



*The Shangri La Dilemma*

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Dramatization of "Lost Horizon" by James Hilton (1931)

by Christian Lanciai (2002, translated 2017)

*Dramatis personae:*

Henry S. Barnard, American  
Miss Roberta Brinklow, nurse  
Hugh Conway, British consul  
Miles Mallison, his vice consul  
Talu, pilot  
Tibetans  
Chang, chinese  
The High Lama  
Princess Lo-Tsen  
a doctor  
three nurses  
Rutherford

The action takes place around the Himalayas 1930  
and (the last scene) on the sea.

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## *The Shangri La Dilemma*

Act I scene 1. Buskar.

*Barnard (with a cigar)* What the hell did we do to deserve this? Didn't we come here with good will and honest intentions? What good did we do in this country except good?

*Brinklow* It's not their fault. They can't help it. Don't blame the oppression by bandits on them.

*Barnard* But then they should shoot down the bandits and not at us!

*Conway (enter)* The plane is ready. We only have to get on board.

*Barnard* Thank goodness that at least we have met with a British consul!

*Brinklow* And what about all the other stranded outcasts?

*Conway* Take it easy, miss Brinklow. There is a plane transport for all of them, and we are not more than 80 foreigners in this country.

*Barnard* You make it sound so damned easy. How the devil are we to get through that swarming noisy throng of a mob to the airplane? It's running the gauntlet!

*Conway* Nothing will get better by your spreading panic around, Mr Barnard.

*Mallison* Let's just trust Conway and keep our heads on and cold, and everything will be all right. This contraption of the Maharaja's will anyway do better than any old Indian flying wreckage!

*Conway* All will get away, Mallison. The only difference is that we have a private plane. It's not more secure because it's smaller, but all are secure.

*Barnard (throws away his cigar)* What the hell are we waiting for then? Let's get on with it and get out of this bloody revolution pit before everyone starts firing at random!

*Mallison* They already did that for quite some time, and it's your fault, yankee, who supplied them with weapons for their civil war!

*Barnard* Are you then as white and innocent as a lamb, you upper class snob of a manipulative elite? Do you mean to suggest that the British didn't sell a single weapon or tank here for the war with the enemy?

*Conway* Don't start fighting, gentlemen, but let's get on board.

*Brinklow* Perhaps they would rather stay here and fight the rebels than be evacuated.

*Barnard* Well, I am not going to wait here to get grilled and fried here by gun crazy head hunters! *(takes out another cigarr and bites it off)*

*Conway* You will have no time for another cigarr now, Mr Barnard, and there is no smoking on board.

*Barnard* Bloody hell! Do you then have to wait among hooligans to get flayed alive to have a chance for a smoke!

*Conway* You will have your smoke after the journey.

*Mallison* Come on, Barnard! Let's get even on board!

*Barnard* Lucky me that at least I have my whisky! *(throws away the cigar)*

*(They make their way out to the airfield through a stormy sea and chaos of tumultuous clamorous Asians in turbans.)*

Scene 2. They enter the airplane, Brinklow first.

*Brinklow* This is not exactly any super Boeing. I suppose they have the toilet on the wing.

*Barnard* From which prehistoric war did they dig out this box of junk?

*Mallison* Be grateful that you are allowed to get off at all. Or else we would gladly leave you grounded to the cannibals.

*Brinklow* I can't see any toilet anywhere.

*Barnard* The toilet, Madame, is not on the wing. You will have to shit between the planks of the floor.

*Mallison* Although you are an American, Mr Barnard, we have a lady on board whom we should show some consideration.

*Barnard* That's bloody hell exactly what I am doing! She needs a toilet! I try to help her get on with it! Isn't that what you call to behave like a gentleman?

*Conway (the last to enter)* The toilet, Madame, will be accessible as soon as we shut the door.

*Barnard (to Mallison)* Don't you try to patronize me just because I am a free American, you arrogant brat!

*Mallison* Sorry, I am just trying to indicate to you the manner of proper behaviour on board a flying machine in the presence of ladies.

*Barnard* Do you call this T-ford a flying machine? Are you sure it can get above ground? How the devil, Conway, do you think we could get across the Himalayas in this flapping coffer?

*Conway* The Maharajah of Kashmir did it dozens of times and survived.

*Barnard* Even from the bottom end of the world out of this shithole of Buskar?

*Mallison* The ladies, yankee.

*Brinklow* It's all right. I am used to cannibals. Mr Barnard at least doesn't fire off.

*Mallison* I wouldn't be too sure. It wouldn't surprise me if it was he that furnished the head hunters with shotguns and robots.

*Barnard* Shut up, you nitwit!

*Mallison* Obviously it's true.

*Brinklow* Hurray! We are moving!

*Conway* May I ask you to take your seats and fasten your seatbelts.

*Barnard* Are there really such modernities here? It's a miracle if we really get above ground!

*Mallison (takes his seat)* We had better hold tight. This reminds me of the first time I flew across the English channel in the Great War.

*Barnard* Tell the truth. You both pissed and shitted your pants full.

*Mallison (rising)* This is going too far!

*Conway* Sit down!

*Barnard* The young cock wants a fight. Pistol, sword or blunderbuss, you old-fashioned anachronism?

*Mallison* Why not your own weapons, those shotguns loaded with grenades you gave this people to fire at us with?

*Conway* No fighting on board. Didn't you learn anything from the hell in Buskar?

*Brinklow* They were only contaminated.

*Mallison* Confess, you rogue! You are a smuggler of weapons to the rebels! That's why you are so rich and sneaky and haughty!

*Barnard (takes out a cigarr and bites it off)* You greenborn, you don't know with whom you are speaking. You don't know what you are talking about. Is it wrong to support suppressed people in their fight for freedom? You and your British empire has only colonised and subjected people in order to exploit them. That's why we are ended up with our hands full of organising the universal discontent and resistance!

*Mallison* He admits it!

*Conway* Sit down in the airplane!

*Barnard* I admit nothing. It just pleases me to contradict you, blasted upstart. You should have stayed for a few more years in Sunday school.

*Mallison* We have heard with our own ears how he as an American helps and supports uneducated people to grab power by violence in order to abuse it. We English educate people! You only teach them to kill!

*Barnard* No, we teach them to defend themselves against bullies and exploiters like you.

*Mallison* Isn't it exploitation to sell weapons for them to destroy themselves with?

*Barnard* The fundamental policy of the British Empire has always been to divide and rule.

*Mallison* It's not true! We only wanted to civilise! But you arms dealers only brutalise!

*Barnard* To make money anything is allowed, said the executive director of the Bank of England and printed more money.

*Mallison* He admits it!

*Barnard* I admit nothing. I am only a realist.

*Brinklow* Gentlemen, please desist with your tiresome nagging! How are we to sleep with your heated debate going on?

*Barnard* Consul Conway sleeps like a log. He is used to the gun music. Wasn't he in Moscow in 1918?

*Mallison (has looked out and caught a suspicion)* Something is wrong.

*Brinklow* I think we keep a fairly good speed and height. What is wrong?

*Mallison* We are not keeping the right course. That high mountain is K2, but it should be to the north and not to the south.

*Brinklow* Are you sure?

*Mallison (waking up Conway)* Conway, wake up!

*Conway (tired)* What is it?

*Mallison* We are going in the wrong direction! Look!

*Conway (tired, but looks out)* You always keep hounding me, Mallison. So perhaps we are following some other route. So what?

*Mallison* Isn't that mountain over there K2?

*Conway* Yes, I suppose it is. So what?

*Mallison* We are flying north of it instead of south!

*Conway* I advise you not to go to the cockpit to instruct the pilot how to fly.

*Mallison* That's exactly what I am going to do! (*wants to go to the cockpit*)

*Barnard (stops him)* Don't be such an idiot, Mallison. We don't need your panic up here. We had enough of it down there. We were damned lucky to get this ramshackle private machine at all, and the pilot knows where to take us.

*Mallison* But he is going wrong!

*Barnard* Just take it easy. I'll go and see if he has fallen asleep at the wheel. (*goes towards the cockpit*)

*Brinklow* The pilot could hardly be asleep at the controls, could he?

*Mallison* He was just joking. But I feel something is wrong.

*Brinklow* Perhaps we are being shanghaied and are going to Shanghai instead.

*Mallison* It isn't funny in that case, because the fuel won't last all that way. We are heading for wayward areas where airplanes only can go down.

*(Barnard reappears looking grave)*

*Brinklow* Well?

*Barnard* Mallison is right. Something is wrong.

*Brinklow* What did the pilot say?

*Barnard* Nothing. He is not our pilot.

*Mallison* I knew it!

*Brinklow* How do you know he is not our pilot?

*Barnard* He doesn't speak English, and his only language is a gun.

*Mallison* Wouldn't that just suit you, yankee! Why didn't you knock him out at once and landed us at some suitable place?

*Barnard* Try it yourself unarmed against a loaded gun.

*Mallison* How do you know it's loaded?

*Barnard* I prefer not to be the one to find that out in a plane in the air.

*Brinklow* Do you mean that we are hijacked?

*Barnard* It doesn't look any better. They must have thrown out the regular pilot maybe already down on the ground.

*Conway* Let's sincerely hope so.

*Mallison* Do something, Conway! This is a crisis!

*Conway* Is it? Not yet. Or we don't know yet. The man can fly, and he knows where he is going. We kept exactly the same steady course all the time. There is some method in this madness.

*Brinklow* So what shall we do?

*Conway* Advisedly nothing. We are at the mercy of our hijacker. We don't know his intentions, but hopefully he does.

