

# ***PEER GYNT***

By Henrik Ibsen  
Adapted by Tom Woldt

## **Act I** **PROLOGUE**

(Some or all of ensemble enters)  
(Peer and Solveig in special/spots that will be revisited at the end of play.)

[Music, fog, wind, snow, water.]

PEER  
I am lost!

SOLVEIG  
There is One who understands.

PEER  
Lost! Unless you can answer a riddle!

SOLVEIG  
Ask it!

PEER  
Ask it? Yes, you must answer it.  
Can you tell me where Peer Gynt has been  
Since you saw him last?

SOLVEIG  
Where he has been?

PEER  
With the mark of destiny on his brow,  
Where has he been since he first sprang forth  
As a thought newly born in the mind of God?  
Can you tell me that? If not I must go  
Home to the land of the valley of shadows.

SOLVEIG (smiling)  
Your riddle is easy ...

[MUSIC]

## PART ONE

(More Ensemble Enters)

Caption: Part One. Spring time, a few years back, in a land of mountains, villages, and snow. Lots of snow. . . An affable lad of the name Peer Gynt crows to his mother about a young buck and an old flame.

AASE  
Peer you're lying.

PEER  
Fuck I am!

AASE  
Well then, swear that it's the truth.

PEER  
Swear? Why should I?

AASE  
Pshaw you're frightened!

PEER  
Fuck off, I said!

AASE  
Can you face me without blushing?  
You run off, just when I need you  
To dig up some vegetables for dinner.  
And what for? To go reindeer hunting  
In the mountains? And when you do  
Come home, your clothes are all shredded,  
Your dead father's shotgun is gone  
And you haven't even got a rat,  
Say nothing about a reindeer  
For our table! What's more,  
You insult your poor old mother  
By expecting her to fall for some  
Bullshit tale about--  
Tell me where you saw this buck!?

PEER  
Just near Gendin.

AASE (with a mocking laugh) That sounds likely!

PEER  
I was hidden in a thicket,  
Sheltering from the icy blast.  
That's when I first heard him.  
Scraping at the hard snow for moss.

AASE  
So you said.

PEER  
I held my breath, I stood and listened,  
Heard the crunching of his hoofs.  
Then I saw it!

AASE  
What?

PEER  
A glimpse of antlers.

AASE  
O?

PEER  
Like fuckin' trees, Mother, they were that big!  
I dropped and crept up on him, real quiet  
Across the ice to a rock, for protection,  
While I got the bastard's measure.  
What a buck! So sleek, so fat!  
I could scarcely believe my eyes.

AASE  
Scarcely!

PEER  
Bang! I took a shot.  
The buck fell bump among the boulders.  
In the twinkling of an eye  
I was straddled on his shoulders,  
Holding on to his left ear.  
And then, just as I was going to plunge  
My knife into his guts—(*imitates by over-exaggeration, a  
wounded deer*)  
The nasty brute reared up and screamed,  
Tossed his head and knocked my knife  
Clean from my hand, then braced his horns,  
Pinned me by the loins and held my  
Crotch and legs in a steel vise.  
Then the son-of-a-bitch bounded off

Like lightning along the Gendin Ridge,  
With me wrapped like a damn scarf around his head.

AASE  
Christ above!

PEER  
You know the ridge? Half-a-mile from end to end  
It stretches, sharp as any butcher's best knife.  
Walls of black rock drop down either side  
Two thousand feet and more below,  
Into the dark waters of the lakes.  
Along that edge, the buck and I  
Clamored a virgin trail through the sky.  
What a ride and what a fuckin' steed!

AASE  
Oh, God help me!

PEER  
Suddenly, on the very edge of the great chasm,  
Right underneath the reindeer's hoof,  
A hawk exploded in the air,  
Cackling, flapping his great wings,  
Terrified. The buck swung round,  
Reared on his hind legs, made one bound  
And out into sheer space we plunged.  
(AASE totters)  
Spinning, he and I, ass over appetite!  
Behind, the giant mountain wall!  
Below, a bottomless abyss!  
Down we went with gathering speed;  
Far beneath us something shimmered  
White and brown, with a spot as red as blood  
Mother, it was our reflection  
Mirrored in the mountain lake.  
Up, up, up it came to meet us  
At the same mad pace as we  
Hurtled downwards to the waters.

AASE (gasping for breath)  
Peer! God help me! Tell me quickly!

PEER  
Buck from air, buck from the depths.  
Clashed together violently,  
With an almighty god-damned crash of antlers,  
Spraying foam for miles around. (*Beat*)  
There we were, half drowned. At last,

We scrambled to the northern shore.  
The reindeer swam through the bloody water,  
I held his stump of a tail. Till--here I am!

AASE  
But where's the buck?

PEER  
The buck? He's probably still there.  
(snapping his fingers and turning on his heel)  
Go and look! And if you can catch him, Ma,  
He's all yours!

AASE  
How is it that your neck's not broken?  
Your legs? Your arms? It's a miracle!  
God must be looking out for you.  
Course your trousers are ripped...but what does that matter?  
When you think of the height?  
*(She stops suddenly, stares at him wide-eyed, open mouthed and  
speechless, then suddenly breaks out)*  
Oh, you liar! Oh, you devil!  
Oh, my God! What lies, what lies!  
It's all come back to me! I heard this B.S.  
First when I was still a girl.  
"The Legend of Gúnnar Glesne"  
Not you and your phony adventure

PEER  
Yes me, mother. It happened to me.  
Can't the same thing happen to two different people?

AASE  
Maybe, but not the same fantasy.  
It's an old whore of a lie tarted up in new clothes  
But an old whore all the same.  
That's the way you spend your time,  
Building castles in the air,  
Inventing and imagining.

PEER  
If anybody else said that,  
No pissing around; I'd knock him flat.

AASE (weeping)  
Oh, God, I wish that I were dead  
And buried deep down in the earth!  
Not even tears and prayers affect him.

You're damned--that's all there is to it!  
What is left of all the wealth  
Your rich grandfather used to own?  
Where are all the sacks of coins  
Old Rasmus Gynt left? Flown, gone crash,  
Squandered, dissolved! Your father lent them wings—  
Buying land everywhere, driving fancy chariots.  
And his grand final winter banquet,  
When each guest threw every glass and bottle  
Against the wall behind him, smashed to bits.  
Where did it go? It ran like sand  
Straight through your father's open hand,  
And down his throat like a milking funnel.  
Whiskey, Aquavit, spirits of every fruit and grain;  
That was how far your father's enthusiasm went—  
Buy the best, give-away most, drink the rest.

PEER

Where have all the flowers gone?, as they say.  
You know it never rains but pours.  
Our luck is out--well, it will turn.

AASE

God knows how much help I've had  
From you, you scamp! When you're at home  
You poke the fire--that's all you do.  
You frighten all the decent girls you see  
You make a laughing-stock of me,  
You brawl and fight with everyone.

PEER

Shut up, Mother

AASE

Is it true  
That in that recent drinking bout  
That it was you who broke the Blacksmith Aslak's arm?

PEER

Who's been running to you with tales?

AASE

The cotter's wife, Kari. She heard the yells.

PEER

Yes, but it was I who yelled.

AASE

You?

PEER

Yes, I. He's a tough bastard.

AASE

Good God! You make me want to spit.  
A silly lump like that has thrashed you.  
Shame and more shame. A sodden  
Idiot like that has whipped your ass.  
(Crying rejuvenates.)

PEER

It's of no account at all  
If I thrash or if I'm thrashed,  
As long as you can have your cry.  
(laughing) Cheer up, Mother!

AASE

You've been lying!  
Have you?

PEER

Yes, just this once.  
Look! With this pair of pincers here  
I held the big son-of-a-bitch.  
My sledge-hammer was my right hand.  
Jaw, nose, eye, ear, all mashed--

AASE

And you, my Peer, are no better than him;  
Drunken brawler! You'll bring me to the grave.

PEER

Come on! You'll have a better fate,  
Darling, ugly, little old Mother,  
Surely you can trust in me.  
It won't be long until all the parish will  
Bow to you. Just wait till  
I do something really grand!

AASE

Be quiet! You're mad!  
Yet you might have got somewhere  
If you had not spent your time  
Building castles in the air.  
The girl at Heggstad wanted you  
And you could have won her, too,  
If you'd gone about it properly.

PEER  
Do you think so?

AASE  
The old man  
Can't resist his daughter's whims.  
He's firm enough up to a point,  
But in the end she gets her way.  
Wherever Ingrid goes, her father  
Stamps behind and minds his step.  
*(begins to cry again)*  
Ah, my Peer! A golden girl!  
And an heiress! Think of it, if you  
Had set your mind on it you could  
Have been a handsome bridegroom now,  
And not a filthy, smelly tramp.

PEER  
OK, then. Let's go.

AASE  
What?

PEER  
Come with me, I'll start my courting.

AASE  
Where?

PEER  
At Heggstad.

AASE  
(Laughs) My poor boy,  
That road is closed to lovers.

PEER  
Why?

AASE  
Oh, dear God, I'm gonna cry! You've lost your opportunity!

PEER Why?

AASE  
While you "scoured the mountain tracks"  
and "rode your reindeer through the sky,"  
Mads Moen was down here bagging his bride!

PEER  
What? Him? That fool! That piss-ant!

AASE  
Yes that's the man she's marrying.

PEER  
Wait for me, I'll go and get  
The mare and cart--

AASE  
Don't bother,  
The wedding is tomorrow.

PEER  
I can get there by tonight. Bah!

AASE  
You'll go and make things ten times worse.  
They'll add insult to injury.

PEER  
Don't worry! It will be all right.  
It takes too long to get the mare.  
Ready, Mother? We'll leave the cart: (he picks her up)

AASE  
Let me go!

PEER  
No! I will carry  
My mother to the wedding feast. (wades into the stream)

AASE  
Help! Oh, Lord, have mercy! Peer!  
We're drowning!

PEER  
Not me! I was born  
To die a glorious death.

AASE  
You will!  
You'll swing for this in God's good time. (pulls his hair)  
Oooh, you beast, you!

PEER

Gee-up, Gee-up!  
Shall we play at Peer and reindeer? I'll be the reindeer, you be  
Peer.

AASE  
I'm fainting! Where am I? Oh shit!

PEER  
There now! We've reached the other side.  
Now give the deer a nice big kiss  
And thank him for the lovely ride.

AASE (thumps his head)  
That's the thanks you'll get from me!

PEER  
Ow!  
That's a handsome tip, I must say.

AASE  
Let me go!

PEER  
To the wedding first!  
You are such a clever talker,  
Talk to Ingrid's old man,  
Say Mads Moen is always drunk.

AASE  
Put me down!

PEER  
Tell him the virtues of your son  
And what a rare catch I'd be instead!

AASE  
I'll tell him everything I can  
About my good-for-nothing son  
And the devil's pack of tricks you play on me.  
And I won't stop 'til the old man  
Has set his dogs on you.

PEER  
Hmm. In that case I must go alone.

AASE  
In that case I will follow on.

PEER  
Mother dear, you haven't strength to--

AASE  
You shall see! I'm in the mood  
When I could crush rocks to flour  
With my teeth, I'm in such a rage!  
Let me down!

PEER  
Well, will you promise--

AASE  
No. I'm going there. With you.  
I'll tell them all just what you are!

PEER  
Alright then. I'll have to put you somewhere.

AASE  
Never! I'll follow on behind.

PEER  
Oh no, you won't!

AASE  
What will you do?

PEER  
I'll put you up here on the roof.  
(he puts her on the roof of the mill)  
(AASE is screaming and yelling)  
Sit tight, Ma, and don't move your legs,  
Don't tear the thatch because you might  
Fall off and then--

AASE  
You horrid pig!! (Throws dirt or sod at him)

PEER  
No kicking!

AASE  
I should have left you in the fireplace,  
Like the troll's bastard that you are,  
To be sucked back up the chimney where you came from!

PEER  
Shame!

AASE  
Bah!

PEER  
You should give your blessing  
On a trying trip like this.  
Will you?

AASE  
I will wallop you,  
Big and burly as you are.

PEER  
Well, good-bye then, dearest Mother.  
Be patient! I won't be too long! Remember now, quiet as a mouse!

AASE  
Peer! PEER! God help me, he has gone!  
Reindeer-rider! Liar! Hey!  
No, he's off across the fields--  
I'm fainting! Help!

## **PART TWO**

Caption: Part Two. A celebration at Heggstad Farm. Boys play my-prick-is-bigger-than-yours while a band plays and dancers dance. There's a new girl in town. A groom loses a bride. A wedding dress, and the girl in it, get soiled. At the Spring wedding, Peer takes his first great Fall.

PEER  
Like flies on shit. So what?  
They'll only start laughing behind my back,  
So fucking what? You've always known.  
What the hell do I care?  
What I really need is a good stiff drink, or ten.  
Or if I could make myself invisible...  
Or if they didn't know me...no, a drink  
And then I wouldn't give a donkey's asshole for them  
Or their laughter.  
*(Hears more guests coming, withdraws)*

MAN  
Sure his father was a drunk, and his mother's mad.

WOMAN  
The upbringing he's had, it's no wonder.  
*(They continue walking on)*

PEER

Who? Is it me you're talking about you uppity bastards?  
Is it me? Fuck off. See if I care.  
What do words matter anyway?

[Lets himself down, off the path a bit, flat on his back with his hands  
under his head, gazing up into the sky.]

What a strange sort of cloud! It is just like a horse.  
There's a man on it too--and saddle--and bridle.--  
And after it comes an old crone on a broomstick.

*[Laughs quietly to himself.]*

It is mother. She's scolding and screaming: You beast!  
"You swine, Peer Gynt"--*[His eyes gradually close.]*  
The hell with her.

Peer rides ahead as thousands cheer the virtues  
Of their Emperor Gynt! Look-golden horseshoes!  
Himself he has gauntlets and sabre and scabbard.  
His cloak is long, and lined with silk,  
That billows down, down to the ground.  
Full brave is the company riding behind him.  
None of them, though, sits his charger so stoutly.  
None of them glitters like him in the sunshine.--  
Down by the fence stand the people in clusters,  
lifting their hats, and gazing upwards.  
Women are curtseying. All the world knows him,  
Emperor Gynt, and his thousands of henchmen.  
Shiny gold pieces and coins  
he scatters over the roadway like pebbles.  
Rich as a lord grows each man in the parish.  
High over the ocean Peer Gynt goes a-riding.  
The King of England's waiting on the shore;  
With England's ladies—hundreds—thousands—or more!  
They all see Emperor Gynt come riding and rise to cheer.  
And raising his crown, the English King says—

ASLAK

Well, if it isn't that drunken fuck, Peer Cunt!

PEER (*startled*)

Your Majesty—

ASLAK (*to his cronies as they enter*)

Peer Cunt, get it?

(*cronies make pig or other disgusting sounds*)

What's the matter, Cunt? Can't stand up?

