drifts off into slumber. CHRISTINA ALBERTA kisses him and crosses with BOBBY out onto the lawn. Paul Lambone and his fiancée, MISS MEANS, pass by. It is twilight and the beam from the lighthouse flashes round. Sound of nightingales)*

BOBBY: The spring has come fast.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Yes, the world is opening. I never know whether spring is the happiest time in the year or the most miserably restless. Everybody and everything is falling in love.

BOBBY: I didn't wait for spring.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: I thought Paul at least was safe.

MISS MEANS: It is so beautiful here, perfectly beautiful—just a little chilly. I think we should go in and light the candles.

PAUL: Yes, dear.

MISS MEANS: We will just light the candles and the fire.

PAUL: Right.

MISS MEANS: Such marvelous fireplaces here—they blaze up at once. I don't know if you've noticed them—a new sort.

PAUL: Yes, well I...

MISS MEANS: The fire is all on the hearth—no draught below—the shape of the back draws it up. I love a wood fire.

PAUL: Come along, dear.

*(They exit.)*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Yes, the spring tides have caught Paul. They catch everybody.

BOBBY: They've caught you?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Bobby dear, what do you want in me?

BOBBY: You. To be with you. To be always with you. And to be loved by you.

*(Next two speeches at the same time:)*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: I'm ugly, rude, greedy, inconsiderate. I've no purity, no devotion.

BOBBY: You're incessantly interesting. You're straight, swift, and endlessly beautiful.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Bobby, truly! Does it look like that to you?

BOBBY: Yes. Don't you know?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Yes.

BOBBY: Will you marry me?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: I don't want to marry anyone. I don't love anybody. Except of course you. But even you, I can't marry.

BOBBY: But why?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: I don't want to be a wife. I don't want someone seeing me grow all the time. You'd always be looking at me, Bobby, I know you would.

BOBBY: Yes, I would. But if you're not to marry, what about children?

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Bobby, the most astonishing thing in the feminine make-up is that many of us do not want children. To me they seem like a swarm of hidden dwarfs, prepared to come upon me and eat up my whole existence. It's not simply I don't want them; I live in fear of them.

BOBBY: We need a third sex.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: *(Quietly, after a pause)* What?

BOBBY: You know, perhaps...in the new world. There would cease to be two sexes only; there would be recognized varieties and subdivisions. Just as there are women who don't want to bear children, there are men who don't want to lord it over wife and children. We need a third sex.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: They would want to love all the same. Love we do want. Many of us. Intensely. I want dreadfully to be close to someone, as close as possible, and be kissed and told "there! there!" and to keep there. But I just can't. I'm not a normal woman perhaps. Or something has happened to me unawares. Oh I don't know, Bobby. I want someone dreadfully; I want you dreadfully and I don't want you at all.

BOBBY: But I thought...

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: No.

BOBBY: I'll wait ten years for you on the chance of your altering your mind.

*(CHRISTINA ALBERTA clings to BOBBY; she is weeping.)*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Wetting you instead of wedding you. Oh, I do love you, Bobby!

*(They kiss. Then CHRISTINA ALBERTA runs away but remains on stage.)*

*Song: Here Is Love*

BOBBY: Here is love  
On this warm still night.  
The sky like the inside of a deep blue globe—  
Looking out across the sea—

She isn't going to marry me.

Here is love.  
The beam from the lighthouse  
Sweeps across the distant fields and out to sea;  
Calling into being a church tower, a group of trees—  
Then drops them back into darkness.

She isn't going to marry me.

Here is love  
On this warm still night.  
The hawthorne trees are white with blossom,  
Great bushes of elder are bursting into flower.  
High May rules the world.

She isn't...going to...marry me.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA & BOBBY: Here is love.  
Warm, still night  
The sky. A deep blue globe—  
Receding out to sea—  
A liner, brightly lit—  
The old world passes—  
The new world—glows.