*Mallison* Yes, to dump us on top of K2!

*Barnard* Don't get hysterical, boy. Do like me. (*takes a cigar*) There is nothing better to do.

*Conway* You are fully excused, Mr Barnard, since we have been bereft of all our rights. I just hope our lady will excuse.

*Brinklow* If we are doomed we might as well go under in style.

*Barnard* Exactly my conclusion.

*Brinklow* So let's take it easy and sleep on it until we land, if we land.

*Barnard* You are unusually sensible for a woman, Miss Brinklow.

*Brinklow* You sound as if you were married and running away from your wife.

*Mallison* Or from justice.

*Barnard* Maybe from both.

*Conway* I'll check the pilot. (*goes to the cockpit, knocks on the glass, whereupon the pilot turns around aiming at him with a gun*) Sorry, wrong door.

(*returning*) You saw it. There is nothing to do.

*Mallison* This is terrible!

*Barnard* Don't make it worse, boy. Have a cigar.

*Mallison* Yes, and set the engine on fire while we are in the air! Wouldn't that be something for you to laugh at!

*Barnard* Don't get desperate, my boy. Just because the situation is hopeless doesn't mean that it's serious.

*Mallison* For you it doesn't matter, but it does for me, who has a girlfriend home in England, who doesn't know where I am! And now I will demand of this crazy pilot to end the joke and fly us back or at least land before we go down in the mountains!

*Conway* I think you will be spared the trouble, Mallison. The engine is coughing, the gas will soon be finished, and I think he is going down to land.

*Barnard* If he can land us here in the middle of the Rocky Mountains he is the smartest pilot I ever went down with.

*Mallison* Shut up! Never speak of going down in an airplane!

*Barnard* But my boy, we *are* going down. I am just being realistic.

*Brinklow* Is it true, consul Conway?

*Conway* We are definitely going down for landing, and the pilot knows his business. Any other pilot would get his wings clipped among these sharp mountains.

*Mallison* (*more and more desperate*) We are going down! We are falling!

*Barnard* Look at it this way, my boy. It's a free fall. The abyss has no bottom. All you can sense is perfect vertigo. You are going down faster and faster, and the disaster is absolutely inevitable. Not even a miracle can save you.

*Brinklow* You are cruel, Mr Barnard.

*Barnard* I am only trying to bring this boy into some maturity while he lives. And even if we survive a crash nothing can save us, since no one knows where we are and least of all ourselves.

Mallison Shut your mouth, you damned defeatist! (*runs at him and takes him by the throat*)

Conway Not now, Mallison. Hold on. We are crashing.  
(*A deafening noise as the plane goes down while the lights flash and go out. After a moment it's all over.*) Are you all okey?

Barnard That was the most incredible landing I have seen. He didn't lose more than a wheel and a piece of the tail.

Mallison Now by the devil I'll see that he'll pay for this! (*rushes to the cockpit*)

Conway Mallison!

Barnard Too late. The rumble will be as inevitable as the disaster. If the pilot survived he will be dead now. (*Mallison comes back with an empty look.*)

Brinklow What is it, Mr Mallison?

Mallison Conway, come. Something is wrong with the pilot.

Barnard You can say that again.

Conway Is he alive?

Mallison Yes, but probably not for long.

Conway Is he unconscious?

Mallison I think he's had a stroke.

Barnard I would have that as well having to fly an airplane with that jolly joker for a backseat driver.

Brinklow Don't joke about it. This is serious.

Barnard You don't say!

Brinklow Consul Conway, I have some brandy, if it could help.

Conway That if anything could perhaps help. We must bring the pilot over here. Give me a hand, Mallison. (*They go to the cockpit.*)

Barnard I didn't know that nun nurses travelled around with such strong stuff.

Brinklow All for the patients, Mr Barnard.

Conway (*drags in the pilot with Mallison*)

Brinklow How is he?

Conway He is alive but not much more.

Mallison Where's the bottle?

Brinklow Here. (*offers the bottle. Mallison gives the pilot to drink.*)

Conway Careful. Not everything at once.

Pilot (*coughs and comes to life*)

Brinklow (*triumphant*) He lives!

Mallison Thanks to you. But I have removed his gun.

Barnard You had better remove it from Mallison, Conway.

Conway He could be right, Mallison. (*offers his hand. Mallison gives him the gun.*)

Brinklow Try to make him talk. He is the only one who knows anything about where we are.

Pilot Tibet.

Mallison He talks!

Brinklow He understands us!

Conway Why are we here?

Pilot (*with extreme effort*) Shangri La.

Mallison Shangri La. What the devil is Shangri La?

Conway La means a pass in Tibetan. Perhaps it's the name of our location.

Barnard It's definitely off the map.

Conway What is Shangri La?

Pilot (*with difficulty*) Monastery. Mountain.

Conway There's a monastery here somewhere, probably by the mountain.

Mallison What bloody mountain? There are only a hundred thousand of them around here.

Conway Didn't you see the mountain just before we landed, the great lonely pyramid in the moonlight?

Brinklow I saw it!

Barnard So it exists. No doubt about it.

Conway We should probably go towards the mountain to find the monastery.

Pilot Shangri La. Shangri La. (*points at a direction*)

Mallison Yes, you already said that. But how the devil are we to find it?

Brinklow Don't speak hard to him. He is dying.

Pilot (*dying*) Shangri La. (*dies*)

Barnard That's that. He is gone, the only one who knew something. What do we do now?

Conway We must find our way to this Shangri La. If we don't find it we must find our way back here.

Mallison There is neither food nor heat here on board.

Conway Yes, I know.

Barnard So we must find the place.

Brinklow Look! (*points*)

Mallison Rescued!

Conway They must have seen our aborted landing. Now it begins, my friends. Get ready for the great mystery of why we were taken here.

Mallison A greater mystery is how we are to get back.

Barnard We are in no hurry, my boy. (*bites off a cigar*) One thing at a time.

Brinklow At least we have survived.

Mallison So far.

(*The door is opened and furred Tibetans enter the plane, all very talkative and eager to take care of them and lead the way for them.*)

Barnard What are they saying?

Conway They seem to wish to show us the way to Shangri La.

(*The Tibetans bewail the dead pilot but bring him along as well.*)

Barnard At least he will have a decent funeral.

Mallison A decent funeral? Here on the moon?

Brinklow We are not on the moon, Mr Mallison. We are among decent Buddhists who are here to take care of us. The least we can do is to follow them.

*Barnard* Finally a realist! You have much to learn from her, my boy.  
*Conway* Come, let's go. We are finished here.  
(*They follow the Tibetans out of the plane, who also carry out the dead pilot.*)

Scene 3. Outside the plane.

Wild mountain landscape, almost expressionistic in surrealistic terribility.

*Barnard* This seems like a regular welcome committee.  
*Conway* This is getting more interesting all the time.  
*Mallison* The only interesting thing is how we are to get out of here.  
*Barnard* Prepare yourself for a long vacation, my boy. We are well taken care of.  
*Mallison* I think I almost would have preferred the cannibals of Buskar.  
*Brinklow* Try to look at it from the bright side, colleague.  
*Mallison* What bright side?  
*Brinklow* The fact that we have good chances of survival.  
*Mallison* Is that a bright prospect?  
*Chang (from a sedan-chair)* I hope your voyage wasn't too unpleasant.  
*Conway* Its unpleasantness has constantly been topped by its surprises.  
*Chang* I apologize for all its unintended inconvenience.  
*Conway* You speak as if you felt responsible for them, Mr?  
*Chang* Call me Mr Chang.  
*Conway* Well, Mr Chang. Your presence here to greet us in the middle of these wildest mountains in the world seems a bit puzzling, especially since you speak with such an excellent Oxford accent.  
*Chang* What did you expect?  
*Conway* Anything but that.  
*Chang* All your questions will be answered in due time, but you have to have patience. In the long run, Mr Conway, patience is the only medicine that helps against all the world's problems.  
*Conway* How do you know my name?  
*Chang* Also that question will be answered in due time.  
*Barnard* This is all incredible. Pinch me in the arm, my dear. I have reason to suspect that I am dreaming.  
*Brinklow* In that case we are in the same dream, and then I would prefer staying in the dream.  
*Mallison* This is no dream. We have been abducted and are in the hands of calculating kidnappers. What ransom did you imagine? You kidnapped the wrong people. We have no resources.  
*Chang* It's not quite as simple as you presume, young man. But we have argued enough, and you must be tired after your journey and its dramatic climax. Let's immediately descend to Shangri La.

*Conway* It sounds more and more like as if there actually was some intention behind bringing us here. Wouldn't you care to explain a bit more, Mr Chang?

*Chang* In time you will learn and know it all. But it was absolutely not intentional that your pilot would crash. You can be quite certain about that, Mr Conway.

*Conway* But this was his destination with us in the luggage?

*Chang* Almost correct, Mr Conway, but not quite.

*Mallison* He crashed the machine so that we would not return with it. That's the worst of it.

*Chang* We all regret that unfortunate turn-out, young man.

*Mallison* You appear to know who Conway is but know nothing about the rest of us.

*Chang* You may present your fellow passengers, Mr Conway.

*Conway* This is Miles Mallison, my vice consul. This is Miss Brinklow of the Red Cross and active as nurse in crisis situations as the one at Buskar. And this is Mr Henry Barnard from America, a secret agent.

*Barnard* That's great, Conway. I like that presentation. Let me remain secret. But I do smoke cigars. *(bites one off)*

*Chang* That is entirely on your own responsibility as long as they last, Mr Barnard, and the responsibility will be entirely yours when they are finished.

