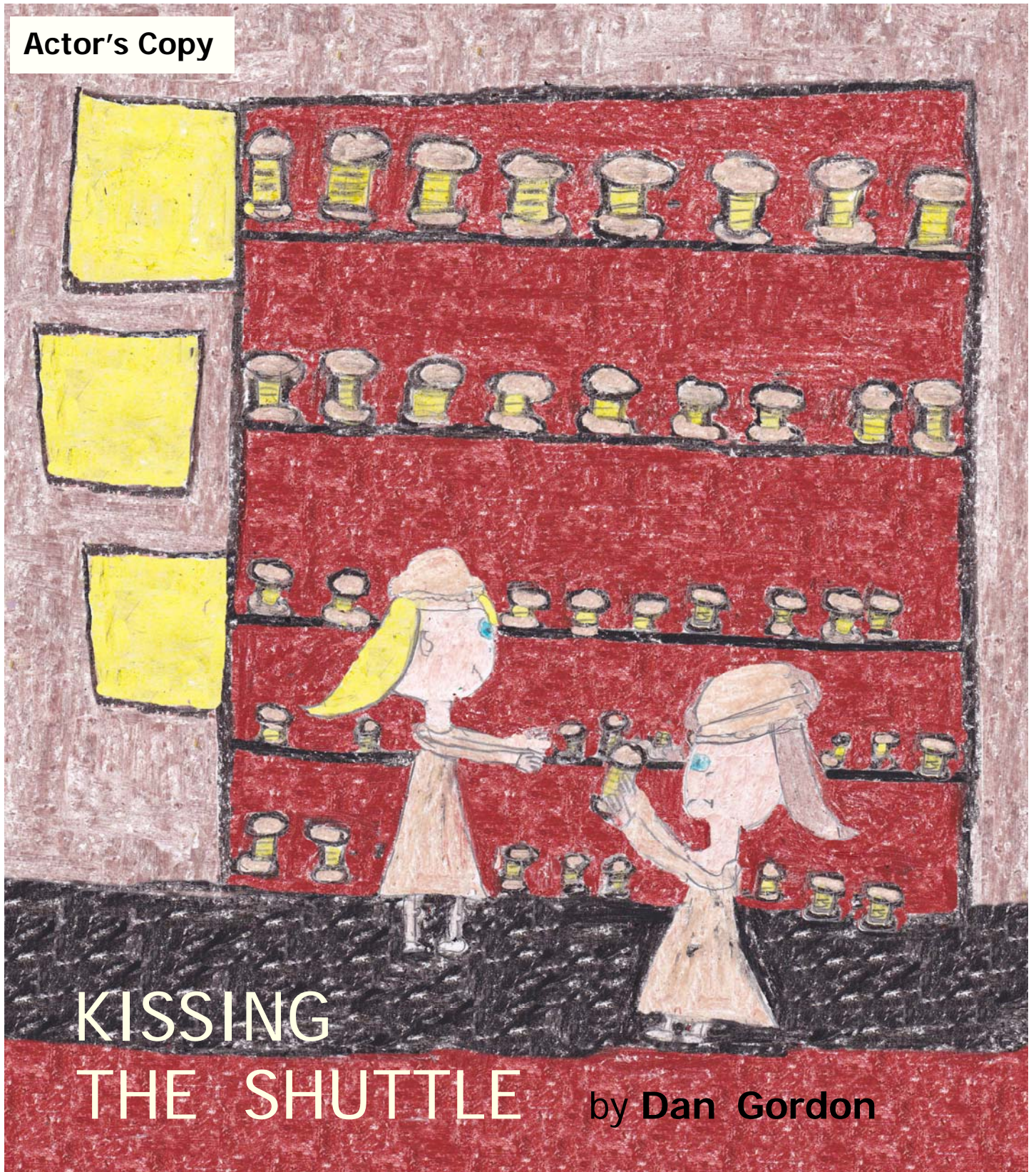




Ulster-Scots Agency  
Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch

PAT & PLAIN (Chapter 2)

Actor's Copy



# KISSING THE SHUTTLE

by **Dan Gordon**

Lyric  
Theatre

The Theatre on the River



Cover designed by Chloe Wilson (P7)  
Fountain Primary School

Copies of this script are downloadable from [www.ulsterscotsagency.com](http://www.ulsterscotsagency.com)

## SCENE 1:           GET UP AN' GET ON YE

*The lights go to blackout.*

### **Mill horn.**

*The cast enter in a line/lines (not marching) from the main entrance or entrances: one line from each entrance. They are humming the melody of the verse and chorus quietly and gradually they move around the edges of the space behind the audience. They then la-la the tune (still quite quietly). A whistle is blown and the la la-ing stops abruptly. One of the eight sings the first line, a second joins for line two and a third for line three, until all eight sing the final line of the verse. The song is sung both unaccompanied and like the singer is telling a story. The eight performers are barefoot. Remember, these girls love life, have fun and are strong women.*

Girl 1:                            You will **asy** know a **doffer**

Girl 2:                            When she comes into town,

Girl 1/2/3:                      With her long **yella** hair

Girl 1/2/3/4:                    And her ringlets hanging down.

