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**In  
the  
SUMMER HOUSE**

by **JANE BOWLES**



RANDOM HOUSE, NEW YORK

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*For*  
OLIVER SMITH



IN THE SUMMER HOUSE *was presented at the Playhouse Theatre in New York on December 29, 1953, by Oliver Smith and the Playwrights' Company. It was directed by Jose Quintero with the following cast:*

GERTRUDE EASTMAN CUEVAS	<b>Judith Anderson</b>
MOLLY, her daughter	Elizabeth Ross
MR. SOLARES	Don Mayo
MRS. LOPEZ	Marita Reid
FREDERICA	Miriam Colon
ESPERANZA	Isabel Morel
ALTA GRACIA	Marjorie Eaton
QUINTINA	Phoebe Mackay
LIONEL	Logan Ramsey
A FIGURE BEARER	Paul Bertelsen
ANOTHER FIGURE BEARER	George Spelvin
VIVIAN CONSTABLE	Muriel Berkson
CHAUFFEUR	Daniel Morales
MRS. CONSTABLE	Mildred Dunnock
INEZ	Jean Stapleton

*Scenery by* Oliver Smith

*Costumes by* Noel Taylor

*Music by* Paul Bowles

*Lighting by* Peggy Clark

*Associate Producer,* Lyn Austin

## SCENES

### ACT ONE

Scene I: Gertrude Eastman Cuevas' garden on the coast,  
Southern California

Scene II: The beach. One month later

Scene III: The garden. One month later

### ACT Two

Scene I: The Lobster Bowl. Ten months later, before  
dawn

Scene II: The same. Two months later, late afternoon

*Time: The Present*

## ACT ONE



## ACT ONE

### SCENE I

GERTRUDE EASTMAN CUEvas' garden somewhere on the coast of Southern California. The garden is a mess, with ragged cactus plants and broken ornaments scattered about. A low hedge at the back of the set separates the garden from a dirt lane which supposedly leads to the main road. Beyond the lane is the beach and the sea. The side of the house and the front door are visible. A low balcony hangs over the garden. In the garden itself there is a round summer house covered with vines.

#### GERTRUDE

(A beautiful middle-aged woman with sharply defined features, a good carriage and bright red hair. She is dressed in a tacky provincial fashion. Her voice is tense but resonant.

*She is seated on the balcony)*

Are you in the summer house?

(MOLLY, a girl of eighteen with straight black hair cut in bangs and a somnolent impassive face, does not hear GERTRUDE'S question but remains in the summer house. GERTRUDE, repeating, goes to railing)

Are you in the summer house?

#### MOLLY

Yes, I am.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

If I believed in acts of violence, I would burn the summer house down. You love to get in there and loll about hour after hour. You can't even see out because those vines hide the view. Why don't you find a good flat rock overlooking the ocean and sit on it? (MOLLY *fingers the vine*) As long as you're so indifferent to the beauties of nature, I should think you would interest yourself in political affairs, or in music or painting or at least in the future. But I've said this to you at least a thousand times before. You admit you relax too much?

MOLLY

I guess I do.

GERTRUDE

We already have to take in occasional boarders to help make ends meet. As the years go by the boarders will increase, and I can barely put up with the few that come here now; I'm not temperamentally suited to boarders, Nor am I interested in whether this should be considered a character defect or not. I simply hate gossiping with strangers and I don't want to listen to their business. I never have and I never will. It disgusts me. Even my own flesh and blood saps my vitality—particularly you. You seem to have developed such a slow and gloomy way of walking lately . . . not at all becoming to a girl. Don't you think you could correct your walk?

MOLLT

I'm trying. I'm trying to correct it.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

## GERTRUDE

I'm thinking seriously of marrying Mr. Solares, after all. I would at least have a life free of financial worry if I did, and I'm sure I could gradually ease his sister, Mrs. Lopez, out of the house because she certainly gets on my nerves. He's a manageable man and Spanish men aren't around the house much, which is a blessing. They're almost always out . . . not getting intoxicated or having a wild time . . . just out . . . sitting around with bunches of other men . . . Spanish men . . . Cubans, Mexicans . . . I don't know . . . They're all alike, drinking little cups of coffee and jabbering away to each other for hours on end. That was your father's life anyway. I minded then. I minded terribly, not so much because he left me alone, but he wasn't in his office for more than a few hours a day . . . and he wasn't rich enough, not like Mr. Solares. I lectured him in the beginning. I lectured him on ambition, on making contacts, on developing his personality. Often at night I was quite hoarse. I worked on him steadily, trying to make him worry about sugar. I warned him he was letting his father's interests go to pot. Nothing helped. He refused to worry about sugar; he refused to worry about anything. (*She knits a moment in silence*) I lost interest finally. I lost interest in sugar . . . in him. I lost interest in our life together. I wanted to give it all up . . . start out fresh, but I couldn't. I was carrying you. I had no choice. All my hopes were wrapped up in you then, all of them. You were my reason for going on, my one and only hope . . . my love. (*She knits furiously. Then, craning her neck to look in the summer house, she gets up and goes to the rail*) Are you asleep in there, or are you reading comic strips?

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MOLLY

I'm not asleep.

GERTRUDE

Sometimes I have the strangest feeling about you. It frightens me . . . I feel that you are plotting something. Especially when you get inside that summer house. I think your black hair helps me to feel that way. Whenever I think of a woman going wild, I always picture her with black hair, never blond or red. I know that what I'm saying has no connection with a scientific truth. It's very personal. They say red-haired women go wild a lot but I never picture it that way. Do you?

MOLLY

I don't guess I've ever pictured women going wild.

GERTRUDE

And why not? They do all the time. They break the bonds . . . Sometimes I picture little scenes where they turn evil like wolves . . . (*Shuddering*) I don't choose to, but I do all the same.

MOLLY

I've never seen a wild woman.

GERTRUDE

(*Music*)

On the other hand, sometimes I wake up at night with a strange feeling of isolation . . . as if I'd fallen off the cliffs and landed miles away from everything that was close to my heart . . . Even my griefs and my sorrows don't seem to be-

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

long to me. Nothing does—as if a shadow had passed over my whole life and made it dark. I try saying my name aloud, over and over again, but it doesn't hook things together. Whenever I feel that way I put my wrapper on and I go down into the kitchen. I open the ice chest and take out some fizzy water. Then I sit at the table with the light switched on and by and by I feel all right again. (*The music fades. Then in a more matter-of-fact tone*) There is no doubt that each one of us has to put up with a shadow or two as he grows older. But if we occupy ourselves while the shadow passes, it passes swiftly enough and scarcely leaves a trace on our daily lives . . . (*She knits for a moment. Then looks up the road*) The girl who is coming here this afternoon is about seventeen. She should be arriving pretty soon. I also think that Mr. Solares will be arriving shortly and that he'll be bringing one of his hot picnic luncheons with him today. I can feel it in my bones. It's disgraceful of me, really, to allow him to feed us on our own lawn, but then, their mouths count up to six, while ours count up to only two. So actually it's only half a disgrace. I hope Mr. Solares realizes that. Besides, I might be driven to accepting his marriage offer and then the chicken would be in the same pot anyway. Don't you agree?

MOLLY

Yes.

GERTRUDE

You don't seem very interested in what I'm saying.

MOLLY

Well, I . . .

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GERTRUDE

I think that you should be more of a conversationalist. You never express an opinion, nor do you seem to have an outlook. What on earth is your outlook?

MOLLY

*(Uncertainly)*

Democracy . . .

GERTRUDE

I don't think you feel very strongly about it. You don't listen to the various commentators, nor do you ever glance at the newspapers. It's very easy to say that one is democratic, but that doesn't prevent one from being a slob if one is a slob. I've never permitted myself to become a slob, even though I sit home all the time and avoid the outside world as much as possible. I've never liked going out any more than my father did. He always avoided the outside world. He hated a lot of idle gossip and had no use for people anyway. "Let the world do its dancing and its drinking and its inter-killing without me," he always said. "They'll manage perfectly well; I'll stick to myself and my work." (*The music comes up again and she is lost in a dream*) When I was a little girl I made up my mind that I was going to be just like him. He was my model, my ideal. I admired him more than anyone on earth. And he admired me of course. I was so much like him—ambitious, defiant, a fighting cock always. I worshipped him. But I was never meek, not like Ellen my sister. She was very frail and delicate. My father used to put his arms around her, and play with her hair, long golden curls . . . Ellen was the weak one. That's why he spoiled her. He

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pitied Ellen. (*With wonder, and very delicately, as if afraid to break a spell. The music expresses the sorrow she is hiding from herself*) Once he took her out of school, when she was ten years old. He bought her a little fur hat and they went away together for two whole weeks. I was left behind. I had no reason to leave school. I was healthy and strong. He took her to a big hotel on the edge of a lake. The lake was frozen, and they sat in the sunshine all day long, watching the people skate. When they came back he said, "Look at her, look at Ellen. She has roses in her cheeks." He pitied Ellen, but he was proud of me. I was his true love. He never showed it . . . He was so frightened Ellen would guess. He didn't want her to be jealous, but I knew the truth . . . He didn't have to show it. He didn't have to say anything. (*The music fades and she knits furiously, coming back to the present*) Why don't you go inside and clean up? It might sharpen your wits. Go and change that rumpled dress.

### MOLLY

(*MOLLY comes out of the summer house and sniffs a blossom*)

The honeysuckle's beginning to smell real good. I can never remember when you planted this vine, but it's sure getting thick. It makes the summer house so nice and shady inside.

### GERTRUDE

(*Stiffening in anger*)

I told you never to mention that vine again. You know it was there when we bought this house. You love to call my attention to that wretched vine because it's the only thing that grows well in the garden and you know it was planted

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

by the people who came here before us and not by me at all. (*She rises and paces the balcony*) You're mocking me for being such a failure in the garden and not being able to make things grow. That's an underhanded Spanish trait of yours you inherit from your father. You love to mock me.

**MOLLY**

(*Tenderly*)

I would never mock you.

