



The Preview script of ...

Portrait of Dylan

A two act play by Tony Layton

Portrait of Dylan

By Tony Layton

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NOTE : This is a preview version, and does not contain the full script.

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Main Characters.

Young Dylan - schoolboy
Dylan - from age 19 to 39
Caitlin - 24 to 38
Porter - an elderly New Yorker
Young Dan - schoolboy.
Liz Reitel - early 30's.

Other roles.

Suggestions for multi role playing are indicated.

Elsie Morgan / Bessie Morris / Fiona Price / Mary Parker
Doris Eynon / Daisy Brown / Marcia Stein / Actress / Mrs Evans
Pamela Hansford-Johnson / Young Actress/ Pearl (late twenties) / Mrs Jones / Jane Fisk

Bert Trick / Charlie Chaplin / 1st Comedian / Dr Feltenstein / Seaman
Theatre Director / Script Editor / Registrar / 1st Soldier / 1st Doctor / Seaman
Dan (early twenties) / 2nd Comedian / 2nd Soldier / 2nd Doctor / Seaman
Young Actor / Stephen Spender / American Agent / Seaman.

Plus

Gossips, partygoers, actors, children, etc..

This play is based on factual events in Dylan's life. It is designed to be played by a small cast using multi-role playing techniques. A company with greater resources might like to use a larger cast. A close link with a youth theatre would prove useful for some of the parts for young people, although older actors have played these roles successfully.

Setting

This play requires an open set with no clutter, and heavy props kept to a minimum. The cyclorama and side panels should be designed with images of Dylan, and maybe a collage of Swansea, Laugharne and New York images. At stage left, position a raised rostrum to represent the bedroom at the Chelsea Hotel, New York. There should be enough room on this for a small table, two chairs and a drinks cabinet. There should be easy access from the rostrum to the main stage. It is suggested that there is a large central screen for a large lithograph-type portrait of Dylan. However, individual directors might like to consider having a white screen on which to throw images, gobos, to indicate change of scene.

Act One

Six characters appear. It's Swansea. The sound of a chapel organ can be heard playing a hymn in the far distance.

- 1st Man** Some say good riddance, but not me. He was all right as long as you didn't cross him. Yeah, on the whole he was all right.
- 2nd Man** I don't think I ever really knew him.
- 1st Woman** Wouldn't trust him as far as I could throw him. There again, what man can you trust?
- 2nd Woman** I had no time for him, personally. Never sober. A right layabout.
- 1st Man** Tell you something, talk about gift of the gab. He could talk. I'll give him that.
- 3rd Man** He certainly had a way with words. English words mind, but still, magical sounds he made.
- 3rd Woman** I could never fancy a man like that. Let's face it, he was no Gary Cooper. Never a saint. Never in a month of Sundays.
- 2nd Man** Never met him. Did you?
- 1st Woman** No. I know someone who knew someone who shared a drink in the "Mermaid" with him once, or was it the "Antelope"?
- 2nd Woman** Everyone in Swansea knows someone who knew someone who had a drink with Dylan.
- 3rd Man** He didn't like Swansea much, did he.
- 1st Man** Oh yes. He liked to pretend he didn't, but he did all right. Oh yes.
- 2nd Man** Anyway, he's here to stay now.
- 1st Woman** They said he'd be buried with a jar of pickles and a pint on his coffin.
- 2nd Woman** And was he?
- 1st Woman** Wouldn't be surprised. Wouldn't be surprised at anything that lot did.
- 1st Man** He's certainly put this place on the map.
- 2nd Man** Yep! You've got to give him that.
- 3rd Man** Poor bugger! I bet he'd have a good laugh at all this fuss.
- 3rd Woman** Funny how some men are picked out for immortality.

Cross fade to Porter : Chelsea Hotel, New York.

- Porter** Yeah! This is it. Not the best room in the joint. Unfortunately not my fault on account that he arrives late, he didn't book ... somethin' like tha'. Anyways, here it is. It's clean. It's warm. What else d'ya want when you're killin' yourself with liquor. Yeah, an' that's the truth. 'Course when he walks in here I don't know the guy from Adam. Poetry's not my scene, ya know wha' I mean. I puts his case down there and he says "Be a friend. Get me some scotch." So, I gets the scotch and he says "Sit down. Have a drink." So, I sits, and we drink, and I picks up this book of poetry he's got there, and he says to me, he says, "Do you like poetry?" I say "Poetry? I suppose for them who likes it, it's okay. But na! Give me Mike Hammer any day. Now that's my kind of poetry." That tickles him. Turns out he's a fan of Spillane an' all them guys. A real fan. So straight off, we have somethin' in common. So, here we were. I sat here. He sat there. We talked. And we talked. In point of fact, I gotta admit, he did most of the talkin', but tha' I didn't mind. In my opinion, the guy needed to talk. You sense this sort of thing in my job. You gotta know when to talk and when to button it up. So, I kept my trap shut most of the time and listened.

Dylan enters stage left.

- Dylan** Damn ugly town, Swansea. No room to breathe. Parochial. Too many narrow minded lives for my liking. Stifling. Not even enough room for a small boy with curly hair.

A group of youngsters enter dancing in a circle around Young Dylan. A Swansea park.

- Group** Titchy-titch, never be big!
Hit him on the bum with a hazel twig.
Titchy-titch, never be big!
Hit him on the bum with a hazel twig.
- 1st Girl** And who loves you?
- 2nd Girl** Nobody loves him.

Dylan Only the bully boys love you. Come on boys! Penny a punch-penny a punch.
1st Boy Teacher's pet!
2nd Boy Curly wurly, like a girly.
1st Girl Punch him!
2nd Girl Bash him!
1st Girl Ditch him!
2nd Girl Drop him in the bin.

The boys attack Young Dylan violently, whilst the girls chant.

Girls Ditch the titch! Ditch the titch!

The attack ends, the gang runs off laughing, leaving Young Dylan alone crouched on the floor.

Dylan Then along came Dan. (*Young Dan enters. Young Dylan stands. Young Dan creeps up behind Young Dylan and gives him a strong push. They start a fight which is performed in slow motion over the following dialogue*). We scratched and pulled and tugged like young tigers. I decided the humiliation had to stop. From now on I was going to fight back. To hell with the bullies. We fought with eyes closed. Our untutored limbs flayed the air like manic windmills, until we agreed on a face-saving draw.

The fight stops. Both boys are exhausted. They stand facing one another.

Porter It happens all over. What you need is insurance. You join a gang-you get protection. Me I was never a fighter. Benny the blade, he was the fighter. We had a great outfit ... the Hawks. We were terrific.

Centre stage.

Young Dan Do you want to be in my gang?
Young Dylan What gang?
Young Dan My gang. The Warmley gang. We're called the Warmlies.
Young Dylan Who's in it?
Young Dan Just me ... and you if you want.
Young Dylan What do we do in this gang?
Young Dan Anything you like. What do you like doing?
Young Dylan I don't know. Running, cricket and....
Young Dan What?
Young Dylan I like writing stuff.
Young Dan Why?
Young Dylan It's the only thing I'm any good at. And what do you do?
Young Dan I write music.
Young Dylan You don't.
Young Dan I composed a sonata the other day.
Young Dylan So what! I played strip poker.
Young Dan You didn't! Who with?
Young Dylan Wouldn't you like to know.
Young Dan Liar!
Young Dylan You know the Levy's house?
Young Dan Yes.
Young Dylan The maids. I played with them. They stripped right off.
Young Dan What do they look like?
Young Dylan What?
Young Dan You know. You know. Down below. What's it like?
Young Dylan Figs. That's what they look like. Figs!
Young Dan Figs?
Young Dylan That reminds me. I'm starving.
Young Dan Fancy some cakes and pop?

Young Dylan Dandelion and Burdock?

Young Dan Yeah!

Young Dylan Let's go! I'll race you.

Young Dan I don't run.

Young Dylan You do now.

They run off.

Dylan And off we went to the land of Warmley ... Eversley Road, Sketty, the land of milk and honey-layered toast, of laughter and home made games and cakes of sugar and spice, and the air was full of strawberries and flowers.

Young Dan and Young Dylan enter carrying biscuit tins for drums. They march around the stage ending up facing one another down stage.

Young Dylan I start?