He's still not over the ass-whipping I gave him in Lunde.

PEER

Go fuck yourself, Aslak.

CRONIES

*(Laughs and--)* Oooh, Mr. big prick! Better watch your mouth.  
Still got any teeth left? Etc.

ASLAK

I just might. (Pause)

So, where you been the last six weeks, Cunt?

Up the mountain with some hairy-assed trolls again?

KID

Bangin' em up the ass?

PEER

Yeah, I've been in the mountains.

ASLAK

Let's hear it then. I'm sure you've got some wild story to toss around  
You like the Cunt's stories, boys?

PEER

You wouldn't understand.

ASLAK

Why, because it involves ass-fucking?

PEER

No, because it involves words, Aslak.

ASLAK

What do you mean?

PEER

Exactly.

*(Silence. Aslak is unsure if he's being insulted or not.)*

ASLAK

So, you going in for the big event, then?

PEER

No.

ASLAK

But I heard the bride used to have it bad for you.

PEER

Suck it, Aslak! You're the cunt, not me!

ASLAK

Hmmm. Touchy.

Don't worry, plenty more fish in the sea,

Know what I mean fellas?

Even for you, Cunt. Come with us.

You might tickle a young carp,

Or maybe filet an old toothless trout!

*(Cronies laugh and make rude sounds and gestures)*

Must be someone desperate enough to have you.

PEER

Shove it up your own Ass-lick. Go to hell.

ASLAK

I will then. Be seeing you.

And if I see the bride

Should I give her one from you?

BOY

Up the ass!

BOY

Turd-packer!

PEER

Fuck off all of you! She can

Marry all of you for all I care.

I don't give one shit about it.

*(Aslak and cronies leave)*

*(Peer takes stock of himself)*

Look at yourself, would you?

You look like a goddamn tramp!

What's that? Who's there?

Someone laughed, I heard.

I must get home and get Mother

Down off that roof *(chuckles; starts to move)*

*(stops and listens--music)*

The dancing is starting.

Oh Hell! I must join in, I can't miss a party!

But Mother will still be up there on the roof.

Listen! They're putting some life in it!

They'll be kicking the walls down!

And all these wonderful girls! Oh, Hell!

The Devil can take my soul, but I'm going in!

*(transition to Wedding)*  
*(Festive Music, crowd gathering)*

*(A Wedding Dance is underway. And drinking.)*

WOMAN

The bride? Well, of course, she's crying a bit.  
But who ever took any notice of that?

STEWARD

Come along, folks, drink up, there's lots more in the vat.

MAN

Thank you! I'm finding it hard to keep pace!

DANCING YOUTH

Keep at it Guttorm, scrape away till you bust!

GIRL

Scrape away! Let it echo over the hills!

GROUP OF GIRLS

He can dance, can't he? He's got such long legs!

*(the BRIDEGROOM, MADS MOEN, half-crying, approaches his FATHER who is talking to guests, and pulls his sleeve)*

MADS

Father, I've tried but she won't! She's . . . standoff-ish.

FATHER

What won't she?

MADS

She's gone and locked herself in—

FATHER

Well, what about going and finding the key?

MADS

I don't know where to look.

FATHER

You're a damn fool, boy. *(He turns to others)*

YOUTH

Peer Gynt's just arrived. Things are going to get lively.

ASLAK

Who asked him, anyway?

STEWARD

That's what I'd like to know!

ASLAK

Ignore the creep, girls, if he tries to get friendly

GIRL (whispering to other girls)

As far as we go, he doesn't exist!

PEER

Who's the best dancer here? Which one is  
Twinkletoes?

GIRLS

Not I. Not I. I'm certain I'm not.

PEER

Well, then, you, before somebody better turns up!

GIRL

No time.

PEER

Well, then, you!

GIRL

I'm afraid I'm just going.

PEER

Going? So early! You can't be all there!

ASLAK

Look, Peer! She's gone off to a scabby old ram!

PEER

Where are some other girls?

MAN

Go and Look.

*(PEER has suddenly lost his vitality. He glances furtively toward the group. He is met everywhere by stony silence. As he moves away, people smile and follow him with their eyes)*

PEER

Black looks, sharp answers, superior smiles!

Sneers! They grate like a file on the blade of a saw.

*(SOLVEIG, leading little HELGA, comes into the courtyard with her PARENTS)*

MAN

Here are our new neighbors.

SECOND MAN

The ones from the west?

FIRST

From Hedalen.

SECOND MAN

Oh yes. I think you are right.

PEER

May I dance with your daughter?

FATHER

Yes, certainly, but first

We must go in and pay our respects to the host.

STEWARD (offering PEER a drink)

Since you're here you might as well try some of this.

PEER (staring after SOLVEIG)

No, thanks, I'm not thirsty. I'm here for the dance.

How lovely she is! I know no one as lovely!

Her eyes cast down and her apron so white!

And the way she held on to her Mother's dress (*or "sister's hand"*)

And carried her prayer book wrapped in a Kerchief!

I must see her again.

(turns to go into the house)

YOUTH

What, leaving so early?

PEER

No.

YOUTH

Then your sense of direction's gone wrong.

PEER

Let me pass.

YOUTH

Ah, I see! You're afraid of Aslak!

PEER

Me? Afraid?

YOUTH

Yes, the Lunde affair's not blown over. (Laughs and runs off)

SOLVEIG

I think it was you who asked me to dance.

PEER

Of course! You can't have forgotten me, surely!  
Come on!

SOLVEIG

Mother says don't go too far away.

PEER

Mother says, Mother says! Were you born yesterday?!

SOLVEIG

You're laughing at me!

PEER

Why, you're still quite a baby. You haven't grown up.

SOLVEIG

I was confirmed last spring.

PEER

Tell me your name, then we'll feel more at ease.

SOLVEIG

My name is Solveig. And what is yours, please?

PEER

I'm Peer Gynt.

SOLVEIG (*pulling her hand away*)

Oh, my god!

PEER

Well, what's wrong with that?

SOLVEIG

My garter's worked loose. I must tie it up tighter. (*she moves away*)

MADS  
Mother, I've tried but she won't—

MOTHER  
She won't what?

MADS  
She won't Mother!

MOTHER  
What?

MADS  
She won't unlock the door.

FATHER  
The boy's only fit to be fed with a spoon!

MOTHER  
Don't scold the poor boy, he'll soon find his way.

YOUTH  
Brandy, Peer?

PEER  
No, thanks!

YOUTH  
Come on, just a shot!

PEER  
Have you got any?

YOUTH  
Well perhaps--and perhaps not! (*pulls out a flask*)  
What a kick it's got! Well?

PEER  
Has it? Let's have a nip! Skol!

SECOND YOUTH  
Try some of this! Have a damned good swig!

PEER  
No!

SECOND YOUTH  
Oh, baloney! What's wrong? You were never slow

About having a drink.

PEER

Well, a shot then, no more.

YOUTH

Skol!

PEER

Skol! *(it burns a little this time)*

A GIRL

We ought to be going.

PEER

You're frightened of me.

YOUTH

Who isn't?

ANOTHER YOUTH

You showed us a few things at Lunde.

You gave us a bit of an eye opener then.

PEER

Oh, I can do more than that once I start. *(another shot of liquor)*

FIRST YOUTH

*(whispering)* And he's starting, believe me!

SEVERAL

Come on! Let it rip! Tell us what you can do!

PEER

Tomorrow.

YOUTH

No, now.

GIRL

Are you good at black magic?

PEER

I've conjured Old Nick!

MAN

My grandmother did that before I was born.

PEER

Liar! Nobody else can manage that trick.  
I've conjured the devil inside a nut!  
The thing was worm eaten.

MAN  
Well, that's obvious (laughing)

PEER  
He swore and he cried and he tried hard to bribe me  
With this and with that—

MAN  
Was he forced to get in?

PEER  
He was. Then I plugged up the hole with a pin.  
Christ! You should have heard the buzz and the rumble!

GIRL  
Should we?

PEER  
Oh yeah. It was like a great bee!

GIRL  
But where is he now? Is he still in the nut?

PEER  
Oh, no. He managed to get away right away.  
That's why the blacksmith hates me to this day. (*Drinks*)

YOUTH  
(doubtful) Really?

PEER  
I went to Aslak the blacksmith and asked him  
To hammer that nut for me. He said, "Of course!"  
He took hold of the nut to hammer it flat.  
But being as clumsy as he always is  
And swinging his hammer as he always does—

VOICE  
Did he kill the Devil?

PEER  
He hit like a madman,  
But the Devil went up in a fury of flame--  
Hey presto! Straight through the roof and the walls.

MAN  
And the smith?

PEER  
Just gaped, his hands roasted like beef!  
And since that day we have never been friends.  
*(drinks with some panache) (everybody laughs)*

MAN  
That's a good story

ANOTHER  
One of his best!

PEER  
Are you hinting that I made it up?

MAN  
He didn't make it up.

PEER  
You see?!

MAN  
You couldn't have. It was one of my  
Grandma's stock stories.

PEER  
You fucking liar! It happened to me. *(he turns away)*

MAN  
You've done it all, Peer Gynt!

PEER  
That's right, I've done everything.  
More than your grandma at least.  
I've ridden horses through the fuckin' air—

BOY  
Ride through the air then, prick.  
Go on Peer Cunt!

PEER  
I'll ride like the wind over the lot of you,  
And my horse will shit on your heads.  
Wait till you see that one!

MAN or YOUTH  
Wait till they drag you through the shit,

With your ass whipped raw, and your eyes  
Punched black and blue. Wait till you see,  
I'm telling you, it comes to us all.  
*(crowd disperses, jeering and etc.)*

MADS

Can you really ride through the air, Peer?

PEER

Yah, Mads, did you not know I'm a rare one?  
That there's nothing I can't do?

MADS

Can you make yourself invisible then too?

PEER

Yah. I've got a special cloak.

MADS

And a hat?

PEER

Fuck off, Mads!

*(Solveig enters with Helga)*

PEER

Solveig, you're back! I'm glad! Let's have a dance  
*(grasps her wrist)*  
I'll show you how light I can be on my feet.

SOLVEIG

Please let me go.

PEER

Let you go?

SOLVEIG

You're so wild!

PEER

Like the reindeer, when the summer comes on?  
Come along, girl, don't be so obstinate.

SOLVEIG

I can't! No, I dare not!

PEER

Why?

SOLVEIG  
You've been drinking. (goes with Helga)

PEER  
Why didn't I get my knife and stick it  
Right through the lot of them--yes, everyone?

MADS  
I wish you'd help me get into her room.

PEER  
(absently) The bride's? Where is she?

MADS  
Her sleeping loft.

PEER  
Ah, I see!

MADS  
It's the least you can do, Peer. You might have a try.

PEER  
To get at your bride? You must do that yourself.  
*(suddenly a thought strikes him)*  
Ingrid in her bed loft!?  
*(He goes up to SOLVEIG)*  
Have you changed your mind?  
*(SOLVEIG tries to go. He bars her path)*  
You're ashamed of me! I look like a tramp!

SOLVEIG  
But you don't! It's not true! I don't think it at all.

PEER  
Yes, I do, and what's more, I'm a little bit drunk. I was piqued.  
You'd annoyed me. That's why I did it.  
Now will you--?

SOLVEIG  
I'm frightened. Even if--

PEER  
Frightened? Of whom?

SOLVEIG  
Mostly of father.

PEER

Father! I see! He's so very correct!  
Does he rule with an iron rod? Well, answer me.

SOLVEIG

What can I say?

PEER

Does he sing in the choir?  
And you and your mother?  
Are you just the same?  
Why don't you answer me?

SOLVEIG

Please let me go!

PEER

(in a threatening voice)

I won't! I can turn myself into a troll!  
At the stroke of twelve I'll be in your room,  
And you'll hear a strange noise--a hissing and spitting,  
Next to your bed, and it won't be your cat  
But me! I'll drain your blood into a cup,  
And I'll grab your sister and eat her up,  
Cuz every night I turn myself into a werewolf!  
I'll bite your loins and I'll bite your nipples--  
(*suddenly entreats her*) Dance with me Solveig!

SOLVEIG

Now you're being just plain nasty!  
(*she leaves*)

MADS

I'll give you an ox if you'll help me.

PEER

Come on!

(they leave as CROWD comes out/forward)

ASLAK

No, we'll have this out once and for all,  
It's Peer Gynt or I and it's now or never.

CROWD

Let them fight it out, etc. No, let them fight with words!

ASLAK

Words! Words be damned! It's fists or it's nothing

SOLVEIG'S FATHER  
Control yourself, man!

HELGA  
Are they going to hit him?

ANOTHER YOUTH  
Kick him out of the place!

ANOTHER YOUTH  
I'll spit in his eye.

YOUTH  
(to Aslak)  
Are you backing out, you?

ASLAK  
No. I'll murder him-

SOLVEIG'S MOTHER  
Now you can see what they think of the fellow!  
(to SOLVEIG)

(AASE comes in)  
AASE  
Is he here? Where's my son? I'll give him what for.  
My God! What a walloping he's going to get!

VOICES  
The blacksmith will bash him! Will Thrash him! Etc.

ASLAK  
I'll smash him!

AASE  
What? You smash my Peer? Just try if you dare!  
His old mother Aase's got sharp teeth and claws!  
Where is he? Peer!

MADS  
(running in) Father! Mother!

FATHER  
What's happened?

MADS  
What do you think? Peer Gynt--

AASE  
Have you killed him?

MADS  
No, Peer Gynt has--Look! Up there! On the hills!

CROWD  
With the bride! He's got Ingrid! Oh, her beautiful dress! (*Other exclamations*)

AASE  
Oh, the beast!

ASLAK  
It's a sheer precipice!  
He's clambering up! My god, like a goat!

MADS  
Look how he's carrying her! Like a pig!

AASE  
I hope he falls! (Beat. Then shrieks in terror)  
Oh take care! It's not safe!

INGRID'S FATHER  
I think he's raped my daughter! I'll kill him.

AASE  
And I swear you'll not touch a hair upon his head.

INGRID'S FATHER  
You'll fucking pay for this you mad old witch,  
I'll make sure.

AASE  
God strike me dead if I let you hurt him!

### **PART THREE**

**Caption:** Part three. The mountains. Dawn is breaking. The Mountain Chase has begun. Peer seeks refuge with, on, and in, women from the higher place.

(transition to mountain)

(Peer and Ingrid are undressed, a portion of a torn, dirty, blood-stained wedding dress nearby. They are in 'clench' of having sex, or Ingrid is trying to arouse him from post-coital sleep. Over the course of the scene, they dress, which involves in some moments, throwing clothing pieces at each other—especially he at her.)

PEER Go on, fuck off from me!

INGRID  
But where can I go  
After this?

PEER  
Go where you like.

INGRID  
You lying...

PEER  
Oh, hold your tongue!  
This is where we part for good.