**GERTRUDE**

(*Working herself up*)

I thought I'd find peace here . . . with these waving palms and the ocean stretching as far as the eye can see, but you don't like the ocean . . . You won't even go in the water. You're afraid to swim . . . I thought we'd found a paradise at last—the perfect place—but you don't want paradise . . . You want hell. Well, go into your little house and rot if you like . . . I don't care. Go on in while you still can. It won't be there much longer . . . Ill marry Mr. Solares and send you to business school. (*The voices of MR. SOLARES and his family arriving with a picnic lunch stops her. She leans over the railing of the balcony and looks up the road*) Oh, here they come with their covered pots. I knew they'd appear with a picnic luncheon today. I could feel it in my bones. We'll put our own luncheon away for supper and have our supper tomorrow for lunch . . . Go and change . . . Quickly . . . Watch that walk. (*MOLLY exits into the house. GERTRUDE settles down in her chair to prepare for MR. SOLARES' arrival*) I wish they weren't coming. I'd rather be

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here by myself really. (*Enter Spanish people*) Nature's the best company of all. (*She pats her bun and rearranges some hairpins. Then she stands up and waves to her guests, cupping her mouth and yelling at the same time*) Hello there!

(*In another moment MR. SOLARES, MRS. LOPEZ and her daughter, FREDERICA and the three servants enter, walking in single file down the lane. Two of the servants are old hags and the third is a young half caste, ESPERANZA, in mulberry-colored satin. The servants all carry pots wrapped with bright bandanas.*)

### MR. SOLARES

(*He wears a dark dusty suit. Pushing ahead of his sister, MRS. LOPEZ, in his haste to greet GERTRUDE and thus squeezing his sister's arm rather painfully against the gate post*)

Hello, Miss Eastman Cuevas! (*MRS. LOPEZ squeals with pain and rubs her arm. She is fat and middle-aged. She wears a black picture hat and black city dress. Her hat is decorated with flowers.* MR. SOLARES *speaks with only a trace of an accent, having lived for many years in this country. Grinning and bobbing around*) We brought you a picnic. For you and your daughter. Plenty of everything! You come down into the garden.

(*The others crowd slowly through the gate and stand awkwardly in a bunch looking up at GERTRUDE.*)

### GERTRUDE

(*Perfunctorily*)

I think I'll stay here on the balcony, thank you. Just spread yourselves on the lawn and well talk back and forth this

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way. It's all the same. (To *the maids*) You can hand me up my food by stepping on that little stump and I'll lean over and get it.

MRS. LOPEZ

(*Her accent is much thicker than her brother's, smiling up at GERTRUDE*)

You will come down into the garden, Miss Eastman Cuevas?

MR. SOLARES

(*Giving his sister a poke*)

Acaba de decirte que se queda arriba. Ya no oyes? (*The next few minutes on the stage have a considerable musical background. The hags and ESPERANZA start spreading bandanas on the lawn and emptying the baskets. The others settle on the lawn. ESPERANZA and the hags sing a raucous song as they work, the hags just joining in at the chorus and a bit off key. ESPERANZA brings over a pot wrapped in a Turkish towel and serves the family group. They all take enormous helpings of spaghetti. MR. SOLARES serves himself*) Italian spaghetti with meat balls! Esperanza, serve a big plate to Miss Eastman Cuevas up on the porch. You climb on that.

(*He points to a fake stump with a gnome carved on one side of it.*)

ESPERANZA

(*Disagreeably*)

Carambal

(*She climbs up on the stump after filling a plate with spaghetti and hands it to GERTRUDE, releasing her hold*

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*on the plate before GERTRUDE has secured her own grip. ESPERANZA jumps out of the way immediately and the plate swings downward under the weight of the food, dumping the spaghetti on MRS. LOPEZ\* head.)*

**GERTRUDE**

Oh! (*To ESPERANZA*) You didn't give me a chance to get a firm hold on it!

**MR. SOLARES**

Silencio!

*(ESPERANZA rushes over to the hags and all three of them become hysterical with laughter. After their hysterics they pull themselves together and go over to clean up MRS. LOPEZ and to restore GERTRUDE'S plate to her fitted with fresh spaghetti. They return to their side of the garden in a far corner and everyone starts to eat.)*

**MR. SOLARES**

*(To GERTRUDE)*

Miss Eastman Cuevas, you like chop suey?

**GERTRUDE**

I have never eaten any.

**MRS. LOPEZ**

*(Eager to get into the conversation and expressing great wonder in her voice)*

Chop suey? What is it?

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MR. SOLARES

*(In a mean voice to MRS. LOPEZ)*

You know what it is. *(In Spanish)* Que me dejes hablar con la Senora Eastman Cuevas por favor. *(To GERTRUDE)* I'll bring you some chop suey tomorrow in a box, or maybe we better go out to a restaurant, to a dining and dancing. Maybe you would go to try out some chop suey . . . Would you?

GERTRUDE

*(Coolly)*

That's very nice of you but I've told you before that I don't care for the type of excitement you get when you go out. . . You know what I mean—entertainment, dancing, etc. Why don't you describe chop suey to me and I'll try and imagine it? *(MRS. LOPEZ roars with laughter for no apparent reason. GERTRUDE cranes her neck and looks down at her over the balcony with raised eyebrows)* I could die content without ever setting foot in another restaurant. Frankly, I would not care if every single one of them burned to the ground. I really love to sit on my porch and look out over the ocean.

MRS. LOPEZ

You like the ocean?

GERTRUDE

I love it!

MRS. LOPEZ

*(Making a wild gesture with her arm)*

I hate it!

GERTRUDE

I love it. It's majestic . . .

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MRS. LOPEZ

I hate!

GERTRUDE

*(Freezing up)*

I see that we don't agree.

MR. SOLARES

*(Scowling at MRS. LOPEZ)*

Oh, she loves the ocean. I don't know what the hell is the matter with her today. (GERTRUDE *winces at his language*) Myself, I like ocean, land, mountain, all kinds of food, chop suey, chile, eel, turtle steak . . . Everything. Solares like everything. (In *hideous French accent*) Joie de vivre!

*(He snaps his fingers in the air.)*

GERTRUDE

*(Sucking some long strands of spaghetti into her mouth)*

What is your attitude toward your business?

MR. SOLARES

*(Happily)*

My business is dandy.

GERTRUDE

*(Irritably)*

Yes, but what is your attitude toward it?

MR. SOLARES

*(With his mouth full)*

**O.K.**

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

Please try to concentrate on my question, Mr. Solares. Do you like business or do you really prefer to stay home and lazy around?

MRS. LOPEZ

*(Effusively)*

He don't like no business—he likes to stay home and sleep—and eat. *(Then in a mocking tone intended to impress MR. SOLARES himself)* "Fula, I got headache ... I got bellyache ... I stay home, no?" *(She jabs her brother in the ribs with her elbow several times rolling her eyes in a teasing manner and repeats)* "Fula, I got headache ... I got bellyache ... I stay home, no?"

*(She jabs him once again even harder and laughs way down in her throat.)*

MR. SOLARES

Fula! Esta es la ultima vez que sales conmigo. Ya defame hablar con la Senora *Eastman Cuevasf*

MRS. LOPEZ

Look, Mm Eastman Cuevas?

GERTRUDE

*(Looking disagreeably surprised)*

Yes?

MRS. LOPEZ

You like to talk to me?

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

*(As coolly as possible short of sounding rude)*

Yes, I enjoy it

MRS. LOPEZ

*(Triumphantly to MR. SOLARES)*

Miss Eastman Cuevas *like* talk to me, so you shut your mouth. He don't want no one to talk to you, Miss Eastman Cuevas because he think he gonna marry you.

*(FREDERICA doubles over and buries her face in her hands. Her skinny shoulders shake with laughter.)*

MR. SOLARES

*(Embarrassed and furious)*

Bring the chicken and rice, Esperanza.

ESPERANZA

You ain't finished what you got!

MR. SOLARES

Callate, y traigame el arroz con polio.

*(ESPERANZA walks across the lawn with the second pot wrapped in a Turkish towel. She walks deliberately at a very slow pace, throwing a hip out at each step, and with a terrible sneer on her face. She serves them all chicken and rice, first removing the spaghetti plates and giving them clean ones. Everyone takes enormous helpings again, with the exception of GERTRUDE who refuses to have any.)*

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

*(While ESPERANZA serves the others)*

If Molly doesn't come out soon she will simply have to miss her lunch, It's very tiring to have to keep reminding her of the time and the other realities of life. Molly is a dreamer.

MRS. LOPEZ

*(Nodding)*

That's right.

GERTRUDE

*(Watching FREDERICA serve herself)*

Do you people always eat such a big midday meal? Molly and I are in the habit of eating simple salads at noon.

MRS. LOPEZ

*(Wiping her mouth roughly with her napkin. Then without pausing and with gusto)*

For breakfast: chocolate and sugar bread: for lunch: soup, beans, eggs, rice, roast pork with potatoes and guava paste . . . *(She pulls on a different finger for each separate item)* Next day: soup, eggs, beans, rice, chicken with rice and guava paste—other day: soup, eggs, beans, rice, stew meat, roasted baby pig and guava paste. Other day: soup, rice, beans, grilled red snapper, roasted goat meat and guava paste.

FREDERICA

*(Speaking for the first time, rapidly, in a scarcely audible voice)*

Soup, rice, beans, eggs, ground-up meat and guava paste.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

*(Wearily)*

We usually have a simple salad.

MR. SOLARES

She's talkin' about the old Spanish custom. She only come here ten years ago when her old man died. I don't like a big lunch neither. *(In a sudden burst of temerity)* Listen, what my sister said was true. I hope I am gonna marry you some day soon. I've told you so before. You remember?

MRS. LOPEZ

*(Laughing and whispering to FREDERICA, who goes off into hysterics, and then delving into a shopping bag which lies beside her on the grass. In a very gay voice)*

This is what you gonna get if you make a wedding. *(She puts out a paper bag and hurls it at GERTRUDE'S head with the gesture of a baseball pitcher. The bag splits and spills rice all over GERTRUDE. There is general hilarity and even a bit of singing on the part of ESPERANZA and the hags. MRS. LOPEZ yells above the noise)* Ricel

GERTRUDE

*(Standing up and flicking rice from her shoulders)*

Stop it! Please! Stop it! I can't stand this racket. . . Really. *(She is genuinely upset. They subside gradually. Bewildered, she looks out over the land toward the road)* Something is coming down the road . . . It must be my boarder . . . No . . . She would be coming in an automobile. *(Pause)* Gracious! It certainly is *no* boarder, but what is it?

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MRS. LOPEZ

Friend come and see you?

GERTRUDE

*(Bewildered, staring hard)*

No, it's not a friend. It's . . . *(She stares harder)* It's some sort of king — and others.

MRS. LOPEZ

*(To her brother)*

Qué?

MR. SOLARES

*(Absently absorbed in his food)*

King. Un rey y otros mas . . .

MRS. LOPEZ

*(Nodding)*

Un rey y otros mas.

