

DROIT DU SEIGNEUR



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Norman Maine Publishing

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Norman Maine Publishing
P.O. Box 1400
Tallevast, FL 34270

*"I for one, would certainly need
some protection from the drawit de saynoor.
If I had to tussle with some o' them
healthy Rudling lasses on their wedding night,
it would fair be the end o' me."*

—Old Capper Wambley

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FARCE. Ian, a simple Yorkshire country lad, hears of a law, the droit du seigneur, at a local pub. Though it is a medieval law that is no longer enforced, Ian thinks that he must offer up his fiancée, MaryAnn, to the Duke on their wedding night. Dismayed at the thought but fervently law-abiding, Ian takes MaryAnn to see the Duke so that he can set a date for the droit du seigneur. The Duke, horrified and aghast at the notion, but fearful that Ian, a hulking brute, will cause him bodily harm, must rely on his wits and help from his butler, Travers, to convince the stubborn lad that “while there may be laws o’ man, ba gun, there’s laws o’ nature, too.”

Performance Time: Approximately 35 minutes.

ABOUT THE STORY

The French term “droit du seigneur” means “right of the lord” and refers to a custom in medieval Europe in which the lord had the right to sleep with the brides of his vassals on their wedding night. However, actual evidence that the practice was ever enforced, except for a brief time in Italy and France, is scanty. The right is thought to have existed merely as another way for the lord to extract dues from his vassals.

CHARACTERS

(8 m, 1 f)

IAN CAWPER: Hulking giant country lad; a bit slow on the uptake but law-abiding, religious, and becomes a mountain of solidity once his mind is made up.

MARYANN BATTERSBY: Ian's fiancée; bright, saucy, simple country girl; she's also a bit mischievous, fun, and sexy.

DUKE: 50-60, charming, dresses impeccably, a bit of a dandy; prone to anger, especially when his authority is questioned, but a bit of a coward—reminiscent of the cowardly lion; he stands tall when he is in control, even if bluffing, but has a unique ability of seeming smaller, shrinking if you will, when cowed.

TRAVERS: Duke's butler; tall, stoic, blasé and worldly; he's seen everything and nothing surprises him, but if it does, he never shows it.

SAMMYWELL SMALL: 40-50, considered by all to be the sage of the Spread Eagle.

ROWLIE HELLIKER: Owner of the inn; unsociable, jaded, and annoyed with most of his patrons since they rarely pay.

OLD SITHERWICK: Can't hear too well and his silliness might indicate that he's on the brink of senility; has been cadging drinks for the past 50 years and will cadge them for 50 more, if he lives that long.

OLD CAPPER WAMBLEY: Reads the paper daily, dutifully, and discerningly, and others look to him to keep them abreast of things current.

JOHN WILLIE BRATHWAITE: Simple, curious, and a bit timid.

SQUIRE LEFFINGWELL: Tall, humorless, brusque, impatient; a hell-and-damnation preacher and teacher; stuffy, prissy, but firm and a bit frightening in his beliefs.

SETTING

Yorkshire, England. The time is the past.

SET

Spread Eagle Inn, a rural pub. At the bar of the inn are one or two taps for ale and stout. Behind the bar, on the wall, there is a simple shelf with a few bottles of harder liquor upon it. Downstage right is a fireplace with a table and several chairs before it. There are two more tables with chairs on the set—one down left and one center stage.

Duke's Study. Ornate room with a knight in armor, shelves of books, ancestral paintings, a stag or two, great leather easy chairs. If these items are unavailable or impractical, a simple set will do. The only mandatory aspect of the set is a window, presumably looking out on the courtyard of a great castle.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Scene 1: Spread Eagle Inn.

Scene 2: Outside the inn. Needs only an indication of an exterior—a few bushes or just a stage area lit separately from the pub.

Scene 3: Garden, early evening, the next day. There is a bench and/or a swing.

Scene 4: Duke's study.