*Barnard* It can't be as bad as that.

*Chang* Shangri La is above 3500 meters. That's why we don't smoke here since we need our lungs for better practice. But if you wish to smoke it's your own affair.

*Barnard* Thank you. I'll smoke as long as it lasts.

*Mallison* What are we waiting for?

*Chang* Let's leave then. Our Tibetans will show the way.

*Conway* You are not Tibetan yourself?

*Chang* No, I am Chinese, and that's why the Tibetans know the way better than I, who isn't really made for this climate.

*Mallison* What are you doing here then?

*Chang* The same as you: wondering what I am really doing here.

*Mallison* Then we are in the same boat.

*Chang* If that is your view it pleases me, Mr Mallison, and I can promise you that you will find that boat unsinkable.

*Barnard* Well, as far as we are now from the sea, I have no doubts about that.

*Brinklow* I am looking forward to reach Shangri La.

*Mallison* As soon as we get moving I'll be content, for there is nothing we can do here.

*Chang (calling to the Tibetans)* Challo! Let's go! *(All immediately start breaking up.)*

Act II Scene 1.

A fine but simple hall with a table laid for dinner.

(For an introduction, you could show how well dressed servants prepare the table and the food on a revolving stand.)

*Barnard* I dare say! Hot shower and fresh underwear! Western plumbing! Clean sheets in bed! Where did they get everything?

*Conway* I think our friend Chang said something about that we need not in any way feel outside civilisation here.

*Barnard* It's almost like an American hotel. The only thing missing here is probably some cultivation of tobacco.

*Mallison* Do you really have to worry about that, Mr Barnard, as inexhaustible as your supply of cigars seems to be?

*Barnard* I never worry about that. When my cigars are finished there always seems to turn up new ones. It's with cigars as with money: you had better spend them, or else you will never get them back.

*Brinklow (has just come in)* That sounds almost Christian, Mr Barnard. Who doesn't willingly give will neither be given anything.

*Mallison* Don't start preaching to us, Miss Brinklow.

*Brinklow* Not that I intended to, but why not, Mr Mallison?

*Mallison* You saw for yourself how things turned out as you preached to the cannibals in Buskar. The whole country was upset to hysterics.

*Brinklow* You mean it was my fault?

*Mallison* I can't quite exclude that possibility.

*Conway* He is only pulling your legs.

*Brinklow* I am not so sure. You can't imagine what effect the mere mention of the name of Jesus can have on undisciplined people.

*Barnard* Don't talk rubbish now, children. Don't you see that dinner is served?

*Conway* Whatever you may want, Miles, I trust you still have your appetite.

*Mallison* No one can take that away from me.

*Brinklow* Real Chinese food at that, easy to digest and mild to the stomach. I hope they didn't season it too hard.

*Barnard* For me anything goes even if it's horse meat or dog meat as long as it can be chewed.

*Conway* Barnard, the ladies!

*Barnard* I only see one, and she doesn't seem very squeamish, does she? Wasn't she a Christian at that?

*Brinklow* Mr Barnard, call on me if you on any occasion need to have your stomach pumped out.

*Barnard (to Conway)* You see what I mean.

*Mallison* It's obvious that you lived in India, Miss Brinklow.

*Brinklow* How is that?

*Mallison* The most common topic of conversation there is problems of digestion, which usually are different kinds of diarrhoea or dysentery.

*Conway* Mallison!

*Barnard* Our consul himself seems to be the most sensitive one around here.

*Mallison* Yes, to interior problems, not to exterior ones. But he hasn't fixed the problem of getting us out of here yet.

*Conway* Give us a few days, Mallison. We have to have enough rest first. The altitude is always exhausting to newcomers, and we haven't got used to it yet.

*Barnard (eating with good appetite)* I'll gladly stay here some extra days if the food is free of charge.

*Brinklow* Me too, since it's definitely healthy.

*Chang (entering)* I hope our food agrees with you, honoured guests.

*Barnard* Absolutely, Chang! You couldn't have made it better!

*Conway* We are impressed by your high standards here, Mr Chang – the cleanliness, the service, the efficiency, the hot water supply, the excellent food – I spent my best ten years in China while Doctor Sun Yat Sen was still alive, where I learned to appreciate things Chinese, especially the kitchen.

*Chang* A generous compliment, Mr Conway.

*Mallison* There is only one thing missing. How do we get out of here?

*Conway* Try to take it easy, Mallison.

*Mallison* Pardon me, Conway, but they don't seem very eager to help us out of here.

*Chang* Everything takes time, Mr Mallison.

*Conway* Don't make it more difficult by stressing it.

*Mallison* I don't want to stress you. I just want to know how we are to get out of here.

*Barnard* Can't you be patient for just a few days, my boy? There is so much here to discover, how everything works so well, how all the people came here and what they are doing, and what's actually going on here really.

*Chang (laughs dryly)*

*Mallison* What are you laughing at, Mr Chang?

*Chang* Only that our friend from America seems to be on the right track.

*Conway* Sounds interesting. Could you explain more about that track?

*Chang* All in due time, Mr Conway.

*Mallison* I am tired of all this mumbo-bumbo and secretiveness! Why will you never get to the point, Mr Chang?

*Chang* What point are you seeking? Speak freely. I will gladly answer all questions that I may.

*Mallison* When are we released from here? Where can we find porters to help us out? Do you have maps and guides that can show us the way?

*Chang* Mr Mallison, you must never regard yourselves as prisoners here. You have all the freedom in the world and from the world. You can leave whenever you want. Concerning porters it could be difficult to find them since people here in the valley unwillingly leave it. We have maps in abundance. But our best guide is unfortunately dead.

*Mallison* The pilot that brought us here?

Chang Yes.

Mallison There are no others?

Conway Mr Chang, you just stated that porters don't willingly leave the valley. What brought you then and your company to our airplane? Did you just by accident pass by on a Sunday stroll?

Chang (*serious*) Mr Conway, you had your share yourself of the hardship of crossing the pass down here. You can imagine how much worse it must be to get back up. No, Mr Conway, we did not just pass by by accident.

Conway So you knew we would come?

Chang Yes.

Mallison (*rising, angry, throwing away his napkin*) This is going too far! So we were actually abducted here against our will, kidnapped, shanghaied! And you won't help us back! And you demand that we must not feel like prisoners! What kind of an infernal charade is this?

Conway Cool down in the storm, Mallison. I am sure everything must have its explanation. Don't forget the hell we got out of alive.

Mallison But I have a fiancée back in England who is waiting for me! I have a career to fulfill! I have my duties to my own and to my country! Don't you, Conway? Are you completely satisfied about being considered lost by all your friends around the world? (*rushes out*)

Conway Pardon a young man's impatience, Mr Chang.

Chang Yes, he is very young.

Brinklow How about yourself? You give the impression of being very old but in that case extremely well kept.

Chang I owe you thanks for that, Miss Brinklow.

Barnard That's no answer to her question.

Chang Ask another question.

Brinklow I understand the monastery here must belong to some religious order, but I can't see which. I can't even see if the monastery is Buddhist, Christian or anything else.

Chang We are not of any special religion, Miss Brinklow, but we try to observe moderation in all things, even in the practice of religion.

Conway That sounds sensible.

Chang We try to stick to common sense, Mr Conway, as the most constructive way of living.

Brinklow That sounds buddhistic.

Chang Still our founder was not a Buddhist.

Brinklow But?

Chang Christian.

Brinklow (*triumphant*) I knew it!

Chang Still there are sources indicating that Christ had his main ideas from Buddhism, which he studied as a young man in India.

Conway Are there really reliable sources confirming that?

*Chang* Only old writings like the oldest biblical manuscripts, if not older.

*Barnard* If you start discussing theology I had better go to bed.

*Brinklow* I think we are all very tired. I suggest that we continue tomorrow.

*Barnard* Good idea. I appreciate your common sense, Miss Brinklow, although you are a Christian.

*Brinklow* Christ *was* sensible. The lack of sense was only found in his opponents and persecutors who were senseless.

*Barnard* Like Lenin and Stalin.

*Brinklow* Yes, socialism is Antichrist.

*Conway* We have to turn in to that sensible argument.

*Brinklow* It will be impossible not to sleep well tonight.

*Barnard* What are we waiting for? The thin air demands incessant rest to begin with.

*Brinklow* For once you are right. (*Brinklow and Barnard break it up.*)

*Barnard* You stay on, Conway?

*Conway* Yes, but don't wait for me. (*Brinklow and Barnard leave.*)

(*as soon as they are gone*) Our situation is becoming more and more spectacularly interesting, Mr Chang. So we were expected. That actually points at that we were abducted. Then we must know why.

*Chang* Call it a rescue mission.

*Conway* Of us from the chaos at Buskar?

*Chang* The High Lama will explain everything to you when the time is ripe.

*Conway* When will that be? When will I meet him?

*Chang* That's for him to decide.

*Conway* What does that mean?

*Chang* When you get to know Shangri La you don't want to leave it, Mr Conway. You haven't yet got to know Shangri La.

*Conway* Such an explanation will hardly satisfy Mallison.

*Chang* That's why I only give it to you.

*Conway* So all I can do for Mallison is to ask him to be patient until he has learned to know Shangri La so he doesn't want to leave it. Is that so?

*Chang* (*laughs, to conceal his embarrassment*) You will understand what I mean one day, Mr Conway.

*Conway* And will Mallison understand it?

*Chang* That depends on him entirely. He is still very young.

*Conway* I am 37 but I understand him. What do you suggest that we occupy ourselves with while learning to be patient, Mr Chang?

