

## NOTE

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THE WOMAN IN BLACK  
adapted by  
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from the book by  
SUSAN HILL

Also by Stephen Mallatratt  
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An Englishman's Home ...

## ACT I

*A small Victorian theatre*

*The proscenium has its gilding and its cherubs, and the curtains are gathered at the sides revealing a stage that is unprepared for performance and devoid of scenery. On the stage is a clutter of cloths, boxes and furniture. This clutter will evolve according to the needs of the performance — though should include a couple of chairs, a rocking chair, a high stool, a blanket and a large skip or trunk. A gauze divides the upstage area from the downstage. Beyond it, though unseen until lit, odd shapes of furniture are shrouded in cloths. The action, until stated, takes place in the downstage area and in the aisle of the theatre. A door is placed at the side of the stage. This door, which is presumably a remnant from some previous production, stands firmly closed*

*The House Lights remain on and working Lights come up on the stage*

*A middle-aged man enters. He carries a manuscript. He stands on the stage. This man, whose name is Kipps, will not be referred to as "Kipps" but as "Actor" — even though he clearly isn't one*

*At the back of the theatre, in amongst the seats, a young man enters. This man, who is an actor, will not be referred to as "Actor" but as "Kipps"*

*The House Lights remain on as the Actor on the stage begins to read from his manuscript*

**Actor** (*reading*) It was nine-thirty on Christmas Eve. As I crossed the long entrance hall of my house, on my way from the dining-room, where we had just enjoyed the first of the happy, festive meals, towards the drawing-room and the fire around which my family were now assembled, I paused, and then, as I often do in the course of an evening, went to the front door, opened it and stepped outside.

**Kipps** (*from the body of the theatre*) This is intended to be of interest, I take it?

**Actor** Why, yes, of course.

**Kipps** They why announce it as if it were the fatstock prices?

**Actor** I'm afraid I don't understand.

**Kipps** Let us *see* this entrance hall, let us *see* this house, let us taste and smell this happy, festive meal!

**Actor** But that's impossible.

**Kipps** No, sir! Draw on your emotions, and on our imaginations.

**Actor** Forgive me, I am not an actor.

**Kipps** No. (*Pause*) Again. Try it again.

**Actor** (*reading*) It was nine-thirty on Christmas Eve. As I crossed the long entrance hall of my house, on my way from the dining-room, where we had just enjoyed the first of the happy, festive meals —

**Kipps** You will excuse me. I know that what you read holds particular significance for you. That it is possible it will cause you some distress.

But I must implore you: have sympathy for your audience.

**Actor** Sir?

**Kipps** Just now we are alone here in this theatre. These rows of empty seats are unlikely to protest as you hum and mumble through your lines.

But believe me, sir — speak them thus before an audience and you'll see them one by one expire with boredom.

*Pause*

**Actor** It was nine-thirty on Christmas Eve. As I crossed the long entrance hall of my house, on my —

**Kipps** Long entrance hall?

**Actor** That's right.

**Kipps** Why long?

**Actor** Because it is.

**Kipps** Have sympathy for your audience. Are they interested in its length?

*Pause*

**Actor** I apologize. I am clearly wasting your time. (*He puts his manuscript in his pocket and moves to leave*)

**Kipps** Stay where you are.

**Actor** This is a foolish adventure. I should never have come.

**Kipps** You did, however. And you have paid me for the day. I have no intention of not giving you full value.

**Actor** Please, I —

**Kipps** No, sir. Attempt to leave and I will leap upon you and compel you to recite the Sonnets in their entirety!

**Actor** I —

**Kipps** No! We'll make an Irving of you yet.

**Actor** I have no desire to be an Irving. All I wish, implore, is that this tale of mine be told. Be told and — laid to rest. God willing. So I may sleep without nightmares.

**Kipps** Which is why you came to me.

**Actor** Yes.

**Kipps** As one practised in these things.

**Actor** Yes.

**Kipps** As one who will impart to you the rudiments of public speaking, who will offer advice as to *expression* and *delivery*, and, above all, instill in you the *confidence* to stand up and make a go of it!

**Actor** Confidence?

**Kipps** Yes, *confidence*! Now then. Nine-thirty. Christmas Eve. Excitement. Anticipation. Crisp air. Crackling fires. Children asleep with stockings by their beds, a happy family, content, delighted, and above all — *at peace*.

*Pause. The Actor summons up his energies*

**Actor** It was nine-thirty on Christmas Eve. As I crossed the long — the — entrance hall of my house, on my way from — on my way ... (*Pause*)

It was nine-thirty on Christmas Eve. (*Pause*) It was nine-thirty on Christmas Eve —

**Kipps** What time was it?

**Actor** Nine-thirty —

**Kipps** Not on Christmas Eve by any chance? Good gracious!

**Actor** I'm very sorry, this clearly isn't a success, I —

**Kipps** You see, it doesn't come in five minutes. You think to stand up, recite your tale, and have your audience hang upon your words. As if that's all it takes. In which case, why d'you come to me for help? So that I'll say, "yes, wonderful, without a flaw"? Believe me, sir, performing is an art acquired with *tears* and *time*. I would be encouraged, sir, if every time I offered some advice you would not put up your manuscript and make to stalk out of the theatre!

**Actor** Advice?

**Kipps** Yes! *Advice!*

**Actor** It sounds more like reproval.

**Kipps** I promise you that as the day goes on it's likely to sound more so.

**Actor** May I just say — it is not a *performance* that I wish to give. No. I think we are at a misunderstanding in that respect. I wish to — speak it. No more. For my family, only. For those who need to know. I am not a performer — I have no pretensions to be — nor inclination — but — those terrible things that happened to me — they must — I *have* to — let them be told. For my health and reason.

**Kipps** You say you're not a performer.

**Actor** Oh truly.

**Kipps** In your hand is a manuscript which, on estimate, will take five hours to read. If you, as an acknowledged non-performer, should stand before an audience, however friendly, and drone at them for longer than it takes to play *King Lear*, I trust you will be unsurprised if by the end of it they're either fast asleep or at your throat.

**Actor** Five hours?

**Kipps** At least.

**Actor** Good heavens. (*Pause*) I'd no idea — I — five hours? (*Pause. He slumps into a chair*) I cannot possibly. (*Pause. At length he looks up. Addressing Kipps*) It must be told. I cannot carry the burden any longer. *It must be told.*

*Black-out. When the Lights return, the House Lights stay off. Kipps is now on the stage, with the manuscript. Kipps reads it rather well. A bit actorish, certainly, but with enthusiasm and skill. The Actor walks to the back of the theatre to listen*

**Kipps** (*reading*) It was nine-thirty on Christmas Eve. As I opened my front door and stepped outside I smelled at once, and with a lightening heart, that there had been a change in the weather. All the previous week we had had thin chilling rain and a mist that lay low about the house and over the countryside. My spirits have for many years been excessively affected by the weather. But now the dampness and fogs had stolen away like thieves into the night, the sky was pricked over with stars and the full moon rimmed with a halo of frost. Upstairs, three children slept with stockings tied to their bedposts. There was something in the air that night. That my peace of mind was about to be disturbed, and memories awakened that I had thought forever dead, I had, naturally, no idea. That

I should ever again renew my acquaintance with mortal dread and terror of spirit, would have seemed at that moment impossible. I took a last look at the frosty darkness, sighed contentedly, and went in, to the happy company of my family. At the far end of the room stood the tree, candlelit and bedecked, and beneath it were the presents. There were vases of white chrysanthemums, and in the centre of the room a pyramid of gilded fruit and a bowl of oranges stuck all about with cloves, their spicy scent filling the air and mingling with the wood-smoke to be the very aroma of Christmas. I became aware that I had interrupted the others in a lively conversation. "We are telling ghost stories — just the thing for Christmas Eve!" And so they were — vying with each other to tell the horriest, most spine-chilling tale. They told of dripping stone walls in uninhabited castles and of ivy-clad monastery ruins by moonlight, of locked inner rooms and secret dungeons, dank charnel houses and overgrown graveyards, of howlings and shriekings, groanings and scuttlings. This was a sport, a high-spirited and harmless game among young people, there was nothing to torment and trouble me, nothing of which I could possibly disapprove. I did not want to seem a killjoy, old, stodgy and unimaginative. I turned my head away so that none of them should see my discomfiture. "And now it's your turn." "Oh no," I said, "nothing from me." "You must know at least one ghost story, everyone knows *one*." Ah, yes, yes, indeed. All the time I had been listening to their ghoulish, lurid inventions, the one thought that had been in my mind, and the only thing I could have said was "No, no, you have none of you any idea. This is all nonsense, fantasy, it is not like this. Nothing so blood-curdling and becreeped and crude — not so ... so laughable. The truth is quite other, and altogether more terrible. "I am sorry to disappoint you," I said. "But I have no story to tell!" And went quickly from the room and from the house. I walked in a frenzy of agitation, my heart pounding, my breathing short. I had always known in my heart that the experience would never leave me, that it was woven into my very fibres. Yes, I had a story, a true story, a story of haunting and evil, fear and confusion, horror and tragedy. But it was not a story to be told around the fireside on Christmas Eve.

*Pause. Kipps looks out to the Actor at the back of the theatre*

And then I thought you might recite the piece from *Hamlet*.  
**Actor** *Hamlet?*

**Kipps** "Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes ..."

**Actor** Oh yes, of course. (*A beat*) You then, for the purpose of the reading, become me?

**Kipps** Quite so. And you — for the purpose of the *performance* — you draw on your remembrance, to be the people that you met, those that played their parts in your story.

**Actor** Sir, I am not a performer.

**Kipps** Sir, I know.

**Actor** And this must *not* be entertainment. Those most horrible events will *not* be treated as amusement or diversion. I *insist*, sir!

**Kipps** And I *insist*, that you consider your audience. No matter how horrible, if your tale is to be heard, it must be offered in a form that is remotely palatable. You have come for advice and assistance, you must trust me. (*Pause*) From here, if you please.

*The Actor climbs reluctantly on to the stage*

And let us show that we mean business ...

*Kipps switches off the workers, leaving them in a performance state*

So your cue is "... fear and confusion, horror and tragedy. But it was not a story to be told around the fireside on Christmas Eve."