PROPS

Ale glasses
Riding crop
Men's handkerchief

SCENE 1

(AT RISE: Spread Eagle Inn. Seated at the down right table facing the fire reading a newspaper is Old Capper Wambley. Seated at the left table is Sammywell Small. Seated with him are John Willie Brathwaite and Old Sitherwick. Behind the bar is Rowlie Helliker. Standing at the bar, apart from the rest, quite alone, but listening carefully to everything going on is Ian Cawper. There is as usual a discussion going on at the left table with Sammywell holding court.)

SAMMYWELL: It'll come, I'm tellin' you. There'll come the day when women'll have the vote! The boys will be wearin' their hair so long, you won't be able to tell them from the girls; the homy sexuals will come out from the closet; and man will be runnin' round in wild circles like lemmings, wondering which end is which.

ROWLIE: What the hell's the difference? The whole world's gone crazy anyhow.

OLD SITHERWICK: So it is, Rowlie. So it is.

JOHN WILLIE: Well, I'm all for live and let live, but if that day do come, I'm off to the bog and never comin' back.

ROWLIE: That'd be no great loss, John Willie.

(Sitherwick begins to giggle at the comment.)

JOHN WILLIE: Stuff it, you old fool.

SAMMYWELL: Another round, Rowlie, while we ponder on the horns of this dilemma.

OLD SITHERWICK: Horns of a what, Sammywell?

SAMMYWELL: A dilemma, Sitherwick. A dilemma. Probably the most complexing kind of animal ye could ever have the misfortune to meet up with.

OLD SITHERWICK: Well, I've hunted all kinds in my time. But I've never set eye on this dilemmy.

SAMMYWELL: It's just as well, Sitherwick. But it's not too late. More often than not, the creature will hunt you out.

(Rowlie arrives with the drinks.)

ROWLIE: Quit yer blatherin' and pay for the ale.

(Suddenly there is a shout from Old Capper at the downright table. All eyes turn to him.)

CAPPER: Oh, by God. Oh ho, by God. Ay, I'll be jiggered.
That ah will indeed, and that's the truth.

SAMMYWELL: What is it, Capper? What's up?

CAPPER: Why, lads, it says here in black and white that the
old Duke of Rudling is ailin'. He's got t'drewit de segner.

SAMMYWELL: You don't mean it!

JOHN WILLIE: Aye, now, if I'm not right sorry to hear that.

ROWLIE: It don't surprise me. Ain't it just like the lords and
'ristocrats.

JOHN WILLIE: By gum, an him gettin' along in years.

OLD SITHERWICK: Indeed he must be gettin' along. T'last
time as ah seed him, big girth strappin' chap he were, but
gettin' along even then. Aye, it does seem a right mangy
shame, him comin' down like that.

(They all concur with clicks of tongues and sympathetic noises. A respectful pause.)

JOHN WILLIE: Capper, just what is this here...whatever you
said, that he had?

(Capper scratches his head and looks at the paper again.)

CAPPER: T'drewit de seger! You know, if that ain't what's
been bothering me as well. What in the hell would a
t'drewit de segner be?

JOHN WILLIE: Sammywell, you know just about everything
on anything. What is this the Duke has?

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(Sammywell doesn't know everything, but likes for people to think that he does.)

SAMMYWELL: The drewit de segner. Ummuh. Uhuh. *(Sammywell clears his throat, stalling.)* Well, lads. Ah'll explain it to ye. It's...er...let's see that paper, Capper. *(He takes the paper, adjust his glasses, and reads.)* "Among the many and curious ancient rights held by the Dukes of Rudling is that of the droit du seigneur, throughout the six parishes of the Duchy." *(He pauses.)* Oh, now ah see. Ye mixed me up by mispronouncing it, Capper. It's the drawit de saynoor. That's what it is.

CAPPER: Aye, is that what it is?

SAMMYWELL: Aye, that's it.

