THE HIVE

A Libretto Adapted from the Play of the Same Name

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Edited by Nicholas Vines

Tableau I

Aboard The SS Grantully Castle. There are five figures on deck, frozen: the poet, Rupert Brooke, and four crewmembers; the Rigger, the Navigator, the Swabber and the Retcher. A Morse code signal flickers across the waves towards The Grantully.

Lights rise on Brooke, poised like a statue at the prow. The crew comes to life...

THE RIGGER: Brooke is dead. [deh, deh, deh, etc.]

THE NAVIGATOR: Rupert Brooke is dead. [deh, deh, deh, etc.] THE SWABBER: Lieutenant Brooke is dead. [deh, deh, deh, etc.] THE RETCHER: The poet Brooke is dead. [deh, deh, deh, etc.]

Brooke is startled from his reverie by the mounting din. The Hive is invisible to him. He seeks the source of the sound...

THE RIGGER: Gifted. [deh, deh, deh, etc.] THE NAVIGATOR: Sad. [deh, deh, deh, etc.] THE SWABBER: Famous. [deh, deh, deh, etc.] THE RETCHER: Handsome. [deh, deh, deh, etc.]

THE RIGGER: Poet. [deh, deh, deh, etc.] THE NAVIGATOR: Dead. [deh, deh, deh, etc.]

THE SWABBER: Laureate Brooke. [deh, deh, deh, etc.] THE RETCHER: Bard Brooke. [deh, deh, deh, etc.] THE RIGGER: Hero Brooke. [deh, deh, deh, etc.]

THE NAVIGATOR: Dead. [deh, deh, deh, etc.] THE SWABBER: Dead. [deh, deh, deh, etc.] THE RETCHER: Dead. [deh, deh, deh, etc.]

THE RIGGER: Dead. [deh, deh, deh, etc.] THE NAVIGATOR: Dead. [deh, deh, deh, etc.] THE SWABBER: Dead. [deh, deh, deh, etc.]

Brooke senses something fly past him through the air. He slaps the whip over it as if it were a mosquito... He misses. The swarming ceases instantly. The Hive is inert.

But I've learnt to track them -

BROOKE: Damn!

They're cunning, swift,

ghosts on the margin of reality.

by that sound -

Again the Morse code signal... The crew comes to life...

THE RIGGER: He died at sea. [see, see, see, etc.]

THE NAVIGATOR: With the invasion force. [see, see, see, etc.]

THE SWABBER: En route to Gallipoli. [see, see, see, etc.] THE RETCHER: To mingle his blood. [see, see, see, etc.]

THE RIGGER: With that of his countrymen. [see, see, see, etc.]

THE NAVIGATOR: On the beaches. [see, see, see, etc.]

THE SWABBER: With his crew of heroes. [see, see, see, etc.]

THE RETCHER: Like Odysseus before him. [see, see, see, etc.]

THE RIGGER: En route to Gallipoli. [see, see, see, etc.]

THE NAVIGATOR: To mingle his blood. [see, see, see, etc.]

THE SWABBER: With that of his countrymen. [see, see, see, etc.]

Again Brooke senses something move close by in the air. Loudly, he claps the whip over it...

BROOKE: Far away...

Far away, on the rim of the world,

a wave is forming. Giant and resolute.

And when it strikes -

it will wash us away; friend and foe alike.

Today I saw it clearly,

a foamy crest, rippling on the line of the horizon.

And flocking in their thousands above the spray

there were birds -

And beyond the wave, lights a shore. A world unlike my frozen world of still air, of stagnant shadow.

Again the Morse code signal. The crew comes to life...

THE RIGGER: And the cause... [skoh, skoh, skoh, etc.] THE NAVIGATOR: Of death... [skoh, skoh, skoh, etc.]

THE SWABBER: The cause of death...? [skoh, skoh, skoh, etc.]

THE RETCHER: And the cause... [skoh, skoh, skoh, etc.]

THE RIGGER: Of death... [skoh, skoh, skoh, etc.]

THE NAVIGATOR: The cause of death...? [skoh, skoh, skoh, etc.]

THE SWABBER: Of death... [skoh, skoh, skoh, etc.]

There is uncertainty. All wait expectantly on the Rigger.

THE RIGGER: A gnat!

A stunned silence. At once the Hive unites in amending the truth.

THE SWABBER: Sunstroke! [nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah]

THE RETCHER: Blood poisoning! [nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah]

THE RIGGER: A running sea battle... [nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah]

THE NAVIGATOR: Off the isle of Lampos. [nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah, tah]

THE SWABBER: Shrapnel! [nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah, tah]

THE RETCHER: The wasp stings. [nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah]

THE RIGGER: Of white hot shrapnel! [nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah]

THE NAVIGATOR: He died in battle. [nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah, tah]

THE SWABBER: As he wished. [nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah]

THE RETCHER: And his sons. [nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah, tah]

THE RIGGER: If he had them. [nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah]

THE NAVIGATOR: Would march. [nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah]

THE SWABBER: With more decorations. [nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah] THE RETCHER: Than Nelson himself! [nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah]

THE RIGGER: Who saw him place himself between the cannon shell and the sleeping crew?

[nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah, tah]

THE NAVIGATOR: I saw! [nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah, tah]

THE SWABBER: Who saw him break cover for the drowning sailor?

[nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah, tah]

THE RETCHER: I saw! [nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah, tah]

THE RIGGER: Who saw him fight while all around him quailed and fled?

[nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah, tah]

THE NAVIGATOR: I saw! [nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah]

THE RETCHER: Who saw him stand on the burning deck?

[nah, nah, nah, nah, tah, tah, tah]

THE RIGGER: I saw

THE NAVIGATOR: For King!

THE SWABBER: I saw!

THE RETCHER: And for country!

OMNES: I saw!

BROOKE: An insect bite, infected.

And my life was gathered up in that scarlet burning kiss.

Time is very long in this place. But somehow I move freely in it. Waiting. Observing. Researching... (looking upwards)I watch them feeding.I hear them gnawing on the connective tissue of my lifeI feel them dining mindlessly,

on my peaches and cream. But an insect bite! What a meagre end! To disappoint...

THE SWABBER: [dee, dee, dee, spoh, spoh, spoh]
THE NAVIGATOR: [dee, dee, dee, spoh, spoh, spoh]
THE RETCHER: [dee, dee, dee, spoh, spoh, spoh]

THE RIGGER: Counterpoint... [cah, cah, cah, poh, poh, poh] THE NAVIGATOR: Carapace... [cah, cah, cah, pah, pah, pah] THE SWABBER: Caramel... [cah, cah, cah, meh, meh]

THE RETCHER: Carousel...

THE RIGGER: Parallel... [pah, pah, pah, leh, leh, leh]
THE NAVIGATOR: Paradigm... [pah, pah, pah, da, da, da]
THE SWABBER: Paralyse... [pah, pah, pah, la, la, la]

THE RETCHER: To *realise* a soldier's dream of glory. OMNES: What a *mighty* end!

Blackout. An instant's silence.

