

R. CLARK

I

OUR LADY'S TUMBLER.

SEBASTIAN

The scene is set in a chapel. The action takes place before a statue of the Blessed Virgin. The period is not specified. The play is in one act and is so designed that, if necessary, it may be performed in a church or hall without a stage or house curtain. The statue is the only essential property.

A HYMN IS HEARD SUNG OFF-STAGE BY A CHOIR-BOY -

BROTHER SEBASTIAN IS DISCOVERED SEATED ON THE

Brother Sebastian ... (reading his composition over to himself). CHANCEL STEPS

'He stands as a beggar, yet it is I who am blind,
Nor does he seek for alms, but to give me sight;
For my sin is self-love and all my days are darker than the night.....

That's clumsy! I don't like the inversion: 'nor does he seek
for alms'.

It's terribly clumsy.....

Let's try: 'He does not seek for alms but to give me sight.'

Yes, that's clearer and has got rid of that inversion.

Now how does it run?

'He stands as a beggar, yet it is I who am blind,

He does not seek for alms but to give me sight;

For my sin is self-love and all my days are darker than the night.'

Still not right. The last line stumbles like a centipede that's
out of step.

'For my sin is self-love....' another inversion - that's the worst
of knowing too much Latin;

Must alter that, somehow.....

(Brother Andrew comes in carrying a pail, He starts to scrub the aisle,
and seems unaware of Brother Sebastian's presence)

'For my sin is self-love'..... No: 'for self-love is my sin.'

Brother Andrew (to himself as he noisily pushes his pail about)

'Amo, amas, amat,

Amamus, amatis (Pause) amant.'

'amabo, amabis, amabit,

amabimus, amabitis.....(pause)

Brother Sebastian. 'For self-love's my sin'

No, 'For my eyes are blind with self-love' - Yes, that's better.

Brother Andrew.

'Amabo, amabis, amabit,

amabimus, amabitis ... (pause, then almost proudly) amabint!'

Brother Sebastian. (correcting him without looking up) 'Bunt.'

Brother Andrew. 'Amabunt.'

Sebastian. 'For my eyes are blind with self-love and my days are darker
than the night.'
That's worse. Now it sounds as if that centipede's got gout!

Andrew. 'Amabam, amabas, amabat,

amabamus, amabatis, ama (pause) SEBASTIAN

SEBASTIAN

'Bant.'
'For my eyes are blind with self-love and all my days are night.'

Andrew (moving his pail as emphasis) 'Amabant.'

Sebastian. 'He stands as a beggar;
He does not seek for alms, but to give me sight;
For my eyes are blind with self-love and all my days are night.
Night that is darker than darkness
Night that.....'

Andrew. 'Amavi, amavisti, amavit,
amavimus

Sebastian.. Do you mind?

Andrew. Ssh 'amavimus, amavistis'

Sebastian. Brother Andrew.....

Andrew. Yes?

Sebastian, Do you mind?

Andrew. What?

Sebastian. Oh, nothing. I thought perhaps I was interrupting you.
Are you sure I'm not disturbing you or preventing you from
concentrating?

Andrew. No, not at all, Brother Sebastian.
I don't mind in the least.

Sebastian. Indeed, that's very good of you.

Andrew. Not at all. I'm used to working with people watching me.

- Sebastian. Are You? Why, of course - I was forgetting.
But you see, Brother Andrew, I am not so fortunate:
I lack your professional experience.....
Do do you mind not imitating a parrot,
And taking your amo amas amat elsewhere,
So that I get on with my work?
- Andrew. I'm sorry, I didn't know you were doing anything.
I thought you were just sitting down.
- Sebastian. So I am 'just sittingdown'.....
Why must everyone, especially in a monastery,
assume that unless you've got a pail in one hand
and a hammer in the other - you're not doing anything?
As a matter of fact, I was thinking.
- Andrew. Why, have you lost something?
- Sebastian. Do I look as if I have?.....
Ah, I see what you meandear Brother Andrew.
No, I've not lost anything; I was just thinking of something
I've never had -
well, never long enough to lose.
- Andrew. Yes, good money is very hard to come by, isn't it?
- Sebastian. Is it?
- Andrew. Well, it was -
I can't get used to the fact that I don't need it no more
- Sebastian. If you must know: *Start to write leave broom*
I was trying to finish a poem
which I've been trying to write
with a broom in one hand and
- Andrew. You made it up yourself?
I wish I could write poetry.
- Sebastian. Don't you?
I have yet to meet anybody who doesn't.
The reason why nobody reads poetry to-day is:
Everybody's too busy writing it.
You should - it's most relaxing.
- Andrew. No I can never find a rime,
But I did once make up a song, a sort of a ballad.....
- Sebastian. What a pity! I hoped you were unique.
- Andrew. What's your poem about?

