

STILL IN THE WORLD, YET NOT OF THIS WORLD

radio drama inspired by Adam Mickiewicz's poetry

written and directed by Jerzy Machowski

Translations: Charles S. Kraszewski, Dorothea Prall Radin, Clark Mills, Magdalena Mickiewicz

CHARACTERS

Prologue, Intermezzos and Epilogue:

Wizard

Spectre

Part 1 – The Lilies:

Lady

Hermit

Children

Husband

Brothers

Part 2 – The Ghoul:

Ghoul

Part 3 – Upita:

Traveller

Nobleman

Church Warden

Grounds Manager

PROLOGUE

WIZARD

To the graveyard comes filing in
The crowd, and Dziady will begin.
Now, see the flash that bursts forth there
From out the chapel. By the fire
They conjure those spirits most dire —
Condemned souls. Out of graveyard pile
And from the deep forgotten wilds
They lure the bodies of the damned.
The graves are gaping — from the earth
The eerie blue flames now burst forth:
Pine-boards are burst, and cerements
Split wide, their ghastly inhabitants
Crawl forth — with pale heads and thin arms.
Oh, Good Lord! Ha! What do I see?
That's a fresh corpse. His clothes are free
As yet from grave-mould.
No eyes — in his eye-pits there gleam
Two white hot, molten coins of gold.
He's running this way, gnashing teeth,
And milling with his hands as if
Each were a sieve, and he would sift
Something — can you hear him screech?

SPECTRE

Pour some out, pour some out for the orphaned and old

For the imprisoned and widowed;

Pour it out, scrape it off me, this silver and gold!

Dig the ducats out of my head!

You don't want to? Ha! On I must pour, on must roast

Till that ghoul who ripped children apart

Should at last give up his plumbless, gluttonous soul

And I pour the ore straight in his heart.

I will pour the hot ore, using him as a sieve,

Pour it into him, out of him, sift!

One day I'll sift, and tilt, and turn,

But long I wait, and how I burn!

PART 1 – THE LILIES

Forest whispers, a murmuring brook, somewhere in the distance birds sing.

A grave is being filled: shovel — earth; seeds are sown; a Lady sings.

LADY

singing

Lily flowers, grow as high
As my husband deep doth lie;
As my husband deep doth lie,
Do ye, lilies, grow so high!

The sound of the Lady running.

*Forest whispers continue in the background, the wind picks up and we hear nocturnal birds now
— crows and owls.*

Finally the Lady stops running.

The sound of knocking on a door that eventually opens.

HERMIT

God be with thee, woman! What
Dost thou in the wood alone?
What has brought thee to this spot
While the stormy night-winds moan?

LADY

Over wood and marshy hollow
Shines my castle, but to far
Kiev must my husband follow
King Boleslaw in the war.
Years went on, and still among
Battle's noise he wandered free,

I was young amid the young,
Virtue's path is slippery,
And I broke my vows at last.
Woe upon me and alack!
Stern the laws the king has passed,
And the warriors have come back.
But my husband shall not know:
See the blood upon this blade!
He is silenced and laid low! —
Full confession I have made:
Give me, therefore, holy sage,
Prayers to say and pilgrimage;
Tell me where I am to go!
I would walk to hell, endure
Brand, and scourge that tears the skin,
If I only could be sure
Night would cover up my sin.

HERMIT

Woman, dost thou then repent
Of the crime that brought thee here,
Or but dread the punishment?
Go in peace, cast off thy fear,
Clear thy brow, thy secret lies
Safe for ever from men's eyes.
Thus the Lord commands us: those
Things thou dost in secret, none
But thy husband can disclose,
And thy husband's life is done.

*The sound of the Lady running.
Interior. Fire crackling in a fireplace.
The Lady sings her children a lullaby.*

CHILD 1

Mother...

CHILD 2

Why does father stay so late?

LADY

What! You wait the dead?
He is in the wood near by,
He will come tonight.

The Lady continues to sing. The children fall asleep.

Her voice becomes distorted.

Ominous sounds and a man's frightful voice.

HUSBAND

Children, hear me, hear my cry!
'Tis your father, it is I!

The horrible sounds cut out.

LADY

to herself

Through the night I lie awake,
Conscious of my guilty act,
On my lips no smiles will break,
And my heart is ever racked.

to the children

Hurry, Hanka, for I hear
Trampling on the bridge. I see
Clouds of dust now drawing near.
Are they guests to visit me?

A door opens to the thud of horses hooves approaching.