INGRID  
But, dearest Peer, Memories bind us forever.

PEER  
The hell with all memories!  
The hell with all women too,  
Excepting one--!

INGRID  
Who is the one?

PEER  
Not you!

INGRID  
Well then, who is she?

PEER  
Go Away! Go home, go back to your father.

INGRID  
Please, Peer, I love you--

PEER  
Oh, for God's sake--!

INGRID  
You can't mean  
What you're saying!

PEER  
Every word!

INGRID

You get your way, then pack me off.

PEER

Tell me what you have to offer.

INGRID

Heggstad farm and more besides.

PEER

Are you beautiful? Just plain beautiful?

INGRID

What are you saying?

PEER

Or were you sixteen last spring?

INGRID

No. And nor were you!

PEER

Or is there such gentleness in your glances--

INGRID

What the hell--?

PEER

That it makes a lost man whole again?

INGRID

No, but--

PEER (*starts to go*)

Well, then the rest of it is beside the point.

INGRID (blocking his way)

They'll string you up if you leave me now.

PEER

What do I care?

INGRID

What about all those times

You told me how beautiful I was?

How you'd embarrass and excite me

By whispering about what would happen

Between our legs? How you'd imagine kissing and fondling me?

And I, you. Peer, you'll be wealthy,  
You'll be honored if you stay with me--

PEER

Impossible.

INGRID

(trying to hold back tears)  
You treated me like a play-thing.  
A whore.

PEER

You wanted me!

INGRID

I needed a friend—

PEER

I needed a woman. And I was drunk.

INGRID

You'll pay heavily for this!

PEER

Whatever the price, I see now  
That it's worth it.

INGRID

Your mind's made up then?

PEER

Firm as a rock.

INGRID

Right then.

PEER

Right.

INGRID

I'm fucking off then.  
(*leaving*)

PEER

Do that! And all women!  
The devil can have you all!

INGRID

All but one!

PEER

Yes. All but one.

(some rabble noise)

(another place, higher, in the mountains)

PEER

The whole town's on my track,

Like a pack of fucking dogs.

And Ingrid's old man Heggstad is at the head.

I can hear him howling!

Peer Gynt's on the run.

Snowy peaks! Like palace on palace!

Shining peaks bathing in light!

Amazing colors in the light!

And now I hear some music—

My eyes might need to close...

*(enter THREE COWHERD GIRLS singing and chanting)*

GIRLS

We're calling you trolls, you trolls with three heads!

Why not come out and jump in our beds!

PEER

Who are you screeching for?

GIRLS

Trolls, the whole crew!

FIRST GIRL

We sleep with trolls the whole night long!

We've been alone in our huts all summer,

And we need a fuck!

SECOND GIRL

Fuck yes, we do.

THIRD GIRL

So we fuck trolls for want of a man.

FIRST GIRL

My boyfriend called me darling and sweetheart too.

Now he's married a middle age shrew!

SECOND GIRL

Mine found a gypsy asleep in the heather.

Now they are tramping the roads together!

THIRD GIRL

Mine couldn't stand the crying of our little kid.  
So the sheriff stretched his neck for what he did.

PEER

I'm a three-headed troll and your man for today

GIRLS

Are you sure about that?

PEER

I'll fuck you as long and as hard—

FIRST GIRL

We have a cabin nearby!

SECOND GIRL

And a barrel of beer!

PEER

Let's crack everything open and let it all flow!

SECOND GIRL

He glows and gleams like metal--feel!

THIRD GIRL

A baby's eyes but limbs like steel!

GIRLS

(singing and dancing wildly) Trolls! Where are you tonight?  
Where?

You can fuck off tonight, we don't care!

PEER

I'm a wild animal, like a stallion or bear!  
This is more fun than that Blacksmith affair!

(transition)

(Later. PEER has a beer mug, and is unbuttoned all over.)

PEER

(singing a line of the COWHERD GIRLS' song)

What a crazy, hilarious day!

Riding a big buck on the ridge,

Romancing and dancing and lies!

A climb up the sharpest rock

With the bride--and drunk a whole day.

An orgy with crazy women!

What time is it? I can barely keep

My eyes from closing.  
Shit, my head hurts,  
Like I got hit with Aslak's hammer.  
And my....(*hands down pants/crotch*)  
Those mountain girls. Fucking beasts!  
(*Passes out from too much liquor*)

(*A few minutes later. Note—it is important that this moment does NOT play like “now suddenly Peer’s dream world begins,” as is implied in some adaptations with him banging his head on a rock, passing out, etc.*)

(The WOMAN IN GREEN makes some kind of fantastical entrance...perhaps with a giant dress that fills the stage. Or perhaps flying, swinging, “appearing” or otherwise via some other theatrical device. She looks at him for a moment. If close enough she may sniff him. He stirs a little.)

PEER  
Who are you? . . . Who are you?

WOMAN IN GREEN  
Well, I happen to be  
The daughter of the Dovre king.

PEER  
Yeah? Well, what a coincidence. I'm the son of a queen.

WOMAN IN GREEN  
Is that true?

PEER  
It's true. As true as the fact that I'm Peer.  
And true as that you are drop-dead gorgeous.  
Let me have you. I know how to treat a lady!

WOMAN IN GREEN  
You're lying.

PEER  
The fuck I am!  
And I'll never, never pull your hair—

WOMAN  
Nor beat me?

PEER  
No, it would be unheard of!  
We sons of queens do not beat our women.

WOMAN

My Father's palace is deep in the Ronde.

PEER

I feel quite sure my Mother's is grander.

WOMAN

Do you know my Father? His name is King Bastard.

PEER

Do you know my Mother? Her name is Queen Aase.

WOMAN

Those clothes aren't the clothes of a prince.

PEER

I only get decked out on Sundays.  
It's the man inside the breeches that matters.

WOMAN

I wear silk and gold thread every day of the week.

PEER

How come all I see is grass and cow shit?

WOMAN

Ah, yes! There's one thing you must remember;  
In the Ronde we see with another sense,  
And everything seems to have a double  
Form. The way it looks....and the way we say it is  
When you enter my Father's hall,  
You might think it's just a dive filled with rubbish and shit  
But it's a still a great palace, right.

PEER

How peculiar! It's the same with us!

WOMAN

Evil seems good and black becomes white.

PEER

Big is little and dirty is clean.

WOMAN

Ignorance is knowledge.

PEER  
Blindness is vision.

WOMAN  
Wow! I may let you have me after all.  
*(falling on his neck with hungry kisses, etc.)*  
We're made for each other, Peer!

PEER  
Like potatoes and gravy, or balloons and hot air.

WOMAN  
My wedding steed! Come! On your back we'll leap!

*(enter a pig with a rope bridle and sack for saddle. Or some such interesting thing.)*

PEER  
Heigh-ho! Through the Ronde gates we'll sweep! Giddyup; let's go my trusty sow!

WOMAN  
And I was feeling so sad just now!  
It goes to show that it's Fate that counts!

PEER  
You can tell great folk by the style of their Mounts.

## **PART FOUR**

Caption: In the Hall of the Troll King, Peer learns of a new tail, and sews seeds for the future.

*(transition to the Royal Hall of the King of the Dovre Mountains, the King is seated on his thrown. Troll Courtiers, dwarves, imps, nasty fairies, and other hangers-on to royalty appear from every direction and orifice. There might want to be some guttural, libidinous troll-dancing to start the scene.*

*Peer enters)*

COURTIER  
A Human. One who has dared to woo our king's beautiful daughter!

TROLLS  
Kill him! Let me slice his fingers! Kill the pasty bastard!

OTHERS

Let me pull his hair! I want to carve my initials in his face! Let's pierce his nuts! What color is his blood?

KING

Keep cool! Now it's time we stopped preening ourselves.  
Our affairs, of late, have been going down-hill;  
No one knows whether we'll crash or recover,  
So we can't refuse help, whatever the source.  
So you're after my daughter?

PEER

Your daughter and your kingdom  
Thrown in as her dowry, of course.

KING

I'll give you half while I'm still alive,  
You can; have the rest the day I snuff out.  
Now we'll see what you don't know.

COURTIER

Now we'll see whether your wisdom tooth  
Can crack the nut of an old man's riddles.

PEER

That's fair enough.

KING

Wait a moment, my lad!  
You've got to make a few promises too.  
If you break one of them, our pact becomes void  
And you'll never get out of here alive.  
First of all, you must swear to wipe from your mind  
The world outside the Ronde. Avoid the day  
And its affairs; never walk in thie sun.

PEER

If I'm King, that will be easy enough.

KING

What's the difference between a troll and a man?

PEER

None at all, as far as I can see.  
Big trolls would roast you and little trolls skin you.  
We'd do just the same if we only dared.

KING

That's true! There are numerous points of resemblance,

Now, I'll tell you what that difference is.  
Out there, among men living under the blue,  
The saying goes, "Man, to thine own self be true!"  
In here, we've no time for such self-righteous stuff.  
Our saying goes, "Troll, to thine own self be ... enough"

TROLLS

(Laughter. Cheering. Repeating parts of it..."enough"! etc.)

COURTIER

Do you see it?

PEER

I'm not sure I do.

KING

That all-embracing "Enough," my son,  
Must be emblazoned on your chest.  
(*two trolls ready tattoo equipment*)

PEER

But--

KING

It must if you're going to be king here!

PEER

If it must, then it must. It isn't worse--

KING

Next, you must shed your Christian clothes.  
In the Dovre, I'm proud to say, everything  
Is tailor-made; nothing comes from the valley  
Except the silk tassel on our tails.

PEER

I haven't a tail.

KING

I can give you one. Chamberlain, Bring my Sunday tail.

PEER

Don't you dare! You're making a fool of me!

KING

You can't woo my child without a tail!

PEER

You'd turn men into beasts!

KING

My son, you're wrong! I'm turning you into a gallant beau.  
We'll give you a flame-yellow tip.  
We could heap no higher honor on you.

PEER

Well, they say we are feathers in the wind,  
And custom and fashion must carry us with them.  
All right, go ahead!

KING

You're a wise young man.

COURTIER

Now, see with what panache you wag it and whisk it.

KING

Now wag it!

PEER

What?

KING

Wag your fucking tail!

*(He does so)*

And dance with my daughter.

*(Peer does so, somewhat dazed)*

What do you think of her? Really.

PEER

She's OK.

KING

Don't worry son, you can speak your mind.  
I find her pig ugly and I'm her father!

PEER

Honestly? I find her a bit of a pig too.

*(Everything stops)*

Just a joke. I swear.

Cut out my tongue if I wasn't joking.

*(Silence. King bursts out laughing)*

KING

Trying to be true still, boy?  
It's a very strange thing, this human nature;  
It sticks to a man like a layer of skin.  
And so, my son, I must do what I can  
To cure your peculiar human traits.

PEER

How will you do that?

KING

I'll scratch your left eye so that you begin to see awry.  
and everything that you gaze upon  
Will bear the hallmark of excellence.  
Then I'll cut out your right window-pane--

PEER

Are you drunk?

KING

Think of all the annoyance and worry  
You'll manage to dodge in the course of the years.  
And try to remember that the eyes  
Are the source of bitter, angry tears.

PEER

That's true enough and the Bible says,  
"If thy right eye offend thee pluck it out"  
Now tell me, when will my sight be restored  
To normal again?

KING

Never, my friend!

PEER

If that's the case, I must say, "No, thank you"

KING

Then what are you going to do?

PEER

Leave at once!

KING

Really? The door to troll-hood only swings one way.  
As the old song goes, "You can check out any time you like,  
But you can never leave."

TROLLS

(Laughter and jeering.)

PEER

Are you going to keep me here by force?

KING

Now listen, Prince Peer, and try to be prudent!  
Your gifts mark you out to be a troll--  
Hasn't he got the stamp and the carriage?--  
And you would like to be a troll, wouldn't you?

PEER

God knows I would! It's worth giving up  
Something to win a beautiful bride  
With a model kingdom thrown in besides.  
But to know I can never be free again;  
That I can't even die like a decent man.  
To that, I'm afraid, I cannot agree.

KING

Now, on my life, I'm losing my temper.  
And I'm not here to be trifled with.  
You long-legged ass! Do you know who I am?  
Do you know whose daughter you've just fucking fucked?!

PEER

But I didn't fuck her--

KING

You'll have to marry her!

PEER

Do you mean to say--?

KING

Can you deny  
That you had a hankering after her?

PEER

That's not such a serious crime, after all.

KING

So you think desire is of no account?  
Human beings are all the same.  
You talk, talk, talk about your souls,  
But you're much more interested in flesh.  
Well, you'll very soon learn to think otherwise.

PEER

You won't catch me with your bait of lies.

WOMAN IN GREEN

By the end of the year you'll be a proud father.

PEER

Let me get out of here.

KING

We'll send you your child  
Wrapped up in a goatskin.

PEER

(wiping the sweat from his forehead)  
If I could wake up!

KING

Shall we send him to your palace?

PEER

The poorhouse for all I care!

KING

Very good, Prince Peer, it's your own concern.  
But one thing is certain, what's done is done.  
You'll be surprised when you see your son;  
Half-breeds grow at prodigious speed.

PEER

*(to the Woman in Green)*  
Will you listen to reason?  
We may yet strike a bargain.  
You'll make nothing out of marrying me,  
I'm not a prince, I haven't a bean.  
Paint me how you like,  
And I'm still worth nothing.  
*(Woman in Green faints)*

KING

He's all yours.

*(Trolls tie PEER down to a chair and turn on tattoo needle)*

YOUNG TROLLS

Skin him! Close in; we've got him! Scratch his eyes out, etc.

*(general fighting and melee)*

PEER  
Help Mother they're fucking killing me!

*(church bells)*

TROLLS  
Bells in the mountains! Let's get out of here! Fucking lucky. Etc.  
*(they flee)*

## **PART FIVE**

Caption: Sunrise. Mountains. Peer wakes, checks for tails and tattoos. He is relieved. The Great Boyg orders Peer to go "round-about."

PEER  
Tell me! Who are you?

VOICE IN THE DARKNESS  
Myself.

PEER  
Move aside.

VOICE  
Go round about, Peer. There's room on the mountain.  
*(PEER tries to pass in another direction, but comes up against the thing)*

PEER  
Who are you?

VOICE  
Myself. Can you say the same?

PEER  
I can say what I like and my sword can strike hard!  
Take care or I'll bring it down on your head!  
King Saul slew his hundreds;  
Peer Gynt slays his thousands. *(slashes out)*  
Who are you?

VOICE  
Myself!

PEER  
That's a stupid reply.  
Keep it to yourself. And try to be clearer.  
What are you?

VOICE  
The Great Boyg.

PEER  
That's a bit better.  
Your riddle is clearing.  
The black's turned to gray.  
Get out of the way Boyg!

VOICE  
Go round about, Peer!