Girl 1/2/3/4/5:                 With her rubber tied before her

Girl 1/2/3/4/5/6:              And her pickers in her hand,

Girl 1/2/3/4/5/6/7:            You will **asy** know a **doffer**

Girl 1/2/3/4/5/6/7/8:         For she'll always get her man.

All:                                Oh, she'll always get her man,  
                                      Oh, she'll always get her man.  
                                      You will **asy** know a **doffer**  
                                      For she'll always get her man.

Girl 8:                            You will **asy** know a weaver

Girl 8/7:                         When she comes into town,

Girl 8/7/6:                      With her **oul** greasy hair

Girl 8/7/6/5:                    And her scissors hanging down.

Girl 8/7/6/5/4:                 With a shawl around her shoulders

Girl 8/7/6/5/4/3:              And a shuttle in her hand,

Girl 8/7/6/5/4/3/2: You will **asy** know a weaver

Girl 8/7/6/5/4/3/2/1; For she'll never get a man.

All: No, she'll never get a man,  
No, she'll never get a man.  
You will **asy** know a weaver  
For she'll never get a man.

*The 8 begin to dance – weaving around each other and linking arms.*

All: You will **asy** know a **doffer**  
When she comes into town,  
With her long **yella** hair  
And her ringlets hanging down,  
With her rubber tied before her  
And her pickers in her hand,  
You will **asy** know a **doffer**  
For she'll always get a man.

Oh, she'll always get her man,  
Oh, she'll always get her man.  
You will **asy** know a **doffer**  
For she'll always get her man.

*All the cast dance.*

You will **asy** know a weaver  
When she comes into town,  
With her **oul** greasy hair  
And her scissors hanging down.  
With a shawl around her shoulders  
And a shuttle in her hand,  
You will **asy** know a weaver  
For she'll never get a man.

No, she'll never get a man,  
No, she'll never get a man.  
You will **asy** know a weaver – *pause – 3 beats*

*The final line builds to a shout of the final word...*

For she'll never get a MAN!

*Blackout.*

*The eight performers fall down onto the four raised platforms – two on each, like beds. They use their shawls as a blanket over them and pretend to be asleep - the rest of the cast remain standing, spaced out around behind the audience, watching. Four of the eight take the roles of Katy, Marie, Sadie and Hetty.*

*Billy Whitten, the rapper up enters. He has one arm and a long pole to rap the **windys**. Several rappers up were disabled because of an industrial accident or by birth – this was a job they could do.*

Billy Whitten –  
the rapper up:

My name is Billy Whitten,  
My job is **rapper up**.  
I **hammer** on their **windys**  
**'Til** they beg me for to **stap**.

I carry a great big stick  
For to make the **rap rap rap**.  
I **bate** their bedroom **windys**  
And make them all get up.

For the Shipyard or Ropeworks,  
The Docks or Linen Mills,  
The workers they all need me,  
Whatever is their skills.

For there's no one has alarm clocks  
For to get them from their bed  
And if I didn't wake them up  
They'd sleep like they were dead.

So for sixpence for a fortnight,  
Or four pence for a week,  
I'll waken you up right regular  
And make sure that you don't sleep.

**'Get up and get on ye!'**  
They all hear me call;  
It's near half five in the morning:  
Get up one an' all.

**Rap, rap**, Katy Wilson,  
Can **ye** not hear me call?  
It's half five in the morning,  
Are **ye** comin' **atall**?

*Katy sits up.*

Katy:  
Yes, I hear, Billy Whitten,  
**Howl yer gowlin'**, don't bawl.  
I've to just wash me face  
An' put on me shawl.

Billy Whitten –  
the rapper up:       **Rap, rap**, Mar-ee Thompson,  
                                  Can **ye** not hear me call?  
                                  It's half five in the morning,  
                                  Are **ye** comin' **atall**?

*Marie sits up. (Marie's name is pronounced Mar-ee, not Marie as in Rosemarie.)*

Marie:                    Is that you, Billy Whitten?  
                                  **Ach**, I'm just into bed.  
                                  Your **gurnin'** and **greetin'**  
                                  Has me 'way in the head.

Billy Whitten –  
the rapper up:       **Rap, rap**, Sadie Watson  
                                  Can **ye** not hear me call?  
                                  It's half five in the morning,  
                                  Are **ye** comin' **atall**?

*Sadie sits up.*

Sadie:                    Yes, I hear, Billy Whitten,  
                                  I've **got on me** an' all.  
                                  My feet's on the cold floor  
                                  And my shawl's in the hall.

Billy Whitten –  
the rapper up:       **Rap, rap**, Hetty English,  
                                  Can **ye** not hear me call?  
                                  It's half five in the morning,  
                                  Are **ye** comin' **atall**?