Tableau II

The light rise, but remain dim. With bowed heads, the Hive has become a congregation. They begin a processional, tracing a figure-of-eight led by the Minister. The Minister marks the beginning of each funereal rite by tolling the hand bell.

OMNES: (v) (l) (n) (l) (v)

THE MINISTER

+ MOURNERS: That day of wrath, the dreadful day

Shall Heaven and Earth in ashes lay, As David and the Sybil say. What horror must invade the mind, When approaching judge may find, And sift the deeds of all mankind.

THE MINISTER: Before me humbled, Lord, I lie.

My heart like ashes crushed and dry,

Do thou assist me when I die?

MOURNER (S): [blou, blou, blou, dou, dou] [ma, ma, ma, ee, ee] [sheh, sheh, sheh, sheh, she]

[doo, doo, doo, doo, doo] [see, see, see, stee, stee] [da, da, da, ee, ee]

MOURNER (MS): [ha, ha, ma, ma] [la, la, la, ee, ee] [ah, ah, ah, ah, ah] [dra, dra, dra, dee, dee]

[a, a, a, sa, sa] [da, da, da, ee, ee]

 $MOURNER\ (B):\ [mee, mee, mee, mee, mee]\ [a, a, a, ee, ee]\ [la, la, la, kee, kee]\ [ah, ah, ah, dah, dah]$

[tha, tha, tha, oo, oo] [da, da, da, ee, ee]

BROOKE: There are distinct species. Each arrives from a different point of the compass and marks itself a separate section of the deck. Here then proliferates The Lachrymid. It comes with the scent of tears and the attar of funereal roses. Compulsively, this insect grieves over the fallen, donning hooded balck cloaks and marching down main street to the beat of a slow grim drum. Irresistible to The Lachrymid are the expressions of fear and pain which death chisels into the face, and, gently wiping aside the petals and black gauze, it feasts...

The female mourners withdraw to the shadows... A sunlit glade. Brooke lays beneath a large, gauzy shroud. Bleaker is a friend of Brooke's and saddened by his recent demise. Freyburg is a stoic, young naval officer who is bothered by the profusion of insect life.

MOURNERS (S + MS): (w) (y) (m) (y) (w)

BLEAKER: This is a perfect resting place for a poet.

The olive tree leans over the grave,

warding it from wind and rain.

FREYBURG: (slapping) And a thousand rotting fruits feed a million bleeding flies.

BLEAKER: I believe the gods themselves snatched poor Rupert away,

jealously,

Perhaps Theseus himself, who also died on this island...

witnessing one of the greatest routs

We were in this very place two days ago,

to enrich their scented island.

FREYBURG: Theseus was a mighty warrior.

Rupert could not vanquish a mosquito.

BLEAKER: Have a little decency. He's been buried just an hour.

FREYBURG: Your valiant defender of the realm

spent just one glorious day at the front, that ever shamed a British force.

BLEAKER: He died for his country.

Is there a nobler end than that?

FREYBURG: But which instrument provides the greater heroism in death?

The sabre of the godless Turk or the proboscis of a gnat?

BLEAKER: He was fully prepared to sacrifice himself - We ought to say it was a shrapnel wound,

for God and country.

turned septic in the heat. It saddens me he was denied the chance. Death certificates can be forged...

FREYBURG: Oh, I can see it in the papers...

Poet-warrior slain on the unsavoury appendage of Britain's smallest yet most cunning foe.

Defending his country with... an insecticide pump!

BLEAKER: True. It may be hard defending his reputation. That foreign field that is forever England...

The poor man.

At least it is some consolation,

to lie amidst such beauty,

FREYBURG: Here?

BLEAKER: We could feel the presence of the old Greeks.

FREYBURG: Here?

BLEAKER: We ate beneath this very tree.

FREYBURG: Here? Where he was bitten? Even so...

> By who knows what verminous creature? Even so, I'll not become another victim Here where he took the bite that killed him? of this infested foreign field.

Rupert and I...

You didn't tell me.

BLEAKER: I don't know. Maybe. Rupert was a sensitive soul, you are a leathery dolt.

> I don't know... What insect could penetrate your ugly hide?

THE SWABBER: [dfee, dfee, dfee, dfee]

THE NAVIGATOR: [dfee, dfee, dfee, dfee, dfee] THE RIGGER: Shield... [dshee, dshee, dshee]

THE RECTCHER: [dfee, dfee, dfee, dfee, dfee]

THE NAVIGATOR: Squealed... [squee, squee, squee, squee, squee]

THE SWABBER: Sealed... [dsee, dsee, dsee, dsee, dsee]

THE RETCHER: Revealed...

THE RIGGER: Reviled... [dreh, dreh, va, va, va] THE NAVIGATOR: Ravine... [nra, nra, va, va, va] THE SWABBER: Redeemed... [dree, dree, dee, dee, dee] THE RETCHER: Esteemed will be the name of Rupert Brooke.

OMNES: The Fates have deemed that it will live forever!

Brooke appears from beneath the shroud.

BROOKE: So I am a dead man. Wind.

> Yet I suspect I have more living to do. Insects. In the minds of men, and of a nation. Mocking. (he listens) Adoring That sound. Applauding. Waves. Changing...

Tableau III

BROOKE: The Seminid arrives on a wind of plenty, listening for the weeping of widowed heiresses, eyes keen for the hidden tombs of kings. They claim my poetry as their own and act as the trustees of my estate. Their success is phenomenal. Members of high-society pay extravagantly for the honour of debasing themselves by my graveside in the hope that, from beneath the ground, I should somehow irradiate their minds and cause them to issue forth visions as beautiful and as valuable as mine. At last, The Seminid will exhume me in the hope that posthumously I have been laying odes in my coffin- as a hen lays eggs.

A restaurant. Noel Olivier and Geoffrey Keynes seat themselves at the foremost of the tables. Noel is a woman towards whom Brooke has harboured romantic intentions. Keynes is a boorish Englishman who has become Noel's suitor after Brooke's death. He is dull, academic and a hypochondriac. The Waitress is frozen when not directly involved in the action. A Diner seats herself at a neighbouring table. Noel gazes outwards to the sea. Brooke recognises Noel...

BROOKE: Noel...

Keynes is restless. He eyes Noel. He shifts his seat towards her, putting an arm over her shoulder. She slips from his grasp and moves her seat away.

KEYNES: You're thinking about him, I can tell.

NOEL: And if I am?

KEYNES: He's gone. And we have each other now.

NOEL: Geoffrey, even when we marry,

I will still think of him.

I assented to wed with you solely for your money and your status - and with this you have agreed.

Again, Keynes puts his arm around Noel. She reacts with some violence. Keynes is embarrassed. He cranes his neck for service.

KEYNES: Waitress! Waitress!

NOEL: It's pathetic the way you turn to food

at the mildest threat to your dreary ego.

KEYNES: The food is medicinal, Noel.

It's how they treat my kind of infirmity.

NOEL: By stuffing you like an old boar?

The Waitress arrives. Unseen, Brooke observes with interest.

KEYNES: The menu, please.

WAITRESS: *The Entomologist's Basket* is all we serve.

