

The Apple Tree

ORSON WELLES: Good evening, this is Orson Welles, your producer of a special series of broadcasts presented by the makers of Pabst Blue Ribbon ... the Mercury Summer Theater of the Air.

MUSIC: Mercury Theme (first movement of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto no. 1)

ANNOUNCER: Tonight, and every Friday night, Pabst Blue Ribbon presents you with a front row seat in America's favorite summer theater. So while America's famous producer-writer-director Orson Welles entertains you, pour yourself a tall, frosted glass of Pabst Blue Ribbon and enjoy at the same time great entertainment in this truly great theater. And now, Mr. Welles.

ORSON WELLES: Tonight, the Mercury brings you one of the loveliest of all love stories. It's by John Galsworthy and it's called ... "The Apple Tree" ...

MUSIC IN

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): It was Stella's and my silver wedding anniversary. We'd motored to Torquay where we first met ... to celebrate. Stella had suggested that we take a lunch and drive out on the moor.

STELLA: It'd be so lovely there, Frank, and quite warm in the sun, I can do some sketching while you read.

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): We drove several miles and stopped on a high hill with a view into the deep valley beyond. Stella wandered off somewhere to sketch and I stretched out in the sun and watched the sky and longed for I knew not what. There was no reason I should be unhappy or even mildly disturbed. My life had been pleasant, my marriage quite successful but, as I lay there, it seemed to me that there was something missing, something that had nothing to do with pleasant lives or successful marriages.

MUSIC OUT

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): The familiar words of Hippolytus echoed in my mind ... The apple tree. "The Apple-tree, the singing and the gold." ... The

apple tree.

MUSIC IN

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): And then, quite suddenly, I remembered. I'd been here before. Years before. I'd stood on this self-same hill. I knew the valley into which I looked. That ribbon of road and the old well behind. Life has moments of sheer beauty, of unbidden flying rapture that -- they last no longer than the span of a cloud's flight over the sun. I'd stumbled on just such a moment. In my own life, I'd stumbled on a buried memory of wild, sweet time.

MUSIC OUT

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): It was after my first year in college. A friend of mine, Robert Garton, and I were making a walking tour of the country around Torquay. But my knee which'd been injured in a football game the year before was giving me trouble. I knew I'd have to give up the tour, we were looking for a farmhouse somewhere where we could put up until I got better.

ROBERT: I don't think you ought to walk much farther, Frank. Why don't I go ahead and reconnoiter? Ohhhh, I won't need to. Here's someone coming.

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): It was a girl. The wind blew her crude, little skirt against her legs and lifted her battered tam-o'-shanter. It was clear she was a country girl -- her shoes were split, her hands were rough and brown, and her hair waved untidily across her forehead. But her lashes were long and dark, and her gray eyes were a wonder: dewy, as if opened for the first time that day.

MEGAN: Hello.

ROBERT: Could you tell us if there's a farm near here where we could spend the night? My friend's getting pretty lame.

MEGAN: Well, there's our farm, sir.

FRANK: Oh, could you put us up?

MEGAN: I'm sure my aunt would be glad to. If you like, I'll show you the way.

FRANK: We appreciate it very much.

MEGAN: It's not very far. Just down the valley. Right through the apple orchard and we're there.

MUSIC IN

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): Just through a narrow wood, we came on the farm -- a long, low, stone-built house with casement windows, in a farmyard where pigs and fowls and an old mare were straying about, and in front, an orchard of apple trees, just breaking into flower. A woman stood by the door, watching as we approached.

MEGAN: This is Mrs. Narracombe, my aunt.

FRANK: We met your niece on the road, she said she - she thought you might put us up.

AUNT: Well, I can, if you don't mind one room. Megan, get the spare room ready, and a bowl of cream. The gentlemen will be wanting tea, I expect.

FRANK: Thank you, Mrs. Narracombe. By the way, I - we haven't been introduced.

MEGAN: No, sir.

FRANK: This is Robert Garton, I'm Frank Ashurst.

MEGAN: How do you do, sir?

ROBERT: Hello.

FRANK: What's your name?

MEGAN: Megan David.

ROBERT: Are you a Devonshire girl?

MEGAN: Oh, no, sir. I'm from Wales.

FRANK: You're very young, aren't you?

MEGAN: Seventeen, sir.

ROBERT: Er, how many of you live here?

MEGAN: Oh, there's my aunt and the two nephews, the boys you saw as you came.