*Hetty sits up.*

Hetty:                    Yes, I hear, Billy Whitten,  
                                  I'm near ready to go,  
                                  All your **bengin'** (banging) and **bargin'**

*Hetty produces an enamel chamber pot.*

Made me **near** spill the **po**!

*Katy, Marie, Sadie all produce chamber pots. Their 'sisters' get up and produce them too.*

All:                      Oh!

*Mill horn.*

## **SCENE 2:            YIS ALL KNOW THE RULES**

*The cast whistle/hum a verse of ‘You’ll Easy Know a **Doffer**’ while the 8 girls get rid of their ‘pos’ take up their ‘bed blankets’ and wrap them around their heads as shawls. They then form two lines side by side.*

*As the first verse finishes the cast begin to hum/la the tune. The other children hoist shawls over their heads and follow the eight through the mill gates which are represented by two children standing on one of the platforms and forming an archway by linking hands high over their heads. The ‘workers’ will have to cross the threshold by stepping onto and then off the rostra to pass under the arch. A cross Sammy Blair stands at the arch watching them come in.*

*When they get through the arch, they drop the shawls around their shoulders and begin work. When all are in position, a whistle blows and they stop. The new foreman, Sammy Blair, stands on a crate that he’s brought on with him. He isn’t a happy man. Flanking him is Lizzie Longley and Ernie McClatchie.*

Sammy Blair:            Right spinners and **doffers** - all listen to me.  
My name’s Sammy Blair and I want **yis** to see  
I’m the new foreman boss – for the floors of this mill.  
**Youse’ll** do what I tell **youse** and follow my will!

It’s come to my ‘tention, while watchin’ that gate,  
That some of **youse** girls has been coming in late.  
It seems to me **nigh youse** is floutin’ the rules  
And treating your **bettters** like **eejits** and fools.

Well, I’m telling **yis** all and I’m giving **youse** warnin’,  
I’ll be watching that gate like a hawk in the mornin’.  
I’m locking it tight when the clock bell strikes six;  
If you’re late then it’s **youse** has **yerselves** in the fix.

I’ll be **dockin’ yer** wages - a guaranteed offer,  
Whether hackler or spinner or layer or **doffer**.  
So **buck yerselves up** and **set yerselves straight**  
Or you’ll be findin’ yourselves the wrong side of that gate.

Timekeeper McClatchie will speak **til yis** now,  
For the rest of the rules yis need to avow.  
The slackin’ and dodging is going **til** stop:  
And know that this message comes right from the top!

*Billy gives them the evil eye for a moment – everyone is afraid to move. He climbs down from his crate and the cast burst into talking excitedly among themselves for a few seconds until Sammy jumps back up on the crate and shouts...*

Sammy Blair:            QUIET! (*calling him forward up on to the crate*)  
Mr McClatchie, if you would?

*Mr McClatchie is a time keeper/wages clerk. He is small and pale or tall and gangly – whatever, he is awkward getting on and off the crate. He speaks very nasally and wears wee glasses. He holds a clipboard with the rules written on.*

McClatchie: Em – thank you Mr Blair. Now ladies, I have been asked to tell you...

Wag 1: Speak up Ernie - we can't hear ye!

McClatchie: Sorry, can you hear me at the back?

Wags 1/2/3/4/5: No!

McClatchie: *(louder)* What about now?

Wags 1/2/3/4/5: That's better.

*They snigger among themselves.*

McClatchie: Rule 4: A worker shall be liable to instant dismissal if in the opinion of the Employer, Manager or Foreman she is – Incompetent – absent without permission – disobedient – loitering – smoking – idling or assisting others to idle – annoying or quarrelling with other workers – using obscene or blasphemous language...

Wag 1: What's that mean?

McClatchie: Swearing or taking the Lord's name in vain, Maggie.

Wag 1: Oh!

McClatchie: Breaching the peace –

Wag 2: You know what that one means, Maggie!

*The others chorus a...*

All: Yeeeeeeeeeeooooo!

*Maggie cheers too.*

McClatchie: *(continuing)* Being under the influence of drink or bringing drink in – doing anything dangerous – interfering with machinery – starting work before you're supposed to – finishing work after your supposed to – bringing in strangers or bringing in knitting – needlework – books – newspapers or other articles likely to cause a waste of time.

*The girls all clap when he is finished. He looks pleased with himself and takes a bow, then realises they are laughing at him. Blair quietens them.*

Mr Blair: ENOUGH! Mr McClatchie – remind them of rule 5.

McClatchie: Yes, Mr Blair – Rule 5: Any worker absent in the morning shall pay a fine of 2d and any worker absent after any **meal hour** shall pay a fine of 3d, but at the discretion of the Manager any worker can also be dismissed for absence.

*The girls all boo.*

Mr Blair: Right that's enough of taking the hand **outta** him.  
The rules is the rules so **yer** chances are slim.  
Get back to **yer** work and carry **yer** load,  
For to work in my mill, **yis** will walk the hard road.

