

GALSWORTHY

JOHN

THE SKIN

GAME

John Galsworthy

The Skin Game

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Содержание

CHARACTERS	5
АКТ I	6
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	17

John Galsworthy

The Skin Game (A Tragi-Comedy)

CHARACTERS

HILLCRIST...A Country Gentleman
AMY...His Wife
JILL...His Daughter
DAWKER...His Agent
HORNBLOWER...A Man Newly-Rich
CHARLES...His Elder Son
CHLOE...Wife to Charles
ROLF...His Younger Son
FELLOWS...Hillcrist's Butler
ANNA...Chloe's Maid
THE JACKMANS...Man and Wife
AN AUCTIONEER
A SOLICITOR
TWO STRANGERS
ACT I. HILLCRIST'S Study
ACT II.
SCENE I. A month later. An Auction Room.
SCENE II. The same evening. CHLOE'S Boudoir.
ACT III
SCENE I. The following day. HILLCRIST'S Study. Morning.
SCENE II. The Same. Evening.

ACT I

HILLCRIST'S study. A pleasant room, with books in calf bindings, and signs that the HILLCRIST'S have travelled, such as a large photograph of the Taj Mahal, of Table Mountain, and the Pyramids of Egypt. A large bureau [stage Right], devoted to the business of a country estate. Two foxes' masks. Flowers in bowls. Deep armchairs. A large French window open [at Back], with a lovely view of a slight rise of fields and trees in August sunlight. A fine stone fireplace [stage Left]. A door [Left]. A door opposite [Right]. General colour effect – stone, and cigar-leaf brown, with spots of bright colour. [HILLCRIST sits in a swivel chair at the bureau, busy with papers. He has gout, and his left foot is encased accord: He is a thin, dried-up man of about fifty-five, with a rather refined, rather kindly, and rather cranky countenance. Close to him stands his very upstanding nineteen-year-old daughter JILL, with clubbed hair round a pretty, manly face.]

JILL. You know, Dodo, it's all pretty good rot in these days.

HILLCRIST. Cads are cads, Jill, even in these days.

JILL. What is a cad?

HILLCRIST. A self-assertive fellow, without a sense of other people.

JILL. Well, Old Hornblower I'll give you.

HILLCRIST. I wouldn't take him.

JILL. Well, you've got him. Now, Charlie – Chearlie – I say – the importance of not being Charlie —

HILLCRIST. Good heavens! do you know their Christian names?

JILL. My dear father, they've been here seven years.

HILLCRIST. In old days we only knew their Christian names from their tombstones.

JILL. Charlie Hornblower isn't really half a bad sport.

HILLCRIST. About a quarter of a bad sport I've always thought out hunting.

JILL. [Pulling his hair] Now, his wife – Chloe —

HILLCRIST. [Whimsical] Gad! your mother'd have a fit if she knew you called her Chloe.

JILL. It's a ripping name.

HILLCRIST. Chloe! H'm! I had a spaniel once —

JILL. Dodo, you're narrow. Buck up, old darling, it won't do. Chloe has seen life, I'm pretty sure; THAT'S attractive, anyway. No, mother's not in the room; don't turn your uneasy eyes.

HILLCRIST. Really, my dear, you are getting —

JILL. The limit. Now, Rolf —

HILLCRIST. What's Rolf? Another dog?

JILL. Rolf Hornblower's a topper; he really is a nice boy.

HILLCRIST. [With a sharp look] Oh! He's a nice boy?

JILL. Yes, darling. You know what a nice boy is, don't you?

HILLCRIST. Not in these days.

JILL. Well, I'll tell you. In the first place, he's not amorous.

HILLCRIST. What! Well, that's some comfort.

JILL. Just a jolly good companion.

HILLCRIST. To whom?

JILL. Well, to anyone – me.

HILLCRIST. Where?

JILL. Anywhere. You don't suppose I confine myself to the home paddocks, do you? I'm naturally rangey, Father.

HILLCRIST. [Ironically] You don't say so!

JILL. In the second place, he doesn't like discipline.

HILLCRIST. Jupiter! He does seem attractive.

JILL. In the third place, he bars his father.

HILLCRIST. Is that essential to nice girls too?