CHILD 1

They ride hither in their might,
All the road a whirling cloud,
And their sharp swords glisten bright
And their black steeds neigh aloud.

CHILD 2

They are knights-in-arms who ride,
Brothers of our lord who died.

The horses stop just outside the house.

Knights dismount their horses and enter.

BROTHER 1

Greetings! And how dost thou fare?
Greet us, sister!

BROTHER 2

Tell us, where
Is our brother?

LADY

He is dead.

BROTHER 2

When?

LADY

A year ago.
He died in the war.

BROTHER 1

Nay, 'tis false! Be happy thou,
For the war is over now.

BROTHER 2

He is well and of good cheer,
Soon thou shalt behold him here.

LADY

Where is he, my own true knight?
Will he soon rejoice my sight?

BROTHER 1

He returned with us, but then
Hastened on ahead that he
Might receive us with his men
And the sooner comfort thee.
He will come, if not today,
Then tomorrow; he perhaps
In his haste has lost the way.
We will let a day elapse
And then seek him. Never fear,
One more night will bring him here.

Ominous sounds and a man's frightful voice.

HUSBAND

Brothers, hear me, hear my cry!
'Tis your brother, it is I!

The horrible sounds cut out.

BROTHER 1

We sent searchers high and low,
Waited one day, then another,
When we could not find our brother,
Weeping, we decided to go.

LADY

Autumn is no time for travel,
Winds are cold and rains are wet;
You have waited without cavil,
Wait a little longer yet.

BROTHER 1

So we wait...

Music — the passing of time.

BROTHER 2

Winter came,
But no brother!

BROTHER 1

Take our message in good part,
Lady, once our brother's wife!

BROTHER 2

He has surely lost his life.
We sit idle here. Thou art
Youthful — far too young, in truth,
To renounce the world and smother
All the impulses of youth!

BROTHER 1

Take one brother for another!

The Lady runs out. We hear her running, the sound of the forest in the background. Finally, she stops and knocks on a door that slowly opens.

LADY

Tell me how to reconcile them,
Both would have me, I must choose.
Either suits me: how beguile them?
Who shall win and who shall lose?
I have children. I command
Wealth of stores and settled land,
But my wealth will soon have fled,
If I stay alone, unwed.
Ah, but there can never be
Any wedded joy for me!
God has sent a cruel blight
And a spectre haunts my night.
Scarcely have I closed my eyes,
Creak! and up the door-latch flies;
And I wake and see and hear
How it pants as it draws near,
And its panting and its tread
Tell me that I hear the dead!
Whir! It holds a knife in air,
Wet with blood, above me there.
From its mouth the sparks fly free
And it pulls and pinches me.
Ah, enough of torment! I
Must from my own dwelling fly;

Happiness I shall not see,
Wedded joy is not for me.

HERMIT

Daughter! Listen here: no crime
But is punished in due time.
Yet the Lord doth still give ear
When repentance is sincere.
I know secrets hid from men,
And I bring thee words of cheer:
I can raise thy knight again
Though he has been dead a year.

LADY

What, my father! Do not thou
Raise the dead! 'Tis over now,
And the blade of steel must sever
Me and him it slew forever.
I am worthy punishment,
I will suffer what is sent,
Only let this ghost relent!
I will give up all my goods,
Far within the lonely woods
In a cloister take the vow,
Only, father, do not thou
Raise the dead! 'Tis over now,
And the blade of steel must sever
Me and him it slew forever!

HERMIT

Go then, while thou canst, and marry:
Do not fear the spectre form!
In the grave the dead will tarry,
For death's gate is hard to storm,
And thy husband will appear
Only if thou call him here.

LADY

How appease the brothers? Who
Shall be favoured of the two?

HERMIT

Let God choose, and do thou call
Him on whom the lot shall fall.
Let them both at break of day
Go and gather flowers, and they
From the flowers for thee shall twine
Each a wreath and put a sign
In the garland that shall show
Which is which for all to know;
Then in church with their own hands
Place them where the altar stands.
He whose wreath thou choosest, be
Thine own lord and love shall be.

Ominous sounds and a man's frightful voice.

HUSBAND

My wife, hear me, hear my cry!
'Tis thy husband, it is I!

The horrible sounds cut out. Church bells ring out and singing is heard coming from the church.

Then the rustling of flowers.

LADY

Lo, the wreath of lilies! Whose
Are they, who is it I choose?