*(End of song)*

*(BOBBY joins CHRISTINA ALBERTA who sits next to PREEMBY.)*

PREEMBY: My dear, I've been thinking. I ought never to have left you. But there came a sort of wonder upon me as though the world was opening... I am Sargon. But I am not exclusively Sargon. You—are both Sargon, too. His blood is in our veins. We all inherit. Not only from Sargon—from all the great kings, from all the noble conquerors. From all the brave and beautiful women. All that rich wine from the past is in our veins. A little arithmetic—it's perfectly plain. There, you see. I've worked it out on a piece of paper.

*(PREEMBY hands paper to BOBBY.)*

BOBBY: It seems incredible.

PREEMBY: It is. And I thought I was just Albert Edward Preemby! A Human Rabbit. Why, I can remember a blazing day when a band of men went out across a sandy desert for the first time. And when a man first stood upon a glacier.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: It must have been slippery.

PREEMBY: It was. And I remember watching my people build the walls of my first city. Later, we planned the Great Walls of China.

*(Next three lines at the same time:)*

BOBBY: We built a million temples.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: We made all those sculptures and paintings—

BOBBY: And music—

PREEMBY: And we have loved a billion loves—to bring us here. There I was walking about in a suit of clothes I never really liked—not knowing that the

whole earth down to the center and up to the sky was mine. And yours. Ours. In the past, we were all one and in the future we may come together again. We've just separated to take hold of things as the hand separates into thumb and fingers.

*(PREEMBY takes CHRISTINA ALBERTA's and BOBBY's hands.)*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: But what are you going to do, Daddy?

PREEMBY: What are we going to do.... That's where the difficulties begin. We can't be kings and not do kingly things.

BOBBY: That seems reasonable.

PREEMBY: Yes. But I am not clear. There's a lot to be thought out. Still, the mere fact that I am not clear shows clearly where I have to begin. I have to get clear.

*(Music begins under.)*

PREEMBY: I have to get knowledge, find out about my kingdom. I have to go to school again. To learn how to think harder. I know nothing. But I am impatient.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Yes, Daddy.

PREEMBY: *(Increasingly to himself)* I am so eager to get at things. You know, it is astonishing that there has been flying in our kingdom for a dozen years and I've never been in an aeroplane. And I shall need to go to India and China and other strange and wonderful countries. And there's science. All the wonderful work men do in laboratories and their marvelous discoveries are our care. If I don't understand I may hinder. How blind I have been to the splendor of my life! When I think of all these things, I can hardly endure to be here in bed, I'm so impatient to get on with them. But I suppose I must be patient... Patient. Is it summer yet?

BOBBY: The very first night.

*(BOBBY exits leaving CHRISTINA ALBERTA alone with PREEMBY.)*

PREEMBY: Can you tell me the time?

*(CHRIS is seen out of view of CHRISTINA ALBERTA. PREEMBY dies. We hear the voice of CHRIS.)*

*Song: Alone in the World (reprise)*

CHRIS: Take care of your daddy  
He's gentle and good  
And not to be trusted alone  
In the world.

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: I never was all a daughter  
Could be to you.



But it's been so difficult.  
I've had a great love for you.

It never entered my mind  
You wouldn't be here with me—  
Always. Something—  
Something will keep us together:  
Something to open me  
As Sargon opened you.  
(*End of song*)

For a long while after Daddy died, I did nothing. Then, exactly one year later, I fell in love—with comparative anatomy. Bobby thought that comparative anatomy was dry, pedantic stuff about bones, but for me it lit up the whole history of life.

(PREEMBY *sits up and observes* CHRISTINA ALBERTA.)

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: The bones of a wing or the scratches of a flint could restore the storms and sunlight and passion of ten million years ago. It made human history seem silly.

*Song: First Night of Summer*

CHRISTINA ALBERTA: Now—this summer  
Now—this night  
This wonderful first night of summer  
Tonight, I am born.  
I will be very difficult,  
Almost impossible and absurd.  
For the first time  
I want the world:  
This infinite space, stars and so forth  
To the bottom of the sea  
For myself. For my own hungry self  
And all between  
All the precious things between—  
The love.  
(*End of song*)  
Now.

PREEMBY: Now.

END