Young Dan You start.

Young Dylan In the far off froggy infested forest of Ffelinfrog,

Young Dan Lived a crusty, odorous creature with ulcerous gums

Young Dylan Who slowly moved in foggy silence through the whispering water willows

Young Dan Endlessly searching, searching, searching for the root of the Rangabang tree to sooth his sores.

Young Dylan The night was as black as a billion bibles and ... and ...

Young Dan ... and black and grey sniffing rat noses stretched their snotty snouts ...

Young Dylan ... searching for slow worms that wormed their slow way through the sloes

Young Dan Hold on! Slow way through the sloes?

Young Dylan Sloes! The berries. Wormed their slow way through the sloes.

Young Dan Right. Got it. Go again.

Young Dylan Searching for slow worms that wormed their slow way through the sloes.

Young Dan The night was a symphony of screams from creatures that lived above, beside, inside and under the wood ... always ... always ...

Young Dylan Hiding from hideous, hollering morons who mumbled manically

Young Dan Speaking Welsh in a strange inexplicable dialect

Young Dylan Only vaguely understood by imbeciles and natives of Llareggub

Young Dan A place not to be found on any civilised map

Young Dylan But known by everyone who dared to look.

They bang their drums, march around the stage and exit.

Dylan Now there was an innocence ... a beautiful innocence.

Stage left.

Porter I tell ya, the sorta games we played ... they'd make your hair curl. Man, talk about wild. We ran the block. No kiddin' we ran the block. Anythin' going on, coming off, we knew it. For fun we turned on the fire hydrants and we all had a cool shower. It was rough, tough and we loved it. Yea, I love this place.

He fills Dylan's glass.

Dylan *(Toasting)* To childhood and the child in us all.

Centre stage.

Young Dylan Let's go to the park.

Young Dan Right.

Young Dylan Great.

Young Dan Hold on! What if she's there.

Young Dylan Who?

Young Dan That girl.

Young Dylan So what?

Young Dan Well ...

Young Dylan You're not scared of a girl, are you?

Young Dan I didn't want to be kissed in front of that lot.

Young Dylan Don't be soft. She showed me her knickers once.

Young Dan What did you do?

Young Dylan I looked.

Young Dan Anything else?

Young Dylan I could've touched if I'd wanted to, but I didn't.

Young Dan Scared?

Young Dylan Rubbish! Want a gob-stopper?

Young Dan Hey, thanks!

Young Dylan It's been in my pocket for a couple of days. Got a bit of fluff on it, but it's all right. I haven't sucked it or anything.

Young Dan Ta, Dylan. Dylan?

Young Dylan What?

Young Dan Will you always be my pal?

Young Dylan 'Course. And you me.

Young Dan Yep.

Young Dylan Even when you're rich and famous?

Young Dan Yep.

Young Dylan What have you got to do to become famous?

Young Dan No idea. Jack the Ripper's famous. The King's famous. Charlie Chaplin's famous.

Young Dylan Has anyone from Swansea ever been famous?

Young Dan Don't think so. What do you want to be when you grow up?

Young Dylan No idea. I know! A film star, and six feet tall.

Young Dan Rudolph Valentino!

Young Dylan Yes!! Last to Cwmdonkin Park's a sissy.

Young Dylan starts to run off.

Young Dan I'm not kissing that girl.

Young Dylan C'mon!!

Young Dan exits. Two elderly women enter centre stage carrying shopping bags and wearing head-scarves.

Elsie How they put up with him I'll never know.

Doris And his father working in the Grammar an' all.

Elsie A disgrace he is. Urinating on the hill.

Doris He never.

Elsie He did. I saw it with my own eyes. I pulled back the curtains and there he was, as bold as punch.

Doris Always drinkin'.

Elsie Always drunk.

Doris And the language.

Elsie Colourful isn't the word.

Doris And you know the latest?

Elsie No !

Doris He's lost his job. Sacked from the Evening Post.

Elsie Get away. And he calls himself a writer.

Doris Mind you, I'm not surprised. If he isn't drinking coffee in the Kardomah he's propping up a bar somewhere.

Elsie Nineteen and he still doesn't know what real work is, see.

Doris That poor family.

Dylan and Dan enter.

Dylan Afternoon ladies!

Doris Don't you afternoon me Dylan Thomas. Where were you with our Hattie until after midnight?
Dylan I was reading poetry to her at the end of Mumbles pier.
Doris And where did she get all those grass stains from, all over her back?
Dylan We stared at the stars, Mrs Eynon. I showed her the Plough.
Doris Leave her alone. Understand? Hattie's a good girl.
Dylan She is. Very good.
Doris Don't play silly games with me. She is a good girl and she's staying a good girl.
Elsie If you'd been mine I'd have packed you off to the reformatory years ago. Come on Doris.

The women exit.

Dylan Twisted and venomous hags. Back to your dank, mothballed retreats. Hide behind your mildewed drapes and cuddle up to your festering cats. Your secrets are not safe with me. Anyway, it was too late for Hattie. She saw more than moons and stars that night.

Centre stage.

Dan Who's Hattie?
Dylan Works in the cake shop. Nice arse and lips like cherries, but no brain.
Dan What's this about the job?
Dylan I was tired of writing obituaries. "And at St. James' Church the mourners were led by Captain Catfood and the gallant crew of the SS Jellybelly who had all recently recovered from a bout of syphilis. We are pleased to report that nothing dropped off during the Reverend Eli Jenkins' address."
Dan So, what's next?
Dylan I want to grow fat, smoke forty Woodbines a day, get drunk whenever I can ... and write.

Stage left area.

Porter Talkin' about writin', when I was in the army this guy gives me a Remington typewriter in return for a favour. So, I loads up the machine and I sits there, 'cos I was gonna write the greatest crime story ever. Anyways, I sits there and I stares at that blank piece of paper. I stares at that blank piece of paper for hours. The next day the paper's still blank. I picks up the machine and I hurls it outa the winda. It lands on a car. The owner sues me fifty dollars to repair the heap of rust. Believe me, writing ain't that easy. And Dylan was saying he could sweat over a poem for weeks, sometimes longer. Very lonely business, writing. I couldn't do that. He said that was the great thing about amateur theatre ... it gets you off your fanny.

The stage is full of a cast with scripts standing around informally after a read-through. The Director hands out practice cloaks to the cast.

Director Right'o everyone. We all know that "The Way Of The World" is Restoration Comedy. Let's see if we can restore some comedy into our acting, shall we? Let's put on our cloaks, shall we. Thank you. Now I want you to think of a character in the play and I want you to show me how this character moves. Off you go. That's it. Move in character. Now think about facial expression to help create the comedy. It's got to be big everyone. Larger than life. Now exaggerate the walk. (*Dylan is downstage walking across and back in an exaggerated mincing style*). Now let's add sounds to this movement...not words...just vocal noises to add another dimension to the character. (*The cast oblige, but Dylan's effort is the most imaginative. The rest of the cast stop to watch his performance for a good ten seconds. When he realises that everyone is watching, he stops, and gives a perfect Restoration bow which gets a round of applause*). And which character was that supposed to be Mr. Thomas?

Dylan Mincing.

Director It's a pity that Mincing's a woman. You'd be perfect. (*The cast laughs. Dylan bows again*). As it is Dylan you'll be playing Witwoud and I've decided that Evely will play Mincing. I think everyone, that is the cast. Thank you very much indeed. Good rehearsal. Don't forget, words, words, words! Dylan, collect up the cloaks. Thank you.

An older actress approaches the Director.

Actress Vincent!

Director Yes Joan.
Actress I've been a member of the Little Theatre for a long time, as you well know, Vincent, so I thought you would at least have the decency to give me a part. Otherwise, I don't see the point in being a member. Do you?

She storms off, throwing her cloak over Dylan.

Director Amateurs!

The Director shakes his head and walks off. A young actress approaches Dylan and helps him to sort out the cloaks into a neat pile.

Young Actress Pity about Mincing.

Dylan Yes. That's the way of the world. *(They share the joke).* Look, last night ... I ...

Young Actress Forget it. I don't mind a kiss, but ... I want to keep myself for the right man.

Dylan My loss.

She returns to her friends upstage and they look at their scripts. Dylan writes something in his script. A young actor walks up to him.

