

# **A WILDE AFFAIR**

**MISS PRISM AND CANON CHASUBLE IN CONCERT.**

**by CHRISTOPHER OWEN.**

**Music and script adviser: David Wykes.**

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Tel: 020 8888 1751.

[info@christopherowen.co.uk](mailto:info@christopherowen.co.uk)

[www.christopherowen.co.uk](http://www.christopherowen.co.uk)

**A Wilde Affair** was first performed at Fonthill Bishop Church, Wiltshire, on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 2005 by **Susan Flannery and Michael Lunts** as Miss Prism and Canon Chasuble prior to touring nationally.

THE YEAR 1902 – 2 YEARS AFTER THE DEATH OF OSCAR WILDE.

SET: THE STAGE OF A HALL OR THEATRE.

Piano. Music stand. A table, on which a large Gladstone bag and a jug of water and a glass and 3 heavy manuscripts, these being the 3 volumes of Miss Prism's memoirs.

**MISS LAETITIA PRISM:** 65 years old. Although it is believed that at one time Miss Prism was employed as a governess and was noted for her gentility and erudition, the woman who arrives on stage this evening is unexpectedly one of energy and great charm and dazzling theatricality.

**CANON FREDERICK CHASUBLE, DD:** 65 years old – in dog collar and appropriate suiting – a respectable gentleman, pedantic, repetitious and somewhat self-important.

## **PART ONE.**

**CANON CHASUBLE AND MISS PRISM ENTER.**

**BOTH:** Good evening.

**CHASUBLE MOVES TO THE PIANO. MISS PRISM TO THE MUSIC STAND.**

**CHASUBLE:** Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. May I commence by introducing ourselves. Miss Laetitia Prism.

**PRISM: (RESTRAINED ALTHOUGH NOT UNPLEASANT):** Good evening.

**CHASUBLE: (INTRODUCING HIMSELF):** Canon Frederick Chasuble. Doctor of Divinity. Formerly rector at Wooton, in Hertfordshire. Now retired. Miss Prism and I consider it a great honour to have been invited here this evening, during the course of which we shall have the pleasure of singing a number of songs – many of which, we are sure, will be known to many of you.

Miss Prism and I, on occasion, have been asked when it was that we first began to sing together. Well, for your information, we began to sing together just two years ago in the church choir. Isn't that so, Miss Prism?

**PRISM:** It is, Canon Chasuble.

**CHASUBLE:** Thereafter, in response to numerous requests from friends and members of the public we began to perform our concerts, as indeed we are this evening..

**PRISM:** We shall also this evening be recounting one or two stories about ourselves, won't we, Canon?

**CHASUBLE:** Oh, yes, yes, we shall.

**PRISM:** These stories, together with a great many others, are to be found in my soon-to-be-published memoirs. My memoirs – SHE HOLDS UP THE THREE MANUSCRIPTS) – entitled: 'There's A Thrush In The Corner Behind The Dead Tree.' All three volumes of which, on publication, we trust you will all rush out to buy.

**CHASUBLE:** We shall now have our first song, shall we? A May Morning, by Luigi Denza.

**PRISM:** A lovely song. (TO CHASUBLE): Thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** (TO PRISM): Thank you so much.

**SONG 1. A MAY MORNING.**

**BOTH:** Come out, come out my dearest dear.  
Come out and greet the sun,  
The birds awake on tree and brake,  
The merry May's begun.  
Come out and drink the diamond dew,  
Come out and tread the lea,  
The world is all awake, and you,  
And you are all, are all the world to me.

**CHASUBLE:**  
Put on your gown of dainty white,  
Put on your bodice blue,  
For I've been waiting all the night  
To greet the May with you.  
And ev'ry tree is white with thorn,  
The village blithe and gay,  
Come out, come out this happy morn,  
And be our Queen, and be our Queen of May!

**PRISM:** The whitethroat sings unto his mate,  
And I am singing too,  
For morning early, ev'ning late  
My heart is all for you.

**CHASUBLE:**  
My songs shall blossom at your feet,

**PRISM:** Your heart my throne shall be,

**BOTH:** For you/I am Queen of May my sweet,  
And all the world, and all the world to me.  
Come out! Come out! Come out!

**AFTER WHICH:**

**PRISM:** Thank you, thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** Thank you very much. Our next song is the Moon Has Raised Her Lamp Above by Sir Julius Benedict.

**PRISM:** Before we sing The Moon Has Raised Her Lamp Above, I should like, at this early stage in our concert this evening, to take the opportunity of correcting the unfortunate impression, held by a number of otherwise well-meaning people, that the Canon and I are, in any way, as we have been most unfortunately depicted by Mr Oscar Wilde in his comedy of manners entitled The Importance of Being Earnest.

**CHASUBLE:** Mr Wilde's boulevard entertainment The Importance of Being Earnest was staged seven years ago in 1895 at the St James's Theatre in London, where it played for no more than just a few weeks.

**PRISM:** Canon Chasuble and I wish to impress upon the general public that neither he nor I are as Mr Wilde would have you believe us.

**CHASUBLE:** Indeed, indeed, that is so. Mr Wilde regrettably depicted Miss Prism as a neurotic spinster.

**PRISM:** Neurotic. I mean, you tell me, ladies and gentlemen, do I look neurotic?

**CHASUBLE:** He went on to suggest –

**PRISM:** I wouldn't bother to say any more about it, Canon – it's all slander.

**CHASUBLE:** He depicted me as a pedantic, self-important, repetitive old fool. Isn't that so, Miss Prism? Ha! Pedantic, self important, repetitive.

**PRISM:** Our next song then: 'The Moon Has Raised Her Lamp Above'.

**CHASUBLE:** Pedantic, repetitive, can you imagine?

**PRISM:** Are we ready for our next song, Canon Chasuble?

**CHASUBLE:** Me, repetitive.

**PRISM:** The song ‘The Moon Has Raised Her Lamp Above’ by Sir Julius Benedict.

**CHASUBLE:** Before we proceed with our next song - if I may Miss Prism - I am delighted to inform you, ladies and gentlemen, that this coming Sunday week, Miss Laetitia Prism and I are at last to be joined together in holy wedlock.

**PRISM:** We are to be married, ladies and gentlemen.

**CHASUBLE:** Dear Miss Prism and I finally – and, I might add, for the second time - became engaged to be married just two years ago – soon after the dear lady returned from France, where she had resided for all of five long, long years.

**PRISM: (ENTHUSIASTICALLY):** Ah, yes! La France! I’m just going to have to tell you about my life in Patee. Why, I have sometimes asked myself, did I ever leave?

**CHASUBLE:** That is a question best addressed on some other occasion. Don’t you think?

**PRISM:** Ah, yes. Indeed. Thank you, Canon. We’re now going to sing The Moon has Raised Her Lamp Above from Sir Julius Benedict’s opera The Lily of Killarney. **(CHECKING HER MUSIC):** When I was in France, I knew Toulouse Lautrec, you know. A quite delightful gentleman. On the small side. But quite delightful. I was also closely acquainted with Auguste Rodin, the sculptor.

**CHASUBLE: (WISHING TO PRESS ON):** This lovely song was composed by Sir Julius Benedict in 18 hundred and 62.

**PRISM: (TO THE AUDIENCE):** Auguste Rodin and I are great friends.

**CHASUBLE: (UPBEAT AND WISHING TO PRESS ON):** Indeed, indeed.

**PRISM:** He moulded me in clay.

**CHASUBLE:** (PLEASANTLY SURPRISED): I didn't know that. Did he do a bust of you?

**PRISM:** He did just about all of me, Canon, dear. Good gracious, yes. Now then. The Moon has Raised Her Lamp Above by Sir Julius Benedict. Thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** Thank you so much.