*Pause.*

And if **yis** are late in the morning – **yis** won't get in for diamonds!

*A whistle is blown. All sing – softly, unaccompanied. All but Katy, Marie, Sadie and Hetty exit during the song. The rest of the cast remain standing, spaced out around behind the audience, watching. Four dressers bring each of the girls their aprons and help them put them on. The four girls mime working as soon as they are ready and the dressers 'leave'.*

All: At half past five – the horn will blow;  
Six o'clock we all must go.  
And if you be a minute late,  
Sammy Blair will shut the gate

*The rattle of spinning looms - fade up under the singing.*

*Chorus:* So early in the morning,  
So early in the morning,  
So early in the morning,  
Before we get our **tay**.

*Blackout.*



### SCENE 3:            **HALF-TIMERS NO MORE**

*Spinning frames run.*

*The four girls are working (miming) – moving backwards and forwards, lifting imaginary bobbins off the spinning frames, winding the ends on and throwing them into an imagined central point (a wooden box called a ‘cage’). Whistle blows.*

*Frames come to a stop.*

*The girls sit, 2 on two of the opposite rostra.*

Katy:                    I don’t feel no different, Marie.

Marie:                  What do you mean, Katy?

Katy:                    Well, this is our first day as full timers in the Mill and I don’t feel no different.

Marie:                  Well, at least we don’t have to go back to school and have the **Master - oul** Mr Parker - shouting at us for not bringing him any turf or coal for his fire.

Katy:                    And even if you do, oul **nosey** Parker sits right in front of it and doesn’t let the heat out.

Sadie:                  Marie, has Lizzie Longley said anything yet?

Marie:                  What like, Sadie?

Sadie:                  About, you know, us being full timers now an’ not being half-timers no more, and getting to be proper spinners like her.

Marie:                  I haven’t heard her say anything. What about you, Hetty?

Hetty:                  I heard her say something.

Katy:                    What did she say?

Hetty:                  She said the only yarns we’ll spin will be the yarns we tell her about why we’re late back from our **tay** break.

Katy/Marie/Sadie:    Hetty!

Sadie:                  No, she didn’t.

Marie:                  **Yer head’s a marlie.**

Katy:                    Lizzie Longley never said nothing **atall**.

*Lizzie Longley enters with a new **doffer**. She blows a whistle and the spinning frames come to a stop.*

Lizzie: And what did Lizzie Longley never say nothing **atall** about?

All: Nothing, Miss Longley.

Lizzie: I'm Lizzie Longley, Doffing Mistress of this here spinning room, and nobody better forget it.

All: No, Miss Longley.

Lizzie: **I'll take my hand off** of somebody's **lugs** in a minute! **Yis** get me?

All: Yes, Miss Longley.

Lizzie: Have **yis** been to the toilet?

All: Yes, Miss Longley.

Lizzie: Does any of **youse** want to help out on **muck up day** next Friday?

Hetty: Yes, we do, Miss Longley.

*Lizzie is surprised and the others give Hetty a look and find it hard to hide their annoyance.*

Hetty: I mean...I mean...I didn't mean...oh dear....

Lizzie: (*suddenly pleased*) Oh, good girls! Maybe we will make spinners of **yis** yet. This is Agnes Roberts. She's starting today as a new **doffer** and **youse** four mind her for me. She can be a **cager**.

All: Yes, Miss Longley.

Lizzie: And now yer not half-timers any more, youse can call me Lizzie.

All: Yes, Miss Longley.

*Lizzie puffs in exasperation and goes. The girls sit Agnes down and circle around her singing.*

Marie: (*mimicking Hetty*) Yes, Miss Longley – three bags full, Miss Longley – yes we'll all get covered in grease and grime and soaked and stinkin' cleaning down the spinning frames on **muck up day**, Miss Longley.

Katy: What did you go and volunteer us for **muck up day**, Hetty?

Sadie: Money wouldn't pay ye. **Muck up day** is stinking!

Agnes: What's **muck up day**?

Marie: Who are you again?

Agnes: I'm Agnes Roberts.

Katy: Who **spoke up** for to get you this job?

Agnes: My Aunt Minnie. She's a weaver but she died. My mammy says it was from kissing the shuttle.

Marie: What's kissing the shuttle?

Agnes: I'll tell you if you tell me what **muck up day** is?

Marie: Alright, you first.

Agnes: Weavers have to get the thread through the shuttle: it's the thing that goes back and forwards and does the weaving.

Marie: So what - everybody knows that!

Agnes: Well, instead of using a picker or a hook they just suck the thread through with their mouths. That's kissing the shuttle.

Marie: Oh.

Agnes: But my mammy says that's dirty. If you kiss someone else's shuttle, it gives you germs and if they have consumption, you get it too and you die. So that's why she won't let me be a weaver. What's **muck up day**?

Sadie: Agnes, **muck up day** is twice a month when they stop the spinning machines at **meal hour** and somebody has to get stinking smelly, up to their **oxters**, scraping all the grease and **glowter** and **gorry** off of it.