JILL. [With a twirl of his hair] Fish not! Fourthly, he's got ideas.

HILLCRIST. I knew it!

JILL. For instance, he thinks – as I do —

HILLCRIST. Ah! Good ideas.

JILL. [Pulling gently] Careful! He thinks old people run the show too much. He says they oughtn't to, because they're so damtouchy. Are you damtouchy, darling?

HILLCRIST. Well, I'm – ! I don't know about touchy.

JILL. He says there'll be no world fit to live in till we get rid of the old. We must make them climb a tall tree, and shake them off it.

HILLCRIST. [Drily] Oh! he says that!

JILL. Otherwise, with the way they stand on each other's rights, they'll spoil the garden for the young.

HILLCRIST. Does his father agree?

JILL. Oh! Rolf doesn't talk to him, his mouth's too large. Have you ever seen it, Dodo?

HILLCRIST. Of course.

JILL. It's considerable, isn't it? Now yours is – reticent, darling. [Rumpling his hair.]

HILLCRIST. It won't be in a minute. Do you realise that I've got gout?

JILL. Poor ducky! How long have we been here, Dodo?

HILLCRIST. Since Elizabeth, anyway.

JILL. [Looking at his foot] It has its drawbacks. D'you think Hornblower had a father? I believe he was spontaneous. But, Dodo, why all this – this attitude to the Hornblowers?

[She purses her lips and makes a gesture as of pushing persons away.]

HILLCRIST. Because they're pushing.

JILL. That's only because we are, as mother would say, and they're not – yet. But why not let them be?

HILLCRIST. You can't.

JILL. Why?

HILLCRIST. It takes generations to learn to live and let live, Jill. People like that take an ell when you give them an inch.

JILL. But if you gave them the ell, they wouldn't want the inch. Why should it all be such a skin game?

HILLCRIST. Skin game? Where do you get your lingo?

JILL. Keep to the point, Dodo.

HILLCRIST. Well, Jill, all life's a struggle between people at different stages of development, in different positions, with different amounts of social influence and property. And the only thing is to have rules of the game and keep them. New people like the Hornblowers haven't learnt those rules; their only rule is to get all they can.

JILL. Darling, don't prose. They're not half as bad as you think.

HILLCRIST. Well, when I sold Hornblower Longmeadow and the cottages, I certainly found him all right. All the same, he's got the cloven hoof. [Warming up] His influence in Deepwater is thoroughly bad; those potteries of his are demoralising – the whole atmosphere of the place is

changing. It was a thousand pities he ever came here and discovered that clay. He's brought in the modern cutthroat spirit.

JILL. Cut our throat spirit, you mean. What's your definition of a gentleman, Dodo?

HILLCRIST. [Uneasily] Can't describe – only feel it.

JILL. Oh! Try!

HILLCRIST. Well – er – I suppose you might say – a man who keeps his form and doesn't let life scupper him out of his standards.

JILL. But suppose his standards are low?

HILLCRIST. [With some earnestness] I assume, of course, that he's honest and tolerant, gentle to the weak, and not self-seeking.

JILL. Ah! self-seeking? But aren't we all, Dodo? I am.

HILLCRIST. [With a smile] You!

JILL. [Scornfully] Oh! yes – too young to know.

HILLCRIST. Nobody knows till they're under pretty heavy fire, Jill.

JILL. Except, of course, mother.

HILLCRIST. How do you mean – mother?

JILL. Mother reminds me of England according to herself – always right whatever she does.

HILLCRIST. Ye-es. Your mother it perhaps – the perfect woman.

JILL. That's what I was saying. Now, no one could call you perfect, Dodo. Besides, you've got gout.

HILLCRIST. Yes; and I want Fellows. Ring that bell.

JILL. [Crossing to the bell] Shall I tell you my definition of a gentleman? A man who gives the Hornblower his due. [She rings the bell] And I think mother ought to call on them. Rolf says old Hornblower resents it fearfully that she's never made a sign to Chloe the three years she's been here.

HILLCRIST. I don't interfere with your mother in such matters. She may go and call on the devil himself if she likes.

JILL. I know you're ever so much better than she is.

HILLCRIST. That's respectful.

