

Barnharrow

A One-Act Play

Gordon Daviot
[Elizabeth Mackintosh]
1954

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Barnharrow

Gordon Daviot (Elizabeth Mackintosh)

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CHARACTERS

JANET LINTON

ROB LINTON, *her father-in-law*

SIMON LINTON, *her son*

ISHBEL GRIERSON, *her niece*

A SERGEANT

BARNHARROW

The living-room of a small farm in the South-west of Scotland on a summer evening in the sixteen-eighties.

Against the back wall is a large dresser with plates and dishes. R. of the dresser is a cask of ale, and L. of the dresser the door to the passage. R., is the wide hearth with a peat fire burning. L., the window, against which is a bare wood table.

The door at the back is wide open, and so is the outside door (to the R. as one walks into the passage) so that both room and passage are flooded with the light of the westering sun, through window and open door, and anyone coming in by the front door casts a shadow in front of them.

There are two people in the room. At a smaller table, where the light falls on it between the window and the fire, JANET LINTON is ironing. She is forty; a dignified woman with an intelligent face, the remains of what must have been a quiet rather than a flashing beauty, and grace and good taste in her plain clothes. In a chair by the hearth is her father-in-law, ROBERT LINTON. He is not much more than sixty, but he is so crippled by rheumatism that he is physically an old man. Mentally he is alert, and his face is a great deal livelier than his daughter-in-law's.

JANET irons while she talks, and more or less throughout the play; changing her iron at convenient moments. The clothes to be ironed are in a basket on a stool to L. of the table. The finished articles she hangs to air by the fire if they are garments, or folds and lays over the edge of the basket if they are small pieces.

JANET (*casting a glance at the other iron which is heating at the fire*) Put another peat on the fire, Father. That iron's not heating.

[ROB reaches behind him for a peat, and lays it on the fire.]

ROB There are not many peats left. Simon was in such haste to get to town he forgot to bring in a load this morning. Is it a girl, do you think?

JANET (*more to herself than to him*) If only it were!

ROB (*carefully ignoring her reaction*) He's got to an age now to be looking them over; but you need not fear for his picking. All the Lintons were good pickers. You never knew my Hannah, but when my son brought you over the threshold to me

that day, do you know what I thought? I thought: Well, he had to go all the way to Dumfries to find a woman as good as his mother, but he's found her. Trust a Linton. And Simon will be the same. He may look them over down in Dalmeath, but he won't bring one home until——

JANET (*interrupting quietly*) Father; don't bother to pretend. You know as well as I do where he is.

ROB And where is that?

JANET Patrick Kennedy is preaching today at the back of the Tor hill.

ROB (*as one says: Indeed!*) A conventicle.

JANET (*bitterly*) Ay; a conventicle.... And my son's there.... I think Will must be turning in his grave....

[ROB *searches in his mind for comfort to offer her, but finds none to hand.*]

JANET ... Where have I failed, Father?

ROB Failed?

JANET What have I done, or not done, that Will's son should be up there listening to the raving of fanatics?

ROB It's no fault of yours, Janet.

JANET I gave him a good education, that he might have a mind to reason with.... Sending him to the minister to learn Latin and the like.... He used to be very fond of old Mr Pierse, but now, it seems, he's a 'priest of Baal'.

ROB It's nobody fault, Janet; neither yours nor good old Mr Pierse's. Look out of the window there and tell me what you see.

JANET (*glancing automatically out of the window without pausing in her work*) Moors.

ROB Ay. Moors. Go round the back of the house, and what do you see? Moors. Bogs and mist in the winter, and bogs, plain bogs, in the summer. And no moving thing, summer or winter, but the cloud shadows. What kind of country is that for a young man?

JANET Will lived in it, and so did you.

ROB Will came back to it. He'd seen the world, and had something to measure things by. And Will was a sober creature anyhow. As for me, I made my own liveliness, God forgive me, before I met my Hannah. That is what I say to you. A man must make his own excitement in a country like this. Even if it is only listening to

a bag of wind like Pat Kennedy.

JANET If it were only harmless as wind.... He makes them mad with words. He plays with them the way he would play with chuckie-stones. They have no wills or thoughts of their own by the time he's finished with them.

ROB Ay. It was all he was ever good at: talking.

JANET It's a fearful thing that one man's tongue can have such a power.

ROB (*amending her speech*) A tongue and one man's vanity.

JANET (*reflective*) Ay; vanity. I sat on a school bench with Patrick Kennedy. Even then he could never bear to come second—even in a game. We used to play Hang-the-man on our school slates, and if he was losing he would dash a wet rag over it before you could stop him.

