

英 汉 对 照
读 物



FIVE ONE-ACT PLAYS

五 个 独 幕 剧

天 津 人 民 出 版 社

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五个独幕剧

吕叔湘 译注

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序

这里选录的五个独幕剧都是很有名的，常见于别的选本。剧本的译注工作是四十年代后期做的，这次重印，有些小修改。这几个剧本都曾经在开明书店的《英文月刊》上登载过，第一、第二两种还曾经跟另外一个剧本《马路边上的人》合起来出过一个单行本。初学英语的人需要有课外读物，现在也已经出了不少种，但是剧本形式的好象还不多，这个选本也许可以填补这个空缺。

《哥儿回来了》的作者 A. A. Milne (1882-1956) 是英国现代名作家，剑桥大学出身。他不光写剧本，也写散文，写儿童读物，写侦探小说，并且当过幽默杂志 Punch 的副主编。他的剧本有 First Plays, Second Plays, Three Plays, Four Plays 等集。他的另一个独幕剧 The Camberley Triangle 曾经由赵元任先生译成汉语，改名《最后五分钟》(中华书局)。

《家教》的作者 George Middleton (1880-?) 是美国人，哥伦比亚大学的毕业生。他一直从事写作，提倡独幕剧最出力，他自己写的也以独幕剧为多。“家教”是他最好也最出名的短剧之一。这个戏用 Tradition (传统) 这个字做名字，有点一语双关：一方面欧立凡这个老头儿代表一种传统的观念，演戏不是高尚的事儿；另一方面，欧老太太可同情女儿，因为她自己有志未成，她们母女之间又有了一个世代相传的关系。现在勉强译作“家教。”

《星期四晚上》的作者 Christopher Morley (1890—1957) 是一个数学教授的儿子，大学毕业后曾留学英国。回国后做记者，在《星期六晚邮》上写专栏，以文笔优雅见称。后来也写小说，但不及他的小品文更为人称道。他的剧作不多，《星期四晚上》最有名。小两口儿拌嘴，两位老太太用计调解，表面上看来只是开开玩笑的故事。可是这里揭示一个真理：人们的成见，在他本人无不持之有故，言之成理，可是经别人拿来一夸大，连他本人也看出来它的不合理。这就是所谓“寓庄于谐”，是喜剧的本色。

《沈普生先生》的作者 Charles Lee 是英国人，曾写过好几本描写英国西部乡村生活的短篇集。这是他的第一个剧本，脱胎于一个同名的短篇小说。这里边的性格描写的精到，幽默的自然，剧情结束的恰当，都是不可多得的。这个短剧写于1911年，在1927年同时获得英国戏剧协会组织的 Festival of Community Drama 里 Lord Howard de Walden 奖杯和纽约“小剧院”竞赛里的 David Belasco 奖杯，也可见得它的确有站得住的道理。这个剧，以表现在它里边的那一个生活片段而论，当然是一个喜剧，可是德琳和洛琳这姐妹俩的一生又何尝不是一个大悲剧呢？

《一个道德问题》的作者 R. U. Joyce 生平不详。剧本虽短，剧情却颇能吸引观众意注，结尾尤其出人意外。

吕叔湘

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The Boy Comes Home

By A. A. MILNE

CHARACTERS: Uncle James

Aunt Emily

Philip

Mary, the Parlour Maid

Mrs. Higgins, the Cook

TIME: The day after the War

SCENE: *A room in Uncle James's house in the Cromwell Road. Any room in Uncle James's house is furnished in heavy mid-Victorian style; this particular morning-room is perhaps solidier and more respectable even than the others, from the heavy table in the middle of it to the heavy engravings on the walls. There are two doors to it. The one at the back opens into the hall, the one at the side into the dining-room.*

Philip comes in from the hall and goes into the dining-room. Apparently he finds nothing there, for he returns to the morning-room, looks about him for a moment and then rings the bell. It is ten o'clock, and he wants his breakfast. He picks up the paper, and sits in a heavy armchair in front of the fire—a pleasant-looking well-built person of twenty-three, with an air of decisiveness about him. Mary, the parlour maid, comes in.

Mary. Did you ring, Master Philip?