**Actor** (*reading from a copy of the manuscript*)

"Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes  
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,  
This bird of dawning singeth all night long.  
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad,  
The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,  
No Fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm  
So hallowed and so gracious is that time."

**Kipps** Those lines came into my head as if from heaven, and a great peace came upon me. I recalled that the way to banish an old ghost that continues its hauntings is to exorcise it. Well, then. Mine should be exorcised. I should tell my tale. I should set it down on paper, with every care and in every detail. I would write my own ghost story, and then, that they might know and that I might be forever purged of it, relive it through the telling. I prayed a heartfelt, simple prayer for peace of mind, and for strength and steadfastness to endure while I completed the most

agonizing task. The first part, the writing, I have done. Now comes the telling. I pray for God's protection on us all.

*Black-out*

*The Actor exits*

*The Lights come up. It's the worker state again, though the House Lights are now down and remain so for the rest of the evening. Kipps is on stage, arranging the clutter of furniture into some order that can pass for a solicitor's office. The skip suggests a large partners' desk*

*The Actor enters*

Good-morning!

**Actor** Good-morning.

**Kipps** I trust you slept well?

**Actor** Thank you, yes.

**Kipps** No nightmares?

**Actor** Not too bad, I thank you.

**Kipps** Ah. So we are not clear of it yet?

**Actor** I fear I never will be.

**Kipps** We'll have you playful as a lamb again, you mark my words. Did you study as I asked you?

**Actor** As best I can — you must excuse me, it is not my ... forte.

**Kipps** We'll make an Irving of you yet.

**Actor** (*irritably*) I have no wish to be an Irving.

**Kipps** No. But for the sake of our audience, let us at least try.

**Actor** This audience you speak of — it is to be just my family and friends?

You don't intend to make a public spectacle —

**Kipps** Good heavens, no. Your family, your friends. Perhaps the odd theatre manager, but ... Now then — scene: London. Interior of the offices of solicitors Bentley, Haigh, Sweetman and Bentley. And I have a little surprise for you.

**Actor** What's that?

**Kipps** Thank you, Mr Bunce! (*He clicks his fingers to the back of the theatre*)

*Instantly come the sound effects of a London Street: cars, horses, shouts*

*from street vendors, etc. The Actor is momentarily amazed. He listens for a while, then ...*

**Actor** Recorded sound!

**Kipps** Precisely. A remarkable invention, is it not?

**Actor** Extraordinarily true to life! I could swear I was in a London street, attempting to negotiate the thundering traffic!

**Kipps** And so, Mr Kipps, will our audience. No need to speak of cars and trams and horses, smoke and grime. No need in fact, for words. Just let the recorded sound be heard and they are there. Transported.

**Actor** But the scene is to be in an office, is it not? Why do we have London's traffic flowing through an office?

**Kipps** Why indeed? Mr Bunce! *(He clicks his fingers again)*

*At once the traffic sound begins to fade and dissolves into the sonorous ticking of a long-case clock*

**Actor** *(listening with a certain amount of awe)* Remarkable.

*The clock fades out. The street sounds return*

**Kipps** *(with a superior smile)* The miracle of science, the hands of Bunce. He is particularly good at this sort of thing. And so to work. I am you, you are your clerk. I enter briskly, you are already at work.

**Actor** *(preparing to perform)* You must forgive me, this is not —

**Kipps** — your forte. Quite. And it won't become so unless you attempt it. Begin. Just as we went through it all last night. *(Calling to the back of the theatre)* I thank you!

*The London street sound gives way to the sonorous clock*

*Kipps exits*

*The Actor, alias Tomes the clerk, stands working at a ledger. His desk might be the stool, or a pile of boxes. Whatever, it suggests discomfort*

*Kipps enters briskly. He tosses his briefcase on to the desk and sits*

*Kipps has learnt his part. The Actor struggles manfully, reading from the manuscript. The conceit is that although the Actor is unaccomplished, his*

*enthusiasm for the task will grow through the early part of the enactment, in spite of his protestations*

A foul day, Tomes.

**Tomes** Yes, Mr Kipps. *(He sniffs)*

**Kipps** November. The drearest month of the year. Lowering to the spirits.

**Tomes** Yes, Mr Kipps. *(He sniffs)* This fog don't help.

**Kipps** *(looking up from his desk to address the audience)* The thickest of London pea-soupers. A yellow fog. A filthy, evil-smelling fog, a fog that choked and blinded, smeared and stained. I worked at some dull details of the conveyancing of property leases, forgetful for the moment of it pressing against the window like a furred beast at my back.

*Tomes leaves his ledger, moves to Kipps's desk and knocks on it. Kipps looks up*

**Tomes** Mr Bentley wishes to see you, sir.

**Kipps** Straight away?

**Tomes** Straight away, sir, if you would. *(He sniffs)*

**Kipps** *(addressing the audience)* That sniff, incidentally, occurred every twenty seconds, for which reason Tomes was confined, in general, to a cubbyhole in an outer lobby.

*Kipps stands*

**Actor** What now?

**Kipps** Now you become Bentley.

**Actor** Oh yes, of course. *(A beat)* Do I do all right? Will it pass?

**Kipps** Excellent. We'll make an Irving of —

**Actor** *(angrily)* Will you be quiet about Irving!

**Kipps** Apologies. Carry on.

*The Actor sits the other side of the desk from Kipps, becoming Mr Bentley as he does so. He polishes his glasses*

**Bentley** Sit ye down, Arthur, sit ye down.

*Kipps sits. Bentley spreads himself in a relaxed way, taking his time before he speaks*

I don't think I ever told you about the extraordinary Mrs Drablow?

*Kipps shakes his head*

Mrs Drablow. *(He takes out her will and waves it at Kipps)* Mrs Alice Drablow of Eel Marsh House. Dead, don't you know.

**Kipps** Ah.

**Bentley** Yes. I inherited Mrs Drablow from my father. The family has had their business with this firm for ... oh ... *(He waves his hand, signifying ages)*

**Kipps** Oh yes?

**Bentley** A good age. Eighty-seven.

**Kipps** And it's her will you have there, I take it?

**Bentley** Mrs Drablow was, as they say, a rum 'un. Have you ever heard of the Nine Lives Causeway?

**Kipps** No, never.

**Bentley** Nor ever of Eel Marsh in ——shire?

*That the written convention of "——shire" might be vocalized, I suggest that the actor mumbles and coughs through the "——"*

**Kipps** No, sir.

**Bentley** Nor, I suppose, ever visited that county at all?

**Kipps** I'm afraid not.

**Bentley** Living there, anyone might become rum.

**Kipps** I've only a hazy idea of where it is.

**Bentley** Then, my boy, go home and pack your bags, and take the afternoon train from King's Cross, changing at Crewe and again at Homerby. From Homerby you take the branch line to the little market town of Crythin Gifford. After that, it's a wait for the tide!

**Kipps** The tide!

**Bentley** You can only cross the causeway at low tide. That takes you on to Eel Marsh and the house.

**Kipps** Mrs Drablow's?

**Bentley** When the tide comes in you're cut off until it's low again. Remarkable place. *(He stands to look out of the window)* Years since I went there, of course. My father took me. She didn't greatly care for visitors.

**Kipps** Was she a widow?

**Bentley** Since quite early in her marriage.

**Kipps** Children?

**Bentley** Children. *(He rubs at the window panes as a church bell tolls in the distance. He turns)* According to everything we've been told about Mrs Drablow, no, there were no children.

**Kipps** Did she have a great deal of money or land?

**Bentley** She owned her house, of course, and a few properties in Crythin Gifford — shops with tenants, that sort of thing; there's a poor sort of farm, half under water. And there are the usual small trusts and investments.

**Kipps** Then it all sounds pretty straightforward.

**Bentley** It does, does it not?

**Kipps** May I ask why I'm to go there?

**Bentley** To represent this firm at our client's funeral.

**Kipps** Oh yes, of course. I'll be very glad to go up to Mrs Drablow's funeral, naturally.

**Bentley** There's a bit more to it than that.

**Kipps** The will?

**Bentley** I'll let you have the details to read on your journey. But, principally, you're to go through Mrs Drablow's documents — her private papers ... whatever they may be. Wherever they may be ... and to bring them to this office.

**Kipps** I see.

**Bentley** Mrs Drablow was — somewhat ... disorganized, shall I say? It may take you a while.

**Kipps** A day or two?

**Bentley** At least a day or two, Arthur.

**Kipps** Will there be anyone there to help me?

**Bentley** I've made arrangements. There's a local man dealing with it all — he'll be in touch with you.

**Kipps** But presumably she had friends ... or even neighbours?

**Bentley** Eel Marsh House is far from any neighbour.

**Kipps** And being a rum 'un she never made friends, I suppose?

**Bentley** *(chuckling)* Come, Arthur, look on the bright side. Treat the whole thing as a jaunt.

*Kipps stands*

*(Waving his hand towards the window)* At least it'll take you out of all this for a day or two. You'll reach Crythin Gifford by late this evening,

and there's a small hotel you can put up at for tonight. The funeral is tomorrow morning at eleven.

*Bentley stands up and moves away from the desk*

**Kipps** (*clearing the desk*) I had to inform my landlady that I would be away a couple of nights, and to scribble a note to my fiancée Stella, to whom I hoped to be married the following year. After that I was to catch the afternoon train to a remote corner of England of which, until a few moments ago, I had barely heard.

*The Actor, now as Tomes, approaches Kipps with a thick brown envelope marked "Drablow"*

**Tomes** The Drablow papers, sir.

**Kipps** Thank you. (*He takes them*) I must say, Tomes, for all it's a strange part of the world I'm going to, that it's a relief to be leaving this appalling fog and unhealthy atmosphere.

*Tomes sniffs and goes. Pause. Kipps looks across at the Actor*

(*Calling*) And you still feel unsure whether to go through with this?

**Actor** Oh, certainly.

**Kipps** In spite of having just performed as you have done?

**Actor** There are so many things we cannot represent. How do we represent the dog, the sea, the causeway? How the pony and trap?

