

LIMERICKS

Ortenzia

Said Francesca, 'My lack of volition
Is leading me straight to perdition;
But I haven't the strength
To go to the length
Of making an act of contrition!'

EARBRASS.

From Number Nine, Penwiper Mews,
There is really abominable news;
They've discovered a head
In the box for the bread,
But nobody seems to know whose.

~~HENRY~~ & HAMISH.

There's a rather odd couple in Herts
Who are cousins, or so each asserts;
Their sex is in doubt
For they're never without
Their moustaches and long, trailing skirts.

Mona

A beetling young woman named Pridgets
Had a violent abhorrence of midgets;
Off the end of a wharf
She once pushed a dwarf
Whose truncation reduced her to fidgets.

NARRATOR (EARBASS)
 SAM COMINES WITH HARRY (HAMISH)
 EDNA (ORTENZIA OR
 NELLIE (MONA)

EDNA. (Screams.) Look! Down there!

NARRATOR. —a flash of lightning revealed a figure creeping up the embankment. (*The lighting returns to normal.*) Some months went by, and still they had not returned to Willowdale. They passed the ruins of some sort of factory.

SAM. Look! There's the ruins of the Crampton Vinegar Works.

~~NARRATOR. Said Sam.~~

SAM. It was destroyed by a mysterious explosion.

~~HARRY. Ah, yes. Didn't I read about that in the Triangle last fall?~~

NARRATOR. At Wunksieville—

(*A hook with a baby doll attached descends from the grid. EDNA, SAM and HARRY stop the handcar abruptly.*)

EDNA. Oh, dear. Look at that. (*SAM removes the doll from the hook and places it in EDNA's arms.*)

NARRATOR. They rescued an infant who was hanging from a hook intended for mailbags.

EDNA. How much she resembles Nellie.

NARRATOR. Said Edna. They turned her over to the matron of the orphanage in—

EDNA. Stovepipe City! (*CELIA enters left and EDNA tosses the doll to her. She immediately exits. EDNA, SAM and HARRY return to the car.*)

NARRATOR. From the tressel over Peevish Gorge they spied a frightful scene.

EDNA. It appears to be the wreckage of a touring car . . . there near the bottom.

HARRY. I don't see Dick's friend anywhere.

NARRATOR. ~~Said Harry.~~ In— (*The three dismount the handcar.*)

EDNA. Violet Springs!

NARRATOR. They attempted to visit with Mrs. Regera Dowdy. (*EDNA mimes knocking on the door. MONA enters as the MAID.*)

~~MONA as MARY. I'm sorry but I'm afraid Mrs. Dowdy is not receiving visitors.~~

~~SAM. Pity. (MONA exits.)~~

NARRATOR. Through a window they were able to see inside her home.

EDNA. Look! If I'm not mistaken that's the desk on which Mrs. Dowdy writes her poems. (*They return to the handcar.*)

NARRATOR. As they were going along the edge of the Segmush river— (*EARBASS enters left with an oar and rows to exit stage right.*) —they passed a man in a canoe.

EDNA. If I'm not mistaken—

NARRATOR. —said Edna.

EDNA. He was lurking inside the vinegar works.

NARRATOR. Between West Elbow and Penetralia— (*MARY enters as NELLIE and lies down near to EDNA, SAM and HARRY.*) —they nearly ran over someone who was tied to the track. (*SAM and HARRY struggle to stop the car.*)

HARRY. Oh, my.

NARRATOR. It proved to be Nellie.

EDNA. Nellie!

HARRY. (*Helping her aboard.*) Are you all right?

SAM. Perhaps you could join us?

NARRATOR. Despite their entreaties, she insisted on being left at the first grade crossing—

MARY as NELLIE. I'm sorry, but I really must go . . . goodbye. (*NELLIE exits hurriedly.*)

NARRATOR. —where she hurried away.

EDNA, SAM & HARRY. Goodbye. Goodbye, Nellie! (*The trio begin to pump the car again.*)

NARRATOR. A week later they noticed someone who might be Nellie walking in the grounds of the Weedhaven Laughing Academy.

EARBASS & HENRY

GOREY STORIES

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(MONA as HENRY'S LITTLE SISTER, FANNY ELIZA, *enters and joins him.*)

EARBASS. Once when he saw a sea-gull rise from the waves—

LITTLE HENRY. Oh, Fanny Eliza, my dear little sister! When I die I shall go up to heaven just like that bird.

EARBASS. —Little Henry made a rather adroit prediction about his future. He habitually went without sweet things.

LITTLE HENRY. So that I might be able to give pennies to stop the poor heathen from bowing down to idols.

EARBASS. He dearly loved his parents—

LITTLE HENRY. Mother. Father.

EARBASS. —and never tired of trying to be helpful.

LITTLE HENRY. Is there anything I might do for you? (LITTLE HENRY'S parents *shake their heads "no" and turn away.*)

EARBASS. Although he was kind and good, he was sometimes tempted.

LITTLE HENRY. (*To audience.*) Get thee behind me, Satan!

EARBASS. But, he felt his sins deeply and was truly sorry for them afterwards. (LITTLE HENRY *falls to his knees in prayer.*) He was often discovered upstairs . . . alone on his knees.

~~FATHER. Dear little Henry.~~

~~MOTHER. Dear little Henry.~~

(JASPER and HAROLD *enter as boys. They mime ice-skating.*)

EARBASS. One Sunday he saw some boys sliding on the ice.