Philip (*absently*). Yes; I want some breakfast, please, Mary.

Mary (*coldly*). Breakfast has been cleared away an hour ago.

Philip. Exactly. That's why I rang. You can boil me a couple of eggs or something. And coffee, not tea.

Mary. I'm sure I don't know what Mrs. Higgins will say.

Philip (*getting up*). Who is Mrs. Higgins?

Mary. The cook. And she's not used to being put about like this.

Philip. Do you think she'll say something?

Mary. I don't know what she'll say.

Philip. You needn't tell me, you know, if you don't want to. Anyway, I don't suppose it will shock me. One gets used to it in the Army. (*He smiles pleasantly at her.*)

Mary. Well, I'll do what I can, sir. But breakfast at eight sharp is the master's rule, just as it used to be before you went away to the war.

Philip. Before I went away to the war I did a lot of silly things. Don't drag them up now. (*More curtly.*) Two eggs, and if there's a ham bring that along too. (*He turns away.*)

Mary (*doubtfully, as she prepares to go*). Well, I'm sure I don't know what Mrs. Higgins will say. (*Exit*)

Mary. As she goes out she makes way for Aunt Emily to come in, a kind-hearted mid-Victorian lady who has never had any desire for vote.)

Emily. There you are, Philip! Good-morning, dear. Did you sleep well?

Philip. Rather; splendidly, thanks, Aunt Emily. How are you? *(He kisses her.)*

Emily. And did you have a good breakfast? Naughty boy to be late for it. I always thought they had to get up so early in the Army.

Philip. They do. That's why they're so late when they get out of the Army.

Emily. Dear me! I should have thought a habit of four years would have stayed with you.

Philip. Every morning for four years, as I've shot out of bed, I've said to myself. "Wait! A time will come." *(smiling.)* That doesn't really give a habit a chance.

Emily. Well, I dare say you wanted your sleep out. I was so afraid that a really cosy bed would keep you awake after all those years in the trenches.

Philip. Well, one isn't in the trenches all the time. And one gets leave—if one's an officer.

Emily *(reproachfully).* You didn't spend much of it with us, Philip.

Philip *(taking her hands).* I know; but you did understand, didn't you, dear?

Emily. We're not very gay, and I know you must have wanted gaiety for the little time you had. But I think your Uncle James felt it. After all, dear, you've lived with us for some years, and he is your guardian.

Philip. I know. You've been a darling to me always, Aunt Emily. But (*awkwardly.*) Uncle James and I—

Emily. Of course, he is a little difficult to get on with. I'm more used to him. But I'm sure he really is very fond of you, Philip.

Philip. H'm! I always used to be frightened of him.... I suppose he's just the same. He seemed just the same last night—and he still has breakfast at eight o'clock. Been making pots of money, I suppose?

Emily. He never tells me exactly, but he did speak once about the absurdity of the excess-profits tax. You see, jam is a thing the Army wants.

Philp. It certainly gets it.

Emily. It was so nice for him, because it made him feel he was doing his bit, helping the poor men in the trenches. (*Enter Mary.*)

Mary. Mrs. Higgins wishes to speak to you, ma'am. (*She looks at Philip as much as to say, "There you are!"*)

Emily (*getting up*). Yes, I'll come. (*To Philip.*) I think I'd better just see what she wants, Philip.

Philip (*firmly to Mary*). Tell Mrs. Higgins to come here. (*Mary hesitates and looks at her mistress.*) At once, please. (*Exit Mary.*)

Emily (*upset*). Philip, dear, I don't know what Mrs. Higgins will say—

Philip. No; nobody seems to. I thought we might really find out for once.

Emily (*going towards the door*). Perhaps I'd better go—

Philip (*putting his arm around her waist*). Oh, no, you mustn't. You see, she really wants to see me.

Emily. You?

Philip. Yes; I ordered breakfast five minutes ago.

Emily. Philip! My poor boy! Why didn't you tell me? And I dare say I could have got it for you. Though I don't know what Mrs. Higgins— (*An extremely angry voice is heard outside, and Mrs. Higgins, stout and aggressive, comes in.*)

Mrs. Higgins (*truculently*). You sent for me, ma'am?