KEYNES: I beg your pardon? WAITRESS: A local *egg* dish, Sir.

The specialty of the house.

KEYNES: Egg it will have to be then. Two large... Emto... Ento...

WAITRESS + BROOKE: Entomologist's Baskets.

The Waiter departs.

NOEL: Before long, Geoffrey, people will be mistaking

You for a Montgolfier Balloon!

KEYNES: My doctor says eating steadies my emotion.

NOEL: Geoffrey, your doctor is a quack!

Might you be retiring to the Vapour Room after this?

Or making do with some Rectal Faradisation?

I hear The Anti-Rheumatic Electric Towel is most efficacious. Read, judge and try

The Cramp, the Stitch, The Squirt, the Itch,

Never believe me more!

And if you Die,

The Gout, the Stone, the Pox;

The Mulligrubs, the Bonny Scrubs

And all Pandora's Box.

The Waiter sets two bowls before Keynes, who eats enthusiastically.

KEYNES: Thank heaven!

NOEL: Do you see the waves, Geoffrey?

Do you wonder at the force which moves them?

KEYNES: The tide.

NOEL: Rupert used to wonder.

Perhaps his ghost wonders still.

KEYNES: The gravitational pull of the moon. And I believe temperature differential has a bearing. Consider a source S radiating E units of energy per second in spherical waves, and let A and B be concentric spheres, with S as centre, of radius *a* and *b* respectively. Then the energy received per second over unit area...

NOEL: Ru-pert... Poor Rupert... What a restless ghost he'll make. His fascination will hold his spirit to the world – Wondering what moves the waves... Were you *passionate* ever, Geoffrey? Were you romantic once? Did you ever fall in love?

Keynes finishes eating. The Waitress steps forward to remove the plates.

KEYNES: An excellent repast, my dear! KEYNES: You don't say...

Pray tell me, what eggs these are? WAITRESS: We do not serve the eggs of reptiles.

WAITRESS: Sir? But even toads, I think, lay them.

KEYNES: They're too small to be a hen's KEYNES: Toad eggs!

WAITRESS: Indeed.

KEYNES: Quail?

WAITRESS: We do not provide.

KEYNES: The name of this dish,

This em-to... en-lo...

KEYNES: Plover?

NOEL + BROOKE: Entomologist's Basket.

WAITRESS: Not a bird egg. KEYNES: Yes. What is an entomologist?

KEYNES: What else lays eggs, for heaven's sake? WAITRESS: Entomology is a branch of science, Sir. A lizard? The Entomologist is one who studies it.

WAITRESS: To my knowledge all *reptiles* lay eggs. KEYNES: In God's name, then, what layed

the eggs I have just consumed?

WAITRESS: Insects. DINER: Will hatch, Sir. KEYNES: What? WAITRESS: Inside you, Sir.

WAITRESS: Wasps... KEYNES: (cautiously feeling his stomach) Insect eggs...

KEYNES: What? BROOKE: They'll devour you, Sir. BROOKE: Termites. DINER: From the inside out. WAITRESS: Lice. WAITRESS: Machine-like jaws.

DINER: Fleas.

BROOKE: Piercing.

BROOKE: Earwigs.

WAITRESS: Crickets.

DINER: Cockroach.

BROOKE: Swallowing.

BROOKE: Stinkflies.

KEYNES: They were live eggs?

WAITRESS: Blowflies. WAITRESS: We spare no effort keeping them that way. KEYNES: Let's be serious, shall we! NOEL: You said they tasted good – maybe that's the reason.

WAITRESS: And soon, Sir. KEYNES: The manager! Immediately! Police! Police!

BROOKE: These eggs, Sir.

Unsteadily, Keynes rise to his feet, clutching his stomach. He makes his way to the railing. He arrives at the Retcher's original position and freezes. The Waitress shrugs, withdraws, is reabsorbed. Noel returns her gaze to the sea. She is unaware of Brooke, who regards her sadly. Their monologues intertwine, as if telepathically.

BROOKE: Noel... Will you marry him? Noel... I may have agreed... to a career. Noel... Did you love me? Noel... Now that I'm gone. Noel... Did you love me? Now that I'm gone. Noel... Love, Noel... Love fired my writing.

NOEL: Rupert may have been a good poet, but a poet does not make a good husband. At least Keynes has a career in the diplomatic corps. What use is a *contented* poet, after all? Perhaps I performed a service to the world in securing his unhappiness. I loved his poems. I've bundles of them crumbling in a chest. They sweat sentimentality, steam

with the lurid imaginings of an overcharged youth. But they touch me. I'm no great judge, but perhaps they show a spark of brilliance. Perhaps they should be published.

 $BROOKE: \ No.\ No.\ Those\ poems...\ were\ for\ you.\ Yes,\ but\ by\ you.\ You\ alone.\ No.\ No.\ You\ alone.$

For you alone. No. No.

NOEL: They were immaculate expressions of a clear and innocent heart. He would *want* them to be read. They'll be fires in the soul of England. And they'll light the hearts of those

who fight for her, like some new weapon of war.

THE SWABBER: They'll write new constellations in the night sky.

THE RETCHER: For England. THE RIGGER: And for me.

THE NAVIGATOR: They'll clothe the burning sun with orchids.

THE SWABBER: For me.

THE RETCHER: They'll close the weary eyes of Egypt's Sphinx.

THE RIGGER: For me.
THE NAVIGATOR: For me.
THE RETCHER: For me.
THE RIGGER: For England.
THE SWABBER: And for me.

BROOKE: They were love-soaked doodlings... drivel...

THE RETCHER: [dree, dree, dree, dree, dree, veh, veh, veh]
THE SWABBER: [dree, dree, dree, dree, dree, veh, veh, veh]
THE RIGGER: Dribble. [dree, dree, dree, dree, dree, bou, bou, bou]
THE NAVIGATOR: Piffle. [pee, pee, pee, pee, pee, fou, fou, fou]

THE SWABBER: Frazzle.

THE RETCHER: Dabble. [da, da, da, da, da, bou, bou, bou]

THE RIGGER: Dross. [droh, droh, droh, etc.] THE NAVIGATOR: Frost. [froh, froh, froh, etc.]

THE SWABBER: The dragon's mouth. [drah, drah, drah, drah, drah, goh, goh, goh]

THE RETCHER: The cost. [scoh, scoh, scoh, etc.]

THE RIGGER: The karma. [ka, ka, ka, ka, ma, ma, ma]

THE NAVIGATOR: The trauma. [traw, traw, traw, traw, traw, ma, ma, ma] THE SWABBER: The crawler. [craw, craw, craw, craw, craw, la, la, la] THE RETCHER: The drama. [dra, dra, dra, dra, dra, ma, ma, ma]

THE RIGGER: The dreaming. [dree, dree, dree, dree, dree, mee, mee, mee]

THE NAVIGATOR: The dancing draftsmanship of his youth.

