



PLOT SUMMARY –
“AND THE SNOW FALLS – MUSICAL EDITION”

Adaptation by James M. Kemp

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The document is a script for a musical adaptation of a Miklos Laszlo play set in a perfumery in London during the Christmas season of 1938.

The owner of Hammersley's Perfumery is Mr. Hammersley.

Hammersley's Perfumery has a pleasing old shop atmosphere that is comfortable, hospitable, and exudes an air of stability. The shop is old-fashioned and manufactures its own brand of cosmetics in a laboratory located at the rear. Shelves full of bottles of perfume, soap, bath salts, lotion, and various cosmetics run along the walls and below the sales counters. There is a large glass display case on stage right. The entrance door is center stage left from the street, situated between two large shop windows that contain cosmetic displays and seasonal decorations. Inside, there are doors leading to the owner's office, the laboratory, and the employees' break room.

The play is set during the Christmas season of 1938 in London, England. The historical context includes the uneasy atmosphere among the citizens of London following the announcement by Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in September 1938 that he had reached an agreement with Adolf Hitler, promising "peace in our time." However, shortly after this announcement, Hitler's army invaded Czechoslovakia, increasing the tension and fear of imminent danger among the British people. Additionally, there was hope that the United States might intervene in European matters, but this hope was dashed when the American president announced that the U.S. would not become involved in European conflicts. This backdrop of political uncertainty and the looming threat of war significantly influences the characters and events in the play.

The main plot of the play "And the Snow Falls" revolves around the employees of Hammersley's Perfumery during the Christmas season of 1938. The story focuses on the interpersonal dynamics and conflicts among the staff, particularly between Ashwood, a salesman, and Patience Baker, a chemist.

Ashwood and Baker have been unknowingly writing love letters to each other under pseudonyms, developing a deep emotional connection through their correspondence. However, their real-life interactions are filled with hostility and misunderstandings. The tension escalates when they discover each other's true identities during a planned meeting at a jazz club, leading to further complications in their relationship.

Meanwhile, the shop owner, Mr. Hammersley, is dealing with personal turmoil after receiving an anonymous letter suggesting his wife is having an affair with one of his employees, Mr. Kelly. This revelation leads to a series of dramatic events, including Mr. Hammersley's confrontation with Kelly and a near-suicide attempt, which is thwarted by the delivery boy, Raymond.

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The play explores themes of love, trust, betrayal, and the impact of external political tensions on personal lives, all set against the backdrop of a quaint, old-fashioned perfumery in London.

BAKER and ASHWOOD have a complex relationship characterized by both conflict and an unexpected emotional connection. In their professional lives at Hammersley's Perfumery, they frequently clash and exchange sarcastic remarks, with ASHWOOD often criticizing BAKER's work and behavior. This antagonistic dynamic creates tension between them.

However, unbeknownst to each other, they have been writing love letters under pseudonyms for the past six months, developing a deep emotional bond through their correspondence. They each believe they are in love with the person behind the letters, not realizing that it is their workplace adversary.

The relationship takes a dramatic turn when they plan to meet in person at a jazz club, only to discover each other's true identities. This revelation shocks both of them and complicates their feelings, as they struggle to reconcile the person they have grown to love through letters with the colleague they have been at odds with in real life.

ASHWOOD has mixed feelings about BAKER. Professionally, he often finds her frustrating and criticizes her work and behavior, leading to frequent clashes and sarcastic exchanges between them. He perceives her as cold and unpleasant, and their interactions are marked by mutual hostility.

However, on a deeper level, ASHWOOD unknowingly harbors affectionate feelings for BAKER through their anonymous correspondence. As pen pals, he has developed a deep emotional connection with her, appreciating her kindness and gentleness expressed in the letters. This creates a significant internal conflict for ASHWOOD when he discovers that the woman he has been writing to and fallen in love with is actually BAKER, his workplace adversary.

Ultimately, ASHWOOD is torn between his negative professional interactions with BAKER and the positive, loving relationship he has built with her through their letters. This duality complicates his feelings and challenges his perceptions of her.

BAKER has a similarly conflicted view of ASHWOOD. In their professional environment at Hammersley's Perfumery, she finds him antagonistic and critical, which leads to frequent arguments and a strained relationship. She perceives him as someone who constantly undermines her and makes her work life difficult.

However, like ASHWOOD, BAKER has unknowingly developed a deep emotional connection with him through their anonymous letters. She views her pen pal as a kind, gentle man who understands and appreciates her, and she has even agreed to marry him based on their written exchanges.

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When BAKER discovers that her pen pal is actually ASHWOOD, she is shocked and finds it difficult to reconcile the loving, understanding man from the letters with the critical colleague she knows at work. This revelation leaves her feeling confused and hurt, as she struggles to align her feelings for the two very different personas of ASHWOOD.

A significant interaction between BAKER and ASHWOOD occurs during their confrontation in the shop after their failed meeting at the jazz club. This scene is pivotal as it reveals the depth of their misunderstandings and the emotional turmoil they both experience.