OLD SITHERWICK: Well, if it ain't fair amazin'.

ROWLIE: Aye, that's all well and good. But what the hell is it?

JOHN WILLIE: Yes, Sammywell. What is it?

SAMMYWELL: Well, ah were just off to tell thee, John Willie. It's...it's...it's Latin. That's what it is.

JOHN WILLIE: But what does it mean?

SAMMYWELL: Well, happen ah can best explain it this way. Latin, as ye may all have heard tell, is a vaary funny language.

CAPPER: Aye, that it is.

SAMMYWELL: Now, one o t'funniest things abaht it is that one time it'll mean one thing, in a manner of speaking, and then another time, it'll mean sumthin' else, as ye might say. Aye, it's a fair mangy thing, Latin is.

JOHN WILLIE: Aye, it must be a mangy ting and all. But now what would the Latin be meaning in this particular case, for example?

SAMMYWELL: Well, it's like I were tellin' you, John Willie. It means somethin', and then again, as ah explained, it don't...to all intents and purposes. In this particular case, it

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would take an extra lot o varry, varry deep study to say whet it really means.

ROWLIE: What he's sayin' is that when it comes to drawit de saynoor, he knows about as much as the bat in the church belfry. Latin! My pig's left leg.

(Ian has been standing at the door, which has a window in it, listening sullenly and peering out the window.)

IAN: There's the schoolteacher out. Talkin' with the widow Carlin. He'd might to know.

OLD SITHERWICK: A good thought, lad. *(Old Sitherwick goes to the door and calls out.)* Oh, Mr. Leffingwell. Squire Leffingwell. In here, sir.

SAMMYWELL: Well, I wouldn't mind at all conferrin' with the schoolteacher on any important matters of Latin.

(Leffingwell enters.)

LEFFINGWELL: Well, what is it?

JOHN WILLIE: Beggin' your pardon, sir, Squire Leffingwell. Sorry to trouble you, sir, but we have a bit of problem here.

LEFFINGWELL: It's not a bit of a problem. The lot of you. Sittin' here swillin'. Your lands and animals wantin'. Your wives nursin' their wrath, keepin' it warm till youse come stumblin' home wid empty pockets and empty heads.

CAPPER: Beggin' your pardon, Squire. It's advice of a different sort we're in need of right now. But thankee for the sermon.

LEFFINGWELL: Well, what is it? I've nought all day to spend watchin' youse drink your way to perdition.

JOHN WILLIE: Have ye been readin' the paper of late, sir?

LEFFINGWELL: Of course. My mind is not atrophied with rum and ale.

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JOHN WILLIE: Of course, sir. But, sir, we were wonderin'...what is the Duke's affliction accordin' to the day's paper?

LEFFINGWELL: Affliction?

JOHN WILLIE: A royal one, perhaps. It say he has a drawit de saynoor.

LEFFINGWELL: Drawit de saynoor?

CAPPER: Yes, sir. Here in the paper, sir.

(He hands Leffingwell the paper, who reads it for a moment.)

LEFFINGWELL: Drawit de saynoor, indeed! Ye fools. Ye sotted fools. It's a law.

JOHN WILLIE: A law, sir?

LEFFINGWELL: Yes. A disgusting and immoral law.

JOHN WILLIE: Would you please to explain, sir?

LEFFINGWELL: An old and disgusting law, which means that every lass who gets married in any of the six parishes of the Rudling Duchy, has to sleep with the Duke on the first night of her wedding.

JOHN WILLIE: *(Awestruck.)* Sleep with the Duke?

LEFFINGWELL: If you all weren't sitting here getting sotted every night, you could do somethin' about laws like that. It's a curse visited on you, and you deserve what you earn.

(Leffingwell turns and storms out of the pub. They are all a bit awed by the revelation.)

OLD SITHERWICK: Sleep with the Duke on her wedding night. My God!

(Sammywell tries to restore his position.)

