

LORENZO'S DREAM

by

JEFFREY A. LEE

a play in four scenes based on the eighteen months
D.H. Lawrence and Frieda
spent in Cornwall
during the First World War
and set in the living room of Tregerthen Cottage, Zennor.

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LORENZO'S DREAM

CHARACTERS

FRIEDA LAWRENCE
(speaks with a slight German accent)

LORENZO (D.H. LAWRENCE), SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS 'DAVID'

HENRY HOCKING, A CORNISH FARMER

KATHERINE MANSFIELD
(speaks with a slight New Zealand accent)

JOHN MIDDLETON MURRY, USUALLY REFERRED TO AS MURRY OR 'JACK'

THE INSPECTOR

JENKINS, THE POLICEMAN WHO HELPS TO SEARCH THE COTTAGE

TWO OTHER POLICEMEN, ONE UNIFORMED THE OTHER PLAIN CLOTHED
(both non-speaking)

THE CREATURES OF LORENZO'S DREAM

2 female (speaking)

5 male (speaking)

2 male (non-speaking)

unspecified number of creatures in Lorenzo's dream (these could be speaking members of the cast who are not needed on stage).

SCENE ONE

The scene which remains constant throughout the play is the lower room in Treggerthen Cottage, near Zennor in Cornwall. It is a small but well-proportioned room. The walls are covered with a pale pink wash. The cupboards, constructed by Lorenzo, are painted bright blue. On the upstage wall is a charming cottage fireplace with an open fire, presently unlit, on either side of which are two Staffordshire figures of people riding to market. On the mantelpiece is a pair of fine brass candlesticks inherited by Lorenzo from his mother. In the centre is a large terra cotta pot, probably Italian with which, in Scene Two, Frieda strikes Lorenzo on the back. On the wall above the fireplace hangs a beautiful embroidery by Lady Otterline Morrell of a tree with big bright flowers and birds and beasts after a drawing by Duncan Grant (It is important to get this right and the designer should look at pictures of Duncan Grant's work in order to provide authenticity).

The room has the character of an old Cornish cottage that has had a somewhat Bohemian appearance imposed upon it. Despite the unusual Bloomsbury decor, it is furnished sparsely to the point of austerity. Most of the items have been purchased second-hand from a fisherman at Saint Ives, including several old clocks that have been mended by Lorenzo. There are two paraffin stoves close to the fireplace, and on these most of the cooking is done. There is a large kitchen table and four chairs, all of which have been painted black. Katherine Mansfield says of them: "Look at the funeral procession of chairs!" A camp bed is folded away against a wall. This is where Lorenzo will lie when he has his dream in Scene Three.

Upstage, left of the fireplace, is a somewhat rickety stairway leading to the upper floor. Though we do not see the upper floor, it is important to know that it consists of one room overlooking the sea. Lorenzo refers to it as 'The Captain's Cabin'.

Stage left of this stairway is a doorway, which forms the entrance to a dark and rough scullery. This is where the washing and the washing up are done. We assume that the lavatory is outside in the garden.

Stage right is the main entrance, a door leading straight to the outside. When the wind blows as it does frequently in Cornwall, this door is inclined to fly open much to Frieda's annoyance. Upstage of this door is a window through which Lorenzo and Frieda can see visitors approaching.

The Scene begins to an old Cornish song. The lights slowly fade in on the scene. FRIEDA is discovered sitting at the table. She is dressed somewhat colourfully in the fashion of Nineteen Sixteen. She looks up suddenly and addresses the audience.

FRIEDA: Yes, this is it! Treggerthen Cottage where we took refuge from the war 'like foxes under the hill'. That's how Lorenzo

described it. Lorenzo was like a god. He could always find the right words.

FRIEDA rises, comes downstage.

FRIEDA: Not much of a cottage, as you can see, but at fifty pounds a year it was all we could afford. Oh, we lived like field mice in those days, scraping together anything that would keep us alive from day to day. We had to make this granite hole into a living-space. Lorenzo always knew what to do about that. But, I can tell you it wasn't easy.