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- Sebastian. It's a canzone.
- Andrew. Is it in Latin?
- Sebastian. No, though that would have been easier.
- Andrew. What's it called?
- Sebastian. 'A Prayer for Our Lady's Intercession.'
I've written it for the Celebration.
- Andrew. What celebration?
- Sebastian. This evening's, of course.
I shall recite my poem before the statue,
As an offering to Our Lady.
- Andrew. She'll like that.
Do you always read your poems to her?
- Sebastian. No, of course not.
Don't you know what day it is? Can't you read the
calendar?
- Andrew. No, I can't make Latin out yet.
- Sebastian. But hasn't anybody told you?
Don't you know why you're giving the floor an extra
scrub?
And why I'm sweeping with one hand and writing with
the other?
- Andrew. To brighten the place up, I suppose.
- Sebastian. Yes, because to-day happens to be
the Feast-day of the Blessed Virgin.
- Andrew. And your poem's a sort of birthday present?
- Sebastian. One of three offerings.
- Andrew. (To statue) Nobody told me it was your birthday..
Or I'd have done something too.
- Sebastian. Never mind, Brother Andrew, you can watch with the other
The chapel will soon be full -
Everybody in the village will be here,
And people come from miles around.
to see whether the statue will move.
- more to
him*

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Andrew.

Does she really?

Sebastian.

Don't you know? I thought everybody knew,
It's a Legend: when the perfect offering is made, the
statue will make a sign.

Andrew. (to statue) You see, I wasn't here last year. And nobody
told me.

So I haven't got you anything.

Sebastian. (interested and touched by Brother Andrew's simplicity)

Towards him

Brother Andrew, tell me what made you become a novice?

Andrew.

My heart.

Sebastian.

You mean, you had a vocation?

Andrew.

Yes, my heart used to go pit-a-pat
Whenever I did my
Whenever I did anything vigorous.

Sebastian.

Ah, Palpitations

Andrew.

That's it; so I had to stop
So I had to give the profession up
right in the middle of the season.
Three years next Christmas it'll be.

Sebastian.

I understand: a vocation more than a vocation....
But what made you become a novice?
Couldn't you have retired to a little farm or

Andrew.

It wasn't because I hadn't any money, don't think that.
But I was sort of lonely, you see
- Always having moved around in a troupe

Sebastian.

Yes, I see - so you just joined another?

Andrew.

Why, the Abbot's not going to make me leave, is he?

Sebastian.

No. I don't think so - not if you learn your
conjugations
silently, and let me try and finish this poem.

Andrew.

Won't you read me a bit?

Sebastian.

No, it needs polishing. *break away*

Andrew.

I'll make allowances. Don't be shy.

Sebastian. Thank you. But you'll hear it later.

Andrew. I suppose you think I wouldn't understand it?

Sebastian. No, it wasn't that.
I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll read some if you
stand down there
and then you can tell me if you can hear it all right.
The acoustics are a bit erratic; one's voice certainly
goes up to heaven -
for nobody can hear you on earth.

Andrew. (going back) Here?

Sebastian. No, farther back. There, that'll do.

Towards
Back
Right

Night that is darker than darkness,
night which no gentle evening
Leads in,
nor dawn alleviates,
nor sun penetrates;
night of no shadow:
Night

Andrew. Right, I'm ready.

Sebastian. But I've read it. Didn't you hear it?

Andrew. Not a word.

Sebastian. I'll have to stand farther from the statue.
I'll try again

Back

Night that is darker than darkness,
Night which no gentle evening
Leads in.
nor dawn
alleviates,
nor sun penetrates;
Night of no shadow

How's that?

Andrew. Not very good.

Sebastian. You mean the poem? Or can't you hear it?

Andrew. (returning to him) You want to throw your voice. Look like
this:
And use your lips more and imagine you are talking
to some person right at the back of the audience.

Sebastian. You mean 'congregation'.

