

MARTIAN: As long as it's somewhere you can function, fine.
I leave it up to you, the planet's yours, not mine.

HUGH MANN: I've ruled the Sahara out – just a shade too hot;
Antarctica's.. well... fresh – doesn't leave a lot.
Aha! I do remember (I read it in the press)
Something on the subject of a last wilderness
Set in a temperate zone, nothing too extreme.
Now where on earth was it? Surely I didn't dream...
No, no I have it. Dartmoor was the place.

MARTIAN: Show me on the globe.

HUGH MANN: There.

MARTIAN: In that case
Systems full ahead – twelve engine zoom.
Follow me then, please, down to the equipment room.

Out MARTIAN

HUGH MANN: This is a right pickle. There I was in the park
Taking my constitutional – it wasn't even dark –
I had the dog with me: loyal old Rover –

Who knows where I'll find him when all this is over!
If he's been at the ducks! or pestered Mrs Brynning!
Over did I say? Things are just beginning –
There I was suddenly with a buzzing in my ears:
Had I been mugged? or slugged? or drugged? Oh, idle fears.
Something far worse; an alien – would you credit –
Has 'beamed me up' to his spaceship. Impossible! You said it!
But here I am, as his slave, at his beck and call
To help our green friend here investigate us all.
I'd better chase after him, he's spent the last few days
Licking me into shape, by means of micro-rays.
Every time I object, or seem a little slow,
He'll toast me with a blast, and you watch me go!
Aaaaaaaaargh!

Out HUGH MANN in agony as a blast of micro rays hits him

SCENE: **a meadow beside woods**

Music

In JAY, planting acorns

In POLLEN and ROSIE, pursued by PATCH with a fork

PATCH: If ever you comes back, I'll tell ee what I'll do.
See this fork 'ere - I'll run ee both through!

Out PATCH

POLLEN: Ignorant peasant, aggressive little burk!
No need for him to go quite so berserk.

ROSIE: I'm not being disrespectful...

POLLEN: Come on, out with it.

ROSIE: Weren't you pushing things, though, just a weeny bit,
Telling the poor old man he couldn't plant his seeds
In his own back garden, in case they harm the weeds?

POLLEN: Rosie, I'm ashamed of you, and after all I've taught you.
Years of Youth Training Schemes, and look if I haven't caught
you
Referring to native herbs as weeds, if you please.

ROSIE: I'm sorry, Dr Pollen... I think I'm going to sneeze.

POLLEN: Hay fever, Rosie? This is rather sad.

ROSIE: Just a little allergy, nothing very bad,
Gets me now and then, whenever I can sniff
A preservation order.

POLLEN: What sort of whiff

Does that have, might I ask?

ROSIE: A sort of frozen smell

As though from ice-cream vans.

POLLEN: You can go to hell!

But where have we come to? Look at all those flowers.

Species-rich grassland, by the Official Powers!

Habernaria, Trifolium, and, over where that fence is,

Can it be? It is: Knautia arvensis.

ROSIE: That's not a plant is it? That over there.

POLLEN: Great sample plots! No! Hey! Don't you dare!

What on earth are you doing, you misbegotten creature,

Digging like that at an outstanding natural feature?

Stop it immediately, I order you; observe

The spirit of what will soon be a nature reserve.

In JAY

JAY: Screeeeeeeeeeech! What do you mean? I'm only planting oak.

Isn't that my nature?

I don't care if it's farmers, or stubborn-minded jays!
Grassland it is! and grassland it stays!

JAY: My mistress won't like it.

POLLEN: Your mistress? Who is she?
Are you a pet or something? Ah! Hang on! I see!
Not at all natural, but doing the behest
Of some human being. Well, I might have guessed.
No wild jay-bird would have had the cheek
To step on native grassland with an acorn in its beak.

JAY: Pet indeed! My mistress doesn't keep pets.
She lives in the trees with us.

POLLEN: Honestly! this gets
Crazier by the minute; lives in the green wood?!
Maid Marian is she? With a bird as Robin Hood!!
Ha! Ha! Ha! I like it. Robin-bird, d'you get it?

ROSIE: There's a robin over there. Sh! You might upset it.

POLLEN: You be quiet, Rosie. Treacherous little hussie!
This'll teach me, won't it. I should have been more fussy.
Flirted through the interview; you're a born deceiver -

No true botanist develops hay-fever!