LITTLE HENRY. (*Rising.*) Oh, dear!

EARBASS. He went up to them and said . . .

LITTLE HENRY. (*Crossing to the boys.*) Oh, what a shame it is for you to idle on the Sabbath instead of reading your Bibles! (*The boys laugh at HENRY and exit.*)

EARBASS. He was very fond of Fanny Eliza, and whenever she got into a passion he became alarmed. (FANNY ELIZA *goes into a temper tantrum, waving her arms and stomping on the floor.*)

LITTLE HENRY. (*Crossing to FANNY ELIZA.*) Oh, Fanny Eliza, my dear little sister. I am deeply concerned for the salvation of your soul. (FANNY *thumps her nose at her brother and exits. HENRY is dejected.*)

C.F. EARBASS

MONA

HAROLD (HENRY/HAMISH)

(As EARBASS begins his story, the COMPANY moves about the stage leaving MONA and HAROLD down left. They begin to mime the action as EARBASS speaks.)

EARBRASS. Harold Snedleigh was found beating a sick small animal to death with a rock when he was five years old. That same year Mona Gritch was born to a pair of drunkards. (Pause.) That night a great dark cloud came up and . . . (Pause.) By the time he was twelve Harold had caught the cold that afterwards never left him. As a child Mona already had thick ankles and thin hair. (Pause.) A great black cloud came up. Hailstones fell in profusion. (Pause.) After leaving school, Harold went to work in a plumber's office, and stole curiosa from booksellers whenever he got the chance. Mona was employed behind the jewelry counter in a five-and-ten, amusing herself by loosening the settings with a nailfile so that the stones would fall out soon after purchase. (Pause.) ~~LARGE HAILSTONES FELL . . .~~

~~A GREAT DARK CLOUD CAME UP . . . Little Henry developed . . . contracted . . . fell victim to . . . (Pause.)~~ The two met at a Self-Help Institute lecture on the Evils of the Decimal System, and immediately recognized their affinity. On Sundays they took long walks . . . and Harold would bring one of his books. They went to the local cinema whenever there was a crime film playing. After one particularly exciting one, they . . . fumbled with each other in a cold woodshed. Several years later,

they secretly rented a remote and undesirable villa. When they tried to make love, their strenuous and prolonged efforts came to nothing. It was then that they decided to embark upon their life's work. After many complicated preparations, they felt at last they were ready. Mona lured a little girl named Eepie Carpetrod to the villa with promises of a doll wearing a green satin frock. They spent the better part of the night murdering the child in various ways. By twilight of the next day the body was buried and the mess cleaned up. They then sat down to a meal of cornflakes and treacle, turnip sandwiches, and artificial grape soda. The pictures Mona had taken did not come out very well, being underexposed, but they put them in the new album they had bought anyway. Over the next two years they killed three more children . . . but . . . it was never as exhilarating as the first one had been. For no very good reason their activities remained unsuspected. But . . . one day . . . in April, some snapshots fell out of Harold's pocket on a tram. At times they said they had done it all, but other times they denied everything. ~~Someone threw a~~

NARRATOR (ANYONE)

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GOREY STORIES

~~LADY CELIA as INSTRUCTRESS. Charlotte! (CHARLOTTE rises and begins to courtsey. The INSTRUCTRESS slaps her hands and then throws her to the floor.)~~

NARRATOR. During the day Charlotte Sophia hid as much as possible. And at night lay awake weeping . . . and weeping . . . and weeping . . . and when she could bare it no longer, she fled from the school at dawn. (CHARLOTTE runs stage left and right. As she does the stage grows darker.) She soon lost consciousness . . . (CHARLOTTE faints.) and fell to the pavement. (The lighting has become eery and dark.) A man came and took the locket with her parents picture inside. (HENRY enters in a cloak and steals the locket violently.) Another man came from the opposite direction and carried her off. (HAMISH enters and carries CHARLOTTE upstage and places her in a chair.) He brought her to a low place. (The COMPANY breaks into wildly wicked laughter.) He sold her to a drunken brute. (The COMPANY gives forth another burst of wild laughter and the NARRATOR disarranges his coat thus becoming the DRUNKEN BRUTE.)

~~ORTENZIA as "NARRATOR".~~ Charlotte Sophia was put to work making artificial flowers. (CHARLOTTE is shoved stage left and a paper flower placed in her hand.) From time to time the brute got the horrors. (HAROLD, now the BRUTE, goes into a state of convulsions and rage all at the same time. He stalks CHARLOTTE slowly. She crawls circling the stage.) Charlotte Sophia's eyesight began to fail. (CHARLOTTE wanders about, blind.)

NARRATOR. Meanwhile; her father, who was not dead after all, returned home. (FATHER uses a chair as his auto.) Everyday he motored through the streets searching for her.

~~FATHER. Charlotte! Charlotte Sophia!~~

NARRATOR. At last the brute went off his head. (The BRUTE becomes exceedingly violent, pursuing CHARLOTTE mercilessly.) Charlotte Sophia, now almost blind, ran into the street. (She is struck by the auto.) She was at once struck down by a motor car. Her father got out to look at the dying child. She was so changed he did not recognize her. (FATHER looks at the child then returns to his auto.)

~~FATHER (Motoring again.) Charlotte! Charlotte Sophia!~~

~~(As the lights fade on the FATHER and CHARLOTTE the COMPANY moves to form a group around the settee.)~~

~~COMPANY. (Sings as lights come up.)
SING TIRRALOO, SING TIRRALAY~~