PEER  
I'll go through you! (*slashes*)  
He's fallen!  
(*tries to go forward, but comes up against "the thing"*)

VOICE  
Rely on your fists; have faith in your strength.  
Ha-ha! Peer Gynt, then you'll reach great heights.

PEER  
Backward or forward, it's just as far-  
Within or without, the path is as narrow!  
He's there! And he's there! He's all round. Why don't you fight?

VOICE  
The Great Boyg gets his way by keeping the peace.

PEER  
(biting his arms and hands)  
Give me claws and teeth to rend my flesh!  
Let me feel my own blood, let me taste my own blood!  
  
(*Church bells and hymn singing featuring Solveig*)

VOICE  
(with a gasp)  
He was too strong! He was shielded by women!

## **PART SIX**

**Caption:** The mountain outside AASE'S hut. PEER sends a message with Helga and sees a boy who does not go round about. AASE's belongings go to Heggstad without her.)

(*Peer is sleeping. Wakes, looks around and spits.*)

PEER  
What would I give for a pickled herring!  
(spits again, HELGA approaches)  
Hi, little 'un, what are you doing here?

HELGA  
Solveig--

PEER  
Where is she?

HELGA  
Behind the hut.

SOLVEIG  
If you come over here, I'll run away!

PEER  
Are you still afraid I might cuddle you?

SOLVEIG  
You're shameless!

PEER  
Do you know where I was last night?  
The Dovre king's daughter was chasing me!

SOLVEIG  
Then we did right to ring the church bells.

PEER  
Peer Gynt's not the sort who's so easily caught. Well, say something!

*(Solveig moves away)*

HELGA (crying)  
Oh, she's running away! (runs after her)  
Wait!

PEER  
(catching Helga by the arm)  
Look what I've got in my pocket here!  
A silver button! I'll give it to you  
If you'll say a good word for me!

HELGA  
Please let me go!

PEER  
Here it is.

HELGA  
Let me go. Here is the basket!

PEER  
If you don't, God help--

HELGA  
You're hurting! Please let me--

PEER  
*(quietly, letting her go)*  
I meant no harm; beg her not to forget me!

*(Peer picks up an axe to chop at a tree. Chops for some time, intent on removing branches from the main trunk. Hears something.)*  
There's someone after me! Is it Ingrid's old man  
With another fucking court order?

*(Crouches behind a tree and peeps out cautiously)*  
A boy! Just a lad! He seems afraid;  
So furtive, too. Whafs that he's hidden  
Under his jacket? A sickle? He's peering  
All round him. He's putting his hand on a branch.  
What's he doing now? He's so still, so tense.  
Oh, horrible! He's chopped his finger off!  
Right off! And he's bleeding like an ox.  
He's running off with a rag round his hand.  
*(Goes nearer)*  
This is the very Devil! A finger!  
Right off! And he did it deliberately.  
Aha! Now I see! It's a certain way  
Of keeping out of the King's Service.  
That must be it! They wanted him to fight  
And he had his own ideas about war.  
But to chop it off-! To maim himself-!  
Think about it, yes; have the wish, the intention.  
But do it! No! That is beyond me.  
*(He shakes his head, then carries on with his work)*

*(Transition to AASE'S hut)*

AASE  
*(Hurrying to one side of the room)* Kari, listen!

KARI  
What's the matter?

AASE (*At far end of room*)  
Where is-  
I wonder where- Tell me. Tell me where  
What am I looking for? I'm going mad!  
Where is the key to the chest?

KARI  
In the keyhole.

AASE  
What is that rumbling?

KARI  
It's the last load  
Going to Heggstad.

AASE (*Weeping*)  
If only they were  
Carrying me out in my coffin!  
What we poor creatures have to put up with!  
Have mercy, God! The whole house cleaned out  
What Heggstad forgot, the bailiffs have taken.  
They've left me barely a rag to my back.  
It's disgusting that people can be so harsh!  
(*Sits on edge of bed*)  
The farm and the land have gone for good.  
Old Heggstad was hard but the law was harder.  
Not a soul would help me; not one showed pity;  
My Peer away, no one to advise me.

KARI  
This house is yours till the day you die.

AASE  
Bread of Charity for me and my cat!

KARI  
God help you!, You've got Peer to thank for all this!

AASE  
Peer? I'm afraid you're getting muddled  
Ingrid got home safe enough in the end.  
They'd have shown more sense if they'd blamed the Devil;  
He's the offender and no one else.  
The Father of Lies tempted my poor boy!

KARI

Wouldn't it be best to send for the parson?  
You may be even worse than you think.

AASE

Send for the parson? I suppose I should ..

*(Gets up)*

But, O God! No, I can't! I'm the boy's own mother.  
I must help him! It's my sacred duty.  
They've all deserted me. Let me do  
What I can. They've left him this coat. I'll patch  
It up. Would to God I'd dared filch the rug!  
Where are the stockings?

KARI

With that pile of rubbish.

AASE *(Rummaging in pile of rubbish)*

What's this we've got here? Oh yes, it's an old  
Casting ladle. It was one of his toys.  
He used to smelt buttons and mold them with it.  
One day, at a party, my Peer marched in  
And asked his father for a piece of tin.  
"Not tin," said my husband; "I'll give you silver;  
King Christian's coin for the son of John Gynt!"  
God pardon him, he was in such a state  
That he couldn't distinguish between tin and gold.  
Here are the stockings. They're full of holes,  
I must darn them, Kari.

KARI

It won't be too soon.

AASE

When I've finished them I'm going to bed.  
I'm tired out and I feel so sick and ill. *(Gleefully)*  
Look, Kari! Two shirts! They've forgotten to take them.

KARI

So they have!

AASE

Well, that's a bit of good luck!  
I think I can safely keep one of them p.ere. No! I don't see why  
we shouldn't keep both.  
The one he's wearing is quite threadbare.

KARI

But, goodness! Aase, you know that's a sin.

AASE

I do know. I also know that repentance  
Absolves us from sin. Well, I'll repent!

## PART SEVEN

**Caption:** Part Seven. Outside a newly built hut with reindeer antlers over the door. Peer glimpses Solveig's true love, and the Troll-King's Grandson.

(PEER fastening a wooden bolt)

PEER

I must fix a lock; a bolt to secure  
The door against trolls, against men and women.  
All those goddamn all those hobgoblins.

(SOLVEIG enters on skis, wearing shawl and carrying a bundle)

SOLVEIG

God speed your work!  
Please don't send me away.  
You sent and I came, and now I am yours.

PEER

Solveig! No, it can't be--! Yes, it is--! And you're not afraid to come so close!

SOLVEIG

You sent a message with little Helga;  
Others came, too, with the wind and the silence.  
There were messages in your mother's words,  
Messages in my crowded dreams.  
The long, long nights and the empty days  
Brought me the message that I must come.  
Down there, the joy had gone out of life;  
Laughter and tears were denied to me.  
I did not know what was in your mind.  
I only knew what I should and must do.

PEER

But your father--?

SOLVEIG

In the whole world  
I've no one now to call Father or Mother.  
I have left them forever.

PEER  
Solveig, my precious!  
All this for me?

SOLVEIG  
Yes, for you alone.  
You must be all to me, my friend, my life. (begins to cry)  
It was worst to part from my little sister,  
And even worse to leave my Father.  
No, God forgive me, by far the the worst was  
The sorrow of leaving them all; yes, all.

PEER  
Do you know the sentence they passed on me? How  
they even took my inheritance?

SOLVEIG  
It was not for your goods nor your chattels  
That I parted from those I loved so much.

PEER  
Do you know the rest? My life is at stake  
If anyone captures me outside this forest.

SOLVEIG  
I came on snow-shoes. I asked my way here.  
They said, "Where are you going?" I answered,  
"Home."

PEER  
Then away with nails and bars and boards!  
I need no bolts to protect me from  
Hobgoblin thoughts. If you dare to dwell  
With me here, my hut will be sanctified  
Let me look at you, Solveig.  
No, not too near! Let me gaze on you!  
You're so pure and fair!  
Let me carry you—you're so slender and light  
May I carry you Solveig? I'll never tire!  
I will not soil you. I'll hold you away from me.  
You're so lovely, so warm! Who would  
Have thought I could make you love me?  
How I have longed for you, night and day!  
Look, when I built this house I thought of you!  
But it's too ugly—I'll tear it down and start again!

SOLVEIG  
Ugly or not, it's where I want to be.

It's so easy to breathe in the wind up here.  
The valley was stifling. I felt entombed.  
That was one reason why I came away.  
But here, I can hear the singing pines  
Silence and song—here I am at home.

PEER

Are you quite sure? It will be forever.

SOLVEIG

I have come to you. There is no way back.

PEER

Then you're mine!  
Go in! I will get some logs for a fire.  
It will soon be snug and bright and warm.  
It will always be cozy. You'll never be cold.  
*(she goes in)*  
My princess! My beauty! My salvation!  
At last my castle has a firm foundation!

(Someone approaches. It's the WOMAN IN GREEN, now haggard, deformed, or otherwise broken down; and the UGLY BRAT—also nasty, stupid and ill-formed)

WOMAN IN GREEN

Good evening, Mr. Now-you-see-him-now-you-don't!

PEER

What? Who's that?

WOMAN

Old friends, Peer Gynt? My house is nearby.  
We're neighbors.

PEER

Are we? That's news to me.

WOMAN

As your hut was built, mine rose at its side

PEER

(trying to go) I'm in a hurry--

WOMAN

You always were.  
But I'll plod along and still keep you in sight.

PEER  
You've made a mistake.

WOMAN  
Your father's thirsty. Give him a drink. (*to the UGLY BRAT*)

PEER  
Father? Are you drunk? Are you trying to say--

WOMAN  
You can always tell a pig by its skin!  
Where are your eyes? Can't you see he's as crooked  
In the shanks as you are in the mind?

PEER  
Are you trying--

WOMAN  
Are you trying to wriggle out?

PEER  
This long legged brat--

WOMAN  
He has grown very quickly.

PEER  
You old witch, do you dare to tell me that I--

WOMAN  
Listen, Peer Gynt, you're as crude as an ox!  
(*crying*)  
Is it my fault if I'm not as fair as I was  
That day you enticed me out on the hills?  
If you want to see me as fair as before,  
You need only show that girl there the door,  
Drive that tart out of sight and mind, my dear,  
And if you do, this snout will disapper.

PEER  
Get away, you old hag!

WOMAN  
You'll see if I do!

PEER  
I'll split your skull open--

WOMAN

You try if you dare!

Oh no, Peer Gynt, I can stand hard knocks.

I'll come back here every single day.

We'll share you. We'll take it in turns in your bed

PEER

You hell-fiend!

WOMAN

Oh, dear, I nearly forgot!

You'll have to bring up your son, you wretch!

Go along, little devil, go to your father.

CHILD (spitting)

I'll brain you with my ax. You wait! Just you wait!

WOMAN

*(kissing the child)*

Oh dear! What a head he has on his shoulders

You'll be daddy's double when you grow up!

PEER

And all this--

WOMAN

Arises from thoughts and desires.

It's hard on you, Peer.

PEER

It's worse for her!

Solveig! My loveliest, purest gold!

WOMAN

Oh yes! It's the innocent who suffer.

The Devil said that when his mother beat him

Because his father turned up dead drunk!

*(she goes with the CHILD who throws the flask at PEER's head)*

PEER

Go round about, said the Boyg; that's what I must do.

My king's palace has collapsed.

We were so near; and now she's walled in.

And beauty and joy have departed forever.

Go round about. There is no way

Straight through from me to her. Straight through

Well. .. perhaps ... there still might be a way.

I think the Bible has something to say

About repentance. But what does it say?

I have no Bible. I have forgotten.  
No, no, I must find my way round about,  
Not for gain or for loss but only to cleanse  
Myself from things that are best forgotten.

SOLVEIG

*(the 'girl' has become a 'woman'—heavy clothes off, hair down,  
etc. Comes to "doorway")*

Are you coming?

PEER

*(half to himself)* Go round about.

SOLVEIG

What?

PEER

You must wait.

It's dark here and I've a heavy load.

SOLVEIG

Wait! Let me help! I will come and share it.

PEER

No, stay where you are. I must manage myself.

SOLVEIG

Well, don't be too long!

PEER

Be patient, dear.

No matter how long I may be--

SOLVEIG

I will wait.

*(PEER goes into forest. SOLVEIG remains standing in the half-open door. She begins singing quietly to herself)*

*(Or...Strains of Solveig's song are heard)*

*(Transition to Aase's hut.)*

## **PART EIGHT**

Caption: Part eight. Peer conjurs his mother's last journey to the castle that's west of the moon and east of the sun. When Queen Aase is gone, "round-about" still lingers.

(AASE is in bed)

PEER  
Good evening!

AASE  
Is that Peer? Thank God!  
Here at last, my own dear boy!  
It's an awful risk you're running,  
Your life is an danger here.

PEER  
My life? What does my life matter?  
I felt I must see you at once.

AASE  
I can leave you now in peace.

PEER  
Leave me? What's this you're saying? Where are you going then?

AASE  
Ah, Peer! My time's nearly over. I'm not very long for this world.

PEER  
*(turning away)*  
There! I thought I was flying from trouble;  
Here, at least, I thought I'd be free.  
Are you cold? Your feet? And your hands?

AASE  
Yes, Peer; it will soon be over.  
Do you see how much  
They've left us? It's just like them.

PEER  
Are you thirsty? I'll bring some water.  
Have you room to stretch yourself?  
That bed seems so small. Why, it must  
Be the bed I had when a boy.  
Every evening you used to sit  
On the edge and tuck me in,  
And sing me your lullabies.  
Sometimes, you would call the cattle  
Home again. Do you remember?

AASE  
Yes, yes.

PEER

Yes, yes, but do you remember  
What was the best thing of all?  
Our fiery Arab horses ... !

AASE

As though I could ever forget it!

PEER

We drove away up hill and down dale  
To Soria Moria Castle,  
The castle that's west of the moon,  
The castle that's east of the sun.  
Why are you moaning?

AASE

My back, dear, It's aching on these hard boards.

PEER

Sit up then, and let me hold you ...  
There now! That's more comfortable.

AASE

I want Him to take me, Peer.

PEER

Take you?

AASE

Please, Peer, will you bring my prayer book?  
I'm uneasy in my mind.

PEER

In Soria Moria Castle,  
King and Prince are giving a feast.  
Now lie back upon your pillow,  
I'm going to drive you there.

AASE

But, Peer dear, am I invited?

PEER

Yes, both of us will be there.  
(*throws string around cat's chair, etc.*)  
Gee up! Look alive there, Blackie!  
Mother, you're not cold, are you?  
Ah! Now, we're making headway.  
Grane's got into her stride.

AASE  
Peer dear, I can hear bells ringing.

PEER  
The glittering sleigh bells dear.

AASE  
It's a ghostly hollow clanging.

PEER  
We're driving over a fjord.

AASE  
Peer, I'm frightened. What's that sighing?  
And that eerie whispering?