SAMMYWELL: I knew what it was all the time, lads. But I didn't want to embarrass you with irreverencies of that sort. We were havin' such a good time, don't you know?

JOHN WILLIE: (*Still awed.*) Sleep with the Duke...

CAPPER: Well, bless mah back and buttons. Ah've heerd tell o' such things on the quiet like, but ah never knew before they had a law compelling it!

OLD SITHERWICK: Ah never heard tell on it neither.

SAMMYWELL: Well, we don't know on those things of the Duchy cause we're in the Pawkithorpe Brig parish. That's not one of the Rudling parishes. So our lasses can sleep with their husbands, if they want.

ROWLIE: The lasses have to sleep with the Duke... Well, mates, all I can say, some people seem to have all the fun in this life.

(They all begin to laugh and enter into the spirit of the revelation – all except Ian.)

OLD SITHERWICK: You'd think he'd be worn out by now, the old duffer.

JOHN WILLIE: Well, whose to say he isn't? I don't see him to the fair anymore.

CAPPER: And when he does come out, he's got those two mean lookin' collies with him; protection, no doubt.

ROWLIE: Against what, Capper?

(They all laugh again.)

CAPPER: Well, the Duke and I bein' about the same in years...I for one, would certainly need some protection from the drawit de saynoor. If I had to tussle with some o' them healthy Rudling lasses on their wedding night, it would fair be the end o' me.

OLD SITHERWICK: What a wonderful end that would be.

ROWLIE: Old Leffingwell would give you the best hell-and-damnation sermon ever, that's sure.

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(Sammywell notices Ian at the bar. Ian is glowering at the men in obvious disapproval.)

SAMMYWELL: And Ian. What say you? How would you like to be the Duke for awhile. Ian?

IAN: Good neight.

(Ian suddenly lumbers out of the pub. It is difficult to tell whether he is angry or just sullen, but he is definitely upset. As he leaves, there is a chorus of "Good neight. Good neight, Ian" etc. Pause.)

JOHN WILLIE: What's wrong wi' the youngster now?

SAMMYWELL: Nothin' wrong with him. That's just Ian's way. *(He takes a last swig of ale and rises.)* Well, lads, I'll be on my way. Molly will be waitin' up for me. There's no livin' with her since she heard Leffingwell's last sermon on drink and the devil.

(Sammywell exits. He walks a short distance from the pub in an exterior setting. Blackout.)

SCENE 2

(AT RISE: Outside the inn. Sammywell is making his way slowly through the dimly lit area when suddenly a figure appears out of the darkness before him. It is Ian.)

IAN: Sammywell!

SAMMYWELL: What? Oh, my God! Ian! Ye fair scared the breath outta me.

IAN: I've somewhat to ask thee, Sammywell.

SAMMYWELL: Surely, Ian lad. Surely. Go right on.

(Ian stares into the darkness for a moment. Ian's thoughts are always slow in coming, as are his words. At the moment, he seems to be having a particularly difficult time.)

IAN: Sammywell. Is there anybody stronger nor me in all the counties that thou knows?

SAMMYWELL: Nay, Ian lad. Thais the strongest lad ah ivver seed in all ma travels about the world.

IAN: And if ah wanted, Sammywell, ah could break thee in two with ma bare hands, here. Couldn't ah?

(Sammywell is a bit apprehensive.)

SAMMYWELL: Aye, that you could, Ian.

IAN: So ah could. Well, then, tell me true. You and the others...you weren't coddling tonight, were you? About t'Duke o' Rudling and...and...and the...you knows...

SAMMYWELL: Ah, the t'drawit de saynoor, you mean? Nay, Ian. It's true as ah'm standin' here fraid o' thee. An ye know, the schoolmaster said it, so there's no mistakes.

(Ian stands for awhile in silence. Sammywell is uncomfortable, as well as a bit afraid.)

SAMMYWELL: Er...aught else ah can do for thee, Ian?