**THEY SING SONG 2: THE MOON HAS RAISED HER LAMP ABOVE.**

**CHASUBLE:**

The moon has rais'd her lamp above  
To light the way to thee, my love,  
To light the way to thee my love;  
Her rays upon the waters play,  
To tell me eyes more bright than they  
Are watching thro' the night,  
Are watching thro' the night.  
I come, I come, my heart's delight  
I come, I come, my heart's delight.  
I come, I come, I come, my heart's delight!  
I come, I come, my heart's delight!  
I come, I come, my heart's delight!

**PRISM:** On hill and dale the moon beams fall  
And spread their silver light on all,

**BOTH:** But those bright eyes I soon shall see  
Reserve their purest light for me  
Methinks they now invite,  
I come, I come, my heart's delight.

**AFTER WHICH:**

**PRISM:** Thank you, thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** Thank you very much. Our next song is The Bay Of Biscay.

**PRISM: (SOTE VOCE TO CHASUBLE):** You said we'd tell them about the baby.

**CHASUBLE: (SOTE VOCE TO PRISM):** Ah yes.  
(TO THE AUDIENCE): Ladies and gentlemen, Miss Prism and I, at this juncture in the evening, would very much like to address some of the grave misconceptions surrounding the occasion, thirty eight years ago in 1864, on which Miss Prism lost her employer's baby boy.

**PRISM:** Much of the unfortunate misunderstanding relating to that tragic event, we regret to say, has been caused by the sadly inaccurate and incomplete account of it in Mr Oscar Wilde's play *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

**CHASUBLE:** We may now hear the true story of that appalling accident, ladies and gentlemen, 'straight from the horse's mouth'. Miss Prism.

**PRISM:** Thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** In employing the phrase 'straight from the horse's mouth', I was, of course, speaking metaphorically.

**PRISM:** Oh, thank you – so gratifying to hear you say so.

**CHASUBLE:** My metaphor is drawn from Early Christian Veterinary procedure. Indeed, the phrase 'straight from the horse's mouth', according to Dr Ebenezer Cobham Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fables*, may be traced back to the twelfth century A.D.

**PRISM:** Oh, good.

**CHASUBLE:** And, as you may or may not know, it has as its genesis the scientific conclusion that the only certain way of discovering a horse's age is by the examination of the said animal's front teeth.

**PRISM:** Thank you, thank you, Canon.

**CHASUBLE:** Thank you, thank you.

**PRISM:** Well, dear ladies and gentlemen, with regard to that day, on which I lost my employer's baby boy: to begin the story at the beginning: I was, at the time of which we speak, a young lady of twenty six, and had been engaged as a nursery maid to the baby son of Mrs Moncrieff, who, subsequent to her husband's death, was staying with her sister Lady Bracknell in Upper Grosvenor Street, Mayfair. Unknown to my employer and her sister Lady Bracknell, *of which lady we shall this evening make no further mention*, I was, during this period, much occupied in the writing of a three volume work of fiction entitled: 'Cherubim and Seraphim In Glittering Ranks With Wings Displayed'. In order to keep this same work from the prying eyes of my employer and her sister, it had been my custom to keep it in my dear old handbag - which I am delighted to say is, after so many years, again in my possession – lovely. I would then deposit my work of fiction and handbag in the left-luggage cloakroom at Victoria Station. Each morning, dear ladies and gentlemen, I would walk the baby in his perambulator to Victoria Station, collect my work of fiction, and, together with the baby, take it to St James's Park where I would continue my work on it.

**CHASUBLE:** This is most fascinating.

**PRISM:** Thank you. However: One day - I was in St James's Park.

**CHASUBLE:** We are now coming to a most exciting part of the story.

**PRISM:** We are, indeed. Indeed, indeed, we are. Thank you again, Canon, dear. One day – and this is an incident to which Mr Wilde in his play quite failed to alert his audiences - I was sitting on my bench in St James's Park with the perambulator over here, and with my handbag and the baby on the bench beside me here, and with my work of fiction open on my lap, when I looked up and I saw standing beneath a hawthorn tree the most beautiful young man!

**CHASUBLE:** He had the most wonderful piercing blue eyes.

**PRISM:** You won't believe this, ladies and gentlemen, but, for a brief moment, I thought that the young man whom I saw there beneath the hawthorn tree was none other than my long lost twin brother.

**CHASUBLE:** Miss Prism is speaking of the long lost twin brother of whom she has no physical recollection.

**PRISM:** No, indeed, none at all.

**CHASUBLE:** You see, her mother passed away when she and her brother were two years old, and, soon after, her brother was sent away to live somewhere else with some other family.

**PRISM:** And I never knew where. Well, as I was saying, I looked up, and saw beneath the hawthorn tree this most beautiful young man –

**CHASUBLE:** He had the most wonderful piercing blue eyes.

**PRISM:** (TRYING TO HIDE HER IRRITATION WITH CHASUBLE): He had the most wonderful piercing blue eyes – thank you, Canon - well done – and, ladies and gentlemen, I was possessed by this extraordinary idea that the young man was my long lost twin brother.

**CHASUBLE:** Her long lost twin brother.

**PRISM:** I rushed up to the young man –

**CHASUBLE:** Miss Prism rushed up to the young man –

**PRISM:** - and I said: ‘James! Darling! It isn’t!’

**CHASUBLE:** And it wasn’t.

**PRISM:** It wasn’t. But it could have been. And ever since that day, I have been asking myself will I ever, ever be reunited with him?!

**CHASUBLE:** Miss Prism continually asks herself will she ever be reunited with her long lost twin brother?

**PRISM:** Well, ladies and gentlemen, this young fellow strides off - and my poor head is spinning, my heart is pounding, and there I am, I realize I am late getting back to my employer for luncheon, and then it happened.

**CHASUBLE:** Then it happened.

**PRISM:** My poor, poor head in a frightful whirl, I place work of fiction in perambulator, baby in handbag. Don’t I, Canon?

**CHASUBLE:** Baby in handbag.

**PRISM:** I hand baby in bag into left luggage cloakroom, Victoria Station, and start back home with work of romantic fiction in perambulator. And then of course I realize! What have I done?!

**CHASUBLE:** Horror, horror.

**PRISM:** I rush back to the left-luggage cloakroom –and calamity upon calamity, I discover that another member of the travelling public has moments earlier come along, handed in his ticket, and the left luggage attendant has mistakenly handed him my handbag containing the baby boy. Oh, my goodness! The memory of it!

**CHASUBLE:** She was most distressed.

**PRISM:** I was out of my mind!

**CHASUBLE:** Miss Prism runs, perambulator before her – seeks for the man with the baby throughout the neighbouring streets and alleys – Pimlico, Warwick Way, Sutherland Street –

**PRISM:** Semley Place –

**CHASUBLE:** Semley Place –

**PRISM:** Eaton Square – The King's Road.

**CHASUBLE:** Miss Prism looked absolutely everywhere, but the baby was nowhere to be found. What was she to do? She couldn't go home.

**PRISM:** I couldn't go home!

**CHASUBLE:** She threw herself beneath the London to Brighton Express.

**PRISM:** I did, I did.

**CHASUBLE:** But she missed.

**PRISM:** I missed. The train was approaching, I took a deep, deep breath, and threw myself at it.

**CHASUBLE:** But she missed.

**PRISM:** I missed, didn't I, Canon, dear? (IMITATING THE TRAIN PASSING): Wzoom! And I missed. I hit my head, ladies and gentlemen, on the up train rail.