PEER  
It's only the pine trees, Mother,  
Murmuring on the hills.  
On guard, outside, stands Saint Peter.  
He's inviting you straight inside.  
Peer Gynt and his mother are here!  
What was that, Mister Saint Peter?  
My mother may not come in?  
You'd search far and wide, let me tell you,  
And not find so honest a soul.  
I'll leave myself out of the counting;  
I can go back the way I came.  
But you must esteem and honor  
And please her and make her happy.  
Ho ho, there is God the Father!  
Saint Peter, you're in for it now.  
*(in a deep voice)*  
"Stop being so high and mighty!  
Mother Aase is welcome her."  
*(laughs aloud and turns to his mother)*  
There you are! What did I tell you?  
Saint Peter has piped down already.  
Mother, what is it? Tell me,  
Have you gone clean out of your mind?  
Don't stare at me like that, Mother!  
Say something! It's Peer, your boy!  
*(feels her forehead and hands)* Well you can rest now Grane.  
The journey has come to an end. *(bends over AASE)*  
Thank you, dear, for all you gave me,  
The thrashings and kisses, too.  
But, now, you must thank me also  
*(presses his cheek against her mouth)* That was you fare for the  
drive.

KARI

What? Peer! Well you've put an end to her sorrow and suffering.  
Dear God, she is sleeping soundly-- Or is she--?

PEER

Ssh! Ssh! She is dead.

*(KARI weeps beside the corpse. PEER walks up and down the room for a time. SOLVEIG is heard softly singing somewhere.)*

See that she's buried with honor.  
I must get away from here.

KARI

Are you going far?

PEER

Yes, to sea.

KARI

So far?

PEER

Yes, and farther still.

*(SOLVEIG's singing briefly gets louder and then stops.)*

END OF ACT ONE

## Act II

### Part Nine

**Caption:** Part Nine. Two decades later. PEER GYNT has become a wealthy man, due to his accomplishments as a trader in undocumented workers, a black marketeer, and a smuggler. A table set for four for dinner in a beachside palm grove in West Africa. With an awning. And a valet. A large yacht sits off shore. On the cost of doing business, and the law of the jungle.

VALET

My dearest sir, may I introduce our guests.  
From America, the legend of southern agriculture

Peer Gynt, Draft M 58

Mr. B. Picken Cotton. From Germany, the titan of Industry, Heinrich von Boarsnest. The French Marketing genius, Monsieur Gasbag, and last, But not least, our Swedish friend and the world's Leader in business technology, the Honorable Nils Buglepuss.

PEER

Drink, my friends! All men and women's  
Greatest need is for pleasure, so that  
Must be our aim. What will you have?

BUGLEPUSS

Brother Gynt, you are the perfect host.

PEER

Please, you should praise my valet and cook.  
I only sign the checks.

COTTON

Very well, to the three of you; a Toast!

GASBAG

Monsieur, you have a taste....an elegance  
That nowadays is rarely found  
In bachelors living on their own  
There's something which I can't define—

BOARSNEST

It's in that fine wave of the hand.  
A mirror of emancipation,  
Spiritual meditation,  
And citizenship of the world,  
Vision that can pierce the clouds,  
A mind devoid of prejudice  
But tinged with higher perception  
A natural, real knowledge of life;  
These admirable traits all bound  
Into an embracing whole.  
Isn't that what you meant, monsieur?

GASBAG

Possibly. Although in French it sounds  
Much less high-flown.

BOARSNEST

*Ei was*, that language is so ordinary!  
But Herr Gynt, we are looking for  
The cause of this phenomenon.

PEER

Gentlemen, I believe it's found.

*(Brandishes a remote control, "TV" or "Projected Video" begins)  
(OR this might be played live on a different part of the stage)*

INTERVIEWER

Beautiful place you have.

PEER

Well my assistants take good care of it.

INTERVIEWER

But under your management

PEER

I've learned something along the way

INTERVIEWER

'Inside the mind of Peer Gynt.'

*(This might also appear as a title, subtitle or caption as for  
'opening' of a TV interview)*

PEER

Like I said.

INTERVIEWER

It's not what you've got but how you use it.

PEER

The one thing I have always despised is mediocrity.

INTERVIEWER

It's certainly one thing you can't be accused of.

PEER

I despise mediocrity. Better to be totally bad than average.

INTERVIEWER

Is that your secret?

PEER

No.

INT

What is?

PEER

Don't get married.

*Laughter*

We're rational beings, aren't we?

INT

Of course.

PEER

And it is only rational that one should look out for oneself?

INT

The law of the jungle.

PEER

The survival of the fittest. It is therefore not rational that a man  
Should look after someone else.

INT

Makes complete sense. But what if you want to be with someone?

PEER

If you've got enough money, they want to be with you.

INT

But someone special

PEER

Who?

INT

Someone. A loved one. To share—

PEER

Once, when I was young perhaps.

INT

You loved someone?

PEER

I was nearly trapped. They wanted to turn me  
Into something I wasn't.

INT

What were you?

PEER

I'm not sure I knew then, but not one of them. I was myself, that's  
who I was.  
You can't change that, no matter how hard you try. Had to beat up  
seven of her brothers in the end.

INT  
How did you make your millions?

PEER  
*(pause)*  
Helping people.

INT  
Like a charity?

PEER  
Exactly. We helped desperate people. People desperate to leave the places they'd found themselves in: war, famine, natural disasters, the hells on Earth. And we would get them out of those places, to other countries, place them in work.

INT  
Of course you'd charge for this service.

PEER  
Of course. We weren't a charity. We had to fund our operations. That was the deal.

INT  
How gratifying to be able to help people, and run a profitable business.

PEER  
It was a high risk business. Sometimes it cost them everything they had. But what use is a little cash or jewelry if you live in hell?

INT  
Indeed. Some of your critics, though, have argued that you profited from peoples' desperation.

PEER  
That is the fundamental premise of business. The desperation of the customer: to be healthier, wealthier, sexier, slimmer.

INT  
Uh-huh. And you gave people something they really wanted. How did you transport them?

PEER  
Containers. *(beat)* I had a shipping company.

INT  
And then you would find them work?

PEER  
Of course. All part of our service.

INT  
What type of work?

PEER  
Service industries, largely. Leisure. Especially the women.

INT  
With such a profitable and charitable enterprise, why did you stop?

PEER  
I began to feel uncomfortable.

INT  
Really?

PEER  
Perhaps I just have very high standards.

INT  
But you were these peoples' savior.

PEER  
I gave to charity. . . Millions.

INT  
Is there no end to your generosity, Peer Gynt?

PEER  
I started a foundation for displaced people. But it was difficult to offset the feeling.

INT  
The discomfort?

PEER  
Perhaps I felt that it just wasn't me.  
(*laughs*)

INT  
So this is you?

PEER  
We might call this a redeployment.

INT  
For what campaign?

PEER (*laughs*)  
My campaign to be emperor!

INT  
(*laughs*)  
Emperor? Of what in particular?

PEER  
Of everything!

(*Concurrent/interspersed with interview*)  
[BUGLEPUSS—Aha! That's where this is going.

GASBAG—Fantastic philosophy!

BOARSNEST—And poetic!

COTTON—Quiet!]

INT  
Perhaps then you'd explain where we are and what exactly we are doing here?

PEER  
We are in West Africa in a country that must remain nameless. We are by the coast. And out there, off the coast, is my yacht. And my yacht is full of arms.

INT  
Arms?

PEER  
Guns. Bullets. Rockets. Grenades. And men. The best money can buy.

INT  
You mean mercenaries?

PEER  
What's the saying? Conquer the world—

INT  
And lose yourself?

PEER  
No. That's not it. In conquering the world, I will realize myself.  
(*Interview ends*)

GASBAG  
To own the world and all its great wonders!

PEER

Gentlemen, let me explain to you  
How I conceive of the Gyntian Self.  
It is an army of wishes, hankerings,  
Desires; the Gyntian self –it is a sea  
Of fantasies, cravings and dictates.  
But just as the Lord needed some dust  
To make himself God of the Earth,  
I, Peer Gynt, have need of cash and gold  
To make myself an Emperor.

BOARSNEST

But you're rolling in it!

PEER

Yes, enough for a few acres, like  
Monaco or Lichtenstein but  
To be myself, in absolute total,  
Then I must Gynt the universe!  
Lord Gynt for better or for worse!

COTTON

But first let's talk about a little plunder!

PEER

My friends, I'm way ahead of you.  
Tonight our ship heads north.  
Excuse me for not telling you sooner.

ALL FOUR

What happened? Well? What's going on? Etc.

PEER

The Greeks are in rebellion

ALL FOUR

The Greeks? What? In Greece? Etc.

PEER

The Greeks have risen up in arms.

ALL FOUR

Hooray!

PEER

And the Turks are sounding the alarms.  
(*empties his drink. Again.*)

GASBAG  
To Greece! Where I will fight with pride!

BOARSNEST  
And I'll be. . . cheering from the side!  
Ballistics are not really my area.

COTTON  
And I'll help with...uh...logistics!

BUGLEPUSS  
Let's go!

GASBAG  
Friend—forgive me for ever doubting you (*hugging him*)

BOARSNEST  
And I—I'm so ashamed—I thought you were nothing  
But a reprobate.

BUGLEPUSS  
Forgive me, dearest sir. (Trying to kiss PEER)

PEER  
What's this all about?

COTTON  
We see what's behind this army of desires, wishes  
And fantasies.

BOARSNEST  
Now we comprehend!

GASBAG  
So that's the Monsieur Gynt you want to be!

BUGLEPUSS  
Now that is being Gynt honorably!

PEER  
But what the...

COTTON  
Don't you understand?

PEER  
Damned if I do! There's something funny going---

GASBAG  
Aren't you going to lend a hand

To help the Greeks with your ship and money?

PEER

No thanks. I believe that might is right.  
I'll loan my money to the Turks  
*(Beat)*

GASBAG

You can't!

COTTON

You're joking, right? Very funny.

*(Silence)*

PEER

Listen my friends,  
The man who has nothing to lose  
Can gamble anything he likes.  
If you only own a plot of earth  
The length of your own shadow then  
Your obvious fate is cannon-fodder.  
But when a man's as comfortable  
As I he runs far greater risks.  
You're going to Greece. I'll take you there  
For nothing. I'll put you ashore  
Well armed. The more you fan the flames  
Of war the better I shall like it.  
Strike hard for freedom and for right!  
Forward! On! On! Give the heathen Hell!  
And end your days with glory, spiked  
Upon a Turkish spear!  
But make my apologies for me!  
*(slaps his pocket)*  
Money! Myself! Sir Peter Gynt!  
*(opens a parasol, strolls away)*

BUGLEPUSS

The swine

GASBAG

Where is his sense of honor?

COTTON

Honor be hanged! Think of the profits  
We could make if Greece succeeded  
In getting independence.

GASBAG

Saw myself crowned a conqueror,

Feted by lovely Grecian women.

BOARSNEST

I saw my Fatherland's Kultur  
Creeping out over land and sea.

COTTON

The material loss is greatest. Goddamn!  
I could shed tears of rage!  
I saw myself owning Olympus.  
And if that mountain only lives  
Up to its reputation there's  
A mint of copper to be mined.

GASBAG

So near success and now so far!

COTTON

That slave trading nabob's goods  
Are in that coffin of a ship!

BOARSNEST

A marvelous idea! Quick, quick!  
His empire's going to collapse! Hurrah!

GASBAG

What is it?

BOARSNEST

Seize the ship.  
We'll bribe the crew. That won't be hard!  
On board! Expropriate the yacht!

COTTON

You can't!

BOARSNEST

We'll pinch the whole damned thing!

COTTON

In that case, my own interests  
Advise me to do some pinching, too.

BUGLEPUSS

That man's a crook!

GASBAG

What villainy!  
Enfin!

*(they follow the others)*

BUGLEPUSS

I must go with the other three  
But I'm protesting, as you all can see.

(VALET enters with a serving tray. Stops. Studies the situation.  
Then quickly takes off his livery and shoes, grabs some valuables  
[utensils, or candlestick, etc.], pockets them, and runs.)

*(transition to another part of the beach, PEER is running;  
INTERVIEWER is tagging along with some crew people. Yacht  
sails away in the distance)*

PEER

My yacht! My fucking yacht! My guns! And my money you  
fucking bastards! They're getting away! Fucking mercenary  
bastards. I found you, I paid for you, I own you, you fucking,  
fucking.....motherfuckers. This must be a dream. I'll wake myself  
up. *(Slaps himself.)* Wake up! Wake up you stupid shit.

INTERVIEWER

Can you explain what's happened?

PEER

My yacht....my yacht, which was anchored off shore there....they  
stole my fucking yacht! All the weapons, all the cash, everything. I  
think I'm going mad! No, I can't go mad. I won't.

INTERVIEWER

And what about your buyers here?

PEER

Shit, I forgot about them. Fuck. If those bastards find me without  
the  
Guns and money and mercenaries I promised them, they'll skin me  
alive.

Those people in the Party of God are sick amoral creeps. Fuck.  
*(Drops to his knees)*

INT

What are you doing?

PEER

Praying. God, please make them come back. Don't listen to  
anyone else, God, this is important. Listen to me, God, you  
bastard, I want my shit back. You old fraud; you old bankrupt  
goon; I've given to charity....I've helped people.

INT

Do you believe in God?

*(Yacht blows up)*

PEER

My yacht! My Goddamned yacht's blown sky high!

*(Pause)*

I do now. I fucking do now.

*(Another explosion)*

## **PART TEN**

Caption: Part Ten. Peer plans a city and finds a new vessel.

*(Alarum bells or whistles)*

SLAVE'S VOICE

The Emperor's white steed has disappeared.

SECOND SLAVE

The Emperor's sacred attire has been stolen.

EUNUCH VOICE

A hundred strokes of the bastinado

For each man who fails to catch the thief!

*(voices/noises of the chase; horses galloping)*

*(Chase sound fades as PEER is discovered trying to sleep in a tree. Two apes emerge and study him. He wakes with a start.)*

PEER

Shit! Get away from me you fucking ape. Get away!

What are you looking at? I'll catch you and I'll kill you

And I'll make a furry ape suit out of your skin....then...then

*(Looking for interviewer. Camera person staggers near)*

Are you getting this? Great fucking footage!

*(Laughs)* I'll be an animal just like you. Survival of the fittest.

Evolve back to a monkey.

*(APE throws fruit at him.)*

Is that the best you've got?

*(PEER throws fruit back at APE. APE throws his own shit at PEER.)*

Ahhh, shit. You bastard, stop it! Let me talk to you!

We're not so different. *(They study each other for a moment.)*

We're brothers. We shouldn't throw shit at each other.

*(Another moment.)*

*(Suddenly APE throws more shit and fruit at PEER and rushes at him. PEER and CAMERA PERSON scatter off as...)*

Don't you dare you little bastard! I'll kill you.....STOP!