JILL. You do keep your prejudices out of your phiz. But mother literally looks down her nose. And she never forgives an "h." They'd get the "hell" from her if they took the "hinch."

HILLCRIST. Jill-your language!

JILL. Don't slime out of it, Dodo. I say, mother ought to call on the Hornblowers. [No answer.] Well?

HILLCRIST. My dear, I always let people have the last word. It makes them – feel funny. Ugh! My foot! [Enter FELLOWS, Left.] Fellows, send into the village and get another bottle of this stuff.

JILL. I'll go, darling.

[She blow him a kiss, and goes out at the window.]

HILLCRIST. And tell cook I've got to go on slops. This foot's worse.

FELLOWS. [Sympathetic] Indeed, sir.

HILLCRIST. My third go this year, Fellows.

FELLOWS. Very annoying, sir.

HILLCRIST. Ye-es. Ever had it?

FELLOWS. I fancy I have had a twinge, sir.

HILLCRIST. [Brightening] Have you? Where?

FELLOWS. In my cork wrist, sir.

HILLCRIST. Your what?

FELLOWS. The wrist I draw corks with.

HILLCRIST. [With a cackle] You'd have had more than a twinge if you'd lived with my father. H'm!

FELLOWS. Excuse me, sir – Vichy water corks, in my experience, are worse than any wine.

HILLCRIST. [Ironically] Ah! The country's not what it was, is it, Fellows?

FELLOWS. Getting very new, sir.

HILLCRIST. [Feelingly] You're right. Has Dawker come?

FELLOWS. Not yet, sir. The Jackmans would like to see you, sir.

HILLCRIST. What about?

FELLOWS. I don't know, sir.

HILLCRIST. Well, show them in.

FELLOWS. [Going] Yes, sir.

[HILLCRIST turns his swivel chair round. The JACKMANS come in. He, a big fellow about fifty, in a labourer's dress, with eyes which have more in them than his tongue can express; she, a little woman with a worn face, a bright, quick glance, and a tongue to match.]

HILLCRIST. Good morning, Mrs. Jackman! Morning, Jackman! Haven't seen you for a long time. What can I do?

[He draws in foot, and breath, with a sharp hiss.]

HILLCRIST. [In a down-hearted voice] We've had notice to quit, sir.

HILLCRIST. [With emphasis] What!

JACKMAN. Got to be out this week.

MRS. J. Yes, sir, indeed.

HILLCRIST. Well, but when I sold Longmeadow and the cottages, it was on the express understanding that there was to be no disturbance of tenancies:

MRS. J. Yes, sir; but we've all got to go. Mrs. 'Arvey, and the Drews, an' us, and there isn't another cottage to be had anywhere in Deepwater.

HILLCRIST. I know; I want one for my cowman. This won't do at all. Where do you get it from?

JACKMAN. Mr. 'Ornblower, 'imself, air. Just an hour ago. He come round and said: "I'm sorry; I want the cottages, and you've got to clear."

MRS. J. [Bitterly] He's no gentleman, sir; he put it so brisk. We been there thirty years, and now we don't know what to do. So I hope you'll excuse us coming round, sir.

HILLCRIST. I should think so, indeed! H'm! [He rises and limps across to the fireplace on his stick. To himself] The cloven hoof. By George! this is a breach of faith. I'll write to him, Jackman. Confound it! I'd certainly never have sold if I'd known he was going to do this.

MRS. J. No, sir, I'm sure, sir. They do say it's to do with the potteries. He wants the cottages for his workmen.

HILLCRIST. [Sharply] That's all very well, but he shouldn't have led me to suppose that he would make no change.

JACKMAN. [Heavily] They talk about his havin' bought the Centry to gut up more chimneys there, and that's why he wants the cottages.

HINT. The Centry! Impossible!

[Mrs. J. Yes, air; it's such a pretty spot-looks beautiful from here. [She looks out through the window] Loveliest spot in all Deepwater, I always say. And your father owned it, and his father before 'im. It's a pity they ever sold it, sir, beggin' your pardon.]

HILLCRIST. The Centry! [He rings the bell.]