*(Enter LIONEL, bearing a cardboard figure larger than himself, representing Neptune, with flowing beard, crown and sceptre, etc. He is followed by two or more other figure bearers, carrying representations of a channel swimmer and a mermaid. LIONEL stops at the gate and dangles into the garden a toy lobster which he has tied to the line of a real fishing rod. The music dies down.)*

LIONEL

Advertisement.

*(He bobs the lobster up and down.)*

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

For what?

LIONEL

For the Lobster Bowl . . . It's opening next week, (*Pointing*) That figure there represents a mermaid and the other one is Neptune, the sea god. This is a lobster . . . (*He shakes the rod*) Everything connected with the sea in some capacity. Can we have a glass of water?

GERTRUDE

Yes. (*Calling*) Molly! Molly!

MOLLY

(*From inside the house*)

What is it?

GERTRUDE

Come out here immediately. (*To LIONEL*) Excuse me but I think your figures are really awful. I don't like advertising schemes anyway.

LIONEL

I have nothing to do with them. I just have to carry them around a few more days and then after that I'll be working at the Bowl. I'm sorry you don't like them.

GERTRUDE

I've always hated everything that was larger than Life size.  
(*LIONEL opens the gate and enters the garden, followed by the other figure bearers. The garden by now*

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

*has a very cluttered appearance. The servants, MRS. LOPEZ and FREDERICA have been gaping at the figures in silence since their arrival)*

MRS. LOPEZ

*(Finding her tongue)*

Una maravilla!

FREDERICA

Ay, si.

*(She is nearly swooning with delight. Enter MOLLY. She stops short when she sees the figures.)*

MOLLY

Oh . . . What are those?

LIONEL

Advertisements. This is Neptune, the old god.

*(MOLLY approaches the figures slowly and touches Neptune.)*

MOLLY

It's beautiful . . .

LIONEL

Here's a little lobster.

*(He dangles it into MOLLY'S open palm.)*

MOLLY

It looks like a real lobster. It even has those long threads sticking out over its eyes.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

**GERTRUDE**

Antennae.

**MOLLY**

Antennae.

**LIONEL**

*(Pulling another little lobster from his pocket and handing it to MOLLY)*

Here. Take this one. I have a few to give away.

**MOLLY**

Oh, thank you very much.

*(There follows a heated argument between FREDERICA and MRS. LOPEZ, who is trying to force FREDERICA to ask for a lobster too. They almost come to blows and finally MRS. LOPEZ gives FREDERICA a terrific shove which sends her stumbling over toward LIONEL and MOLLY.)*

**MRS. LOPEZ**

*(Calling out to LIONEL)*

Give my girl a little fish please!

*(LIONEL digs reluctantly into his pocket and hands FREDERICA a little lobster. She takes it and returns to her mother, stubbing her toe in her confusion.)*

**GERTRUDE**

*(Craning her neck and looking out over the lane toward the road)*

There's a car stopping. This really must be my boarder.  
*(She looks down into the garden with an expression of con-*

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

*sternation on her face*) The garden is a wreck. Mr. Solares, can't your servants organize this mess? Quickly, for heaven's sake. *(She looks with disgust at MR. SOLARES, who is still eating, but holds her tongue. Enter VIVIAN, a young girl of fifteen with wild reddish gold hair. She is painfully thin and her eyes appear to pop out of her head with excitement. She is dressed in bright colors and wears high heels. She is followed by a chauffeur carrying luggage)* And get those figures out of sight!

VIVIAN

*(Stopping in the road and staring at the house intently for a moment)*

The house is heavenly!

*(MOLLY exits rapidly.)*

GERTRUDE

Welcome, Vivian Constable. I'm Gertrude Eastman Cuevas. How was your trip?

VIVIAN

Stinky. *(Gazing with admiration into the garden packed with people)* And your garden is heavenly too.

GERTRUDE

The garden is a wreck at the moment.

VIVIAN

Oh, nol It's fascinating.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

You can't possibly tell yet

VIVIAN

Oh, but I can. I decide everything the first minute. It's a fascinating garden.

*(She smiles at everyone. MR. SOLARES spits chicken skin out of his mouth onto the grass.)*

MRS. LOPEZ

Do you want some spaghetti?

VIVIAN

Not yet, thank you. I'm too excited.

GERTRUDE

*(To MR. SOLARES)*

Will you show Miss Constable and the chauffeur into the house, Mr. Solares? Ill meet you at the top of the stairs.

*(She exits hurriedly into the house, but MR. SOLARES continues gnawing on his bone not having paid the slightest attention to GERTRUDE'S request. Enter MRS. CONSTABLE, VIVIAN'S mother. She is wearing a distinguished city print, gloves, hat and veil. She is frail like her daughter but her coloring is dull.)*

VIVIAN

*(Spying her mother. Her expression immediately hardens)*

Why did you get out of the taxi? You promised at the hotel that you wouldn't get out if I allowed you to ride over with

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

me. You promised me once in the room and then again on the porch. Now you've gotten out. You're dying to spoil the magic. Go back . . . Don't stand there looking at the house. (MRS. CONSTABLE *puts her fingers to her lips entreating silence, shakes her head at VIVIAN and scurries off stage after nodding distractedly to the people on the lawn*) She can't keep a promise.

### GERTRUDE

(*Coming out onto the balcony again and spotting MR. SOLARES, still eating on the grass*)

What is the matter with you, Mr. Solares? I asked you to show Miss Constable and the chauffeur into the house and you haven't budged an inch. I've been waiting at the top of the stairs like an idiot.

(MR. SOLARES *scrambles to his feet and goes into the house followed by VIVIAN and the chauffeur. Enter MRS. CONSTABLE again.*)

### MRS. CONSTABLE

(*Coming up to the hedge and leaning over. To MRS. LOPEZ*)

Forgive me but I would like you to tell Mrs. Eastman Cuevas that I am at the Herons Hotel. (MRS. LOPEZ *nods absently. MRS. CONSTABLE continues in a scarcely audible voice*) You see, Mrs. Eastman Cuevas comes from the same town that I come from and through mutual friends I heard that she took in boarders these days, so I wrote her that Vivian my daughter was coming.

### MRS. LOPEZ

Thank you very much.





## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MRS. CONSTABLE

My daughter likes her freedom, so we have a little system worked out when we go on vacations. I stay somewhere nearby but not in the same place. Even so, I am the nervous type and I would like Mrs. Eastman Cuevas to know that I'm at the Herons . . . You see my daughter is unusually high spirited. She feels everything so strongly that she's apt to tire herself out. I want to be available just in case she collapses.

MRS. LOPEZ

(*Ruffling FREDERICA'S hair*)

Frederica get very tired too.

MRS. CONSTABLE

Yes, I know. I suppose all the young girls do. Will you tell Mrs. Eastman Cuevas that *I'm* at the Herons?

MRS. LOPEZ

O.K.

MRS. CONSTABLE

Thank you a thousand times. Ill run along now or Vivian will see me and shell think that I'm interfering with her freedom . . . You'll notice right away what fun she gets out of Life. Good-bye.

MRS. LOPEZ

Good-bye, Mrs. Vamos; despiertense. Esperanza. (MRS. CONSTABLE *exits hurriedly*. To MR. SOLARES) Now we go home.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MR. SOLARES

*(Sullenly)*

All right. *(Spanish group leaves)* Esperanza! Esperanza!  
Frederica!

*(Enter from the house VIVIAN, GERTRUDE and the chauffeur, who leaves the garden and exits down the lane.)*

VIVIAN

*(To GERTRUDE, continuing a conversation)*

I'm going to be sky high by dinner time. Then I won't sleep all night. I know myself.

GERTRUDE

Don't you use controls?

VIVIAN

No, I never do. When I feel myself going up I just go on up until I hit the ceiling. I'm like that. The world is ten times more exciting for me than it is for others.

GERTRUDE

Still I believe in using controls. It's a part of the law of civilization. Otherwise we would be like wild beasts. *(She sighs)* We're bad enough as it is, controls and all.

VIVIAN

*(Hugging GERTRUDE impulsively)*

You've got the prettiest hair I've ever seen, and I'm going to love it here. *(GERTRUDE backs away a little, embarrassed. VIVIAN spots the summer house)* What a darling little house!

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

It's like the home of a bird or a poet. (*She approaches the summer house and enters it.* MRS. LOPEZ motions to the hags to start cleaning up. They hobble around one behind the other gathering things and scraping plates very ineffectually. More often than not the hag behind scrapes more garbage onto the plate just cleaned by the hag in front of her. They continue this until the curtain falls. Music begins. Calling to GERTRUDE) I can imagine all sorts of things in here, Miss Eastman Cuevas. I could make plans for hours on end in here. It's so darling and little.

GERTRUDE

(*Coldly*)

Molly usually sits in there. But I can't say that she plans much. Just dozes or reads trash. Comic strips. It will do no harm if someone else sits in there for a change.

VIVIAN

Who is Molly?

GERTRUDE

Molly is my daughter.

VIVIAN

How wonderful! I want to meet her right away . . . Where is she?

(*The boys start righting the cardboard figures.*)

LIONEL

Do you think we could have our water?

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

I'm sorry. Yes, of course. (*Calling*) Molly! (*Silence*) Molly!  
(*More loudly*) Molly! (*Silence*)

LIONEL

I think we'll go along to the next place. Don't bother your daughter. I'll come back if I may. I'd like to see you all again . . . and your daughter. She disappeared so quickly.

GERTRUDE

You stay right where you are. I'll get her out here in a minute. (*Screaming*) Molly! Come out here immediately! Molly!

VIVIAN

(*In a trilling voice*)

Molly! Come on out! . . . I'm in your little house . . . Molly!

GERTRUDE

(*Furious*)

Molly!

(*All the players look expectantly at the doorway. MOLLY does not appear and the curtain comes down in silence.*)

## SCENE II

*One month later.*

*A beach and a beautiful backdrop of the water. The SOLARES family is again spread out among dirty plates as though the scenery had changed around them while they themselves had not stirred since the first act. GERTRUDE is kneeling and rearranging her hair near the SOLARES family, VIVIAN at her feet. MOLLY and LIONEL a little apart from the other people, MOLLY watching VIVIAN. The two old hags are wearing white slips for swimming.*

*The music is sad and disturbing, implying a more serious mood.*

MRS. LOPEZ

*(Poking her daughter who is lying next to her)*

A ver si tu y Esperanza nos cantan algo . . .

FREDERICA

*(From under handkerchief which covers her face)*

Ay, mamá.

MRS. LOPEZ

*(Calling to ESPERANZA)*

Esperanza, a ver si nos cantan algo, tu y Frederica.