BROTHER 1

There inside a lily wreath
I enwove a ribbon band:
See the token underneath!
It is mine — I win thy hand.

BROTHER 2

'Tis a lie!
Not far off there is a plot
And these flowers are from that spot
In a forest opening,
On a grave beside a river.
I will show you grave and spring:
This my wreath and I the giver!

The brothers draw their swords and commence to duel.

BROTHERS

Mine! Mine! Mine!

The duel is interrupted by the sudden opening of the church gates.

HUSBAND

'Tis my wreath, and thou art mine!
From my grave the flowers were broken:
Bind me, father, with thy stole!

Evil wife, by every token
I am thine! Cursed be thy soul!
Cursed be you, my evil brothers,
Who have thus despoiled my grave!
Cease your struggle for each other's
Life-blood. Mine the wreath you gave!
Wife and brothers, you shall go
With me to the world below!

The church collapses in crashes and thuds and through the clamour the Lady sings a ballad.

LADY

singing

Thereupon the church foundation
Shook. The walls and arches slipped
From their lofty elevation,
Sinking down beneath the crypt.
All lie buried underground,
Lilies blossom on the mound,
And the flowers grow as high
As the dead man deep did lie.

INTERMEZZO 1

WIZARD

Ha! What do I see? So! So near —
Another sprite comes running here,
And what a hideous corpse is he!
Freshly buried, pale and fat,
He's sprung away from chapel-side —
The devil leads him far astray
And will not let him get inside:
Like a girl on her wedding day,
The devil winks, and blows a kiss
At him, and so, the dazzled sprite
Lurches after the hellish miss
Like newlywed on wedding night.
But just as he gets hold of her,
The ground gapes open at his feet
And mastiffs tear him from beneath,
Ah! Limb from limb! And then, each cur
Runs off with the disgusting meat.
The dogs are gone — now, a new wonder!
The corpse that had been torn asunder
And strewn about the churchyard wide
Now trembles, flops, and comes alive —
Each sundered piece of ghoulish meat
Drawing unto a ghastly heap.
The head hops hither like a frog
Propelled by the sulphurous fog

That blasts from out the nose; the chest
Crawls up more slowly to join the rest,

Just like a tortoise drags its shell.
The ripped-off fingers now, as well,
Like blindworms slither through the grass.
The palm there inchworms close; at last,
The corpse again stands whole, erect.
Again the maiden tilts her neck
Coquettishly, again the chase,
Again the horrible embrace,
Again the ground gapes, and the curs
Rip him apart, as the first.

PART 2 – THE GHOUL

WIZARD

The heart is stopped, cold is the breast,
Mouth closed, and eyes as dull as lead;
He's here, and yet he's somewhere else:
What kind of man is this? — The dead.

The breast swells, yet cold is that breast,
His lips and eyelids wide are spread,
He's here again, yet somewhere else:
Who is this man? The living dead.

GHOUL

Spirit accursed! Why do you send
Through the dumb earth the spark of life?
Splendour accursed! Snuffed, once again
Why do you shine to send me strife?

O righteous sentence, yet fraught with fear!
To see her, just to part again;
To relive my pain year after year
And as I ended, each year end.

To find her, I must err among
The mob, leaving my peace behind;
Living, I met with rough welcomes,
Now dead... I've really ceased to mind.

My friends would laugh at me, and call
My pain a modish heart's device;
Elders would nod and squeeze my arm

And offer me some... good advice.

Scoffers and sober minds alike
I treated — how were they to blame?
Had I not frowned at lowing sighs
And sneered at 'woes too grim to name?'

Such will my lot be now, if risen
I show the foreign world this shade:
Some will chase me with exorcisms,
Others, amazed, will run away.

With pride they charm, with mercy bore,
Some bend ironically their brows —
Going to One, why must I scores
Of others annoy and astound?

Whatever will be, I go the well-trod roads:
Mercy for scoffers, for merciful — abuse;
But you, my darling! when you meet this ghost
Treat him as you always used!

Look at me, speak, forgive my fault
That once again I dare to haste
To you, a past dream, for an hour
To trouble your new happiness.

Your eyes, used to the world, the sun,
Perhaps won't fear this dead man's face.

Perhaps you'll listen, till I'm done
With my speech torn from out the grave,
And twist about the past your thoughts
Like some parasitic vine
Which on an ancient structure's walls
Its widely-scattered arms will twine.

INTERMEZZO 2

SPECTRE

My body's ever slit and rent:
Ravenous vultures 'filthy meat —
Who, who will save me? Who defend?
And of my tortures there's no end!