(Ian doesn't answer. Pause. He is wrapped in thought. Then suddenly.)

IAN: Nay!

(And Ian quickly walks off into the darkness, leaving a perplexed Sammywell. Lights fade to black.)

SCENE 3

(AT RISE: Garden, early evening, the next day. Ian is sitting beside MaryAnn, his fiancée. They sit lost in thought. Ian is forlorn.)

IAN: That's the long and short of it, MaryAnn. Ye're livin' in Holdersby, and it bein' one of the six parishes of Rudling.

(They sit for another long moment. Suddenly MaryAnn sits up.)

MARYANN: Ian, my love. Ah've got an idea.

IAN: Whet sort an idea?

MARYANN: This sort. Us could get around it all, happen.

IAN: Get around it?

MARYANN: Aye! Now lewk. Suppose us aways to Bradfield and pretty as pretty, us gets wed, quiet like. Then his lordship wadn't hear on it until thee and me had...well...y'know...until it were too late.

(Ian considers this for a moment.)

IAN: MaryAnn. Ah'm fair capped at thee, ah am. Ah'm not sure that'd be honest. Nay, if us did that, happen ivver after us'd feel like us was livin' under false pretenses.

MARYANN: Nay. If anybody raised a fuss, us could say us didn't know.

IAN: But us does know.

MARYANN: You're too honest for your own good, Ian Cawper.

IAN: *(Sadly.)* Don't ah know.

MARYANN: *(Resignedly.)* All right. If you'll not be budged. After all, it may be best. Hard on us as maught seem.

IAN: Aye, now, it relieves me to hear thee take it honest like that. So it's all settled then. All us must do now is see his lordship and find out whut evenings he's not busy like.

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We'll ask him to pick a neight he's free, and us'll be married that day.

MARYANN: Well, hard on us as it maught be, as you say, the law is the law. It does seem funny though, ah hev'n't heard on it afore this.

IAN: Well, ah don't expect a maid would hear tell on such things. It were only by lucky chance ah heard on it. Ba gun, if ah hadn't, us maught have made a terrible mistake.

MARYANN: *(Dully, lacks any enthusiasm.)* I suppose.

IAN: Tomorra then?

MARYANN: Tomorra then.

(Lights fade out on a dejected MaryAnn and a stoic, somewhat noble Ian.)

SCENE 4

(AT RISE: *The Duke's study. The Duke is standing at the window, glowering down at what he sees in the courtyard. He is muttering to himself as he stares out the window.*)

DUKE: Damme. Bawds and bitches. I'm surrounded by them. (*There is a knock at the door. Shouts.*) Yes. Yes. What is it?

(*The butler, Travers, enters.*)

TRAVERS: Beggin' you pardon, sir.

DUKE: Well? Well? What is it, Travers?

TRAVERS: A young lad to see you, sir.

DUKE: Lad. What lad?

TRAVERS: Sort of a bumpkin, sir. Says he's from Pawkithorpe Brig. Has a lass with him, sir.

DUKE: Damn fool. Probably going to wed. And wants my blessing. Damn fool. Tell him I'm busy, Travers.

TRAVERS: He seem quite insistent, sir. And he's very big.

(*The Duke steps to the window.*)

DUKE: Travers. Look down there. (*Travers crosses to the window and looks out.*) What de ye see?

TRAVERS: Quite a few ladies, sir. In their Sunday best, it appears.

DUKE: Quite a few, indeed. There's over a hundred.

TRAVERS: Really, sir.

DUKE: Yesss. It's the damn ladies committee for the Preservation of Ethical Culture Society, whatever the hell that is.

TRAVERS: How deep, sir.

DUKE: Deep, my arse. They're just a bunch of biddies, all shapes and sizes, all ages and looks, with nothin' better to do

with their time than drink my tea and dig up the courtyard lawn. I'm supposed to deliver a speech to those bawds and then hobnob with them all afternoon. I can hardly stand one of them, let alone a hundred on my lawn.