**Kipps** With imagination, Mr Kipps. Our's, and our audience's.

**Actor** I would be obliged if you would inform me how imagination will create a pony and trap upon this stage.

*Kipps, with alacrity, swings the skip into a position end on to the audience*

**Kipps** Here, trap! (*Indicating the space in front of it*) Here, pony! What could be clearer?

*A pause as the Actor surveys it dubiously*

**Actor** It doesn't instantly say "trap" to me.

**Kipps** But you *ride* it, don't you? And with a whip! And with recorded

sound of a pony's hooves, I promise, *nothing* in the world could say it clearer.

**Actor** Except a pony and trap.

**Kipps** Let us not be finicky, Mr Kipps.

*Pause*

**Actor** I have to own, the recorded sound is splendid. It was a great surprise to me.

**Kipps** And it does not stop now. There shall be more, much more. Tomorrow we are on the train. With more surprises. So now to work. (*He hands him some pages*) You will study these, I have divided up the lines again. And you will see I have cut much of the descriptive passages.

**Actor** But ———

**Kipps** Recorded sound, Mr Kipps. Recorded sound!

*The Lights fade to Black-out. When they come up again, Kipps has a travelling bag, and from the sounds of steam trains and general bustle we are aware he is in King's Cross Station. The Actor reads from his manuscript now with more confidence*

**Actor** Nothing could raise his spirits more than the sight of this great cavern of a railway station, glowing like the interior of a blacksmith's forge.

*Kipps arranges his compartment and sits. He reads a newspaper*

Beyond the windows it is quickly dark, and when the carriage blinds are down all is as cosy and enclosed as some lamplit study.

*There are sounds of a steam train heading north. Kipps, in great contentment, reads his newspaper, and looks out of the window. After a while, the train slows down and draws to a halt as we hear "This is Crewe! Crewe Station! Passengers for Homerby please change here!" During the next speech, the Actor puts on a great-coat and hat*

At Crewe he changes with ease,

*Kipps swaps his seat*

and continues on his way, noting that the track begins to veer towards the east as well as heading north. It is only when he comes to change again,

*Kipps swaps his seat again*

on to the branch line at the small station of Homerby, that he begins to be less comfortable, for here the air is a great deal colder and blowing in gusts from the east with an unpleasant rain upon its breath, and the train in which he is to travel the last hour of his journey is ancient and comfortless.

*Kipps turns up his collar and rubs his hands against the cold. The Actor walks along the platform, sees Kipps, and climbs in by him as the guard's whistle blows*

**Kipps** (*nodding*) It's a poor night.

*Samuel Daily nods agreement. The Actor is still reading at this stage, though becoming freer in performance*

It seems I have exchanged one kind of poor weather for another. I left London in the grip of an appalling fog, and up here it seems to be cold enough for snow.

**Sam Daily** It's not snow. The wind'll blow itself out and take the rain off with it by morning.

**Kipps** I'm very glad to hear it.

**Sam Daily** But if you think you've escaped the fogs by coming up here you're mistaken. We get bad frets in this part of the world.

**Kipps** Frets?

**Sam Daily** Ay, frets. Sea-frets, sea-mists. They roll up in a minute from the sea to land across the marshes. One minute it's as clear as a June day, the next ... (*His gesture indicates the suddenness of the frets*) Terrible. But if you're staying in Crythin you won't see the worst of it.

**Kipps** I stay there tonight, at the *Gifford Arms*. I expect to go out to see something of the marshes later. (*He picks up his newspaper, nods at Samuel Daily, and begins to read*)

*The train puffs on a while*

**Sam Daily** Mrs Drablow.

*Kipps looks up at him*

Drablow. (*He points at the envelope*)

*Kipps nods*

You don't tell me you're a relative.

**Kipps** I am her solicitor.

**Sam Daily** Ah! Bound for the funeral?

**Kipps** I am.

**Sam Daily** You'll be about the only one that is.

**Kipps** I gather she was something of a recluse? Well, that is sometimes the way with old ladies. They turn inwards — grow eccentric. I suppose it comes from living alone.

**Sam Daily** I daresay that it does, Mr —?

**Kipps** Kipps. Arthur Kipps.

**Sam Daily** Samuel Daily.

*They nod*

And when you live alone in such a place as that it comes a good deal easier.

**Kipps** (*smiling rather smugly*) Come, you're not going to start telling me strange tales of lonely houses?

*Pause*

**Sam Daily** (*levelly*) No. I am not.

*Pause. Kipps shudders*

**Kipps** Well, all I can say is that it's a sad thing when someone lives for eighty-seven years and can't count upon a few friendly faces to gather together at their funeral. (*He rubs his hand on the window and peers out*) How far have we to go?

**Sam Daily** (*looking through the window*) Twelve miles. It's a far flung part of the world. We don't get many visitors.

**Kipps** I suppose because there is nothing much to see.

**Sam Daily** It all depends what you mean by "nothing". *(Pause)* But you'll find everything hospitable enough at Crythin, for all it's a plain little place. We tuck ourselves in with our backs to the wind, and carry on with our business. *(He takes a card from his wallet and hands it to Kipps)* Should you need anyone ...

**Kipps** Thank you. I doubt I shall. Whatever practical help I need I'm sure the local agent will provide — and I don't intend to be here more than a day or two.

*Daily looks at him in silence*

But thanks all the same. *(He puts the card into his waistcoat pocket)*

*The train swells to a crescendo as the Lights fade to a Black-out, then, as it whistles, snaps off. When the Lights come up again, Kipps is arranging the furniture: making a hotel lounge. The Actor has moved to the side of the stage and is donning an apron*

The Gifford Arms was as comfortable a hotel as I could have wished to find.

*Kipps looks around him approvingly, settles in an armchair and holds his hands to the fire. There is a murmur of voices from the public bar*

My spirits rose and I began to feel more like a man on holiday than one come to attend a funeral. *(He takes out notepaper and pen and begins to write)* My Dearest Stella —

*But at this the Landlord enters to interrupt him*

**Landlord** Are you a friend of Mr Daily's, then, sir?

**Kipps** No, no.

**Landlord** Ah. Not meaning to pry, only I saw you arrive in his car.

**Kipps** I met him on the train. He was kind enough to bring me from the station.

**Landlord** I see. He's a large landowner is Mr Daily. Buying up half the county.

**Kipps** In that case I may be doing business with him myself before the

year is out. I am a solicitor looking after the affairs of Mrs Alice Drablow of Eel Marsh House. Perhaps you knew of her?

**Landlord** *(a momentary reaction which he quickly controls)* I knew of her.

**Kipps** It's quite possible that her estate will come up for sale in due course.

**Landlord** I doubt whether even Samuel Daily would go so far.

**Kipps** I don't think I fully understand you. I gather there is a farm a few miles out of the town.

**Landlord** *(dismissively)* Hoggetts! Fifty acres and half of it under flood for the best part of the year. Hoggetts is nothing.

**Kipps** There's also Eel Marsh House and all the land surrounding it — would that be practicable for farming?

**Landlord** No, sir.

**Kipps** Well, might not Mr Daily simply want to add a little more to his empire? You imply he is that kind of man.

**Landlord** Maybe he is. But let me tell you that you won't find anybody, not even Mr Sam Daily having to do with any of it. I'll wish you good-night, sir. We can serve breakfast at any time in the morning, to your convenience.

*The Landlord abruptly leaves Kipps. A moment, then Kipps resumes his letter. We hear his words as a voice-over — his tone is slightly tetchy*

**Kipps's voice** There seems to be a propensity for leaving conversations to hang in the air whenever Mrs Drablow's name is mentioned. People close up, change the subject or leave the room. I suppose it's inevitable: these small, out of the way communities have only themselves to look to for whatever drama and mystery they can extract out of life. And I would think it not unfair to say that country people, particularly those who inhabit the remoter corners of our island, are rather more superstitious, more gullible, more slow-witted perhaps — certainly more unsophisticated — than those of us who encounter the "metropolitan experience" every day. Doubtless in such a place as this, with its eerie marshes, sudden fogs, moaning winds and lonely houses, any poor old woman might be looked at askance; once upon a time, after all, she would have been branded as a witch ...

*The Lights cross-fade to the worker state. Kipps, no longer acting, sits in a chair, and talks across to the Actor*

**Kipps** Admit it, Mr Kipps, secretly you are enjoying this.

**Actor** I am very grateful to you for your assistance. I cannot say I am enjoying it.

**Kipps** Mr Kipps, every day you have come here you have grown in stature and confidence.

**Actor** But this is merely practice. What you call rehearsal. I fear it will be different altogether before an audience.

**Kipps** Mr Kipps, sir!

**Actor** Yes?

**Kipps** For all you deny it, you damn well *will* be an Irving! Now then, tomorrow I should like to work right through to the end.

**Actor** In one?

**Kipps** If we are able. How does that seem?

**Actor** I have a horror of it. Watching you, it is as if I relive it all, moment by moment ... though you, of course, will never suffer as I did — I must always tell myself that.

*Kipps moves to him and gently takes his hand*

**Kipps** But never think I don't feel for you. I have a child myself.

**Actor** You have?

**Kipps** A daughter. She is four.

**Actor** And well? And happy?

**Kipps** I thank Providence.

**Actor** (*earnestly gripping Kipps's hand*) Love her. Take care of her. (*A pause as he looks into Kipps's eyes*) Well — tomorrow. Yes. Let us work to the end. And, all being well, tomorrow *I* shall have a surprise for you.

**Kipps** Excellent! You have a theatrical's instincts, Mr Kipps, if not his enthusiasm. Till tomorrow then!

*Kipps moves to go as the Lights fade to Black-out*

*The Lights come up to suggest the dawning of a crisp, clear day, and we hear the hubbub of the market place as Kipps attaches a black armband to his sleeve. The Actor, as Mr Jerome, comes up to Kipps. Like Kipps, he wears a black tie and armband. The Actor has learnt his words and is no longer reading*

**Jerome** Mr Kipps?

**Kipps** Yes indeed.

**Jerome** (*offering his hand*) Mr Jerome. Your agent here.

**Kipps** Of course. How d'you do.

**Jerome** I trust you spent a comfortable night?

**Kipps** I can't remember when I've slept so well.

**Jerome** Good, good. It's a sad business, that brings you here.

**Kipps** Yes. Of course, I never met Mrs Drablow —

**Jerome** No. Of course. I don't wish to hurry you, Mr Kipps, but if we were to step out now we'd be about right for time.