FRIEDA crosses to the camp bed.

FRIEDA: He was ill quite a lot of the time. The war was eating into his very soul. He hated all the jingoism, the suspicion, and the mean-mindedness of it, not to mention the terrible slaughter. His novel 'The Rainbow' had been published and banned and confiscated. He was like Prometheus, the bringer of fire, chained to the rock and having his liver pecked out every day. There was no chance of royalties. So we had virtually no money. Sometimes he lay on this camp bed, but, when he was really sick, he stayed up there in 'The Captain's Cabin'. That's what he called the upstairs room. It made him feel like Theseus or Columbus on their voyages of discovery. That's the way he thought of life...as a wonderful voyage of discovery! But, of course, he wouldn't stay in bed for long even when he felt wretched. His daemon wouldn't allow it. And sometimes he was like a man possessed. He used to walk up and down with that brisk stride of his, talking to himself, even laughing sometimes. And then he would come down here and start tampering furiously with these clocks we'd bought from the fisherman in Saint Ives, or simply painting the chairs or cooking the dinner. The clocks never went, which wasn't surprising since he threw them about the room when he got into a rage ... which was quite often. The poor darling. When he was well enough, he would sit at this table, here, writing or typing. He was working on that wonderful book 'Women in Love'. 'Women in Love'...

FRIEDA returns to the table and lights a cigarette. The lights fade and come up again. The front door and the windows are open. We hear the sound of gulls and the faint plashing of the sea.

LORENZO: *(calling from above)* Frieda!

FRIEDA: I'm down here, Lorenzo!

LORENZO appears at the top of the stairs, begins to descend and stops halfway.

LORENZO: What are you doing?

FRIEDA: Smoking! Relaxing! What does one do in Cornwall in June?

LORENZO: You slut, Frieda! Don't you realise they might be here any minute now?

FRIEDA: Of course. That's exactly why I'm doing nothing. It'll be hectic enough when they arrive.

LORENZO: *(going to the window right)* But we have to eat. Doesn't it occur to you that we must give them something when they arrive even if we're content to starve ourselves?

FRIEDA: Naturally we must eat. I thought you had all that in hand, as usual.

LORENZO: We have nothing, Frieda, absolutely nothing! The cupboard is bare!

FRIEDA: Then they'll have to take us as they find us, two paupers, two little foxes in a hole under the hill, as you put it yourself. They might as well learn the truth.

LORENZO: I'm sure Jack will be stoical. I'm not so certain about Katherine.

FRIEDA: You shouldn't expect too much from her. She's totally neurotic. I'm surprised you don't see how alien she is to your ideas, Lorenzo.

LORENZO: *(moving agitatedly about the room)* She'll adapt. Katherine's no fool, you know. She has a firm grasp of what's important.

FRIEDA: I really see no basis for your confidence. Their marriage is about as safe as 'The Titanic'. I should have thought you'd have been the first to see that.

LORENZO: I do see it and I feel it here. *(places his hand above his solo plexus)* But I must have Jack. He's one of the few people who actually understands.

FRIEDA: Oh, yes. He worships you, Lorenzo. I sometimes think I should feel a little jealous of him.

LORENZO: He's far too easy-going, That hysterical girl takes advantage of his weakness. A man must go ahead absolutely in front of

his woman, without turning round to ask her approval. You know I can't help believing that.

FRIEDA laughs

FRIEDA: That's the one thing she's right about. You know I reject all that male dominance stuff.

LORENZO: Yes and that's the reason we quarrel so bitterly, that and those three children you can't ever get your mind away from.

FRIEDA: *(rising quickly)* Don't be cruel, Lorenzo! You keep on parading your feelings and your precious solo plexus.
(places her hand over her womb) This is where we women feel things. How can a mere man expect to understand that a woman can never forget the children of her womb even when she's parted from them! I don't think you'll ever realise the sacrifice I made for you ... for us ... when I left those three precious orphans!