In this interaction, ASHWOOD tries to persuade BAKER to go home because she is visibly ill, but BAKER resists, feeling criticized and belittled by him. Their conversation quickly escalates into a heated argument where they exchange harsh words. ASHWOOD accuses BAKER of being cold and incapable of love, while BAKER defends herself by revealing the emotional letters she has received from her pen pal, who she does not yet realize is ASHWOOD.

BAKER: "You've hated me ever since I crossed that threshold. For the past six months, I haven't had a kind word from you."

ASHWOOD: "That's not true."

BAKER: "It is. It is. It is! The others here all like me. SMITH does. RICHARDS does. MOLSON does. Mr. HAMMERSLEY is always nice to me. Even RAYMOND likes me."

ASHWOOD: "You're forgetting KELLY."

BAKER: "I am not. Compared to you, he's a gentleman. You're the only one against me."

This interaction is significant because it lays bare their mutual animosity and the deep emotional wounds they have inflicted on each other. It also sets the stage for the eventual revelation of their true identities as pen pals, highlighting the irony and complexity of their relationship.

BAKER and ASHWOOD's conflict begins to resolve when they both realize the true identities of their pen pals. This revelation forces them to confront their preconceived notions and misunderstandings about each other.

After their heated argument in the shop, ASHWOOD writes another note to BAKER, attempting to make amends for their disastrous meeting at the jazz club. This gesture indicates his willingness to bridge the gap between them and reconcile their differences.

The turning point comes when ASHWOOD acknowledges his feelings and apologizes for his behavior:

ASHWOOD: "I just need to say...Pat... that I am sorry about last night."

This apology is a significant step towards resolving their conflict, as it shows ASHWOOD's vulnerability and genuine regret for how he has treated BAKER. It opens the door for BAKER to reconsider her perception of him and the possibility of a future together.

While the document does not provide a detailed resolution, it is implied that through continued honest communication and understanding, BAKER and ASHWOOD can overcome their past animosities and build a relationship based on the emotional connection they developed through their letters.

ASHWOOD's relationship with other employees evolves significantly throughout the play, particularly with SMITH and BAKER.

1. **With SMITH:** Initially, SMITH and ASHWOOD share a collegial relationship, with SMITH often advising ASHWOOD to be cautious and not to provoke their boss, Mr. HAMMERSLEY. As the play progresses, SMITH becomes a confidant and supporter of ASHWOOD, especially during the turmoil with Mr. HAMMERSLEY and the revelation of ASHWOOD's pen pal relationship with BAKER. SMITH's role as a mediator and voice of reason helps ASHWOOD navigate his conflicts and emotions, strengthening their bond.
2. **With BAKER:** ASHWOOD's relationship with BAKER is initially fraught with tension and mutual animosity. They frequently clash, and ASHWOOD's critical attitude towards BAKER exacerbates their conflict. However, the discovery that they have been unknowingly writing love letters to each other as pen pals forces them to reassess their perceptions and behavior. ASHWOOD's apology and attempts to reconcile mark the beginning of a potential resolution and a deeper understanding between them.
3. **With Other Employees:** ASHWOOD's interactions with other employees like RICHARDS and MOLSON are less detailed but indicate a professional and sometimes strained dynamic. His role as a senior employee and his conflicts with Mr. HAMMERSLEY affect his standing among his colleagues. However, his eventual reconciliation with Mr. HAMMERSLEY and efforts to mend his relationship with BAKER suggest a move towards a more harmonious workplace environment.

Overall, ASHWOOD's relationships evolve from tension and conflict to understanding and support, highlighting his growth and the potential for improved dynamics within the perfumery.

KELLY's behavior significantly impacts the other employees at HAMMERSLEY's Perfumery in several ways:

1. **Tension with Mr. HAMMERSLEY:** KELLY's actions, particularly his involvement with Mrs. HAMMERSLEY, create a significant amount of tension with Mr. HAMMERSLEY.

This tension culminates in a dramatic confrontation where Mr. HAMMERSLEY accuses KELLY of being insolent and ultimately throws him out of the shop. This incident disrupts the workplace atmosphere and highlights the underlying issues within the team.

2. **Distrust and Conflict:** KELLY's behavior, including his attempts to borrow money from BAKER under false pretenses and his general demeanor, fosters an environment of distrust among the employees. His actions lead to conflicts, particularly with ASHWOOD and SMITH, who view him as untrustworthy and manipulative.
3. **Impact on BAKER:** KELLY's interactions with BAKER, including his attempts to borrow money and his involvement with Mrs. HAMMERSLEY, add to the stress and complications in BAKER's life. This further strains her already tense relationship with ASHWOOD and contributes to the overall discord in the shop.
4. **Workplace Morale:** The revelation of KELLY's affair with Mrs. HAMMERSLEY and his subsequent dismissal by Mr. HAMMERSLEY create a scandal that affects the morale of the entire team. The employees are left to deal with the fallout, including the emotional and professional repercussions of the incident.

Overall, KELLY's behavior introduces significant turmoil and conflict within HAMMERSLEY's Perfumery, affecting the relationships and morale of the other employees. His actions serve as a catalyst for the dramatic events that unfold, ultimately leading to a reevaluation of personal and professional dynamics within the shop.