**CHASUBLE:** She still has the bruise.

**PRISM:** (INDICATING THE BRUISE ON HER FOREHEAD): I still have the bruise.

**CHASUBLE:** It's in her memoirs, ladies and gentlemen.

**PRISM:** It's on my forehead, Canon, dear. That's something Mr Oscar Wilde altogether omitted to mention, didn't he?

**CHASUBLE:** The effect of this really most regrettable experience upon dear Miss Prism was frankly catastrophic. As Miss Prism has so informed me, she had a nervous breakdown.

**PRISM:** I had a nervous breakdown.

**CHASUBLE:** For fourteen whole years, thereafter, ladies and gentlemen, Miss Prism endlessly roamed the streets of central London.

**PRISM:** I did, I did.

**CHASUBLE:** She lived in a dustbin, to the rear of the Café Royal in Regent Street. (VERY THEATRICAL): Imagine the scene –

**PRISM:** We can imagine it, Canon, dear.

**CHASUBLE:** For fourteen whole years, Miss Prism, our very own, my dear wife as this coming Sunday week she will joyfully become, in a dustbin at the rear of the Cafe Royal in Regent Street.

**PRISM:** Quite dreadful.

Well, now: (TAKING A DEEP BREATH): I think it's time we had another song, don't you? We mustn't forget what we are here for this evening.

**CHASUBLE:** The Bay of Biscay, composer John Davy. A jolly shipwreck song.

**PRISM:** Oh, good. Are we ready? (TO CHASUBLE): Thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** (TO PRISM): Thank you so much.

**THEY SING SONG 3: THE BAY OF BISCAY.**

**PRISM:** Loud roars the dreadful thunder,  
The rain a deluge show'rs;  
The clouds are rent asunder,  
By lightning's vivid pow'rs.

**BOTH:** The night is drear and dark,  
Our poor devoted bark,  
Till next day there she lay,  
In the Bay of Biscay, O!

**CHASUBLE:**  
Now dash'd upon the billow,  
Her op'ning timbers creak;  
Each fears a wat'ry pillow,  
Non stop the dreadful leak.

**BOTH:** The dismal wreck to view,  
Strikes horror to the crew,  
As she lay on that day,  
In the Bay of Biscay, O!

**CHASUBLE:**  
Her yielding timbers sever,  
Her pitchy seams are rent;

**PRISM:** When heav'n, all bounteous ever,  
Its boundless mercy sent.

**BOTH:** A sail in sight appears,  
We hail her with three cheers,  
Now we sail with the gale,  
From the Bay of Biscay, O!

**AFTER WHICH:**

**PRISM:** Thank you, thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** Thank you very much.

**PRISM:** Next song, Canon. The White Squall by G. A Barker.

**CHASUBLE:** The White Squall by G. A Barker.

**PRISM:** Another shipwreck song. My goodness.

**CHASUBLE:** Very dramatic.

**PRISM:** (TO THE PIANIST): Thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** (TO THE PIANIST): Thank you so much.

**THEY BEGIN TO SING BUT VERY SOON DISCOVER THAT  
THEY ARE SINGING IN DIFFERENT KEYS.**

**PRISM:** The sea was bright and the bark rode well,  
You are in the wrong key, Canon.

**CHASUBLE:** I don't think so. D Major.

**PRISM:** (FLARING UP): We agreed to sing it in A Major. We changed  
it!

**CHASUBLE:** I don't think we did. Did we?

**PRISM:** You said you couldn't reach top F sharp.

**CHASUBLE:** I can reach top F sharp.

**PRISM:** Well, it was something you couldn't reach, and we changed it.

**CHASUBLE:** I've never had any trouble with top F sharp.

**PRISM:** (TO CHASUBLE): You'll have to go and get the music – A  
Major. Thank you, Canon.

**CHASUBLE:** Good gracious. Well, if you say so.

**PRISM:** Thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** (TO THE AUDIENCE – MAKING TO EXIT): I am just going to get the music for the song. Shan't be long. So sorry. I think it's in the wings. (SHOWING OFF HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THEATRICAL IDIOMS): You know, *the wings*. Thank you very much. Jolly good.

**CHASUBLE EXITS.**

**PRISM:** My goodness – that man! His memory! We quite definitely agreed to sing *The White Squall* by G. A. Barker in *A Major*. Oh, he's a delightful gentleman, but quite dreadfully forgetful, ladies and gentlemen. Of course, I've known him for years - since we were children. Since I was about ten. His father was our local rector. They had moved, as I recall, from a village in Cambridgeshire - and little Frederick used to come over and play with us. And you know what we used to call him then? 'Little Lost Soul'. He used to go about with his boot laces undone! Poor little chap. I was always having to tie up his boot laces for him. And then one day – I'll never forget it – not that I speak of it now – he tripped over his laces – fell – splash – into the Thames! And I had to jump in, with all my clothes on, and drag him out! Then, I remember, his father became a rector somewhere else, miles and miles away, and the Canon, little Frederick and I, well, we didn't meet again for oh-I-don't-know-how-many-years, by which time he was rector at St Charles the Martyr in Totteridge. Of course – I know none of you will tell him I'm telling you this - but it hasn't been at all easy for the Canon. All that religion. It all got too much for the poor dear man. He started drinking - drinking very heavily. And I have to tell you, it took a great deal of effort on my part to wean the dear man off it. Oh yes, the Canon, who on Sunday week is to honour me by agreeing to become my husband, is a splendid gentleman – but quite, quite dreadfully forgetful – and he appears to take simply ages to go and get anything when one has requested him to do so, as you may have observed.

**CHASUBLE ENTERS WITH THE SHEET MUSIC FOR THE PIANIST AND HIMSELF.**

**CHASUBLE:** Here I am.

**PRISM:** Here you are.

**CHASUBLE:** Miss Prism, I regret to say I have failed to locate The White Squall in A Major. I did find this though.

**PRISM:** Oh, 'The Spider And The Fly' by Seymour Smith. Lovely song. Off we go. Ready? Thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** Thank you so much.

**SONG 4: THE SPIDER AND THE FLY.**

**PRISM:** Will you walk into my garden,  
Pray you, handsome Mister Fly,  
If any time you'd walk away  
You've only just to try

**CHASUBLE:**  
Thank you thank you dear Miss Spider,  
I'm so sorry to refuse,  
But I have a prior engagement,  
So I hope you will excuse,

**PRISM:** Won't you really?  
Handsome fly, ah say not nay,

**CHASUBLE:**  
No, I think not  
No, not today,  
No, I thank you, not today.  
Pray excuse me, many thanks  
But not today.

**PRISM:** I've the prettiest, sweetest garden,  
Where the larks and linnets sing;  
I will be, will be your servant there,  
And you shall be my king!

**CHASUBLE:**  
Well, my dear, as you're so pressing  
I'll just step within your door,  
With a welcome so caressing,  
Sure, no fly could wish for more.

**PRISM:** Now I've caught you,

**CHASUBLE:**

Dear Miss Spider

**PRISM:** Silly fly, you'll have to stay,  
In my meshes you must stay

**CHASUBLE:**

Won't you let me fly away?  
Cruel spider!  
Ah! I'll never fly away.

**PRISM:** You're my slave sir,  
Mine forever you must stay.

**AFTER WHICH:**

**PRISM:** Thank you, thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** Thank you very much.

**PRISM:** Oh, my goodness me! What have we done?!

**CHASUBLE:** What?

**PRISM:** We've forgotten to mention the questions the audience were invited to write down for us to answer. Ladies and gentlemen – I am so sorry - you may well have noticed that on your arrival this evening a number of you will have been handed cards on which to write down your questions to Canon Chasuble and myself. Questions, the answers to which may well be found in my soon-to-be-published memoirs - entitled: *There's A Thrush In The Corner Behind The Dead Tree*. Where are the questions cards?