LORENZO: Oh, do stop playing the martyr, for God's sake, Frieda! If you feel it so intensely, go back ... go back to them at once! It's your choice. For goodness sake choose and be damned!

There is a knock at the door.

FRIEDA: *(leaping to her feet)* Good God, it's them! They're here already! *(looks about the room in dismay)* What are we to do?

LORENZO: Calm down, Frieda! *(goes to the window and looks out)* It's only Henry!

LORENZO opens the door.

LORENZO: Come in Henry! Come in!

Enter HENRY HOCKING carrying two dead rabbits.

HENRY: Hello, David, Mrs Lawrence. Thought you might like these. I've been shooting this morning. The little buggers were all over the clifftop.

LORENZO: *(taking the rabbits, holding them up)* There you are, Frieda! The dark gods have spoken! O ye of little faith! *(to HENRY)* Thank you, Henry. You've saved our lives again.

HENRY: I knew you were expecting company, so I thought a couple of rabbits for the pot might help.

LORENZO: Sit down. I'll make some tea.

FRIEDA: Yes, do sit down, Henry. It's very good of you to think of us.

HENRY sits by the door with his cap in his hand. He is somewhat ill-at-ease with FRIEDA who continues to smoke in a somewhat masculine fashion. LORENZO takes the kettle from a stove and makes tea.

FRIEDA: I suppose it was like a dream on the cliffs at first light this morning.

HENRY: It was that, Mrs Lawrence. I love to get up in the dark and go down there. It makes me think of the beginning of time, if you know what I mean.

LORENZO: Like the first craggy breaking of dawn on the world, a sense of the primitive darkness just behind creation.

HENRY: *(with enthusiasm)* That's it exactly, sir! The primitive darkness. That's just what I felt. Only I can't give words to it like you.

LORENZO: But you feel it here, Henry. *(places his hand against his solar plexus again)* And that's better than mooning about it in your precious brain box. *(points to his head)*

Pause

LORENZO: Is there any news?

HENRY: News? Oh, you mean the war, what's going on in France? I don't know. I try to keep my mind off it. Thinking about all that bloodshed is enough to drive anyone mad.

FRIEDA: It is a madness ... the dreadful carnage and waste we came down here to get away from.

LORENZO: There's no real escape from that numbness of the spirit, Frieda. Wherever you are, you feel it dragging you into the void like an evil umbilical cord that's lost its power to nourish. It's as though the Nation has been bitten by a tarantula.

HENRY: All I can say is that Jerry's giving them a terrible time out there. *(glances quickly at FRIEDA)* Sorry, madam, I shouldn't have used that word. I didn't mean to be rude.

FRIEDA waves her cigarette dismissively.

FRIEDA: You don't have to remind me I'm German, Henry. It makes no difference what one is. It's still the shedding of innocent human blood. Such a squandering of good life.

LORENZO: Slaughter whichever way you look at it. And so hard for you Cornish to accept. You belong to an ancient race, most unwarlike, soft, peaceable. Sending a Cornishman out to the trenches is like putting a mole among rats.

HENRY: We like to think we're as patriotic as anyone else.

LORENZO: Of course you are! But patriotism owes nothing to the mechanistic madness that's infecting Europe.

HENRY: I expect you're right. But whichever way you look at it there's nothing we can do, is there? Only, if you don't mind me saying so, there must be rules. If we all do as we like we're no more than animals, are we?

LORENZO: Animals! If only we were more like animals, Henry! If only we could cast aside all this crippling mechanical nonsense and learn to live the instinctual life again. Then there'd be some hope for us. Animals fight and hunt by instinct but there's no cruelty between them. We fight from our heads with calculation and we condemn ourselves to a kind of mechanical life of the mind. Don't you see?

LORENZO hands HENRY tea.

HENRY: I know what you're driving at, and it's partly true, that I'll concede.