Mrs. J. [Who has brightened up] I'm glad you're goin' to stop it, sir. It does put us about. We don't know where to go. I said to Mr. Hornblower, I said, "I'm sure Mr. Hillcrist would never 'eve turned us out." An' 'e said: "Mr. Hillcrist be – " beggin' your pardon, sir. "Make no mistake," 'e said, "you must go, missis." He don't even know our name; an' to come it like this over us! He's a dreadful new man, I think, with his overridin notions. And sich a heavyfooted man, to look at. [With a sort of indulgent contempt] But he's from the North, they say.

[FELLOWS has entered, Left.]

HILLCRIST. Ask Mrs. Hillcrist if she'll come.

FELLOWS. Very good, sir.

HILLCRIST. Is Dawker here?

FELLOWS. Not yet, sir.

HILLCRIST. I want to see him at once.

[FELLOWS retires.]

JACKMAN. Mr. Hornblower said he was comin' on to see you, sir. So we thought we'd step along first.

HILLCRIST. Quite right, Jackman.

MRS. J. I said to Jackman: "Mr. Hillcrist'll stand up for us, I know. He's a gentleman," I said. "This man," I said, "don't care for the neighbourhood, or the people; he don't care for anything so long as he makes his money, and has his importance. You can't expect it, I suppose," I said; [Bitterly] "havin' got rich so sudden." The gentry don't do things like that.

HILLCRIST. [Abstracted] Quite, Mrs. Jackman, quite! [To himself] The Centry! No!

[MRS. HILLCRIST enters. A well-dressed woman, with a firm, clear-cut face.]

Oh! Amy! Mr. and Mrs. Jackman turned out of their cottage, and Mrs. Harvey, and the Drews. When I sold to Hornblower, I stipulated that they shouldn't be.

MRS. J. Our week's up on Saturday, ma'am, and I'm sure I don't know where we shall turn, because of course Jackman must be near his work, and I shall lose me washin' if we have to go far.

HILLCRIST. [With decision] You leave it to me, Mrs. Jackman. Good morning! Morning, Jackman! Sorry I can't move with this gout.

MRS. J. [For them both] I'm sure we're very sorry, sir. Good morning, sir. Good morning, ma'am; and thank you kindly. [They go out.]

HILLCRIST. Turning people out that have been there thirty years. I won't have it. It's a breach of faith.

MRS. H. Do you suppose this Hornblower will care two straws about that Jack?

HILLCRIST. He must, when it's put to him, if he's got any decent feeling.

MRS. H. He hasn't.

HILLCRIST. [Suddenly] The Jackmans talk of his having bought the Centry to put up more chimneys.

MRS. H. Never! [At the window, looking out] Impossible! It would ruin the place utterly; besides cutting us off from the Duke's. Oh, no! Miss Mullins would never sell behind our backs.

HILLCRIST. Anyway I must stop his turning these people out.

Mrs. H. [With a little smile, almost contemptuous] You might have known he'd do something of the sort. You will imagine people are like yourself, Jack. You always ought to make Dawker have things in black and white.

HILLCRIST. I said quite distinctly: "Of course you won't want to disturb the tenancies; there's a great shortage of cottages." Hornblower told me as distinctly that he wouldn't. What more do you want?

Mrs. H. A man like that thinks of nothing but the short cut to his own way. [Looking out of the window towards the rise] If he buys the Centry and puts up chimneys, we simply couldn't stop here.

HILLCRIST. My father would turn in his grave.

MRS. H. It would have been more useful if he'd not dipped the estate, and sold the Centry. This Hornblower hates us; he thinks we turn up our noses at him.

HILLCRIST. As we do, Amy.

MRS. H. Who wouldn't? A man without traditions, who believes in nothing but money and push.

HILLCRIST. Suppose he won't budge, can we do anything for the Jackmans?

MRS. H. There are the two rooms Beaver used to have, over the stables.

FELLOWS. Mr. Dawker, sir.

[DAWKERS is a short, square, rather red-faced terrier of a man, in riding clothes and gaiters.]

HILLCRIST. Ah! Dawker, I've got gout again.

DAWKER. Very sorry, sir. How de do, ma'am?

HILLCRIST. Did you meet the Jackmans?

DAWKERS. Yeh.