TRIVERS: But the lad, sir?

DUKE: The hell with the lad. Send him away. Didn't I just after finish tellin' you how busy I am. *(The door bursts open and Ian steps in boldly with MaryAnn cowering timidly behind him.)* What in the devil...?

IAN: Ye're the Duke, sir?

DUKE: Of course, I'm the Duke. What the hell do ye mean breakin' into my private study like this?

IAN: Ah've come to see you on a varry important personal matter.

DUKE: Oh, you did, did ye! And who the hell gave you leave to drop your manners by the roadside.

IAN: Yer man said you were here. I couldna wait any longer.

DUKE: Oh, you couldna, couldn't you? By God, I'll teach you a proper manner, you country lout.

(The Duke reaches for a riding crop atop a desk or table. Ian steps in front of him, rising to a full and menacing height.)

IAN: Duke or no Duke. I'll nay be talked to that way. Ah'm Ian Cawper of Pawkithorpe Brig.

(Although the Duke is momentarily impressed by Ian's size, he is still in a rage and is about to stand off with Ian.)

DUKE: Ian Cawper, is it? Pawkithorpe Brig, is it? Well, by God... *(Then in mid-sentence, the realization comes upon him, as he remembers who Ian Cawper is. There is a bit of a sickly surprised look on his face.)* Ian Cawper? Pawkithorpe Brig?

IAN: *(Defiantly.)* The same, sir.

DUKE: Not the strongest lad in all of Yorksha, is it?

IAN: Aye. That's me.

DUKE: Well, coom in, lad. Coom in.

IAN: I am in.

DUKE: So ye are. So ye are. Ian Cawper. Ah've heard tell on thee. And ye've brought ye're pretty lass, no doubt.

IAN: This is MaryAnn Battersby of Holdersby.

MARYANN: (*Curtsies.*) How do, sir.

DUKE: Sit ye down, the two on ye. Travers, don't stand there with no but to do. Help the lass.

TRAVERS: Yes, sir. (*Travers leads MaryAnn to a seat with Ian beside her. The Duke sits opposite them.*) Shall I leave, sir?

DUKE: Yes. (*He takes another look at the grim set of Ian's jaw.*) On second thought, mebbe you'd better stay a bit.

TRAVERS: Very good, sir.

(*Travers takes a position standing at the Duke's side, slightly behind him.*)

DUKE: Now Ian, lad, whut can ah dew for thee? (*Ian begins to fidget and look forlornly down at his feet.*) Come, come, come. Out with it. Don't be shy.

(*Ian looks up quickly and quizzically, wondering how the Duke knew. MaryAnn, throughout all this, is impressed with the Duke and is not above warming up to him.*)

MARYANN: Well, sir. Him and me's off to be wed.

DUKE: Aigh, now that's champion. Just the thing we need. A lot o' little lads in the parish wi' some of the heft of Ian. And ye'll be havin' a half dozen bairns or so, no doubt.

(*MaryAnn blushes and giggles a bit. Pause.*)

MARYANN: Now in a manner of speakin', your lordship, that's almost the varry thing us coom to see you about.

DUKE: See me? Why damme. O' course. Ye want my blessing. O' course.

MARYANN: Well, not exactly, sir.

DUKE: What then?

MARYANN: Ian'll explain. Go on, Ian. Tell the Duke about t'drawit de saynoor.

DUKE: The what?

MARYANN: T'drawit de saynoor. Go on, Ian.

IAN: Well, sor. I would've called before, but I just heard of the arrangement.

DUKE: Arrangement?

IAN: Yes, sor. We were readin' the paper at the Spread Eagle Inn, and it said how the law said you had the t'drawit de saynoor for every lass married in the six counties. Ah'm sorry about not known about the law before. But we came as soon as I found out. And here we are.