*(another part of the desert)*

THIEF  
The blades of the lances  
    Are flashing and sparkling.  
See, See! They are on my trail!

RECEIVER  
My head will soon  
Roll in the sand. Woe! Woe!

THIEF  
My father stole  
So I must Steal.

RECEIVER  
My father received  
So I must receive.

THIEF  
You must bear your lot.  
You must be yourself.

RECEIVER  
Footsteps approaching  
Run! Run! But where?

THIEF  
Deep is the grave  
And the Prophet great.  
*(they flee leaving the horse and booty)*

PEER  
(entering, TV people still, barely, tagging along)  
Well, what a perfectly lovely morning!  
A toad! Just there, in that clump of sandstone,  
There he sits, gazing out on the world,  
As though from a window. To himself  
He is enough. Enough! Be yourself!  
Where have I seen that? In the Bible, I think.  
Here's a cool spot. I'll rest here and stretch my legs.  
    (lights a cigar)  
What an immense and limitless waste!

INTERVIEWER  
Do you know where we are?

PEER  
The sea's in the West; it's there behind me.  
And that hill is the dyke which is keeping it out.  
*(a thought strikes him)*

A dyke! Well, perhaps--! It's not much of a hill,  
A dyke! A bit of blasting! Then a canal!  
Like a river of life, it would lead the waters  
Right through the channel, drowning the desert.  
Soon, the whole of this smoking Hell  
Would be as fresh as a rippling sea.  
Around a lagoon, on rising land,  
I will found my capital! Peeropolis!

INT  
How will you do that?

PEER  
The world's obsolete! Now it's the turn  
Of Gyntiana, my nascent state!  
*(sticking his face closer and closer to the camera)*  
Give me the money! It can be done!  
My kingdom—no, half my kingdom for a horse!  
*(the horse whinnies)*  
A horse! And clothes! And Jewels! And a sword!  
It can't be! It is! Yes, really! I've read  
Somewhere or other that faith can move mountains,  
But that doesn't mean it can move a horse, too!  
But a fact's a fact! There is the horse!  
*(puts on robe and looks himself over)*  
Sir Peter--and Turk from head to heels!  
Look alive there, Grane, my trusty steed!  
*(mounts)*  
Gold stirrups, too, to support my feet!  
It goes to show that it's Fate that counts.  
You can tell great folk by the style of their mounts!  
*(TV people watch PEER gallop off. Camera/light off, head in  
Opposite direction as "the hell with it.")*

## **PART ELEVEN**

Caption: Part eleven. A tent in an oasis. At the end of this ride,  
Peer gets taken for one.

*(ANITRA and other girls are dancing and singing for PEER, in  
the manner of pulsing rock-and-roll or smoky jazz. With a slight  
Morroccan/African/Asian vibe.)*

CHORUS  
The prophet has come!  
The prophet, the lord of the land,  
Unto us the lord has come  
Riding across the sea of sand.  
The prophet, the lord, the all wise one,

Unto us the lord has come  
Sailing across the sea of sand.  
Blow the flute, beat the drum;  
The prophet, the prophet has come.  
*(they continue to dance and play)*

PEER

I have seen it in print--so it must be true--  
"No man's a prophet in his own country."  
This is a much more pleasant existence  
Than the life over there as a black-market merchant.  
There was something hollow about all that—  
Something foreign; I might even say corrupt.  
A prophet! That makes my position clear.  
I didn't intend to deceive them. Oh no!  
Prophetic replies are certainly not lies.  
And, anyway, I can always resign.  
I'm not tied. I am master of the situation.

ANITRA

Prophet and lord!

PEER

What does my slave desire?

ANITRA

The sons of the desert are waiting outside.  
They beg permission to gaze on your face—

PEER

Stop! Tell them to muster a long way away.  
I'll give them audience from afar.  
You may add that I'll tolerate no men in here.  
Men, dear child, are a rotten lot  
In fact, they're nothing but dirty swine.  
Anitra, if you knew the brazen way  
They've cheated, I mean sinned, against me, my child!  
Never mind! Enough of them! Dance for me, daughter.  
The prophet desires to forget these afflictions.

CHORUS

*(singing and dancing-reprise of chorus)*  
The prophet is good; the prophet is sad  
At the evil deeds of the sons of man.  
The prophet is kind; may his kindness be praised!  
To sinners he opens up Paradise!

PEER

*(watching ANITRA dance)*

She's a tasty piece of flesh, for damn sure.

Her legs are quick and lithe.

I bet she knows some nasty, sexy tricks.

Yes the extravagant makes its appeal

To a tongue overfed with normal fare.

Anitra, my child, come sit with me.

ANITRA

Thy slave desires enlightenment.

PEER

Oh, you make my mouth water, my daughter!

You're irresistible. You uplift your prophet.

You will be my queen in paradise

ANITRA

Impossible, master.

PEER

What do you mean? I'm the prophet!

ANITRA

But I have no soul.

PEER

Then I'll get you one!

ANITRA

But I've done so many wicked things.

PEER

I'll bet you have.

That's why you need me, to show you

The ways of purifying yourself.

I'll make it my duty to educate you.

By the time I'm done with you,

You'll be the Queen of Soul.

ANITRA

The prophet is very kind—

PEER

Don't be shy. Speak!

ANITRA

A soul is boring. I would rather have--

PEER  
What? Just say it.

ANITRA  
That lovely opal.

PEER  
*(giving her the jewel; he is delighted)*  
Anitra! You're a true daughter of Eve!  
You draw me like Adam, because I'm a man.

ANITRA  
So tell me Master, how will I gain my soul?  
Will you whisper the secret in my ear?

PEER  
Oh yes, we'll have plenty of time for whispering.  
But on such a beautiful evening, I'd be a fool  
To waste words alone to open you up.  
Would you like to experience true paradise?

ANITRA  
Yes, yes! Teach me!

*(He fondles and kisses her, begins to undress her)*

ANITRA  
Stop. *(He doesn't)* Stop, my lord. *(He doesn't)* Stop that or I'll bite you!

PEER  
That's not a bad idea...

ANITRA  
O Master, your sense of humor  
Always grabs me where I am most vulnerable.

PEER  
Dear little friend—  
At bottom, I am very frisky,  
Especially when we're alone.  
When we're alone I'm just plain Peer,  
The Peerest of them all. Hey presto!

ANITRA  
What do you want from me?

PEER  
I want to play the thief and the banker's wife.  
I want to kidnap you. Do crazy things with

Rubber. I want to turn into a wolf  
And bite you, too—your thighs, your nipples...

ANITRA  
Shame on you! An old prophet!

PEER  
(Laughing)           What bullshit!  
This prophet is not so old, you goose!  
I'm your Emperor!  
*(thrusts against her from behind, tries to kiss her)*  
See how perky the little woodpecker is!  
Now do you have some new ideas?

ANITRA  
Yes, I'd like to play with your ring.

PEER  
Anitra darling, take everything. Here.  
*(Hands her more jewels and trinkets.  
Slips an ankle hoop onto her leg. They  
Both laugh.)*

ANITRA  
Yes, you are young. Have you any more?

PEER  
Yes, yes, I *am* young. Here, more beads  
More trinkets. Look, look—I fell good!  
*(He starts to sing and dance. To the tune of "Yankee Doodle  
Dandy")*  
I'm the hardest working prophet  
Wipe my brow and lick my chin  
Watch me go from dusk to sunrise  
Catch my breath and start again!

ANITRA  
Prophet, your dance of love would be even  
Lighter without that big heavy pouch  
Hanging from your belt—let me hold it.

PEER  
Yes, my money bag. You are so thoughtful,  
My beauty. Yes, I want you to carry my burdens.  
*(ANITRA takes the bag)*  
Now hurt me, my little minx, so I'll never forget.  
*(ANITRA blindfolds him)*  
In the state I'm in, who can tell the difference  
Between pleasure and pain

ANITRA

Your wish is my command.

PEER

*(Singing and dancing around; tune of a children's song)*

Peer Gynt is a silly loon, silly loon, silly loon.

Peer Gynt is a silly loon, and can't tell his ass from the  
Big bright moon!

La-la-la-la

Peer Gynt is a happy fool, happy fool, happy fool....

*(He gradually slows as he senses he is alone. ANITRA has made  
off with all of his jewels and baubles. He lifts his blindfold. Looks  
around.)*

Well, I'll be damned.

*(The Desert, later. PEER is discovered, walking)*

Bitch! I could have fallen for her. I nearly did.

Could have made a real ass of myself

Chasing after her baubles. Glad to be

Done with her, truth be told.

Free of all female, all business, all religion.

The future is a blank page on which I shall write.

I am Peer Gynt! A goddamn Emperor.

I'll write the history of mankind.

Emperor of history! The history of human treachery.

Bitch, bitch, bitch, how fucking dare she!?

Fuck it. Better off without that twaddle. Without them all!

Peer Gynt...the Emperor. Of what? Thin air?

And women-- frailty, thy name is woman!

*(Solveig appears above or away from him)*

SOLVEIG

*(singing)*

The winter and spring may come and go,

The summer time and the long year, too;

but some day, I know, you'll come back to me,

PEER *(interjecting)*

No. No stop. No turning back. No memories.

SOLVEIG

And I will wait, as I promised you.

God give you His love wherever you are,

If you are on earth or in His care.

I will wait here till you come back to me,

And if you're in Heaven I will meet you there.

PEER

Stop it. Leave me alone. Who are you? What are you?

## **PART TWELVE**

(transition)

**Caption:** Part twelve. Peer wanders across Egypt. Near Cairo, in the shadow of the statue of the Great Sphinx, Peer is chosen Emperor. Of the lunatics.

*(actors form a body sculpture reminiscent of The Sphinx)*

PEER

Now where have I met this thing before?

Do you still speak in riddles? Let's try you out.

Hi, Boyg. Who are you?

VOICE (BEGRIFF)

Ah, Sphinx, wer bist du?

PEER

What's that? An echo? In German? Unheard of!

VOICE

Wer bist du?

PEER

Talks just like a native! A new observation.

(takes out pencil and small book, writes)

Echo in German, Berlin accent.

*(BEGRIFFENFELDT emerges)*

BEGR

A man!

PEER

Me? Huh? Oh. I suppose it was him speaking.

(writes)

"Later came to other conclusions"

BEGR

Just checking to see if there had been any improvement

PEER

Improvement? Excuse me, but I'm trying to make a television program here.

BEGR

Yes, of course you are, but still, can you tell me who you are?

PEER  
*(shields eyes, to imaginary crew)*  
Could someone please explain to this man  
What we are trying to do here?

*Pause*

BEGR  
Who are you talking to?

PEER  
The crew. The interviewer. "Inside the mind of..."

BEGR  
And what do they say?

PEER  
What?

BEGR  
What do your "crew" say?

PEER  
They've gone. Sorry, where am I?

BEGR  
You call it your 'palace.'

PEER  
My palace? What was your name again?  
Now I see where I am.  
*(tries to run off, but encounters a group of inmates)*

BEGR  
I'm afraid the doors of this palace don't open out.

PEER  
But I should not be here.

BEGR  
Well, it looks like your cabinet is in session. People.  
People, come to order please. You are in the presence  
Of your Emperor.

INMATES *(chanting, as sports fans)*  
Peer Gynt, you're the emperor  
Peer Gynt, you're the emperor

PEER  
You're mocking me.

BEGR  
But you are the man himself.

PEER  
But these people are not themselves.  
They are beside themselves.

BEGR  
Beside? Oh no! You're sadly mistaken.  
Here, we're ourselves from the very word "go"  
    We're ourselves and nothing but ourselves,  
    We speed full sail ahead as ourselves,  
We shut ourselves up in a keg of self,  
And so, since we must have an Emperor,  
It's clear that you are the very man.

PEER  
If only the Devil--

BEGR  
    Now, don't get discouraged.  
Every new task must have a beginning.  
"Oneself." Come here, we'll look for examples;  
We'll take a chance and choose one at random.  
Him. King Apis, he built the pyramids.

*(to a FELLAH who carries a mummy on his back)*  
Illustrious One, how are things going?

FELLAH  
*(wildly to PEER)* I am King Apis!

BEGR  
You see? Will your Majesty  
Report on the situation?

FELLAH  
They worshipped me as a bull god.  
You don't believe me? I'll tell you how.  
One day King Apis was out hunting.  
He needed to shit. So he shat in  
My ancestor's field, where corn grew.  
My ancestor ate the corn and fucked his wife.  
She had a child and so on, eating and fucking  
For two thousand years. And I am the product.  
A fellah, a slave. But I need to be more like my ancestor

PEER

You mean dead? Your majesty...

FELLAH

I'll do it! My life for a halter! A rope around my neck!  
At first I'll feel a bit different,  
But time will soon smooth that out.  
*(goes away and begins making arrangements)*

BEGR

Herr Peer, I call that personality,  
A man with method--

PEER

Undoubtedly--  
But he's really hanging himself! Oh God!  
*(Fellah hangs himself)*  
Have mercy! I'm ill! My head's in a whirl!

BEGR

A transitional stage; it won't last long.

PEER

Transition? What to? Forgive me—I'm going—

BEGR

*(holding him)*  
Not so fast?

*(Uproar. Hussein, a minister, approaches)*

HUSSEIN

I've been told an Emperor arrived today.  
Is it you?

PEER

*(in despair)*  
That seems to have been decided.

HUSSEIN

Then you'll have some documents to sign.

PEER

*(tearing at himself)*  
All right! Carry on! The madder the better!

HUSSEIN

In short, Mein Herr, my story is this:  
They all say I'm a sand box whereas I'm a pen.

PEER

My history, Herr Pen, is just as brief—  
I'm a sheet of paper that's been left blank  
And the future can be written on me  
Whatever way I want.

HUSSEIN

Let me, let me write that future please.

PEER

Yes, yes of course, why shouldn't you?

HUSSEIN

Excuse me while I remove my cap, my lid.

PEER

But you're not wearing one.

HUSSEIN

But I am. *(takes out a knife)*

What a relief for this life to be of some use at last.  
Long live the future!

*(Hussein cuts his throat and tries to write on PEER with his blood.)*

I am your instrument.

PEER

What shall I--? What am I? Great God--hold on!  
I'm all that You wish--a Turk, A sinner,  
A troll—but help me; something has burst!  
*(shouting)*  
Your name--it's gone--I can't remember--  
Help me, Thou! Oh, Protector of Madmen, help!  
*(sinks into unconsciousness)*

BEGR

*(with a crown of straw, sits astride PEER and puts it on his head)*

Ha! Look at him sitting enthroned in the mire!

He's beside himself! We'll crown him there!

Long live the Emperor, the emperor of Self!

*(INMATES cheer, raggedly. Some shout "Self, self, self"  
Others lift Peer up as a corpse above their heads)*

SCHAFFMANN

Es lebe hoch "the Great Emperor Peer!"

