

“TAKING THE PLUNGE”

Written by  
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*A London street. RALPH SPUNT enters.*

RALPH

I LEFT MY BAGS AT THE DESK  
AND A TIP FOR THE HOTEL MAID.  
I CANCELED MY T-MOBILE,  
AND MY BRITISH AIRWAYS BILL IS PAID.  
CAUSE I'M JUMPING OFF OF BIG BEN.

I PUT OUT FOOD FOR THE CAT  
AND A NOTE FOR THE FIANCÉE:  
"DEAR ANGELA CHESTERFIELD, I LOVE YOU,  
BUT I WON'T BE AT OUR WEDDING TODAY.

"I'M TAKING THE PLUNGE.  
I'M UNDESERVING OF YOUR LOVE, IT'S TRUE.  
AND AFTER I HAVE PLUNGED  
AND MY STAINS HAVE BEEN EXPUNGED,  
YOU'LL FIND A GUY MORE WORTHY OF YOU,  
WHO'S BREATHING."

*(RALPH exits. MRS. CHESTERFIELD enters. She wears a formidable fur coat.)*

MRS. CHESTERFIELD

I LEFT MY JEWELS IN THE SAFE  
AND WROTE A CHECK FOR THE PILOT'S FEE.  
MY STAFF'S BEEN PUT ON NOTICE:  
THEY'LL BE TERMINATED EARLY, LIKE ME.  
FOR I'M JUMPING OFF OF BIG BEN.

I SENT MY DAUGHTER A NOTE  
PER OUR USUAL TÊTE-À-TÊTES:  
"DEAR ANGELA CHESTERFIELD, I LOVE YOU  
BUT I WON'T BE AT YOUR WEDDING. REGRETS.

"I'M TAKING THE PLUNGE.  
UNGRATEFUL CHILD, YOU'VE LEFT ME INCOMPLETE.  
I'VE LOST THE THINGS THAT MATTER,  
SO FORGIVE ME IF I SPLATTER  
WHEN I FINALLY HIT ROCK BOTTOM  
AND THE STREET."

*(MRS. CHESTERFIELD exits. At Big Ben, RALPH walks to a ticket counter.)*

RALPH  
MY VETERINARY CLINIC WILL RECOVER.

One ticket for Big Ben, please!

*(MRS. CHESTERFIELD approaches a different ticket counter.)*

MRS. CHESTERFIELD  
THEY'LL CONSOLIDATE THE DRUG EMPIRE I LED.

Two tickets. One for me, one for my coat.

BOTH  
TELL ANGELA, MY DARLING, THAT I LOVE HER.  
AND TELL THE OFFICE I'M CALLING IN DEAD.  
FULL SPEED AHEAD—

*(Separately, THEY climb the stairs to the top of Big Ben.)*

MRS. CHESTERFIELD  
I'M TAKING THE PLUNGE—

RALPH  
I'VE CLIMBED BIG BEN TO TAKE THE  
PLUNGE—

BOTH  
AND, ANGELA, OUR PROBLEMS ARE THROUGH.  
WE'LL RESOLVE OUR LAMENT  
BY LEAPING OFF PARLIAMENT.

*(THEY reach the top.)*

MRS. CHESTERFIELD  
OH, I'M TAKING THE PLUNGE.

RALPH  
TAKING THE PLUNGE—

BOTH  
YES, I'M TAKING THE PLUNGE.  
ANGELA, I'M TAKING THE PLUNGE FOR—

*(THEY see each other.)*

Mrs. Chesterfield?

RALPH

Ralph?

MRS. CHESTERFIELD

YOU?  
BOTH

RALPH  
Mrs. Chesterfield, what are you doing here?

MRS. CHESTERFIELD  
I should think it's obvious. My daughter, by the acceptance of your hand, has made it perfectly clear that she doesn't need me anymore. So I'm doing what any reasonable mother would do and throwing myself from Europe's largest timepiece.

RALPH  
But that can't be!

MRS. CHESTERFIELD  
Well, the Glockenspiel is larger, but I can't abide the Germans.

RALPH  
You misunderstand. I also came to Big Ben to jump, after briefly considering the Glockenspiel.

MRS. CHESTERFIELD  
What? Why?!