*Chang* (*opens the door to the balcony. The whole scenery is exposed with an irresistibly beautiful mountain which in its pyramidal form dominates the entire horizon.*)

What could be more beautiful than the loveliest mountain in all the Himalayas in its absolute purity so splendidly dressed all in white? And is there any higher enjoyment than the purely esthetical one? Mr Conway, there is much to do here for the entire world, I can assure you.

*Conway* You are becoming constantly more mysterious. What mountain is it? I have never seen it before even in pictures.

*Chang* The locals call it Karakal.

*Conway* That's more known as the name of a central asian lynx. What does the name mean in the local language?

*Chang* The Blue Moon.

*Conway* A very fitting name, I must admit.

*(They remain on the balcony, contemplating the mountain.)*

## Scene 2.

*(The scene is closed up, the dapper servants clear the table and change to breakfast, while the scene shifts from evening to morning.)*

*Barnard* I haven't slept so well for years.

*Brinklow* I had the strangest feeling tonight. Here everyone seems so civilised that no one needs to be saved. There is no need for christianity here, as all are already more than Christian, as if the message of christianity was obvious, and that's how it should be. It almost feels like having come home to a kind of original home to that natural mentality of friendship that should be inherent in all humanity. But strangest of all is, that the more I feel I have very much to do here.

*Mallison (has entered)* So you no longer want to go back.

*Brinklow* I am in no hurry, so to speak. If we have to wait I have nothing against it.

*Barnard* I also have nothing against moving on slowly. Here perhaps I could at last get rid of my old ulcer.

*Brinklow* If you have an ulcer you shouldn't smoke and drink whisky.

*Barnard* That's exactly why it would be worth while getting rid of the ulcer.

*Chang (entering)* I hope, honoured guests, that you have slept well.

*Mallison* Indeed, so well, that I am burning of lust to find the porters that will help us to get back.

*Chang* Unfortunately that will be difficult.

*Mallison* I see. You detain us here like prisoners by force.

*Chang* I repeat that you are completely free. And we are not isolated here. Now and then there are caravans arriving with necessities that we can't produce ourselves.

*Mallison* Well, at last a possibility! So there are occasional caravans arriving here.

*Chang* Regularly.

*Mallison* When? How often? Every week? Every month?

*Chang* You must understand that such transports are completely at the mercy of the unpredictable weather and its whims, which usually put your life at risk here in the Himalayas, so we can never know exactly when they arrive. But it is presumable that we dont have to wait for the next one more than two months.

*Mallison* Two months! Two months of inactivity and no contacts in this limbo of nowhere! Two months lost of your life for nothing! And you can't even be of any use! And you have no telephone and no telegraph!

*Barnard* Consider it a well deserved vacation, Mallison. We westerners sometimes need to be compelled to take it easy.

*Mallison* Make it cozy enough in your self-sufficient snugness, yankee! The laziness of being supported by others seems to suit you like hand in glove.

*Barnard* Honestly speaking, Mallison, I see no other choice.

*Brinklow* Two months is just two months.

*Conway* Just start the countdown, Mallison.

*Barnard* But there you are, Conway! We just had the news that we can leave this paradise already in two months if we want to, but I presume, Chang, that we are also at liberty to stay on as long as we wish.

*Chang* Here anyone may stay as long as he wishes. It's so seldom we have guests entering here, and it's an honour for us to make those who come as happy as possible.

*Conway* Total hospitality in other words.

*Chang* Hospitality has never harmed anyone.

*Mallison* What was it our host said in Peking, Conway? "The guest is always right." So if the guest wants to leave no one has any right to stop him, is that right? So maximum two months. I'll try to constrain my impatience for that duration.

*Conway* Honestly speaking, Mallison, I am glad if that time is not shortened. I like it here, and there is nothing missing here for me. I find your large library, Mr Chang, at least as valuable as the British Library.

*Chang* That's too much of a flattery. As I said, our deliveries are extremely unreliable.

*Barnard* All cards on the table. Since you started, Conway, I might as well go on. You have all of course long ago realized that I am not what I claim to be.

*Mallison* Conway and I noticed already in Buskar that you travelled with a fake passport, but we don't know who you really are.

*Brinklow* That you travelled incognito was all too obvious, Mr Barnard, but who are you then? Can you reveal it?

*Barnard* You must have heard of Chalmers Bryant?

*Mallison* The great Wall Street racketeer?

*Brinklow* One of the main rogues responsible for the crash a year ago?

*Barnard* Yes, and wanted all over the world. I thought I had got away in Buskar, but when they started firing I was not so sure any more.

*Conway* It was only the prospect of becoming all perforated by bullets that made you prefer coming with us.

*Barnard* It was neither very attractive to risk being received by handcuffs and the police for a welcome committee in British India. But I took a risk. I am used to taking risks, and this time I seem to have come off safely for a change.

*Mallison* So you are the world's greatest swindler.

*Barnard* That's what the headlines say. The press is not always right.

*Mallison* Do you mean to excuse yourself for having cheated people of a hundred million dollars, that just disappeared?

*Barnard* I am the last one to defend the capitalist system. I view the Wall Street crash a year ago as a natural disaster that no one could foresee and that no one could repair. Capitalism like all the consumption society is a chimaera, an artificial illusion, that no one can trust in the long run. There is no safety. The terrorism at Buskar is no sensationally unique phenomenon. Terrorism is everywhere and has always existed, whether it takes forms like the catholic inquisition, the thirty years war, the terror reign of the French revolution, the terror of the communists or whatever. It's always there, and there are no means for protection against it. All you can do is to protect yourself before it hits you. I managed that on Wall Street while the great majority blindly trusted there was no danger. I was blamed, because I got away. The media blew up my guilt to comprise everyone else's. My only possible means of defense against the witchhunt of the media was to seek shelter and change identity. By chance I have happened to find absolute security here, and there is not much that even an energetic fanatic like you, Mallison, can do about it. With your permission I intend to stay here.

*Brinklow* By a happy chance of luck you have found the perfect refuge, Mr Barnard. No one can search for you here, since no one knows where or that Shangri La exists. I have understood from Mr Conway that Shangri La isn't even marked on any of the 70 maps in the library. And that makes three of us. Neither am I in any hurry to get back to civilisation, since I find this local civilisation beyond space and time more civilised.

*Barnard* What is your secret, Miss Brinklow? I always wondered that.

*Brinklow* You must have heard of Shanghai Lily?

*Mallison* The notorious courtesan? The queen in the east among...

*Brinklow* Speak out what you intended. Was it fallen women, prostitutes or whores?

*Barnard* You don't mean...

*Brinklow* Even I sometimes had to abscond underground.

*Barnard* But then for a change yourself manifested as a Christian nun and nurse disguised by the Red Cross...

*Brinklow* You can't imagine what sisters I have in that assembly.

*Barnard* I am more impressed than astonished.

*Brinklow* You do comprehend my case in the right manner, Mr Barnard.

*Mallison* But whatever could you find to do here?

*Brinklow* Charity, of course. What else?

*Mallison* So it's only the two of us, Conway, who are established decent and honest people. But I feel rather lonely, since also you show a tendency to wish to join these – freebooters.

*Conway* Look at it this way, Mallison. We are stuck here for some time. Let's make the best of it. And let us at least not make it worse by trying to do something about what we can practically do nothing about.

*Barnard* That's what I call a pragmatic view.

*(All fall silent.)*

*Chang (after a while)* Since you all seem to have come so far on the way to some insight, what about some tea?

*Brinklow* A most excellent suggestion. *(Chang signals for some tea, which is brought in.)* Tea is good both for health and the teeth, in contrary to coffee, liquor and cigarettes.

*Barnard* That's what settled everything for me. Do you know that they actually grow tobacco here?

*Conway* You have come from the witches' cauldron direct to paradise, Mr Barnard. I understand your preference for staying on here.

*Barnard* That's not all. There is something else as well. I think I would like to call it magic. There is something mysterious about this place, and that mystery is constantly growing thicker.

*Conway* I experience the same sensation.

*Mallison* It depends on your getting more potty every day. You will end up going gaga like drivelling idiots in a madhouse.

*Brinklow* That is surely some exaggeration.

*Mallison* I know. I was rude. Pardon me. I am just pissed off. I am leaving. *(leaves)*

*Chang* How old is he?

*Conway* Twenty-four.

*Chang* He has a long way to go. You don't start maturing until 30.

*Brinklow* And you are not mature until 40. How old are you, Mr Chang? We guessed at everything between 49 and 149.

*Chang* Then your guess was right, for it is actually something in between.

*Brinklow* You are as discreet about your age as a lady.

*Chang* For that I have certainly not the same good reasons as you.

*Brinklow* Was that intended as a compliment?

*Chang* Ladies always have a prerogative in secrecy.

*Barnard* And especially such a lady.

*Brinklow* Another compliment, I presume?

*Barnard* You succeeded in keeping your secret longer than I. But what will you do here? Open business?

*Brinklow* And you of course would start off as a broker. Apart from joking, Mr Barnard, religion actually interests me, and there is some depth of it here worth investigating.

*Chang* That's sooner or later the conclusion of most people here in Shangri La.

*Barnard* Nature interests me most of all here, all this water coming down from the mountains without turning the whole valley into one big lake, what outlets the valley could have, how the climate can be both alpine, subtropical and almost tropical, and what other people have found their way here for good.

*Chang* You will find plenty of answers to your curiosity. Here are both Europeans, one or two Americans, Russians, Japanese, Chinese, Hindus, Nepalese, Burmese, Mongols and other Asians.

*Brinklow* Any Christians?