Nick and Rick they're called. And then there's old Jim, our hired man.

FRANK: Quite a family.

MEGAN: Yes, sir. There's anything else you want, (fades away) you'll call.

FRANK: All right. Thank you.

ROBERT: Pretty thing, isn't she?

FRANK: Huh? Pretty? She's like a flower. Like a wildflower that you come on unexpectedly in the woods.

ROBERT: Mmm. A bit poetic for me. But I see your point. I say, Frank, your knee is pretty bad.

FRANK: Yea...

ROBERT: What do you say I leave you here for a couple of days?

FRANK: Well, it does hurt like the devil. What about you?

ROBERT: Well, I have to get back to London but I can get the train from Torquay. That is, if you don't mind being left alone.

FRANK: As a matter of fact, I shall like it -- nothing to do but dream and watch Spring on a farm. I've always wanted to do that.

ROBERT: Well, good luck to you, then. Look me up when you get to London. And, uh, be careful of the ... wildflowers.

MUSIC IN

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): It was good to be left alone. I think they were glad to have me. Megan and her aunt worried about my lameness as if I'd been one of the family. From the very first I felt that Megan liked me. She performed little kindnesses for me that weren't part of her duties. As the days went by, I began to expect them. When I awoke in the morning, the thought of her made me anxious to be up and downstairs. Even if I didn't talk with her, I liked to be near her where I could hear her singing at her work. One day I was down by the big apple tree. The two little boys, Nick and Rick, were playing there by the pool.

MUSIC OUT - CHILDREN LAUGHING

NICK: Watch out, Rick! The gipsy bogle will get you!

FRANK: Gipsy bogle? (laughs) What do you mean by the gipsy bogle, Rick?

RICK: The gipsy bogle sets on the stone there by the apple tree.

FRANK (greatly amused): Oh? And what does he look like?

RICK: Dunno. Never seen it. Megan says he sets there. Megan's a-feared of it.

FRANK: Oh?

NICK: But she's not a-feared o' you!

RICK: She says a prayer for you.

FRANK: How do you know that, you little rascal?

RICK: When I was asleep, she said: 'God bless us all, an' Mr. Ashes.'
I
heard 'er whisperin'.

FRANK (pleasantly): You're a little ruffian to tell what you hear when you're not meant to hear it.

NICK: Ya see, Rick! I told ya not to tell him!

MEGAN (calling out): Nick! Rick! Come here, both of you!

FRANK: Here they are, Megan.

MEGAN (approaching): And I've been looking all over for the last-- (the boys laugh) Go into the house at once! Auntie wants you. Now, go on with you.

RICK: Nick told him about the gipsy bogle!

MEGAN: Go on, now! No more nonsense out of you!

BOYS EXIT, LAUGHING

MEGAN (laughs self-consciously): Children are silly sometimes.

FRANK: Oh, I don't think so. They're often more sensible than grown-ups. Tell me, Megan. What's this gipsy bogle they're talking about?

MEGAN (dead serious): He brings bad things. There're bogles in the rocks; they're men who lived long ago. There's one that comes here and sits on that rock.

FRANK: I shall come down one night and sit on the rock, then, and have a talk with him.

MEGAN (genuinely distressed): Oh, please don't! Something will happen to you.

FRANK: Well, does it matter if anything happened to me, Megan? Would it disturb you a lot? (beat) Well, I - I daresay I shan't see him, because I suppose I shall be off pretty soon.

MEGAN: Oh, no.

FRANK: Would you like me to stay?

MEGAN (whispers): Yes. Very much.

FRANK: Well, then I will stay. And tonight, Megan, I will -- I'm going to say a prayer for you.

MEGAN: You're laughing at me. Laughing at us, all of us.

FRANK: That's not true, Megan. Really, that's not true.

MEGAN: Oh, I, I --

FRANK: Wait, Megan. Your hair. Your hair -- it's caught in the apple blossoms.

MUSIC IN

FRANK: Don't move, Megan. Don't move. Ah, you're - you're beautiful with those clusters of pink blossoms in your dark hair. (whispers) Megan.

MEGAN: Ohhh!

FRANK: You're so very, very sweet, Megan.

MEGAN: You're, too.

FRANK (pause): Megan, come here tonight. The big apple tree. After they've gone to bed. Megan, promise.

MEGAN (whispers): I promise.