Andrew. YOU WANT TO SPEAK LIKE THIS,
or half the sound gets lost in the roof of the
marquee

Sebastian.~~cathedral~~. *Chapel*

Andrew. But of course, it's easier if you've got a good house.

Sebastian. A what?

Andrew. If it's a good day ... if the takings ...
I mean, if you've got plenty of people in the tent...

Sebastian. ~~Cathedral~~. *Chapel*

Andrew. Then the sound carries better, see?

Sebastian. Yes, I think we'll get a good house...
But I'll throw my voice as you showed me.
Thanks very much for the tip.

Andrew. That's all right - we artists have got to help each
other, haven't we?

Sebastian. Yes, that's true....
I wonder if you'd mind doing this sweeping for me
while I finish this poem?

Andrew. (taking the broom and sweeping) Not at all.
I don't suppose I could help with the poem.
(Brother Gregory comes in carrying some roses).

Gregory. Brother Sebastian...

Sebastian. Yes, what is it now?

Gregory. As you're ~~xxxx~~ not doing anything, could you hold
these flowers for a moment while I get some water?

Sebastian. (not looking up). Why, of course, I hate being idle.

Gregory. (holding the flowers out) Well, come on then.
What are you doing now?

Sebastian. I'm just writing an inscription.
I've dedicated my poem to you.

Gregory. Really! I'm touched.

Sebastian. You will be (reading it) 'To my friend, Brother
Gregory, with whose help this poem would never have
been written.'

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(He goes to hold the flowers)

(continues) And you needn't thrust the thorns into my hands quite so viciously.

Andrew. (going to them still holding his broom)

Aren't they beautiful? (pause)
There's nothing like flowers, is there? (Pause)
To cheer a place up, I mean.
Though, of course, they always remind me of funerals..
Do they remind you of funerals, Brother Sebastian?

Sebastian. Yes, that's why they cheer me up.

Andrew. (coming closer) They are lovely.

Gregory. Do mind your broom

Andrew. I'm sorry. Yes, they're the most beautiful roses I've ever seen.
They're almost too perfect, don't you think? (pause)
What's your favourite flower, Brother Sebastian?
(pause)
I said: 'What's your favourite flower, Brother Sebastian?'

Sebastian. Black roses.

Andrew. Is it? How interesting!
Now, I've never seen a black rose.
Have you seen a black rose, Brother Gregory?

Gregory. They're all black at night.

Andrew. Are they now? How interesting.
But my favourite rose is a sweet brier rose.

Sebastian. Is it now?

Gregory. How interesting.

Andrew. Is it, why, many people like the sweet-brier rose.
They're quite common in the hedges: indeed, they grow wild.
In fact I suppose they're not a rose at all.

Gregory. Not at all. They're a species of flowering thorn.

Andrew. How interesting. Still, they're very pretty
But, of course, not as beautiful as yours.
Did you grow them all yourself?

Gregory. Nature took a hand here and there. (He finishes arranging the flowers.)
Now which is best - which is the most perfect rose of all?

goes to next bowl 94

Sebastian.

What about this?

Gregory.

No, it's a little too full.

Sebastian.

Or this red one?

Gregory.

Yes on this white?
Now which of these two.....?
It's very difficult.

cross left before d

Andrew.

Why must you choose only one?

Gregory.

To offer Our Lady the best, of course.

Andrew.

Couldn't you give her all of them?

Gregory.

No, our hands can only hold one rose;
And that must be the most perfect rose of all.

Andrew.

Then let me help you.

Gregory. (ignoring him) Now, shall it be the white or the red.
Brother Sebastian?

Andrew. (excitedly rushing up) The red! The red!

Gregory. ~~2x~~

Don't touch it!
Oh, now you've soiled it.

Andrew. ~~1~~

I'm sorry. (He returns to his swearing.)

Gregory.

Now it will have to be the white!

Sebastian.

No, choose the red. *cross left big cross*
light up behind them

Gregory.

Why?

Sebastian.

It's more appropriate. (Brother Gregory places the red rose in a bowl to the left of the statue. Father Marcellus and Brother Justin come up the aisle.)

Father Marcellus. The boys should, of course, lead the procession.
Now, show me where you want them to stand.

Justin. (taking up a position to the left of the statue)

Here, Father - when I rehearsed them yesterday,
I found that if they stood farther back.