**Kipps** Ah yes, of course.

*They step into the sunshine. Now the market noises intensify. Kipps looks about him*

I must say, my first impressions of your little town are entirely favourable, Mr Jerome.

**Jerome** It's a busy day for us, market day. They come from all over.

**Kipps** Though I'd like to experience it in happier circumstances. Our funeral garb seems at odds with the prevailing mood of the place.

*The market noises lull*

(*looking about him*) Is it my imagination, or are we the subject of scrutiny, Mr Jerome?

*Jerome doesn't reply*

There! Those men — did you see? They turned away then they caught my eye ... and there!

**Jerome** (*walking away*) It's only a short walk to the graveyard, Mr Kipps.

**Kipps** (*following and looking back over his shoulder*) I feel like some pariah.

*Jerome doesn't speak*

Oh well. (*He smiles*) I suppose we must look like a pair of gloomy ravens amongst all this, mustn't we? You and I, Mr Jerome, are the spectres at the feast.

*He smiles across at Jerome who doesn't acknowledge him. The market*

*hubbub fades, and now their footsteps echo as they walk. The Lights dim slightly, as if filtered through spreading trees. They walk on*

I take it she is to be buried in the churchyard?

**Jerome** That is so, yes.

**Kipps** Is there a family grave?

*Jerome glances at Kipps closely*

**Jerome** (after a pause) No. At least not here, not in this churchyard.

**Kipps** Somewhere else?

**Jerome** It is ... no longer in use. The area is unsuitable.

**Kipps** (stopping walking; turning to Jerome) I'm afraid I don't quite understand —

*But Jerome carries on walking. The Lights suggest the interior of the church as we hear the following voice-over*

**Priest's voice** I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.

*This is followed by the echoing tread of the undertaker's men bearing the coffin down the aisle. Both Kipps and Jerome turn upstage. The voice-over fades in again with the Priest's voice*

Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, (for the trumpet shall sound) and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

*As the voice-over continues, Kipps looks back into the audience*

*In the centre aisle stands the Woman in Black. Her clothes are black, old-fashioned. She wears a black bonnet that partly obscures her face, though, from what remains of it to be seen, it appears she suffers from some terrible wasting disease. She is extremely pale, the thinnest layer of flesh is tautly stretched across her bones, and her eyes seem sunken back into her head*

*Kipps is clearly momentarily shocked to see her, then steadies himself. The Actor does not look back at her, and we can believe he does not see her, nor know she's there*

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is there thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

*Kipps pulls his eyes away from her*

*As he turns away, so she moves back down the aisle*

But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

*The church gives way to the graveyard. Jerome and Kipps stand as if looking into the grave, over the edge of the stage. Birdsong is heard, dissolving once again into the Priest's voice*

Man that is born of woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay.

*The Woman in Black enters behind the two of them, upstage*

In the midst of life we are in death: of whom may we seek for succour, but of thee, O Lord, who for our sins art justly displeased.

*Kipps, sensing her presence, looks around. Again the Actor does not see her*

For as much as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear sister here departed, we therefore commit her body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

*The voice-over fades down. Kipps turns away from the Woman in Black and kneels to pray fervently at the graveside*

*The Woman in Black moves away*

*The voice-over dissolves into birdsong. At length, Kipps crosses himself and steps back from the grave*

**Kipps** A very poignant ceremony.

*Jerome is silent*

Tell me, that woman ... I hope she can find her own way home ... she looked so dreadfully unwell. Who was she?

*Jerome looks at him*

The young woman with the wasted face, behind you in the church and then in the graveyard here, a few yards from us.

**Jerome** A young woman?

**Kipps** Yes, yes, with the skin stretched over her bones, I could scarcely bear to look at her ... she was tall, she wore a bonnet type of hat ... I suppose to try and conceal as much as she could of her face, poor thing.

*Jerome looks frozen, pale, his throat moving as if he were unable to utter*

Is there anything the matter? You look unwell.

**Jerome** *(at length; in a low voice)* I did not see a young woman.

**Kipps** But surely ... *(He turns)*

*The Woman in Black appears again*

*(Pointing)* Look, there she is again ... ought we not to —

*Jerome grabs his wrist, evidently in an extreme of terror. He avoids looking where Kipps is pointing. Kipps looks at him in astonishment*

*The Woman in Black goes*

*(At length)* Mr Jerome, can you take my arm ... I would be obliged if you would loosen your grip a little ... if you can just walk a few steps, back to the church ... path ... I saw a bench there, a little way inside the gate, you can rest and recover while I go for help ... a car ...

**Jerome** *(almost shrieking)* No!

**Kipps** But my dear man!

**Jerome** No. I apologize ... *(He takes deep breaths)* I am so sorry. It was nothing ... a passing faintness ... it will be best if you would just walk back with me towards my offices in Penn Street, off the square.

**Kipps** If you are sure —

**Jerome** Quite sure. Come ...

**Kipps** You quite worried me just now, I —

**Jerome** Please, I apologize. It was nothing. Nothing at all.

**Kipps** *(after a pause)* Very well. *(Pause)* I gather you are to take me over to Eel Marsh House later?

**Jerome** *(stiffly)* No. I shall not go there. You can cross any time after one o'clock. Keckwick will come for you. He has always been the go-between to that place. I take it you have a key?

*Kipps nods*

You will find Mr Keckwick perfectly obliging.

**Kipps** Good.

**Jerome** Though not very communicative.

**Kipps** *(smiling)* Oh, I'm getting very used to that.

*Kipps clicks his fingers towards the back of the theatre. The Lights change to the worker state again*

I'm sorry, Mr Kipps, I have to stop. *(He shakes the Actor's hand, looking fervently into his eyes)* You said you had a surprise for me — I had no idea, *no idea*, it would be that.

**Actor** No?

**Kipps** That was the most — remarkable — *coup de théâtre* I have ever experienced.

*The Actor is changing into a greatcoat, cap and high riding boots*

**Actor** No, really?

**Kipps** I am devastated. Devastated. How did you manage it?

**Actor** Well, I worked hard, I suppose. As you said: time and tears. *(He smiles)*

**Kipps** But — from *nowhere*, Mr Kipps — it was miraculous! How on earth did you set about it?

**Actor** Oh —

**Kipps** No. Very well. I understand. One must appreciate the magic, one must not ask how the magic works. But I do appreciate it. *(He pumps the Actor's hand)* I assure you, sir, *I do!* Quite, quite remarkable — and terrifying!

**Actor** *(a little puzzled)* Well, you're very kind, sir.

**Kipps** And you, sir, are a true theatrical.

*The Actor modestly reacts. A pause*

Do we proceed?

**Actor** If you wish.

**Kipps** And will there be more — surprises?

**Actor** I will do my very best, though I cannot be altogether confident.

*Kipps gives the Actor's hand a final fervent shake then signals to the back of the theatre. The Lights revert to a performance state. There is the sound effect of a pony and trap as Kipps puts on more relaxed clothes. When dressed, the Actor picks up a riding whip, places the skip end on to the audience, and sits facing out front. Kipps looks at him as we hear the pony draw to a halt and the Actor, as Keckwick, reins in. Kipps, after digesting the sight a moment, turns away as if looking for a car*

**Keckwick** *(at length)* Mr Kipps?

**Kipps** *(turning to him)* Yes?

*Keckwick says nothing, looks ahead*

You aren't — you're not Mr Keckwick by any chance?

*Keckwick nods*

Oh, that's delightful — I was expecting a car!

*Kipps climbs up behind Keckwick who clucks at the pony, which then sets off*

*(As the trap is under way)* This is a remarkable corner of the world, Mr Keckwick. *(He looks about him with evident pleasure)* Sky, sky, and only a strip of land. This must be how those great landscape painters saw Holland, or the area around Norwich, don't you think?

*Keckwick does not respond*

No clouds at all today, though I can imagine how magnificently that huge brooding area of sky would look with grey, scudding rain and storm clouds lowering over the estuary.

*They drive on a while in silence, Kipps continuing to gaze about him*

It is quite startlingly beautiful, the wide, bare openness of it. This sense of space, the vastness of the sky — I would have travelled a thousand miles to see this. I have never imagined such a place!

*They trot on, the silence broken by nothing but the sound of the pony, and occasional, harsh, weird cries from birds. Kipps kneels up on the skip, alert, looking ahead*

And that, I take it, is the Nine Lives Causeway!

*The Lights isolate Kipps and we hear the pony and trap as it rolls across*

Ahead, the water gleamed like metal, lying only shallowly over the sand. A narrow track led directly forwards, and I saw how, when the tide came in, it would quickly be submerged and untraceable. Then I looked up ahead, and saw as if rising out of the water itself, a tall, gaunt house of grey stone with a slate roof.

*The Lights come up on stage. Keckwick reins in the pony and dismounts*

It stood like some lighthouse or beacon or Martello tower, the most astonishingly situated house I had ever seen or could ever conceivably have imagined — isolated, uncompromising, but also, I

thought, handsome. For a moment or two, I simply sat looking about me in amazement. I felt a strange sensation, an excitement mingled with alarm ... But I was not afraid — of what could I be afraid in this rare and beautiful spot? The wind? The marsh birds crying? Reeds and still water? (*Suddenly he moves to Keckwick*) How long will the causeway remain passable?

**Keckwick** Till five.

**Kipps** Listen. It will be quite ridiculous for you to be driving to and fro twice a day. The best thing will be for me to bring my bags and some food and drink and stay a couple of nights here. That way I shall finish the business a good deal more efficiently and you will not be troubled. I'll return with you later this afternoon and then, tomorrow, perhaps you could bring me back as early as possible, according to the tides.

*A considerable pause until Keckwick nods his agreement*

Or perhaps you would prefer to wait here for me now, though I shall be a couple of hours. You know what suits you best.