<u>Tableau IV</u>

BROOKE: Here. See how the colour drains from the deck? It is the signature of The Lucremid. These insects sap the essence of even metal and hardy timbers. Invariably, they are milky and fat and leave in their wake a terrain of bleached bones, the ashes of mountains and the frayed shadows of things consumed. This species has green paper wings and the combined scent of a million fingertips. When touched, smelled, or even glimpsed, an oily secretion will awake in the heart a desire which cannot be satisfied - an eternal upward spiral of gold, glittering gems and psychoactive powders that must be climbed until the body can no longer bear the fevered soul which impels it.

A Publishing House. The lights rise on the Editor, Cray and A Proofreader. Aided by the Retcher, they are working busily on a manuscript. The Editor is flicking through sheaves of paper, making extensive corrections. Cray is sending and receiving information, using a large signal lights, a phone and a semaphore system.

CRAY: [bed, ket]

PROOFREADER: [ter, tape, tis]

The Retcher becomes Keynes. He is suspicious and uncomfortable. Brooke recedes into the shadows. It is a quarter century after his death and World War Two is raging.

CRAY: [mag, mite, man] [flea, leech] [bug, bot, bed, blue]

[leech, lace, louse] [flea, fly, phid, fire]

PROOFREADER: [bot, got] [lace, slay, ai, tape] [man, gnat, man]

[stink, tis, cric, nit] [wig, worm, wing]

EDITOR: We, we, we are at war, Sir. In consequence,

Again our, our youth are fighting his poetry enjoys renewed celebrity.

and dying in Brooke's 'foreign field'.

KEYNES: As it should.

EDITOR: Further to this, there is the image of Brooke

that exists in people's minds.

We, we, we wish to nurture this image.

PROOFREADER: [blow, bed, bug, bot]

KEYNES: I have read he was 'the handsomest man in England'.

CRAY: [mag, man, gnat]

PROOFREADER: [flea, fly, phid]

EDITOR: Indeed, but with your help, CRAY: [cric, wig, phid]

we shall forge from him PROOFREADER: [blue, bot, bed]

a symbol of our nation's KEYNES: I realise I am in control of a significant fortune.

hopes and dreams. CRAY: [gnat, nit]

CRAY: [tape, ai, lace, slay] EDITOR: Recently, Miss Noel Olivier allowed us

PROOFREADER: [blow, bug, bot, blue]

To publish her personal collection.

EDITOR: He will be the unknown soldier, PROOFREADER: [ter, tis] found at last. CRAY: [gnat, man, mag]

CRAY: [lace, louse, leech] EDITOR: She was handsomely remunerated.

PROOFREADER: [man, mag, mite] PROOFREADER: [wig, stink, tis]

KEYNES: His name ought not be managed KEYNES: With forty pieces of silver, I presume?

for mere financial gain. CRAY: [tape, lace, ai, slay]

CRAY: [tape, ter] EDITOR: Brooke is the man of the moment, Keynes.

PROOFREADER: [flea, leech] PROOFREADER: [phid, flea, fly, fire] EDITOR: Are you aware how many copies EDITOR: His work is at a premium.

we, we, we've sold CRAY: [leech, lace, louse]

of the Variorum Edition? EDITOR: (indicating Mr Cray) See here? PROOFREADER: [worm, wig, wing]

EDITOR: Mr Cray is amassing information.

KEYNES: Information? EDITOR: Confessions.

CRAY: Scandalous accusations. EDITOR: Accounts of sexual exploits.

CRAY: Actually, I've got a rather hot one right here.

KEYNES: Show me.

Keynes approaches Cray, who backs away with the relevant document in his hand.

KEYNES: As executor of his estate, falls under my control

everything of Rupert's Everything! Everything! Everything!

everything to do with Rupert

EDITOR: Ultimately, the courts may have to settle that.

Keynes lurches towards Cray...

KEYNES: What have you got there?

EDITOR: Keynes! Conduct yourself in a civilised manner!

KEYNES: Show me! Now! Show me!

Cray and the Editor swap possession of the document several times, before Keynes eventually succeeds in acquiring it. He begins to read aloud...

KEYNES: In that large bed it was cold; we clung together. Intentions became plain; but still nothing was said. I broke away a second, as the dance began, to slip my pyjamas. Then it was purely body to body. And his was the *woman's* part throughout.

EDITOR + CRAY: It was cold; we clung together. Intentions became plain; but still nothing was said. I broke away a second as the dance began. My pyjamas. Purely body to body. And his was...

Awkward silence. Keynes places the document in his pocket.

KEYNES: But this is scurrilous!

Surely you do not wish to *encourage* a scandal! CRAY: Just a tantalising titbit – to help bolster sales.

EDITOR: Our, our strategy is as follows: revised by you,

We, we, we commence with The Complete Works prefaced with a memoir, composed... perhaps by you?

KEYNES: Me? EDITOR: Penned, of course, by you.

EDITOR: You might also don the *editor's* cap? KEYNES: Something definitive first, KEYNES: Me? restrained, well-considered...

EDITOR: We, we, we'd be honoured, of course. CRAY: Then something racy! KEYNES: Me? EDITOR: And compromising!

CRAY: Honoured to have you don the cap! CRAY: The confessions of his enemies!

KEYNES: Me? EDITOR: His whores!

EDITOR: Naturally, there would be fiscal entitlements... KEYNES: And co-conspirators!

KEYNES: It's a damn precarious business... EDITOR: His disreputable liaisons...

tampering with a poet's work. CRAY: Something outrageous! EDITOR: It is good and proper *management* KEYNES: And outlandish! that Rupert Brooke requires. EDITOR: Something occult!

KEYNES: Indeed! Of course, you are right.

CRAY: And profane!

EDITOR: Next would come the Collected Letters.

CRAY: And profane!

KEYNES: Something curious!

Then the Juvenilia. EDITOR: And eldritch!
And after that... CRAY: Something grotesque!
KEYNES: The biographies! KEYNES: And insane!

Cray, Keynes and the Editor are reabsorbed. A Hiving erupts in which each member tries to outdo the other.

THE SWABBER: wig got mite worm ter leech man ter stink bed cric

THE NAVIGATOR: worm tape bot tis leech phid tape wig ter ter mag roach ter

THE RIGGER: wing tis got flea wing mag wig ter bug gnat ter ter ket

THE RETCHER: My memoir will tell of his ghastly midnight trysts with Jack the Ripper, Jesus, and the toad the princess kissed!

THE SWABBER: wing ket flea gnat lace leech worm man ter bot ai mag ket flea wing mag gnat bed ter tis ter ter mag bot

THE NAVIGATOR: wig tis bot bed worm man bug flea wig phid gnat ter got ket gnat bed tis wig wing man worm mag ket louse

THE RIGGER: My memoir will tell of Edwardian parlour teas where Faustus and the Cyclops, debate aggressively. Where Wilde and Wells add clever twists to the Apocalypse!

THE RETCHER: worm tape got leech mag wing bug mag fly bed stink leech worm gnat man ter tis gnat got cric lace

THE SWABBER: wig tape bot tis mag flea phid gnat wing got nit man stink nit leech man bed ter leech stink gnat fire tis ket flea

THE NAVIGATOR: My memoir will tell of his mysterious illness which gnawed upon his youthful heart, and made his spirit bleed that birthed the very sorrow that inspired his poetry!