They drink tea. LORENZO moves about restlessly.

LORENZO: There's something I've been wanting to ask you, Henry.

HENRY: What's that, sir?

LORENZO: Who owns the black dog?

HENRY: Which black dog would that be?

LORENZO: The one that runs free at night.

HENRY: Can't say I know of a black dog. Old Trebilcock has that old spaniel Rick. He's black. But they don't let him out at night in case he meets Mr Fox and frits the life out of hisself.

LORENZO: That's strange.

HENRY: When did you see this black dog?

LORENZO: Last night as I walked back through the fields from The Tinnars' Arms. It isn't the first time either. I've seen it on at

least three occasions. If I didn't know better I'd think it actually waited for me on that stile by the church.

HENRY: That's interesting. And it follows you all the way home?

LORENZO: I wouldn't say it follows so much as leads. When I climb over the stile, it trots ahead to the next wall and looks back to make sure I'm coming on.

HENRY: Almost like a tug steering a ship into port so to speak?

LORENZO: Precisely! Just as though it doesn't want me to get lost.

HENRY and LORENZO laugh

LORENZO: It comes right back to the door and then raises its head as if to say: 'There you are, safely delivered. Now you can take care of yourself!' And then disappears.

HENRY: I wish it could have been there to see me home last Saturday night when I did miss my footing and end up rolling in the ditch!

HENRY laughs again.

HENRY: Well, isn't that spooky? Don't you think that's spooky, Mrs Lawrence?

FRIEDA: Very strange, specially since Lorenzo never drinks more than half a pint!

HENRY and FRIEDA laugh. Although LORENZO joins in, he appears far from amused.

HENRY: *(getting up)* Well, thanks for the tea. I suppose I must be getting on. Things to be done on the farm.

HENRY goes to the door and turns.

HENRY: I'll make a few enquiries about that black dog of yours. Perhaps it's an enemy spy.

FRIEDA: *(laughing)* Yes, we can't have it running amok, can we?

HENRY: No, Mrs Lawrence. That wouldn't do, would it?

FRIEDA: Thank you for the rabbits.

HENRY: Thank you, Mrs Lawrence. Thank you, David.

HENRY exits.

LORENZO: Why did you say that?

FRIEDA: Say what?

LORENZO: About the black dog running amok.

FRIEDA: It was a joke. Henry enjoys a joke.

LORENZO: No, it wasn't! You don't believe in this black dog, do you?

FRIEDA: Of course I believe in it. If you say you saw a black dog, then you saw it.

LORENZO: No you don't! You don't believe it's a real dog of the flesh. You think it's a figment of my imagination!

FRIEDA: No I don't!

LORENZO: Yes, you do. Otherwise you wouldn't have used the word 'amok'. You think the idea of a phantom dog running amok is absurd!

FRIEDA: Well, isn't it?

LORENZO: Yes, but the point is I did see it.

FRIEDA: Of course you did.

LORENZO: Then it must be real, mustn't it?

FRIEDA: Yes...in a sense.

LORENZO: In what sense, for God's sake?

There is the sound of a gig arriving. They freeze, staring at one another.

FRIEDA: That must be them!

LORENZO: Yes, they're here at last.

FRIEDA and LORENZO both go to the door.

LORENZO: Hello, Katherine. So you managed to find us.

Enter KATHERINE MANSFIELD carrying a case, which LORENZO takes from her. KATHERINE is a somewhat neurotic young woman dressed more suitably for town than for the country. She talks somewhat stiffly and fast with a slight New Zealand accent.

KATHERINE: David, it's good to see you. We've had a ghastly journey! I can't begin to describe these awful Cornish roads. (*kisses LORENZO on the cheek*) Murry'll be in in a minute. He's just paying off the driver. (*shakes hands with FRIEDA*) How are you. Frieda?

FRIEDA: Quite well for a refugee.

FRIEDA laughs. KATHERINE joins in politely.

LORENZO: I'll go and help Jack with his cases.