ROB (*dryly*) He'll maybe make a successful hanging one of these days, for all that. Give a cry to Ishbel, and perhaps she'll bring in a peat or two.

JANET I would have to cry very loud. It isn't men like Pat Kennedy that end on the gallows, but their poor dupes.

ROB Is Ishbel not out-by?

JANET She is not. The last bannock wasn't off her girdle (*she tilts her head to where, under a clean cloth on the table by the window, the bannocks are lying*) this afternoon but she was out of the door like the flirt of a cat's tail.

ROB The conventicle, is it?

JANET Where else?

ROB Well, I could imagine better places. But I suppose listening to a man with a price on his head preaching treason is more exciting than a roll in the hay. That is what they want, Janet. Excitement.

JANET If she wasn't my sister's child she could search for excitement under some other roof.

ROB It's what gives Patrick Kennedy and all his tribe their power in the West. In Edinburgh no one would even pause to listen to them. And why? Because in the East their days are full, and there is entertainment for their eyes and their minds and their bodies. Every hour a new fashion, a new idea, a new dance step. Europe and the great world washes up on their doorstep, bringing its treasure like flotsam. And that keeps their spirits lively and their spleens uncongested. But what new thing ever comes into this country? Even the pedlar plodding up the road from Dalmeath is the same one as last year. A new ribbon once a twelve-month won't keep a girl happy

or a lad interested.

JANET (*casting him a slight smile*) You sound as if you would have liked to go to Edinburgh yourself, Father.

ROB Ay; I always had a notion to go east and see the world. But I would no sooner get the length of Dalmeath than I would notice a pretty girl. It might be a girl I had known for years, but I would notice for the first time what a fine little curl came down in front of her right ear, and I would have to stay in Dalmeath until I became better acquainted with that curl. That was before I met my Hannah, of course.

JANET (*going back to her preoccupation*) I have thought often of sending Simon away. But who would work the place if he left?... I did ask Mr Pierse about it, once. He was very proud of Simon. A good brain he had, he said. And when I asked him about finding work for Simon somewhere in the East he said he would speak for him any time. To the King himself, if need were. But of course that was before ... (*Her voice dies away*)

ROB Before Simon decided that Mr Pierse was a ‘spawn of Satan’. Or is it ‘a priest of Baal’? (*As JANET makes no rejoinder*) It’s heady stuff, the Old Testament. Full of cursings and malediction. I doubt if any Covenanter has opened the New Testament since Tippermuir, way back in Montrose’s day.

JANET Why Tippermuir?

ROB There’s direct evidence that they’d at least heard of it then. Their watchword was: ‘Jesus and No Quarter’.

JANET (*contemplative*) The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon. And never the mention of a Cross.... Good old Mr Pierse preaches about being a good citizen and respecting the rights of others, but I suppose it doesn’t sound as fine as the Sword of the Lord.

ROB No; there’s no glory in being a good citizen. Not in Galloway. Just think how dull life would be for Lady Kilenzie if she couldn’t hide Pat Kennedy in her cellar now and then. Or for Daft Davie Dunbar if he couldn’t run with messages about the whereabouts of the patrol, or for——

JANET (*bitter*) If Lady Kilenzie had a son she might see Patrick Kennedy in a different light. Would I care about his shoutings and his blasphemies if it were not for Simon!... Isn’t every day I rise a burden to me for fear of what he may be led into.... If only Will had lived he might——

ROB (*interrupting*) Now, Janet, now; you know that is not so. Will could not have altered by one oat-straw anything that——

JANET (*passionate*) If Will had lived there would be someone to work Barnharrow, and Simon could have gone away, and learned to judge things with a better understanding in a wider world. To find worthier heroes than Patrick Kennedy. And a finer creed than—— (*Her head turns to the window*)

ROB Is that Simon now?

JANET No. It's Ishbel.

[*The girl's footsteps are not audible until she moves from the turf to the large flagstones that surround the door. As the flat, metallic sound of her feet on the stone is heard, one can see her shadow in the passage and she comes into the room.*

[*She is not yet twenty; still slim, but with the promise of a mature opulence; her auburn hair and full mouth suggest warmth and temperament. She is, indeed, the antithesis of her aunt.*

[*She is flushed with her long journey in the heat, and is carrying the small light-woollen shawl that she would normally be wearing as outdoor garment.*]

ISHBEL Whoa! Was there ever a summer like this one! The air on the moor is dancing in the heat like a cloud of midges. (*She picks up a dipper and draws water from a pail just inside the door, and drinks it thirstily*)

ROB (*watching her*) If you drink like a calf you'll have to go to the well again tonight.