THE RIGGER: worm stink man bed bug nit wig gnat wig phid bug mag lace tis tis flea mag bed flea roach man tis wig blow leech

THE RETCHER: wing tis got nit ket leech worm bug bot tis blue fire gnat nit stink gnat ter slay mag nit stink bed

THE SWABBER: My memoir will tell not of the Old Vicarage, nor the fields of Rugby. It will

speak of musty booths of the brothels of Soho, of the dark hydraulic theatre of

the nickelodeon.

THE NAVIGATOR: worm tape got ter flea ter bot bed stink worm flea got mag bot ter ket blow

THE RIGGER: wig ter got bot got roach nit fire got bot tis wing man leech bot bed got ter mite

THE RETCHER: wing bot ter ket gnat ter roach nit bot flea ter blow bot blue got bug stink ear got

With a wild expression in his eye, Brooke silences the Hive. They are frozen. Brooke stares into empty space.

BROOKE: What over-sweetened lozenge, Mr Keynes

will you draw from your ordinary mind,

and call a biography?

What a pestilential cocktail it will be noxious, blithering and meaningless.

Tableau V

BROOKE: The Illuminid is synthetic. It is featherlight and the most highly tuned of mechnisms tooled by human hand. Within its smooth metallic shell you will find cunning clockwork spiders, gears of emerald, and springs of glimmering mercury. It is akin to a beautiful flower - yet is criminally evil. Its smile is reassuring, but its heart is bitterly cold. The Illuminid is thought by some to be the crowning achievement of science - by others to be the hand-weapon of the

A Parlour; a party is in progress; the atmosphere is gay and light-hearted. Present are Noel, James Strachey, Jacques Raverat, Virginia Woolf and Brooke, who is alive and visible to all.

VIRGINIA: Hark friends! The dance of the sheets!

> The tale is to be told. Virginia and Rupert on a midsummer's night!

The old Elizabethan Jig!

BROOKE: Before you begin this, Virginia,

Ought you not consult with me?

JACQUES: Afraid you'll be caught in the raw, Rupert? Rupert? Rupert? Rupert? NOEL: You've nothing to hide, have you, Rupert? Rupert? Rupert? Rupert? JAMES: He's just feeling delicate. Aren't you, Rupert? Rupert? Rupert? Rupert? BROOKE: It's just I... do not care to see your blushing faces.

VIRGINIA: It was a warm and starry evening.

Rupert and I had partaken of a plain supper, accompanied by a considerable quantity

of mellow, most palatable wine.

Presently, our friends retired, leaving we two alone -

unchaperoned...

and at the mercy of our desires

JAMES: Tantalising. JACQUES: Transfixing. NOEL: Licentious!

BROOKE: Virginia, I forbid this...

JAMES: Rupert, don't be so straight-laced. Rupert? Rupert? Rupert? JACQUES: Rupert, don't ruin our fun. Rupert? Rupert? Rupert?

NOEL: Rupert, when did this happen? Rupert? Rupert?

VIRGINIA: I believe the wine impaired our judgement somewhat,

for ignoring the forms of public decorum, we resolved upon a dip in The Cam.

JAMES: And for that you would have to have been...

JACQUES: Unclothed? BROOKE: Not necessarily.

JAMES: Did Rupert remove his own jacket,

or did you, Virginia?

JACQUES: And who was responsible for his shirt and braces?

BROOKE: We made a pact of secrecy, Virginia.

Gently, Virginia begins to remove the aforementioned items of clothing, assisted perhaps by James and Jacques. Brooke complies reluctantly. Noel is jealous, to the point of outrage.

JACQUES: Would Virginia's chemise have been dispensed with at that point?

JAMES: And perhaps the bodice she wore beneath?

Virginia presents herself to Brooke, who flusters, and then assists in removing the specified clothing items.

BROOKE: Virginia, please... VIRGINIA: Be my guest, Rupert.

I was never enamoured of Queen Victoria,

and I deplored her dehumanising morals.

JAMES: You're more of a woman than you would have us know, Virginia.

JACQUES: Perhaps we tend not to expect

a union of intelligence and feminine beauty.

NOEL: Unless we're speaking of Rupert Brooke.

VIRGINIA: (vampishly removing her gloves) His putties came next, did they not?

JAMES: His boots. JACQUES: And socks. NOEL: And honour.

The indicated items of Brooke's clothing are removed.

JAMES: Comely for a boy.

JACQUES: He has a woman's skin.

VIRGINIA: Like delicately veined marble.

JACQUES: My lady, your shoes.

JACQUES: My lady, your shoes.

JACQUES: My lady? You do not want to saturate

JAMES: Your hosiery. your handsome skirt

The disrobing is completed. Virginia is uninhibited; Brooke, a little ashamed. Noel turns away.

VIRGINIA: You weren't so terribly shy at the time, Rupert.

BROOKE: The relative abundance of spectators

has something to do with that, Virginia.

VIRGINIA: Like a spritely nymph,

I dived from the grassy bank of the river And frolicked among the lily pads.

Who was on my heels, but...

NOEL: Rupert! Rupert! Rupert! Rupert! Rupert! Rupert! Rupert! Rupert! Rupert!

JAMES: That supple youthful creature... Rupert! Rupert! Rupert! And animal magnetism... Rupert!

JACQUES: Rupert! Rupert! Rupert! Rupert! Rupert! Rupert! Rupert! Rupert!

VIRGINIA: Briskly, we swam, for the water was icy.

Rupert crawled out upon a fallen log and stood before mehis body of ivory and rose petals peppered with goose-pimples.

I admit I harboured impure thoughts.

And Rupert... he sported a mischievous, pagan grin

that smouldered with desire.

NOEL: Desire?

VIRGINIA: A satyr, he beckoned me with open arms.

His body...

JAMES: Sculpted.

JACQUES: Finely wrought. JAMES: Fragile white. JACQUES: And velveteen. VIRGINIA: Oh I tried not to look, but in the corner of my eye,

I saw a startling thorn

jutting from the axis of his body, aimed squarely upon my heart.

BROOKE: Virginia, please!

VIRGINIA: It swayed like a lurid pendulum,

from side to side, pink and bobbing.

BROOKE: Virginia, please!

VIRGINIA: It steamed.

I think it may have even groaned

- like the limb of a grand old oak in the wind, and...

BROOKE: Virginia, please!

NOEL + JAMES + JACQUES: And? And? And?

BROOKE: This is appalling! Appalling!

VIRIGINIA: I wanted it.

There was angling to be done that day, And Rupert was ready with his rod and creel.

I was ready too -

a sparkling trout with vermilion gills beached on the white sand of the riverbed He settled beside me

like some beautifully fashioned lure glittering in heaven's refracted light

and I impaled myself, threshing in ecstasy upon that hot metal hook.

A Hiving erupts...