**CHASUBLE:** The question cards?

**PRISM:** I believe that we agreed that you would bring them on with you, Canon, dear?

**CHASUBLE:** Oh no, I – I rather think we agreed that you would bring them on, Miss Prism. I seem to think I have a record of it in my notebook.

**PRISM:** Yes, well, never mind, I shall get them.

**CHASUBLE:** No, no. I wouldn't want to put you to any trouble.

**PRISM:** (UNABLE TO HIDE HER IRRITATION): I'll get them!  
They're in the wings. The wings. You sing your *solo*, Canon. (TO THE AUDIENCE): The Canon's quite splendid *solo*. You'll greatly enjoy his *solo*. (TO CHASUBLE): Off you go. (ABOUT TO EXIT): I'm now moving through the wings.

**PRISM EXITS.**

**CHASUBLE:** (AS HE TAKES OUT A HIP FLASK): Well, if that is the general consensus. Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to sing for you the lovely song 'Thora' by the prolific and successful Stephen Adams and Frederic E. Weatherly.  
(EXPLAINING TO THE AUDIENCE): For the voice. The larynx. As recommended by the profession's medical experts.

**HE DRINKS.**

Thank you - thank you so much.

**CHASUBLE SINGS 'THORA':**

I stand in a land of roses  
But I dream of a land of snow  
Where you and I were happy,  
In the years of long ago.  
Nightingales in the branches,  
Stars in the magic skies,  
But I only hear you singing,  
I only see your eyes,  
I only hear you singing,  
I only see your eyes.

Come! come! Come to me, Thora,  
Come once again and be  
Child of my dream, light of my life,  
Angel of love to me!  
Child of my dream, light of my life (*cont'd on next page*)

**CHASUBLE (Cont'd:**

Angel of love to me,  
Angel of love to me.

I stand again in the North land,  
But in silence and in shame;  
Your grave is my only landmark,  
And men have forgotten my name.  
'Tis a tale that is truer and older  
Than any the sagas tell,  
I lov'd you in life too little,  
I love you in death too well!  
I lov'd you in life too little,  
I love you in death too well.

Speak! speak! speak to me, Thora,  
Speak from your Heav'n to me;  
Child of my dream, love of my life,  
Hope of my world to be!  
Child of my dream, love of my life,  
Hope of my world to be!  
Hope of my world to be!

**AFTER WHICH:**

**CHASUBLE: (TO AUDIENCE):** Thank you, thank you - thank you very much.

**HE LOOKS TOWARDS THE WINGS.**

**CHASUBLE: (CALLS):** Finished.

**HE GOES TOWARDS THE WINGS.**

**CHASUBLE: (CALLS):** Miss Prism. (HE GOES TOWARDS THE WINGS): I've finished my 'Thora'. (TO STAGE MANAGEMENT IN THE WINGS): Have you by chance seen Miss Prism? She's fetching the question cards. Perhaps someone would be good enough to look for her.

*(Cont'd on next page)*

**CHASUBLE** (*Cont'd*): Thank you, thank you.(TO AUDIENCE): Well, you must excuse Miss Prism. She is a wonderful lady – make no mistake about it. But ‘of the artistic temperament’, you understand. Of course, I’ve known her since we were children. Since I was ‘oh, so high’. I think I may have told you, have I? My father, you see, was the local parish rector. And I used to go over and play with Miss Prism and with some of the other local children. We used to call her, I remember: ‘Little Miss Head in the Clouds’. She used to go about with her boot laces undone. You’ve no idea! Always having to tie up her boot laces for her. One day – shan’t ever forget it – not that I speak of it now – she tripped over her laces – fell – straight into the Thames. And I, ladies and gentlemen, had to jump in and drag her out! Huh! Of course, over the years it’s not been easy for her – what with losing the baby and her subsequent nervous breakdowns. Mind you, there’s no doubt about it, these last few years she has come on tremendously well under me. She is a wonderful lady. She wanders off and one never knows when she’s coming back, as you may have observed, but, for all that, she is a wonderful lady, and I am delighted to say she is shortly to become my wife – Mrs Frederick Chasuble.

### **PRISM ENTERS WITH THE QUESTION CARDS.**

**PRISM:** Questions!

**CHASUBLE:** Ah, here you are.

**PRISM:** Auguste Rodin is here! He said he might be over in England.

**CHASUBLE:** Auguste Rodin?

**PRISM:** And Algernon Swinburne, you know, the poet, and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, they’re here too! Auguste has requested we sing ‘Excelsior’, which he remembers hearing sung at my wedding in Bordeaux. Questions!

**CHASUBLE:** Your wedding in Bordeaux?

**PRISM:** First question: question from Miss Townsend of Pedley, Buckinghamshire: ‘Would you please tell us if it is true that Miss Prism has a long lost twin brother?’ Yes, it is true, Miss Townsend of Pedley, Buckinghamshire. I’ve looked for him everywhere – nowhere to be found.

**CHASUBLE:** (SOMEWHAT ALARMED): You have been married, you say? – in Bordeaux?

**DURING PRISM'S NEXT SPEECH, CHASUBLE TAKES OUT HIS HIP FLASK.**

**PRISM:** Next question: From Mr Willoughby of Welwyn, Hertfordshire: 'Would Miss Prism please tell us how *many* babies she has lost over the years?' (ANGRY AND ON THE OFFENSIVE): I have lost just the one baby, Mr Willoughby of Welwyn! Our last song before the interval: Excelsior. Are we ready?

**PRISM SEES CHASUBLE WITH THE HIP FLASK.**

**PRISM:** Don't overdo it, Canon.

**CHASUBLE:** For the voice. Strictly for professional use.

**PRISM:** Well, if you say so.

**CHASUBLE DRINKS.**

**PRISM:** Now then, come along – the song.

**CHASUBLE:** This marriage in France?

**PRISM:** The song!

**CHASUBLE:** What?

**PRISM:** We're singing the song, Canon!

**CHASUBLE:** Oh, yes.

**PRISM:** Off you go! Thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** Thank you so much.

**THEY SING SONG 6: EXCELSIOR.**

**PRISM:** The shades of night were falling fast  
As through an alpine village passed  
A youth, who bore mid snow and ice  
A banner with the strange device,

**BOTH:** Excelsior! Excelsior!

**CHASUBLE:**

His brow was sad, his eye beneath  
Flashed like a falchion from its sheath,  
And like a silver clarion rung  
The accents of that unknown tongue,

**BOTH:** Excelsior! Excelsior!  
Excelsior! Excelsior!

**PRISM:** “O stay, O stay,” the maiden said,  
“And rest thy weary head upon this breast”.  
A tear stood in his bright blue eye,  
But still he answered with a sigh,

**BOTH:** “Excelsior! Excelsior!”

**CHASUBLE:**

Beware the pine tree’s withered branch,  
Beware the awful avalanche  
This was the peasant’s last goodnight:  
A voice replied far up the height,

**BOTH:** “Excelsior! Excelsior!”

A traveller, by the faithful hound,  
Half buried in the snow was found,  
Still grasping in his hand of ice  
That banner with the strange device,  
“Excelsior”, Excelsior!”

There in the twilight cold and grey,  
Lifeless but beautiful he lay,  
And from the sky serene and far  
A voice fell like a falling star,  
“Excelsior! Excelsior!”