*(She gives her daughter a few pokes. They argue a bit and FREDERICA gets up and drags herself wearily over to the hags. They consult and sing a little song. The hags join in at the chorus.)*

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

ESPERANZA

Bueno—si . . .

GERTRUDE

*(When they have finished)*

That was nice. I like sad songs.

VIVIAN

*(Still at her feet and looking up at her with adoration)*

So do I . . . (MOLLY is watching VIVIAN, a beam of hate in her eye. VIVIAN takes GERTRUDE'S wrist and plays with her hand just for a moment. GERTRUDE pulls it away, instinctively afraid of MOLLY'S reaction. To GERTRUDE) I wish Molly would come swimming with me. I thought maybe she would. *(Then to MOLLY, for GERTRUDE'S benefit)* Molly, won't you come in, just this once. You'll love it once you do. Everyone loves the water, everyone in the world.

GERTRUDE

*(Springing to her feet, and addressing the Spanish people)*

I thought we were going for a stroll up the beach after lunch. *(There is apprehension behind her words)* You'll never digest lying on your backs, and besides you re sure to fall asleep if you don't get up right away.

*(She regains her inner composure as she gives her commands.)*

MRS. LOPEZ

*(Groaning)*

Ay! Caray! Why don't you sleep, Miss Eastman Cuevas?

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

It's very bad for you, really. Come on. Come on, everybody! Get up! You too, Alta Gracia and Quintina, get up! Come on, everybody up! (*There is a good deal of protesting while the servants and the SOLARES family struggle to their feet*) I promise you you'll feel much better later on if we take just a little walk along the beach.

VIVIAN

(*Leaping to GERTRUDE'S side in one bound*)

I love to walk on the beach!

(*MOLLY too has come forward to be with her mother.*)

GERTRUDE

(*Pause. Again stifling her apprehension with a command*)

You children stay here. Or take a walk along the cliffs if you'd like to. But be careful!

FREDERICA

I want to be with my mother.

GERTRUDE

Well, come along, but we're only going for a short stroll. What a baby you are, Frederica Lopez.

MR. SOLARES

I'll run the car up to my house and go and collect that horse I was telling you about. Then I'll catch up with you on the way back.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

You won't get much of a walk.

(*FREDERICA throws her arms around her mother and gives her a big smacking kiss on the cheek. MRS. LOPEZ kisses FREDERICA. They all exit slowly, leaving VIVIAN, LIONEL, MOLLY and the dishes behind. MOLLY, sad that she can't walk with her mother, crosses wistfully back to her former place next to LIONEL, but VIVIAN—eager to cut her out whenever she can—rushes to LIONEL'S side, and crouches on her heels exactly where MOLLY was sitting before. MOLLY notices this, and settles in a brooding way a little apart from them, her back to the pair.*)

VIVIAN

Lionel, what were you saying before about policies?

LIONEL

When?

VIVIAN

Today, before lunch. You said, "What are your policies" or something crazy like that?

LIONEL

Oh, yes. It's just . . . I'm mixed up about my own policies, so I like to know how other people's are getting along.

VIVIAN

Well, I'm for freedom and a full exciting life! (*Pointedly, to MOLLY'S back*) I'm a daredevil. It frightens my mother out of her wits, but I love excitement!

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

LIONEL

Do you always do what gives you pleasure?

VIVIAN

Whenever I can, I do.

LIONEL

What about conflicts?

VIVIAN

What do you mean?

LIONEL

Being pulled different ways and not knowing which to choose.

VIVIAN

I don't have those. I always know exactly what I want to do. When I have a plan in my head I get so excited I can't sleep.

LIONEL

Maybe it would be a stroke of luck to be like you. I have nothing but conflicts. For instance, one day I think I ought to give up the world and be a religious leader, and the next day I'll turn right around and think I ought to throw myself deep into politics. (VIVIAN, *bored, starts untying her beach shoes*) There have been ecclesiastics in my family before. I come from a gloomy family. A lot of the men seem to have married crazy wives. Five brothers out of six and a first cousin did. My uncle's first wife boiled a cat alive in the upstairs kitchen.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

VIVIAN

What do you mean, the upstairs kitchen?

LIONEL

We had the top floor fitted out as an apartment and the kitchen upstairs was called the upstairs kitchen.

VIVIAN

*(Hopping to her feet)*

Oh, well, let's stop talking dull heavy stuff. I'm going to swim.

LIONEL

All right.

VIVIAN

*(Archly)*

Good-bye, Molly.

*(She runs off stage in the direction of the cove. MOLLY sits on rock.)*

LIONEL

*(Goes over and sits next to her)*

Doesn't the ocean make you feel gloomy when the sky is gray or when it starts getting dark out?

\*

MOLLY

I don't guess it does.

LIONEL

Well, in the daytime, if it's sunny out and the ocean's blue it puts you in a lighter mood, doesn't it?

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MOLLY

When it's blue . . .

,LIONEL

Yes, when it's blue and dazzling. Don't you feel happier when it's like that?

MOLLY

I don't guess I emphasize that kind of thing.

LIONEL

I see. (*Thoughtfully*) Well, how do you feel about the future? Are you afraid of the future in the back of your mind?

MOLLY

I don't guess I emphasize that much either.

LIONEL

Maybe you're one of the lucky ones who looks forward to the future. Have you got some kind of ambition?

MOLLY

Not so far. Have you?

LIONEL

I've got two things I think I should do, like I told Vivian. But they're not exactly ambitions. One's being a religious leader, the other's getting deep into politics. I don't look forward to either one of them.

MOLLY

Then you'd better not do them.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

LIONEL

I wish it was that simple. I'm not an easygoing type. I come from a gloomy family . . . I dread being a minister in a way because it brings you so close to death all the time. You would get too deep in to ever forget death and eternity again, as long as you lived—not even for an afternoon. I think that even when you were talking with your friends or eating or joking, it would be there in the back of your mind. Death, I mean . . . and eternity. At the same time I think I might have a message for a parish if I had one.

MOLLY

What would you tell them?

LIONEL

Well, that would only come through divine inspiration, after I made the sacrifice and joined up.

MOLLY

Oh.

LIONEL

I get a feeling of dread in my stomach about being a political leader too . . . That should cheer me up more, but it doesn't. You'd think I really liked working at the Lobster Bowl.

MOLLY

Don't you?

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

LIONEL

Yes, I do, but of course that isn't life, I have fun too, in between worrying . . . fun, dancing, and eating, and swimming . . . and being with you. I like to be with you because you seem to only half hear me. I think I could say just the opposite and it wouldn't sound any different to you. Now why do I like that? Because it makes me feel very peaceful. Usually if I tell my feelings to a person I don't want to see them any more. That's another peculiar quirk of mine. Also there's something very familiar about you, even though I never met you before two months ago. I don't know what it is quite . . . your face . . . your voice . . . (*Taking her hand*) or maybe just your hand. (*Holds her hand for a moment, deep in thought*) I hope I'm not going to dread it all for too long. Because it doesn't feel right to me, just working at the Lobster Bowl. It's nice though really . . . Inez is always around if you want company. She can set up oyster cocktails faster than anyone on the coast. That's what she claims, anyway. She has some way of checking. You'd like Inez.

MOLLY

I don't like girls.

LIONEL

Inez is a grown-up woman. A kind of sturdy rock-of-Gibraltar type but very high strung and nervous too. Every now and then she blows up. (*MOLLY rises suddenly and crosses to the rock*) Well, I guess it really isn't so interesting to be there, but it is outside of the world and gloomy ideas. Maybe it's the decorations. It doesn't always help though, things come creeping in anyway.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MOLLY

*(Turning to LIONEL)*

What?

LIONEL

Well, like what ministers talk about . . . the valley of the Shadow of Death and all that . . . or the world comes creeping in. I feel like it's a warning that I shouldn't stay too long. That I should go back to St. Louis. It would be tough though. Now I'm getting too deep in. I suppose you live mainly from day to day. That's the way girls live mainly, isn't it?

MOLLY

*(Crossing back to LIONEL)*

I don't know. I'm all right as long as I can keep from getting mad. It's hard to keep from getting mad when you see through people. Most people can't like I do. I'd emphasize that all right. The rest of the stuff doesn't bother me much. A lot of people want to yank you out and get in themselves. Girls do anyway. I haven't got anything against men. They don't scheme the way girls do. But I keep to myself as much as I can.

LIONEL

Well, there's that angle too, but my point of view is different. Have you thought any more about marrying me if your mother marries Mr. Solares? I know we're both young, but you don't want to go to business school and she's sure to send you there if she marries him. She's always talking

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

about it. She'd be in Mexico most of the year and you'd be in business school. We could live over the Lobster Bowl and get all the food we wanted free, and it's good food. Mr. Solares and Mrs. Lopez liked it when they went to eat there.

MOLLY

Yes, I know they did.

LIONEL

Well?

MOLLY

I won't think of it until it happens. I can't picture anything being any different than it is. I feel I might just plain die if everything changes, but I don't imagine it will.

LIONEL

You should look forward to change.

MOLLY

I don't want anything different.

LIONEL

Then you *are* afraid of the future just like me.

MOLLY

*(Stubbornly)*

I don't think much about the future.  
*(VIVIAN returns from her swim.)*

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

LIONEL

(To MOLLY)

Well, even if you don't think much about the future you have to admit that . . .

(*He is interrupted by VIVIAN who rushes up to them, almost stumbling in her haste.*)

VIVIAN

(*Plopping down next to LIONEL and shaking out her wet hair*)

Wait 'til you hear this ... ! (LIONEL is startled. VIVIAN is almost swooning with delight, to LIONEL) It's so wonderful. . . I can hardly talk about it ... I saw the whole thing in front of my eyes . . . Just now while I was swimming . . .

LIONEL

What?

VIVIAN

Our restaurant.

LIONEL

What restaurant?

VIVIAN

*Our restaurant.* The one we're going to open together, right now, as soon as we can. I'll tell you about it ... But only on one condition . . . You have to promise you won't put a damper on it, and tell me it's not practical.

(*Shaking him.*)

LIONEL

(*Bored*)

All right.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

VIVIAN

Well, this is it. I'm going to sell all the jewelry my grandmother left me and we're going on a trip. We're going to some city I don't know which but some big city that will be as far from here as we can get. Then well take jobs and when we have enough money we'll start a restaurant. We could start it on credit with just the barest amount of cash. It's not going to be just an ordinary restaurant but an odd one where everyone sits on cushions instead of on chairs. We could dress the waiters up in those flowing Turkish bloomers and serve very expensive oriental foods, all night long. It will be called Restaurant Midnight. Can you picture it?