*Chang* All religions are represented.

*Barnard* I would like to start researching different project possibilities at once. No matter how excellent everything is, something can always be improved.

*Chang* Indeed, Mr Barnard.

*Barnard* Miss Brinklow, may I have the honour to escort you to the library to show you some interesting handmade maps of the valley pointing at interesting possibilities?

*Brinklow* How interesting, Mr Barnard!

*Barnard* But what did you really do in Buskar?

*Brinklow* The same thing as you – trying to get away from the world.

*Barnard* We both seem to have succeeded beyond all expectation. *(They go out.)*

*Conway* Like me they like it better here every day. It's only Mallison who hasn't been able to calm down.

*Chang* Give him time. And in his youth he does have time.

*Conway* That's when you are the most impatient. When you get old and gray and start to take it easy you forget that your time is beginning to run out.

*Chang* Not here in Shangri La.

*Conway* What do you mean?

*Chang* Mr Conway, I have some good news. The High Lama wants to see you already.

*Conway* Does *he* want to see *me*? Why?

*Chang* I regret the secrecy I have been obliged to observe about much about Shangri La, which I myself found at least as annoying and painful as you. But now when the High Lama himself wants to see you, you will gradually come to understand the mysteries here. It has never happened before that the High Lama so soon wished to see a newcomer here. I must confess that I myself earnestly pleaded for the matter, which could have had some influence on the High Lama's decision.

*Conway* When may I see him?

*Chang* Now at once, if it suits you?

*Conway (rises)* It suits me perfectly.

*Chang* Then please to follow me. *(They go out.)*

### Act III scene 1.

An obscure room with dimmed light.

*Chang* I leave you here, since the High Lama wants to see you alone.

*Conway* I understand. *(Chang leaves.)*

*High Lama (in the background)* Come closer, my son. Don't be afraid.

*Conway* You appear unusually plain and simple to be a High Lama.

*High Lama* That's intentional. What did you expect?

*Conway* Something almost – majestic.

*High Lama* I am sorry if I disappointed you.

*Conway* Not at all. On the contrary.

*High Lama* Of course you shall learn everything that you don't know. But all true stories have their preface and introduction. Let's abide by the usual ceremony. Some tea, please.

*(A servant immediately turns up from nowhere without a sound and serve them with some tea.)*

Let's see what you may think about my special tea, Conway.

*Conway (tasting)* This is an entirely new taste to me.

*High Lama* I should have thought so. It's neither the beneficial Chinese green tea nor the sometimes intoxicating tea of Darjeeling or Kashmir but a Tibetan unique mutation which we cultivate here in the valley. As you notice it is neither related with the Tibetan butter tea but is absolutely clear and needs no addition.

*Conway* It feels unusually beneficial and invigorating.

*High Lama* Doesn't it? It's one of those special Tibetan herbs which you'll only find on extreme altitudes as close to the sun as possible. If I had known its benefactory qualities from the start, many medicinal mistakes could have been avoided.

*Conway* Of course I am very curious about your story and that of the valley. The culture here is neither specifically Tibetan, Buddhist or Christian but more like comprising all three of them.

*High Lama* Your astute observation pleases me. I'll gladly tell you something of what I know.

Perhaps you know something about the antique Nestorian church?

*Conway* Its Christian communities in Asia are known to sometimes have been older than both the Orthodox and the Catholic church. The priest king John, who was eagerly searched for in the 16th century in Africa and India is rumoured to have had his community in the Manasarovar area around the holy mountain of Kailash.

*High Lama* Close enough to the truth, Conway. It was on the search of lost Nestorian communities between Peking and Moscow that jesuits were sent around the year 1700, especially four of them, and one of them actually reached here alive all the way from Peking. His name was Perrault and was dying when he found this holy mountain and its valley in its shadow. Some local nomads could save his life, and he recovered here in the monastery, which at that time was derelict. It was the last remaining resort of the large community in Tibet of the priest king John's, which had stretched from Afghanistan to China. But the local tradition here even claimed that Shangri La was the heart of the lost empire of Shamballah at the foot of the real mount Meru, dear Conway.

*Conway* Shamballah, the ideal realm, the Avalon and Elysium of Buddhism, where only righteousness and justice could exist in eternal harmony...

*High Lama* Something like that father Perrault found as he came here two hundred years ago 59 years old. After his recovery he immediately set out to repair and

restore the monastery to its ancient glory, enlarge it and commence his jesuitic mission. He was then taken aback by the fact that the local Tibetan community gladly accepted his lecturing. There was no problem for them to be good to one's neighbour. This liberal attitude without any reservations impressed on father Perrault, who became seriously interested in buddhism and started learning Tibetan and to study the scriptures here. He was amazed of what he found. There were buddhist 1600-year old writings and authentic accounts of the travels of Jesus in India, how he studied the Pali language and buddhism in Sarnath and even visited Kashmir. Perrault here found a palpable and intimate connection between buddhism and christianity which he based further research on.

*Conway* That's why you find this universal tolerance everywhere in Shangri La.

*High Lama* It's just natural universal kindness inherent in everyone here, which in its organic naturalness overwhelmed father Perrault and overcame him, but he was not the only one. There were other wayward travellers as well losing their way into here, and one of them was an Austrian who had got lost by the Napoleonic wars. He also was on the threshold of death when we found him, and he also went through a miraculous recovery in Shangri La. He started the collection of all those treasures of arts and books which you have been able to benefit from. We dispatched regular expeditions to continuously update our book collections, and thus we have been able to keep regularly updated. Also other strangers came stumbling into the valley from nowhere, and one of them was the renowned veterinary William Moorcroft, who introduced the exclusive horse breeding of the valley. If you are interested in the riding sport you will find no horses in the world more beautiful and enduring than here.

*Conway* I believe you. But all this must have cost enormous fortunes. Barnard the American has found that the valley is rich in natural assets and perhaps also in more precious metals.

*High Lama* Yes, that is the problem. We have gold here, by which we can pay for the import of anything. But to safeguard the unique quality and intact virginity of the valley and protect it against visitors of less idealistic motives, we were obliged to introduce a restriction.

*Conway* That no one is allowed to leave the valley?

*High Lama* It's a necessity. If its secret isn't preserved it's no secret, and it becomes worthless. It's so unique so that it must not get lost.

*Conway* I agree. But what about the transports here? They must either come from Peking or India if not both.

*High Lama* The caravans arriving here must not approach any further than about where you landed. They have to unload their yaks over there while we ourselves then carry on the transport down here.

*Conway* Very practical and well thought out. But the outside world and its hard civilisation must break through even here one day. You can't protect yourselves against it forever.

*High Lama* That's exactly what the Dalai Lama says about his entire Tibet. But Shangri La is different. It's not on the map. It is surrounded by unsurmountable mountains. No one comes here willingly on his own, and no one leaves here willingly. And it is not about self protection but entertaining and carrying on an ancient tradition.

*Conway* And for that purpose you kidnapped four poor lost westerners from the chaos of Buskar, of which one is a nervous pusher, another one of the world's greatest swindlers and a third a leading courtesan on her way down.

*High Lama* You were the bait, Conway, but it wasn't I who chose you. It was Talu, the pilot. It was all his plan. We hadn't had a visitor here for thirty years, but Talu offered to bring in a few with the means of modern methods of modern times. Unfortunately he perished on the mission. He was an invaluable member of our community by his youth and intrepidity. But your three friends are neither to be despised. I always wished for an American to come here, and at last it came to be. He is amusing, I heard.

*Conway* Yes, he is easy to get along with.

*High Lama* And your lady has some interesting experience and is not exactly thin-skinned. She could be a considerable resource.

*Conway* I believe that too.

*High Lama* Which leaves us with your young and wild vice consul. Not all that arrived here managed to take root. One or other always remained out of place and went away. But it is not recommendable. The chances are small to be able to stand up to the environment out there after a longer stay down here. The shock of the climate change is too hard, and there is no sluice between Shangri La and the world. It's the total contrast – here paradise, ideal and peace with a good health warrant, and out there only wild darkness, inhuman moonscape, eternal hostile winter and total chaos. I tried to send some messengers to the holy father in Rome in the beginning, but they never made it. Extremely seldom also my messengers to my holy brothers in Peking made the way.

*Conway* So you are still alive after two hundred and fifty years, father Perrault.

*High Lama* Did it take that long for you to find out who I was?

*Conway* I had a slight suspicion at once, but everything you have told me confirmed it.

*High Lama* I think it's time for another round of tea. As you see my condition isn't without limits any more, and nothing is more tiresome to me than company, probably because nothing gives me greater pleasure. Another round of tea, please.

*(The silent noiseless seroant appears again bringing in another set of tea.)*

My friend Conway, I am so glad to have met you, for I know that I haven't got much more time. No matter how old we grow we must still die in the end, and aging before that cannot be avoided.

*Conway* What kept you alive so long?

*High Lama* The constant intellectual expansion. One interest always gave the other. Once I had mastered Tibetan, no other language offered any difficulty. A jesuit

brother once told me, that only the first seven foreign languages are hard to learn. After that every new language only becomes easier. I learned ten and could have learned twenty if I wished, but music, philosophy and religious writings made me go deeper into them. We have a qualified musical salon here since one of our brothers was a pupil of Chopin's.

*Conway* I heard him play some amazingly unknown pieces by Chopin. That's what really started me wondering. But the intellectual interest only could not be the whole secret.

*High Lama* The Buddha became more than eighty himself, and they say Jesus died at 120 in Kashmir. A wise life is a long life. We neither exaggerate nor deny ourselves anything. The golden mean seems to be the best way after all. Then of course we have the beneficial tea, which I apply very regularly.