Marie: Aye, and thanks to Hetty English, now it's us!

Hetty: Would **yis give my head peace**?

Agnes: What's a half-timer? Lizzie Longley said **youse** used to be half-timers.

Hetty: A half-timer is somebody who goes to the mill one day and to school the next.

Sadie: But we're thirteen, so we've left school and from today we just come to the mill.

Aggie: Well, what's a cagerer? Lizzie Longley says I've to be a cagerer.

Marie: **Boys a dear**, you ask some questions wee girl.

Katy: It's called a **cager** - and we'll show you. You just have to push a big wooden collecting box on wheels along the pass between the spinning machines and we doff the full bobbins into it when Lizzie Longley tells us.

Agnes: I'm **ascared** of Lizzie Longley.

Katy: Ach, don't be **ascared**. Lizzie Longley may shout a bit but she looks out for her doffers.

Sadie: Lizzie Longley has a heart of corn.

Katy/Sadie: (*singing unaccompanied*)

Oh, do you know her or do you not?  
This Doffing Mistress that we have got.  
For Lizzie Longley, it is her name  
And she hangs her coat upon the highest frame.

All: Fad-dey right fol ra, fad-dey right fol ree.

Marie/Hetty: On Monday morning, when she comes in,  
She'll hang her coat upon the highest pin.  
She'll turn around for to view her girls,  
Saying '**Gwan** you **doffers**, lay up your ends.'

All: Fad-dey right fol ra, fad-dey right fol ree.

Katy/ Hetty: Lay up our ends, we will surely do,  
Our hands are steady and our hearts are true.  
Lay up our ends, we will surely do,  
All for Lizzie Longley, but not for you.

All: Fad-dey right fol ra, fad-dey right fol ree.

Sadie/Marie: Oh, Lizzie Longley, when you've gone away,  
It's every night that for you we'll pray.  
You've left us here with a broken heart,  
For there's no one left that will take our part.

All: Fad-dey right fol ra, fad-dey right fol ree.

*The rattle of spinning looms fade up under the singing.*

## **SCENE 4:           THE OWNERS CELEBRATE SUCCESS**

*The owners are chatting and dancing and enjoying a party atmosphere.*

*A Viennese waltz plays.*

Owner 1:           Ladies and Gentlemen, Gentlemen – order, order, order. I want to welcome you all to the Annual Mill Owners’ Dinner. Tonight is held at very great expense, with lots of food and drinks and horses and carriages and clothing, and I want you to give me a cheer – for all of the workers who work in our mills.

All:                Horrah!

Owner 2:           Linen, not Shipbuilding, has made Ulster great. Linen has made Belfast a City and Linen has made all of us very, very rich. So, give me a cheer for the city of Belfast!

All:                Horrah!

Owner 1:           In Northern Ireland there are 35,000 men working in our Shipyard but there are 90,000 people working in our mills and 70,000 of them are women! Let’s have a cheer for the millies.

All:                Horrah!

Owner 2:           And, because so many of them are women, we can pay them even less than we have to pay the men!

All:                Horrah!

Owner 1:           In 1864, with the fall of New Orleans in the American Civil War, cotton supplies stopped to the world; but our flax flowed from Russia, so Ulster and Linen were crowned King and Queen.

All:                Horrah!

Owner 2:           We’re making enough yarn in a year to go round the world 25,000 times.

All:                Horrah!

Owner 1:           That yarn would stretch to the sun and back six times!

All:                Horrah!

Owner 2:           Or 380 times to the moon.

All:                Horrah!

Owner 1:           We have 28 mills in Belfast alone and linen mills and companies, warehouses and weaving factories in nearly every major town and many more villages such as:

All:	Antrim	Inver
	Ballyclare	Islandreagh
	Ballymena	Jennymount
	Ballymoney	Kells
	Ballysillan	Kildrum
	Balnamore	Killinchy
	Banbridge	Killyleagh
	Bangor	Lambeg
	Belfast	Larne
	Benburb	Laurencetown
	Bessbrook	Lisburn
	Castlecaulfield	Londonderry
	Castledawson	Loughgall
	Castlereagh	Lurgan
	Castlewellan	Mallusk
	Coalisland	Markethill
	Coleraine	Mossley
	Comber	Moygashel
	Cookstown	Muckamore
	Cullybackey	Newry
	Darkley	Newtownabbey
	Derriaghy	Newtownards
	Doagh	Portadown
	Donacloney	Randalstown
	Donaghadee	Ravarnet
	Dromore	Rostrevor
	Drumaness	Saintfield
	Dungannon	Sion Mills
	Dunmurry	Tandragee
	Edenderry	Upperlands
	Gilford	Waringstown
	Glenanne	Whitehouse
	Hilden	
	Hillsborough	

Owner: Belfast is known throughout the world as Linenopolis and Ulster the capital of the Linen world – there is nothing we can't do! Ladies and Gentlemen charge your glasses and I give you a toast: to Linenopolis!