LIONEL

*(Very bored)*

Well, yes . . . in a way . . .

VIVIAN

Well, I can see the whole thing . . . very small lamps and perfume in the air, no menus, just silent waiters . . . bringing in elaborate dishes one after the other . . . and music. We could call it "Minuit" . . . as it is in French . . . But either way we must leave soon . . . I can't go on this way with my mother snooping around . . . I can't be tied down . . . I've tried running off before, when I felt desperate . . . But things didn't work out. . . maybe because I never had a real friend before . . . But *now I have you—(She stops, suddenly aware of MOLLY—then with a certain diffidence)* and Molly, of course, she must come too—we understand each other even

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

if she is still waters run deep. She has to escape from her mother too . . .

(MOLLY starts at the word "mother." Her face blackens.)

LIONEL

Molly, you're shivering . . . Why didn't you say something? (*Looking up*) The sun's gone behind a cloud, no wonder you're cold . . . I can go back to the house and get you a jacket, unless you want to come along and go home now too. (MOLLY does not move) I'll go and get it. Sit nearer the rocks you'll be out of the wind. Vivian, do you want something heavier than that?

(Points to her robe.)

VIVIAN

No, thanks. I'm much too excited about Restaurant Midnight to notice anything. Besides I'm not very conscious of the physical. (LIONEL exits. MOLLY gets up and walks to the rocks leading to the cliff) Have you ever eaten Armenian vine leaves with little pine nuts inside of them?

(MOLLY is climbing the rocks.)

MOLLY

Don't follow me . . .

VIVIAN

Or their wonderful flaky desserts with golden honey poured..,

MOLLY

Don't follow me!

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

VIVIAN

*(Tapering off)*

... all over them . . .

MOLLY

The day you came I was standing on the porch watching you. I heard everything you said. You put your arm around my mother, and you told her she had beautiful hair, then you saw my summer house and you told her how much you loved it. You went and sat in it and you yelled, Come out, Molly. I'm in your little house. You've tried in every way since you came to push me out. She hates you.

VIVIAN

What?

MOLLY

My mother hates you! She hates you!

VIVIAN

*(After recovering from her shock starts out after her in a rage)*

That's a lie, a rotten lie . . . She doesn't hate me . . . She's ashamed of you . . . ashamed of you. *(Exits, then repeating several times off stage)* She's ashamed of you . . . ashamed of you . . .

*(Her voice is muffled by the entrance of the Mexicans and GERTRUDE. The servants head the procession, chattering like magpies and singing. MR. SOLARES and FREDERICA bring up the rear carrying a tremendous pink rubber horse with purple dots. The hindquarters are supported by FREDERICA.)*

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

**MRS. LOPEZ**

*(Signaling to one of the hags who puts a fancy cushion down on the bench, which she sits on, then yelling to GERTRUDE)*

Well, how do you like our gorgeous horse? Pretty big, eh?

**MR. SOLARES**

It's worth thirty-two dollars.

*(They all seat themselves.)*

**GERTRUDE**

Now that you've asked me I'll tell you quite frankly that I would never dream of spending my money on a thing like that.

**MRS. LOPEZ**

*(Popping a mint into her mouth)*

Pretty big, eh?

**GERTRUDE**

*(Irritably)*

Yes, yes, it's big all right but I don't see what that has to do with anything.

**MRS. LOPEZ**

That right. Big, lots of money. Little not so much.

**GERTRUDE**

*(Bitterly)*

All the worse.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MRS. LOPEZ

*(Merrily)*

Maybe next year, bigger. You got one? (GERTRUDE, *bored, does not answer*) You got one?

GERTRUDE

What?

MRS. LOPEZ

A rubber horse?

GERTRUDE

Oh, for heaven's sake! I told you I thought it was silly. I don't believe in toys for grownups. I think they should buy other things, if they have money to spare.

MRS. LOPEZ

*(Complacently folding her hands)*

What?

GERTRUDE

Well, I guess a dresser or a chair or clothing or curtains. I don't know but certainly not a rubber horse. Clothing, of course, one can always buy because the styles change so frequently.

MR. SOLARES

Miss Eastman Cuevas, how many dresses you got?

GERTRUDE

*(Icily)*

I have never counted them.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

**MRS. LOPEZ**

*(To her brother)*

Cincuenta y nueve, dile.

**MR. SOLARES**

She got fifty-nine back at the house.

**GERTRUDE**

*(In spite of herself)*

Fifty-nine!

**MR. SOLARES**

I bought them all for her, since her husband died. He was a no good fellow. No ambition, no brain, no pep.

**MRS. LOPEZ**

*(Smiling, and nodding her head to GERTRUDE sweetly)*

Fifty-nine dresses. You like to have that many dresses?

*(Enter MRS. CONSTABLE carrying a fishing pole and basket, although she is immaculately dressed in a white crocheted summer ensemble. She has on a large hat and black glasses.)*

**MRS. CONSTABLE**

*(Trying to smile and appear at ease)*

I hope I'm not interrupting a private discussion.

**MB. SOLARES**

Happy to see you on this beautiful day. Sit down with us. We weren't having no discussion. Just counting up how many dresses the ladies got

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MRS. CONSTABLE

*(A little shocked)*

Oh! I myself was hunting for a good spot to fish and I passed so near to your house that I dropped in to call, but you weren't there, of course. Then I remembered that you told me about a bathing spot, somewhere in this direction, so I struck out hoping to find you. Where are the children?

GERTRUDE

They were here a little while ago . . . They'll be back.

MRS. CONSTABLE

I think I might sit down for a few minutes and wait for my bird to come back. I call Vivian my bird. Don't you think it suits her, Mrs. Eastman Cuevas?

GERTRUDE

*(Bored)*

Yes.

MRS. CONSTABLE

*(She sits down on a cushion)*

I miss her very badly already. It's partly because she has so much life in her. She finds so many things of interest to do and think about. *(She speaks with wonder in her voice)* I myself can't work up very much interest. I guess that's normal at my age. I can't think of much to do really, not being either a moviegoer, or a card player or a walker. Don't you think that makes me miss her more?

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

*(Icily)*

It might.

MRS. CONSTABLE

This morning after I was cleaned and dressed I sat on the porch, but I got so tired of sitting there that I went to the front desk and asked them to tell me how to fish. They did and I bought this pole. The clerk gave me a kit with some bait in it. I think it's a worm. I'm not looking forward to opening the kit. I don't like the old hook either. Ill wager I don't fish after all. *(She sighs)* So you see what my days are like.

GERTRUDE

Don't you read?

MRS. CONSTABLE

I would love to read but I have trouble with concentration.

MR. SOLARES

*(Coming over and crouching next to MRS. CONSTABLE on his heels)*

How are you feeling today, Mrs. Constable? What's new?

MRS. CONSTABLE

Not very well, thank you. I'm a little bit blue. That's why I thought I'd get a look at my bird.

MR. SOLARES

*(Still to MRS. CONSTABLE)*

You're looking real good. *(Studying her crocheted dress)* That's handwork, ain't it?

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MRS. CONSTABLE

*(Startled)*

Why, yes.

MR. SOLARES

You like turtle steak?

MRS. CONSTABLE

What?

MR. SOLARES

Turtle steak. You like it, Mrs. Constable?

MRS. CONSTABLE

*(Stammering, bewildered)*

Oh, yes ...

GERTRUDE

Mr. Solares!

MR. SOLARES

*(Looking up)*

What is it?

GERTRUDE

Perhaps I might try chop suey with you, after all. Did it originate in China or is it actually an American dish?

MR. SOLARES

I don't know, Miss Eastman Cuevas.

*(Quickly turns again to MRS. CONSTABLE.)*

MRS. LOPEZ

*(Loudly to GERTRUDE)*

Now you want to go eat chop suey because he's talkin' to

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

the other lady. You be careful, Senora Eastman Cuevas or you gonna lose him.

*(She chuckles.)*

### GERTRUDE

*(Furious but ignoring MRS. LOPEZ)*

I thought we might try some tonight, Mr. Solares—that is, if you'd like to ... *(Bitterly)* Or have you lost your taste for chop suey?

### MR. SOLARES

No, it's good. *(Turning to MRS. CONSTABLE again)* I'll call you up in your hotel and we'll go eat a real good turtle steak with fried potatoes one night. One steak would be too big for you, Mrs. Constable. You look like a dainty eater. Am I right?

### GERTRUDE

*(Turns and sees MOLLY sitting on the rock)*

Molly, we met Lionel. He's bringing the coats. *(She sees MOLLY'S stricken face and questions her)* Molly, what's happened? *(MOLLY doesnt answer)* What is it Molly? What's happened to you . . . Molly . . . what happened? What is it Molly? *(Looking around for VIVIAN)* Where's Vivian? *(MOLLY still does not answer)* Molly . . . Where is she? Where's Vivian?

### MOLLY

*(Zn a quavering voice)*

She's gathering shells ...

*(MRS. CONSTABLE rises and starts looking vaguely for VIVIAN. Then she sits down again. GERTRUDE gathers*

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

*her composure after a moment and speaks to MR. SOLARES.)*

**GERTRUDE**

*(Starts off and meets LIONEL)*

Mr. Solares, I'm going home. It's windy and cold . . . The clouds are getting thicker every minute . . . The sun's not coming out again. I'm going back to the house.

**LIONEL**

*(Entering with the coats)*

I brought these . . . I brought one for Vivian too. . . . Where's Vivian?

**GERTRUDE**

*(Takes sweater from LIONEL)*

She's gathering shells. *(She puts sweater on MOLLY'S shoulders)* Molly, put this on, you'll freeze. *(She starts off and calls to MR. SOLARES)* I'm going home.

*(MOLLY rises and starts to leave and comes face to face with MRS. CONSTABLE. They look at each other a moment. MOLLY then rushes off, following her mother. MRS. CONSTABLE goes back to the rock. MR. SOLARES and the Spanish people start to gather up their stuff and prepare to leave.)*

**MR. SOLARES**

We're coming right away Miss Eastman Cuevas. *(He gives the servants orders in Spanish. Then to MRS. CONSTABLE)* Come on back to the house and I'll mix up some drinks.

**MRS. CONSTABLE**

No, thank you.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

**MRS. LOPEZ**

*(Butting into the conversation)*

You don't come?

**MR. SOLARES**

*(To MRS. LOPEZ)*

Acaba de decir, no thank you . . . no oyes nunca?