ISHBEL (*pausing in her drinking but not turning*) I'll go to the well. (*She finishes her drink*)

JANET (*not nagging; merely casting her a glance and going on with her ironing*) Five miles is a long way to walk on a hot day for a sermon. You were never as fond of walking the mile to kirk.

ROB (*not archly; merely stating a fact*) Och, at kirk she had only the sermon, and a sideways keek of Johnny Stewart's black hair. At a conventicle she can throw her eye over the likely lads of three parishes. Indeed, if all they tell me is true, the young ones throw more than their——

JANET (*repressive*) Father!

ISHBEL (*equably*) I didn't go for sermon or lads. I wanted to see them drilling.

JANET (*standing stock-still*) Drilling!

ISHBEL (*a little pleased now to be able to shock them*) Yes. They have pikes. And forty muskets besides.

JANET (*to herself*) God help us.

ROB (*dryly*) And what great truth are they going to prove with a pike?

ISHBEL They're going to prove that they are better men than His Majesty's troops.

ROB That won't be difficult. (*As ISHBEL looks surprised*) Nine to one is good odds, by any reckoning. There's eighty men down yonder at Kilmichael, and not another blink of a uniform in five hundred square miles. If Patrick Kennedy is anything of a General he can pick them off ten at a time—there are never more than ten in a patrol, because they can never afford more—and in a week he will be lord of the West.

JANET Father! How can you take it so lightly? So——

ROB (*soothing*) Because he won't do it, my dear. Pat Kennedy never had any stomach for a fight.

JANET (*doubtfully*) No; that's true.

ISHBEL Patrick Kennedy is a saint, and he has the courage of a lion.

ROB (*ignoring ISHBEL*) He wants to be a Gideon as well as a Moses. But reviewing a private army is one thing, and facing the business-end of a pike is another matter altogether.

JANET But, Father! Think. He preaches them daft and then puts muskets into their hands.

ROB (*reflective*) Ay. I wonder where he got those muskets.

ISHBEL They came from Holland in a ship that put into Loch Ryan. Mr Kennedy ordered them with money that godly folk subscribed.

ROB Folk who are too poor by their way of it to pay their taxes to the Government.

ISHBEL What have the Government ever done for us?

JANET (*tartly, rousing from her abstraction of worry*) They sent troops down to prevent our being rabbled by a crowd of hooligans because we choose to go to our own kirk of a Sabbath. For that if nothing else we are grateful to them.

ISHBEL Och, Barnharrow was never in danger of being rabbled.

JANET (*bitter*) Because my son stands well with the hooligans? It's a poor outlook when one's peace and safety are dependent on one's standing with the mob.

Where is Simon, by the way?

ISHBEL I don't know. I haven't seen him.

JANET Was he not at the conventicle?

ISHBEL Oh, I expect so, but it was all over before I got there. (*She has taken a bannock from under the cloth on the table, and carried it to the dresser, where she finds butter to spread on it*) Someone had told the troops at Kilmichael that there was going to be a conventicle somewhere today. So it had to be cut short, and there was no drilling. It was safer to leave the arms in their hidey-hole.

ROB (*murmuring*) Safer for who?

ISHBEL I met everyone on their road home.

JANET Why didn't you meet Simon, then?

ISHBEL (*indifferent*) I don't know. I suppose he had a ploy of his own. The conventicle was ended by noon, and that would be much too early to think of coming home.

ROB And who told the troops about the conventicle?

ISHBEL Lady Kilenzie says it was Dallas the grocer in Kilmichael.

ROB Oh, was she there?

ISHBEL I met her riding home, and she stopped and we had cake out of her saddle-bag and a drink called claret. That's wine. Her saddle-bags were stuffed full of food—chicken and things—because she had planned for an all-day outing, and she wasn't pleased to be going home shortly after noon.

ROB I suppose that means that old Dallas will wake tomorrow morning to find his stock dumped in the river; or are they going to fire his place?

ISHBEL Oh, Lady Kilenzie just said it was Dallas because she doesn't like him. He once said she ran round like a hen with its head cut off, and she heard about it. No, it wasn't Dallas.

ROB Who, then?

JANET How can anyone know who it was?

ISHBEL They have a good idea. It had to be someone who knew about the conventicle in the first place.

JANET The whole countryside knew about the conventicle.