[He hardly ever quite finishes a word, seeming to snap of their tails.]

HILLCRIST. Then you heard?

DAWKER. [Nodding] Smart man, Hornblower; never lets grass grow.

HILLCRIST. Smart?

DAWKER. [Grinning] Don't do to underrate your neighbours.

MRS. H. A cad – I call him.

DAWKER. That's it, ma'am-got all the advantage.

HILLCRIST. Heard anything about the Centry, Dawker?

DAWKER. Hornblower wants to buy.

HILLCRIST. Miss Mullins would never sell, would she?

DAWKER. She wants to.

HILLCRIST. The deuce she does!

DAWKER. He won't stick at the price either.

MRS. H. What's it worth, Dawker?

DAWKER. Depends on what you want it for.

MRS. H. He wants it for spite; we want it for sentiment.

DAWKER. [Grinning] Worth what you like to give, then; but he's a rich man.

MRS. H. Intolerable!

DAWKER. [To HILLCRIST] Give me your figure, sir. I'll try the old lady before he gets at her.

HILLCRIST. [Pondering] I don't want to buy, unless there's nothing else for it. I should have to raise the money on the estate; it won't stand much more. I can't believe the fellow would be such a barbarian. Chimneys within three hundred yards, right in front of this house! It's a nightmare.

MRS. H. You'd much better let Dawker make sure, Jack.

HILLCRIST. [Uncomfortable] Jackman says Hornblower's coming round to see me. I shall put it to him.

DAWKER. Make him keener than ever. Better get in first.

HILLCRIST. Ape his methods! – Ugh! Confound this gout! [He gets back to his chair with difficulty] Look here, Dawker, I wanted to see you about gates —

FELLOWS. [Entering] Mr. Hornblower.

[HORNBLOWER enters—a man of medium, height, thoroughly broadened, blown out, as it were, by success. He has thick, coarse, dark hair, just grizzled, wry bushy eyebrow, a wide mouth. He wears quite ordinary clothes, as if that department were in charge of someone who knew about such, things. He has a small rose in his buttonhole, and carries a Homburg hat, which one suspects will look too small on his head.]

HORNBLOWER. Good morning! good morning! How are ye, Dawker? Fine morning! Lovely weather!

[His voice has a curious blend in its tone of brass and oil, and an accent not quite Scotch nor quite North country.]

Haven't seen ye for a long time, Hillcrist.

HILLCRIST. [Who has risen] Not since I sold you Longmeadow and those cottages, I believe.

HORNBLOWER. Dear me, now! that's what I came about.

HILLCRIST. [Subsiding again into his chair] Forgive me! Won't you sit down?

HORNBLOWER. [Not sitting] Have ye got gout? That's unfortunate. I never get it. I've no disposition that way. Had no ancestors, you see. Just me own drinkin' to answer for.

HILLCRIST. You're lucky.

HORNBLOWER. I wonder if Mrs. Hillcrist thinks that! Am I lucky to have no past, ma'am? Just the future?

MRS. H. You're sure you have the future, Mr. Hornblower?

HORNBLOWER. [With a laugh] That's your aristocratic rapier thrust. You aristocrats are very hard people underneath your manners. Ye love to lay a body out. But I've got the future all right.

HILLCRIST. [Meaningly] I've had the Dackmans here, Mr. Hornblower.

HORNBLOWER. Who are they – man with the little spitfire wife?

HILLCRIST. They're very excellent, good people, and they've been in that cottage quietly thirty years.

HORNBLOWER. [Throwing out his forefinger – a favourite gesture] Ah! ye've wanted me to stir ye up a bit. Deepwater needs a bit o' go put into it. There's generally some go where I am. I daresay you wish there'd been no "come." [He laughs].

MRS. H. We certainly like people to keep their word, Mr. Hornblower.

HILLCRIST. Amy!

HORNBLOWER. Never mind, Hillcrist; takes more than that to upset me.

[MRS. HILLCRIST exchanges a look with DAWKER who slips out unobserved.]

HILLCRIST. You promised me, you know, not to change the tenancies.