*(The Spanish people all exit noisily.)*

**LIONEL**

*(As he leaves, sees MRS. CONSTABLE alone)*

Aren't you coming Mrs. Constable?

**MRS. CONSTABLE**

I think I'll sit here and wait for my bird.

**LIONEL**

But she might climb up the cliffs and go home around the other way. It's getting colder Mrs. Constable . . . I could wait with you . . .

**MRS. CONSTABLE**

I don't want to talk. No, I'll just sit here and wait a little while.

**LIONEL**

*(Going off)*

Don't worry, Mrs. Constable. She'll be all right.

**MRS. CONSTABLE**

*(Left alone on the stage)*

I get so frightened, I never know where she's going to end up.

*The Curtain Falls Slowly*

## SCENE III

*Same as Scene I. There is an improvised stand in the upper right-hand corner of the garden (the corner from the house), festooned with crepe paper and laden with a number of hot dogs, as well as part of a wedding cake and other things. MOLLY is leaning against the stand wearing a simple wedding dress with a round shirred neck. She has removed her veil and she looks more like a girl graduating from school than like a bride. She is eating a hot dog. The stage is flooded with sunlight.*

## GERTRUDE

*(Also in bridal costume. She is sitting on a straight-backed chair in the middle of the garden, with her own dress hiked above her ankles, revealing bedroom slippers with pompons. Eyeing MOLLY)*

Molly! You don't have to stuff yourself just because the others stuffed so much that they had to go and lie down! After all, you and I are brides even if I did take off my shoes. But they pinched so, I couldn't bear it another minute. Don't get mustard spots all over your dress. You'll want to show it to your grandchildren some day.

*(MOLLY'S mouth is so full that she is unable to answer. The hags and ESPERANZA are lying with their heads under the stand, for shade, and their legs sticking way out into the garden. MRS. CONSTABLE is wandering around in a widow's outfit, with hat and veil. She holds a champagne glass in her hand.)*

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MRS. CONSTABLE

*(Stopping beside GERTRUDE'S chair)*

I don't know where to go or what to do next. I can't seem to tear myself away from you or Mr. Solares or Mrs. Lopez or Molly. Isn't that a ridiculous reaction? *(She is obviously tight)* I feel linked to you. That's the only way I can explain it. I don't ever want to have any other friends. It's as if I had been born right here in this garden and had never lived anywhere before in my life. Isn't that funny? I don't want ever to have any other friends. Don't leave me please. *(She throws her arms around GERTRUDE)* I don't know where to go. Don't leave me.

*(She squeezes GERTRUDE for a moment in silence.)*

GERTRUDE

Now you must stop brooding. Can't you occupy yourself with something?

MRS. CONSTABLE

*(Firmly)*

I'm not brooding. I can think about it without feeling a thing, because if you must know it's just not real to me. I can't believe it. Now what does seem real is that you and Mr. Solares are going away and deserting me and Mrs. Lopez and Molly and Lionel too. And I don't want to be anywhere except in this garden with all of you. Isn't it funny? Not that I'm enjoying myself, but it's all that I want to do, just hang around in this garden. *(She goes over to the stand rather unsteadily and pours some champagne into her glass out of a bottle. She takes a few sips, then bitterly in a changed tone)* I want to stay right here, by this stand.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

*(Looking over her shoulder at MRS. CONSTABLE)*  
Drinking's not the answer to anything.

MRS. CONSTABLE

Answer? Who said anything about answers? I don't want any answers. It's too late for answers. Not that I ever asked much anyway. *(Angrily)* I never cared for answers. You can take your answers and flush them down the toilet. I *want* to be able to stay here. Right here where I am, and never, never leave this garden. Why don't you have a drink, or one of these lousy hot dogs? *(She brushes a few hot dogs off the stand, onto the grass. MOLLY stoops down and picks them up)* Let's stay here, Gertrude Eastman Cuevas, please.

GERTRUDE

You're being silly, Mrs. Constable. I know you're upset, but still you realize that I've sold the house and that Molly and I are going on honeymoons.

MRS. CONSTABLE

*(Vaguely)*

What about Mrs. Lopez?

GERTRUDE

Well, now, I guess she has her own affairs to attend to, and Frederica. Mrs. Constable, I think a sanatorium would be the best solution for you until you are ready to face the world again.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

**MRS. CONSTABLE**

*(Thickly)*

What world?

**GERTRUDE**

Come now, Mrs. Constable, you know what I mean.

**MRS. CONSTABLE**

I know you're trying to be a bitch!

**GERTRUDE**

Mrs. Constable ... I ... *(She turns to MOLLY who has come to her side)* Molly, go inside. At once .. *(MOLLY runs into the house)* Mrs. Constable, you ought to be ashamed. I won't tolerate such...

**MRS. CONSTABLE**

You have no understanding or feeling\* Mrs. Lopez is much nicer than you are. You're very coarse. I know that even if I do hate to read. You're cearse, coarse and selfish. Two awful things to be. But I'm stuck here anyway so what difference does it make?

**GERTRUDE**

*(Refusing to listen to any more of her rambling)*

Mrs. Constable, I'm surprised at you. I'm going in. I won't put up with this. What would Vivian think . . .

**MRS. CONSTABLE**

Vivian was a bird. How do you know what Vivian would feel? Do you know anything about birds? Vivian understood everything I did. Vivian loved me even if she did answer

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

back and act snippy in company. She was much too delicate to show her true feelings all over the place like you do and like I do.

**GERTRUDE**

*(Crossing to MRS. CONSTABLE)*

I've never in my life shown my feelings. I don't know what you're talking about!

**MRS. CONSTABLE**

*(Reeling about at the wedding table)*

I don't know what I'm talking about. . . *(She grabs a bottle of champagne and offers it to GERTRUDE)* Have another drink, Miss Eastman Cuevas.

**GERTRUDE**

*(In disgust grabs the bottle from her and puts it on the table)*

I don't like to drink!

**MRS. CONSTABLE**

Then have a hot dog. *(She drops it at GERTRUDE'S feet. GERTRUDE starts toward the house. MRS. CONSTABLE stops her)* You and I grew up believing this kind of thing would never happen to us or to any of ours.

**GERTRUDE**

What?

**MRS. CONSTABLE**

We were kept far away from tragedy, weren't we?

**GERTRUDE**

No, Mrs. Constable. None of us have been kept from it.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MRS. CONSTABLE

Yes, well, now it's close to me, because Vivian hopped off a cliff—just like a cricket.

GERTRUDE

Life is tragic, Mrs. Constable.

MRS. CONSTABLE

I don't want tragic.

GERTRUDE

*(Cant put up with it any more)*

Why don't you lie down on the grass and rest? It's dry. (GERTRUDE starts toward the door of the house. MRS. CONSTABLE takes the suggestion and falls in a heap behind the stump under the balcony of the house) Take your veil off. You'll roast! (MRS. CONSTABLE complies and GERTRUDE goes into the house. The two old hags appear from behind the wedding table and start to take some hot dogs. They are stopped by MOLLY coming out of the house. MOLLY looks for a moment at the garden and then runs into her summer house. A moment later GERTRUDE calls to the garden from the balcony) Molly? Molly, are you in the summer house?

MOLLY

Yes, I am.

GERTRUDE

They're getting ready. After we've left if Mrs. Constable is still asleep, will you and Lionel carry her inside and put her to bed in my room? Tomorrow when you leave for the Lobster Bowl you can take her along and drop her off at her

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

hotel. Poor thing. Be sure and clean up this mess in the morning. I have a list of things here I want you to attend to. Ill leave it on the table downstairs. Mr. Solares and I will be leaving soon.

MOLLY

No!

GERTRUDE

Yes.

MOLLY

Please don't go away.

GERTRUDE

Now, Molly, what kind of nonsense is this? You know we're leaving, what's the matter with you?

MOLLY

No, I won't let you go!

GERTRUDE

Please, Molly, no mysteries. It's very hard getting everyone started and I'm worn out. And I can't find my pocket-book. I think I left it in the garden. I'm coming down to look. (GERTRUDE *leaves the balcony to come downstairs.* MOLLY *comes out of the summer house and stands waiting with a small bunch of honeysuckle in her hands.* GERTRUDE *comes out of the house and crosses to the wedding table. She looks at MOLLY and sees her crying and goes to her*) What on earth is wrong, Molly? Why are you crying? Are you nervous? You've been so contented all day, stuffing yourself right along with the others, What has happened now?

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MOLLY

**I didn't picture it.**

GERTRUDE

Picture what?

MOLLY

What it would be like when the time came. Your leaving ...

GERTRUDE

Why not?

MOLLY

I don't know. I don't know ... I couldn't picture it, I guess. I thought so long as we were here we'd go right on being here. So I just ate right along with the others like you say.

GERTRUDE

Well, it sounds like nonsense to me. Don't be a crybaby, and wipe your tears.

*(GERTRUDE starts toward the table when she is stopped by MOLLY who puts the flowers in her hands.)*

MOLLY

Stay!

GERTRUDE

Molly. Put them back. They belong on your wedding dress.

MOLLY

No, they're from the vine. I picked them for you!

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

They're for your wedding. They belong to your dress. Here, put them back . . .

MOLLY

No . . . No . . . They're for you . . . They're flowers for you! (GERTRUDE *does not know what to make of this strange and sudden love and moves across the garden*) I love you. I love you. Don't leave me. I love you. Don't go away!

GERTRUDE

*(Shocked and white)*

Molly, stop. You can't go on like this!

MOLLY

I love you. You can't go!

GERTRUDE

I didn't think you cared this much. If you really feel this way, why have you tormented me so . . .

MOLLY

I never have. I never have.

GERTRUDE

You have. You have in a thousand different ways. What about the summer house?

MOLLY

Don't leave me!

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTBUDE

And the vine?

MOLLY

I love you!

GERTRUDE

What about the vine, and the ocean, what about that? If you care this much why have you tormented me so about the water . . . when you knew how ashamed I was . . . Crazy, unnatural fear . . . Why didn't you try to overcome it, if you love me so much? Answer that!

*(MOLLY, in a frenzy of despair, starts clawing at her dress, pulling it open.)*

MOLLY

I will. I will. I'll overcome it. I'm sorry. Ill go in the water right away. I'm going now. I'm going . . .

*(MOLLY rips off her veil and throws it on the wedding table and makes a break for the gate to the ocean.*

*GERTRUDE in "horror grabs MOLLY'S arm and drags her back into the garden.)*

GERTRUDE

Stop it! Come back here at once. Are you insane? Button your dress. They'll see you . . . they'll find you this way and think you're insane . . .