LORENZO exits.

FRIEDA: Well, here we are. Sit down and make yourself as comfortable as possible in the circumstances.

KATHERINE remains standing. She looks all round the room, fixes on the embroidery over the mantelpiece.

KATHERINE: Ah, I've seen that before, haven't I?

FRIEDA: You may have. It's Otterline Morrell's version of Yggdrasil, the Tree of Life, I believe.

KATHERINE: Yes, I remember. From a painting by Duncan Grant, wasn't it?

FRIEDA: That's right

KATHERINE: I like the funeral procession of chairs.

FRIEDA: Oh, the black chairs. Lorenzo painted them while in the grip of one of his depressions. Katherine, before the men join us, I want to say how very sorry I was to hear about your brother.

KATHERINE: Yes, yes, it was terrible. Thank you, Frieda, but there've been so many, haven't there? They tell me he died very bravely but who knows? They make these stories up to raise our spirits artificially. It's all such a mess, isn't it?

KATHERINE moves away from FRIEDA.

KATHERINE: Didn't those two Staffordshire figures come from David's mother.

FRIEDA: Yes, he keeps them to remember her by.

KATHERINE: Quaint.

FRIEDA: Perhaps.

KATHERINE: I mean for David. One doesn't think of him as being sentimental at all, does one?

FRIEDA: I don't think it's sentimentality exactly. It's just that ...

KATHERINE: Just her way of retaining her hold on him, I suppose. That wizened little snob still dominates his life from beyond the grave. The things our parents do to us. David will never succeed in ridding himself of that woman's pernicious influence.

KATHERINE walks round the room looking at things

KATHERINE: There's something you should know, Frieda.

FRIEDA: About you and Murry?

KATHERINE: (*obviously surprised*) How did you guess?

FRIEDA: Aren't we women supposed to be intuitive?

KATHERINE: I'm not sure about that. Well, anyway, you're right. Murry and I have been going through a very sticky patch. We went to Bandol hoping it would help, but I'm afraid it hasn't. Murry thinks that being in Cornwall for a time might do something for us. Men are so very naive, aren't they?

KATHERINE moves to the door right.

KATHERINE: Look at them now. David's taken Murry down to inspect his marigolds or something. They've completely forgotten we exist. Doesn't it worry you sometimes, Frieda?

FRIEDA: What do you mean?

KATHERINE: The way Lawrence treats you, all this male dominance stuff? I don't know how you can stand it. Of course Murry's the opposite. Like a spaniel he wants to please me all the time. Sometimes I feel like going up into a high tower and screaming ... Not to mention this Rananim business.

FRIEDA: Oh, the Rananim! Then you're not in favour of it?

KATHERINE: Of course I'm in favour of it ... in principle. It's wonderful, a new Utopia in which all members are given the opportunity to develop their talents to the full. I can't think of anything better, except, of course, that both sexes must be absolutely equal. Don't you agree?

FRIEDA: Of course. It must be so.

KATHERINE: No dominance by the male or the female for that matter, and no pretending that they have to defer to us because we're the weaker sex. Is that agreed?

FRIEDA: Of course.

KATHERINE: Then we're at one on that subject at least.

KATHERINE sits down.

KATHERINE: Have they been bothering you much?

FRIEDA: Whom do you mean?

KATHERINE: The authorities, the powers that be, all those people David loathes so much.

FRIEDA: Why do you ask?

KATHERINE: Because they get everywhere like bedbugs or woodlice. One of them leaped out at us as we turned off the main road. Ridiculous little man.

FRIEDA: I don't understand. Who leaped out?

KATHERINE: Don't get excited. I'm telling you. As we turned down the lane a man who was obviously a detective sprang out of the hedge like a Faustian Mephistopheles. He was wearing a trench coat and a trilby hat and big black boots and as we passed he got out a little notebook and began to scribble in it. The driver was quite windy. I could see his neck going all bulgy and red.

FRIEDA: You mean this has just happened?