## **PART THIRTEEN**

**Caption:** Part thirteen. Some years later. In a storm at sea, Peer finds himself adrift.

*(aboard a ship—the actors might create the outline of the bobbing deck of the ship)*

CAPTAIN

Two men to the wheel--and the lantern set!

PEER

There's a stiff breeze blowing.

CAPTAIN

The storm's on its way.

PEER

Can you see the Ronde hills from the sea?

CAPTAIN

No, they're behind the glaciers.  
You seem to know these parts.

PEER

I sailed past here when I left my home.  
The houses are very scattered here.

CAPTAIN

You can walk for miles without seeing a dwelling.

PEER

When I pay my bill remind me  
To tip the crew. I'd like to give something  
To all of them.

CAPTAIN

That's handsome of you. Nearly all are hard up.  
And they all have wives and children at home.  
They can't make ends meet on their wages alone.  
If they can go back with a bit more to spend,  
It would be the homecoming of their lives.

PEER

What was that you said? They've got wives and children?  
They're married then?

CAPTAIN

Every man-jack of them!  
The cook's the one who's most in need.

His family are all half-starved.

PEER

Married? A home? Someone waiting for them?  
Someone to welcome them when they return? ~

CAPTAIN

Yes, a poor man's welcome.

PEER

No, I'm damned if I do! Do you think I'm mad?  
Do you really expect me to empty my pockets  
For the sake of other people's children?  
I've had to slave for what I've got.  
There's no one waiting for old Peer Gynt.

CAPTAIN

Do as you like; the money's yours.

PEER

It certainly is! And mine it will stay!

CAPTAIN

Excuse me now; the wind's getting up.

PEER

Support~other people's swarming brats,  
Make them laugh, bring joy into their homes,  
Know that they're always in someone's thoughts!  
There's no one at all to think of me.  
(the ship rolls heavily)  
Well, that was nasty! The sea is working  
As though it were paid for every wave.  
These northern waters are always themselves,  
Always raging, wayward, tempestuous.  
what was that? I heard--

WATCH

A wreck to leeward.

CAPTAIN

Starboard the helm! Close to the wind!

MATE

Any men on the wreck?

WATCH

I can see three.

PEER  
Quick, lower a boat!

CAPTAIN  
It would never get there.

PEER  
How can you talk like that? If you're men  
You'll try. What does it matter if you  
Get wet?

BO'SUN  
It's impossible in this sea.

PEER  
They're shouting again. The wind's dying down.  
You, cook! Will you? I'll make it worth-while.

COOK  
Not for twenty crowns.

PEER  
You curs, you cowards!  
They're men, with wives and children at home  
Waiting--

BO'SUN  
Well, patience is a virtue.

CAPTAIN  
Bear away from the breakers.

MATE  
The wreck's gone under.

PEER  
This silence--? What?

BO'SUN  
If they were married,  
As you seem to think, then three new widows  
Have just been born into the world.  
*(storm increases to a fury)*

PEER  
Nobody cares about anyone anymore.  
Well, no one is waiting for me.  
Trouble with this kind of thing  
Is that you all go down together.  
No individual fate. But I've still got time.

Peer Gynt shall come back from across the seas.

*(a STRANGE PASSENGER appears magically, from nowhere)*

STRANGE PASSENGER  
Good evening!

PEER  
Good evening! What? Who are you?

SP  
Your fellow passenger.

PEER  
Well, that's funny.  
I thought I was the only one here.

SP  
A small mistake. We've put it right.

PEER  
Why is it I've never seen you before?

SP  
I don't go on deck during the day.

PEER  
Have you been ill? You're as white as a sheet.

SP  
Not at all. I'm in the best of health.

PEER  
What a fearful storm!

SP  
Yes, a good thing, too.

PEER  
A good thing?

SP  
The waves are as high as a house.  
I'm licking my lips. Just think of all  
The ships that are going under! It makes  
Me hard to think of the dead  
Bodies splattered on the shore!

PEER  
Good God!



SAILOR  
The ship's dog, sir.

WATCH  
Land just ahead!

PEER  
Get my trunk and my box! All my luggage on deck!

BO'SUN  
I've got things to do, mister.

PEER  
I was joking, Captain; if cash would  
Help the cook, you can depend on it.

CAPTAIN  
The jib is gone!

MATE  
That was the foresail!

BO'SUN  
Breakers ahead!

CAPTAIN  
She's smashing up!!  
*(the ship founders, noise and confusion)*  
*(transition to in the sea)*

PEER  
Help! I'm drowning! Send a lifeboat!  
Save me lord--that's in the Bible.  
*(PEER clings to a board. COOK breaks surface nearby)*

COOK  
Dear Lord, take pity on my children.  
Be merciful! Help me reach shore.  
*(he grabs board)*

PEER  
Let go!

COOK  
Get off!

PEER  
I'll hit you in the nose--

COOK

I'll smash your fucking face--

PEER

I'll kick your balls till they're black and blue  
Let go! This won't hold two.

COOK

That's right, so swim old man.

PEER

You swim, douchebag!

COOK

Never!

*(they fight, COOK hurts his hand, hangs on with the other one)*

PEER

Away with that hand!

COOK

Spare me please.

Think of my little ones at home.

PEER

I have no children yet,  
So I need my life more than you!

COOK

Let go! You've lived. I am still young!

PEER

Get off! Quick! You'll drag us down!

COOK

Have pity! In God's name, give way!

You have no one to grieve for you.

*(screams as he slips off)*

PEER

*(catching hold of him)*

No, I'm holding you by your hair. Now say your prayers.

COOK

I can't remember. Everything is black--

PEER

The high points then! Stop blubbing.

COOK

"Give us this day--" I forget....Shit.

PEER  
Forget all that.  
You'll soon get everything you want.

COOK  
"Our daily bread"

PEER  
The same old song!  
A chef to the end. (*his grip loosens*)

COOK  
"Give us this day our--(*goes under for the last time*)

(*STRANGE PASSENGER appears*)

SP  
Hello again.

PEER  
You?

SP  
See? It's happening just like I said.  
Now about your corpse....

PEER  
Piss off! There's only room for one.

SP  
Oh, I can swim with my left leg.  
I'll float by holding on to this  
Chink here with my finger tip.  
Now, about the corpse--

PEER  
Shut up!

SP  
Look, this really is the end...

PEER  
Shut up!

SP  
Very well. (*silence*)

PEER  
Well?

SP  
I've shut up.

PEER  
You devil, you! What are you up to?

SP  
Waiting.

PEER  
I'll go mad. What are you?

SP  
A friend.

PEER  
What else?

SP  
What do you think?  
Can't you think of anyone who  
Looks like me?

PEER  
Only the devil!

SP  
Hardly like the devil to show us a light  
When life is black?

PEER  
I see! Then in reality,  
You're my guardian angel, are you?

SP  
Friend, have you, say once in six months,  
Felt fear strike right into your hear?

PEER  
When danger threatens, I'm afraid.  
But your talk will get us nowhere.

SP  
Friend, have you, say once in your life,  
Won a victory from fear?

PEER  
You dickhead! Get off! Get off!  
I won't die. I refuse to die.

SP

Yes, ease your mind. One doesn't die  
Halfway through the final act. (glides away)

PEER

Smartass.

## PART FOURTEEN

**Caption:** Part 14. Later, back in his Motherland, Peer looks for a way home. Near a hut with reindeer antlers over the door.

*(PEER is on his hands and knees in the undergrowth searching for something to eat. )*

PEER

This is one point of view. Where is the next one?

The main thing in life is to fill your belly.

Emperor! You're no Emperor;

You are just an onion.

And I'm going to peel you, my dear Peer!

*(begins to peel an onion layer by layer)*

There's the outer layer, all bruised and broken;

It's the drowning man hanging on to the wreck,

But still it tastes faintly of me.

And inside here is the gold-digging "I".

All dried up, juices gone.

The next layer's like a crown. No Thank you!

The scholar, the prophet, the celebrity—

No, no, no, no. What's at the center?

When am I going to get to the heart?

*(pulls the rest to pieces)*

God, it hasn't got one! Nothing.

Nature is witty!

*(throwing the bits away)*

Ack! Where am I anyway?

*(approaching the hut with the antlers)*

That hut? In the forest! But--

*(rubs his eyes)*

I know I've seen this building before.

Those reindeer antlers over the door!

And a bolt to keep out hobgoblin thoughts!

*(SOLVEIG'S voice heard in the hut)*

SOLVEIG

*(Or a song of similar tone)*  
Now all is ready for Pentecost,  
Dear love of mine so far away,  
When will you come back?  
Your burden is heavy?  
Then rest, rest awhile;  
I will wait, I promised  
You long, long ago ...  
(PEER rises, as white as death)

PEER  
One who remembered, and one who forgot,  
One who had faith, and one who had none.  
The game is over; my race is run!  
My Empire was here. My kingdom...  
Round about....someone once said.  
*(PEER dashes away)*

*(Patches of mist here and there on the ground. PEER runs in across the moor.)*

PEER  
Ashes, mists and driving dust-storms--  
They're the stuff from which to build!  
Stench and rottenness inside them;  
All a whited crypt.  
Dreams, romance, and still-born wisdom  
For foundations, and above  
The pyramid will rise complete.  
"Petrus Gyntus Caesar fecit"  
["Made by the Emperor, Peer Gynt"]  
*(Listens)*

I hear the sound of children weeping,  
Weeping that is half a song.  
Threadballs are rolling at my feet!  
*(Kicking at them)*  
Get away! You block the path!

THREADBALLS *(On the ground)*  
*(rolling, or heads popping out of holes)*  
We are thoughts;  
You should have thought us!  
Legs to move on,  
You should have brought us!

PEER Once, I gave life to a thought;  
It was deformed, with crooked legs.

THREADBALLS  
We should have soared skyward,

A tremulous choir.  
Instead, as gray threadballs,  
We roll in the mire.

PEER (*Stumbling*)  
Threadballs, you confounded devils!  
Are you tripping up your father?  
(*Runs away*)

WITHERED LEAVES (*Flying before the wind*)  
(*Swinging. Or dancing with sticks and ribbons or the like*)  
We are the words you should have spoken,  
Now the wind has dried us and the bugs eaten us--

PEER  
Right, so that makes you manure for next year's thoughts.

WIND  
(*Rolling across stage on something*)  
We are songs you should have sung!  
A thousand times you strangled us in your throat,  
Now we are poison.

PEER  
Be stilled yourself, with your rhyme and curse!  
What time have I for nonsense verse?  
(*Turns aside*)

DEWDROPS (*Dripping from the trees*)  
(*Lying flat and swimming/dancing in the GRID above the stage*)  
We are tears you never shed.  
We could have melted the ice around your heart.

PEER.  
I cried once in the Troll King's hall.  
All I got for my trouble was a kick in the ass!

BROKEN STRAWS  
We are deeds you have left undone!  
We'll sing like black crows on judgment day

PEER  
You weird little creeps. Why torment me  
Me for what I Haven't done?  
(*Runs away*)

AASE'S VOICE (*Far away*)  
Pshaw! What a driver!  
You've thrown me in  
To an icy puddle;

I'm soaked to the skin!  
You're on the wrong road Peer;  
Where is the Castle?  
Some send-off you've given me!

PEER  
I think I'd better hurry off.  
I'd sink into the hillside if  
I had to bear the Devil's sins.  
My own are hard enough to carry.

*[Runs away]*

## **PART FIFTEEN**

**Caption:** XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

*(Another Part of the moor.)*

PEER *(Singing)* [or some other funereal, profane song]  
A sexton, a sexton! Where are you, you hounds?  
Bleating notes from the preceptors' mouths.  
Around your hats, black mourning-bands!  
Let me follow the coffins of my dear friends!

*(The BUTTON MOLDER, with a bag of tools and a large casting-ladle, enters)*

BUTTON-MOLDER  
Good evening, old man!

PEER  
Good evening, my friend!

BM  
My sight's not so good--  
Excuse me--your name isn't Peer, I suppose?

PEER  
Yes, it is--Peer Gynt.

BM  
Well I call that luck!  
I've been searching for Peer Gynt everywhere.

PEER  
Oh? What do you want?

BM  
You can see what I am.

I'm a button molder. I want you for my spoon.

PEER  
What for?

BM  
You are to be melted down.

PEER  
Melted?

BM  
I have orders from here from my Employer  
To bring Him your soul without any delay.  
I'm afraid it's over, pal.

PEER  
You can't do that! I've had no warning.

BM  
It's the custom at funerals and births  
To give the guest a tremendous surprise.  
No one ever tells him the fateful day.

PEER  
Yes. I know. My brain is in a whirl. You are--?

BM  
I told you! A button molder.

PEER  
I'm not as bad as you seem to think;  
At the worst. I'm no more than a bungling ass;  
I'm certainly not a confirmed reprobate.

BM  
That's the problem, pal.  
Because your sins were such puny ones  
You're being let off perpetual torment  
And are ending, like most, in the casting ladle.

PEER  
You're calling me mediocre?

BM  
Don't take it personally buddy.  
Top class sinners are hard to find these days.

PEER  
Fucking hell, I've never done anything mediocre!

Off you go! And stick to your own affairs!

BM

My friend, you're making a great mistake.  
As we're both in a hurry I'll put the case  
As concisely as possible. It will save time.  
There's more to it than wallowing in filth.  
Strength and purpose are needed for epic sinning.  
You didn't do that; you took sin lightly.  
And therefore, my friend, you'll be melted down.

PEER

What sort of dodges have you been up to  
Here at home while I've been abroad?

BM

The method's as old as time.  
The aim is the conservation of matter.  
You know the trade, so you're well aware  
That a casting may frequently have a flaw.  
For example, a button may have no loop.  
What would you have done with it?

PEER

Thrown it away.

BM

Oh yes! John Gynt was a squanderer  
As long as he had something left in his pocket.  
But my Employer is very careful;  
That's why he's become so prosperous.  
He throws nothing away; he finds a use  
For the useless as raw material.  
You were going to be a shining button  
On the world's tuxedo; but your loop gave way.  
So you must be merged into the mass.

PEER

No, I say, no; I'll fight to the end.  
I protest! I'd do anything rather than that.

BM

But what else is there? Come, be sensible.  
You don't seriously think you're a candidate for Heaven?

PEER

I'm easy to please. I don't aim so high.  
But I'll be damned if I'll let myself be melted down.  
How about I do some time with the devil

A hundred years if you think I deserve it;  
I think I'd manage to last it out.  
This ladle business, this ending at Gynt-  
Not the button melting—into oblivion.

BM

But, my dear Peer, it's really unnecessary  
To make so much about such a small thing.  
You have never really been yourself,  
So why bother now if you go for good?

PEER

I've not been myself! I could almost laugh!  
Peer Gynt not himself! You're fucking blind  
Button-man! I'm Peer Gynt, I'm me.