*A Viennese Waltz plays.*

**SCENE 5:            FLAX TO LINEN**

*As the party goes waltz off, the mill girls are revealed.*

*Waltz music changes to spinning frame sounds.*

*The five girls enter, followed by Lizzie Longley. Agnes has her arm in a makeshift sling.*

Lizzie :            It's a sunny day – **youse** girls might as well sit out here and get the air round **yis** 'til the **meal hour** is over, but make **youse** sure you're back, for it's lighting up day. Is your hand alright, Agnes?

Agnes:            Yes, Lizzie it was just a bit of a nip. I was just scared when it **birled** me round.

Lizzie:            Well, you'll be alright now. Sit with the girls. Right you girls, remember what I told you.

All:                Yes, Lizzie.

*Lizzie leaves.*

Hetty:            Oh my goodness, did you see the blood draining from Lizzie's face? I thought she was gonna faint.

Katy:             Hetty, it was no wonder! We all thought Agnes was going to get sucked right into the back of the spinner.

Marie:            You must have thought you were **sent for**, Agnes.

Agnes:            It *was* very scary, Marie.

Sadie:            Whatever were you thinking of putting your hand near the drive belt like that?

Agnes:            The label blew off the cage and I was trying to catch it.

Katy:             Agnes, you never, ever, ever put your hands near that big belt. That's why we have to tie our hair up and not wear anything loose in the Mill - the machines can suck you in.

Hetty:            Jinnie Armstrong's granny was a weaver and got her arm pulled into the back of a power loom and lost all her fingers.

Marie:            Hetty!

Hetty:            I'm only saying – and she was an **oul doll**.

Katy:             Well, don't only say.

Hetty:            She near lost her whole arm, so she did.

Katy/Marie/Sadie: Hetty!

Sadie:            Never listen to her, Agnes, you're alright now.

Agnes: I never knew a place could be so hot or so noisy.

Katy: You'll get used to it after a while.

Marie: It'll be nicer after lighting up.

*Agnes motions to ask a question. Marie puts her hand up to stop her.*

Marie: And before you ask, lighting up is when they put gas mantles up to light the mill in the winter. Otherwise, you'll see nothing. We always have a party and a concert and the bosses give us wee presents.

Agnes: Well, why is the floor always wet?

Marie: Questions, questions, questions!

Sadie: They need to keep the yarn wet with **scaldin'** water to help it spin. So there's no point anybody wearing shoes: even if you had any, they'd get destroyed.

Hetty: Lizzie Longley has lovely shoes. I seen them.

Marie: Aye, but even she doesn't wear them in the spinning room with all the steam and the water.

Agnes: Where does it come from and where does it go?

Katy: What, the steam and the water?

Agnes: No, the yarn I mean. Where does the yarn come from and where does it go?

Marie: You mean you don't know?

Agnes: No.

Katy: Right girls, let's show her!

*The girls run around making preparations for a little play. One of them places Agnes at the front - in the middle of the front row of the audience. Make them squeeze up to let her in! The girls get in a huddle and whisper instructions to each other about what they are going to do – lots of pointing and a little arguing. They reach agreement, get into a line and are ready to do their 'play'.*

Marie (grandly giving herself a little fanfare of trumpet)  
The Spinning Room Doffers present –

*Each steps forward and curtseys to introduce herself..*

Katy: Katy Wilson.

Marie: Marie Thompson.

Sadie: Sadie Watson.

Hetty: And Hetty - most beautiful mill girl in the mill.

Katy/Marie/Sadie: Hetty!

*Resolved.*

Hetty: And Hetty English.



Marie: In!

All: 'From Flax to Linen'.

*Agnes claps on her leg with her good hand and cheers. Katy takes the role of narrator, standing on a rostrum, and the others act out what she says.*

Katy: Flax needs to be planted in well dug soil.

*The girls dig furiously.*

Marie: Soil, that has already been broken up by growing potatoes in it, is best.

*Hetty mimes finding a potato and eating it.*

Sadie: Because the seeds are so small, sowing the seed must be done on a windless day. People are sometimes hired to do this because they use special patterns and rhythms to get an even spread.

*Marie and Sadie do a lovely even job. Hetty mimes chucking it everywhere.*

Katy: The harvest season begins about one month after the blue flax flower blooms. But flax isn't cut, but rather it is pulled out of the ground.

*Sadie and Marie pull away – Hetty can't get hers to budge.*

Marie: This is to make sure we get the longest fibres which are in the stem. But pulling is very sore on the hands and often the workers can hurt their backs.

*Hetty does a whole pulling/trailing/sore hands/sore back act.*

Sadie: Then after it is dried in the sun for a while in wee haystacks called **stooks**, the seeds are taken off the flax by combing it through bits of wood with nails in them and they catch the seeds in a sheet and this is called 'rippling'.

*The girls demonstrate, while Hetty mimes combing her own hair. The other girls pretend that bugs have fallen out of Hetty's hair.*

Marie: Next, the flax is put in water and weighed down with stones in a river or in a flax dam for 6-10 days.