KATHERINE: No more than ten minutes ago.

FRIEDA moves restlessly to the window.

FRIEDA: Oh dear! Please don't mention it to Lorenzo. He gets so worked up! So despondent! I could smash their heads in for them!

KATHERINE: I know exactly how you feel. You mean you weren't aware that these vultures had their eye on you?

FRIEDA: Of course I was aware. Sometimes they follow us when we walk to Saint Ives across the cliffs. It's all too squalid to

mention. But it does have a pantomime quality as you suggest. It makes us laugh and that does something to relieve the tension. A couple of weeks ago, we were coming back from the village when two thugs dressed as fishermen jumped up from behind the hedge and demanded to know what I was carrying in my knapsack. 'Ah, a camera!' one of them shouted, pulling out my small parcel and flourishing it in triumphant! Guess what it was! A loaf of bread!

KATHERINE laughs.

KATHERINE: They probably believe you're photographing the cliffs so that the enemy can choose the best place to wade ashore and occupy the country?

FRIEDA: I don't know what they believe. It's all so much nonsense. But what am I thinking off? You haven't seen your cottage yet, have you?

KATHERINE: There's no hurry. It was Murry's idea anyway.

FRIEDA: It's quite nice. A bit like this. Lorenzo and Henry have been busy with brooms and mops and things getting it ready.

KATHERINE: *(without much enthusiasm)* That's very good of them.

FRIEDA: Well, you know how Lorenzo loves doing something practical. I think he must be like his father in that respect. Shall we go and take possession?

KATHERINE: Yes, if you like. Otherwise David and Murray will be gassing out there all day.

FRIEDA: Come on then.

FRIEDA and KATHERINE exit. FRIEDA is talking about the curtains for the other cottage. There is a short pause in which we hear the splash of the sea and the cry of the gulls. Enter the INSPECTOR. He is dressed exactly as KATHERINE has described him above. He walks into the cottage without embarrassment or shame. He glances round at the decor with contempt and is about to thumb through the papers on the table when we hear the voices of LORENZO and MURRY outside.

LORENZO: Look, they're going to your cottage to inspect. We'll join them in a minute. Come in, Jack. There's so much to discuss. The magazine, your book, etc.

MURRY: Yes, yes. I'm anxious to know what you think of the book.

MURRY enters first, looks round and sees the INSPECTOR. LORENZO follows quickly.

LORENZO: Of course, the book. It's excellent! You've gone right to the heart of this Dostoevsky business!

LORENZO stops dead, having come face to face with the INSPECTOR.

LORENZO: Oh, it's you!

INSPECTOR: Yes, sir, it's me. I'm sorry if I startled you. I wanted a word, and, as there was nobody in, I thought I'd just wait a minute. I knew you weren't far away.

Although the INSPECTOR takes the trouble to sound very polite, his contempt is always close to the surface.

LORENZO: Didn't you see my wife?

INSPECTOR: Not exactly, sir. I did happen to hear her voice as she walked away with the other lady.

LORENZO: So you came in?

INSPECTOR: Yes, sir. I took the liberty.

LORENZO: Well, what do you want?

The INSPECTOR sits down at the table and produces his notebook.

INSPECTOR: It's this other gentleman I want to speak to. May I ask you a few questions, sir.

MURRY: I suppose so. What do you want to know?

INSPECTOR: (*Eyeing the cases*) I take it you've just arrived, sir?

MURRY: That's a fair deduction since you sprang in front of our gig no more than fifteen minutes ago.

INSPECTOR: Precisely, sir. (*writes in notebook*) Would you mind giving me your name and telling me how long you intend to stay?

MURRY: I take it you're authorised to ask these questions?

INSPECTOR: I believe I am, sir. As you may have noticed, there is a war on. We have to be very particular these days because of the danger from possible enemy action along the coast. I'm sure you understand.

MURRY: Of course. (*ironically*) If I may say so, you seem admirably suited to your work.