**AFTER WHICH:**

**PRISM:** (BOWING): Thank you, thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** (BOWING): Thank you very much.

**THEY EXIT – WITH PRISM, AFTER A MOMENT’S  
HESITATION, TAKING HER HANDBAG WITH HER.**

**END OF PART ONE.**

## **PART TWO.**

### **CHASUBLE AND PRISM ENTER**

**PRISM:** (TO AUDIENCE): Here we are again!

**CHASUBLE:** (TO AUDIENCE): Here we are.

**PRISM:** (TO AUDIENCE): We have been very busy entertaining Auguste Rodin, Mr Swinburne and Sir Henry, haven't we? They have gone off for a spot of supper at Romano's. Wonderful Romano's. I tell Canon Chasuble he really must go there some day.

**CHASUBLE:** Miss Prism is always telling me to go to Romano's.

**PRISM:** Yes, indeed – it'd do you the world of good, Canon. We shall now have the first song of the second half of our evening.

**CHASUBLE:** What I would very much like to know is what you meant when you said Monsieur Rodin greatly enjoyed the song Excelsior when it was sung at your wedding in Bordeaux?

**PRISM:** (DETERMINEDLY AVOIDING THE ISSUE): Monsieur Rodin is greatly attached to Excelsior, Canon. 'The Lark Now Leaves His Wat'ry Nest'.

**CHASUBLE:** You say you were once married in Bordeaux?

**PRISM:** It's in the past, Canon. Now then: off you go. (TO CHASUBLE): Thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** (TO PRISM): Thank you so much.

### **THEY SING THE SONG 'THE LARK NOW LEAVES HIS WATERY NEST'.**

**PRISM:** The lark now leaves his wat'ry nest,  
And climbing spreads his dewy wings;  
He takes this window for the East,  
And to implore, and to implore (*cont'd on next page*)

And to implore your light he sings,

**BOTH:** Awake, awake, the morn will never rise,  
Till she can dress her beauty at your eyes,  
Awake, awake, the morn will never rise,  
Till she can dress her beauty, dress her beauty at your eyes.  
Awake, awake, awake, awake!

**BETWEEN THE VERSES OF THE SONG:**

**CHASUBLE:** Are you by any chance still married?

**PRISM:** No, no. My husband died.

**CHASUBLE:** What did he die of – your husband?

**PRISM:** A blow to the head.

**CHASUBLE:** A blow to the head?

**PRISM:** Several blows to the head.

**CHASUBLE:** Good lord.

**THEY CONTINUE TO SING:**

**CHASUBLE:**

The merchant bows unto the seaman's star,  
The ploughman from the sun his season takes,  
But still the lover wonders what they are  
Who look for day, who look for day  
Who look for day before his mistress wakes.

**BOTH:** Awake, awake, the morn will never rise,  
Till she can dress her beauty at your eyes,  
Awake, awake, the morn will never rise,  
Till she can dress her beauty, dress her beauty at your eyes.  
Awake, awake, awake, awake!

**AFTER WHICH:**

**PRISM:** Thank you, thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** Thank you very much.

**PRISM:** Now then, we must attend to the ladies and gentlemen's written questions.

**CHASUBLE:** (TO PRISM:) The several blows to the head of the man you married in Bordeaux – may I enquire from what he received these blows?

**PRISM:** An axe.

**CHASUBLE:** An axe? Who, one may ask, dealt these fatal blows to the head to the man you married in Bordeaux?

**PRISM:** The French gendarmerie was not able to ascertain..

**CHASUBLE:** But there must have been suspicions.

**PRISM:** Oh, there were! Now then – the ladies and gentlemen's written questions? Here they are. (**HANDING A QUESTION PAPER TO CHASUBLE**): Canon, would you be good enough to read out the first one?

**CHASUBLE:** Oh, yes. Indeed. Of course.

**PRISM:** Thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** Question here from Mrs Jackson of Brickenden: 'Would the Canon please relate the circumstances surrounding the day when he *first* proposed marriage to Miss Prism.' Ah, yes, Mrs Jackson, it would give me the greatest pleasure to speak of that very special day. Thank you.

**PRISM:** In apprising our audience this evening of the events that took place on that special day, please do remember, Canon, we do not wish to hear anything more of that dreadful woman Lady Bracknell.

**CHASUBLE:** Oh, no – except that – she was present on that afternoon.

**PRISM:** You will have to tell it without her. That is understood, is it not?

**CHASUBLE:** Certainly, certainly. Well now, ladies and gentlemen: the circumstances relating to that special day on which I first proposed marriage to Miss Prism: at the time, of which I speak, I was rector of St Ann's Parish Church in Wooton in Hertfordshire, and Miss Prism was governess at The Manor House, Wooton, to Mr John Worthing's young charge Miss Cecily Cardew. We both remember Miss Cardew, do we not, Miss Prism?

**PRISM:** Oh, yes, we remember Miss Cecily Cardew very well.

**CHASUBLE:** She was such a beautiful young lady. She had, I remember, the most enormous beautiful brown eyes.

**PRISM:** She did, indeed.

**CHASUBLE:** They were enormous, ladies and gentlemen.

**PRISM:** Enormous. She had the most enormous beautiful brown eyes and the brain of a stunted gnat.

**CHASUBLE:** Her physical appearance, however, was quite stunning.

**PRISM:** Oh, yes, stunning. The last we heard of her, she had married an army major. To whom she had born seventeen children. She now weighs twenty two stone.

**CHASUBLE:** Twenty two stone.

**PRISM:** She is no longer stunning.

**CHASUBLE:** Indeed, no.

**PRISM:** Stunned but not stunning.

**CHASUBLE:** Very sad.

**PRISM:** Her husband, I'm told, died in the Zulu Wars.

**CHASUBLE:** Good gracious, did he really?

**PRISM:** And I can't say I blame him.

**CHASUBLE:** Indeed, indeed. Well now, to return to my exposition: we are on the afternoon of that day gathered in the rose garden at the Manor House, Wooton, when who should arrive, but Miss Cardew's guardian Mr John Worthing.

**PRISM:** Dear Mr John Worthing, such a clever little fellow.

**CHASUBLE:** Soon after Mr John Worthing's arrival we are quite unexpectedly joined by his young friend Mr Algernon Moncrief, and thereafter by Miss Gwendolen Fairfax and her formidable mother Lady Bracknell.

**PRISM:** Canon Chasuble! I have told you I will not have you speak of that woman Lady Bracknell!

**CHASUBLE:** Oh, dear, yes.

**PRISM:** If you cannot tell the story as we agreed then best not tell it at all! Where are the questions? Next question. (DRIVING ON): I've a question here from Mr Harris of Borehamwood. Mr Harris of Borehamwood is in our audience, Canon. You know Mr Harris.

**CHASUBLE:** No. I don't think so.

**PRISM:** Mr Harris of Borehamwood - a charming gentleman.

**DURING THE FOLLOWING 'HARRIS OF BOREHAMWOOD' INTERCHANGE, PRISM TAKES FROM HER HANDBAG A BOTTLE OF WHISKY. SHE OPENS IT, AND POURS WHISKY INTO A GLASS – AND DRINKS. THEN POURS A SECOND TIME AND DRINKS.**

**PRISM:** False teeth – ill fitting – tendency to fall out – is obliged to pick them up off the floor – cleans them on the tail of his shirt.