So Jay, your mistress, this impudent dame

Who contests meadow grassland, tell me what's her name?

JAY: She's called the Green Woman.

POLLEN: You're pulling my leg!

This whole business stinks like an addled jay's egg.

JAY: When you've quite finished with the personal abuse –
Green Woman certainly.

POLLEN: This is some excuse

For raising up Rosie over my head!

A feminist plot that Rosie's out to spread!

ROSIE: Listen Dr Pollen, why the Green Man
And not the Green Woman?

POLLEN: So, it was your plan.

ROSIE: Listen, off in India, up in the Himalayas,
When big commercial firms ignored the village prayers
Not to fell their trees, who saved the day
By hugging every trunk? It was women I say.

Women have a special relationship with trees.

JAY: The spirit of the woods is female.

POLLEN: It agrees.....

But then it 'wood', 'woodn't' it, jumped up little crow!

Oh yes, it's a corvine; all rooks you know!

Uncle Jack's a thief, Auntie Maggie – well!

And old grandpa Raven, he's as black as hell.

Come on Rosie, quickly! I'm off to find a phone.

We'll let the NCC pick this particular bone.

JAY: I don't want any trouble, I'll go and plant elsewhere.

Conservationists? Huh! Sometimes I despair.

Out JAY

POLLEN: So that's dealt with him. What about some grub!

Half past twelve – time to head for the pub.

Out POLLEN and ROSIE

SCENE:

Moorland on the other side of the wood

In MARTIAN and HUGH MANN, both running to escape detection

MARTIAN: I thought you said this place was called a wilderness.
Then why so many people?

HUGH MANN: I'm puzzled, I confess.
The books all say it is.

MARTIAN: Books? Explain please.

HUGH MANN: Information packages made out of trees.

MARTIAN: Is that what trees are for?

HUGH MANN: Not exactly, no.
Without trees around, little else could grow
And that includes people. Trees cycle rain,
Enable earth to nourish grass and bean and grain.

MARTIAN: If trees are that important, why waste them making
The sort of information that leads to us mistaking
A well-peopled area for somewhere more remote?

HUGH MANN: 'This last great wilderness', I swear that's a quote.
I'm with you entirely, don't ask me the reason –
Let's just be thankful it's still got some trees on
Where you can stay in hiding, observe things discretely
And still, with luck, avoid detection completely.

Out MARTIAN and HUGH MANN

In CAIRNS and PEAT

PEAT: I'm sure I saw something, like a man, but green
With stalks sprouting out of it.

CAIRNS: Sounds quite obscene.
Where did you say it was?

PEAT: Going into the wood.
Let's follow after.

CAIRNS: I don't feel we should.

PEAT: Why not Dr.Cairns?

CAIRNS: Well, the fact is, Peat,
We happen to be tracing a very ancient leaf

Which veers the other way. I'll bet what you saw
Was just a chance pattern in the leaves, nothing more.
Marvellous, the view! Not a human trace.
The wilderness experience, my sort of place!

PEAT: But surely this leat was made by humans once?
That's a human trace.

CAIRNS: Of course it is, you dunce!
But not a recent one – so kindly please desist
From statements quite unworthy of an archaeologist.
Ancient humans fine, on a higher plane,
Modern humans rubbish: empty, shallow, vain –
Except of course the ones whom I educate
To value ancient monuments – before it's too late.

PEAT: What, you mean the farmers, faced with the threat of jail,
Who agree, instead of ploughing, to make a farm trail,
Letting tourists browse on the very site where sheep
In the good days of old throve on seeded keep?

CAIRNS: Students will have their jokes, but don't push your luck.
A word to the director and you could be for the chuck!

PEAT: Please, not the director! Reaves, monstrous man.

CAIRNS: You wouldn't recall Mills, I suppose.

PEAT: No.

CAIRNS: I can.

Makes Reaves look human. Tintin Mills, they called him.

A real man of mettle! – your sort appalled him.

Green Men! I tell you, he detested cranks.

One sniff of the Greens and he'd send in the tanks!

PEAT: What happened to him then?

CAIRNS: A sad story really –

He went soft on badgers.

PEAT: A crank himself, clearly.

CAIRNS: Fell down a mine-shaft and somehow got entwined

With badger goings-on – the rest slips my mind.

PEAT: Wasn't the Green Man ancient? A sort of Celtic spirit?

CAIRNS: If you saw a ghost, I'm not going near it!