*Conway* Is it narcotic?

*High Lama* What means of enjoyment is not narcotic? And you must admit that tea is one of the most moderate.

*Conway* So the four of us are stuck here for life.

*High Lama* I prefer expressing the situation by your wonderful idiomatic expression "for good". And I don't believe that you will ever have any reason to regret it. Imagine what possibilities you have here. You can pursue your studies throughout your life without being disturbed by the follies of the political world. You can devote your life to music and literature without interruptions. All the best of the world is here, and you can ignore and forget all the worst. The world order as always is on the way down to its total dissolution and perdition, and only in live university oases like this you can forget its terrors, violations and historical derailments. At the same time it gives us some responsibility. If the world really is perishing as it desperately and constantly tries to, an intact paradise like this is the only possibility of carrying on the eternal tradition of culture. The meaning of a monastery is to conserve and preserve what the world is devoted to destroy.

*Conway* Now I am so absorbed by your revelations that I must try to collect myself in between. I am sure you must be quite exhausted yourself as well.

*High Lama* It has been a great pleasure speaking with you. I hope we may continue.

*Conway* I hope so too.

*High Lama* One last request before you leave: please don't reveal our secrets to your friends. It's better psychologically if they find out things by themselves.

*Conway* I understand. (*rises and kneels, bending his head deep to the High Lama*) Thanks for your confidence, father Perrault.

*High Lama* We must all invest in the future to ensure ourselves of our participation in the eternal continuity.

*(Conway rises and leaves. The High Lama continues having his tea.)*

Scene 2. At breakfast.

*Mallison* He was long yesterday at the High Lama's.  
*Brinklow* Without doubt they must have had much to discuss.  
*Barnard* Maybe they found each other and took a glass or two.  
*Brinklow* You always have to vulgarise everything, Mr Barnard.  
*Barnard* It's the American way of seeing everything from a practical perspective.  
*Brinklow* You are incorrigible.  
*Barnard* Aren't we all, when it comes to it. (*Conway arrives.*)  
*Mallison* Well, what did he say about the porters? When can we leave?  
*Brinklow* Did you present my mission plans to him?  
*Barnard* Judging from your long session, you must have played a card or two.  
Who won?  
*Conway* I am sorry, but I must make you all disappointed.  
*Mallison* No porters, Conway? You surprise me. Of course you didn't even discuss the matter. You are getting more and more like the other dreamers here.  
*Conway* The question didn't come up.  
*Brinklow* And my mission?  
*Conway* Nothing can stop it, Miss Brinklow. You will find everyone easy to cooperate with, and there are only open doors to break in.  
*Barnard* In brief, we are well off here and can't get it better.  
*Mallison* You are all lost and duped by the deceivers here. I don't like it at all. And where is that Conway who so heroically managed the evacuation of Buskar? Has he completely decayed into a gullible and naive dotard?  
*Conway* We are facing a completely different situation here, Mallison.  
*Mallison* The difference is, that there our lives were in danger. Here our souls are in danger, but you all seem to lose them gladly in the general flummery.  
*Brinklow* On the contrary. The only way not to lose your soul is to devote yourself to others. Your soul you can only lose by egoism and loneliness.  
*Barnard* I don't bother about the soul as long as I am happy with life, which I am here.  
*Brinklow* And your soul, Mr Conway? Might you have found it here?  
*Conway* I believe I am on my way of finding it here.  
*Mallison* You are bewitched and not even aware of it. You are lost, Conway. You are brainwashed by these holy idiots who think they are something because they are potty. I deplore you, Conway. I thought better of you.  
*Conway* How can you judge and condemn the High Lama without even knowing him?  
*Mallison* What does he represent? A shady philosophy which you call wisdom. A wise unworldliness in contrast to all what we are concerned about, social and political responsibility, dutifulness to our families, progress and success and that economical safety which comes with it, stability and security. And all this you are willing to sacrifice for the weird uncertainty of the High Lama's airiness.

*Conway* We are different, Mallison. You have your sweetheart back home in England and your parents, to whom you feel obliged with some responsibility, and that's very honourable and decent of you indeed. I have no family obligations and no sexual interest. I am what you might call asexual: all eventual love life is to me disinteresting as I prioritize knowledge, wisdom and esthetic enjoyment. Perhaps you can't understand this, but I understand your point of view and respect it. Never forget that.

*Mallison* If you do, you will leave this place and its morbid mysteries and follow me back to reality.

*Conway* We haven't yet got means for that. You must be enough of a realist to understand that there are certain practical difficulties involved in the enterprise of returning to what you call reality. These practical difficulties you must consider.

*Mallison* Sorry. I am young and impatient. I thought you had capitulated completely to the seductive pipedreams of Shangri La.

*Conway* I must consider all and even myself. That you are impatient to return to civilisation is a matter of your own, but you have no right to demand of me that I should share that impatience. If I together with Miss Brinklow and Mr Barnard have my own interests here in Shangri La, you must show that some consideration and not demand of me to share your impetuosity.

*Mallison* Sorry. I just don't understand what you find here in Shangri La to be so absorbed by. What stimulation is there except to get bored to death?

*Brinklow* The paradise of possibilities. A hope for humanity. The ideal human way of life.

*Barnard* A possibility for even the most hopeless cases to have a fresh start in a new and better life.

*Mallison* That's all what I call delusions and self-deceit. I beg your pardon, and you must excuse me, but I can't share your naivety. (*leaves*)

*Brinklow* The doubting Thomas.

*Conway* Even he has his role to play in reality.

*Barnard* I can't find him as anything else than a stupid sourpot. He is not only self-destructive but downright destructive also to others in his self-destructiveness.

*Conway* Still we can't ignore him and his arguments. He is part of reality, and we can't disregard it.

*Barnard* He is your problem, Conway. He was your vice consul. I renounce myself of his case and wash my hands of it.

*Brinklow* I share your view, Mr Barnard. Young Mallison does not realize his own good. We leave the entire problem to you, consul Conway. (*leaves with Barnard.*)

*Conway* And unfortunately the problem is insolvable as long as Mallison can't resolve it himself, which he probably never will be able to.

Scene 3.

*Chang* But, Your Holiness, isn't it extremely out of the ordinary to allow such a fresh newcomer to your presence again after only his first initiation?

*High Lama* Yes, it is, Chang, by all means, and therefore the more noteworthy and important from your side to respect.

*Chang* But what does it mean?

*High Lama* We will see, Chang. I just feel that it has to be.

*Chang* I hear and obey.

*High Lama* You are the closest and most faithful servant of me and the valley, Chang. Never forget that.

*Chang* No risk, Your Holiness.

*(goes out, telling Conway)* His Holiness is ready to see you now.

*Conway (outside)* Why this great and sudden honour conferred on me so soon after only my first visit?

*Chang* We all wonder about that, but no one asks any questions.

*High Lama* Come in, Conway, and don't be shy or afraid.

*Conway (entering)* I am just bewildered.

*High Lama* And you have every reason to be.

*Conway* It's almost like I have to suspect some special intention behind this overwhelming intimacy.

*High Lama* Your guess is right, Conway, and I have to apologize for my boldness of decision to bring you directly from the beginner's class to the highest initiation. I admit it's against all rules and all practice, but it's a matter of responsibility. During my too many years especially here in Shangri La I made the acquaintance of the most various personalities of extremely different kinds, but I never found anyone I could give my complete confidence until you entered Shangri La. By all means, don't feel flattered – no compliments are intended, but according to my habit I stick firmly to the objective truth. You alone have the qualifications I always looked for among my many novices – afterthought, carefulness, total self control, sensitivity almost like a woman, psychological insight and a clear mind to logics and the obvious, which most people are blind to. Only such a man I could ever consider initiating in the highest wisdom and responsibility, and you are actually the first man of that kind that I ever met. Therefore I have decided to initiate and invest you with the highest responsibility.

*Conway* I don't know whether I shall feel flattered or embarrassed or maybe both.

*High Lama* I understand you completely, and you have the right to feel both. But I have no choice. You see, it's becoming more certain every day that my time is running out.

*Conway (alarmed)* Whatever you do, don't strain yourself.

*High Lama* I do what must be done. You know, meditation is almost the dominating element in ours and the lives of all buddhists. I meditate almost all of the

time, and my meditations are generally of the clairvoyant kind. I can see and feel the whole world by the spectrum of my spirit and thereby discern only its spiritual values and deserts. Thereby I experience and live empathically in all the constructive activities of the world. With my sheer will I can telepathically manipulate and activate such intrinsic and unfathomable forces that stage those avalanches that decide the development and course of history, but thereby also my responsibility becomes tremendous. Now that I feel that I must leave this my temporary contact with reality in the form of this frail body, it's my absolute responsibility that I don't bring with me this quality or secret across the threshold of death but leave it behind me to someone who could take it on. Do you see what I mean?

*Conway* I am trying to understand.

*High Lama* Only understanding is not enough, and just trying to understand it even less. You can't understand this responsibility unless you feel it yourself in your whole being and not just in your heart. You have to be completely filled with this responsibility in order to understand it. Maybe I have been mistaken about you, and maybe you can't understand what I feel, but still I must try to make you understand, for there is no one else, and I don't want to pass away in possession of such an extreme loneliness.

*Conway* What do you want me to do?