**CHASUBLE:** No, no. I don't seem to recall his name.

**PRISM:** A wart on the tip of his nose! The size of a front doorknob!

**CHASUBLE:** Ah, yes, Mr Harris of Borehamwood.

**PRISM:** Question here from him: ‘When did Miss Prism first find out she had a twin brother?’ How very kind of you, Mr Harris of Borehamwood, to enquire! **(SHE LOOKS FOR HIM OUT IN THE AUDIENCE):** I don’t think I can see you – ah, yes, there you are. Well, now, Mr Harris, I first heard that I had a twin brother from my father who, at the time, was on his death-bed. We shall now sing another song. ‘The Yeomen of England’ from Edward German’s Merrie England. **(TO CHASUBLE):** Thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** **(TO PRISM):** Thank you so much.

**SONG 2. ‘The Yeomen of England’.**

**PRISM:** Who were the Yeomen, the Yeomen of England?

**CHASUBLE:**

The freemen were the Yeomen, the freemen of England!  
Stout were the bows they bore  
When they went out to war,  
Stouter their courage for  
The honour of England,

**BOTH:** And Nations to Eastward,  
And Nations to Westward,  
As foemen did curse them,  
The Bowmen of England!  
No other land could nurse them,  
But their Motherland, old England!  
And on her broad bosom  
Did they ever thrive!

**CHASUBLE:**

Where are the Yeomen, the Yeomen of England?

**PRISM:** In homestead and in Cottage  
They still dwell in England!  
Stained with the ruddy tan  
God’s air doth give a man,  
Free as the winds that fan  
The broad breast of England!

**BOTH:** And Nations to Eastward,  
And Nations to Westward,  
As foemen may curse them,  
The Yeomen of England!  
No other land can nurse them  
But their Motherland, old England!  
And on her broad bosom  
Shall they ever thrive!

**AFTER WHICH:**

**PRISM:** Thank you, thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** Thank you very much. **(TO PRISM):** Please permit me to ask, Miss Prism, the man you married in Bordeaux – the axe – who was this man?

**PRISM:** He was my singing teacher.

**CHASUBLE:** You didn't tell me you had a singing teacher.

**PRISM:** One should never divulge everything to one's future spouse all at once, Canon Chasuble?

**CHASUBLE:** I see.

**PRISM:** To do so might well eliminate all possibility of the element of surprise that might be hoped for in a marriage. **(OMINOUSLY):** And we all like to be surprised, do we not?

**CHASUBLE:** **(SOMEWHAT ALARMED BY THIS POSSIBILITY):**  
Ah. Yes, indeed.

**DURING PRISM 'S SPEECH BELOW: CHASUBLE,  
ALARMED, TAKES OUT HIS FLASK.**

**PRISM:** Next question: a question here from Mr and Mrs Denton of Haywards Heath: 'Would Miss Prism please tell us how she came to damage her handbag?' Ah yes! How very nice of you to enquire, Mr and Mrs Denton. Perhaps the Canon would care to tell the story. Or would it be best if it came, as Canon Chasuble has spoken of it, straight from the horse's mouth.

**CHASUBLE: (POURING A TOT AND ABOUT TO DRINK IT):** I think perhaps it might be best straight from the horse's mouth.

**PRISM:** Charming - thank you.

**PRISM SEES CHASUBLE WITH THE FLASK.**

**CHASUBLE:** The voice.

**PRISM:** The voice. Indeed.

**CHASUBLE DRINKS.**

**PRISM:** Well, Mr and Mrs Denton, the unfortunate incident, the damage to my handbag, to which you refer: one day – this is all most exciting – isn't it, Canon?

**CHASUBLE:** Indeed, indeed.

**PRISM:** One day I was walking down Gower Street in London's West End when I saw the most beautiful young man.

**CHASUBLE:** He had the most wonderful piercing blue eyes, Mr and Mrs Denton.

**PRISM:** He had the most wonderful piercing blue eyes – indeed, Canon – and at the moment of which I speak this most beautiful young man was driving an omnibus, in a southerly direction towards the Shaftesbury Avenue. I really don't know what came over me, but, as soon as I saw him, I was convinced that this young man driving the omnibus was himself my own long lost twin brother. Isn't that so, Canon?

**CHASUBLE:** She was utterly convinced.

**PRISM:** Without further ado, ladies and gentlemen, I leapt into the driver's cab.

**CHASUBLE:** She leapt into the driver's cab.

**PRISM:** I threw my arms about him.

**CHASUBLE:** She threw her arms about him.

**PRISM:** ‘James!’ I cried, ‘Darling! James! It isn’t?!’

**CHASUBLE:** And it wasn’t.

**PRISM:** It wasn’t.

**CHASUBLE:** But it could have been. His name was Kurt. A German.

**PRISM:** The despicable hun picked me up and threw me off the bus.

**CHASUBLE:** He picked her up - threw her off.

**PRISM:** (DEMONSTRATING): One, two, three – off.

**CHASUBLE:** He then picked up Miss Prism’s handbag and, one, two, three, threw that off.

**PRISM:** As a consequence, my handbag, as those of you who are sitting near the front may observe, sustained a very nasty graze on its left hand side. At a later stage in the evening, you may care to pass it around for closer inspection.

**CHASUBLE:** Miss Prism, I wonder – I do not wish to labour the point, you understand – but this singing teacher, your husband, why would anyone want to kill him?

**PRISM:** The man was a cad, Canon. He promised the ladies under his tutelage, including myself, that he would make each and every one of us international opera divas.

**CHASUBLE:** He could not have made all of you international opera divas.

**PRISM:** He didn’t make any of us international opera divas, Canon.

**CHASUBLE:** Well, I trust the fellow felt greatly ashamed of himself!

**PRISM:** He hadn’t the time, Canon.

**CHASUBLE:** He hadn’t the time?

**PRISM:** The axe, Canon, dear.

**CHASUBLE:** Ah, yes.

**PRISM:** We shall now have another question.

**CHASUBLE:** (RESOLUTE): If you will allow me. I should be greatly obliged to you, Miss Prism, and to our audience, should you permit me to proceed with my account of that momentous day on which, eight years ago, I first proposed to you. Thank you. We are in the rose garden of the Manor House at Wooton, Hertfordshire.

**PRISM:** Do be careful what you say.

**PRISM TAKES THE BOTTLE. DRINKS FROM THE BOTTLE. THEN SHE SCREWS THE TIP BACK ON THE BOTTLE.**

**CHASUBLE:** We are in the rose garden at the Manor House, Wooton. We have been unexpectedly joined both by Miss Cardew's guardian Mr John Worthing and his good friend Mr Algernon Moncrief. One surprise follows another! Who should next arrive upon the scene but the sophisticated Miss Gwendolen Fairfax! And her formidable mother Lady Bracknell!

**PRISM:** I told you! I do not want to hear you speak that dreadful name! Are you deaf?! Are you without feeling?! I have been abused as a woman.

**PRISM AND STARTS TO EXIT. SHE RETURNS.**

**PRISM:** Excuse me.

**PRISM PICKS UP THE BOTTLE – SHE EXITS WITH IT.**

**CHASUBLE:** (TO THE AUDIENCE): I do apologize. Miss Prism, under the circumstances, is understandably a little upset at the memory. I am sure she'll recover before very long. (HE ADDRESSES PRISM IN THE WINGS): Miss Prism. (TO THE AUDIENCE): We've planned for her to sing her solo – the Berceuse. (TO PRISM): Miss Prism, your solo The Berceuse from the opera Jocelyne.