MUSIC UP AND DOWN

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): For a long time, after Megan had fled away through the orchard, I stood there, under the apple tree. This was the beginning of what? She was so lovely, so unutterably lovely, and untouched. I felt somehow as if I'd beheld a miracle and it had transformed me. I walked on toward the wild meadow. Jim, the hired man, was out there.

MUSIC OUT

JIM: Good evening to you, Mr. Ashurst.

FRANK: Good evening, Jim.

JIM: 'Tis brave weather for the grass.

FRANK: They tell me you've seen the gipsy bogle. Uh, have you seen it too, is that right?

JIM: Well, 'twere in my mind as 'twas there, this evenin', little af' four.

Ask Megan. If she was there, she seen him.

FRANK: Yes. Yes, she's sensitive. She - she feels everything.

JIM: She's very lovin'-'earted.

FRANK: Loving-hearted.

JIM: Aye.

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): Yes. That was it. What was I to do about this girl who loved me so? And whom I loved? I walked for a long time. In the orchard, I broke off a spray from a crabapple tree. The buds were like Megan, shell-like, rose-pink, wild, and fresh -- and the opening flowers, white, and wild, and touching.

MUSIC IN AND OUT

ORSON WELLES: Ladies and gentlemen, you're listening to our Mercury production of John Galsworthy's great love story "The Apple Tree." Now, before we bring you the final act of "The Apple Tree," here's Jimmy Wallington who has the glint of an old grad in his eye as he thinks of the coming football season.

ANNOUNCER: Ah, yes, Orson. Tomorrow and next Saturday, the old pigskin season swings into action. Those first really post-war elevens gallop out on the field. And that reminds me, of course, of blended, splendid Pabst Blue Ribbon. For what is that truly great beer but a team? A blend of never less than thirty-three fine brews, each in itself an all-American for flavor and quality. Yes, and what is finer than to have the team right with you in a tall, foam-capped glass as you sit by your radio and listen to the referees' whistles start the Saturday gridiron battles? Yes, friends, you'll find

me
tomorrow right by my radio, listening to a football game. And right
beside
me, where I can enjoy that perfect flavor -- not too heavy, not too
light,
but clean, fresh, sparkling -- will be a good supply of blended,
splendid
Pabst Blue Ribbon. And, say, incidentally, friends, if you occasionally
can't
get all the Pabst Blue Ribbon you wish, please keep on asking your
dealer for
it. We're doing our best to get you your share of blended, splendid
Pabst
Blue Ribbon. And now, part two of Orson Welles' Mercury production of
the
famous love story by John Galsworthy, "The Apple Tree."

MUSIC IN

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): She kept her promise. Megan met me under the
apple
tree that night.

FOOTSTEPS APPROACH

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): She came straight toward me ... and into my
arms.
And our lips sought each other. And we stood there together ... for a
long
time in the moonlight.

MUSIC UP AND DOWN

FRANK: Megan. Megan, why did you come?

MEGAN: Sir, you asked me to.

FRANK: Megan, darling, don't call me "sir."

MEGAN: What should I be callin' you?

FRANK: Frank.

MEGAN: Oh, I couldn't.

FRANK: But you love me, don't you?

MEGAN: I couldn't help lovin' you and I want to be with you -- that's
all.

FRANK: That's all?

MEGAN: I shall die if I can't be with you.

FRANK: You shall be with me forever, Megan. Forever. We'll go to
London. I'll
show you the world.

MEGAN: I don't care where we go. If I can be with you, that's all.

FRANK: Tomorrow, dear, I'll - I'll go to Torquay and get some money,
and get
you some clothes that won't be noticed, and when we get to London ...
if you
love me well enough, we'll be married.

MEGAN: Oh, no, I couldn't. I only want to be with you.

FRANK: Oh, Megan, I'm not nearly good enough for you.

MUSIC OUT

FRANK: Tell me, when did you begin to love me?

MEGAN: When I saw you in the road and you looked at me. But I never
thought
you'd want me.

FRANK: Oh, my darling. My darling.

MUSIC IN

MEGAN: Oh, look! Look! The gipsy bogle!

FRANK: The gipsy bogle? Where? I don't see anything.

MEGAN: There! Sitting on the stone, under the tree!

FRANK: Megan! There's nothing there. Only the moonlight on the rocks.

MEGAN: I saw it! And I'm afraid! Bad sign.

FRANK: A bad sign?

MEGAN: I must go in.

FRANK: Darling, Megan, there's nothing there. There's no gipsy bogle.
It's
only your imagination.