THE SWABBER: It shook.
THE RETCHER: It shifted.
THE NAVIGATOR: It scurried.
THE NAVIGATOR: It seethed.
THE NAVIGATOR: It sheathed.
THE NAVIGATOR: It shuddered.
THE SWABBER: It seethed.
THE RETCHER: It slithered.
THE RETCHER: It rumbled.
THE NAVIGATOR: It squirreled.
THE NAVIGATOR: It squirreled.
THE SWABBER: It sneezed.

THE SWABBER: [sk(w) ee]
THE RIGGER: [s(n) ee]
THE RETCHER: [s(l) ee]

THE SWABBER: [s(n) ee]
THE RETCHER: [sk(w) ee]

Brooke is disorientated. It is later in the evening. Jacques and Noel depart and are reabsorbed into the Hive. Though the following scene, Virginia and James have a subtextual interest in Brooke, who is consequently ill at ease. Virginia is reclothed. Brooke has found something to cover his nakedness.

VIRIGINIA: You deserve a cognac, Rupert.

JAMES: With a sugared rim and a fresh strawberry.

Brooke sits. Virginia reclines next to him. James supplies the drinks.

VIRGINIA: Shall we toast to Rupert's extraordinary patience and good humour?

Virginia and James toast with enthusiasm.

BROOKE: Actually, I found it rather distressing.

VIRGINIA: (taking Brooke's hand) I was bowing to public persuasion, Rupert.

JAMES: Everybody had but one thing on their minds.

One reason for being in this room.

VIRGINIA: You must know what that was, Rupert.

BROOKE: I don't think I do.

VIRGINIA: Your modesty becomes you, Rupert.

JAMES: Your beauty blinds us.

VIRGINIA: Your eyes - so penetrating, so forlorn. JAMES: Cheeks - so rosy... lips... tongue.

JAMES: His lithe and supple body? His... poetry?

VIRGINIA: You have a faculty which draws people to you. JAMES: The Sirens, their song! JAMES: Who can say quite what it is? VIRGINIA: The Cyclops, his eye!

VIRGINIA: Samson had his hair...

JAMES: Christ, his cross! VIRGINIA: While Rupert has his Caesarean profile? His... poetry?

THE SWABBER: Parody? THE RETCHER: Prudery? THE RIGGER: Pillory? THE NAVIGATOR: Puberty? THE SWABBER: Ptolemy? THE RETCHER: Reverie? THE RIGGER: Feathery? THE NAVIGATOR: Devilry?

THE SWABBER: Memory? THE RETCHER: Mimicry? THE RIGGER: Mummery? THE NAVIGATOR: Flummery? THE SWABBER: Bibbity? THE RETCHER: Bobbity? THE RIGGER: Hippity? THE NAVIGATOR: Hoppity?

THE SWABBER: [f(l) ee] THE RIGGER: [(m) ee] THE RETCHER: [(v) ee] THE SWABBER: [(m) ee] THE RETCHER: [f(l) ee]

Tableau VI

BROOKE: The Rheuminid comes ravenous in its hordes, consuming all that lies in its path – not as fat, protein or cellulose, but as information. I see their shining metallic skins - of copper, green chrome, blue chrome and gunmetal - as they process me. And record. Long after I am dead they will farm me for my ghost image. Centuries into the future they may still keep a sentinel posted here to record my meaningless absence. Process. Record. Calculate the ratios of probability in this airy nothingness. Recurring...

Characters and set are retained from the parlour scene- only the lights which were festive and gay are now sombre and eerie, symbolising Brooke's recent death. The four are holding an impromptu séance, hoping to raise Brooke's spirit. They have joined hands around a ouija board or planchette; Virginia serves as the medium, playing a drone instrument and urging on the others. Additionally, a tambourine and conga drum have been placed nearby; they are to act as a conduit, enabling Brooke's ghost to communicate. Observing wryly, Brooke stands to one side, invisible to the sitters.

NOEL, JAMES + JACQUES:

If I should die, think only this of me That there's some corner of a foreign field That is forever England. There shall be In that rich Earth a richer dust concealed.

VIRGINIA: Think of him. Call him. Think of him. Call him.

Open yourselves to the continuum of luminiferous aether that co-exists with our own.

Seek Rupert's ageless soul among the decaying astral shells.

We are a glowing candle in the dark to which his spirit will be drawn Think of him. Call him.

A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,

Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,

Think of him. Call him.

A body of England's, breathing English air,

Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

NOEL + JACQUES: And think, this heart, all evil shed away, A pulse in the eternal mind, no less...

JAMES: And think, this heart, Virginia... Virginia... VIRGINIA: Concentrate, James.

JAMES: I believe I... heard something. VIRGINIA: You may hear many odd things before the night is out, James. Smiling sadly, Brooke blows on Noel's face and neck.

JAMES + JACQUES: Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;

NOEL: Gives somewhere back the thoughts, Virginia... Virginia...

VIRGINIA: Open yourself to him, Noel.

NOEL: There's a breeze...

VIRGINIA: The shutters are closed tight, dear.

Brooke playfully brushes Jacques with the back of his hand.

NOEL + JAMES: And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,

In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

JACQUES: I... I have been touched.

Fingers. Drumming on my knee.

VIRGINIA: If his spirit touches you, Instead say- thank you, friend.

do nothing, do not move. Always say- thank you, friend.

Jacques?

JACQUES: Thank you, friend.

As the power of the song reaches a peak, Brooke is visibly affected and may slap his hands and cry out against the summoning.

OMNES: If I should die, think only this of me

That there's some corner of a foreign field

That is forever England.

Silence. All are still and very tense; all can sense Brooke's presence. He stands above their seated forms like a ghostly statue, regarding his friends sadly.

VIRIGINIA: Good evening, Rupert?

Brooke moves from person to person, touching each of them. The atmosphere remains tense...

JAMES: Thank you, friend.

VIRGINIA: Thank you, friend.

NOEL: Thank you, friend.

The sitters exchange wary glances. Suddenly, Brooke performs a violent outburst on the tambourine and drum. The group is startled out of their wits.

OMNES: [Thank you friend!]

Strained silence.

VIRGINIA: He has answered our summons.

NOEL: It's cold all of a sudden!

VIRGINIA: Now we may question him with the planchette.

JAMES: The icy vapours of the dead!

JACQUES: (regarding the planchette)

JACQUES: Such devices are said to liberate-

Let us abandon this foolishness.

VIRGINIA: Thank you, friend.

JACQUES: not discarnate spirits,

JACQUES: Rupert would refute this utter bunkum,

NOEL: Thank you, friend.

JACQUES: but elements of the

JACQUES: if he could see us now.

Collective unconscious.

JAMES: Thank you, friend JAMES: Thank you, friend.

VIRGINIA: Abandon your strenuous logic, Jacques; it will not help you here.

NOEL: It's cold! The vapours of the dead.

JAMES: The icy vapours... The vapours of the dead.

VIRGINIA: Who would ask Rupert a question?

Jacques?

All lay their hands on the planchette and concentrate...

JACQUES: There have been rumours, that you did not die in battle

Rupert? Is it true?

but of an insect bite.

NOEL: [Rupert] JAMES: [Rupert]

The planchette moves under their hands...

OMNES: Yes!

JACQUES: Then Rupert is not the hero we supposed.

as most suppose -

JAMES: He was a poet, never a warrior.