MOLLY

I was going in the water . . .

GERTRUDE

Button your dress. Are you insane! This is what I meant. I've always known it was there, this violence. I've told you

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

again and again that I was frightened. I wasn't sure what I meant . . . I didn't want to be sure. But I was right, there's something heavy and dangerous inside you, like some terrible rock that's ready to explode . . . And it's been getting worse all the time. I can't bear it any more. I've got to get away, out of this garden. That's why I married. That's why I'm going away. I'm frightened of staying here with you any more. I can't breathe. Even on bright days the garden seems like a dark place without any air. I'm stifling!

*(GERTRUDE passes below the balcony on "her way to the front door, MRS. LOPEZ tilts a vessel containing rice and pours it on GERTRUDE'S head.)*

MRS. LOPEZ

That's for you, bride number one! Plenty more when you go in the car with Solares. Ha ha! Frederica, anede, tu tambien!

*(FREDERICA, terribly embarrassed, tosses a little rice onto GERTRUDE and starts to giggle.)*

GERTRUDE

*(Very agitated, ill-humoredly flicking rice from her shoulders)*

Oh, really! Where is Mr. Solares? Is he ready?

MRS. LOPEZ

My brother is coming right away. Where is bride number two?

GERTRUDE

*(Looking around for MOLLY who is back in the summer house)*

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

She's gone back into the summer house.

*(She goes out.)*

MRS. LOPEZ

I got rice for her too! *(Calling down to the servants who are still lying with their heads under the food stand)* Quintal Altagracia! Esperanza! Despiertense!

*(The servants wake up and come crawling out from under the food stand.)*

ESPERANZA

*(Scowling)*

Caray!

*(She takes an enormous comb out of her pocket and starts running it through her matted hair. There is a sound of a horn right after ESPERANZA begins to comb her hair.)*

FREDERICA

*(Beside herself with excitement)*

It's Lionel back with the automobile, Mama! It must be time. Tell the musicians to start playing!

MRS. LOPEZ

Yes, querida. Musica! *(She kisses her daughter effusively and they both exit from the balcony into the house talking and laughing. LIONEL enters from the lane, hurries across the lawn and into the house, just as FREDERICA and MRS. LOPEZ enter through the front door onto the lawn. MRS. LOPEZ calling to the servants)* Cuando sale la Senora Eastman Cuevas de la casa, empezerdn a cantar. *(She sings a few bars herself counting the time with a swinging finger and facing the sero-*

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

ants, who rise and line up in a row. Calling to MOLLY) Bride number two! Bride number two! Molly!

*(She takes a few steps toward the summer house and throws some rice at it. The rice gets stuck in the vines instead of reaching MOLLY inside. After a few more failures, she goes around to the front of the summer house and, standing at the entrance, she hurls handful after handful at MOLLY. Enter from the house LIONEL, and MR. SOLARES. The men are carrying grips. MRS. CONSTABLE is still stretched out in a corner where she won't interfere with the procession. Some very naive music starts back stage (sounding, if possible, like a Taxco band), as they proceed across the lawn; then the maids begin to sing. While this happens MRS. LOPEZ gradually ceases to throw her rice and then disappears in the summer house where she takes the weeping MOLLY into her arms.)*

LIONEL

Where's Molly?

MRS. LOPEZ

*(Over the music, from inside the summer house)*

She don't feel good. She's crying in here. I cried too when I had my wedding. Many young girls do. I didn't want to leave my house neither.

*(She steps out of the summer house.)*

LIONEL

*(Calling)*

I'll be back, Molly, as soon as I load these bags.

*(Enter GERTRUDE as MRS. LOPEZ comes out of the sum-*

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

*mer house. The music swells and the singing is louder. GERTRUDE walks rapidly through the garden in a shower of rice and rose petals. MOLLY comes out of the summer house and GERTRUDE stops. They confront each other for a second without speaking. GERTRUDE continues on her way. MOLLY goes back into the summer house.)*

### GERTRUDE

*(From the road, calling over the music)*

Good-bye, Molly!

*(The wedding party files out, singing, MRS. LOPEZ bringing up the rear. She throws a final handful of rice at the summer house, but it does not reach. They exit. MOLLY is left alone on the stage. The music gradually fades.)*

### LIONEL

*(Returning and coming into the garden)*

Molly! *(There is no answer. He walks around to the front of the summer house and looks in)* Molly, I'm sorry you feel bad. *(Pause)* Why don't you come out? There's a very pretty sunset. *(He reaches in and pulls her out by the hands. He puts his arm around her shoulder and leads her toward the house)* We can go upstairs on the balcony and look at the sunset.

*(They disappear into the house and reappear on the balcony, where they go to the balustrade and lean over it.)*

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MOLLY

*(Staring down into the garden, in a very small voice)*  
It looks different.

LIONEL

*(After gazing off into the distance very thoughtfully for a minute)*

I've always liked it when something that I've looked at every day suddenly seems strange and unfamiliar. Maybe not always, but when I was home I used to like looking out my window after certain storms that left a special kind of light in the sky.

MOLLY

*(In a whisper)*

It looks different . . .

LIONEL

A very brilliant light that illuminated only the most distant places, the places nearest to the horizon. Then I could see little round hills, and clumps of trees, and pastures that I didn't remember ever seeing before, very, very close to the sky. It always gave me a lift, as if everything might change around me but in a wonderful way that I wouldn't have guessed was possible. Do you understand what I mean?

*(MOLLY shakes her head, negatively. He looks at her for a moment, a little sadly.)*

MOLLY

*(Anguished, turning away from him)*

I don't know. I don't know. It looks so different . . .

*Curtain*



## ACT TWO



## ACT TWO

### SCENE I

*The Lobster Bowl, ten months later.*

*Just before dawn. The oyster-shell door is open and the sound of waves breaking will continue throughout this scene. MOLLY and LIONEL are playing cards at one of the tables, Russian Bank or its equivalent. They are sitting in a circle of light. The rest of the stage is in darkness. MRS. CONSTABLE is lying on a bench but cant be seen.*

MOLLY

You just put a king on top of another king.

LIONEL

I was looking for an ace.

MOLLY

*(Smiling)*

It's right here, silly, under your nose.

LIONEL

It's almost morning.

MOLLY

*(Wistful)*

Can't we play one more game after this?

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

LIONEL

All right.

*(They play for a while in silence, then LIONEL stops again.)*

MOLLT

What is it?

LIONEL

Nothing.

MOLLY

I don't think you want to play at all. You're thinking about something else.

LIONEL

I had a letter from my brother . . . again.

MOLLY

*(Tense)*

The one who's still in St. Louis?

LIONEL

That's right, the popular one, the one who'd like us to come back there.

MOLLY

He's big and tall.

LIONEL

Yes, he's big and tall, like most boys in this country. I've been thinking a lot about St. Louis, Molly . . .

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MOLLY

Inez says we've got bigger men here than they have in Europe.

LIONEL

Well, Swedes are big and so are Yugoslavians . . .

MOLLY

But the French people are little.

LIONEL

Well, yes, but they're not as little as all that. They're not midgets. And they're not the way people used to picture them years ago, silly and carefree and saying Oo ... la ... la ... all the time.

MOLLY

They're not saying Oo ... la ... la?

LIONEL

I don't know really, I've never been there. (*Dreaming, neglecting his cards*) Molly, when you close your eyes and picture the world do you see it dark? (MOLLY *doesn't answer right away*) Do you, Molly? Do you see the world dark behind your eyes?

MOLLY

I ... I don't know ... I see parts of it dark.

LIONEL

Like what?

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MOLLY

Like woods . . . like pine-tree woods.

LIONEL

I see it dark, but beautiful like the ocean is right now. And like I saw it once when I was a child . . . just before a total eclipse. Did you ever see a total eclipse?

MOLLY

I never saw any kind of eclipse.

LIONEL

I saw one with my brother. There was a shadow over the whole earth. I was afraid then, but it stayed in my memory like something that was beautiful. It made me afraid but I knew it was beautiful.

MOLLY

It's my game.

*(They start shuffling.)*

LIONEL

*(Tentative)*

Did you ever worry about running far away from sad things when you were young, and then later getting older and not being able to find your way back to them ever again, even when you wanted to?

MOLLY

You would never want to find your way back to sad things.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

LIONEL

But you might have lost wonderful things too, mixed in with the sad ones. Suppose in a few years I wanted to remember the way the world looked that day, the day of the eclipse when I saw the shadow.

MOLLY

*(Stops dealing her cards out very slowly, steeped in a dream)*  
She had a shadow.

LIONEL

And suppose I couldn't remember it. What Molly?

MOLLY

She had a shadow.

LIONEL

Who?

MOLLY

My mother.

LIONEL

Oh ...

*(He deals his cards out more rapidly, becoming deeply absorbed in his game.)*

MOLLY

It used to come and pass over her whole life and make it dark. It didn't come very often, but when it did she used to go downstairs and drink fizzy water. Once I went down when I was twelve years old. I waited until she was asleep and I

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

sneaked down into the kitchen very quietly. Then I switched the light on and I opened the ice chest and I took out a bottle of fizzy water just like she did. Then I went over to the table and I sat down.

LIONEL

*(Without looking up from his cards)*

And then . . .

MOLLY

I drank a little water, but I couldn't drink any more. The water was so icy cold. I was going to drink a whole bottleful like she did, but nothing . . . really nothing turned out like I thought it would. (LIONEL *mixes all his cards up together in a sudden gesture.* MOLLY *comes out of her dream*) Why are you messing up the cards? We haven't begun our game . . . (LIONEL *doesn't answer*) What's the matter?

LIONEL

Nothing.

MOLLY

But you've messed up the cards.

LIONEL

I was trying to tell you something . . . It meant a lot to me ... I wanted you to listen.

MOLLY

I was listening.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

LIONEL

You told me about fizzy water . . . and your mother. (MOLLY *automatically passing her hand over her own cards and messing them up*) I wanted you to listen. I don't want you to half hear me any more. I used to like it but . . .

MOLLY

*(Pathetic, bewildered)*

I listen to you. We had a nice time yesterday . . . when . . . when we were digging for clams.

LIONEL

*(Looking back at her unable to be angry, now with compassion)*

Yes, Molly, we did. We had a very good time . . . yesterday. I like digging for clams . . . *(They hold, looking at each other for a moment)* I'm going upstairs. I'm tired. I'm going to bed.

*(LIONEL exits up stairs. MRS. CONSTABLE comes out of the darkness, where she has been sleeping on her bench, into the circle of light.)*

MOLLY

You woke up.