DUKE: (*Aghast.*) Oh, my God! Droit du Seigneur! (*The Duke is the only one who pronounces it correctly [drwä dü sen-yær]. Even Travers is aghast.*) Oh, my God!

IAN: Well, sor—

DUKE: A moment, Ian. Travers! (*Travers comes to the Duke's side. Whispers, so Ian can't hear.*) Travers. The last Duke who exercised the Droit du Seigneur...what happened to him?

TRAVERS: Your great, great grandfather, sir. The townspeople hanged him. From three parts of this body.

DUKE: Grandfather...hanged... What three parts?

TRAVERS: Well, two of them were the thumbs, sir!

DUKE: Thumbs? (*Then the realization comes upon him as to what the third part was.*) Aaaaaaagh! (*He squeezes his legs together at the thought.*)

IAN: Well, sor, since MaryAnn was born and raised in thy Duchy, us decided to come to thee. Us always obeys the law.

DUKE: A moment, Ian. A moment.

IAN: Since we're fair to get married soon, us thought it would be no but the polite thing, like to ax thee how tha were fixed for appointments.

DUKE: Now, hold on, Ian. This is a varry old law.

IAN: But it's a law. And a law's a law.

(The Duke looks to Travers for help. Travers just shrugs his shoulders and looks heavenward in amazement.)

DUKE: Well, Ian. There are other things to consider.

IAN: What other things? A law's a law.

DUKE: Will ye stop sayin' that. I know what the hell a law is.

IAN: I know you're upset jus comin' to you so sudden like.

DUKE: It's not that, Ian. There are other things to consider.

IAN: There's no other t'consider when it comes to law. Me dad taught me that. I always obeys the law, no matter what.
A law's a law!

(Ian's voice has risen during the last speech, and he punctuates the last sentence by banging his fist on the table, which crumbles pitifully under his mighty blow. They all stare at the broken table for a moment.)

DUKE: Oh, sweet Jasus.

IAN: I'm sorry, sor. But I do get carried away sometimes when I speak of the law. I've always lived by it, and I get sore angry when I think of the many who try to wheedle around it. I could fairbreak them in two as well.

DUKE: *(Rather weakly.)* I see...

(Again the Duke looks to Travers for some help. Again, Travers shrugs his shoulders helplessly.)

IAN: Now, sor. About the appointments...how abaht today a week.

DUKE: Today a week! Ah, my God!

IAN: Sor?

DUKE: Ah'm trying to think...er... MaryAnn, lass, how do thee feel about all this?

MARYANN: Well, you're not a bad figure of a man, sir. And as Ian says, a law is a law.

DUKE: Yes, Ian does say that, doesn't he?

IAN: Well, sor. Today a week?

DUKE: Now, Ian, a moment...er...ah, I just remembered. The truth is, lad, it just happens ah must have a conference wi' the House of Lords.

IAN: Eh?

DUKE: That's true. Isn't it, Travers? The House of Lords.

TRAVERS: *(Puzzled.)* Lords, sir?

DUKE: *(Half under his breath.)* Yes, you bloody idiot. *(Loudly.)* House of Lords. Remember, Travers.

TRAVERS: Yes, of course. I suppose so, sir.

(The Duke gives Travers a fierce look.)

IAN: Aigh, too bad. Then how about a fortnight from today. Us would like to be wed of a Sat's day.

(The Duke thought he was out of it. He reaches for another straw.)

DUKE: Ah...ah...ba gum, Ian. Thous has me there, too. It's t'opening of grouse season. And ah must off to Scotland.

(Ian is beginning to become annoyed. He furrows his brows in suspicion.)

IAN: Nay. T'grouse season don't open in summer.

DUKE: Ah! Hah! Now look at me. That were a slip. Ah meant, it's the openin' o' ma racin' season.

(The Duke heaves a sigh of relief. Ian thinks.)

IAN: Aigh, dear. Well it happen might to best to work from thy end. Now what evenings like is thee free from engagements.

(The Duke looks in wonder at Ian. There are no more straws left.)