Emily (*nervously*). Yes—er—I think if you—perhaps—

Philip (*calmly*). I sent for you, Mrs. Higgins. I want some breakfast. Didn't Mary tell you?

Mrs. Higgins. Breakfast is at eight o'clock. It always has been as long as I've been in this house, and always will be until I get further orders.

Philip. Well, you've just got further orders. Two eggs, and if there's a ham—

Mrs. Higgins. Orders. We're talking about orders. From whom in this house do I take orders, may I ask?

Philip. In this case from me.

Mrs. Higgins (*playing her trump-card*). In that case, ma'am, I wish to give a month's notice from today. Inclusive.

Philip (*quickly, before his aunt can say anything*). Certainly. In fact, you'd probably prefer it if my aunt gave you notice, and then you could go at once. We can easily arrange that. (*To Aunt Emily as he takes out a fountain-pen and cheque book.*) What do you pay her?

Emily (*faintly*). Forty-five pounds.

Philip (*writing on his knee*). Twelves into forty-five.... (*pleasantly to Mrs. Higgins, but without looking up.*) I hope you don't mind a Cox's cheque. Some people do; but this is quite a good one. (*Tearing it out.*) Here you are.

Mrs. Higgins (*taken aback*). What's this?

Philip. Your wages instead of notice. Now you can go at once.

Mrs. Higgins. Who said anything about going?

Philip (*surprised*). I'm sorry; I thought you did.

Mrs. Higgins. If it's only a bit of breakfast, I don't say but what I mightn't get it, if I'm asked decent.

Philip (*putting back the cheque*). Then let me say again, "Two eggs, ham and coffee." And Mary can bring the ham up at once, and I'll get going on that. (*Turning away.*) Thanks very much.

Mrs. Higgins. Well, I—well—well! (*Exit speechless.*)

Philip (*surprised*). Is that all she ever says? It isn't

much to worry about.

Emily. Philip, how could you! I should have been terrified.

Philip. Well, you see, I've done your job for two years out there.

Emily. What job?

Philip. Mess President.... I think I'll go and see about that ham. *(He smiles at her and goes out into the dining-room. Aunt Emily wanders around the room, putting a few things tidy as is her habit, when she is interrupted by the entrance of Uncle James. James is not a big man nor an impressive one in his black morning-coat; and his thin straggly beard, now going grey, does not hide a chin of any great power; but he has a severity which passes for strength with the weak.)*

James. Philip down yet?

Emily. He's just having his breakfast.

James *(looking at his watch)*. Ten o'clock. *(Snapping it shut and putting it back.)* Ten o'clock. I say ten o'clock, Emily.

Emily. Yes, dear, I heard you.

James. You don't say anything?

Emily *(vaguely)*. I expect he's tired after that long war.

James. That's no excuse for not being punctual. I suppose he learnt punctuality in the Army?

Emily. I expect he learnt it, James, but I understood

him to say that he'd forgotten it.

James. Then the sooner he learns it again the better. I particularly stayed away from the office today in order to talk things over with him, and (*looking at his watch.*) here's ten o'clock—past ten—and no sign of him. I'm practically throwing away a day.

Emily. What are you going to talk to him about?

James. His future, naturally. I have decided that the best thing he can do is to come into the business at once.

Emily. Are you really going to talk it over with him, James, or are you just going to tell him that he must come?

James (*surprised*). What do you mean? What's the difference? Naturally we shall talk it over first, and—er—naturally he'll fall in with my wishes.

Emily. I suppose he can hardly help himself, poor boy.

James. Not until he's twenty-five, anyhow. When he's twenty-five he can have his own money and do what he likes with it.

Emily (*timidly*). But I think you ought to consult him a little, dear. After all, he has been fighting for us.

James (*with his back to the fire*). Now that's the sort of silly sentiment that there's been much too much of. I object to it strongly. I don't want to boast, but I think I may claim to have done my share. I gave up my neph-

ew to my country, and I—er—suffered from the shortage of potatoes to an extent that you probably didn't realize. Indeed, if it hadn't been for your fortunate discovery about that time that you didn't really like potatoes, I don't know how we should have carried on. And, as I think I've told you before, the excess-profits tax seemed to me a singularly stupid piece of legislation—but I paid it. And I don't go boasting about how much I paid.