BM

Here are my orders.  
They're in black and white: "You will bring Peer Gynt  
Because he missed the purpose of his life"  
To the ladle with him as damaged goods!"  
Now come with a good grace and don't waste time.

PEER

I'm damned if I will! A very nice thing  
If you found out later you'd made a mistake!  
You'd better take care, my man.

BM

It's in writing here.

PEER

Give me time.

BM

Why should I?

PEER

I'll go and get proof.  
That I've been myself as long as I've lived.

BM

Proof? How?

PEER

Witnesses? Certificates!

BM

I'm afraid my Employer won't be impressed.

PEER  
My friend,  
Only let me loan myself out on trust.  
I'll soon be back. We're only born once,  
So we do our best to cling to the self  
That was born with us. Well? Do you agree?

BM  
One more day won't hurt.  
But remember, we'll meet at the next crossroads.  
*(he disappears)*

*(another part of "the moors")*

PEER  
A witness. A witness? Where can I find one?

*(an old bum enters. He is the TROLL KING)*

KING  
Please sir, a coin  
For a homeless beggar.

PEER  
I've no small change.

KING  
Prince Peer! Just fancy us meeting again.

PEER  
Who are you?

KING  
You remember the Dovre King?

PEER  
You're never--

KING  
The King of the Ronde mountains!

PEER  
The Dovre King? Really? The Fucking Troll King? Tell me!

KING  
Yes, but I'm not what I used to be.

PEER  
Ruined?

KING  
And robbed; stripped of everything;  
I'm a tramp now, as hungry as a wolf!

PEER  
But what an expert witness you'd make!

KING  
You've aged yourself since we last spoke.

PEER  
I was an idiot back then.

KING  
You were, but you did right to steer clear  
Of my daughter. Whore.

PEER  
There's something I want to ask you.  
I'm in an awkward situation.

KING  
Shacked up with one of them?

PEER  
I need a witness, dear Father-in-law;  
In return, I daresay I could stand you a drink.

KING  
Can I really help you in any way, Prince?

PEER  
Drop this "Prince" business. You wanted to lay rough hands on me,  
Slit the lens of my eye, make me see awry  
And transform Peer Gynt into a troll.  
What did I do then? I rose up and fought you;  
I swore that I'd stand on my own firm feet;  
I rejected love and power and a kingdom,  
Gave up everything just to be myself.  
And that's what I'd like you to swear to when--

KING  
No, I can't. When you left my palace,  
You'd written my motto on your coat of arms.

PEER  
What motto?

KING

That all-embracing word--

PEER  
What word?

KING  
The word that distinguishes  
Human beings from trolls, "Troll, to thyself  
Be--enough."

PEER  
Enough!

KING  
And that's how you've lived  
With every fiber of your being.

PEER  
What? I? Peer Gynt?

KING  
(weeping)  
You're very ungrateful.  
You've lived like a troll but you've kept it dark.

PEER  
A troll? I?

KING  
Yes, that seems perfectly clear.

PEER  
I might just as well have stayed where I was,  
And lived with you in comfort and peace,  
And saved myself shoe leather, toil and trouble!  
Peer Gynt--a troll! It's nonsense! It's lies!  
Good-bye! Here's a penny to buy tobacco!

KING  
Dear Prince Peer--

PEER  
My man, I'm afraid you're on the wrong scent.  
The wolf's at my door; you know what that means.

KING  
You don't say so! You? A beggar too?

PEER  
Stony-broke! My princely "self" is in pawn;

And who have I got to thank for that?  
You trolls! Now, you see what low company does.

KING  
So my hope's gone west! Good-by! I must  
Make my way into town somehow or other.

PEER  
What will you do there?

KING  
TV. Become a celebrity.  
Us authentic types are all the rage.

PEER  
The best of luck! Give them greetings from me.  
If I can get free I'll do the same thing.  
I'll write you a series,  
I'll call it: "Fucked."

*(pushing KING off)*  
You're in for a nasty time, friend Peer;  
The trolls' "Enough" has let you down.  
Your ship has sunk; you must cling to a spar,  
To anything, rather than go to the scrap-heap.

BUTTON MOLDER  
(at the crossroads)  
Well, Peer Gynt, where's your certificate?

PEER  
What? Crossroads again? That was pretty quick.

BM  
I can read your face like an open book.  
I don't need the papers to tell me the news.

PEER  
What do you mean by "being yourself"?

BM  
That's an astounding question from you.  
Why, a moment ago--

PEER  
Come, come, answer me.

BM  
To be yourself is to kill the worst  
And so to bring out the best in yourself.

But I'm certain that would be lost on you,  
So let's put it more simply: To carry out  
The Master's intention in every detail.

PEER

How about the man who has never learned  
What the Master intended to do with him?

BM

His intuition should tell him that.

PEER

Intuitions are frequently wide of the mark.

BM

That's true, but when you lack intuition  
The Devil's always ready to sign you up.

PEER

This is a very knotty affair.  
I was roaming the moors just before,  
I felt the shoes of my conscience pinch,  
And I said to myself, "Yes, you're a sinner—  
You're guilty as Fuck."

BM

Now, you're beginning all over again--

PEER

No, I'm not; I mean sinning on the grand scale,  
Not in deeds alone but in purpose and word.  
When I was abroad I sank so low--

BM

So you say, but why don't you show me the proof?

PEER

Give me time; I'll go and find a parson,  
Confess at top speed and bring you his notes.

BM

All right! If you can confirm your claim,  
You may yet keep out of the casting ladle.  
But my orders, Peer--

PEER

It was years ago;  
It goes back to the days when I was a young fool,  
When I believed in Fate, when I played at being  
A prophet. Well? May I ... ?

BM

To the next crossroads, then, but no further than that

PEER

A parson! I must get hold of a parson  
Even if I have to handcuff him.

(transition)

PEER

I may jump from the frying pan into the fire.  
But there's also a saying that has stood  
The test of time, "While there's life there's hope."

*(the THIN PERSON enters dressed as a priest with a birding net)*

Who's there? A priest with a fowling net?  
Heigho! I seem to be in luck's way!  
Good evening, sir! This road's hard going.

THIN PERSON

I agree, but I'd go through more than this  
For a soul.

PEER

So there's someone on his way  
To Heaven.

TP

I hope to the other place.

PEER

Do you mind if I walk with you part of the way?  
And I'd like to ask you something.

TP

Go on.

PEER

You see, Father, I'm not a bad man,  
Not bad enough to be damned eternally,  
Yet not so good that I never faltered.

TP

We all falter, son.

PEER

But these faltering, these little things—

TP  
Little things!?

PEER  
Yes.

TP  
Go away. Leave me be.  
I'm not the person you think I am,  
I'm not interested in little things.

PEER  
But father—  
*(looks down at TP's foot)*

TP  
You appear very interested in my foot.

PEER  
Is that hoof real?

TP  
As real as you and me.

PEER  
I'd have sworn you were a priest.

TP  
Uh-huh.

PEER  
This is so much better.

TP  
Better?  
Shake hands. You don't seem the least bit biased.  
Well, well! And what can I do for you?  
Now, don't start asking for money or power.  
I couldn't oblige you for anything.  
There's been a slump in business;  
New souls are rare; now and then, an odd one--

PEER  
Has Mankind improved that much?

TP  
On the contrary, he gets worse and worse;  
Most people end up in the casting ladle.

PEER

I've heard more than enough about that ladle;  
It's in that connection that I am here.

TP

What's on your mind?

PEER

Would it look very bad  
If I asked you for--

TP

A decent home, eh?

PEER

You've guessed what I want before I ask.

TP

My dear fellow--

PEER

My needs are quite moderate.  
I don't even ask for a living wage.  
I just want to be a friendly tenant.

TP

A warm room?

PEER

Not too warm and, if possible,  
Permission to come and go, as I like;  
And the right--may I call it such?--to move out  
Should the chance of better times come around.

TP

My dear friend, it hurts me; you'd hardly believe  
How many similar requests I get.

PEER

But when I consider my past behavior,  
I feel I've more than a right to get in.

TP

But your sins were such little ones.

PEER

Yes in a way-  
If you exclude my traffic in sex-slaves.

TP  
You yourself have made the claim  
That you were helping them.

PEER  
What about the guns I sold  
To revolutionaries and dictators  
Fighting each other in the same battle?

TP  
Silly stuff! It just makes us laugh.

PEER  
Then listen, in a shipwreck,  
Well, I, more or less, robbed the cook of his life.

TP  
I wouldn't care if you'd, more or less,  
Robbed your kitchen maid of something else.  
Come, come, dearest friend, forget the idea;  
Prepare yourself for the casting ladle.  
That reminds me I must be going at once.  
I'm collecting a steak; I hope he turns out  
Nice and juicy. I'm off! No time for gossip.

PEER  
And may I ask what misdemeanors  
Have fattened this friend of yours?

TP  
I believe He has been himself by night and by day;  
And that, at bottom, is the chief thing.

PEER  
Himself? Well then, who is it?

TP  
Says here the name's Peer Gynt.

PEER  
Peer Gynt indeed?

TP  
You know him?

PEER  
Oh yes, intimately.

TP

I'm late.  
Where did you see him last?

PEER  
In a pool of my own piss staring back at me.  
My reflection.  
I see your intelligence is a bit overrated.

TP  
What? You're not Peer Gynt.

PEER  
I was and I am and I always will be.

TP  
No, no. Never. I've seen him on TV.  
He's young and good looking,  
He's mad and he's mean,  
A myth amongst men.  
Not like you, I'm afraid, my friend...

PEER  
But I'm me.

TP  
Perhaps. But you're not him.  
I'm off to Africa to look for him there.  
Well, I must fly. I hope I don't miss him.  
The Cape, the Cape! Not a very good spot;  
Full of missionaries.  
*(runs off)*

PEER  
*(Beat. Then he laughs)*  
Bastard! Stupid fuck! Look at him trotting away  
With his tongue hanging out; I've cheated you again, you prick!  
And you've cheated me. Of myself.  
My reputation has superseded me, it seems.  
Ah well, on balance his loss is greater.  
*(Beat. a shooting star is seen)*  
Greetings from Peer Gynt, brother shooting star!  
We burn bright for a moment,  
Then disappear into the abyss.  
*(Silence. Then, he cries.)*  
Is there no one, no one in this great world,  
No one in Hell, no one in Heaven?  
*(gradually a great stillness comes over him)*  
A soul is a frail thing when it returns  
Into the grey mists of nothingness.  
You beautiful sun,

You wasted your golden light on me,  
And in my empty travel bus there was  
No one else to keep warm.  
I will climb to the top of the highest peak,  
I want to see the sun rise one last time,  
I will gaze on the promised land till my eyes  
Are tired out. Then let the snow pile over me,  
And above my tomb write, "Here lies no one,  
Let the earth keep turning."  
And afterwards, well--let come what will.

#### CHURCHGOERS

*(singing) (this or "Amazing Grace")*

Most blessed of mornings,  
When the tongues of the Kingdom of God  
Struck the earth like flaming swords!  
Now His sons' hymns rise up  
From the earth to His Heaven  
In the tongue of the Kingdom of God

#### PEER

No, don't look there; it's a desert waste.  
Ack! I was dead long before my death.  
(tries to hide away, but comes out on the crossroads)

#### BUTTON MOLDER

Good morning, Peer Gynt! Where's your list of sins?

#### PEER

I've shouted and whistled all over the place.

#### BM

And you've seen no one?

#### PEER

A traveling

Photographer

#### BM

Then your time is up.

#### PEER

Everything is up.  
*(faint sounds of SOLVEIG singing are heard)*  
What's that light over there?

#### BM

Only a cottage.

#### PEER

I can hear a sound  
Like the wind in the trees.

BM  
It's a woman singing.

PEER  
There--there I shall find my list of sins.  
*(the BM takes hold of him)*

BM  
It's time to set your house in order.

PEER  
Set my house in order? It's there! Clear off!  
If your ladle were as big as a coffin,  
It would still be too small for me and my list.

BM  
The third crossroads is the last, Peer Gynt.

PEER  
Backward or forward, it's just as far,  
Within or without the path is as narrow.  
No! I can hear it--a wild endless cry  
Telling me go in, go back, go back home.  
*(advances a few steps, then stops)*  
"Round about," said the Boyg.

*(singing gets louder)*

No! No! This time,  
It's straight through no matter how narrow the path!  
*(he runs toward the hut as SOLVEIG comes out dressed for church with prayer book in hand. She might or might not be blind. PEER throws himself down)*  
Pass judgment on the sinner before you!

SOLVEIG  
It's you. You're here! Praise be to God!

PEER  
Cry out how wickedly I have sinned!

SOLVEIG  
You have sinned in nothing, my only love.

BUTTON MOLDER  
*(from the near shadows)* The list, Peer Gynt?

PEER  
But I have sinned against you more than anyone!

SOLVEIG  
You have made my life a beautiful song.  
Bless you for having come back at last!  
And blessed be this golden Sunday morning!

PEER  
Then I am lost, unless you can answer a riddle.

SOLVEIG  
Tell me.

PEER  
Where has Peer Gynt been since you last saw him?

SOLVEIG  
Been?. . . That's easy.

PEER  
Then tell me. Where have I been?

SOLVEIG  
You were in my faith, my hope and in my love.

PEER  
What are you saying? You're talking in riddles.

SOLVEIG  
I have love and nurtured the boy who was inside me  
And the father of that boy was he  
Who hears a mother's prayers and forgives.  
*(he clings to her, fighting back tears)*  
*(She kisses him, passionately. He responds)*

PEER  
Hold me in your innocence, my wife, my love.  
Shield me. Save me.  
*(he puts his face in her lap.*  
*Silence.*  
*The sun rises)*

SOLVEIG  
(singing)  
Sleep, my dear, my dearest love!  
I will rock you and watch beside you.  
The boy has sat on his mother's lap.  
They've played together the whole day long.

The boy shall lie in his mother's arms  
The whole day long. God bless you, my love!  
The boy shall lie against his mother's heart  
The whole day long. He is weary now.  
Sleep, my dear, my precious one, sleep ,sleep.  
I will rock you, my boy, my darling. Sleep, sleep.

BUTTON MOLDER

We shall meet at the last crossroads, Peer,  
And then we'll see if--I say no more.

SOLVEIG

(singing louder as sunshine bursts forth)

I will rock you and watch beside you.  
Sleep and dream, my own dear love!

**End of Play**

*ALTERNATE LYRICS FOR ENDING:*

Sleep, my boy, sleep,  
Let me hold you in my arms,  
I'll watch while you rest,  
I'll protect you from all harm.  
Sleep my boy, sleep,  
In the sunlight we played  
And at night you lay upon my breast.  
You're in my heart always.  
Now sleep my boy sleep—

BUTTONMOLDER

At the next crossroads, pal.

SOLVEIG

*(as sunshine bursts forth)*

Sleep my weary boy, sleep,  
I'll love you all my days.

**End of Play**