HORNBLOWER. Well, I've come to tell ye that I have. I wasn't expecting to have the need when I bought. Thought the Duke would sell me a bit down there; but devil a bit he will; and now I must have those cottages for my workmen. I've got important works, ye know.

HILLCRIST. [Getting heated] The Jackmans have their importance too, sir. Their heart's in that cottage.

HORNBLOWER. Have a sense of proportion, man. My works supply thousands of people, and my heart's in them. What's more, they make my fortune. I've got ambitions – I'm a serious man. Suppose I were to consider this and that, and every little potty objection – where should I get to? – nowhere!

HILLCRIST. All the same, this sort of thing isn't done, you know.

HORNBLOWER. Not by you because ye've got no need to do it. Here ye are, quite content on what your fathers made for ye. Ye've no ambitions; and ye want other people to have none. How d'ye think your fathers got your land?

HILLCRIST. [Who has risen] Not by breaking their word.

HORNBLOWER. [Throwing out his, finger] Don't ye believe it. They got it by breaking their word and turnin' out Jackmans, if that's their name, all over the place.

MRS. H. That's an insult, Mr. Hornblower.

HORNBLOWER. No; it's a repartee. If ye think so much of these Jackmans, build them a cottage yourselves; ye've got the space.

HILLCRIST. That's beside the point. You promised me, and I sold on that understanding.

HORNBLOWER. And I bought on the understandin' that I'd get some more land from the Duke.

HILLCRIST. That's nothing to do with me.

HORNBLOWER. Ye'll find it has; because I'm going to have those cottages.

HILLCRIST. Well, I call it simply —

[He checks himself.]

HORNBLOWER. Look here, Hillcrist, ye've not had occasion to understand men like me. I've got the guts, and I've got the money; and I don't sit still on it. I'm going ahead because I believe in meself. I've no use for sentiment and that sort of thing. Forty of your Jackmans aren't worth me little finger.

HILLCRIST. [Angry] Of all the blatant things I ever heard said!

HORNBLOWER. Well, as we're speaking plainly, I've been thinkin'. Ye want the village run your oldfashioned way, and I want it run mine. I fancy there's not room for the two of us here.

MRS. H. When are you going?

HORNBLOWER. Never fear, I'm not going.

HILLCRIST. Look here, Mr. Hornblower — this infernal gout makes me irritable — puts me at a disadvantage. But I should be glad if you'd kindly explain yourself.

HORNBLOWER. [With a great smile] Ca' canny; I'm fra' the North.

HILLCRIST. I'm told you wish to buy the Centry and put more of your chimneys up there, regardless of the fact [He Points through the window] that it would utterly ruin the house we've had for generations, and all our pleasure here.

HORNBLOWER. How the man talks! Why! Ye'd think he owned the sky, because his fathers built him a house with a pretty view, where he's nothing to do but live. It's sheer want of something to do that gives ye your fine sentiments, Hillcrist.

HILLCRIST. Have the goodness not to charge me with idleness. Dawker — where is he? — [He shows the bureau] When you do the drudgery of your works as thoroughly as I do that of my estate — Is it true about the Centry?

HORNBLOWER. Gospel true. If ye want to know, my son Chearlie is buyin' it this very minute.

MRS. H. [Turning with a start] What do you say?

HORNBLOWER. Ay, he's with the old lady she wants to sell, an' she'll get her price, whatever it is.

HILLCRIST. [With deep anger] If that isn't a skin game, Mr. Hornblower, I don't know what is.

HORNBLOWER. Ah! Ye've got a very nice expression there. "Skin game!" Well, bad words break no bones, an' they're wonderful for hardenin' the heart. If it wasn't for a lady's presence, I could give ye a specimen or two.

MRS. H. Oh! Mr. Hornblower, that need not stop you, I'm sure.

HORNBLOWER. Well, and I don't know that it need. Ye're an obstruction – the like of you – ye're in my path. And anyone in my path doesn't stay there long; or, if he does, he stays there on my terms. And my terms are chimneys in the Centry where I need 'em. It'll do ye a power of good, too, to know that ye're not almighty.

HILLCRIST. And that's being neighbourly!