RALPH  
Because this lowly veterinarian could never deserve your beautiful, red-haired daughter.

MRS. CHESTERFIELD  
I should say not! You don't deserve the pavement she walks on.

RALPH  
And that's why I'm throwing myself from 320 feet above it. With me alive, our marriage could be nothing but a disappointment to Angela. But with me bespattered, we'll have the relationship I longed for.

A SIMPLE FUNERAL ON A HILL IN JULY,  
A RUSTIC DIRGE 'NEATH A BLUE VELVET SKY—  
ANGELA WEEPS, AND THE BAGPIPERS CRY.  
THEN SHE'LL KISS MY CORPSE GOODBYE.  
AND THAT'S ALL I SEE.  
THAT'S ALL THERE IS.  
THAT'S ALL FOR ME.

## MRS. CHESTERFIELD

Rustic hillocks and Scottish musicians? You think small, Ralph. That, and your poor bedside manner with goldfish, is why I never liked you. But when Angela learns of my plummeting, think of the funeral she'll plan for me!

SHE'LL GATHER ALL THE LADIES OF SUPREME SOCIETY  
 WHO'LL DRAG ALONG THEIR HUSBANDS AND A CHUBBY CHILD OR  
 THREE,  
 THE BOYS IN KNICKER-BOCKERS AND THE MINISTER IN TAILS,  
 THE LADIES DRESSED IN GUCCI BLACK AND FERRAGAMO VEILS.  
 SCADS OF PERFECT LILIES FROM THE STEEPLE TO THE FLOOR,  
 A CELEBRATION GRANDER THAN ALL FUNERALS HERETOFORE.  
 THE WEEPING AND THE WAILING WILL SPILL OUT INTO THE  
 STREET  
 WHERE A PLATINUM-PLATED HEARSE AWAITS TO GREET THE  
 MOURNING FLEET.  
 IT'S ALL FOR ME,  
 IT'S ALL FOR ME,  
 ALL THE SCULPTURES MADE OF ICE THAT MATCH MY LIKENESS  
 PERFECTLY.  
 IT'S ALL FOR ME,  
 IT'S ALL FOR ME,  
 THE CHEESE FONDUE, THE FRICASSEE.  
 IT'S ALL FOR ME!

But if you jump, I'll have to share both the sympathy and the ice sculptures with you.

## RALPH

And if you jump, Angela and I will never have our moment of postmortem peace.  
 We'll never share—

## MRS. CHESTERFIELD

I'll never have—

RALPH  
 A SIMPLE SERVICE ON A HILL IN  
 JULY,  
 A RUSTIC DIRGE 'NEATH A BLUE  
 VELVET SKY,  
 ANGELA WEEPS, AND THE  
 BAGPIPERS CRY.  
 THEN SHE'LL KISS MY CORPSE  
 GOODBYE.  
 AND THAT'S ALL I SEE.  
 THAT'S ALL THERE IS.  
 THAT'S ALL FOR ME.

MRS. CHESTERFIELD  
 HER GATHER ALL THE LADIES OF  
 SUPREME SOCIETY  
 WHO'LL DRAG ALONG THEIR  
 HUSBANDS AND A CHUBBY CHILD  
 OR THREE,  
 THE BOYS IN KNICKER-BOCKERS  
 AND THE MINISTER IN TAILS,  
 THE LADIES DRESSED IN GUCCI  
 BLACK AND FERRAGAMO VEILS.  
 SCADS OF PERFECT LILIES FROM  
 THE STEEPLE TO THE FLOOR,  
 A CELEBRATION GRANDER THAN  
 ALL FUNERALS HERETOFORE.  
 THE WEEPING AND THE WAILING  
 WILL SPILL OUT INTO THE STREET  
 WHERE A PLATINUM-PLATED  
 HEARSE AWAITS TO GREET THE  
 MOURNING FLEET.  
 IT'S ALL FOR ME,  
 IT'S ALL FOR ME,  
 LUCIANO PAVAROTTI AND THE  
 LONDON SYMPHONY.  
 IT'S ALL FOR ME,  
 IT'S ALL FOR ME,  
 THE WHOOP-DE-DOO, THE  
 JAMBOREE,  
 IT'S ALL FOR ME!