ISHBEL And it had to be someone who wanted Mr Kennedy to stop preaching; and who would want that as much as his rival?

ROB His rival?

ISHBEL The man whose congregation Mr Kennedy stole away. Mr Pierse the minister.

JANET (*sharply*) What nonsense. Mr Pierse is too busy with the cares God put on his shoulders to go traipsing to Kilmichael with tales.

ISHBEL His grievance was in Kilmichael yesterday, though.

ROB And why shouldn't he be?

ISHBEL What took him all the way to Kilmichael? He's always got all he needed in Dalmeath.

ROB Is that what you call evidence?

JANET It's what Covenanters call evidence. But let me tell you, if you harm old Mr Pierse by as much as ham-stringing his horses I'll see to it myself that every—

ROB Och, Janet, don't worry. Even Pat Kennedy's crowd wouldn't rabble an old man. (*Stirring the peats on the hearth*) And talking of old men, if Simon doesn't come soon, I know one old man who will have to carry in peats.

ISHBEL I'll get you a peat.

[*She goes out, still eating and carrying her bit of bannock. As she reaches the outer door we hear her greet her cousin as he approaches the house.*]

ISHBEL (*off*) Oh, there you are, Simon. We were wondering what had become of you. You forgot to take in peats this morning.

SIMON (*off*) I'll take them in after supper. (*He sounds either sulky or brusque*)

ISHBEL (*off*) Did you see Mr Kennedy a bit of the way? (*She sounds as if she is walking away to the house-end*)

SIMON (*approaching*) No, I didn't.

[*His shadow appears on the floor of the passage and he comes in. He is about twenty; pleasant to look at, but somehow too adolescent for his years; and there is an odd suggestion about him that the immaturity may become permanent. The combination of his mother's intelligence with the lack of humour of his good stolid father has produced SIMON, who has the wit to absorb ideas, but not the wit to sift them out.*]

[*He casts a glance round as he comes in, but says nothing. He is heated but pale, as if worn-out with exertion and emotion. He dashes some water with the dipper into a basin, sets it on a stool, and washes both*

hands and face.]

JANET (*into the silence*) Is that what you feel?

SIMON (*washing*) What?

JANET A desire to get clean.

SIMON I'm hot. It has been the hottest day for ten years. (*Towel*) I am sorry about the peats.

ROB (*conversationally*) And how are you shaping with your pike?

SIMON (*pausing*) Who told you about the pikes?

JANET (*ironing*) Is there any secret about it?

SIMON (*scornfully*) No, I suppose nothing can be kept secret in this country. But it doesn't matter. The time cannot be far off when we fight for our liberty.

JANET Liberty to do what?

SIMON To worship God in our own way.

JANET (*calmly ironing*) No one is stopping you. No one has ever stopped you from worshipping God any way you please.

SIMON We will have no minister who bows the knee to a bishop.

JANET You and your silly phrases. Old Mr Pierse has never bowed his knee to any one. But if he bowed it three times daily what has that to do with your worshipping your God?

SIMON If he bows his knee to a bishop he acknowledges a temporal head of the Church. We will have no mortal as head of the Church in Scotland.

ROB (*dryly*) That must be a sad disappointment to Pat Kennedy.

SIMON Patrick Kennedy is a saint, who would rather live from hand to mouth in the wilderness than live fat under a bishop's patronage.

JANET He does not do so badly under Lady Kilenzie's.

SIMON Mock if it pleases you, but Patrick Kennedy will light a torch that will burn the chaff of prelacy out of the land and make it sweet and clean, as it was in the days of the Covenants.

JANET The Covenants! Always the Covenants! As if they were something God-given and holy. Instead of some very worldly and bargaining documents that have little to do with Christian teaching and nothing at all to do with freedom of worship.

SIMON That is blasphemy.

JANET So, according to you, is the Lord's Prayer. We are not likely to agree on

blasphemy, my son. But one thing admits of no argument. The punishment for attending a conventicle is a fine; but for carrying arms it is prison. And——

SIMON And you think I would not go singing to prison for my faith!

JANET No doubt; but it takes more than singing to work Barnharrow, and who is to do it while you are bearing witness to your faith in Wigtown?

SIMON If the Lord calls me to be an instrument of his will, the Lord will provide a substitute.

ROB It's to be hoped the substitute will have a better memory for the peats.

[Enter ISHBEL carrying a few peats tucked under her right arm and in her hand; her left hand still holds her 'piece'.]