*High Lama* Take over when I am gone. Shoulder the responsibility of Shangri La and its administration of the world's collected cultural heritage in its highest concentration and refinement. Together with my Austrian brother of destiny Henschell we succeeded during the 19th century to establish a network of contacts all over the world with continuous information of everything that goes on within its history and culture, which is being maintained still today, with which I have been able to uphold the strings of the world's destiny. Anyone but you would consider me a megalomaniac with such pretensions, but a long life brings a constantly broader perspective and deeper knowledge and insight. And I dare believe that you see what I mean.

*Conway* I try to, but I must confess I still have a long way to go.

*High Lama* Carry on with your effort, then, and you will ultimately reach in the end. You will succeed in time. This position which I wanted to give you for an inheritance does not involve much work but the more effort, no physical or practical duties but the more demanding psychic exertions, no social duties or public performances but the more intensive mind work. Shangri La is made like a centre and an ideal environment for the telepathic mind force of a world conscience. I believe you could only develop such specific tantric talents here, primarily because the mundane world cannot reach up here. We are too refined in our spirit to be able to be corrupted by the lower faculties of man.

*Conway* What was it in me that opened your eyes to my possible suitability?

*High Lama* Your sexual indifference or asexuality. I know that you had very much to do with our cembalo player Lo-Tsen, the princess of beauty in Shangri La, but you never felt any sexual interest in her, although she is so young and beautiful. Chang

noticed this, and it made an impression on me, and I told Chang: "That could possibly be our man, if he gives priority to the intellectual and esthetical pleasures to the physical."

*Conway* That's regrettably what I always did.

*High Lama* I knew it. You are born with such characteristics. You can't educate or cultivate them, but they are inherent in the soul from the beginning indicating that you are an old soul and perhaps a *bodhisattva*, who although he stands above the entrapments and temptations of worldly life continues to reincarnate out of pity and compassion with humanity.

*Conway* Father Perrault, you are tiring yourself out.

*High Lama* On the contrary, I acquire greater life force and renew it by sharing myself with you. The ego is always a dead end. The only way forward in life towards development and expansion lies in sharing yourself with others and give them more time than yourself.

Let it be enough for this time, Conway. Now you know where I stand and where I wish for you to stand. My only actual wish is really that you will not fail us and the responsibility here in Shangri La for the whole world. In principle, all that have any life at all share the responsibility for all living things like for their own. Responsibility, solidarity and tolerance – there you have our three basic pillars of existence.

*Conway* I thank you, father, for your lecture.

*High Lama* And I thank you, Conway, for existing.

*(Like last time, Conway kneels and bends his neck, whereupon this time the High Lama places his hand on his head.)*

Go in peace, my son.

*(Conway rises and leaves, and the High Lama sinks back.)*

#### Act IV scene 1.

*Mallison* But dear little Lo-Tsen, how could you stand living here with only antiquated fogeys of dirty old men? Did you never long to get away from here? How did you get here in the first place?

*Lo-Tsen* I not remember quite clear, but very long ago. I was only child but travel on way to bridegroom in Baltistan from Peking, but journey long and difficult, and we had surprising great snowstorms. Many yaks die, and many porters die. Some Tibetans save us and bring us here. Or else all had perished.

*Mallison* So you were more or less abducted by these greedy Tibetans, who only want to acquire and not let anything go! That's sheer bride-snatching and kidnapping, just like in our case! Then a whole expedition including yaks was kidnapped, but now they hijack airplanes.

*Lo-Tsen* I not quite understand.

*Mallison* You are a victim to these thieves abducting people, just like us! They steal people and seduce them with drugs and then expect them to remain here

complacently forever, like they succeeded with the American swindler and the sanctimonious keeper of brothels! If only Conway could grasp their cunning and deceit! But he seems as enchanted as Chalmers Bryant and that hag Brinklow. Join us in our escape, Lo-Tsen! You have an entire world to conquer outside! Here you will only rot in the company of dry old mummies. They stole you from your wedding! You can have your wedding back!

*Lo-Tsen* With whom, Mallison? You or Conway?

*Mallison* Both, if you wish! Tibetan ladies often marry many men! Just come away with us!

*Lo-Tsen* I like think first of the matter.

*Mallison* There is nothing to think of. The porters arrived here two weeks early, they are willing to take us back to civilisation, they will start in a few days, and we have no time for thought but must make up our minds now! Are you coming?

*Lo-Tsen* If you want me.

*Mallison (embracing her)* Of course I want you, dear little lady! I am in love with you and love you more than anything in the world! But we must act carefully and not give anyone any reason for suspicion. No one must stop us, not even Conway. Here he comes now.

*Conway* What are you two doing here up so late at night?

*Mallison* We are engaged and will escape. Are you coming with us?

*Conway (looking from one to the other)* Have you gone mad?

*Mallison* You are mad if you stay.

*Conway* Are you serious?

*Mallison* Of course. How can you hesitate?

*Conway* You can't take her with you.

*Mallison* Why not?

*Conway* Mallison, for God's sake, what's this sudden lunacy? You can't just leave Shangri La like that. It's more than a hundred miles to civilization across the world's most perilous mountain wilderness with only impossible rocky mountains, snows and snowstorms. You can't do that without preparation and an expedition.

*Mallison* But everything is prepared, and the expedition is ready. The porters have arrived. The caravan reached here yesterday with books, equipment and supplies. They are waiting just on the other side of the pass. They will leave again in two days. We have no time to lose.

*Conway* And they are willing to take responsibility for you and Lo-Tsen on such a hazardous venture?

*Mallison* They have already been paid for it and just wait for us to join them. They will only wait until the day after tomorrow. Everything is fixed, Conway. We are saved!

*Conway* Saved from what and to what? Saved from paradise to hell? Do you want to cast me back down into that condemnable witches' cauldron of the vanity of mundane ambitions and futility?

*Mallison* But that's life, Conway! Your life is there, and not here, where you are nothing but a dead man.

*Conway* Here I thought I at last had found something to live for. The world that the Great War gave me was worthless in its revolting ugliness and evil.

*Mallison* You are bewitched. Wake up, Conway!

*Lo-Tsen* I go to get some clothes. (*leaves*)

*Conway* In any case, you can't take her with you.

*Mallison* Who can stop me?

*Conway* You must consider her situation! She is too old! She came here almost fifty years ago! Only the climate and wholesomeness of Shangri La has made it possible for her to remain young. Out there she would at once wither and become as wrinkled and harrowed as any old Tibetan!

*Mallison* What childish myths have they put into your head? Anyone can see that she is at most nineteen years!

*Conway* It's the secret of Shangri La. Everyone grows extraordinarily old here and do not start aging until after a hundred, and then they start ageing but only very slowly.

*Mallison* Is that the kind of stupid nonsense that the High Lama has brainwashed you with to have a catch on you? And you allowed yourself to get fooled by such inane tricks and believed their lies?

*Conway* The High Lama is an old jesuit who arrived here two hundred years ago and was then old enough already.

*Mallison* And I am archbishop Becket who was never murdered in Canterbury but is still going strong. What kind of a madhouse is it we have ended up in really? It's not enough that they shanghai innocent people to recruit for their racket, but they even believe themselves in their established science fiction lies! Indeed, this entire monastery should be bombed out with all its evil and stinking superstition.

*Conway* Mallison, you don't know what you are talking about.

*Mallison* And you can't see what deceit you have been trapped in!

*Conway* Mallison, if you bring Lo-Tsen out of this valley it could mean immediate death to her!

*Mallison* I am prepared to take that risk, since that's what she wants herself.

*Conway* Did you really ask her?

*Mallison* Yes, and she said yes.

*Conway* Then she doesn't know herself what risk she is taking.

*Mallison* Conway, I would rather risk my life, yes, I would rather sacrifice it than lose my soul to this humbug realm of lies.

*Conway* Then you must do it yourself on your own responsibility. I can't follow you.

*Mallison* You must!

*Conway* I have new duties and responsibilities here which mean more to me than all the riches in the world.

*Mallison* I can't make the road up to the pass alone. At least help us to reach the caravan.

*Conway* On one condition: that you both follow me back here if the caravan isn't there.

*Mallison* Yes, that's reasonable. But the caravan is there. I know it. Everything is fixed.

*Conway* I really hope so for your own sake, Mallison.

*Mallison* As soon as you get out of this humbug set-up of illusions you will decide to join us all the way back. I am sure of it. All you need is a moment to sober up, and you will become yourself again.

*Conway* I seriously wonder if it's you or me who is transported out of reality and who can't see it. Reality will show us who is right.

*Mallison* We have no time to lose! Come! (*drags Conway out with him.*)

## Scene 2.

*Chang* Your Holiness, I have searched all over the monastery. They are nowhere.

*High Lama* I fear a disaster. The young man never tried to understand our mysteries. Instead he interpreted them in his own way and refused to believe anything more than what he actually saw. In his impulsive youth he fell in love with Lo-Tsen, who naturally was flattered and allowed herself to be seduced. When the porters arrived so early the young man saw his chance and took it and made Lo-Tsen and Conway follow him.

*Chang* But why would Conway with his advanced maturity deign to follow him out of here?

*High Lama* Probably out of his sense of responsibility for the young man. Perhaps he only intended to follow them safely to the caravan. But Lo-Tsen can not make one single night out there. She will instantly wither and treat her lover with a shock that he in his immature sensitivity never will be able to endure.

*Chang* And Conway?

*High Lama* He if anyone will make it. And then perhaps he might find his way back, if the disaster isn't too difficult. We will always be here, Chang, and he can always come back, which he is well aware of. Now I am tired, Chang. Let me sleep.

*Chang* Yes, Your Holiness. (*retires*)

*High Lama* (*sighing deeply and leaning back with his face covered in his hands*)  
Was the shock of the responsibility too heavy for you, Conway, so that you immediately had to risk everything just to take on a double responsibility?