MRS. CHESTERFIELD  
 So Ralph, it seems there's only one solution to this. You go home, and I jump.

RALPH  
 I'm not flying home. I have nothing to live for, and Heathrow terrifies me.

MRS. CHESTERFIELD  
 Nothing to live for? A young veterinarian like you with the ability to woo red-headed women and heal livestock? The world is your oyster!

YOU'VE GOT A PERFECT SCORE ON YOUR MCAT  
 AND AN MFA IN COWS FROM NYU.  
 YOU'VE GOT A THRIVING HOSPITAL FOR HORSES  
 AND AN UNRELATED FACTORY MAKING GLUE.  
 YOU'VE GOT A CAT,  
 BUT MORE THAN THAT—

MRS. CHESTERFIELD (CONT'D)

YOU'VE GOT ANGELA!  
SHE'S YOURS, AND NOW SHE'S BRIDAL.  
THINK OF ANGELA!  
LET'S NOT BE SUICIDAL.  
YOU'RE THE GROOM WHOM SHE'S EMBRACED.  
SHE'S THE BRIDE WITH CRAPPY TASTE.  
LIVE FOR ANGELA.  
LIVE FOR LOVE.

So what are you waiting for? Go! Live!

RALPH

And what about you?

MRS. CHESTERFIELD

I'm an old woman. My daughter's getting married. My pharmaceutical empire is getting regulated. I see nothing ahead of me but high-pitched grandchildren and the occasional game of canasta.

RALPH

But, Mrs. Chesterfield, you've got so much more than that.

YOU'VE GOT MEDICINES WHOSE SIDE EFFECTS AREN'T PROVEN,  
WHICH YOU TEST ON MONKEYS, PRISONERS, AND TROUT.  
YOU'VE GOT THE TOP-THREE DRUGS FOR CHRONIC ASTHMA  
AND A WORLD-WIDE MONOPOLY ON GOUT.  
YOU'VE GOT A YACHT,  
BUT MORE THAN THACHT—

YOU'VE GOT ANGELA,  
YOUR EFFERVESCENT DAUGHTER!  
THINK OF ANGELA  
AND ALL THE LOVE YOU BOUGHT HER.  
TRUE, THE LIKENESS MAY BE HAZY:  
YOU'RE NO RED-HEAD. SHE'S NOT CRAZY.  
LIVE FOR ANGELA.

You see?

MRS. CHESTERFIELD

I do!

RALPH

Me, too!

BOTH  
WE'VE GOT ANGELA!

MRS. CHESTERFIELD  
MY CHILD.

RALPH  
MY CHILD BEARER.

BOTH  
THINK OF ANGELA!

MRS. CHESTERFIELD  
SHE'S MINE.

RALPH  
SHE'S MINE.

BOTH  
WE'LL SHARE HER.

*(To EACH OTHER)*  
WHO KNOWS WHY YOU NEVER BUGGED HER?

RALPH  
I FIGURED THAT YOU DRUGGED HER.

MRS. CHESTERFIELD  
LIVE FOR ANGELA.  
I'LL LIVE FOR ANGELA.  
I'LL LIVE FOR ANGELA.

RALPH  
LIVE FOR ANGELA.  
WOAH, I'LL LIVE FOR ANGELA.  
I'LL LIVE FOR ANGELA.  
ANGELA.

BOTH  
I'LL LIVE FOR LOVE.

RALPH  
Mrs. Chesterfield, may I escort you to the wedding?

*(HE offers his arm. SHE takes it.)*

MRS. CHESTERFIELD  
I'd be delighted, Ralph. You know, it's a shame we didn't get to explore more that London has to offer, like Westminster Abbey or tweed.

RALPH

Well, the Abbey is right over there.

*(HE points into the distance.)*

Wait, is that someone on the roof?

MRS. CHESTERFIELD

A jumper? Poor man, to treat life so cheaply when there are so many pleasures in the world, none of which involve Germany. Let us hope that, upon leaping, he learns the error of his ways.

RALPH

I think it's a she.

MRS. CHESTERFIELD

Well, *she* certainly is determined.

RALPH

And look at that red hair.

*(Blackout.)*