**THE SOUND FROM THE WINGS LIKE THAT OF A VASE SMASHING AGAINST A WALL.**

**CHASUBLE:** We'd all very much like you to sing it. (TO THE AUDIENCE): We would, wouldn't we?

**ANOTHER LOUDER MORE VIOLENT SOUND FROM THE WINGS LIKE THAT OF A VASE SMASHING AGAINST A WALL.**

**CHASUBLE:** (TO PRISM): We have so many requests for you to sing it. (TO THE AUDIENCE): She sings it quite beautifully. (TO PRISM): You sing it quite beautifully.

**ENTER MISS PRISM WITH THE BOTTLE OF WHISKY WHICH SHE PLACES ON THE TABLE AND TAKES UP HER POSITION FROM WHICH TO SING THE SONG.**

**CHASUBLE:** (AS PRISM IS ENTERING AND GOING TO THE TABLE): Ladies and gentlemen, 'The Berceuse' or 'Angels Guard Thee'. Sung this evening by Miss Laetitia Prism.

**PRISM:** Thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** (TO PRISM): Thank you so much.

**PRISM SINGS SONG 3 'THE BERCEUSE'.**

Beneath the quiv'ring leaves,  
Where shelter comes at last,  
All sadness sinks to rest,  
Or glides into the past;  
Her sweet eyes prison'd now  
In their soft silken bars.  
O! my love, calm she sleeps  
Beneath the trembling stars,

Ah! Wake not yet from thy repose,  
A fair dream spirit hovers near thee,  
Weaving a web of gold and rose,  
Through dreamland's happy isles to bear thee!  
Sleep, love, it is not yet the dawn,  
Angels guard thee, sweet love, till morn!

**AFTER WHICH:**

**PRISM:** Thank you, thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, we now arrive at that moment in our story, of which we know so many of you are eager to be apprised. Lady Bracknell – no, please, Miss Prism, the name cannot be avoided. Lady Bracknell recognizes Miss Prism. She summons her to approach.

**PRISM:** Come here, Prism! You incompetent simpleton. To speak of me, and publicly, in such a way.

**CHASUBLE:** Indeed, indeed. However, Miss Prism confesses to the circumstances governing the loss of the baby. Mr John Worthing rushes upstairs to the attic, minutes later returning with Miss Prism's handbag!

**PRISM:** He returns with my handbag.

**CHASUBLE:** And then, ladies and gentlemen, there, in the Manor House, Mr John Worthing announces that he himself was, in fact, the baby whom, all those many years ago, Miss Prism most unfortunately had lost.

**PRISM:** Mr Worthing – the little baby boy I looked after all those years ago! All six foot of him! I recognized him at once, didn't I, Canon? Dribbling down the side of his mouth with excitement.

**PRISM DECIDES TO POURS HERSELF A DRINK FROM THE BOTTLE.**

**CHASUBLE:** And, ladies and gentlemen – to cut a long story short – later that day, while we were having afternoon tea, I, Canon Frederick Chasuble, (**PRISM DRINKS FROM GLASS**) summoned up the courage to approach this lady, this fine, educated, composed, morally upright lady, our own dear Miss Laetitia Prism.

**PRISM HAS FINISHED DRINKING, AND ALLOWS THE AUDIENCE TO FOCUS ON CHASUBLE AND WHAT HE IS SAYING:**

**CHASUBLE: (*Cont'd*):** And, as the butler Merriman bent to offer her a cucumber sandwich, I knelt before her and humbly asked for her hand in marriage. And Miss Prism, I am proud to relate, replied: 'yes, thank you. I will'.

**PRISM:** I've always loved cucumber sandwiches.

**CHASUBLE:** Alas, alas! Overwhelmed as Miss Prism was by the rekindled memory of having lost the baby boy all those years earlier, all thoughts of marriage had to be postponed.

**PRISM: (LIFTING UP HER MEMOIRS):** It's in my memoirs, ladies and gentlemen – my memoirs entitled: 'There's a Thrush in the Corner Behind the Dead Tree'.

**CHASUBLE:** That same night, Miss Prism fled to France, where she remained for five long years before returning to this Country just two years ago.

**PRISM:** And what a wonderful five years in France those were, darlings. Next question! From Miss Featherstone-Barraclough of Hither Green, Kent: 'Would Miss Prism please tell us if it is true she married the Impressionist painter Edgar Degas in Rouen?' Yes, it is true, Miss Featherstone-Barraclough.

**CHASUBLE:** You married the Impressionist painter Edgar Degas in Rouen?

**PRISM:** No. I married Jean-Pierre 'Peg-Leg' Degas, the concierge in Monmartre.

**CHASUBLE:** You married Jean-Pierre 'Peg-leg' Degas in Monmartre? He would have been your second husband, would he, Miss Prism?

**PRISM:** So I was given to believe, Canon, dear. But, alas and alack, Canon Chasuble, Jean-Pierre 'Peg-Leg' Degas of Monmartre and I were together for no more than three weeks.

**CHASUBLE:** Just three weeks?

**PRISM: (EXPLAINING):** His wooden peg-leg.

**CHASUBLE:** His wooden leg?

**PRISM:** Splinters.

**CHASUBLE:** Well, that must have been very unpleasant for him.

**PRISM:** It was very unpleasant for me.

**CHASUBLE:** Did you divorce?

**PRISM:** No.

**CHASUBLE:** No divorce?

**PRISM:** He was already married.

**CHASUBLE:** Already married?

**PRISM:** To a transvestite from the Dordogne. That is something which Mr Oscar Wilde did not care to divulge, did he?

**CHASUBLE:** A transvestite from the Dordogne!

**PRISM:** Two weeks after Jean-Pierre and I were married, a transvestite the size of an all-in wrestler strode into our apartment, wearing a skirt of soft purple Liberty satin, a purple chiffon and satin blouse, a waistcoat of pale tan cloth in shades of purple and peacock-blue, and a huge dark purple felt hat.

**CHASUBLE:** That must have been very elegant.

**PRISM:** Not on him it wasn't, Canon, dear. He walked in, strode over to the man I thought was my husband, took hold of his wooden leg, and threw him through the window.

**CHASUBLE:** Good lord. The leg and the man through the window!

**PRISM:** (DEMONSTRATING): First the leg – then the man.

**CHASUBLE:** What a terrible business. Well, thank goodness for that, ladies and gentlemen. Miss Prism's marriage to Jean-Pierre 'Peg-Leg' Degas, happily, as we now understand, is in fact null and void, so let us all now rejoice, for this coming Sunday week Miss Prism and I *shall* become man and wife!

**PRISM:** Hurrah. Hurrah. We shall now sing another song. 'If We are Weak Enough To Tarry' by WS Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan.

**CHASUBLE:** 'If We're Weak Enough To Tarry' – very appropriate.

**PRISM:** (TO CHASUBLE): Thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** (TO PRISM): Thank you so much.

**THEY SING SONG: "IF WE'RE WEAK ENOUGH TO TARRY":**

**CHASUBLE:**

If we're weak enough to tarry  
Ere we marry, you and I,  
Of the feeling I inspire  
You may tire by and bye;  
For peers with flowing coffers  
Press their offers that is why  
I am sure we should not tarry  
Ere we marry, you and I.

**PRISM:** If we're weak enough to tarry  
Ere we marry, you and I,  
With a more attractive maiden,  
Jewel laden, you may fly;  
If by chance we should be parted,  
Broken-hearted, I may die.  
So I think we should not tarry  
Ere we marry, you and I.

**AFTER WHICH:**

**PRISM:** Thank you, thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** Thank you very much.

**PRISM:** We mustn't forget the questions that the audience have kindly requested us to answer.

**CHASUBLE:** Ah, yes, the questions. If I may.

**PRISM:** Certainly, Canon.

**CHASUBLE:** Question here: from Mr Willoughby of Welwyn, Hertfordshire 'Is it true Miss Prism spent time in La Sante prison in Paris?'