*For reply, Keckwick climbs on to the skip and flicks his whip. We hear the pony's hooves across the gravel, fading into the distance. The Lights isolate Keckwick, and gradually fade, along with the pony's hooves. The Actor climbs off the skip as the Lights bounce back. He takes off his cap and undoes his coat as he speaks*

**Actor** And so, imagine if you would, this stage an island, this aisle a causeway, running like a ribbon from the salt marsh through the sea, the only link between the gaunt, grey house and land. Imagine Arthur Kipps alone there now, a tiny figure, lost in the immensity and wideness of marsh and sky, dwarfed by the house, alone amid the mysterious shimmering beauty. He feels the key in his pocket, but does not go inside. Instead, he walks away from the house towards the fragmentary ruins of some old church or chapel. To the west, on his right hand, the sun is already beginning to slip down in a great, wintry, golden-red ball; to the east, sea and sky have darkened slightly to a uniform, leaden grey.

*Kipps scrambles across the skip and through the gauze. The Lights reveal the shrouded furniture. A sudden, harsh cry from a bird startles him. We hear its loudly beating wings and the echo of its cry among the ruins. Kipps watches it fly away*

Imagine now, a burial ground. Imagine fifty gravestones, most of them leaning or completely fallen, covered in lichens, mosses, scoured pale by the salt wind, stained by years of driving rain. Names and dates are now barely decipherable. Imagine him grown conscious of the cold, the bleakness and eeriness of the spot, decide to leave, to go back to the house, to switch on a good many lights, to light a fire. Now see him turn ...

*Kipps turns*

*The Woman in Black appears ahead of him*

*Involuntarily, Kipps steps back a pace or two, then stands as if frozen. The Woman in Black is amongst what we think of as the gravestones. It is not clear that she stares at Kipps, nor that she doesn't*

*The moment is held in silence, then the Woman slips away and out of sight*

*As soon as she does, Kipps rushes after her to look the way she's gone. He stands at the exit, searching with his eyes, then at length moves back through the gauze. The Actor, meanwhile, has not looked upstage*

**Kipps** Beyond the wall the grass gave way within a yard or two to sand and shallow water. The marshes and the salt flats stretched away until they merged with the rising tide. I could see for miles. There was no sign at all of the woman in black, nor any place in which she could have concealed herself.

*Silence*

I did not believe in ghosts.

*There is the sound effect of Kipps running, the thud of his footsteps, the panting of his breath*

**Actor** By the time he reaches the house he is in a lather of sweat from his exertions and the extremes of his emotions.

*We hear the door of the house slam shut*

For a long time he does not move from the dark, wood-panelled hall. He wants company, and he has none. He wants lights. He needs reassurance. But more than anything else, he needs an *explanation*. (*Pause*) For he does not believe in ghosts.

**Kipps** But out on the marshes just now, I saw a woman who — whose form was quite substantial, yet — Oh God — I cannot describe it — I ... (*He moves to sit. He takes a moment to compose himself*) The expression on her face ... desperate, yearning malevolence ... filled me with indescribable loathing and fear. And she vanished in a way that no living human being could possibly manage to do. (*Pause*) I did not believe in ghosts.

*A clock begins to strike, deep in the house*

**Actor** What other explanation is there?

*Pause*

**Kipps** (*moving about the stage, visibly putting the experience behind him*) Hall, staircase, kitchen, scullery. (*He switches on a light. The bulb is weak*) Drawing-room, sitting-room, dining-room, study.

**Actor** Nothing unpleasant, no shades of Miss Havisham, no rubbish piled in corners, no half-starved dogs or cats. A damp, musty, sweet-sour smell there is — but is that remarkable in a house situated as is this one? Furniture — good, solid, dark, old-fashioned. Books, pictures, bureaux.

*Kipps opens the skip and takes out bundles of documents, scattering them about him as the Actor speaks*

Bureaux. Desks, writing-tables, bureaux. Papers, papers, in bundles, in boxes, letters, receipts, legal documents, notebooks, papers. All of which he must examine. A huge task, and one which there is little point in starting now, it is too late and he is too unnerved.

*We see Kipps find a bottle of brandy, which he considers opening, then replaces*

**Kipps** (*looking up from the skip*) How one old woman had endured day after day, night after night in this house I could not conceive. I should have gone mad.

**Actor** He decides to leave the place till the following morning. It will be an hour before Keckwick returns, and if he steps out well he will be back in Crythin Gifford in time to save him from turning out. The causeway is still visible, the roads back are straight and he cannot possibly lose himself.

*Kipps switches off the Lights and locks up. Again the sound of the door slamming shut*

Imagine him now, striding ahead, small and insignificant in that vast landscape. As he walks he summons up the image of the black-robed figure —

*Kipps looks back over his shoulder*

— persuades himself she had not vanished as he'd thought, but that there must have been some slope or dip into which she had concealed herself. For he does not believe in ghosts. He puts her from his mind, walks on, struck by the absolute indifference of sky and water to his presence. Then, from this reverie, he becomes aware he cannot see for more than a few yards ahead,

*Kipps registers this in the dimming light. He turns*

and that behind him Eel Marsh House is quite invisible.

**Kipps** A thick, damp, sea-mist. Damp, clinging, cobwebby, fine and impenetrable. The sea-fret Mr Daily talked of.

**Actor** He must turn, retrace his steps to the house, and wait till Keckwick comes for him.

*The Lights have dimmed to virtual darkness*

**Kipps** The mist was salty, light and pale and moving in front of my eyes all the time. I felt confused, teased by it, as though it were made up of millions of live fingers that crept over me, hung on to me and then shifted away again.

**Actor** Step by slow step he goes, baffled by the moving, shifting mist, praying to reach the house. A nightmare walk, until ...

*Fade up sound of a pony and trap. Kipps turns in evident relief, as the sound fades down, changes its apparent direction, swirls and fades as if carried on the mist*

**Kipps** Keckwick!

*The sound grows near, then recedes. Kipps is baffled by it, at one moment seems to locate it in the fog, at the next is utterly disorientated. At length, the noise of the pony and trap fades altogether, and away on the marsh is a draining, sucking, churning sound, which goes on, together with the shrill neighing and whinnying of a horse in panic. And then another cry: a shout, a terrified sobbing — it is hard to decipher, though it is clear it comes from a young child. Kipps struggles blindly forward a few steps*

Oh no — oh no ... *(Screaming out)* No! No! No! Keckwick!

*Black-out. In the darkness, we hear the front door slam. When the Lights return, Kipps is on stage in the house, clearly in shock. From the skip he takes out the bottle of brandy and a glass and pours himself a largish measure. He sits for a moment. He jumps up and feverishly starts to walk about the house again, rummaging through rooms and furniture*

**Actor** In despair and fearfulness he goes about the house, switching on every light he can make work — in the vain hope that their glow might be seen across the misty wasteland.

**Kipps** *(pacing restlessly)* Every door was open, every room orderly, dusty, bitterly cold and damp and yet also somehow stifling.

*Kipps arrives at the closed door. He stops*

**Actor** One door is locked.

**Kipps** At the far end of a passage that led away from three bedrooms on the second floor. There was no keyhole, no bolt on the outside. *(He rattles it and kicks at it angrily, beating it with his fists. Then, as his anger subsides, he slides, sobbing, to the floor)*

*The Actor is now dressed as Keckwick. He stands at the foot of the steps, as the doorbell rings. Kipps slowly comes out of his sleep, evidently unrefreshed, stiff in his limbs, staggering to answer the bell. The light*

*outside is now full moonlight which shines on to the causeway and the actors. Kipps, on seeing Keckwick, seems bewildered*

**Keckwick** You have to wait for a fret like that to clear itself. There's no crossing over while a fret's up. Unlucky for you that was. And after that there's the wait for the tide. Awkward place. You'll be finding that out fast enough.

**Kipps** What time is it?

**Keckwick** Nigh on two.

**Kipps** I wouldn't have expected you to come back at this hour. It's very good of you.

**Keckwick** I wouldn't have left you over the night. Wouldn't have done that to you.

**Kipps** *(suddenly)* But what happened to you, how do you manage to be here — *how did you get out?*

*Keckwick looks a long moment into Kipps's face. Then he climbs on the trap once more. Kipps climbs up. We hear the pony and trap set off*

*(As he is carried on the trap)* I fell into a sort of trance, half sleeping, half waking, rocked by the motion of the cart. I knew I had entered some hitherto unimagined realm of consciousness and there was no going back. That the woman by the graves had been ghostly I now — not believed, no *knew*, for certainty lay deep within me. And I began to suspect that the pony and trap, the pony and trap with the child who had cried out so terribly and which had been sucked into the quicksands, they too had not been real, not there, present, not substantial, but ghostly also. What I had heard, I had heard as clearly as I now heard the roll of the cart and the drumming of the pony's hooves, and what I had seen — the woman with the pale, wasted face, by the grave of Mrs Drablow and again in the old burial ground — I had seen. I would have sworn that on oath. Yet they had been, in some sense I did not understand, unreal, ghostly; things that were dead.

CURTAIN

ACT II

*There is the sound of the busy market town*

*The Actor, as Jerome, sits working at his desk*

*Kipps enters and knocks on his door*

*Jerome answers, evidently with reluctance*

**Kipps** Mr Jerome.

**Jerome** Ah. Yes. *(At length)* Won't you, er — won't you come in?

**Kipps** *(stepping in)* I trust you are fully recovered — after your experience at Mrs Drablow's funeral?

**Jerome** Thank you, yes. Thank you.

*Silence*

**Kipps** No doubt you're wondering why I'm here.

*Jerome doesn't respond*

You see, I had no idea — I don't know whether you had — of the volume of papers belonging to Mrs Drablow. Tons of the stuff and most of it, I've no doubt, so much waste, but it will have to be gone through item by item, nevertheless. It seems that, unless I am able to take up residence in Crythin Gifford for the foreseeable future, I shall have to have some help.

*Jerome's expression is one of panic. He shifts his chair back, away from Kipps*

**Jerome** I'm afraid I can't offer you help, Mr Kipps. Oh no.

**Kipps** I wasn't thinking that you would do anything personally, but perhaps you have a young assistant.

**Jerome** There is no-one. I am quite on my own. I cannot give any help at all.

**Kipps** Well then, help me to find someone. Surely the town will yield me a young man with a modicum of intelligence, and keen to earn a few pounds, whom I may take on for the job?