NOEL: But Rupert, you wanted the war to finish you. Life had become so cruel and disappointing, that His Majesty's service

providing a convenient vehicle for your sullen boyish suicide.

Rupert? Is it true?

VIRGINIA: [Rupert] JAMES: [Rupert]

The planchette moves under their hands. It vacillates at first, then decides...

OMNES: Yes!

VIRGINIA:

Rupert?

I know about the skinny-dipping, and the polite bacchanalia in the New Forest. But it is said that your deep attraction

to nature and all things natural, drove you further, Rupert;

drove you further, Rupert; drove you to adopt the gross mannerisms of the beast and, like the hairy-legged fly, you coveted the hindquarters of the goat Rupert? Is it true?

NOEL: [Rupert] JACQUES: [Rupert]

A sprinkling of uneasy laughter. No response...

JACQUES: No answer.

NOEL: The aether is awash with the ill-natured gossip

of Rupert's acid-tongued friends.

JAMES: Ought not we make more sensible use of this extraordinary verifier?

NOEL: Rupert?

Did you take Virginia carnally,

that night, on the bank of the River Cam?

VIRGINIA: [Rupert] JACQUES: [Rupert]

The planchette moves under their hands...

NOEL + JAMES + JACQUES: No! VIRGINIA: Spirits can lie like the rest of us.

JAMES: Rupert?

Which did you prefer,

Man or Woman?

NOEL: [Rupert] VIRGINIA: [Rupert]

No response...

NOEL: No answer. JAMES: We can forgive him his reluctance... JACQUES: He is not reluctant, James.

He is appalled!

in all honesty,

NOEL: Rupert,

Whom did you love?

Brooke raises his head with interest. He moves behind Noel and touches her. Sadly, he strokes her hair...

NOEL: Thank you, friend.

Noel leans back and exhales gratefully. Virginia and James exchange glances and, with Jacques, are reabsorbed by the Hive.

NOEL: Rupert, tell me,

do you remember walking with me, a certain Spring?

BROOKE: Yes.

The atmosphere changes. We are experiencing a memory: it is a clear summer's day. We are given the sense of a forest. Brooke is in a relaxed state of mind; he sits and closes his eyes. Noel regards him lovingly. She leans into him.

BROOKE: Lovers in the woods,

entwined like knotted roots.

A farmer's son...

NOEL: And a miller's daughter?

BROOKE: Becoming one flesh on the forest floor, dry leaves beneath them,

crackling like flames...

Noel...

He opens his eyes and focuses on Noel. He reaches out to kiss her hand; coyly, she withdraws it and rises to her feet.

NOEL: I must go.

Brooke rises and takes her in his arms. She struggles free.

BROOKE: Your scent intoxicates me, Noel.

The colours and the sights of Spring rise from your flesh like a vapour...

Brooke links arms with her. She consents and they walk.

BROOKE: It brings pictures to my mind.

I see the merging of great ocean currents...

NOEL: I am not certain I approve of that look in your eyes.

NOEL: I think I may go back.

BROOKE: I see the true union of two eternal souls.

NOEL: You're just a boy, Rupert.

and I your model train

your toy kaleidoscope, your wooden sword...

BROOKE: My lightsome glass marble,

shaped in the Orient by hands that have known

of unclouded crystal the secret lore of love.

They sit and begin making love - their ardour gains intensity as the scene progresses.

NOEL: Rupert, you are confusing love with lust.

BROOKE: Never!

Lust is simple and magical.

NOEL: We could be complete strangers then?

But so long as we *desired* each other, our actions would be pure?

BROOKE: While love is a strangled thing,

that leaves the heart like shattered glass

in the lover's gutted chest.

NOEL: We could be those lovers,

in the woods?

entwined like knotted roots?

A farmer's son...

BROOKE: And a miller's daughter.

NOEL: He: with the rough strength

common to a life outdoors.

BROOKE: His lithe, deeply muscled flesh,

bound in coarse cloth...

NOEL: A tiger's eyes, deep, wary and brown.

A concerned expression appears on Noel's face.

NOEL: Rupert? What's that?

Consumed by passion, Brooke doesn't respond.

NOEL: It feels like... Oh, God! Oh God! Oh, God! BROOKE: What is it? Noel? What's the matter?

NOEL: Ants!

Noel gathers up her clothing, runs wildly off into the forest and is reabsorbed by the Hive. Stricken, Brooke stares after her.

NOEL: A tiger's eyes, deep, wary and brown.

long months of abstinence...

NOEL: Teased to madness by

BROOKE: Her hair like red silk...

BROOKE: She: with the burgeoning health of youth...

NOEL: Strewn over the dry leaves on the forest floor...

BROOKE: Ants?

A Hiving erupts...

THE RETCHER: Gnats! THE NAVIGATOR: Bees! THE RIGGER: Nits! THE SWABBER: Bites! THE NAVIGATOR: Ticks! THE RETCHER: Moths! THE SWABBER: Flies! THE RIGGER: Mites!

THE RETCHER: Fleas! THE NAVIGATOR: Maggots!

THE RIGGER: Bugs! THE SWABBER: Lice!

THE SWABBER + THE RETCHER: Gnat!

THE SWABBER + THE RIGGER + THE RETCHER: Gnat!

OMNES: Gnat! Gnat! Gnat!

Brooke gazes out towards the horizon.

BROOKE: I shall welcome the wave

and pray it tears my flesh as hard, and lifts it as brutally from my bones,

as the forces that have ploughed and harvested me.

Too brutally... Too long...

To release this ramshackle ghost -

and the wild charismatic harlequin that is its shadow

Then each and every face of the poet -

Rupert Brooke will be gone -

bleached even from the longest memory.

Tableau VII

BROOKE: The Pulchrid is a subtle insect. I am only aware that it has passed through my flesh by the scent of wheat and crushed stems that comes suddenly on the breeze and is gone; like something glimpsed briefly through vines and branches that leaves a lasting impression on the soul. In its presence, you may find yourself thinking of deep fragrant wells and eroding desert sandwalls, of ancient shipwrecks consumed by coral, and fingers stretching lovingly for the touch of a hand. Because it is little more than a thought itself, it can steer thoughts – like glass marbles through the ether. It saddens me that The Pulchrid is by far the least numerous of the marauders here.

Brooke is seated centre-stage atop a great stack of documents representing correspondence, diaries, essays and articles, etc. Surrounding the stack at a distance are Keynes, Noel, The Editor and Cray. They are frozen in place with their attention set keenly upon the stack.

KEYNES: What is that you're sitting on?

NOEL: Show us, us, Rupert.

EDITOR: Give it to us, us, Mr Brooke. CRAY: We'll keep it confidential.

The Hive freezes momentarily. Brooke regards them.

BROOKE: Subtle manipulators,

conspiring in the crevices and cracks

swarming in the woodwork - Or am I fevered and hallucinating... Not dead at all?

One by one, the Hive takes a step towards the stack.

EDITOR: Oh, you're most certainly dead.

CRAY: So, you won't be needing those documents.