Young Actor What you writing?

Dylan CB.

Young Actor What's CB.

Dylan It's code. I'm gradually coding the women. CB, that's chastity belt, and this place is full of chastity belts. So beware my thespian friend. *(In a loud voice).* Very well friends and fellow actors, it's time to mince. Let this merry band mince off to the loving arms of the Prince of Wales.

Dylan exits with a mincing walk. The rest follow him off. A Swansea square. Bert Trick enters with a soap box. He places it centre stage and stands on it. On-lookers gather around him.

Bert Listen friends, maybe I'm only a greengrocer but I can dream like anyone else, and I tell you this, we will only truly prosper as a people, when we rid our minds of dogma.

Elsie What's that Bert? We've got to get rid of dog meat?

Bert Very funny Elsie. You didn't laugh when you couldn't get married in chapel because you were pregnant and living in sin. That's dogma Elsie, and I'm not willing to put up with it. Are you? We must be free to express our thoughts and ideas. This is the 20th Century. The past has gone. We need new ideas. What do people see when they come to Wales? A black landscape full of grey people. Don't be told what to think. Think for yourselves. Or are you afraid to think?

Stage left area.

Dylan Good old Bert Trick. Never be afraid to tell it as it is. I'd had those blank pieces of paper and old exercise books full of poems, stagnating in drawers, doing nothing, going nowhere, hidden in the dark like a life time of sins, and along comes a greengrocer.

Centre stage area. Bert's home. Bert is reading a poem.

Bert What's your name again?

Dylan Dylan. Dylan Thomas.

Bert This is good. This is very good.

Dylan What do I do with it?

Bert You give it wings and let it fly, Dylan. You let it fly. Competitions. They're the thing. Established national competitions. Get it out of this God-forsaken place. You know what they say about prophets in their own land. Let it fly! *(Calling off stage as he exits)* Nell, put the kettle on! We've got a genius in the house.

Stage left area.

Dylan "Polly put the kettle on,
Polly put the kettle on,
Polly put the kettle on,
There's a genius in the house."
Ever met a genius before, my friend?

Porter I once saw Houdini on the Brooklyn Bridge. They say he was a genius.
Dylan Every home should have one. *(He pours himself a drink and offers the bottle to the porter).*
Porter Very kind, but no thanks sir. I'm officially still on duty.
Dylan How many have I had?
Porter I'd say four.
Dylan So would I. Tonight I might go for the record. Cheers!
Porter Are you married, sir?
Dylan Why do you ask?
Porter 'Cos before the war I married the biggest bitch in town. Before I married her I was tee-total. When we divorced, I was a lush. I was a 'two bottle a day' man and I'm talkin' hard spirits here.
Dylan I drink because in an imperfect world it seems to be the most natural thing to do. I try not to deprive my body of the things it craves.
Porter Do they all talk like you back there?
Dylan Only poets, and the clinically insane.

Centre stage area. Pamela is standing in a spotlight.

Pamela Dear Dylan Thomas, May I introduce myself. I am Pamela Hansford-Johnson. I, too, write poetry and I hope to have an anthology of mine printed very soon. I write to congratulate you on your beautiful poem "That Sanity Be Kept". I feel strong influences of TS Eliot in the poem, which is all to the good. I am a great fan of his. Kind regards, Pamela.

Stage left area.

Dylan Pamela! Pamela. My hyphenated English rose.

Centre stage area.

Pamela Thank you so much for your much-valued letter, Dylan. It was so good of you to review my poems. No, I don't mind you being critical. I think that's what true friends are for. I do hope we will remain good friends, Yours, Pamela.
Dylan I love your photograph. Although we have never met, I feel a great affection for you. We will always be close and dear friends. By the way, as you ask, I'm 23 and five foot six-sevenish, perhaps slightly taller. I smoke Woodbines in the centre of my mouth. Write soon. Love Dylan.
Pamela I hate to think of you in that grey, dank place. It's here you need to be, surrounded by writers and artists. There are so many people I could introduce you to. I love you, Dylan. You are my inspiration. I will love you always. All my love, Pamela.
Dylan. I can't wait to see you this weekend. I will order the sun to shine and we will stroll barefoot on the wild sands of Gower. I'm sure you'll love it. Yours, always, Dylan.
Pamela It was wonderful to see you, Dylan, although you were not quite as tall as I had imagined. No matter, I'm enclosing pieces that I was inspired to write just by being with you. Write soon. Love, Pamela.
Dylan I have to tell you, a friend of mine brought his girl friend to stay. She forced herself on to me. In parts of her I saw you. It was you I made love to. Can you forgive me. Tell me you still want me to come up to see you. All my love, always. Dylan.

Dylan and Pamela turn to face one another. They meet centre stage.

Pamela You're not five foot six. You're more like five foot three. And you're not twenty four. What are you, that is if you can tell the truth?
Dylan Nineteen.
Pamela I'm not averse to small men, but small, immoral men I find totally repugnant. Goodbye Dylan.

Stage left area.

Dylan Goodbye Pamela.
Porter The most intelligent girl-friend I ever had worked on Coney Island. Lousy in bed, but very intelligent. If I had to choose between intelligence and good in bed I'd choose bed every time. Avoid the woman who's good in bed and intelligent. She'll take you for every dime you've got.

Dylan I've had the good fortune to be raggy-arsed poor most of my life. Women had to love me for my mind and my grotesque good looks.

Porter Yeah, well ... lucky man. I suppose we've all got somethin' women go for. For me it definitely wasn't the mind. *(They laugh and clink glasses)* I guess our mothers have gotta lot to answer for. Take me. My mother was an angel, always cuddlin', kissin', sayin' she loved me all the time. So what do we do when we look for a wife? We look for a mother, that's what we do. A wife has got to be a mother and a whore. It's a lucky man who gets 'em both in the same woman.

Dylan And what did you get?

Porter A whore, but hey, who's complainin'!

Centre stage area.

Dan So, where are you going?

Dylan Away from this bloody place. That's what you do when you've poisoned the well, you move on. Having dipped my wick in every available local orifice I seek change and pastures new. Hug me you bastard.

They embrace. Dan exits. A group enter and surround Young Dylan. It's suddenly a busy pub scene.

Stephen Let me introduce you to Dylan

Fiona Hello.

Stephen Just come up from Swansea.

Fiona Where?

Stephen Swansea. Wales.

Fiona Oh, Wales. Stephen, I did like that piece of yours in The Listener. Very interesting. The sonnet can be so demanding, can't it.

Stephen Glad you liked it. TS came over at the weekend. He'd read it. Gave it his usual critical analysis.

Fiona Typical. How is he by the way?

Stephen Top form. Top form. Extremely productive I believe.

Fiona We must have another get together, him and the old crowd. It's been ages. I saw Edith at the Criterion. She asked to be reminded to you.

Stephen She's working with Walton on a piece isn't she? Façade I think she called it.

The crowd move upstage, all engaged in loud, ad-libbed conversation, leaving Dylan isolated down stage. Pamela approaches.

Pamela And how does it feel to be swimming around in the big pond?

Dylan Ah! Cold and wet.

Pamela It will get warmer. They like your work. In spite of everything I still read it. Some of it's very good. Some of it's frustratingly intangible, like its author.

Dylan Very kind. Pamela, you haven't got a fiver have you?

Pamela What for?

Dylan To refresh the spirit, to survive, to pay for digs.

Pamela 'Fraid not. Sorry. Why don't you sing for your supper.

Pamela moves back into the crowd. Stage left.

Porter I tell ya, nothin's lonelier than a crowded room, then we all know that. I guess we've all been there.

Dylan We're a short-arsed nation, the Welsh. That's why we sing, so people know we're there, and to avoid being stepped on, we tell jokes, loudly.

Dylan returns to centre stage where he is surrounded by the crowd. They are laughing loudly. Dylan has just told a joke.

Dylan There's this fella with three testicles. *(The group laugh as only an intoxicated group can.)* He goes into a pub and says, "I bet you any money you like, I can choose any man here and we'll have five testicles between us, definite. Any money." This old codger in the corner says, "You're on, pal, but I only hope you've got four testicles, or you're in deep shit."

The group laugh loudly.

Fiona Tell them that one about the cow.