Emily (*unconvinced*). Well, I think that Philip's four years out there have made him more of a man; he doesn't seem somehow like a boy who can be told what to do. I'm sure they've taught him something.

James. I've no doubt that they've taught him something about—er—bombs and—er—which end a revolver goes off, and how to form fours. But I don't see that sort of thing helps him to decide upon the most suitable career for a young man in after-war conditions.

Emily. Well, I can only say you'll find him different.

James. I didn't notice any particular difference last night.

Emily. I think you'll find him rather more—I can't quite think of the word, but Mrs. Higgins could tell you what I mean.

James. Of course, if he likes to earn his living any other way, he may; but I don't see how he proposes to do it so long as I hold the purse-strings. (*Looking at his watch.*) Perhaps you'd better tell him that I cannot

wait any longer. (*Emily opens the door leading into the dining-room and talks through it to Philip.*)

Emily. Philip, your uncle is waiting to see you before he goes to the office. Will you be long, dear?

Philip (*from the dining-room*). Is he in a hurry?

James (*shortly*). Yes.

Emily. He says he is rather, dear.

Philip. Couldn't he come and talk in here? It wouldn't interfere with my breakfast.

James. No.

Emily. He says he'd rather you came to him, darling.

Philip (*resigned*). Oh, well.

Emily (*to James*). He'll be here directly, dear. Just sit down in front of the fire and make yourself comfortable with the paper. He won't keep you long. (*She arranges him.*)

James (*taking the paper*). The morning is not the time to make one's self comfortable. It's a most dangerous habit. I nearly found myself dropping off in front of the fire just now. I don't like this hanging about, wasting the day. (*He opens the paper.*)

Emily. You should have had a nice sleep, dear, while you could. We were up so late last night listening to Philip's stories.

James. Yes, yes. (*He begins a yawn and stifles it hurriedly.*) You mustn't neglect your duties, Emily. I've no doubt you have plenty to do.

Emily. All right, James, then I'll leave you. But don't be hard on the boy.

James (*sleepily*). I shall be just. Emily; you can rely upon that.

Emily (*going to the door*). I don't think that's quite what I meant. (*She goes out. James, who is now quite comfortable, begins to nod. He wakes up with a start, turns over the paper and nods again. Soon he is breathing deeply with closed eyes.*)

Philip (*coming in*). Sorry to have kept you waiting, but I was a bit late for breakfast. (*He takes out his pipe.*) Are we going to talk business or what?

James (*taking out his watch*). A bit late! I make it just two hours.

Philip (*pleasantly*). All right, Uncle James. Call it two hours late. Or twenty-two hours early for tomorrow's breakfast, if you like. (*He sits down in a chair on the opposite side of the table from his uncle, and lights his pipe.*)

James. You smoke now?

Philip (*staggered*). I what?

James (*nodding at his pipe*). You smoke?

Philip. Good heavens! What did you think we did in France?

James. Before you start smoking all over the house, I should have thought you would have asked your aunt's permission. (*Philip looks at him in amazement, and then*

goes to the door.)

Philip (*calling*). Aunt Emily! ... Aunt Emily! ... Do you mind my smoking in here?

Aunt Emily (*from upstairs*). Of course not, darling.

Philip (*to James as he returns to his chair*). Of course not, darling. (*He puts back his pipe in his mouth.*)

James. Now, understand once and for all, Philip, while you remain in my house I expect not only punctuality, but also civility and respect. I will not have impertinence.

Philip (*unimpressed*). Well, that's what I want to talk to you about. Uncle James. About staying in your house, I mean.

James. I don't know what you do mean.

Philip. Well, we don't get on too well together, and I thought perhaps I'd better take rooms somewhere. You could give me an allowance until I came into my money. Or I suppose you could give me the money now if you really liked. I don't quite know how father left it to me.

James (*coldly*). You come into your money when you are twenty-five. Your father very wisely felt that to trust a large sum to a mere boy of twenty-one was simply putting temptation in his way. Whether I have the power or not to alter his dispositions, I certainly don't propose to do so.

Philip. If it comes to that, I am twenty-five.