In JAY, planting acorns

PEAT: Look, look, what's that?

CARINS: Oh! Hold me. I'm afraid.

PEAT: Ah.

CAIRNS: What?

PEAT: It's a jay.

CAIRNS: What, you mean you made
All that fuss for what was just a bird!
You slimy little toad.

PEAT: Oh, don't be absurd –
I made the fuss? You were the one screaming.

CAIRNS: Wait, what's it doing? No! I must be dreaming!
Great chamber tombs! It is! It's planting trees
Right over the course of the leat, if you please!

PEAT: What, you mean conifers? My eyesight must be weak.

CAIRNS: Can't you see, look there, an acorn in its beak?

PEAT: Oh yes, an acorn, but that's only oak.

CAIRNS: Listen Peat, I've warned you. You have had your joke.
One more squeak out of you that isn't quite in order
And you'll be back the wrong side of the National Park border,
Working in the office filing flint reports;
So just you civilise the tone of your retorts.
Here you! yes – what do you think you're doing?
It's illegal you realise, the hobby you're pursuing.

PEAT: Gone soft on badgers? Or gone hard on jays?!
Obviously in this job crankiness pays!

CAIRNS: Are you going to stop it, or must I twist your wing?!

JAY: Dicotyledons! you'll do no such thing.
This is my territory. Who on earth are you
To come and show me what I can or can't do?
I know, don't tell me: some ecologist
Out to kill nature in the cause of some list
Of ailing flower species you're determined to preserve
At all the rest's expense – my! you've got a nerve.
I've just been driven off by another of your clan

Down in the valley – a most unnatural man.

PEAT: Her! an ecologist?! Huh, there's nothing green
About Beryl Cairns. I know who you mean –
A stooping chap with glasses, has a strange walk:
Stretches out his legs as if he were a stork.

JAY: That's him exactly.

CAIRNS: Pollen's on the loose?!

PEAT: Ebenezer Pollen, Ph.D.

CAIRNS: The deuce!
This is very serious. He'll have this leat grown over
In a trice with some unheard of strain of giant clover,
Nature reserve which no one would have the faintest notion
Concealed an ancient monument under its green ocean!

JAY: So I'll continue planting, if you don't mind,
While you deal with Pollen; he's in the pub, you'll find.

CAIRNS: You can't plant here. Ancient monument,
About to be scheduled – that is my intent.
Besides, this is moorland, wilderness expanse –

Scrubbing up with trees would ruin its romance.

One more violation and it's the DOE:

They don't do things by halves – you wait and see.

PEAT: No, just by millions.

CAIRNS: What was that, Peat?

PEAT: Nothing, Dr.Cairns – I was measuring the leat.

JAY: I don't want any trouble. I won't try again.

And they say we need more trees! Someone, please explain.

Out JAY

PEAT: Not a happy Jay.

CAIRNS: Impertinent little fowl.

I'm glad it saw sense, though, and threw in the towel.

As for explanation, why waste words?

I'm hardly St Francis talking to the birds.

PEAT: Too right, you're not.

CAIRNS: What was that? Not what?

PEAT: Not anything, Dr.Cairns. The word you heard was... hot,
Referring to the .. uh.. food I had in mind to eat
If we went to the ..uh.. pub?

CAIRNS: Well, perhaps, for a treat –
Just to collar Pollen. Though frankly I prefer
Thermos flask and lunch box perched on a lonely spur.

Out PEAT and CAIRNS

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SCENE: **Inside the wood**

Music

In DEER

DEER: (1) Far in the mazes of Hound Tor woods
The oak and holly raise emerald hoods
Like Robin of old
Who stole Wealth's gold
To buy poor Poverty basic goods
And thwart the cold –
(2) The beech and the ash spread sparkling crowns

Where grey cliff rears and boulder frowns:
Under their shade
Through sun-dappled glade
We glide like the river where murmuring drowns
Our hooves' gallopade.

(3) We browse with the breeze

Wandering the trees,

Fade with the light

Out of sight,

Stray at dawn

On someone's lawn,

Come and go

Delicate as snow,

(1) We, the deer, that move like a fleer of wind on the
ponderous face of the lake,

(2) The deer, that deftly career and leave only delicate slots in
their wake,

(3) Over and through with a skipping and tripping and under
and round

(1) With a smattering pattering

(2) We cover the ground in an unheard thunder

(3) Of lightning-scattering dew.