The group chants, "The cow" repeatedly. Dylan is handed a pint and knocks it back whilst the chant continues. When he has finished the pint there is a loud cheer.

Dylan Mae West, that nympho beloved of us all, as are all nymphos, enters a farmyard. Clip-clop, clip-clop, swish-swish, pout-pout, wink-wink. She sees a cow being serviced by a very happy bull. She turns to the farmer and says "How does it know when to do that, honey?". "It's all in the nose" says the farmer. "They smell when the cow's ready." They go to the next pen. Clip-clop, clip-clop, swish-swish, pout-pout, wink-wink. There a ram's going at a sheep ... bang, bang, bang. She asks the same question, by this time with a warm glow on her face and a trickle of sweat running down her cheek. "How does it know when to do that, honey babe?" she says, pout-pout, wink-wink. "Same thing. It's all in the nose," he says. She goes back to her car and she turns to the farmer and says, "Thanks honey! That was all so stimulating. Oh, and I do hope you get over that dreadful catarrh soon."

The group again laugh loudly at this. a man from the crowd puts his arm around Dylan.

Man At Party You're like a breath of fresh air, Dylan. What's your poison?

Dylan Pint of bitter.

Man At Party Coming up.

The man moves away. Caitlin moves out of the group and stands beside Dylan. The rest of the group move up stage.

Caitlin You should be an actor.

Dylan I tried it. I was sacked. Unfortunately, it got in the way of serious drinking, so something had to go.

Caitlin I never go to bed with a man who's sober.

Dylan Glad to hear it.

Caitlin Sex can be so depressing when you're deadly serious about it.

Dylan Exactly.

Caitlin I like to abandon all inhibitions when I have sex.

Dylan What's your name, oh wondrous creature.

Caitlin Caitlin.

Dylan Caitlin. Caitlin. I hear the rivers of Ireland. I see the misty mountains and I see a long-legged peasant girl running towards me ready to wrap lithe limbs around my thighs.

Caitlin I was born in Hammersmith, not in a bog.

Dylan There goes another fantasy.

Caitlin And you're Dylan, and you write poetry. Are you any good?

Dylan I can be all things to all men. And what about you? What do you do?

Caitlin Me? I dance. I've danced at the Palladium. I've danced all over. I love dancing.

Dylan And are you any good?

Caitlin I'm a Celt. We dance in our dreams.

Dylan Come and dance in my dreams.

Caitlin And why should I?

Dylan Because that's where we'll live ... in a world of dreams ... where kindred spirits dance their lives away.

Caitlin You're mad.

Dylan Naturally.

Centre stage. A Registrar stands centre with Caitlin and Dylan standing on either side.

Registrar And do you take this woman to be your lawful wedded wife, to have and to hold until death do you part.

Dylan I do.

Caitlin Promise me you'll never grow old.

Dylan Cross my heart and hope to die.

Caitlin We will never die.

Dylan Kiss me.

Caitlin I might.

Dylan I'll cry.
Caitlin You're my baby. My sweet, ugly, little baby.
Dylan Let me ride on your belly like a Horn-tossed clipper. Let me anchor on your breasts and suckle on your milk.
Caitlin I'll put on your little bed socks and wrap you up tight.
Dylan I'll keep you as cosy as toast and make your cheeks as rosy as roses.
Caitlin I'll warm the cockles of your heart.
Dylan Who is it loves you then?
Caitlin Nobody loves you, only me and I'm drunk with love.
Dylan Oh Caitlin, my Caitlin. My Cat. My own dancing pussycat.
Caitlin And baby must please mummy or no liquorice allsorts at bath time.
Dylan And I'll give you the gob-stopper to end all gob-stoppers.
Caitlin Oh Dylan, Dylan, my true sweetheart.
Dylan And all the bells of the town will ring out "Dylan loves Caitlin".
Registrar I pronounce you man and wife.

Church bells ring out as LX fades. Added to the sound of bells comes an air-raid siren and the sound of bombs dropping. Lights up to reveal Bert Trick and Dylan staring out at the devastation in front of them.

Bert What a bloody mess.
Dylan That's it then, Bert. Our Swansea's dead.

Fade sound and LX. Cross fade to area Stage Left.

Porter All the guys from the block were over there. Sammy the snake, Jimmy the dog, Billy the brains. We called him brains on account tha' he was a bit short in tha' department. He threw himself under a tank, poor bastard. I was two years in Blackpool. I had the dames queuing up. Nylons, gum ... they couldn't get enough. I remember Gladys. Glad-eyed Gladys. What a dame. Did you see any action, Mr Thomas?
Dylan I wrestled with my conscience. Do I love my country enough to die for it? I don't think so. Do I love my country more than my own creative spirit? No, I don't think so. Burn my books and I'll fight you with a fiery pen. But God did not design this shell for bloody battle. I once attacked a man in a bar who insulted a friend of mine. I'm not sure if that was bravery or whisky. I hope it was whisky. Brave men are often fools.
Porter So, you didn't serve.
Dylan I had good intentions. I stood bollock-naked in a line with a dozen others. I coughed, I coughed again and was pronounced unfit. Too pale and sickly, they said. I took out this photograph and showed them. I said, "Look, that's me. Eleven years old, and the school's champion miler. I was featured in the local newspaper. I can run. I can run like the wind." "Not now you can't," they said, "not with that asthma". And that was that.

Cross fade to centre stage. Dylan runs on. He is overjoyed.

Dylan I did it! I did it! One small plot in the corner of a foreign field now available, but not for me, thank you.

Two soldiers enter up stage. They approach Dylan

1st Soldier Here he is.
2nd Soldier Hello Dylan.
1st Soldier We've been looking for you.
Dylan *(Mincing like a queen)* Ooh, I say. There's a nice couple of boys. How many have you stuck it to today boys?
2nd Soldier Not only is he a coward but he's a ginger beer.
1st Soldier I reckon you're right, mate.
Dylan Sorry I can't accommodate you, my loves, but all the nice boys love a sailor.
2nd Soldier You queer arsehole.
1st Soldier Conshie queers are filthy vermin. They've got to be got rid of.

Dylan *(The mincing stops)* Let me buy you brave boys a drink.
2nd Soldier I reckon he's scared.
1st Soldier I bet he's shitting himself.
Dylan Come on, boys. It was a joke.
2nd Soldier You're a joke. You're a conshie coward.
1st Soldier And you know what'll happen. He'll be sniffin' around our women when we're deep in shit over there.
2nd Soldier The dirty bastard.
1st Soldier He's got to be taught a lesson.

They knock him to the ground and start to beat him. Caitlin runs in screaming. She pulls them off.

Caitlin Get off him! Get off!! What's wrong with you? Are you mad? *(The soldiers run off. Dylan is lying in a foetal position. Caitlin takes hold of his head and places it in her lap. She rocks him gently).* Never mind, my love. I've got you now. You're safe now. I'll look after you. There, there. That's it. That's it.

Dylan moves back to the Porter.

Dylan God bless the King, God bless the Prince of Wales, God bless God, God bless the British Empire, God bless the flamin' lot of 'em, and at the going down of the sun we will remember them. But who will remember me, I wonder? Cheers, friend!

Centre stage. Enter two women from Laugharne.

Bessie You should've seen them.
Daisy Go on.
Bessie Sick in the gutter.
Daisy Get away.
Bessie And on a Sunday.
Daisy Where's it all going to end?
Bessie And seen their baby?
Daisy Poor mite. What it's got to put up with.
Bessie Carrying on.
Daisy At all hours.
Bessie And you've heard the news.
Daisy What's that?
Bessie She's pregnant again.
Daisy Get away.
Bessie God's honour.
Daisy I suppose it is his baby.
Bessie She was raped, you know, when she was young.
Daisy Never. Who by?
Bessie A painter.
Daisy Which one?
Bessie That horny old goat, Augustus John.
Daisy Really?
Bessie Posing in the nude.
Daisy Some women ask for it.
Bessie You know what they say...once you get a taste for it, that's it. He's only got to turn his back and she's got someone up there.
Daisy He's as bad mind. Always lookin'.
Bessie Mind you, I've heard she's gone right off it as far as he's concerned.
Daisy Get away.
Bessie And he's jealous see. The baby gets more attention than he does.
Daisy I will say that for her. She does dote on that baby.