**Jerome** *(in great agitation)* I'm sorry — this is a small place — young people leave — there are no openings.

**Kipps** But I am offering an opening — albeit temporary.

**Jerome** *(almost shouting)* You will find no-one suitable!

*Pause*

**Kipps** *(very calmly and quietly)* Mr Jerome, what you mean is not that there is no-one available, that no young person — or older person for that matter — could be found. You are backing away from speaking the truth of the matter, which is that I should not find a soul willing to spend any time out at Eel Marsh House, for fear of the stories about that place proving true — for fear of encountering what I have already encountered.

*Silence. At length, Jerome, in great agitation, moves to look out of the window, his back to Kipps*

**Jerome** Keckwick came back for you.

**Kipps** Yes. I was more grateful than I can say.

**Jerome** There's nothing Keckwick doesn't know about Eel Marsh House.

**Kipps** Do I take it he fetched and carried sometimes for Mrs Drablow?

**Jerome** *(nodding)* She saw no-one else. Not ... *(he stops)*

**Kipps** *(evenly)* Not another living soul.

*Pause*

**Jerome** There are stories. Tales. There's all that nonsense. You can discount most of it.

**Kipps** Of course. But not all.

**Jerome** You saw that woman in the churchyard.

**Kipps** I saw her again. In that old burial ground.

*Jerome turns suddenly to face Kipps, clearly most distressed by the conversation. Kipps decides to spare his feelings*

Well, I'm not going to be put out by a ghost or several ghosts, Mr Jerome. My work has to be done. And I doubt if the woman in black can have any animosity towards me. I wonder who she was? Is? (*He laughs unnaturally*) I hardly know how to refer to her!

*Silence*

I must face it out, Mr Jerome. Such things one must face.

**Jerome** So I said. So I said — once.

*The Lights lose Jerome. Kipps looks with concern towards the Actor, who, in agitation, is dressing as Sam Daily once again. Kipps moves to him*

**Kipps** Mr Kipps, are you all right?

**Actor** I — yes. Yes, I am. Jerome was terrified.

**Kipps** (*bringing him into the light*) But you, yourself — if would seem you are in a — a state of emotion ...

**Actor** (*a trace of panic in his voice*) I was. I was. My emotions had become so volatile and so extreme, that I was living in another dimension. My heart seemed to beat faster, my step to be quicker, everything I saw was brighter, its outlines more sharply, precisely defined, I ... (*he stops*)

*Kipps looks at him, evidently anxious*

**Kipps** Can you go on?

**Actor** Yes.

**Kipps** Can you go on until the end?

**Actor** Oh yes. Yes, I must. Let us go on. Let us have done with it for God's sake!

*He takes a few deep breaths and composes himself. Kipps approaches him*

**Kipps** Mr Daily!

**Sam Daily** Mr Kipps! How's things with you?

**Kipps** Very well, I thank you.

**Sam Daily** And your business?

**Kipps** Mrs Drablow's estate? Oh, I shall soon have all that in order.

Though I confess there will be rather more to do than I had anticipated.

**Sam Daily** You have been out to the house?

**Kipps** Certainly.

**Sam Daily** Ah.

*Pause*

**Kipps** To tell the truth I'm enjoying myself. I am finding the whole thing rather a challenge.

*A long pause as Daily regards Kipps. Kipps shifts uneasily and glances away*

**Sam Daily** Mr Kipps, you are whistling in the dark. You're a fool if you go on with it.

**Kipps** If you mean you think I should give up the job I've been sent here to do and turn tail and run —

**Sam Daily** Listen to me, Arthur. I'm not going to fill you up with a lot of women's tales ... you'd find those out fast enough if you ask about the place. Maybe you already have?

**Kipps** No. Only hints — and Mr Jerome turning a little pale.

**Sam Daily** But you went out there to the house.

**Kipps** I went there and I had an experience I shouldn't care to go through again, though I confess I can't explain it. It seems to me, Mr Daily, that I have seen whatever ghost haunts Eel Marsh. A woman in black with a wasted face. Because I have no doubt at all that she was what people call a ghost, that she was not a real, living, breathing, human being. Well, she did me no harm. She neither spoke nor came near me. I did not like her look and I like the — the power that seemed to emanate from her towards me even less, but I have convinced myself that it is a power that cannot do more than make me feel afraid. If I go there and see her again, I am prepared.

**Sam Daily** And the pony and trap?

*Silence*

**Kipps** So you know of that. (*At length*) I won't run away.

**Sam Daily** You shouldn't go there.

**Kipps** I'm afraid I'm going.

**Sam Daily** You shouldn't go there alone.

**Kipps** It seems I can find no-one to come with me.

**Sam Daily** No. And you will not.

**Kipps** Good God, man, Mrs Drablow lived alone there for — what was it? — sixty-odd years, to a ripe old age. She must have come to terms with all the ghosts about the place.

**Sam Daily** Ay. Maybe that's just what she did do. (*Pause*) But you're set on it?

**Kipps** I am.

**Sam Daily** Then take a dog.

**Kipps** (*laughing*) I haven't got a dog.

**Sam Daily** I have. (*He whistles, then bends and pats the "dog"*) Take her. Bring her back when you are done.

**Kipps** Will she come with me?

**Sam Daily** She'll do what I tell her.

*Kipps pets her*

**Kipps** What's her name?

**Sam Daily** Spider.

**Kipps** All right, I'll be glad of her company, I confess. Thank you. Come, girl! Spider!

*Kipps and the "dog" move out of the light*

**Actor** (*loosening his "Daily" clothes*) Next morning, he crosses to the house on a bicycle lent him by his landlord. The little dog Spider bounds behind. The sun is high, the very air seems purified and more exhilarating.

**Kipps** There they lay, those glittering, beckoning, silver marshes. I could hear the mysterious silence, and once again the haunting, strange beauty of it all aroused a response deep within me. I could not run away from that place. I had fallen under some sort of spell of the kind that certain places exude and it drew me, my imaginings, my longings, my curiosity, my whole spirit, towards itself.

*The Lights suggest the house interior. The Actor moves to the side of the stage, to a position as physically removed from Kipps as possible — perhaps even to the body of the theatre*

**Actor** He lights fires, airs sheets and blankets, opens windows, draws up blinds, and sets himself to work in one of the bays of the morning-room.

*Kipps starts sorting the letters into piles — those to be dealt with, those to discard*

**Kipps** Well, Spider, have you ever seen a more worthless collection of papers? I do believe Mrs Drablow kept every bill, receipt and Christmas card she ever had. (*He fondles Spider*) There's even shopping lists, would you believe!

**Actor** It was pretty tedious going, but he persevered patiently enough, untying and cursorily examining bundle after bundle of worthless old papers before tossing them aside.

*Kipps works on a moment, then yawns and stretches. He stands, crosses the stage and we hear the door slam. He whistles for the dog*

**Kipps** (*calling*) Spider! Spider — rabbits! (*He moves through the gauze into the old graveyard*) Last time I was here, among these graves, I saw a woman. (*He bends to the dog*) Where is she, Spider! Where is she, girl! (*He pats the dog, then stoops to decipher an inscription*) In Loving Memory ... Something net ... Humfrye ... nineteen o-something ... and of her something ... something iel Drablow ... (*He contemplates the stone a moment, then whistles the dog*) Spider!

**Actor** He returns to the house and to his task. Already the air is turning colder, the sky losing its light.

*We hear the door slam as Kipps returns to his papers*

On into the evening he works. Spider is an excellent companion and he is glad of her gentle breathing, her occasional scratching or clattering about in that big empty house. But his main sensation is one of tedium and a certain lethargy combined with a desire to finish the job and be back in London with his dear Stella.

*Kipps sorts through the papers, discarding many, saving few, as the Lights fade. When they return, he is in the process of clearing his work for the night, putting things in piles on the floor*

**Kipps** Another day or two and we'll be done. It's time for bed. Come, Spider!

*He moves by a circuitous route to his bed. He lies down, covering himself with a blanket he has found amongst the clutter. Before the Lights go down, he reaches down to fondle the dog*

Would Mr Daily let me take you home with me to London? I wonder. You'd like Stella. I'm not sure you'd like London. Good-night now. Good-night.

*And the Lights fade to a Black-out. Suddenly, they return, via a shaft of moonlight, and Kipps sits immediately upright. Silence*

*(At length, whispering)* What is it, Spider? What is it?

*Silence. Then, from the depths of the house, comes a sound like an intermittent bump or rumble. Kipps listens, frozen. At length, it stops. Slowly, he climbs out of bed*

*(Whispering)* Good girl, good girl ... *(he moves away from his bed)*

*The sound begins again. Kipps moves cautiously through the house. As he does, the moonlight appears and disappears through the many windows. Gradually, the sound gets louder as Kipps gets nearer, until, inevitably, he's drawn to the closed door. The sound is at its loudest now. Kipps has not the courage to try the door, though it's evident that the source of the sound is behind it. He stands as if paralysed outside. Then, from out on the marshes, comes the sound of a child's cry. Kipps swings around to listen*

**Actor** He gropes his way back to his bedroom, and looks out. There lie the marshes, silver gray and empty, there is the water of the estuary, flat as a mirror with the full moon lying upturned upon it.

**Kipps** But nothing. No-one. The slightest of breezes, nothing more.

*The distant rumble from the room has now ceased. In silence, Kipps moves back through the house, towards the room with the closed door. He reaches it, there is no sound now. He puts his hand on to the handle, hesitates, then turns it. It does not give. He pushes against it slightly with his shoulder. Nothing. Slowly, the dawn light filters up*

**Actor** In the morning he awakes to a change in the weather. When he looks out he can hardly see the division between land and water, water and sky. All is a uniform grey, with low, thick cloud and a drizzle.

**Kipps** I cycled back to Crythin, Spider bounding behind me. There was a letter from Stella, full of exclamations of regret at my absence, and pride in my responsibility. I had the landlord's wife refill my hamper, purchased a good strong torch, and with the letter warming my inside pocket, cycled back, whistling as I went.

**Actor** He works through the day, clearing paper after paper, then, after supper, as a diversion, begins to read some letters he has found.