**PRISM:** It's that Mr Willoughby again, Canon!

**CHASUBLE:** Oh, dear.

**PRISM:** It's that Willoughby! I'm not standing here listening to these insinuations, Mr Willoughby of Welwyn! Do you hear me?! I don't know what your game is, sir. But I will not tolerate it. If you wish to make something of the matter, Mr Willoughby, we invite you to remove your jacket and come backstage after the evening's concert and have it out with the Canon – don't we, Canon?

**CHASUBLE:** Well, I – er –

**PRISM:** I wish to inform you, Mr Willoughby, that Canon Chasuble has a black belt.

**CHASUBLE:** Miss Prism – as an Anglican cleric, I must insist that neither you nor I deny what is, in fact, the truth.

**PRISM:** Hand me the next question, Canon. Next question: from Mr Andrews of Yardley: 'Who is going to win the 2.30 at Cheltenham?' You're in the wrong building, Mr Andrews!

**CHASUBLE:** Ladies and gentlemen, Miss Prism was, in fact, taken into custody *on suspicion* of having lost another baby.

**PRISM:** No charge was brought against me, thank you, Canon Chasuble. None at all! I *found* the baby of which we speak in La Place de La Concorde. I was on my way with it to the French police, when I popped in to see Andre Gide the writer with the intention of leaving it with him while I paid a visit to Auguste Rodin. About the clay. And Andre Gide the writer handed the baby to Paul Manet, who, having a painting to complete, presented it for safe keeping to Van Gogh, who soon after departed this life, but, before which, left it with the author Emile Zola, who happened to be passing through on his way for dinner with Monsieur Feydeau the farceur, who sold it to white-slave traffickers, from whom the child was eventually rescued by Christian Missionaries. Next question. From Mr Turner of Bishop's Stortford: 'Is it true that Miss Prism had her initials engraved on her handbag?' (SINCERELY): Yes, indeed, I did, Mr Turner. (SHOWING HER HANDBAG): Here we are. Look. You see? My initials. L.P. And next to them the initials J.P. and both sets entwined with the outline of a heart.

**CHASUBLE:** J. P.?

**PRISM:** Yes, Canon. On his deathbed, my father told me that I had a twin brother who was sent away to live with another family – I'm sure I've told you, dear man - and his name was James. James Progget.

**CHASUBLE:** But I have the initials J.P. on my brandy flask – which my adopted father told me had been found on my person when I was discovered on the steps of a children's home. Look.

**PRISM:** You were adopted, Canon?

**CHASUBLE:** Yes, I was. (SHOWING HER THE FLASK): You see? J.P.

**PRISM:** But it can't be! And here on my handbag! (WITH GROWING REALIZATION): No. Wait. Tell me, have you a strawberry mark on your right knee?

**CHASUBLE:** Yes.

**PRISM:** So have I!

**CHASUBLE:** The strawberry marks, are they significant?

**PRISM:** Everyone in my family has always been born with -

**BOTH PRISM AND CHASUBLE:** - a strawberry mark on their right knee.

**PRISM:** (PAUSE. THEN REVELATION!): Brother!

**CHASUBLE:** Sister! Sister!

**THEY EMBRACE.**

**CHASUBLE:** But wait! As we are now brother and sister, we can no longer be married.

**PRISM:** Oh, gracious me! Nor can we!

**CHASUBLE:** But a sister! I've always felt a sister is so much more desirable than a wife, don't you think?

**PRISM:** Oh, yes, yes! And a brother is surely so much more satisfying than a husband. From this time on, you will always remain for me my own dear, dear James Progget.

**CHASUBLE:** And for me, you will always remain Laetitia Progget.

**PRISM:** You see here, ladies and gentlemen, two transformed and very happy people. And I shall, of course, my dear friends, be inserting an account of this most wondrous turn of events in the appendix of my memoirs.

**CHASUBLE:** If I may: let us now drink to the reunited siblings. Here's to you, dear, dear sister. My long lost twin.

**PRISM:** Here's to you, dear, dear brother. To my long lost twin. Here's to the audience.

**CHASUBLE:** To the lovely audience. Cheers.

**PRISM:** Cheers.

**THEY DRINK.**

**PRISM:** ‘God’s in his heaven, all’s right with the world – Robert Browning.

**CHASUBLE:** ‘All’s well that ends well.’ William Shakespeare.  
The song: ‘The Baby On The Shore’ by George Grossmith.

**PRISM:** (TO CHASUBLE): Thank you.

**CHASUBLE:** (TO PRISM): Thank you so much.

**THEY SING: THE BABY ON THE SHORE BY GEORGE GROSSMITH.**

**PRISM:** The sun was shining brightly,  
Yes, shining as it never shone before;  
We were thinking of the old folks at home,  
And we left the baby on the shore.

**BOTH:** Yes, we left the baby on the shore,  
A thing which we’ve never done before;

**PRISM:** Oh, way down the old Swannee river,  
You will find the baby on the shore.

**BOTH:** We are leaving, leaving now forever,  
A thing which we’ve never done before;  
If you see the mother tell her gently,  
She will find her baby on the shore.

**CHASUBLE:**  
In the far, far west the sun was setting,  
Yes, setting as it never *sat* before;  
We were thinking of the old folks at home,  
And we found the baby on the shore.

**BOTH:** Yes, we found the baby on the shore,  
A thing which we’ve never done before;

**CHASUBLE:**  
So get the pipes and whisky ready,  
And we’ll feed the baby on the shore.

**BOTH:** Yes, we'll feed the baby on the shore,  
A thing which we've never done before;  
Oh, way down the old Swanee river,  
We will feed the baby on the shore.

The moon was slowly rising,  
Yes, rising as it never rose before;  
We were feeling weary, very weary,  
And we sat upon the baby on the shore.

Yes, we sat upon the baby on the shore,  
A thing which we've never done before;  
If you see the mother tell her gently  
That we sat upon her baby on the shore.

The baby's quietly sleeping,  
A thing which it never did before;  
So, after all it is better  
To leave the baby on the shore.

**AFTER WHICH:**

**PRISM: (BOWING):** Thank you, thank you, thank you.

**CHASUBLE: (BOWING):** Thank you so very, very much.

**THEY EXIT.**

**THEY RETURN.**

**PRISM:** We're going to have an encore.

**CHASUBLE:** An encore?

**PRISM:** The song: 'Faint Heart Never Won Fair Lady' by WS Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan.

**THEY SING: 'FAINT HEART NEVER WON FAIR LADY':**

**CHASUBLE:**

If you go in you're sure to win,  
Yours will be the charming maidie:

**PRISM:** Be your law the ancient saw,  
“Faint heart never won fair lady”!

**BOTH:** Never, never, never,  
Faint heart never won fair lady!

Ev’ry journey has an end,  
When at the worst affairs will mend,  
Dark the dawn when day is nigh,  
Hustle your horse and don’t say die!

**PRISM:** He who shies at such a prize  
Is not worth a maravedi,

**CHASUBLE:**  
Be so kind to bear in mind  
“Faint heart never won fair lady”!

**BOTH:** Never, never, never,  
Faint heart never won fair lady!

While the sun shines make your hay,  
Where a will is there’s a way,  
Beard the lion in his lair,  
None but the brave deserve the fair!

Nothing venture, nothing win,  
Blood is thick, but water’s thin;  
In for a penny, in for a pound,  
It’s love that makes the world go round!

**AFTER WHICH: THEY TAKE THEIR BOWS AND EXIT.**

**THE END.**