Dylan enters. He has clearly been drinking but he is in control.

Bessie Watch it!

Daisy Look at the state of him.

Dylan Ladies. Beautiful ladies. Adorable ladies. Which one is Dolores, the one in the stories?

Bessie You're drunk.

Dylan Madam, you're right. I beseech a kind favour of you. Lend me ten bob, five bob, half a crown?

Daisy Haven't you had enough?

Dylan Madam, even you begin to look desirable after six pints of bitter. Where's Caitlin? Cat! Cat!
Where's my pussy?

The women exit. Caitlin enters trying to steady herself. She is carrying a small woodland flower.

Dylan Come on. Back to Brown's.

Caitlin Hold me! I want to sit.

They sit on the ground. Dylan places an arm around Caitlin.

Dylan Rock a bye baby.

Caitlin I found a flower. What is it?

Dylan No idea. I don't know flowers.

Caitlin You should know flowers. Call yourself a poet?

Dylan I know daffodils. That's it. That's my lot. I don't know trees, flowers, birds. I know sod all.

Caitlin Poor flower. Nobody knows you. Dylan?

Dylan What?

Caitlin I want to dance.

Dylan Off you go.

Caitlin I want a studio. You promised me a studio.

Dylan We'll get one.

Caitlin When?

Dylan We'll get one.

Caitlin When, I said?

Dylan When you're bloody sober.

Caitlin suddenly attacks Dylan, punching him several times. Dylan manages to pull himself away leaving Caitlin sprawled on the ground.

Dylan You mad Irish bitch. Your dancing days are over. Long gone. Forget it.

Caitlin Never.

Dylan Your lungs are shot. You wouldn't last five minutes.

Caitlin I'm in hell. I'm suffocating here. I hate this damned place.

Dylan Sod off back to London.

Caitlin I will.

Dylan Good. Give me some peace.

Caitlin I want to see a bit of life. I want to dance. I want to live. *(Pause)* Lend me a bob.

Dylan I haven't got a bob. *(He laughs)* "If you haven't got a penny a ha'penny will do. If you haven't got a ha'penny, then God bless you."

Caitlin You're a bloody loser. Why the hell did I marry you?

Dylan 'Cos you're a whore and you know how much I love whores.

Caitlin A whore am I?

Caitlin stands up and tries to strike Dylan but he grabs her arm.

Caitlin And you're an adulterer.

Dylan A fine pair.

Caitlin repeatedly tries to hit Dylan.

Caitlin I was havin' your kid and what were you doin'? Screwin' around. She must have been bloody desperate that's all I can say. Who could fancy a short-arsed fat, blobby-eyed sod like you?

A Voice Off Keep it down. Decent folk are trying to sleep.

Caitlin Is that so. Screw you, you miserable bastard. You're all miserable bastards.

A Voice Off You need locking up, both of you.

Caitlin And you need a good ...

Dylan ... come on, Cat. Come on. Cat, we are blind and deaf to the machinations of the local hoi-polloi. We are artists.

Dylan places his arms around Caitlin. At first she struggles then she relaxes.

Caitlin I'm not a whore.

Dylan Of course not. I can forget if you can.

Caitlin He was impotent.

Dylan What a let down.

Caitlin You can be a shit sometimes.

Dylan I'm a phenomenon. A creative turd.

Caitlin I want to dance. I only want to dance.

They move slowly up stage. Caitlin is sobbing. Cross fade to stage left area.

Porter Hey, I was tellin' Dylan about my childhood. Tell ya the truth I guess it wasn't all tha' spectacular. I used to earn a few bucks dodgin' and divin' around the restaurants on Broadway. I got real friendly with some of the movie doorkeepers down there. I'd slip 'em a piece of meat that accidentally fell into my pocket, ya know wha' I mean. Anyways, they could afford it at those prices. So the doors to the stars were wide-open and free. And they were stars. I saw 'em all, in person. Gary Cooper, Bette Davis, Errol Flynn, James Cagney, Judy Garland ... I saw 'em all. Dylan was fascinated by all that. That's another thing we had in common. He loved the movies. And then he tells me he used to work in the movies. I was impressed.

Dylan is centre stage looking through a script. A script editor is by his side

Dylan And what's wrong with that?

Script Editor Too flowery.

Dylan Are we here to strangle imagination?

Script Editor Listen, Dylan. I've got to be honest. Me, I love your poetry, but it can be introspective. Illusive.

Dylan It needs intellect.

Script Editor Exactly. We're here to communicate, Dylan. That's what we're here for.

Dylan Are you telling me I can't communicate?

Script Editor Of course you can. But a documentary propaganda film is not the place for complicated, obtuse metaphors.

Dylan Obtuse?

Script Editor They've got to get it first time. We can be poetic but lets simplify it.

Dylan Am I in the wrong job?

Script Editor No. Because you've got some great ideas and we need that imagination of yours in film.

Dylan So, it's imagination without intellect. You want small, simple words expressing small ideas.

Script Editor No. We want great ideas described simply, which, with your talent, will sound inspiring. And to do that requires a well-tuned intellect. Our job is to build up morale ... for everyone. One thing about this war, it's breathed new life into our film industry. Let's make the most of it.

The script editor exits. Dylan crosses out the first page of his script. He is angry and throws the script down. Caitlin spins on and dances barefoot around him. She seductively snakes around him. He is impassive.

Caitlin And how's my lover, my poet, my luvvy-duvvy Welsh man? Not angry? Shall I tell you something? Every day I dance. I've got a record player. A friend gave it to me. Which friend? That would be telling. Mustn't complicate things now, must we. Keep it simple. The thing is, I'm dancing in a hall, in a chapel. When you're not busy you must come and watch. I'll dance for you. A special dance. A

private dance. I'll dance Salomé for you. I must dash. Got a date. A dark-haired man. I love dark-haired men. Don't worry. I love you, my curly haired cherub.

She notices the script on the floor. She picks it up, and with a dancer's flourish hands it to him and kisses his hand as he takes it. She then exits quickly. Dylan looks as though he is coming out of a dream. He looks at the script. He begins writing on the script, reading aloud what he writes.

Dylan "Look at the darkening town now, a town in mourning for its sons long gone in pit blast, shell blast and rock fall. And in the long shadows by the tidy terraces young children's feet hop-scotch hop on chalked out squares, their squeals and shouts echoing around the blackened hills and rusting chains of terrible ghost-filled pits that are the dreams and nightmares of young men who lie in watery trenches in foreign fields romanticised by long dead poets. Their bright enduring heart-felt hope is a dream, a dream of a land, a land with a home, of a home fit for heroes." Is that simple enough?

There is the sudden approaching whistle of several bombs. People rush on stage wearing gas masks and sit in a circle around Dylan. Caitlin runs on and hands Dylan a gas mask. Then she holds on to Dylan. One of the crowd stands up and starts to perform an improvised dance to "Pack Up Your Troubles In Your Old Kit Bag". All the rest join in with the song loudly to combat the noise of the bombs. Caitlin jumps up and dances with the main singer, then Dylan stands and joins in with the dance. There is a sudden loud explosion which stops everyone in their tracks. Caitlin is down centre stage. She rips off her gas mask.

Caitlin Bloody Adolf!! How can I dance with all this soddin' noise going on around me. I'm getting out of here.

Caitlin exits. The rest watch her and Dylan slowly removes his gas mask. Cross fade to Porter

Porter I knew a dancer. Candy Sapphire. What a doll. She had the face of an angel and the body of a sinner, if you know wha' I mean. Danced in a joint in 42nd Street. What legs. I say I knew her, I only spoke to her once. A week later she goes to the Waldorf Astoria no less, has a slap up meal then throws herself off the roof. Some jerk had told her she was lookin' too old. In my opinion, that broad had class right up to the end. Anyways, that's another story. Going back to that night ...we got through half a dozen scotches, then he suddenly went kinda white and put the glass down. He went quiet for a second or two, ya know the sorta thing ... as though his mind was a long-ways off. The guy didn't look too hot. Then he broke the ice and joked about how he had to have the right atmosphere to get stoned. He said "an appreciative audience heightens the experience", or somethin' like tha'. I tell ya, I could listen to 'im all night.