MEGAN: You don't see the bogles but I see them. And I know. Good night.

FOOTSTEPS AWAY

FRANK: Megan! Megan!

MUSIC OUT

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): I heard the gate click ...

GATE CLICKS

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): ... knew she'd gone. 'Stead of her, only this
old

apple tree and the scent of the woods. A little part of her. And above me,
and around, the blossoms, more living, more moonlit than ever, seemed to glow
and breathe.

MUSIC IN

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): The next morning, I left early and went to Torquay.
I wanted to get some money and I had to cash a check but I found that without
credentials I'd have to wait till they wired the London bank for verification. While I waited for the answer, I shopped for a dress for Megan.

SALESWOMAN: Here's something, sir. It's very smart.

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): The more I looked at those modish gowns, the less
they seemed suited to Megan. It was incredible that Megan -- my Megan --
--
could ever be dressed in anything except the rough tweed skirt and battered
tam-o'-shanter I'd always seen her wear. Couldn't make up my mind and yet she
couldn't wear her old clothes in London. They wouldn't suit her either. Couldn't make up my mind.

MUSIC OUT

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): I walked the streets of Torquay, confused and undecided.

HALLIDAY: Well, Frank Ashurst! Haven't seen you since Rugby!

FRANK: Huh? Oh, Halliday! Phil Halliday! This is a surprise.

HALLIDAY: Hey, if you're not lunching anywhere, come with me. I'm here with
my sister, Stella.

FRANK: Ah, that's good. I - I'd love to see Stella and I haven't any good
reason for refusing, Phil.

PERKY MUSICAL BRIDGE

FRANK: Oh, Great Scott, I've completely forgotten the time. It's after three
and the bank's closed.

HALLIDAY: Splendid! That means you'll have to stay over in Torquay.

FRANK: Oh, I-I can't do that--

MUSIC OUT

STELLA: Oh, we should love to have you. I know Phil's getting bored to death with me and we've had such fun.

FRANK (reluctant): Yes, it has been fun, Stella. I've been rustic for so long, I'd almost forgotten how pleasant London talk can be. (beat) Very well.
(laughs) I'll stay.

PERKY MUSICAL BRIDGE

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): I sent a wire to Mrs. Narracombe. I hoped that Megan would understand. Just this one day away from her wouldn't matter. This was the life that I'd always known -- gay, cheerful, normal people.

MUSIC OUT

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): Just a few more hours of their life before I left it altogether didn't seem wrong. Stella was a pretty thing. Curious, the calm way she looked at me. As if she understood everything and never questioned too deeply.

SAD MUSIC IN

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): But that night I couldn't sleep. I thought of Megan. I was with her again -- under the living, breathing whiteness of the blossoms. The moonlight on her upturned face, the face of innocence and humble passion. Megan, poor little trusting Megan. How much did I really love her? How much was madness? And the Spring? And the wild beauty of her? I thought of Stella. Stella, cool, poised and friendly. Stella belonged to the world I knew and understood, a world that understood me. Megan, Megan didn't understand and ... she never could belong. She loved me but was that enough for either of us? I didn't know what to do.

MUSIC CHANGES TONE

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): Phil and Stella had asked me to go with them to Totnes for a picnic. I hadn't given them a definite answer, nor did I send any further wire to Mrs. Narracombe. Today I had to decide. I knew that. I went out for a walk along the cliff wall.

WAVES AGAINST THE SEA WALL

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): There was a high sea running. There weren't many people out. I'd walked a mile or so, I guess, before I saw her. There she was. Megan, in her old skirt and jacket and tam-o'-shanter. She was looking for me, I knew that at once. She'd look up into the faces of the passers-by -- wavering, lost-looking, and somehow pitiful. I followed her a long way. Once, she stopped and leaned against the sea wall. I wanted her again. I wanted her kisses, her abandonment, all her quick, warm pagan emotion. And the wonderful feeling that night under the moonlit apple tree. Yet I ... I couldn't move toward her. I couldn't let her know I was there. For suddenly I realized that to go back to the farm and love Megan, out in the woods, among the rocks, with everything around, wild and fitting -- that was what I wanted. And that was impossible. But to transplant her to the town, to keep her in some little flat -- and when the wild ecstasy wore off, to find her commonplace, unable to fit into my world, and no longer able to go back to her own -- that was worse. Far worse. I took another long, last look at that pathetic, wistful figure, staring out over the sea. Goodbye, Megan. Goodbye, my darling. Goodbye.

