

A Night at an Inn

By Lord Dunsany

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A Night at an Inn

The first production was at the Neighborhood Playhouse, New York City, on May 13th, 1916, with the following cast:

A. E. Scott-Fortescue (The Toff)	Mr. David Soloman
William Jones (Bill)]	Mr. Max M. Kaplan
Albert Thomas]Sailors	Mr. S. P. Zalmanovic
Jacob Smith (Sniggers)]	Mr. Sol Friedman
First Priest of Klesh	Mr. Jacob Liss
Second Priest of Klesh	Mr. Ira Uhr
Third Priest of Klesh	Mr. David Goldstein
Klesh	Mr. Norman Nacman

A Night at an Inn: 1916
DRAMATIS PERSONAE

A.E. SCOTT-FORTESCUE (the Toff) a dilapidated gentleman.
WILLIAM JONES (Bill)
ALBERT THOMAS,
JACOB SMITH (Sniggers) Merchant Sailors.
1ST PRIEST OF KLESH.
2ND PRIEST OF KLESH.
3RD PRIEST OF KLESH.
KLESH.

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.

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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

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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.

SNIGGERS.

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.

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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-bye, 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-bye. You'll say good-bye ?

THE TOFF.

Oh, yes. Good-bye.

[Still reads paper. Exit Bill.]

[The Toff puts a revolver on the table beside him and goes on with his paper.]

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.

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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 that 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 grandchildren. That fool thinks he can escape 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 most important it is in a very quiet neighbourhood. 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 on it.

BILL.

Well, well.

THE TOFF.

Have a game of poker ?

ALL.

No, thanks.

THE TOFF.

Then do as you're told.

BILL.

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O 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.

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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 reenter in the same manner.]

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.]

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 in 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 armchair 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 round.]

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 on 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 each of his clenched hands. Then he looks at the recumbent Toff. Then he creeps towards him. Bill slips after him and knifes him like the other with his left hand over his mouth.]

BILL.

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[Sotto voce.]

We've only got two, Toffy.

THE TOFF.

[Sitting Up.]

Still another.

BILL.

What'll we do ?

THE TOFF.

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 his arm.]

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 around 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.]

Come on, Bill.

[The Priest rushes to the door. The Toff knifes the last Priest from behind.]

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.

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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 'ave been for him—

BILL.

Yes, if it hadn't 'a' 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.

It wouldn't do for any one to see them.[Going to the window.]

THE TOFF.

O 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.

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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 a 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 AND SNIGGERS.

Good old Toffy.

BILL.

Toffy who saved our lives and made our fortunes.

ALBERT AND 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 fortune.

BILL.

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Here's to Albert Thomas Esquire.

ALBERT.

And William Jones Esquire.

[Renter Sniggers terrified.]

THE TOFF.

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

SNIGGERS.

Toffy, I've been a 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.

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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' sobs. Then stony 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 stops.]

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.

OFF, A VOICE.

[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 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' 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.]

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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.