Cross fade to centre stage. Dylan is centre. He is approached by two people (a music-hall / Vaudeville routine)

1st Comedian I say, I say, I say! And what brings you back to London?

Dylan The train.

2nd Comedian The train?

Dylan Yes, the train.

1st Comedian Very good. And how do you find London now?

Dylan I just got off the train and there it was.

2nd Comedian I see. And how is Wales?

Dylan Full of weather.

1st Comedian And the wife?

Dylan Wild as ever.

2nd Comedian And the kids?

Dylan Got another. One of each.

1st Comedian Very clever.

2nd Comedian They say you're still a poet.

Dylan Who do?

1st Comedian They do.

Dylan They do?

2nd Comedian They do. And they say ...

Dylan What do they say?

1st Comedian They say your voice ...

Dylan My voice?
2nd Comedian Has a sound ...
1st Comedian A richness ...
2nd Comedian Very pukka.
1st Comedian Very upper.
2nd Comedian Tutty-fruity.
1st Comedian Absolutely.
Dylan Really?
2nd Comedian Most positively ...
1st Comedian Unquestionably ...
2nd Comedian Ideal.
Dylan Ideal? What for?
1st Comedian What for?
2nd Comedian What for?
1st & 2nd Comedian For the BBC, of course. Carry on playmate. Ta ta for now. TTFN.

A group surround Dylan at his local pub in Laugharne.

Dylan There I was, microphone in one hand, Woodbine in the other, all ready to go, and he says, "Sorry, Dylan. Your voice isn't Welsh enough." That's London for you. I said, "What the hell is wrong with my voice?", and he says "It sounds too cut-glass, if you know what I mean, too aristocratic. You sound more like an eccentric antique collector than a Welsh writer." (*Now in a broad Swansea accent*) If they want boyo, I can give them boyo. (*Putting his arm around a woman.*) All right, love? I knows you're dyin' for it, so how about it, eh kid?
Bessie What I want to know is, what do you get up to in that little shed of yours.
Dylan I escape, my lovely. I conjure up devils and muffled hooves. I scamper through narrow minds and organ playing woods, and whisk my way through naughty dreams. Which reminds me Polly, being, as I am, transfixed by your glorious cleavage, I dreamt about you again last night.
Bessie And what happened?
Dylan You wouldn't. Now this can't go on.

The group laugh loudly. Caitlin enters.

Caitlin We're supposed to be going to Cardiff tomorrow. Remember? Do something useful will you. Cancel the milk, pack your stuff and clear up those socks and underpants. They're stinking. And don't be late.

Caitlin exits.

Dylan And before you let the sun in mind it wipes its shoes!

Cross fade to the two gossips from Laugharne.

Bessie Now that Richard Hughes is a lovely man.
Daisy Lovely.
Bessie Sits up there in Castle House quiet as a mouse.
Daisy Sophisticated, see. Credit to Laugharne.
Bessie Oh yes. Breeding. You can't buy that.
Daisy And his book, "High whatsit somewhere...."
Bessie "High Wind In Jamaica" love.
Daisy That's it. Oh yes, he's got a bob or two.
Bessie Not like some people I could mention who spend all their time in Brown's playing skittles and drinking ale.
Daisy Tell you what I've heard.
Bessie Go on.
Daisy Dylan goes down into Richard Hughes' cellar and only helps himself to a few crates of wine.
Bessie Never.
Daisy Richard Hughes was furious.

Bessie I can imagine.
Daisy Talk about ructions.
Bessie I bet. Of course, it's not the first time.
Daisy Go on.
Bessie He stole a sewing machine once.
Daisy Get away.
Bessie Bold as brass, walking down the street with the sewing machine under his arm. Took it from the woman he was staying with in London.
Daisy That's poets for you.
Bessie Bold as brass he was.
Daisy Makes you wonder what sort of family he came from.
Bessie I hate to think.

The women exit. Dan enters stage left, Dylan stage right, with a cigarette dangling from his mouth. At first they walk past one another...then stop and turn.

Dylan Dan?
Dan Dylan.

They embrace.

Dylan How you doin' you old bugger?
Dan I'm fine. And you?
Dylan I'm manipulating the hearts and minds of the nation with inspired propaganda.
Dan Adolf must be worried.
Dylan He's practically on his knees the old bastard. Hey, remember the froggy infested forest of Ffelinfrog?
Dan And Llareggub, a town not to be found on any civilised map.
Dylan Good times. I might use that one day.
Dan Yes. Why not.
Dylan I miss those days ... and the Warmley gang.
Dan Yes.
Dylan I think about them a lot.
Dan We were lucky. We had good times.
Dylan We move on.
Dan Yes. We all move on. Got to rush. Sorry. *(Pause)* I really am sorry.
Dylan Yes. Good to see you.
Dan And you. Keep in touch.
Dylan The Warmlies for ever! *(They embrace and Dan walks offstage looking back a last time as he exits. A podium is placed stage right. Dylan moves to it.)* And now, before I lead you in the ritualistic stamped to the bar, let me bring this first half of my recital to a close with a poem I dedicate to my father. In this age of psychoanalysis and psychobabble, we look back to childhood to find the answers. I can honestly say that my present state of decrepitude can in no way be blamed on my youth. I fully accept the responsibility for my condition, which is all part of my life's plan not to live beyond the age of forty. I always prefer to leave parties when they're in full swing. When I was slapdash and making my first curious marks on curly, ink-stained exercise books, there was a beacon, a guiding light that helped me through the labyrinth that is literature. That light was my father, a learned man, a man of letters, a man respected amongst men. I stand forever in his shadow and in his debt.

“Do not go gentle into that good night,
 Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
 Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
 Because their words had forked no lightning: they
 Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage, against the dying of the light.

Wild men, who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage, against the dying of the light.

Begin slow fade to blackout.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless me now with your fierce tears, I pray,
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage, against the dying of the light.”

End Of Act One

INTERVAL

Act Two

Porter In my opinion the sign of a great man is a man who has the common touch. Ya know wha’ I mean. A man who can touch your heart. I gotta tell ya, they’re pretty thin on the ground. I’ve seen ‘em come and I’ve seen ‘em go. Most of ‘em wouldn’t give ya the time of day. Now, some might disagree, but I reckon Dylan was a man with the common touch. He could talk to people like Richard Burton and he could talk to me just like talking to an old friend. Tell ya the truth I get a bit emotional when I think about that. I mean, me, I’m a nobody. Who wants to talk to me? I guess it was a lucky day for America when he decided to come over here.

Dylan is sitting at a wooden table representing the boat-house shed. He is reading a thin paper-back novel, a cheap crime thriller. Caitlin enters holding a bunch of letters.

Caitlin I’m very sorry to disturb the life of the great writer but how do we pay these bills? *(She throws the letters over Dylan).* Electricity, the water, the milk, the rates, clothes, shoes ... It goes on and on, week after week, and all you do is sit there and read Mickey bloody Spillane. *(She grabs hold of his hair and pulls him out of his chair).* Get off your fat arse. Do something. You’re bloody useless. *(She aims a few blows at his head. Dylan protects himself until her fury subsides. She then grabs the book out of Dylan’s hand and tears it in half. Exhausted, she sits on the chair. Dylan takes a letter out of his pocket and hands it to her).* What?

Dylan Read it.

Caitlin You read it.

Dylan It’s from John Brinnin in New York...the Poetry Society. They want me to go over and lecture.

She now takes an interest.

Caitlin You? New York?

Dylan I’ll be touring forty universities ... Yale, Vasser, Princeton, and I’m getting five hundred dollars up front.

Caitlin You let me ... when did you get that letter?

Dylan Ten minutes before you stormed in.

Caitlin Five hundred dollars? I’ve never seen five hundred dollars. I’ve never seen a hundred dollars. You beautiful man you.

She jumps up and kisses him fast and hard all over his face, then pulls him down onto the floor and sits astride him.

Caitlin Goodbye bloody bills, and sleepless nights. I love you Dylan Thomas. *(She quickly gets off him and rushes around picking up the bills)*. I can't believe it. I can't wait to see the look on May Morgan's twisted old face when I pay for my shoes. I'll shove it down her tight little gob and tell her where to stuff her snotty-nosed shop.

Dylan I might not go.

Caitlin Hey?

Dylan It's the flying. I've got to fly everywhere.