HORNBLOWER. And how have ye tried bein' neighbourly to me? If I haven't a wife, I've got a daughter-in-law. Have Ye celled on her, ma'am? I'm new, and ye're an old family. Ye don't like me, ye think I'm a pushin' man. I go to chapel, an' ye don't like that. I make things and I sell them, and ye don't like that. I buy land, and ye don't like that. It threatens the view from your windies. Well, I don't lie you, and I'm not goin' to put up with your attitude. Ye've had things your own way too long, and now ye're not going to have them any longer.

HILLCRIST. Will you hold to your word over those cottages?

HORNBLOWER. I'm goin' to have the cottages. I need them, and more besides, now I'm to put up me new works.

HILLCRIST. That's a declaration of war.

HORNBLOWER. Ye never said a truer word. It's one or the other of us, and I rather think it's goin' to be me. I'm the risin' and you're the settin' sun, as the poet says.

HILLCRIST. [Touching the bell] We shall see if you can ride rough-shod like this. We used to have decent ways of going about things here. You want to change all that. Well, we shall do our damndest to stop you. [To FELLOWS at the door] Are the Jackmans still in the house? Ask them to be good enough to come in.

HORNBLOWER. [With the first sign of uneasiness] I've seen these people. I've nothing more to say to them. I told 'em I'd give 'em five pounds to cover their moving.

HILLCRIST. It doesn't occur to you that people, however humble, like to have some say in their own fate?

HORNBLOWER. I never had any say in mine till I had the brass, and nobody ever will. It's all hypocrisy. You county folk are fair awful hypocrites. Ye talk about good form and all that sort o' thing. It's just the comfortable doctrine of the man in the saddle; sentimental varnish. Ye're every bit as hard as I am, underneath.

MRS. H. [Who had been standing very still all this time] You flatter us.

HORNBLOWER. Not at all. God helps those who 'elp themselves – that's at the bottom of all religion. I'm goin' to help meself, and God's going to help me.

MRS. H. I admire your knowledge.

HILLCRIST. We are in the right, and God helps —

HORNBLOWER. Don't ye believe it; ye 'aven't got the energy.

MRS. H. Nor perhaps the conceit.

HORNBLOWER. [Throwing out his forefinger] No, no; 't isn't conceit to believe in yourself when ye've got reason to. [The JACKMAN'S have entered.]

HILLCRIST. I'm very sorry, Mrs. Jackman, but I just wanted you to realise that I've done my best with this gentleman.

MRS. J. [Doubtfully] Yes, sir. I thought if you spoke for us, he'd feel different-like.

HORNBLOWER. One cottage is the same as another, missis. I made ye a fair offer of five pounds for the moving.

JACKMAN. [Slowly] We wouldn't take fifty to go out of that 'ouse. We brought up three children there, an' buried two from it.

MRS. J. [To MRS. HILLCRIST] We're attached to it like, ma'am.

HILLCRIST. [To HORNBLOWER.] How would you like being turned out of a place you were fond of?

HORNBLOWER. Not a bit. But little considerations have to give way to big ones. Now, missis, I'll make it ten pounds, and I'll send a wagon to shift your things. If that isn't fair – ! Ye'd better accept, I shan't keep it open.

[The JACKMANS look at each other; their faces show deep anger – and the question they ask each other is which will speak.]

MRS. J. We won't take it; eh, George?

JACKMAN. Not a farden. We come there when we was married.

HORNBLOWER. [Throwing out his finger] Ye're very improvident folk.

HILLCRIST. Don't lecture them, Mr. Hornblower; they come out of this miles above you.

HORNBLOWER. [Angry] Well, I was going to give ye another week, but ye'll go out next Saturday; and take care ye're not late, or your things'll be put out in the rain.

MRS. H. [To MRS. JACKMAN] We'll send down for your things, and you can come to us for the time being.

[MRS. JACKMAN drops a curtsey; her eyes stab HORNBLOWERS.]

JACKMAN. [Heavily, clenching his fists] You're no gentleman! Don't put temptation in my way, that's all.

HILLCRIST. [In a low voice] Jackman!

HORNBLOWER. [Triumphantly] Ye hear that? That's your protegee! Keep out o' my way, me man, or I'll put the police on to ye for utterin' threats.

HILLCRIST. You'd better go now, Jackman.