ISHBEL There are two soldiers coming to the house. (*The remark is mildly excited but not alarmed. She has paused to deliver herself of the news, and now moves over to the fireplace and bestows her peats behind her grandfather's chair*)

JANET Soldiers? Coming here?

[SIMON has made an abrupt movement of alarm, but recovered himself.

JANET puts her iron down in the hearth without haste and with apparent self-possession; soldiers, being the police force of the time, upset her no more than a police officer on the doorstep upsets a law-abiding citizen.]

ISHBEL Two soldiers with horses. They look as if they had come a long way. They are walking the horses up the hill.

JANET (*slightly puzzled*) Have they come up from the road?

ISHBEL No, from over the moor, I think. Here they are.

[*There is the faint jingle of horse's bits, and an educated voice can be heard saying: 'You wait here, Bill.'* A shadow appears on the passage floor, and there is a knock on the outer door. A voice says: 'Anyone at home?' and a SERGEANT appears at the inner doorway.]

SERGEANT (*to JANET*) Good evening, ma'am. (*To the others generally*) Good evening. Forgive me for intruding, but I wondered if we could water our horses at your well. In this weather the moors are burnt dry, and we have not been able to give the poor beasts drink since the morning.

JANET But of course, sergeant. With pleasure. And you will drink some ale

yourself, perhaps. You must be thirsty, and Barnharrow ale is famous.

SERGEANT Thank you, ma'am, that is kind of you. I'll just tell Bill about the horses. Shall we use the bucket that is there?

JANET The wooden one, if you please.

SERGEANT Very good, ma'am.

[*He goes out to his companion and JANET draws two jugs of ale from the cask. ISHBEL peers from the window at the soldiers; and SIMON with an elaborate air of unconcern takes a piece of bannock from under the cloth, and sits down at the table to eat it, facing the centre of the room, his back against the wall and his feet thrust out.*]

SIMON (*as the SERGEANT comes back; unable to hold his tongue; taunting*) Did you have to ask for the water?

SERGEANT (*good-humoured*) I thought it safer.

SIMON Safer!

SERGEANT Both from the point of view of good manners and good policy. In this drought you might not have had it to spare. That's manners. And if I took it without asking you might have made a complaint. That's policy.

SIMON (*sneering*) And what good would come of our complaining?

SERGEANT No good at all, believe me. It took me ten years to get me these stripes, but it would take only a couple of minutes to lose them. (*Accepting the ale from JANET*) Thank you, ma'am, and thank you for the beasts' drink.

JANET (*handing the second jug to ISHBEL*) Take that out to the soldier, girl.

[*Exit ISHBEL.*]

SERGEANT Your good health, ma'am.

JANET Have you come far?

SERGEANT We have been out on patrol all day. (*With a little grimace of self-mockery*) I used to think there was nothing worse than a wet day on patrol; with the rain running down the back of your neck and your saddle like a sponge. But after today, give me rain!

ROB Ay, the moor's no place for man nor beast with the sun beating like a flail. Have you far to go yet?

[*The SERGEANT has another swig from the jug.*]

SERGEANT We were on our way back to Kilmichael, but we got word that there was business for us here.

JANET (*in half-alarm*) Here?

SERGEANT (*tilting his head to an imaginary village in the valley*) In Dalmeath. This is wonderful stuff, ma'am. If this is ale, I can't think what it is they give us in mess at Kilmichael.

JANET (*smiling faintly*) The commissariat brew, I suppose.

SERGEANT That's so, ma'am; and plaguey thin, tasteless stuff it is, believe me.

[*Since JANET has seated herself, he has dropped in a tired way on the stool at the up side of the table and put his mug on the board; with the unexpected result that SIMON has leaped to his feet at his end of the table. The SERGEANT looks at him, surprised.*]

SIMON (*with the passion of the over-wrought*) I sit at table with no minion of a persecuting tyranny!

SERGEANT (*getting up easily; with a contemptuous good nature that makes SIMON'S gesture ridiculous*) Sit down, son. I'll stand.

JANET (*smoothly*) You must forgive my son. He reads too much.

SERGEANT (*politely*) Ah, well, it's a lonely country to be young in. (*To SIMON, conversationally*) Where have you been today, lad?

SIMON (*who has sat down again*) To market. (*He sounds sullen*)

SERGEANT Oh. Sell anything?

SIMON I took nothing to sell.

SERGEANT Oh. Bought something.

SIMON (*losing control again*) If you are going to arrest me, why don't you do it without all this play-acting!

SERGEANT (*in genuine astonishment*) Arrest you!