NOEL: Won't you show us, us, Rupert!

No discernible response to Brooke's gesture. As one, the Hive takes a step toards the stack. Swiftly, Noel grabs a document from the pile and beats a hasty retreat. The infuriated Brooke cannot pursue her without surrendering the entire stack. The Hive congratulates Noel with claps and cheers. They bend to listen. Noel reads...

NOEL: Listen: I had such a lust for your fine body.

I was foolish and wicked -

I wanted you to fuck!

EDITOR + CRAY + KEYNES: Such a lust... Your fine body...

Foolish and wicked... I wanted you to fuck

The Hive whoops uproariously. Brooke is highly embarrassed.

BROOKE: You are not Noel.

KEYNES: Morally bankrupt, Mr Brooke.

EDITOR: Yet, it's heady stuff, good reading. Did

Didn't we, we, we make an agreement, Mr Brooke?

Have you more?

BROOKE: I'll not surrender it to you.

CRAY: You promised us, us your work. EDITOR: We, we, we demand it now!

NOEL: You said yourself, Rupert -

'to let them know the poor truths when I die'.

BROOKE: No! No!

The Editor dives for a document. There is a scuffle. The Editor comes away bearing a prize. The Hive congratulates her with claps and cheers. Eagerly, they bend to listen. The Editor reads...

EDITOR: Listen: Though women are sometimes a pleasure to behold,

we should curse the day

they became aware of their beauty for on that day they began to employ it

to control men.

NOEL + CRAY + KEYNES: A pleasure... Curse the day... Their beauty...

To employ it to control men.

The Hive laughs uproariously.

NOEL: Are you joking, Rupert?

BROOKE: Leave me be! I said, leave me be!

■ EDITOR: Or is this what you really believe?

KEYNES: But we, we, we want it, Sir!

CRAY: We, we, we want it all!

The Hive laughs derisively. Noel and Keynes try for documents; the infuriated Brooke fails to stop them. The Hive congratulates them with claps and cheers. Eagerly, they bend to listen. Keynes reads...

KEYNES: Listen: My ambition is to sneak into the British Museum and embrace a female mummy. I've been told that most died of syphilis, but I intend to find a clean one! NOEL + EDITOR + CRAY: (m) mee (m) mee (m) mee

The Hive laughs uproariously.

KEYNES: Extraordinary! EDITOR: We could call it

'The Love Letters of Rupert Brooke!' CRAY: 'The Erotic Prose of Rupert Brooke!'

KEYNES: 'Sex and Poet!'

NOEL: 'The Licentious Underbelly of Edwardian England!'

The Hive laughs uproariously, spitefully. There is another fight for documents involving all. Brooke screams with frustration at the inability to prevent them.

CRAY: Listen: I remember you all naked lying to receive me; wonderful in beauty. I remember the softness of your body; and your breasts and your thighs and your cunt. NOEL + CRAY + KEYNES: Naked! Receive me! Beauty! Remember!

Body! Your breasts! Your cunt!

Hateful, bitter laughter from the Hive.

CRAY: 'Reflections on My Sexual Destiny!'

NOEL: 'A Poet and His Women!'

KEYNES: Or his men!

BROOKE: You'll be damned if one word reaches print. EDITOR: This will be an unprecedented event in the world of publishing! CRAY: A veritable coup by all accounts!

Noel steps forward with a document in her hands. As Noel recites, a Hiving begins; softly at first, building to a horrifying crescendo. Brooke is helpless to prevent them transforming the stack into a whirlwind of paper as they

NOEL: Listen: I remember the agony and joy of our meeting. The pleasure like a sea that drowned you

wave by wave.

And I love you, more so than ever.

In all the ways of love...

THE RETCHER: [Rupert] THE RIGGER: [Rupert] THE NAVIGATOR: [Rupert]

Brooke walks to the front of the stage...

BROOKE:

As I pursued my pale existence, I fell into a snare.

I swam in Byron's pool

and contracted his disease.

Death should render one as solid and as hard as bronze,

but it did not so render me.

Hundreds of images flaked from my image and warped as they grew more distant, melding with the English public mind and its puerile lusts.

xix

It is an ugly process that destroyed the little I stood for, annihilated the little sense my poems sent wheeling into the future, the little love they made...

Listen: The young Apollo, golden-haired,

Stands dreaming on the verge of strife,

Magnificently unprepared, For the long littleness of life.

Brooke lets the documents fall to the ground. The Hive have reassumed the positions they held at the very start. A Morse code signal begins...

THE RIGGER: If I should die. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE NAVIGATOR: Think only this of me. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE SWABBER: That there's some corner of a foreign field. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RETCHER: That is forever England. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RIGGER: His sons. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE NAVIGATOR: If he had them. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE SWABBER: Would march with more decorations. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RETCHER: Than Lord Nelson himself. (deh, deh, deh, etc.) THE RIGGER: Though he did not die in battle. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE NAVIGATOR: He died as a direct result. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE SWABBER: Of shrapnel! (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RETCHER: Of blood-poisoning! (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RIGGER: Of a mosquito bite! (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

In later times. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE NAVIGATOR: This may be judged. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE SWABBER: As the most pointless. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RETCHER: And terrible tragedy. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RIGGER: Of a loathsome war. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE NAVIGATOR: En route to Gallipoli. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE SWABBER: With a crew of heroes. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RETCHER: En route to Gallipoli (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RIGGER: To mingle his blood. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE NAVIGATOR: With that of his countrymen. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE SWABBER: On the glassy Aegean Sea. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RETCHER: With the invasion force. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RIGGER: At sea. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE NAVIGATOR: He died. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE SWABBER: He died. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RETCHER: He died. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RIGGER: He died. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

The Hive is frozen and silent.

BROOKE: (looking towards the horizon)

The wave grows daily.

Whether it is stationary,

mustering its strength before it strikes,

or whether it surges closer -

I cannot say.

A Hiving erupts, the wildest yet...

THE RIGGER: Rupert Brooke. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE NAVIGATOR: The doyen of English poetry. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE SWABBER: The natural successor. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RETCHER: To Wordsworth. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RIGGER: And Coleridge. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE NAVIGATOR: Is. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE SWABBER: The gifted. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RETCHER: Famous Brooke. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RIGGER: The bard. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)
THE NAVIGATOR: Brooke. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)
THE SWABBER: The laureate. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)
THE RETCHER: Brooke. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RIGGER: Is. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE NAVIGATOR: Brooke. (deh, deh, deh, etc.) THE SWABBER: The beautiful. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RETCHER: Sad. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RIGGER: The beautiful. (deh, deh, deh, etc.) THE NAVIGATOR: Poet. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE SWABBER: Is. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)
THE RETCHER: Brooke. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)
THE RIGGER: Lieutenant (deh, deh, deh, etc.)
THE NAVIGATOR: Brooke. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE SWABBER: Rupert. (deh, deh, deh, etc.) THE RETCHER: Brooke. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

THE RIGGER: Is. (deh, deh, deh, etc.)

OMNES: Dead!

BROOKE: When it strikes,

when the wave strikes, it will sound like this...

Cut lights.

End