WIZARD

What then is needed, for your soul
To flee this horrid, tortured dole?
Look — here's sweetmeats, cakes and milk,
Berries and fruits of every ilk.
Speak! Tell us what it will take
To push your soul towards Heaven's gate?

SPECTRE

Heaven? O, you blaspheme in vain.
I don't want Heaven! Not at all —
Only a loss would be my gain —
I only wish my soul would crawl
A little faster out of me.
A hundred times I'd rather be
Pinned to the very floor of Hell
Than wandering here about my woods —
I'd bear each type of torture well,
Yet I can't bear to see the goods
I once enjoyed, and every station
Of late-beloved abomination!

WIZARD

We, your sable train, were once your slaves;

You starved us.

We'll eat the food and quaff the drink

That's offered him, with beak and claw

We'll tear it, be it on the brink

Of his parched, blistered, hungry maw,

Be it within his gripping mouth,

With my talons I'll rip it out!

I'll reach down to his very bowels!

You had no mercy on us, lord,

Nor shall we best you on that score!

Now, ravens, fall we to the feast:

Tear up each morsel, rip each piece,

And when there's no more bread or wine

Slice off his flesh: let his bones shine.

SPECTRE

My body's ever slit and rent:

Ravenous vultures 'filthy meat —

Who, who will save me? Who defend?

And of my tortures there's no end!

PART 3 – UPITA

TRAVELLER

Upita, once a city, a county capital,
Today a squalid town; with just a single chapel
And a few dozen Jewish homes in a state of woe.
Where crowded markets bustled, now mushrooms only grow;
Ramparts lie in ruin, and in place of a castle proud
A windowless and roofless lowly tavern stands bowed.

There, at a stopover, out of boredom I pondered
The faces and speeches of the people who'd gathered.
Three sat at table. First, an elder with silvered hair,
Confederate cap perched askew on his head with flair,
A sabre at his belt. A younger man at his side,
Donning a dashing homespun tailcoat with foppish pride,
Was styling his hair and collar, and from time to time
He would fidget with the tassels of his shoes' design,
Or poke fun at his neighbour whose long coat and red cross
Proved undeniably he served at the house of God.
The fourth was a Jew. To him the man with the sabre
Thus spoke:

NOBLEMAN

Heigh-ho! It will still turn out in our favour!
Why frighten the innkeepers with corpses on Shabbat?
Listen, dear fellows, willing I am to make a bet,
As soon as that Siciński is taken to his grave,

Our good man here will supply us the mead that we crave.

TRAVELLER

The innkeeper nodded his head. I listened intent:
Siciński? And in Upita? An infamous gent!

TRAVELLER

What corpse is this

TRAVELLER

— said I —

TRAVELLER

that you speak of so keenly
And who is this Siciński?

TRAVELLER

The noble spoke freely:

NOBLEMAN

Siciński you ask? Let me start from the beginning.
In the spot where the Jewish tavern sits beckoning
The dead man's castle stood; attracting diverse personage,
Powerful connections, serving countless patronage,
Ensuring scores of supporters and votes to his name:
Siciński was a *dictator* when assembly came!
He defeated elder *patricios* of great esteem;
But it wasn't enough: his ambition was supreme.
Time did witness a surging pride by arrogance fuelled;
One parliamentary assembly: the man was schooled;
Certain of victory, his election he proclaims,
To a grand banquet he invites all the noble names,

In gratitude. But as he sets off for Mazovia:
The *turnum* is counted, Siciński's reign is over!
Agitatus furiis et impotens irae,
He resolves to take revenge: *o scelus! o dirae!*
The fete is prepared; the unwitting victims gather,
Tables buckle 'neath the splendour, wine flows like water,
The mob feasts; but poison parsley soon makes their heads spin:
Pleasure to revulsion turns and nausea sets in.
Quarrels, uproar, a bona fide tower of Babel.
First verbal insults, then sticks, and from sticks to sabres:
Lashing out blindly, left, right, in a killing frenzy,
Tros Rutulusve fuat, hacked up in a fury.
But sweet triumph was brief for our dastardly villain,
He was struck down by lightning, burnt were his home and kinsmen.

CHURCH WARDEN

Amen!