INSPECTOR: Thank you, sir.

MURRAY: My name is Middleton Murry, John Middleton Murry, and my wife and I have rented the neighbouring cottage.

INSPECTOR: (*writing*) Would that be with two d's, sir?

MURRAY: Yes, two d's and a ton: Middle-ton.

INSPECTOR: Thank you, sir. I take it you're British?

MURRAY: Yes, I was born in London and educated at Christ's College's Hospital. I went on to Oxford. Was there anything else?

INSPECTOR: Christ's College Hospital. And your wife, sir?

LORENZO, who has been showing signs of extreme anger, turns quickly.

LORENZO: Mr Middleton Murry's wife is from New Zealand. Her brother was killed in action in France a few months ago. Her name is Katherine with an e. Will that be all?

Pause. The INSPECTOR rises from the table and snaps his notebook shut. He stares hard at LORENZO.

INSPECTOR: That's all for the moment, sir.

INSPECTOR moves to the door and turns.

INSPECTOR: Yes, there was one other thing. A light has been reported coming from this cottage late in the evening several nights running. I wonder if you were aware of that fact, sir?

LORENZO: A light! What sort of light?

INSPECTOR: A light. You know, sir. As though someone was standing at the window and moving the curtains backwards and forwards as though signalling.

LORENZO: Signalling? How ridiculous!

INSPECTOR: Is it, sir? I know it sounds ridiculous when you say it like that, but light travels a long way, you know, and these things do happen. I should advise you to take particular care about your lights in future, especially as I understand your wife is of German extraction, so to say.

LORENZO: Thank you for your advice, Inspector. In future we'll contrive to keep the curtains closed.

INSPECTOR: Thank you, sir.

LORENZO: And perhaps I might ask you something in return.

INSPECTOR: Yes, sir?

LORENZO: To be a little more scrupulous in your work of national importance.

INSPECTOR: In what way, sir?

LORENZO: Next time you have occasion to visit Tregerthen Cottage perhaps you'll be good enough to wait at the door until someone invites you in?

A brief pause. The INSPECTOR is put out momentarily.

INSPECTOR: I'll be sure to bring a warrant next time if the occasion arises.

Exit INSPECTOR quickly. LORENZO and MURRY stare at one another.

MURRY: What cool cheek!

LORENZO: They're like rats! They crawl everywhere and think they can do anything to anybody in the name of patriotism. Have you noticed, there's nothing like the call of one's country to draw all those bloodsucking creepy crawlies out of their petty little sewage holes?

MURRY: We must do our best to ignore them, I suppose.

LORENZO: If only we could get away! Right away, I mean! Italy, Australia, America even. But they won't let us go! They want to keep us here and squeeze the blood out of our veins! Oh, it's all so hateful and petty!

MURRY: You'd think they'd be glad to be rid of you.

LORENZO: Precisely! But, oh no, they prefer to keep me dangling. I've been called to Bodmin for another medical examination though I was pronounced unfit for military service only last year. And still they won't release my passport.

MURRY: We can but hope. But tell me more about this Rananim idea of yours. Where does it come from?

