

May. Act 1 Scene 4

EVA. But you don't want it to go on?

MAY. Not to take Tom and Ralph, no. Just long enough so's I can afford the stock. We 'll be singing round the piano yet. Round here they think I'm queer in the head having a piano. But I could never let it go. It was my father's. When I was small we were quite up in the world. Lower-middle class. My father used to say upper-working but mother said lower-middle. We lived in one of those villas in Hendaal Street . . . before it went downhill. But then father got this notion of speculating in second-hand pianos and that was his undoing. Lost money on them. Lost his job at Paxton's through slipping out to do deals. Did all kinds of jobs after that. Oh he was a character! He once worked for a photographer's shop. Now lots of people who had photos taken never paid up. So, one week while father was in charge of the shop he put all these people's photos in the window with the backs turned to the street so you couldn't see the faces and a notice saying if they didn't pay up by Saturday the photos would be turned round. Sparks flew then! He got the sack. But then my mother, who was a very simple soul, and danced attendance on him, morning, noon and night . . . well when she died it seemed she'd secretly managed to scrimp and save a bit of money and it looked like father and me might get a shop . . . a piano shop. But he frittered most of it away. Then he rented the stall like I told you. Took me from the mill to help run it. He just wouldn't do that kind of work. Went into a depression. I ended up keeping him till he died. You won't pass any of this on will you?

EVA. Of course not.