Caitlin sits beside him, sitting him up and holding him in her arms.

Caitlin Listen, my clever little boy, think about me. Think about the children. Think about this house. Think about your career. You've got to go.

Dylan I'm a coward.

Caitlin No. Some people are afraid of flying, some people are afraid of mice.

Dylan I'm afraid of mice.

They laugh and embrace. Cross fade to the Porter.

Porter He told me all about that first visit. He did all the things the tourists do. Ya know, Empire State, Broadway, 5th Avenue, Central Park, Greenwich Village ... he did the grand tour, the works, and enjoyed every goddam second of this crazy place. And believe me when I say crazy I mean wild. He talks to me about real culture shock. He stays in his hotel too scared to go down to the street some of the time. I can understand that and I've lived here forever. Anyways, it turns out that he gets treated like some pop star today. They turn out in their thousands. He's mobbed. Young broads are down the front screaming for more. The guy has arrived big time. It's a whole new ball game for him.

Dylan is centre stage signing programmes, surrounded by fans.

1st Girl Could you sign it, Janice, with love.

Dylan *(signing)* Janice, with all my fondest love.

1st Girl Oh, thanks Dylan.

The rest shake their programmes but are whisked away by an usher. Pearl stands at a distance. Dylan notices her at last.

Dylan Can I sign your programme?

Pearl You signed it two weeks ago in Salt Lake City. Are you mobbed everywhere you go?

Dylan I don't understand it. I love Americans. They have a lust for life. I'm treated like a hero, but to tell you the truth I'm as nervous as hell most of the time.

Pearl Perhaps that's the case with most heroes. The trick is not to show it. My name is Pearl.

She extends her hand, and they shake hands. She holds on to his hand.

Pearl I've travelled a long way to do that.

Dylan I hope you're not disappointed.

Pearl That's up to you. Are you frightened by American women?

Dylan Are you trying to frighten me?

Pearl You're perspiring.

Dylan I've worked hard.

Pearl You need a rest. You need someone to look after you over here.

Dylan I need a drink.

Pearl Scotch and Rye?

Dylan Perfect.

Pearl Coming up. And when you're rested we'll go on the town and I guarantee a good time.

Cross fade to Porter.

Porter What a dame. I gotta tell ya, when an American dame tells ya she's gonna give ya a good time, she means a real good time. And when she's got the bucks the sky's the limit. And when you're a celebrity, watch out, because in this jungle you're a special kind of prize that looks real good on their arm.

The stage is filled with a wild party. There are party hats, loud jazz music, streamers etc. A limbo pole is set up centre stage, and one by one, the party-goers limbo under the pole. Dylan is the last to go through. He falls over and is quickly picked up by Pearl and the others. Pearl hands him a drink which he knocks back in one. Pearl takes the glass off him. The music fades, the crowd merge into the shadows and he is left alone, centre stage. A small case, a shabby raincoat and a trilby hat are left for him. He puts on the coat and the hat, and picks up the case.

Dylan Caitlin! Caitlin, I'm back. Home is the hunter. *(Caitlin emerges from the shadows holding a letter. She is still, and unwelcoming).* There you are. Come on my lovely. Smother me with kisses.

Caitlin I'll bloody smother you. *(She attacks him violently, knocking him to the floor and banging his head repeatedly against the floor until she is exhausted. Dylan puts up a very weak defence and at no time tries to hit back. When the attack is over, Dylan lies still, his face covered in blood. Caitlin waves the letter in his face).* Pearl, the love of your life. She writes a good letter. Very descriptive. A very clever girl is Pearl. I'd like to meet her. I'd bloody strangle her. You can count yourself lucky I haven't squashed your balls, you bastard. *(She screws up the letter and jams it into Dylan's open mouth).* Eat the bloody thing. Can you smell her expensive perfume? Can you? Eat it you lousy bastard. Eat it!

She falls down by the side of Dylan, crying. He slowly lifts an arm to reach over and touch her. She pushes it away violently. He waits a few seconds, then he tries again. This time a very slow tentative move. His hand rests on her hand. She slowly reacts and takes hold of his hand. Cross fade to Porter.

Porter We had a neighbour, Jacob Lewenski, from Poland. A big man. Worked down on the docks. Every Saturday night he'd be pissed out of his mind. And every Saturday night he'd come home and beat up his wife. No-one said a word. His wife said nothin', we said nothin'. It was their business. One Saturday we heard noises, yelling, screaming ... and then nothin'. Again, no-one did nothin'. The next morning they found the whole family, the three kids and him and his wife, throats cut, all lying there in one big heap. Sad story. I told Dylan that story and he swore he never once struck Caitlin or the kids. If the kids had to be punished ... Caitlin had to do it.

Centre stage. Two women carrying shopping bags meet.

Mrs Jones Good afternoon, Mrs Evans.

Mrs Evans Good afternoon, Mrs. Jones.

Mrs Jones Lovely day.

Mrs Evans Beautiful. Good to be alive.

Mrs Jones How's the twins?

Mrs Evans Smashin'.

Mrs Jones There's nice. And Mr. Evans?

Mrs Evans Twisted his ankle.

Mrs Jones Never.

Mrs Evans Singing "Myfanwy" on the rocks to the seagulls.

Mrs Jones Silly old devil!

Mrs Evans I tell you ... men.

Mrs Jones Dylan's doing well. Off to America again, I see.

Mrs Evans So I hear.

Mrs Jones I saw him go. He kissed his mother goodbye three times. Three times he came back and kissed her.

Mrs Evans He's a good boy.

Mrs Jones If you ask me, I don't think he wanted to go, really.

Mrs Evans Mind you, he's been looking a bit peaky lately. Maybe he's got a touch of colic, or something.

Mrs Jones That could well be it. Heard him on the radio yesterday. Beautiful.

Mrs Evans Don't understand half of it mind.

Mrs Jones And to think, he used to walk up and down here, with his little notebook and pen.

Mrs Evans He came out of Brown's one night and nearly knocked me over. "Careful, Dylan," I said. "Sorry lovely," he said, and off he went, good as gold.

Mrs Jones There's a boy for you. There's a boy.

Caitlin enters with a shopping bag.

Mrs Evans Afternoon, Mrs Thomas. I see your Dylan's off globetrottin' again.

Caitlin Isn't that what men do? They go off, and we're left with the flamin' nappies.

Mrs Jones Too true.
Caitlin They screw around and we act like tidy wives. But this time I won't be around when he gets back. I've had enough. I'm off.
Mrs Evans No! Where will you go, Mrs. Thomas?
Caitlin To the sun.

Caitlin exits.

Mrs Evans There's determined she is.
Mrs Jones My hubby was chattin' to Dylan one night and Dylan said that Caitlin was a martyr to literature. Now that says it all. A martyr to literature.
Mrs Evans There's a lovely phrase mind. Poetic that is.
Mrs Jones Mind you, if she does go it'll cool the ardour of a few men around here.
Mrs Evans I don't think their wives will lose much sleep over that.

Cross fade to Porter

Porter The guy was on a roll, if ya know wha' I mean. He was the flavour of the month. Anyone into books an' stuff they got Dylan along to a party. It looks good in the papers. Even big stars got in on the act. There was that incident at Charlie Chaplin's party for instance. Dylan drives this car through the tennis courts and gets wrapped up in the nets. Who's in the back of the car but Marilyn Monroe, no less, and Shelley Winters. Then Dylan has the gall to piss all over Charlie's flower beds.

Centre stage. Dylan, with his back to the audience, is relieving himself. Chaplin enters.

Chaplin What the hell are you doing, Dylan?
Dylan Giving John Thomas an airing, my friend.
Chaplin You're a disgrace. You've ruined my tennis court. You could have seriously injured my guests. You are an embarrassment both to me and my guests. Now, get out!
Dylan What's the matter, Charlie boy. No sense of humour?
Chaplin Out!! Out!!

Cross fade to Porter, stage left.

Porter I guess it's always been the same. When a celebrity comes along with that tag of notoriety around his collar people get curious and doors open.

Stage right. A party in New York. Two arty American women are sipping cocktails.