## Scene 3. At the pass. Snowstorm and nightmare surroundings.

*Mallison* Phew! Coming up here was doubly difficult as to go down when we came.

*Conway* But we made it and are almost there.

Lo-Tsen I can't go any further. I have to rest.

Mallison Lo-Tsen must rest, Conway.

Conway We can't rest now. If you want to follow the caravan, we can't let it wait.

Lo-Tsen Only little rest. Only little sleep.

Conway I must carry her then. Or do you want to carry her yourself?

Mallison I can't make it. If you still can it's all right.

Conway If only the wind would cease blowing! This wind is full of ice spikes that feel like tearing the face to shreds.

Mallison I am sorry, Conway. I shouldn't have insisted on asking you to follow us.

Conway I was the one who insisted. Or else you would never have reached the pass. We are across it now. It's only a few kilometers down to the caravan.

Mallison You are a hero standing up for us.

Conway That's the least thing I can do.

*(Conway lifts up Lo-Tsen and carries her across his shoulder with her face back.)*

If you are ready we can go.

Mallison I am with you, Conway, if you lead the way.

Conway I think the worst is over now.

*(They continue. Suddenly Mallison cries out.)*

Conway *(turning around)* What's the matter, Mallison?

Mallison Conway, her face! There is something wrong with Lo-Tsen!

Conway What's the matter with her?

Mallison Some illness. We must examine her!

*(They lay down Lo-Tsen carefully and examine her.)*

Conway You are right, Mallison. It's even worse than I ever could imagine.

Mallison *(desperate)* What have they done to her? What has Shangri La done to her?

Conway Nothing, Mallison. She has only grown old. Seventy years in one day. She couldn't take the climate change. That's all. She is dead.

Mallison *(cries out hysterically, runs mad and escape out of his senses.)*

Conway Mallison! Mallison! *(tries to pursue him. A deafening roar and terrific crash is heard.)* Mallison! The avalanche!

*(Everything goes dark, the annihilating crash of the avalanche deafens everything else and gradually dies out while nothing is left of the scene except the howling wind and whirling snow of the mountain storm... )*

Act V scene 1. A basic hospital tent.

Doctor I have taken in many patients but never received anyone in such a condition. How on earth did they manage to bring him here alive?

Nurse Tibetans know how to get through alive under any impossible circumstances.

Doctor But this is no Tibetan.

Nurse No, but only Tibetans could save him.

*Doctor* There is not much left of him. I don't think he can ever be restored to an ordinary human being.

*Nurse* But he is alive. That's the most important.

*Doctor* What is life worth when you have lost your soul? (*Enter another nurse.*)  
What is it?

*Nurse 2* Doctor and sister, the patient has awakened.

*Doctor (rising)* Well, at last! (*goes with the nurses to a curtain, which is withdrawn, where another nurse sits by a bed with Conway as patient.*)

How are you, Monsieur? Can you hear me? Can you see me?

*Conway (regards them confusedly from one to another)* Where am I? Who am I?

*Nurse 3 (happy)* He speaks French!

*Doctor* You are in Chung-King. You were brought here by a Tibetan caravan. They digged you out of an avalanche and saved your life. Don't you know who you are?

*Conway* I have forgotten who I was.

*Nurse* But you are alive and conscious, which is the first and most important step back to life. But you are very weak. You must rest, eat and take it easy and have plenty of sleep. Do you understand?

*Conway* I understand nothing. But I understand what you say.

*Doctor (to the nurses)* He has probably had a long and difficult concussion. It's a miracle that he is alive.

*Conway* What are you saying?

*Doctor* I am saying, that it is a miracle that you are alive.

*Conway* Yes, I should be dead. Why am I not dead?

*Nurse 1* Because you are alive. You have to accept it.

*Conway* That's asking for the impossible.

*Nurse 2* We shall help you to get back your memory.

*Conway* Thank you, sister. I don't deserve your kindness. (*shuts his eyes*)

*Doctor* Let him sleep. (*draws the curtain*)

An interesting case. He could be some well known person. Let's do some research and find out if any Englishman has been lost in Tibet the last half year.

*Nurse 1* It could be Hugh Conway, the former British consul of Buskar, who lead the evacuation from there and was lost in the airplane of the Maharaja of Kashmir into Tibet with three others.

*Doctor* Could it really be him? In that case you have saved us much work, sister. Now for the other patients. (*They leave.*)

## Scene 2. On board a ship at sea.

*Rutherford* What a jolly good luck that I ran into you at that French frontier hospital! Or else we might never have got you on your feet again. And what luck that I recognized you!

*Conway* I still have no clear memory of you in the past, Rutherford, even if I believe you when you tell me we were at school together. The remarkable thing is that all the languages that I must have studied once are all there, and I must have been to India since I know Hindi.

*Rutherford* You knew all the civilized languages: English, French, Latin, Greek and Chinese and Hindi on top of that and God knows what other languages. You gave a brilliant lecture once in Greek for a degree.

*Conway* Yes, I suppose I did, since I also know Greek. But what did I do in India?

*Rutherford* You were in the foreign office and consul at Buskar, if I don't remember wrong.

*Conway* Where is Buskar?

*Rutherford* One of those wild capitals in one of those impossible disorderly countries somewhere beyond nowhere... The war hit you hard, Conway. Many thought you had been damaged for life by the war since you were blown away by a bomb on some occasion, or was it a grenade shock?

*Conway* How should I know?

*Rutherford* In time we will get you completely fit and kicking again, and then your memory will suddenly turn up one day from nowhere as suddenly as it was lost. All you need is a key for the lock... (*You hear from an adjacent lounge music by Chopin being played.*)

*Conway* Who is playing?

*Rutherford* It must be that dashing pianist from Russia, Giesecking or whatever his name was.

*Conway* He is playing Chopin.

*Rutherford* Yes, that's what it is. At least you recognize him. Are you still playing yourself? You used to be one of the best amateur pianists...

*Conway* I must be completely out of practice. A piano repertoire demands daily exercise. One day without practice, and you lost one day of your life and are immediately under the level and start rusting... But he plays wrong. He plays that study in the usual amateur way.

*Rutherford* Do you know better how to play it?

*Conway* Actually I do, Rutherford. I had the great honour of being tutored by a student of Chopin himself... He had several pieces on his repertoire which never even had been published. His name was Biac, Alphonse Biac...

*Rutherford* Whatever are you drivelling about, Conway?

*Conway* It's no drivel, Rutherford. It's the memory that suddenly returned... I suddenly remember everything quite clearly... Lo-Tsen.

*Rutherford* What's that?

*Conway* A Manchu princess who was Biac's pupil – indescribably beautiful – until the disaster... (*covers his face in his hands*)

*Rutherford* My good man, you must have something of a story to tell.

*Conway* I do, Rutherford, I do, thanks to Chopin, the greatest composer who ever lived, but the High Lama and Chang preferred Mozart, while Lo-Tsen loved

Scarlatti... What a splendid and wonderful language is music, Rutherford! But what am I doing here?

*Rutherford* We will soon reach Honolulu.

*Conway* You'll have to excuse me, Rutherford, but I must get off there. I must return to China at once. I have left a mission unfinished there.

*Rutherford* What sort of a mission could that be?

*Conway* They are waiting for me in Tibet.

*Rutherford* My dear Conway, you have to take one thing at a time.

*Conway* You shall have the whole story, Rutherford, before we part, but we have to part in Honolulu.

*Rutherford* But what about your career? The foreign office is expecting you.

*Conway* It may sound strange to you, Rutherford, but I actually have a higher responsibility to think of than my own career.

*Rutherford* I need an explanation.

*Conway* I'll take the whole story from the beginning. It started in that black hole Buskar in that godforsaken country. There was another revolution according to normal procedure, and there were eighty westerners in that city that had to be evacuated. The responsibility for the evacuation fell on me, only I could do it, but we managed to organize airplanes for all of us. For myself I found at my disposal a special airplane built for flying across Kashmir at extreme heights, which the Maharaja of Kashmir had had specially constructed for himself...

*Rutherford* That was the plane that was hijacked by some unknown kidnapper and went off to nowhere...

*Conway* Yes, we were four people on board. It was the American Barnard who travelled with faked papers, but we didn't care. It was that philanthropist Miss Brinklow, who made her reputation much earlier as that Shanghai Lily, a notorious and awesome courtesan. And it was young Mallison, poor Mallison, who knew nothing about life and whom I had to help out of everything, so that he could drag me down into his own perdition... But I remember it now, it's over now, and it is still not too late. The world can still be saved...

*Rutherford* Can you save the world? From what?

*Conway* Not I, Rutherford. Shangri La. The supremely educated spiritual forces that care about the world in Shangri La.

*Rutherford* And what on earth is Shangri La?

*Conway* That's where I have to return.

*Rutherford* Yes, yes, but first tell me your story.

*Conway* I won't be surprised if you don't believe me.

*Rutherford* Let's leave the question of credibility until later. Now I want to know what you know.

*Conway* Imagine that Chopin's most fundamental study could have such an enlightening effect.

*Rutherford* A student of Chopin's, you said?

*Conway* Yes. He owned a later version of the Chopin E flat major study extended by the composer himself. I could play it to you if you would allow me some practice first.

*Rutherford* Let's go in to the pianist and ask him if we may borrow his piano. If you know pieces by Chopin unknown to him he will turn green of envy.

*Conway* Alphonse Briac taught me a few. (*They leave.*)

*The End.*

*(Verona, 23-27.10.2002,  
translated December 2017)*