[The JACKMANS move to the door.]

MRS. J. [Turning] Maybe you'll repent it some day, sir.

[They go out, MRS. HILLCRIST following.]

HORNBLOWER. We-ell, I'm sorry they're such unreasonable folk. I never met people with less notion of which side their bread was buttered.

HILLCRIST. And I never met anyone so pachydermatous.

HORNBLOWER. What's that, in Heaven's name? Ye needn' wrap it up in long words now your good lady's gone.

HILLCRIST. [With dignity] I'm not going in for a slanging match. I resent your conduct much too deeply.

HORNBLOWER. Look here, Hillcrist, I don't object to you personally; ye seem to me a poor creature that's bound to get left with your gout and your dignity; but of course ye can make yourself very disagreeable before ye're done. Now I want to be the movin' spirit here. I'm full of plans. I'm goin' to stand for Parliament; I'm goin' to make this a prosperous place. I'm a good-matured man if you'll treat me as such. Now, you take me on as a neighbour and all that, and I'll manage without chimneys on the Centry. Is it a bargain? [He holds out his hand.]

HILLCRIST. [Ignoring it] I thought you said you didn't keep your word when it suited you to break it?

HORNBLOWER. Now, don't get on the high horse. You and me could be very good friends; but I can be a very nasty enemy. The chimneys will not look nice from that windie, ye know.

HILLCRIST. [Deeply angry] Mr. Hornblower, if you think I'll take your hand after this Jackman business, you're greatly mistaken. You are proposing that I shall stand in with you while you tyrannise over the neighbourhood. Please realise that unless you leave those tenancies undisturbed as you said you would, we don't know each other.

HORNBLOWER. Well, that won't trouble me much. Now, ye'd better think it over; ye've got gout and that makes ye hasty. I tell ye again: I'm not the man to make an enemy of. Unless ye're friendly, sure as I stand here I'll ruin the look of your place.

[The toot of a car is heard.]

There's my car. I sent Chearlie and his wife in it to buy the Centry. And make no mistake – he's got it in his packet. It's your last chance, Hillcrist. I'm not averse to you as a man; I think ye're the best of the fossils round here; at least, I think ye can do me the most harm socially. Come now!

[He holds out his hand again.]

HILLCRIST. Not if you'd bought the Centry ten times over. Your ways are not mine, and I'll have nothing to do with you.

HORNBLOWER. [Very angry] Really! Is that so? Very well. Now ye're goin' to learn something, an' it's time ye did. D'ye realise that I'm 'very nearly round ye? [He draws a circle slowly in the air] I'm at Uphill, the works are here, here's Longmeadow, here's the Centry that I've just bought, there's only the Common left to give ye touch with the world. Now between you and the Common there's the high road.

I come out on the high road here to your north, and I shall come out on it there to your west. When I've got me new works up on the Centry, I shall be makin' a trolley track between the works up to the road at both ends, so any goods will be running right round ye. How'll ye like that for a country place?

[For answer HILLCRIST, who is angry beyond the power of speech, walks, forgetting to use his stick, up to the French window. While he stands there, with his back to HORNBLOWER, the door L. is flung open, and Jim enters, preceding CHARLES, his wife CHLOE, and ROLF. CHARLES is a goodish-looking, moustached young man of about twenty-eight, with a white rim to the collar of his waistcoat, and spats. He has his hand behind CHLOE'S back, as if to prevent her turning tail. She is rather a handsome young woman, with dark eyes, full red lips, and a suspicion of powder, a little under-dressed for the country. ROLF, who brings up the rear, is about twenty, with an open face and stiffish butter-coloured hair. JILL runs over to her father at the window. She has a bottle.]

JILL. [Sotto voce] Look, Dodo, I've brought the lot! Isn't it a treat, dear Papa? And here's the stuff. Hallo!

[The exclamation is induced by the apprehension that there has been a row. HILLCRIST gives a stiff little bow, remaining where he is in the window. JILL, stays close to him, staring from one to the other, then blocks him off and engages him in conversation. CHARLES has gone up to his father, who has remained maliciously still, where he delivered his last speech. CHLOE and ROLF stand awkwardly waiting between the fireplace and the door.]

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