- LORENZO: It was inspired by the Thirty-Third Psalm: 'Ranini Sadekin Badanoi!'- Rejoice in the Lord, O ye Righteous!
- MURRY: Yes, you explained that earlier. But how do you envisage this community? Precisely how will it work? How will it be run?
- MURRY sits down. LORENZO moves about the room in a state of feverish excitement.*
- LORENZO: As I view it, Rananim will be a colony of lost souls. Not lost in the sense that they're groping about in the dark or that they don't know what they're doing, but lost in the sense that they've cast themselves off from the old dead mechanistic society that is threatening to stifle and destroy them. That's why I've chosen the Phoenix as their symbol. Of course you know that when the Phoenix is burned in its nest it rises anew from its ashes and this goes on as a kind of continuous resurrection. Don't you think that's rather magnificent, Jack?
- MURRY: It's an inspiration, a wonderful idea! But who is to be involved?
- LORENZO: (*half carried away*) I don't know yet! None of the old progressive crowd, of course. People like Bertie Russell won't be any good because they can never agree with anything anybody else suggests. He's already made his views known. He wouldn't fit in at all! And, as you know, I don't believe in all this democratic nonsense, which leads down a blind alley. The thing I envisage would culminate in one real head. He would emerge as in any organism. We don't want to imitate a republic with a jumped up man of straw as its president. As I see it, Rananim would consist of open-minded people who would be given the opportunity to develop their talents to the full. They would live in complete freedom, of course, without rules of any sort. There will be no money. Our common life will be regulated by a code of moral integrity and not by riches, power or caprice.
- MURRY: It sounds magnificent! Just the sort of freedom that Katherine and I would enjoy.
- LORENZO: I'm glad you said that, Jack, because to tell you the truth, that has been worrying me a little.
- MURRY: How do you mean?
- LORENZO: Well, I wasn't thinking about you so much. I believe you to be thoroughly sound. But I have been a little concerned about Katherine.

MURRY remains silent.

LORENZO: I have great admiration for Katherine, Jack. I think you know that. Her stories are first rate. But I do sometimes wonder whether she's the sort of person to fit in to the Rananim idea.

MURRY: You do realise she's been far from well, don't you?

LORENZO: Of course.

MURRY: I'm sure you misjudge her, David.

LORENZO: Yes, yes: I expect you're right.

The sound of a loud but distant explosion is heard. MURRY half ducks. LORENZO looks towards the door.

MURRY: What was that?

LORENZO: I don't know. Something going on out at sea. We often hear it. I think they do it to terrify us. Well, then, what about the Rananim enterprise? I think perhaps Italy would be the place. I've thought about going back to Italy. Or Mexico, perhaps.

Enter KATHERINE followed by FRIEDA who is still smoking.

KATHERINE: Jack, did you hear that noise?

MURRY: Of course! Did you see anything?

KATHERINE: Frieda says they're probably firing at a submarine.

FRIEDA: A submarine! A plane! It's of no concern.

LORENZO: Just another symptom of our madness! I'll tell you what: let's all sit down and sing a song in case that silly detective is out there prowling among the bushes in his ridiculous hat and mackintosh.

FRIEDA: Good idea! What shall we sing?

LORENZO: What about one of those German songs we used to sing together, Frieda? What was that one that begins 'Ich weiss nicht...'?

FRIEDA: *(with enthusiasm)* Oh, 'Die Lorelei', of course! We must sing 'Die Lorelie'. *(to KATHERINE)* D'you know it? (*)

KATHERINE shakes head.

MURRY: I've heard it, but I don't remember the words.

FRIEDA: We'll teach you! Lorenzo, we must teach them 'Die Lorelei'!

LORENZO: *(beginning to show off)* Off course!

LORENZO strikes a pose and begins to sing.

LORENZO: Ich weiss nicht, was soll es bedeuten, Dass ich so traurig bin.
How does it go on?

FRIEDA: Ein Marchen aus alten...

LORENZO: That's it! Zeiten, Das kommt mir nicht aus dem Sinn. *(to MURRY)* D'you remember it now?

MURRY: *(laughing)* I do have some dim recollection.

LORENZO starts to sing again.

LORENZO: Where were we? Ah: Die Luft ist kuhl...

FRIEDA: Stop! Stop! We must teach them. Let's begin again, a line at a time.

LORENZO: Yes, that's the way we'll do it, a line at a time.

LORENZO and FRIEDA begin together, a line at a time. MURRY joins in but KATHERINE breaks away to look at one or two of the objects in the room. As they sing, more and more boisterously, the sound of a strange discordant music intervenes and becomes dominant. The lights fade to a blackout.

- *'Die Lorelei' founded on Greek mythology, by the German author Heinrich Heine. Published in 'The Puffin Song Book' compiled by Leslie Woodgate.*