**Kipps** *(sitting with a slim packet of documents and letters)* They were dated between a February of about sixty years ago and the summer of the following year. They were sent first from the manor house of a village some twenty miles from here, and later from a lodge in Scotland. All were addressed to "My dear" or "Dearest Alice" and signed for the most part "J", but occasionally "Jennet". The writer, a young woman and apparently a relative of Mrs Drablow, was unmarried and with child. At first, she was still living at home with her parents; later, she was sent away.

**Actor** In Scotland, a son is born to her and she writes of him with a desperate clinging affection. Pressure is being put on her to give up the child for adoption; she refuses, saying over and over again that they will never be parted.

*As Kipps speaks the following, he is joined by the voice-over of a young woman speaking the same words. They speak the first sentences in unison, then Kipps leaves it to the voice-over*

<b>Kipps</b>	} <i>(together)</i>	"He is mine. Why should I not have what is mine? He shall not go to strangers. I shall kill us both before I let him go."
<b>Young Woman's voice</b>		

**Actor** And then the tone changes.

**Young Woman's voice** "What else can I do? I am quite helpless. If you and Morgan are to have him I shall mind it less. I suppose it must be."

**Actor** But the last letter of all is written in a very small, cramped hand.  
**Young Woman's voice** "Love him, take care of him as your own. But he is mine, mine, he can never be yours. Oh, forgive me. I think my heart will break. J."

**Actor** In the same packet is a simple document declaring that Nathaniel Pierston, infant son of Jennet Humfrye, is become by adoption the child of Morgan Thomas Drablow of Eel Marsh House, Crythin Gifford, and of his wife, Alice.

*Silence. Then Kipps suddenly swings round as if the dog is startled*

**Kipps** What is it, Spider?

*Silence. Then the rhythmic bump, bump, pause, bump, bump, pause. Kipps stands. He hesitates, then moves purposefully forwards. At once, from outside, comes the sound of a pony and trap*

Stay with me, Spider, stay with me! (*He takes up the torch and moves outside*)

*The Lights fade and the only light is from Kipps' s torch as the noise of the pony's hooves gets louder and louder as if coming right up to the house. Just as it seems the vehicle must come into our sight, it veers off the causeway and we hear, as before, the sounds of it submerging. The child's cry rises to a scream of terror, which is then choked and drowned*

*Silence*

*From the interior of the house, now distantly, we hear again the rhythmic bump, bump, pause*

*Kipps moves inside. A light illuminates the door, and as we look, we see it slowly open. The light is outside the door, but not inside. Kipps approaches in fear and caution, then shines his torch inside. He walks through. The only light comes from this torch, and we see by it that the rocking chair is in motion—rocking backwards and forwards apparently of its own volition—and it is this that we have heard, echoing on the floor boards. As he shines his torch on it, it rocks less and less until it stops*

But no-one had been there! No-one! There was no way out of the room except by the door I had come through, and no-one had passed me!

*Pause*

*During the following, Kipps moves about the room, picking up occasional objects as they are mentioned*

**Actor** It is a child's nursery. A bed in one corner, made up and all complete with pillows, sheets and counterpane, beside it, on the table, a tiny wooden horse and a nightlight. In the chest of drawers are clothes, underclothes, day clothes, formal clothes, play clothes, clothes for a small boy of six or seven. Beautiful, well-made clothes in the style of sixty years or more ago. And toys, most neatly and meticulously ordered and cared for. Lead soldiers, arranged in regiments. A farm, set out with barns and fences. A model ship, complete with masts and sails of linen. A whip. A spinning top. Ludo. Halma. Draughts and chess. A monkey made of leather. A cat of wool. A furry bear. A bald doll with a china head and a sailor suit. Pens and brushes, inks and dice, a miniature trumpet, a painted musical box from Switzerland, and a black doll with raggedy arms and legs.

**Kipps** (*holding, with tenderness, an object we can believe is this black doll*) They must have been here half a century, yet they might have been played with this afternoon. There was nothing here to frighten or harm me, there was only emptiness, a curious air of sadness, of something lost, missing, so that I myself felt a desolation, a grief in my own heart. How can I explain? I cannot. But I remember it as I felt it.

*At length, he comes back out through the door, finds a chair, and sits. As he does, the wind begins to rise. Within a short time it is roaring around the house. Then, from the darkness outside, comes the child's cry of desperation and anguish. Kipps switches on the lights as:*

*The Woman in Black leaves the stage — momentarily glimpsed*

*Kipps swings round in horror. As he does so, a huge blast of wind hits the house and the Lights go out. Kipps begins to grope around in panic*

The torch — God help me — the torch, Spider. Where is it, girl? (*He finds it*) Thank God, thank —

*He trips, the torch falls and goes out. He finds it again but it is broken. Then, in total darkness, he gropes his way back to the nursery, half panting, half sobbing — the wind howling as he goes, until he finds the*

*nightlight and succeeds in lighting it. The wind continues to roar about the house. Kipps retraces his steps, out of the room, through the house, with only the candle for light. He sits, his head in his hands, the candle by him*

Let it be morning ... let it be light.

*From outside, comes the sound of someone whistling — as one whistles a dog*

Spider ...?

*Kipps stands, and taking his candle, moves to open the outside door*

Who is it, Spider — who is it, girl?

**Actor** Before he can restrain her she is off, as though after a hare. Running low and fast, out of the house and away across the marshes.

**Kipps** Spider! Come back, Spider! Come back!

*Again the whistle. As Kipps moves violently forward, the candle is extinguished*

Spider!

*Imperceptibly, the dawn begins to break. Throughout the following, the wind rages, and Kipps moves to the forestage and steps*

*During the next sequence, the Woman in Black is engaged in rendering the nursery area an utter shambles. She is outside the light, yet we see her as a crow-like silhouette, violently flapping in the dark*

**Actor** He stands amazed and bewildered, as Spider's small form recedes into the great, open expanse. Then he runs as he has never run before!

*We hear Kipps' s footsteps, pounding furiously*

She is floundering in mud. Fighting to retain her balance from the pull beneath her feet. She is yelping loudly —

**Kipps** Spider!

**Actor** Still just visible —

**Kipps** I'm coming, Spider — hold on, girl —

*Again the whistle*

Then he too begins to feel the stickiness and unsteadiness of the ground as it becomes boggy.

**Kipps** Stay still, Spider — still as you can —

**Actor** He is obliged to wade rather than walk.

**Kipps** Have courage — I'm coming —

**Actor** The little dog can scarcely hold up — her legs and half her body have disappeared beneath the whirling, sucking bog, and her pointed head is held up in the air as she struggles and yelps.

**Kipps** Good girl — good girl ...

*Again the whistle*

Keep trying, Spider — keep trying, good girl ... *(He lies down, and fully extended, reaches for the dog)*

**Actor** He grabs her neck, just as the last of her body sinks. He hauls and strains with a strength born of terror, he feels his grip on the slippery wet fur give, the dog begins to slide away, then with a huge last effort he drags his body backwards on to firmer ground.

*The dog is suddenly released from the mud. Kipps rolls back, exhausted*

**Kipps** *(relieved and tearful)* Oh, Spider, Spider — thank God, thank God ...

*He lies a while in silence, then looks up*

*The Woman in Black stands, looking directly down at him*

*He stares at her, then screams. Then from the back of the theatre comes the sound of a pony and trap. Black-out*

*The Woman in Black exits*

*In the Black-out, the Actor, as Samuel Daily, moves to Kipps and shines a torch into Kipps' s eyes, attempting to rouse him*

Sam Daily Mr Kipps — Arthur ...

*The Lights fade up slowly as Kipps comes round*

Kipps (*feverishly*) The trap — the pony and trap —

Sam Daily Just over there. I still like to make use of it now and again — it's a pleasant way to travel. (*Pause*) What did you think?

Kipps I heard others — another ...

Sam Daily Oh, yes. (*Pause*) Not Keckwick?

Kipps No.

Sam Daily No. (*Pause*) You take care now.

Kipps I'm better. I'm all right.

*Pause*

Sam Daily I had you on my mind. I wasn't happy. It began to unsettle me.

Kipps Isn't it quite early in the morning ...? I've become confused.

Sam Daily Early enough. I kept waking. As I said, I had you on my mind.

Kipps How strange.

Sam Daily Was it? Not as it seems to me. Not strange at all.

Kipps No.

Sam Daily A good job I came when I did.

Kipps Yes, indeed, I'm very grateful. I'm extremely glad to see you, Mr Daily.

Sam Daily People have drowned on that marsh before now.

Kipps Yes. Yes, I know that now. I felt that I was being pulled under and the dog with me. (*He starts up*) Spider ...

Sam Daily She's here. She'll do. Now when you've come to a bit more, you'd better get whatever you need and we'll be off.

Kipps Off?

Sam Daily Ay. I came to see how you were faring in this Godforsaken place. I have seen. You had better come back home with me and recover yourself.

Kipps (*after a pause*) Thank you. I shall gather my things. I shan't be long.

*Kipps moves through the house. He finds, in particular, the small packet of letters and documents he had been reading. These he picks up, together with his overnight bag. He is about to go downstairs when he sees the door to the nursery ajar. He moves to look in, striking a match by which to see.*

*The full extent of the devastation is revealed*

Dear God in Heaven!

*He picks up various broken objects as he looks around him, and puts them down again. Then, in sudden fear, runs from the room to join Daily*

*The Actor, as Daily, moves the skip to represent the trap once more, as Kipps comes up to him*

Sam Daily Come on then, Arthur, in you get. We'll be home in no time.

*Kipps, as he climbs up, stumbles. Daily helps him, then climbs up himself*

Spider — come on now, up! Good lass.

*The pony and trap drives off. As it goes into the fading light, Kipps looks back to the house. There is no-one there*

*Black-out*

*Samuel Daily exits*

*The Lights return. Kipps draws up a chair to the side of the skip — using it as a desk. He opens the packet of letters and takes them out*

Kipps (*reading a death certificate*) Nathaniel Drablow, age six years; cause of death: drowning. (*Reading another*) Rose Judd, nursemaid; cause of death: drowning. (*Reading another*) Jennet Eliza Humfrye, spinster, age thirty-six; cause of death: heart failure.