Mary I tell you who was there. Dylan Thomas.
Marcia Who?
Mary Dylan Thomas, dear. The poet.
Marcia Should I know him?
Mary Everyone's reading him at the moment.
Marcia I must give him a look. Where's he from?
Mary Wales.
Marcia Where?
Mary Wales, dear. Over there. Europe.
Marcia Oh! What's he like? Good looking?
Mary More charismatic, I'd say. A beautiful voice. Sounds like one of those inspired evangelist types.
Marcia Really. Nothing like a bit of inspired evangelism to stir the hormones.
Mary Steady dear. Get in line. You're friend, Liz Reitel, has got her claws in already.
Marcia Liz? Why doesn't that surprise me?

Centre stage. Liz enters with Dylan who is clearly drunk, but he tries not to show it. A group surrounds Dylan.

Liz Dylan Thomas, everyone.
1st Man I can't tell you what it means for me to meet you at last face to face.
Dylan Why not?

A slight pause followed by a polite laugh from the group.

Jane Mr. Thomas, I lecture in Boston, at the university. I have your photograph in my study.
Dylan I'm honoured.
Jane I was wondering ... your poem, "The Ballad Of The Long-Legged Bait"? We were discussing it in tutorial. I think we get the main gist of it but could you go into it in some fine detail for me?
Dylan Here? Now?
Jane I'd appreciate it so much. It would mean so much to my students.
Dylan Very well. In a sentence ... it's the story of a gigantic ... FUCK!!

A deafening pause. The group smile politely and withdraw. Liz takes Dylan to one side.

Liz Dylan! Not funny! This isn't the White Horse mob. These are influential people. This is the literati of New York.
Dylan Don't the literati fuck in New York?
Liz Sometimes you can be so immature.
Dylan That's me, Liz. A man-child. The man who never grew up.
Liz Apologize to her.
Dylan Why should I? She'll go back to suffocating academia and live off that story for the rest of the year. I've done her a favour. An apology would ruin everything.
Liz You're impossible.

Back to the couple stage right.

Mary What do you think?
Marcia The man's a pig.
Mary How she puts up with him I'll never know.
Marcia Fame dear. The scent of fame.
Mary Is she hoping some will rub off, I wonder?
Marcia From what I've seen, the only thing that's going to rub off our little Welsh friend is vomit.
Mary Yes. But what a wonderful accent.
Marcia He's like a grotesque, overgrown child, but endearing for all that.

Dylan moves across to join them.

Dylan I've been told to be a good boy.
Marcia Have you?
Dylan I must learn to tread more softly in the marble halls of diplomacy.
Marcia Really. And to drive more carefully through tennis courts?
Dylan Exactly! By the way, underneath all that greasepaint Charlie Chaplin's a miserable sod, just like you and me.
Marcia Interesting.
Mary What's this "Under Milk Wood" we've been hearing about?
Dylan A diplomatic interjection! Congratulations! "Milk Wood"? It's a bawdy, pornographic study of life in a mad Welsh town. The grand-children will love it.

Stage left area.

Porter Okay, the guy was like a kid with a new toy over here. It's a playground. A gigantic twenty four hour a day playground. You wan' it, you got the dough, youse can have it. Ya gotta know how to handle that kinda stuff, ya know wha' I mean. Anyways, we got to talkin' about kids. When guys start to talk about their kids then ya know you're gettin' close to the real guy, understand wha' I mean. He tells me he dotes on his kids, all three of 'em, Llewelyn, Aeronwy and the last one, Colm I think it was. Anyways, get this! He tells me he gets back off one of his trips and there's his missus in one hell of a mood.

Centre stage. Dylan is reading and eating sweets. Caitlin enters angrily.

Caitlin I'm not bloody having it, and that's that.
Dylan Is it my kid?

Caitlin It's my kid, okay. And it's my body. I don't want another. Yes, it's probably your kid.
Dylan But you can't be sure.
Caitlin Take your stupid, bloody nose out of that book and look at me! Get some money for this abortion or I swear I'll leave you. I'm tired of pleading poverty, Dylan. I'm tired of watching you swan off. I'm tired of all this, the weather, the empty bed, the boring, soul-destroying existence. I'm tired, Dylan. I'm tired.

She grabs hold of his book and throws it to the ground. Dylan picks up the book.

Dylan We'll get the money.
Caitlin Where from? From snotty-nosed Margaret.
Dylan She's been good to us.
Caitlin And you've been good to her, the old bag. I suppose she's got to get something out of it the great, gin-soaked Llanelli money -bags. They do sod all for nothing, these people. It's amazing what she'll do to get screwed.
Dylan Do you, or do you not want an abortion?
Caitlin Yes!
Dylan Then, I'll get the money.

Stage left area.

Porter Me, I'm a Catholic, so I could never agree to tha' sorta thing. Tell ya the truth, and may God protect me, if that's wha' you want then it's your decision. At least, that's wha' I thought until he told me wha' they did to Caitlin. They had to cut the foetus up to get it outa there. Can you imagine tha'? A living being ... cut up like tha'. Ya don't get over somethin' like that easy. I tell ya, I nearly cried when I heard tha'.

Dylan is standing at a podium stage right reading "Fern Hill", Caitlin is wheeled in on a trolley by an abortionist dressed in a white coat. Play this action behind a gauze if possible. Her legs are facing up stage. During the reading of the poem her legs are forced wide apart and an abortion is carried out. As Dylan reads, she moans quietly, her moans get gradually louder.

Dylan "Now, as I was young and easy under the apple boughs,
About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green,

The night above was dingle starry,
Time let me hail and climb
Golden in the heydays of his eyes,
And honoured among wagons I was prince of the apple towns
And once below a time I lordly had the trees and leaves
Trail with daisies and barley
Down the rivers of the windfall night.

And as I was green and carefree, famous among the barns
About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home,
In the sun that is young once only,
Time let me play and be
Golden in the mercy of his means,
And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman, the calves
Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hill barked clear and cold,
And the Sabbath rang slowly
In the pebbles of the holy streams.

All the sun long it was running, it was lovely, the hay
Fields as high as the house, the tunes from the chimneys, it was air,
And playing, lovely and watery
And fire green as grass.
And nightly under the simple stars
As I rode to sleep, the owls were bearing the farm away,
All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the nightjar

Flying with the ricks, and the horses
Flashing into the dark.

Caitlin screams loudly. LX fades on Caitlin. Dylan bows his head. There is a brief silence. Dylan continues quietly. Slow fade to blackout.

Time held me green and dying
Though I sang in my chains like the sea.”

Stage left area.

Porter Yeah! Ya don't get over tha' sorta thing easy. I could see he was choked up, so he took a deep breath and he told me about some of the women he knew. Now, when I was a kid I had no trouble picking up girls, ya know what I mean. I used to score on a regular basis. Not now, I hasten to add. Now's a different story. They take one look at me and run the other way. Every dog has his day. I gotta tell ya, though. It doesn't matter how ugly your mug is, as long as you've gotta a slice of fame the dames come runnin'. I know. I've seen it. When I see my wife with that pancake stuff all over her face I pray for five minutes of fame. I ask myself, would I have the moral courage to turn all the broads away when they came knockin' on my door? Well, wha' would you do? Anyways, Liz Reitel was holding right in there.

Centre stage. Dylan is making love to Liz. Caitlin is standing stage right, reading the letter.

Dylan Dear Cat, Caitlin darling, I love you. There's no meaning to anything without you. There's no meaning without us being together. I love you all the day and night, and I am three thousand miles away. I want to touch your body, your beautiful body and hold you close. I think about you and the children and Laugharne and realise how lucky I am.

The woman cries out in ecstasy. Fade LX on Dylan. Caitlin bellows in anger.

Caitlin And who is it now, you bloody man? I hate it when you're away, and I hate it when you're here.

***** The remainder of the play has been deleted from this preview copy *****

In the last seven A4 pages ... Dylan is portrayed as a loving son to his mother. Caitlin is unable to deal with his love affairs and leaves him. His health starts to deteriorate, but he soldiers on through performances of "Under Milk Wood" and their subsequent parties until he collapses and is admitted to hospital. While he is in a coma the Doctors try to justify their failure to save his life. He is 'visited' by echoes of the enjoyable parts of his past life until he finally slips away into death with Caitlin at his side. An optional three minute 'epilogue' scene is available.

For further details on purchasing a full copy of the script, or for information on royalties, please contact :-

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