*The girls enthusiastically throw armfuls of flax into the river and splash each other with rocks. Hetty falls in and pretends to swim.*

Sadie: This is called **retting** and it makes the inside of the plant rot away from the precious flax fibres on the outside – but it does smell a bit.

*Hetty picks some up, sniffs it and faints. She is caught by the others, or falls and they pick her up.*

Katy: Once the fibres are loosened by **retting**, the flax is put into a breaking machine and the woody bits of stem called **shives** fall off. This is called **breaking**.

*Hetty mimes being the machine; the girls feed the flax in. Hetty tries to mash the girls.*

Marie: The broken **shives** of wood that do not fall out have to be scraped and beaten out by hand.

Sadie: This is called **scutching**.

*The three girls start to scutch, but then Hetty starts fencing them with invisible scutching knives. They beat Hetty, who surrenders. Katy gets faster in her delivery. The girls get more frenetic in their acting. Hetty is demented.*

Katie: Then the flax is **hackled** by combing it again and again and again then it comes to the mill and into the roving room and is **carded** and **roved** and combed over and over and

Marie: **carded** and **roved** and combed over and over and

Sadie: **carded** and **roved** and combed over and over. Then it's joined together to be made into yarn and then it comes to us

Katie/Marie/Sadie: and we spin it into tighter & tighter & tighter & tighter & tighter & tighter threads.

*Lots of mad combing tightening red faces - spinning and doffing.*

Hetty: Then it is sent to be woven into cloth in the weavers and bleached and made into whatever you want. The End!

*The girls fall in a heap.*

***Mill horn sounds.***

## **SCENE 6:            LIGHTING-UP TIME**

*Music: Lighting-up Time.*

Lizzie:                    All gather round girls and listen to me:  
It's lighting up time, so come look and see!  
As the days they grow short and the winter nights come  
And the fire in the hearth starts to curl up the **lum**.

It's the time when the mills turn on their gas light  
And the darkest wee corners are gleaming and bright.  
The mantles are fresh, though the winter is near  
But the songs and the dances will give us good cheer.

Mr Blair:                The darkness and dreariness drift far away,  
As the gas mantles turn all the dark back to day.  
*(through gritted teeth?)*  
We all take the time to be happy and smile  
And forget about hardship and work – for a while.

McClatchie:            So, who's to be first with a song or a tale?  
A dance or a poem about man and a whale?  
Or funny wee limerick, or sing us a tune  
Or tell us the tale of the cow and the moon?

Performer 1:            Hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle,  
The cow jumped over the moon.  
The little dog laughed to see such fun...  
  
...and Sammy Blair ran away with Lizzie Longley!

*Crowd cheer and return to rhythm. Music begins.*

Performer 2:            My Aunt Jane she called me in,  
She give me tea outta her wee tin.  
Half a bap with sugar on the top  
And three black lumps **outta** her wee shop.  
Half a bap with sugar on the top  
And three black lumps **outta** her wee shop.

Performer 3:            My Aunt Jane has a bell on the door,  
A white stone step and a clean swept floor.  
Candy apples and hard green pears,  
Conversation lozengers. *(lozenges)*  
Candy apples and hard green pears,  
Conversation lozengers.

- Performer 4: My Aunt Jane she's awful smart,  
She baked three rings in an apple tart.  
And when Hallowe'en comes round,  
**Fornenst** that tart I'm always found.  
And when Hallowe'en comes round,  
**Fornenst** that tart I'm always found.
- Performer 5: My Aunt Jane can dance a jig,  
Sing a ballad for a sweetie pig.  
Wee red eyes and a cord for a tail,  
Hanging in a bunch from a farthing nail.  
Wee red eyes and a cord for a tail,  
Hanging in a bunch from a farthing nail.
- Performer 6: My Aunt Jane has a great wee shop  
With lucky bags and lime juice rock.  
Cinnamon buds and **yella man**  
And brandy balls in a bright tin can.  
Cinnamon buds and **yella man**  
And brandy balls in a bright tin can.
- Performer 7: There was an old man named Michael Finnegan,  
He grew whiskers on his chin a-gin.  
The wind came out and blew them in a-gin,  
Poor old Michael Finnegan... begin a-gin!
- Performer 8: Dan, Dan, the funny wee man,  
(spoken) Washed his face in a frying pan.  
Combed his hair with the donkey's tail  
And scratched his belly with his big toe nail.
- Performer 9: There was an old man called Michael Finnegan,  
He grew fat and then grew thin a-gin;  
Went and died and had to begin a-gin,  
Poor old Michael Finnegan... begin a-gin.

