

# **A FALL OF SNOW**

a one-act play

by

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## **A Fall of Snow**

A play in one act; running time 30 mins. approx.

7f & 1m

Scene: The public room in a small inn on a remote Cornish moor in January 1814, during a heavy blizzard of snow.

Nightfall. Travellers from an overturned stagecoach seek shelter in the inn, followed soon after by a solicitor and his wife, and a runaway girl apprentice who had been travelling on a stage wagon. The tension is heightened when the employer of the apprentice arrives and there is a startling confrontation.

## A Fall of Snow

### Characters:

Mrs Morcom:	wife of the Landlord of the “Duck and Feathers”
Lyddie:	her maid of all work
Mrs Harding:	an elderly woman travelling towards Truro on the stage coach.
Miss Grace Holman:	a young woman, travelling on the same coach
Amelia Snell:	an orphan aged 15-16, a young girl, apprenticed to Mr and Mrs Bull, landlords of the “Red Lion” near Redruth.
Mrs Wilkes:	a lady travelling with her husband from Truro towards Devon
Mrs Bull:	wife of the landlord of the “Red Lion”
Mr Wilkes:	Justice of the Peace, husband of Mrs Wilkes

‘On Tuesday morning the fall of snow was so great as to render travelling, in any direction, exceedingly dangerous.....’

From the *West Briton* 14 January 1814.

## **A FALL OF SNOW**

*January 1814. A small inn consisting of bar and one public room. Two bedrooms for visitors upstairs.*

*This is the small public room. Dining table, set diagonally UR. A settle, UCL. A door DL. A door to kitchen and bar of inn UL. A fireplace DC on the fourth wall – logs and fire irons set to indicate its position. To L of fireplace, on the fourth wall is a window looking out onto the inn yard.*

*Intermittently the sound of men's voices from the bar along the passage can be heard in the public room.*

*The landlady, Mrs. Morcom is laying a clean cloth on the table. The maidservant, Lyddie, is replenishing the fire and sweeping up the ashes.*

**Mrs Morcom:** Such weather! See it's dark already, and the four o'clock mail's not gone through yet.... *(She goes to the window DL and peers out)* ... and I declare the snow is getting heavier – great flakes whirling from a black sky and settling, I don't doubt. We shan't see anyone here tonight – even old Ben'll stay at home.

**Lyddie:** Sam says it's been laying for the past two hours, and now it's freezing hard. It's freezing all over England, some do say.

*Mrs Morcom returns to table and lays out a knife, fork and spoon at each place. The sound of men's voices and thuds in the passage off L. They stamp their boots and thump down a weighty travelling trunk and sundry boxes.*

**Mrs Morcom:** Lyddie, do 'ee go and see what's to do.

**Lyddie:** *(rising from hearth)* Yes 'mum.

*Exit through door DL. Mrs Morcom returns to window and looks out.*

**Mrs Morcom:** Snow's so heavy now. I can't call to mind when I've seen worse ...  
*(she moves to window DL and peers out)* ... There seems to be a lamp at the gate. They're leading in the horses. One looks very lame.

*Enter Lyddie backwards, cap and fichu awry, giggling and replying to an unseen ostler.*

**Lyddie:** Give over, Sam, you mustn't say things like that.

**Mrs Morcom:** *(forbiddingly)* Lyddie – do 'ee come right in and straighten yourself up, my girl. I sent you out on an errand, not to be flibbertigibbeting with the boy. Now what's going on?

**Lyddie:** Oh Mrs Morcom, begging your pardon, ma'am, but Sam do joke so. *(Straightening her cap and fichu)*. He do say an axle broke on the stage coach just down the road. The coachman couldn't see his way in the snow and the horses pulled the coach into the ditch.

**Mrs Morcom:** Oh my dear life! Not overturned, I do 'ope?

**Lyddie:** Sam didn't say, but he do know they're all coming up the road to us, being the only house on this stretch of moor. And there's ladies too, he do say.

**Mrs Morcom:** Well go and put the kettle on then, and stir that broth that's on the trivet. *(As Lyddie goes)* Wait, tell Master to take the gents into the bar and the ladies better come in here.

**Lyddie:** Yes ma'am.

*Exit Lyddie. Women's voices heard off.*

**Grace:** Steady now, we're nearly there.

**Lyddie:** Do 'ee go straight in by the fire ma'am.

*Enter Mrs Harding, supported by Grace and Lyddie. She appears to be fainting. Mrs Morcom turns a chair from the table, towards the fire, and they guide Mrs Harding to it.*

**Mrs Morcom:** Come along in by the fire now. Ah poor soul, it's been too much for her. Set her down carefully now.

*They lower Mrs Harding into chair, head slumped forward. They crowd around her, fussing and exclaiming.*

**Mrs Morcom:** She'm fainted dead away. Oh dear, Oh dearie me. Lyddie? Where is that girl? Oh there you are. Do 'ee go and fetch some feathers from the outhouse and bring a jug of cold water. Go on. Don't stand there gawping.

*Exit Lyddie. Grace fans Mrs. Harding with her shawl. Enter Amelia timidly. She sees group by the fire and comes C.*

**Amelia:** Oh poor lady. Is she hurt? Please don't crowd in on her, let her have some air. Here, let me ...(She removes Mrs Harding's bonnet and loosens her dress round the neck. To Grace.) Will you fetch a chair for her feet.

*She takes off her cloak and bundles it under Mrs Harding's head, laying her between the back and arm of the chair. She lifts Mrs Harding's feet on to the stool, which Grace has brought forward. Mrs Harding is now almost horizontal.*

**Amelia:** That's better.

*Enter Lyddie with feathers and jug of water. Mrs. Morcom takes the feathers and starts to singe them on the fire. Amelia takes a teacloth from the table, dips a corner in the jug, and wipes Mrs Harding's head and neck.*

**Amelia:** *(to Lyddie)* Will you pour me a cup of water?

*Lyddie does so. Slowly Mrs Harding begins to recover, and opens her eyes.*

**Amelia:** Here y'are ma'am. Try a little sup of water.

*She holds the cup and Mrs Harding drinks. Soon she sits a little straighter.*

**Mrs Morcom:** Well I never, I'll warrant she's feeling better now. *(Loudly)* Feeling a bit better now, are we ma'am? That's the spirit. Lyddie, go and fetch the Daffy's Elixir, that'll do her good. My old mother took some every morning. Took it till the day she died, she did. Lyddie, make a pot o' tay, and be quick about it.

*Amelia has retired UL and stands uncertainly. Exit Lyddie with water jug.*

**Mrs Morcom:***(to Grace)* What happened? Did she bang her head?

**Grace:** I don't know. It was all so sudden. She may have been overcome by the cold, or was hurt when we all fell on her.

**Mrs Morcom** It's no wonder she fainted. Oh look, a bit of colour's coming back into her cheeks. *(Loudly)* Are you feeling better now, my lover?

**Mrs Harding** *(faintly)* Yes. I thank you.