SIMON (*defiant*) You think you have a reason, don't you?

SERGEANT My good lad, if I were going to arrest you I'd need more than a reason. I'd need a warrant. I'm the humble representative of law and order in this country. The only people who are free to do as they please to anyone at any time are the Covenanters.... Though we aim to put an end to that, sooner or later.

JANET You have done much as it is, sergeant; and we are grateful. Before the Government sent you down we were helpless. No one who went to kirk was safe.

Now the Covenanters may still rabble us, but not with impunity. It was the impunity that hurt.

SERGEANT We'll do our best, ma'am. Prevention's not easy, with just the little handful of us in this big territory, but we'll provide the retribution.

ROB Isn't it time you laid that madman by the heels?

SERGEANT Kennedy? High time, sir. But he was born in this district, and knows it like his own palm. We'll get him, though, and that cache of arms too.

ROB Has he arms?

SERGEANT Forty muskets from Flushing, and about a hundred pikes that the smith at Monigaff made for him. And who do you think is teaching the pike drill, but old Tim Gantry, home from the wars in the Low Countries. I remember Tim when he was with the Scots Brigade in Steenvoorde. He wouldn't know one end of a Bible from the other, but he dearly loved a neat squad. It must be the breath of life to him to be putting them through it.

SIMON If you know so much, why have you not arrested the smith and Tim Gantry?

SERGEANT (*eyeing him*) In law there is a thing called evidence. And information received is not evidence. One day, if we patrol long enough, we'll catch them red-handed; and then Patrick Kennedy won't seduce the youth of this country with his tongue any more. (*He looks reflectively at the liquid in his jug*) They say there's nothing like drink to bedevil a man's judgement; drink, or gambling. But it's a fair amazement what two hours of hell-fire preaching will do to a man. It makes him wild, and daft, and furious, and powerful-feeling, and he must do something at once to show off that power. It takes him one of three ways: love-making, arson, or murder. If there's no lass handy he sets fire to some stacks; and if there are no stacks to hand, he remembers his enemy and goes looking for him.

[*As his voice, very quiet and somewhat fateful in the last five words, dies away there is a moment's silence. It is broken by the sound of ISHBEL coming back.*]

SERGEANT Well, it is time I was on my way.

ISHBEL That is a fine chestnut you have, sergeant.

SERGEANT Yes, she's a good mare, Betsy. She has only one fault.

ISHBEL What is that?

SERGEANT She is too conspicuous. Three miles away they say: Here comes that

Sergeant and his chestnut mare. Thank you again, ma'am, for your hospitality. We get so many frowns in our day's work that it is pleasant to have a welcome. (*To ROB*) When we catch Kennedy, sir, perhaps you'll honour me by having a drink with me.

ROB I'll do that, sergeant.

JANET Are you staying long in Dalmeath?

SERGEANT Some time, I expect. Some of the troop are moving up here from Kilmichael.

JANET It must be serious business, yours, to warrant that.

SERGEANT Very serious. They shot the minister this afternoon.

JANET What minister?

SERGEANT The minister at Dalmeath.

JANET Mr Pierse?

SERGEANT Yes, old Mr Pierse. Shot him dead. On his own doorstep.

JANET (*almost speechless*) Murdered!

SERGEANT Well, I understand they don't use that word.

JANET They?

SERGEANT The Covenanters. They call it execution. It seems they blamed him for giving information about the conventicle.

SIMON And didn't he? (*He means the tone to be defiant, but there is an awful fear at the back of it*)

SERGEANT (*quietly; looking him full in the eye*) No. (*He holds his look for a full three seconds, and then his glance goes on to the others*) They'll have to 'execute' someone else. Good-day, ma'am, and thank you again.

[*Exit SERGEANT.*]

[*There is a stunned silence.*]

JANET (*slowly*) Good old Mr Pierse. Murdered. And in cold blood.

SIMON (*with sudden vehemence*) It was not in cold blood! He came to the door with a pistol in his hand! How was anyone to know that—— (*He becomes aware of what he is saying and stops, but it is too late*)

JANET (*looking at him with horror; whispering*) Simon! (*She puts out her hand to the table for support, subsides on to the stool, and with her elbows on the table buries her face in her hands. In a despairing cry*) Will!... Oh, Will!

[ROB *begins to struggle into a standing position, preparatory to going to her; and ISHBEL stands looking in bewildered dismay from SIMON to her aunt as the curtain comes down.*]

CURTAIN

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

[The end of *Barnharrow* by Gordon Daviot]