- Performer 10: I'll tell me ma when I go home,  
The boys won't leave the girls alone.  
They pulled my hair, they stole my comb  
But that's all right 'til I go home.
- Performer 11: She is handsome, she is pretty,  
She's the belle of Belfast City.  
She is courtin' one, two, three,  
Please, won't you tell me who is she?
- Performer 12: Albert Mooney says he loves her.  
All the boys are fighting for her.  
They're knockin' the door and ringin' the bell,  
Sayin' "Oh my true love, are you well?"
- Performer 13: Out she comes, as white as snow,  
With rings on her fingers and bells on her toes.  
Oul Jenny Murray says she'll die,  
If she doesn't get the fellow with the roving eye.
- Performer 14: I'll tell me ma when I go home,  
The boys won't leave the girls alone.  
They pulled my hair, they stole my comb,  
But that's all right 'til I go home.
- Performer 15: She is handsome, she is pretty,  
She's the belle of Belfast City,  
She is courtin', one, two, three,  
Please, won't you tell me who is she?
- Performer 16: Let the wind and the rain and the hail come high,  
And the snow come shovelling from the sky.  
She's as nice as apple pie,  
And she'll get her own lad by and by!
- Performer 17: When she gets a lad of her own.  
She won't tell her ma when she comes home.  
Let them all come as they will  
For it's Albert Mooney she loves still!

Performer 18: I'll tell me ma when I go home,  
The boys won't leave the girls alone.  
They pulled my hair, they stole my comb,  
But that's all right 'til I go home.

All (including  
audience): She is handsome, she is pretty,  
She's the belle of Belfast City.  
She is courtin' one, two, three,  
Please, won't you tell me who is she?

She is handsome, she is pretty,  
She's the belle of Belfast City,  
She is courtin' one, two, three,  
Please, won't you tell me who is she?

*Mill horn sounds.*

*Blackout.*

**THE REAL END!**

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## GLOSSARY

<b>ach</b>	expression of regret – impatience
<b>asy</b>	easy
<b>ascared</b>	afraid - frightened
<b>atall</b>	at all - ever
<b>bargin’</b>	barge – scold loudly
<b>bate</b>	beat
<b>betters</b>	superiors
<b>bengin’</b>	banging
<b>birled</b>	burled – spun around
<b>boys a dear</b>	oh my goodness
<b>breaking</b>	removing the dry wood portion which has been decomposed by the retting
<b>buck yerselves up</b>	improve your attitude
<b>cager</b>	mill girl who collects full bobbins and stacks them in a cage on wheels
<b>carded</b>	loose comb or straighten flax fibres
<b>dockin’ yer wages</b>	deduct money from salary
<b>doffer</b>	girl spinning room worker
<b>eejits</b>	fools – idiots
<b>fornenst</b>	beside – next to
<b>get up and get on ye!</b>	get up and get dressed!
<b>give my head peace</b>	be quiet – stop talking on the subject
<b>glowter</b>	paste – muddy slime
<b>got on me</b>	got dressed – got clothes on
<b>gorry</b>	a mess
<b>greetin’</b>	weeping – crying – moaning
<b>gurnin’</b>	whinge – cry – moan – complain
<b>’gwan</b>	go on – go ahead – please do
<b>hackled</b>	combing process by which the rough fibre is removed, and only the clean linen fibre is left: white, straight, and ready for the spinner
<b>half-timers</b>	part time working children
<b>hammer</b>	knock or hit repeatedly
<b>howl yer gowlin’</b>	hold or stop your moaning/howling
<b>I’ll take my hand off</b>	I will slap or smack
<b>lugs</b>	ears
<b>lum</b>	chimney
<b>master</b>	school master/teacher
<b>meal hour</b>	lunch time – lunch break
<b>muck up day</b>	cleaning out – maintenance period
<b>nosey</b>	too inquisitive
<b>near spill the po</b>	nearly upend the chamber pot
<b>nigh</b>	now
<b>oul</b>	old

<b>oul doll</b>	older woman
<b>outta</b>	out of – away from
<b>oxters</b>	underarms – armpits
<b>po</b>	chamber pot
<b>rap rap rap</b>	knock knock knock
<b>rapper-up</b>	person paid to knock at door or window to waken workers
<b>retting</b>	rotting the outside woody portion of the flax stem in water to free the fibres
<b>roved</b>	gather fibres into bundles of same length
<b>scaldin'</b>	boiling hot
<b>scutching</b>	separating the flax fibres by beating
<b>sent for</b>	summoned to heaven – about to die
<b>set yerselves straight</b>	improve generally or specifically
<b>shives</b>	woody bits of stem
<b>stooks</b>	small stacks of drying flax plant
<b>spoke up</b>	vouched for
<b>stap</b>	stop
<b>tay</b>	tea
<b>taking the hand outta</b>	make a fool of - taunt
<b>'til</b>	until
<b>windys</b>	windows
<b>yella</b>	yellow
<b>yella man</b>	yellow man – honeycomb
<b>yer head's a marlie</b>	you are not being realistic
<b>yerselves</b>	yourselves
<b>yis</b>	you – (more than one person)
<b>yis won't get in for diamonds!</b>	no admission no matter what
<b>youse'll</b>	you will (plural)
<b>youse</b>	you (plural)