

MR BANKS. You are excellent students, gentlemen, but to change the world you must harness that urge to question. Be hungry. Dig deeper. (*Hands LLOYD the essay.*) And it might even be a double first, Lloyd.

LLOYD. Oh, I don't think so, sir.

MR BANKS *hands copies out to everyone.*

MR BANKS. I want you to read this for tomorrow. Read and take note.

WILL. This isn't a second-year essay, surely.

MR BANKS. Isn't it? There's something more there, isn't there.

RALPH (*reading*). This is more than science.

MR BANKS. It means something to the writer. Go on now. Get out of here.

The MEN don't move; they are all reading the essay.

EDWARDS. Sir?

MR BANKS. Edwards?

EDWARDS. Whose essay is this?

LLOYD. Do we know him?

MR BANKS. I don't think so.

HOLMES. Was he a Trinity fellow?

MR BANKS. Trinity? No, no. Girton.

EDWARDS. He was – *she* was –

MR BANKS. Good day, boys.

MR BANKS *leaves. The MEN stand in silence.*

Scene Thirteen

An Education

MRS WELSH *stands and addresses the gathered Senate members. She has a leaflet in her hand.*

MRS WELSH. Gentlemen, the graduation of women. I'm going to surprise you by being brief. I only have one suggestion to put to you; that a student's mind might be bright enough to transcend their gender.

I have here an essay given to me by Professor Banks. In it the student combines physics with study of Kepler and the ancient texts to explain the existence of the Star of Bethlehem. For many years, St Matthew's narrative has puzzled scientists. He describes a star brighter than anything else in the sky, which rises in the east, moves towards Jerusalem, and then changes course to travel south as it guides the Magi towards Bethlehem. If I may quote you just a few lines:

'There is no physical possibility of a star changing course. So what did the Wise Men see? Consider the possibility of an optical illusion. Just as a cart on the road ahead appears to move backwards when overtaken, when the Earth passes Jupiter that October at a rate of twelve to one, onlookers at a specific longitude would have witnessed the planet seeming to double back on itself in retrograde motion. To the Magi standing at thirty-four degrees east in Jerusalem, Jupiter would have appeared to shift from its easterly course onto a new trajectory, north-west, towards Bethlehem.

As for the mystery of its brightness, that October, Saturn and Jupiter aligned in Pisces, a once-in-a-millennia occurrence, the resplendent glow twice as bright as anything else in the heavens. And this had great theological significance. Jupiter is the Roman symbol of kings, Saturn, the symbol of Israel, and Pisces, the symbol of the Jews. There it was, above them, "Here is the King of Israel, King of the Jews", written in the stars.'

Meanwhile, CELIA, CAROLYN and TESS gather at the top of the stairs.

CAROLYN. She hasn't gone, has she?

TESS. We'd have seen her.

CELIA. Poor Maeve.

MAEVE's door opens and she comes out holding her coat, followed by MINNIE who carries her suitcase. She walks past each of the WOMEN, each of whom smiles at her. MRS WELSH continues.

MRS WELSH. A remarkable mind in the making. And yet, this morning I let another equally gifted student go, as family circumstances demanded it. We will not allow scholarship to sabotage home life, gentlemen. But, where it can be taken up without compromise, the benefits will radiate from that student to everyone who surrounds them. So giving our girls an education won't only mean better nurses and teachers. It'll brighten the world for our sons and daughters for generations to come.

Gentlemen, I ask you please to consider a full membership vote.

MAEVE reaches the door, then turns back.

MAEVE. I hope you win. The vote.

CELIA. Thank you, Maeve.

MAEVE. Thank you.

MRS WELSH. Thank you.

Curtain.

ACT TWO

Scene One

An Offer

In a staffroom at Trinity College. MR BANKS has just entered. RADLEIGH, ANDERSON and COLLINS are standing around a table.

MR BANKS. I wasn't expecting a reception committee.

ANDERSON. Well, congratulations are in order. We hear Lloyd and Bennett are on track for firsts next year.

MR BANKS. Yes.

ANDERSON. You'll be next in line for a sainthood, flashing miracles like that.

MR BANKS. They've turned themselves round.

COLLINS. You've turned them around, Banks.

MR BANKS. I love my work.

ANDERSON. Your results speak for themselves. It's secured our place at the top of the league. Which is rather fortunate timing. You see, we're looking to offer a new fellowship.

MR BANKS. A fellowship?

ANDERSON. Yes, indeed.

MR BANKS. That's excellent news for Trinity.

A pause.

ANDERSON. Well?

MR BANKS. Well what?

ANDERSON. Really, Banks, for a double-first scholar you're a bit slow on the uptake.

TESS. Not really.

WILL. Well then.

A window smashes. Sounds of protestors outside.

TESS. Jesus!

WILL. Mr Banks, get the girls out now, let me talk to them.

MR BANKS. But –

WILL. Now!

Another smash from somewhere else, off.

CELIA. No!

TESS. Celia!

Another smash and then the MEN enter, a whole crowd, headed up by LLOYD and HOLMES. They stand in a line, unmoving, terrifying. Silence.

HOLMES (looking at the banners). This isn't right. It can't be right.

LLOYD. To hell with that.

He goes for the banner.

MR BANKS. What do you think you are doing?

The MEN pull the banner down.

Get out.

Silence.

I don't think you heard me. I said get out. If you leave now, there'll be minimal trouble.

WILL. Fellas. Please. Just go home.

HOLMES. What the hell are you doing here?

WILL. I said go home. You shouldn't be here.

LLOYD. You shouldn't be here. You're not one of them, are you? (Indicating MR BANKS.) Like he is.

LLOYD is rounding on WILL.

TESS. Will, be careful!

LLOYD. Whose side are you on? You're with us or against us.

HOLMES. Lloyd. That's enough.

LLOYD. Whose side are you on?!

WILL. I'd be ashamed to be on yours.

LLOYD punches WILL and knocks him down.

TESS. Stop it! Stop it!

WILL launches himself back to LLOYD. It erupts.

MR BANKS. Get out!

One of the MEN punches MR BANKS, who is knocked to the floor. MRS WELSH has entered, unseen, and surveys the scene with horror.

MRS WELSH. What on earth!

Everything goes silent. As she speaks she slowly loses control as she gets more and more distressed, until she lurches at them. All her careful self-control bursts until she is like an animal.

Dear God. What have you done? How dare you? How dare you come in here like this? Thirty years we slave for this day – and you – You should be ashamed. It's a sin. Do you have no respect? No thought? No dignity? It's not your livelihood. You've sacrificed nothing. Nothing! We sweat. Bleed. We give up everything we have in the world for this and you... you're barbarians. Barbarians! Get out. Get out. All of you. Out! Out!

She rushes at LLOYD, who, in one fell swoop, throws her to the ground.

HOLMES. Lloyd!

She lies there, unmoving. They are all paralysed with shock. She stays on the floor. HOLMES goes to help her and she refuses. Very slowly she picks herself up. As she does, MR PECK enters from the opposite side and takes his hat off.