

ANYMAN:

How His Landlord Gave Him Notice to Quit, and His Attempts and Failure to Obtain a Dwelling-place.
Set Out in the Manner of a Moral Play, Showing the Inevitable Outcome of the Housing Problem.
(Written and produced in Vancouver, December, 1920, during a great shortage of houses everywhere.)

(By Herbert Beeman.)

SCENE.

Exterior of Anyman's House, a very dilapidated dwelling.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

The Showman (Prologue)

Anyman	Bank Balance
Cousin	Good Luck
Pal	Ease
Landlord	Comfort
Agent	Undertaker
Booster	Gravedigger

The Moral (Epilogue)

SHOWMAN: Ladies and Gentlemen, assembled here,
I beg of you to lend a list'ning ear
To what, I promise, is a moving tale
Of one whose sighs and tears could naught avail
Against his Landlord—of that callous breed
That knows no feeling but its own base need—
Driven from home (ah! here slow music, please)
Poor Anyman must leave his slipper'd ease,
His chimney corner, where the flames roar'd
high,
And have no roof above him but the sky,
Finding his kindred and his friends that seem
Nought but the baseless fabric of a dream;
See his Bank Balance fade and pine away
Of a disease that Booster cannot stay;
And Ease and Comfort but fair-weather folk,
His hitherto Good Luck a worn-out joke,
Who though he would his master's fortunes
save,
Provides at last no shelter but the grave.

[Exit.]

[Enter Landlord and Agent.]

LANDLORD: You know one Anyman? Well, hasten you
And tell him to get out, and P. D. Q.

AGENT: He hasn't paid his rent?

LANDLORD: No, that's all right.

I've sold the house and he must quit tonight.

AGENT: But where's he going?

LANDLORD: Well, what's that to us?
Come, get you gone and make no further fuss.

[Exit Landlord.]

[Enter Anyman.]

ANYMAN: Ah! Mr. Agent, I must say, well met,
My roof is leaking and the rain is wet,
And widening stains upon the ceiling spread;
The plaster's like to fall upon my head.

AGENT: Oh! No, it won't. You have no cause to fear,
For when that happens—well—you won't be
here.

ANYMAN: I shan't be here! Nonsense, I'm quite content,
And monthly on the dot, I pay my rent.
I'll get some shingles and a bag of nails,
And fix the roof; meanwhile, I'll set some pails
To catch the drips.

AGENT: You tenants make me sick—
"Ah, here's the Agent, now's the time to kick."
But this time it won't work, you've got to go.
The house is sold; I came to tell you so.

ANYMAN: Sold! Who would buy this tumble-down old
shack?

Of decent dwellings there can be no lack.

AGENT: No, Mr. Croesus, if you want to buy,

But if you want to rent! Oh, my- Oh, my!

ANYMAN: Well, in a month I'll prove that I am right.

AGENT: A month, indeed! You get out now, tonight.

[Exit Agent.]

[Enter Pal.]

PAL: How now, Old Sport, you seem to have the hump
Don't say a word, but quickly take a jump
Aboard my car; I'll run you straight out home.

ANYMAN: Ah! Not that word! For me it is to roam,
A wandering Jew, homeless and roofless, I,
My house is sold!

PAL: Ah! then you'll want to buy.
I know a six-roomed house at Kerrisdale,
The very thing, a friend has got for sale;
Hot-water heating, hardwood floors, cement
Floor in the basement.

ANYMAN: No, I want to rent.

PAL: You can't do that; it isn't done these days.

ANYMAN: Ah! No! The Landlord sells, the tenant pays!
You find his taxes and his interest, too,
When times are hard, and everything looks blue
But comes the fresh'ning breeze, the favouring
tide,

The worn-out galley slave goes over-side.

PAL: Well, you **are** cheerful, come along, buck up,
Let's to the movies, then we'll go to sup,
Dutch treat, or else I'll toss you who's to part.

ANYMAN: Move me no movies! Pal, have you no heart?
[Exit Pal.]

[Enter Cousin.]

Ah! Cousin, truly in our hour of need
A seeming friend is but a broken reed
To lean on, and we turn with grateful sigh
To kith and kin, as gladly now do I.
You will remember when you lacked a roof
How that old saying found a ready proof.

COUSIN: Um, yes. I did stay with you for a while.
You seem'd so lonely, it was to beguile
Your empty hours, although of course no doubt
It was convenient; but you seem put out.

ANYMAN: I am, my house is sold, and now tonight
I should be in a truly parlous plight
Had I not met you and recalled to mind
Your spacious dwelling. Doubtless you can find
Sufficient space for all my humble need,
A bed, an ingle nook to write and read,
Room on the stove to cook a simple meal.

COUSIN: Oh! Anyman, you know for you I feel
A fond affection, and would gladly share
My humble dwelling with you if it were
As large and roomy as my loving heart,
But as I live, there's really not a part
That is not taken up and has its use,
Attic to cellar.

[Exit Cousin hastily.]

ANYMAN: Bah! A poor excuse.

What depths of meanness have I come to sound
In this brief time, what hollowness have found
In friendship's vows and kinsmen's protesta-
tions.