MUSIC AND WAVES UP AND OUT

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): Three days later I went back to London, traveling with the Hallidays. On the last day of April, the following year, Stella and I were married. All this I remembered as I sat there on the hill in the warm sun. And as I remembered, an ache for a lost youth, a hankering, and a sense of wasted love and sweetness gripped me. And, the sun no longer warm, I got up and walked a ways down the road. There was a man standing by what I saw was a grave, an old man he was. And the grave was by the crossroads. There was a moorstone to the west. And, on it, someone had thrown a blackthorn spray ... and a handful of bluebells.

OLD MAN: Good afternoon to you, sir. Nice day for the walk.

FRANK: Can you tell me whose grave this is?

OLD MAN: Well, now, it's quite a story. 'Twas a poor soul that killed herself. 'Twas a long time ago, she was a pretty girl but too lovin'-hearted.

FRANK: Too--? Too loving-hearted?

OLD MAN: In them days, I was working for Mrs. Narracombe and she was, too. There was a college gentleman staying with us. She took a fancy to him. He was a nice fella, too. Then, one day he went away sudden-like and never come back. After that she was crying a lot and then one day I found her. She was lying in the pool by the old apple tree by the stone where the gipsy bogle sat.

FRANK: Oh...

OLD MAN: It was June then but she'd found a little bit of apple blossom and stuck it in her hair.

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): I walked away. I'd heard enough.

WIND

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): On the top of the hill, I lay down and buried my face in my hands. Megan's face brushed close. Megan, with a sprig of apple blossoms in her dark, wet hair.

WIND UP

MEGAN'S VOICE (filtered): If I can be with you, that's all. If I can be with you.

WIND DOWN AND OUT, FOOTSTEPS

STELLA: Oh, there you are, Frank. Look at my sketch. It's pretty, don't you think?

FRANK: Hm? (absently) Oh, yes. It's very pretty.

STELLA: Still, there's something wanting, isn't there?

FRANK: Yes.

FRANK ASHURST (narrates): Yes. There was something wanting ... The apple tree ... the singing ... and the gold ...

MUSIC IN AND OUT

ANNOUNCER: You have just heard the Orson Welles Mercury production of "The Apple Tree" by John Galsworthy. Mr. Welles will return in just a moment. But, first, let me again remind you to be patient with your dealer when, occasionally these days, he's unable to supply you with all the Pabst Blue Ribbon you'd like. He's doing his best you can be sure of that. Yes, and here's something else you can be sure of. Every single bottle of Pabst Blue Ribbon you do get will, as always, be the happy blending of never less than thirty-three fine brews. Yes, every foaming, frosty glass you enjoy will, as always, have that famous Pabst Blue Ribbon flavor. Not too heavy, not too light but fresh, clean, sparkling -- with the real beer taste coming through the way you like it. So keep asking for blended, splendid Pabst Blue Ribbon. And now, Mr. Welles.

MUSIC IN

ORSON WELLES: Ladies and gentlemen, because we have a couple of minutes before it's time to say good night, I'd like to read you a poem. Like our story tonight, it deals with love and lost love. It's by Ernest Dowson. It's a great favorite. It's called "Cynara."

MUSIC OUT

Last night, ah, yesternight, betwixt her lips and mine
There fell thy shadow, Cynara! thy breath was shed
Upon my soul between the kisses and the wine;
And I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, I was desolate and bowed my head:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

All night upon mine heart I felt her warm heart beat,
Night-long within mine arms in love and sleep she lay;
Surely the kisses of her bought red mouth were sweet;
But I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
When I awoke and found the dawn was grey:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

I have forgot much, Cynara! gone with the wind,
Flung roses, roses riotously with the throng,
Dancing, to put thy pale, lost lilies out of mind;
But I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, all the time, because the dance was long:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

I cried for madder music and for stronger wine,
And when the feast is finished and the lamps expire,
Then falls thy shadow, Cynara! the night is thine;
And I am desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, hungry for the lips of my desire:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

And now it's time to say good night. Next week's show is Shakespeare's
"King
Lear." Till then, we remain as always, obediently yours.

MUSIC: Mercury Theme

ANNOUNCER: This program came to you through the courtesy of the Pabst
Brewing
Company of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, makers of blended, splendid Pabst Blue
Ribbon. This is CBS, the Columbia Broadcasting System.

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