*Silence*

*Samuel Daily enters with a decanter of whisky and two glasses. He sets them on the skip and sits opposite*

Sam Daily (*pouring a glass for Kipps*) Well, you have come a long way since the night I met you on the late train.

Kipps It feels like a hundred years ago.

**Sam Daily** You've gone through some rough seas.

*Pause. They drink*

**Kipps** Do you suppose that poor Mrs Drablow was haunted night and day by the ghost of that woman in black?

**Sam Daily** Jennet Humfrye. She was her sister.

*Silence*

**Kipps** Do you suppose she had to endure those dreadful noises out there? If such was the case, I wonder how she could have endured it without going out of her mind?

**Sam Daily** Perhaps she did not.

**Kipps** Perhaps. *(Pause)* Was there something I still did not see? If I had stayed there any longer would I have encountered yet more horrors?

**Sam Daily** That I cannot tell.

**Kipps** But you could tell me something.

*Daily shifts uneasily*

Come, we're a good way from the place and my nerves are quite steady again. *(A pause, then, to give the lie to this last statement, an edge of hysteria comes in his voice)* I must know! It can't hurt me now!

**Sam Daily** Not you. No, not you maybe.

**Kipps** What are you holding back?

**Sam Daily** You, Arthur, will be away from here tomorrow or the next day.

You, if you are lucky, will neither hear nor see nor know of anything to do with that damned place again. The rest of us have to stay. We've to live with it.

**Kipps** With what? Stories — rumours? With the sight of that woman in black from time to time? With what?

**Sam Daily** With whatever will surely follow. Sometime or other. Crythin Gifford has lived with that for fifty years. It's changed people. They don't speak of it, you found that out. Those who have suffered worst say least — Jerome, Keckwick. *(He pauses and helps himself to more whisky)* Jennet Humfrye gave up her child, the boy, to her sister, Alice Drablow, and Alice's husband, because she'd no choice. At first she stayed away — hundred of miles away. But, in the end, the pain of being

parted from him, instead of easing, grew worse and she returned to Crythin. She got rooms in the town. She'd no money. She took in sewing, she acted as a companion to a lady. At first, apparently, Alice Drablow would not let her see the boy at all. But Jennet was so distressed that she threatened violence and in the end the sister relented — just so far. Jennet could visit very occasionally, but never see the boy alone nor ever disclose who she was or that she had any relationship to him. No-one ever foresaw that he'd turn out to look so like her, nor that the natural affinity between them would grow out. He became more and more attached to her, and as he did so, he began to be colder to Alice Drablow. Jennet planned to take him away, that much I do know. Before she could do so the accident happened, just as you heard. The boy ... the nursemaid, the pony, trap and its driver, Keckwick —

**Kipps** Keckwick!

**Sam Daily** Keckwick's father. And there was the boy's little dog, too.

That's a treacherous place, as you've found out to your cost. The sea fret sweeps over the marshes suddenly, the quicksands are hidden.

**Kipps** So they all drowned.

**Sam Daily** And Jennet was at the house, watching at an upper window, waiting for them to return. The bodies were recovered but they left the pony and trap, it was held too fast by the mud. From that day Jennet Humfrye began to go mad.

**Kipps** Was there any wonder?

**Sam Daily** No. Mad with grief and mad with anger and a desire for revenge. She blamed her sister who had let them go out that day, though it was no-one's fault, the mist comes without warning.

**Kipps** Out of a clear sky.

**Sam Daily** Whether because of her loss and her madness or what, she also contracted a disease which caused her to begin to waste away. The flesh shrank from her bones, the colour was drained from her, she looked like a walking skeleton — a living spectre. Children were terrified of her. She died eventually. She died in hatred and misery. And as soon as ever she died, the hauntings began.

**Kipps** Well, Mrs Drablow is dead. There, surely, the whole matter will rest.

**Sam Daily** And whenever she has been seen, in the graveyard, on the marsh, in the streets of the town, however briefly, and whoever by, there has been one sure and certain result.

**Kipps** *(whispering)* Yes?

**Sam Daily** In some violent or dreadful circumstance, a child has died.  
**Kipps** What — you mean by accident?  
**Sam Daily** Generally an accident. But once or twice it has been after an illness, which has struck them down within a day or night or less.  
**Kipps** You mean any child? A child of the town?  
**Sam Daily** Any child. Jerome's child.  
**Kipps** But surely ... well ... children sometimes do die.  
**Sam Daily** They do.  
**Kipps** And is there anything more than chance to connect these deaths with the appearance of that woman?  
**Sam Daily** You may find it hard to believe. You may doubt it.  
**Kipps** Well, I —  
**Sam Daily** We know.

*Silence*

**Kipps** I do not doubt, Mr Daily.

*The Lights begin to pulse and blur as the last verbal exchange is repeated as a voice-over, echoing in Kipps's mind*

**Sam Daily's voice** You may find it hard to believe. You may doubt it.  
**Kipps's voice** Well, I —  
**Sam Daily's voice** We know.  
**Sam Daily** Arthur —  
**Kipps's voice** I do not doubt, Mr Daily.  
**Sam Daily** Arthur —  
**Sam Daily's voice** We know.  
**Kipps's voice** I do not doubt, Mr Daily.  
**Sam Daily's voice** We know.  
**Sam Daily** Arthur —

*As Kipps falls, Sam Daily catches him, lays him gently down and covers him with the blanket, which is the overture to Kipp's delirium. In the sequence, snatches of dialogue return to haunt him, in the form of voice-overs. The words are distorted, blurred, accompanied by sounds of the pony and trap*

*There are momentary glimpses of the Woman in Black*

*It's a whirling nightmare, in which, at its climax, Kipps screams*

**Voices** And now it's your turn ... I have no story ... A foul day, Tomes ... Dead, don't y'know?... Have you ever heard of the Nine Lives Causeway? ... Stella. Scribble a note to ... Dead, don't y'know?... One minute it's as clear as a June day, the next ... Stella ... The Drablow papers, sir .. She could hardly do otherwise, living there ... Is there a family grave?... Behold. I show you a mystery ... I did not see a young woman ... Stella ... Dead, don't y'know ... Keckwick will come for you ... How did you get out!... I wouldn't have left you over the night ... Stella ... You will find no-one suitable ... a woman ... so I said once ... a woman ... not another living soul ... a woman in black ... Such things one must face ... a woman ... whistling ... a woman in black with a wasted face ... you are whistling in the dark ... you shouldn't go there .... Drablow!... alone, you shouldn't go there ... dead, don't y'know ... Stella!... alone ... But he is mine ... I ... Spider!... I think my heart will break ... Spider!... Come back!... he can never be yours!... a child ... Stella!... never ... Stella!... in hatred .... never .... a child ... he can never, never, never be yours!  
**Kipps** (*screaming*) Stella!

*A substantial Black-out. Then there is birdsong which gives way to the sound of a pleasure park — music, laughter, many voices — as a spot comes up on Kipps at the side of the stage*

There is only the last thing left to tell. Within a few weeks Stella and I were married, and a little over a year later, Stella gave birth to our child, a son, whom we called Joseph Arthur Samuel, and Mr Samuel Daily was his godfather. I never thought of the past, I was filled with joy and contentment in my life. I was in a particularly peaceful, happy frame of mind one Sunday afternoon the following summer. We had gone to a large park, ten miles or so outside London. There was a festive, holiday air about the place, a lake, a bandstand, stalls selling ices and fruit. Families strolled in the sunshine, children tumbled on the grass. Stella and I walked happily, with young Joseph taking a few unsteady steps, holding on to our hands. One of the attractions on offer was a pony and trap on which rides could be taken, and little Joseph gestured to it excitedly.

*We hear the pony and trap begin to draw away. There is a babble of conversation, and the strains of the band playing a jolly tune*

So, because there was only room for two, Stella took Joseph and I stood, watching them bowl merrily down the ride. For a while they went out of sight away round a bend, and I began to look idly about me, at the other enjoyers of the afternoon. And then, quite suddenly, I saw her.

*A spot illuminates the Woman in Black*

*The pony and trap draws nearer, we hear a child's laughter, the sound of the band, voices. The spot leaves Kipps and we watch the Woman in Black staring as if the trap is bearing towards her. Then, on a sudden movement from her, we hear the neighing of a startled horse, shouts from the driver, shouts of terror from the child, and then a horrifying crash*

*There is a second while the Woman in Black remains in the spot. Then she is gone*

*(As the spot slowly finds him)* Our baby son had been thrown clear, clear against another tree. He lay crumpled on the grass below it, dead. And ten months later, Stella too, died from her terrible injuries. *(Pause)* I had seen the ghost of Jennet Humfrye, and she had had her revenge. You asked for my story, I have told it. Enough.

*Silence. Then Kipps crosses and switches on the workers. The Actor comes to him, and in silence shakes his hand*

**Actor** *(at length)* Thank you.

**Kipps** Thank you. *(Pause)* And is it done, d'you think? Will it now be laid to rest?

**Actor** I pray it will. I thank you for your trouble — your enthusiasm — and your effort. Your emotion just now — it was as if I watched myself.

**Kipps** I imagined my own child ...

**Actor** *(quickly)* Yes. *(He shudders involuntarily)* I pray that when we show it to our audience, at last it will be done with.

**Kipps** Who is she?

**Actor** I beg your pardon?

**Kipps** Your surprise. She is remarkable. Where did you find her?

**Actor** I'm afraid I don't understand.

**Kipps** Your surprise, Mr Kipps — the surprise you found for me.

*Pause*

**Actor** *(puzzled)* My surprise was that I'd learnt my words.

**Kipps** Yes, yes, you learnt them expertly, but the woman you found — the actress. The woman in black. *(Pause)* Who was she? *(Pause)* You organized it as a complete surprise — you had her come here and go through her part and ... a young woman. With a wasted face — she ...

*Silence. The Actor is staring at him in horror*

**Actor** A young woman?

**Kipps** Is there anything the matter? You look unwell.

*Pause*

**Actor** *(at length)* I did not see a young woman.

*As the Lights fade, we hear again the rhythmic bump, bump, pause ... bump, bump, pause ...*

*Black-out*

CURTAIN