DUKE: Ian, lad. Ah'm right afraid ah'm booked up solid for sivveral months. Travers?

TRAVERS: Yes, sir, of course. Several months.

IAN: Sivveral months? Well, then, if we must wait, we must wait. Suppose thee notifies us the first free date convenient. I'll coom back to check with you.

DUKE: Look here, Ian, me lad. It does seem a bit of a shame for thee to be held up.

IAN: But there's no two ways with the law. Us must wait.

(The Duke heaves a sigh. Then he beckons to MaryAnn.)

DUKE: Come here, my lass. *(She goes to him. He takes her hand and pats it.)* Look here, Ian Cawper. As temptin' as it is, and as pretty a lass as MaryAnn is, ah'll tell whut ah'm off to do. For a wedding present. Ah'll let thee of my droit du seigneur. Thee can have MaryAnn all to thysel the first night.

(Ian stands.)

IAN: Why, your lordship tha's kind. But ah couldn't hear tell on it.

DUKE: Why not?

IAN: Why not? We spoke on that. There's the law. The law's the law, thou knows.

DUKE: Aye, spoke on that we did. But suppose, just suppose, pretty, us just forgets it this time.

IAN: Hard on us as it might be, we must observe the law. The law's the law.

(The Duke is at the end of his patience.)

DUKE: (*Shouts.*) Will ye stop sayin' that! (*He takes a deep breath, thinks for a moment.*) Now listen to me, Ian Cawper. If I prove to you that laws were meant to be broken, will you accept my wedding gift?

IAN: If ye can prove it, I will.

DUKE: All right, then. Laws were meant to be broken, because if no one broke them, there'd be no need for them.

(The Duke is surprised at his own brilliance in logic, as is Travers.)

TRAVERS: Very well put, sir.

(Ian ponders this.)

IAN: Well, I've no answer to that, sor. The logic is fair unshakeable.

DUKE: Good, then you'll accept.

IAN: Yes, sir.

DUKE: MaryAnn?

MARYANN: It might ha been a reight interestin' experience and all, in a manner of speakin'. We'll accept, thankee.

(MaryAnn goes to the Duke to give him a kiss on the cheek. He accepts it, but holds her away from him. She seems a bit eager, and he doesn't want it to last too long. He ushers her bodily toward the door. Ian observes this, and once again his brows furrow with suspicion. Ian jumps up.)

IAN: (*Shouts.*) Nay. Ah won't go. So that's it!

DUKE: That's what?

(Ian starts toward the Duke during the next speech, the Duke backing away.)

IAN: Ah know thee. Thou's got it in thy head that my MaryAnn isn't good enough for t'drawit de saynoor! So that's it!

DUKE: Why, easy now, Ian. Easy now. Such a thing as that never passed my mind. *(The Duke is now fearfully backing away toward MaryAnn. Ian follows.)* She's a bonny and buxom a lass as ever I saw. *(The Duke grabs MaryAnn and kisses her on the cheek.)* See!

IAN: Nae more deceit, I tell you.

DUKE: What deceit? She's a delicious morsel. *(He kisses her full on the mouth.)* See!

(Ian is still advancing on the Duke.)

IAN: Enough's enough.

DUKE: She's wonderful.

(The Duke bends her back and low and gives her a strong passionate kiss.)

IAN: Thee needn't try to soft soap us any further. Ah've decided that us'll go threw wi' th thing in a reight and proper way...and I'm not off to havin' my mind changed.

(The Duke drops MaryAnn.)

DUKE: But, Ian...

(Ian picks MaryAnn up during his next speech.)

IAN: Nay. Ma MaryAnn's as good as any other lass in this Duchy, and as her future husband, ah'm off to see she gets her rights. Now that's ma final say, so thou'd better tell me what neight tha's free'n ba gum, if ah hev to, ah'll coom wi' her myself, and see it's done right and proper.

[End of Freeview]