TRAVELLER

— the churchwarden spoke. The groundskeeper in tails
Compared this story to grains passing through sieves to pails
With a wish to discover the truth in the fiction,
He bantered and joked, concluding with this assertion:

GROUNDS MANAGER

The Lord Marshal often thus of Siciński implied:
He was our downfall, the reason our King's hands were tied.
These shrewd words of the Marshal brought something to my mind,
Not the council was key nor which minister assigned,
It all meant to lead to war.

TRAVELLER

But against whom? And when?

GROUNDS MANAGER

Hard to tell truly, most likely Turkey or Sweden;
Siciński would then lure our own King to Upita,
Give him up to the foe, leave our country defeated.

TRAVELLER

He would have continued, had not the churchwarden glared
And with scornful sidelong glance:

CHURCH WARDEN

How very wrong

TRAVELLER

— declared —

CHURCH WARDEN

If simple bell-ringers are meant to teach parish priests,
If youth choose to talk ere the aged have spoken their piece.
I will apprise you as a man who is best informed:
Neither council nor war brings down the wrath of our Lord,
Like godlessness. Siciński, having his faith renounced,
Appropriated, they say, all the parish church grounds,
He refused to pay tithes and was a stranger at church,
On Feast Days and Sundays he forced the peasants to work;
Although the bishop would often hound him with letters,
From pulpit he'd curse him — Siciński remained debtor.
One Corpus Christi feast day, at high noon, might I add,
With Mass in chapel, he a water well dug, my lad.
But his own grave he'd dug by causing general ruin:

Water burst forth from the well with a thundering boom,
Flooding broad golden fields where bountiful wheats flourish,
Ferns took over, leas became bogs that fail to nourish.
Lightning did strike Siciński, as the Judge rightly spoke,
Burnt his whole house down, eradicated his kinsfolk.
His accurséd corpse, to this very day stands unspoilt:
The earth does not want him, at his sight vermin recoil;
Unable to find a holy final resting space,
He gives folks a fright stumbling around the marketplace,
When some poor beggar his corpse from cemetery takes
To the inn on Shabbat to see the innkeeper quake.

TRAVELLER

He finished and opened the door to the barn. There stood
The deceased man's body; hideous and ancient it looked.
Like stilts, very long and black legs protruded from it,
Hand crossed over hand, face deeply emaciated.
Deathly squalor spoils its eerily preserved visage;
Here and there, a lone tooth pokes through lips that are damaged.
Believe it or not, the sturdy, untarnished figure,
Maintains human form, by death not made unfamiliar.
Moreover the face has kept its rightful expression;
Just like an old painting that might leave an impression
Of preparatory sketches beneath layers of paint,
A foregone character doth these worn remains still taint:
Although the face no longer burns with life's ardent fire,
One who knew it alive, would know it in death entire.
Something catches the eye at first glance, I do confess,
Something that no words are able to fully express.
Hitherto a treasonous joy does the lips arouse,

A brigands' ire the forehead marks, arrogance the brows.

His shoulders slumped low, the head hung weary on his breast,
As if the weight of scandal had down to earth him pressed
Or a most violent hand had heaved him out of hell's pit,
And now he'd be most glad to return to hell forthwith.
As one might know a snake just by the skin it had shed:
I could recognise Siciński by his corpse instead.

TRAVELLER

My dear fine fellows!

TRAVELLER

— I said —

TRAVELLER

what good is your discourse?

He was guilty not just of one offence, but divers;
By his poison a whole nation swindled and gone mad,
He tied the kings' hands, the country with ruin he did flood!

TRAVELLER

In my soul I wondered: — what of these local affairs?
Ashes, in which scarcely a spark of a truth smoulders;
A hieroglyph adorning stones overgrown with moss;
An inscription with a meaning that has long been lost;
An echo of fame, drifting over oceans of years,
Bouncing off events, breaking over lies, it appears
Worthy of a scholar's laughter: ere he takes the chance,
Let this scholar tell us, what is all experience?

EPILOGUE

SPECTRE

My corpse sits here among us where we are.
It speaks in a loud voice, and meets your gaze.
My spirit wanders, wanders — far, oh how far
my soul complains down desolate ways.

I have a land, the homeland of my thought —
brothers and sisters, all, all in my heart
so truthfully, so intimately bound and wrought —
nothing can wrench or lure apart.

Cares, labor, pleasure fade. I slip away.
I fall, breathe in the rank and scented grass
and rise under the pines, to follow in their play
sparrows and moths, as large clouds pass.

Look, she is there! White from the portico
and in green fields, who flies to where we are
in woods, through grain as if in water: see her go
who shines from peaks — the morning star!