MRS. CONSTABLE

I've been awake . . . for a while. I was waiting.

MOLLY

I won the game, but it wasn't much fun. Lionel didn't pay attention to the cards.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MRS. CONSTABLE

I was waiting because I wanted to tell you something . . . a secret . . . I always tell you my secrets . . . But there's one I haven't told you . . . I've known it all along . . . But I've never said anything to you . . . never before . . . But now I'm going to . . . I must.

MOLLY

*(Wide-eyed, thinking she is referring to VIVIAN)*

It wasn't my fault! I didn't mean to . . .

MRS. CONSTABLE

My husband never loved me . . . Vivian?

MOLLY

Vivian! It wasn't my fault . . . I didn't . . . She . . . I didn't . . .

*(MOLLY starts to sob.)*

MRS. CONSTABLE

*(Clapping her hand over MOLLY'S mouth)*

Shhhhhh . . . They belonged to each other, my husband and Vivian. They never belonged to me . . . ever . . . But I couldn't admit it . . . I hung on hard to the bitter end. When they died . . . nothing was left . . . no memories . . . Everything vanished . . . all the panic . . . and the strain . . . I hardly remember my life. They never loved me . . . I didn't really love them . . . My heart had fake roots . . . when the strain was over, they dried up . . . they shriveled and snapped and my heart was left empty. There

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

was no blood left in my heart at all ... They never loved me! Molly . . . your mother . . . It's not too late . . . She doesn't . . .

MOLLY

*(Interrupting, sensing that MRS. CONSTABLE will say something too awful to hear)*

My mother wrote me. I got the letter today. She *hates* it down in Mexico. She hates it there.

MRS. CONSTABLE

Molly, if you went away from here, I'd miss you very much. If you went away there wouldn't be anyone here I loved ... Molly, go away ... go away with Lionel . . . Don't stay here in the Lobster Bowl . . .

MOLLY

*(Commenting on her mother's letter and then reading from it)*

She doesn't know how long she can stand it ... She says she doesn't feel very well . . . "The climate doesn't suit me ... I feel sick all the time and I find it almost impossible to sleep . . . • I can't read very much . . . not at night . . . because the light is too feeble here in the mountains. Mrs. Lopez has two of her sisters here at the moment. Things are getting more and more unbearable. Mrs. Lopez is the least raucous of the three. I hope that you are occupying yourself with something constructive. Be careful not to dream and be sure . . ."

MRS. CONSTABLE

Why shouldn't you dream?

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MOLLY

I used to waste a lot of time day-dreaming. I guess I still do. She didn't want me to dream.

MRS. CONSTABLE

Why shouldn't you dream? Why didn't she want you to?

MOLLY

Because she wanted me to grow up to be wonderful and strong like she is. Will she come back soon, Mrs. Constable? Will she make them all leave there? Will she?

MRS. CONSTABLE

I don't know dear ... I don't know ... I suppose she will ... If she needs you, she'll come back. If she needs you, I'm sure she will.

MOLLY

Are you going to walk home along the edge of the water?

MRS. CONSTABLE

I like wet sand... and I like the spray.

MOLLY

You'll get the bottom of your dress all soaking wet. You'll catch cold.

MRS. CONSTABLE

I love the waves breaking in this early light ... I run after them. I run after the waves ... I scoop up the foam and I rub it on my face. All along the way I think it's beginning . . .

IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MOLLY

What?

MRS. CONSTABLE

My life. I think it's beginning, and then . . .

MOLLY

And then?

MRS. CONSTABLE

I see the hotel.

(MRS. CONSTABLE *exits through oyster-shell door.*)

MOLLY

(*She reads again part of her mothers letter*)

"Two days ago, Fula Lopez went into the city and came back with a hideous white dog. She bought it in the street. The dog's bark is high and sharp. It hasn't stopped yapping since it came. I haven't slept at all for two nights. Now I'm beginning a cold . . ."

(*The lights fade as the curtain falls.*)

## SCENE II

*The Lobster Bowl. Two months later.*

INEZ

*(She is middle-aged, full bosomed, spirited but a little coarse. She cannot see into MOLLY'S booth from where she stands behind the bar)*

I'd rather hit myself over the head with a club than drag around here the way you do, reading comic books all day long. It's so damp and empty and quiet in here.

*(She shakes a whole tray of glasses in the sink, which makes a terrific racket.)*

MOLLY

It's not a comic book. It's a letter from my mother.

INEZ

What's new?

MOLLY

It came last week.

INEZ

What are you doing reading it now?

MOLLY

She's coming back today. She's coming back from Mexico.

INEZ

Maybe she'll pep things up a little. I hear she's got more

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

personality than you. (*Shifts some oysters*) You didn't model yourself after her, did you?

MOLLY

No.

INEZ

Ever try modeling yourself after anyone?

MOLLY

No.

INEZ

Well, if you don't feel like you've got much personality yourself, it's an easy way to do. You just pick the right model and you watch how they act. I never modeled myself after anyone, but there were two or three who modeled after me. And they weren't even relatives—just ordinary girls. It's an easy way to do. (*Shifts some oysters*) Anyway, I don't see poring over comic books. I'd rather have someone tell me a good joke any day. What's really nice is to go out—eight or nine—to an Italian dinner, and sit around afterwards listening to the different jokes. You get a better selection that way! Ever try that?

MOLLY

I don't like big bunches of people.

INEZ

You could at least live in a regular home if you don't like crowds, and do cooking for your husband. You don't even have a hot plate in your room! (*Crash of stool to floor, fol-*

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

*lowed by some high giggles')* There goes Mrs. Constable again. You'd think she'd drink home, at her hotel, where no one could see her. She's got a whole suite to herself there. It's been over a year since her daughter's accident, so I could say her drinking permit had expired. I think she's just on a plain drunk now. Right? (MOLLY *nods*) You sure are a button lip. As long as you're sitting there you might as well talk. It don't cost extra. (*She frowns and looks rather mean for a moment. There is more offstage racket*) I think Mrs. Constable is heading this way. I hope to God she don't get started on Death. Not that I blame her for thinking about it after what happened, but I don't like that topic.

(*Enter* MRS. CONSTABLE.)

MRS. CONSTABLE

(*She has been drinking*)

How is everyone, this afternoon?

MOLLY

My mother's coming back today.

INEZ

I'm kind of rushing, Mrs. Constable. I've got to have three hundred oyster cocktails ready by tonight and I haven't even prepared the hot sauce yet.

MRS. CONSTABLE

Rushing? I didn't know that people still rushed . . .

INEZ

Here we go, boys!

MRS. CONSTABLE

Then you must be one of the fortunate ones who has not

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

yet stood on the edge of the black pit. There is no rushing after that, only waiting. It seems hardly worthwhile even keeping oneself clean after one has stood on the edge of the black pit.

INEZ

If you're clean by nature, you're clean.

MRS. CONSTABLE

Oh, really? How very interesting!

INEZ

Some people would rather be clean than eat or sleep.

MRS. CONSTABLE

How very interesting! How nice that they are all so terribly interested in keeping clean! Cleanliness is so important really, such a *deep deep* thing. Those people who are so interested in keeping clean must have very deep souls. They must think a lot about life and death, that is when they're not too busy *washing*, but I guess washing takes up most of their time. How right they are! Hoorah for them!

*(She flourishes her glass.)*

INEZ

*(With a set face determined to ignore her taunts)*

The tide's pretty far out today. Did you take a look at the ...

MRS. CONSTABLE

They say that people can't live unless they can fill their lives with petty details. That's people's way of avoiding the black pit. I'm just a weak, ordinary, *very ordinary* woman in her middle years, but I've been able to wipe all the petty

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

details from my life . . . all of them. I never rush or get excited about anything. I've dumped my entire life out the window . . . like that!

*(She tips her whisky glass and pours a little on the floor.)*

INEZ

*(Flaring up)*

Listen here, Mrs. Constable, I haven't got time to go wiping up slops. I've got to prepare three hundred oyster cocktails. That means toothpicks and three hundred little hookers of hot sauce. I haven't got time to talk so I certainly haven't got time to wipe up slops.

MRS. CONSTABLE

I know . . . toothpicks and hot sauce and hookers. Very interesting! How many oysters do you serve to a customer? Please tell me.

INEZ

*(Only half listening to MRS. CONSTABLE, automatically)*  
Five.

MRS. CONSTABLE

*(Smirking as much as she can)*

Five! How fascinating! Really and truly, I can't believe it!

INEZ

Balls! Now you get out and don't come back here until I finish my work. Not if you know what's good for you. I can feel myself getting ready to blow up! *(Shifts some more oysters)* I'm going upstairs now and I'm going to put a cold towel on my head. Then, I'm coming down to finish my





## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

oyster cocktails, and when I do I want peace and quiet. I've got to have peace and quiet when I'm doing my oyster cocktails. If I don't I just get too nervous. That's all.

### MRS. CONSTABLE

I'm going . . . whether you're getting ready to blow up or not, (*She walks unsteadily toward exit. Then from the doorway*) I happen to be a very independent woman . . . But you are just plain bossy, Mrs. Oyster Cocktail Sauce.

(*Exit MRS. CONSTABLE.*)

### INEZ

Independent! I could make her into a slave if I cared to. I could walk all over her if I cared to, but I don't. I don't like to walk all over anyone. Most women do . . . they love it. They like to take some other man or woman and make him or her into a slave, but I don't. I don't like slaves. I like everybody to be going his own independent way. Hello. Good-bye. You go your way and I'll go my way, but no slaves. I'll bet you wouldn't find ten men in this town as democratic as I am. (*Shifts some oysters*) Well, here I go. I guess I'll give myself a fresh apron while I'm up there. Then I'll be ready when they come for their oysters. (*Vaguely touching her head*) I don't like to eat oysters any more. I suppose I've seen too much of them, like everything else in life.

(*She pulls the chain on the big light behind the bar so that the scene darkens. There is a little light playing on MOLLY'S booth and on the paper flowers and leaves. MOLLY puts her book of comics down, sits dreaming for a moment. There is summer house music to indi-*

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

*cate a more lyrical mood. She pulls a letter out of her pocket and reads it. Enter LIONEL.)*

LIONEL

Hey.

MOLLY

Where were you?

LIONEL

I was walking along the beach thinking about something. Molly, listen. I got a wire this morning!

MOLLY

A wire?

LIONEL

Yes, from my brother.

MOLLY

The one in St. Louis? The one who wants us to come . . .

LIONEL

Yes, Molly. He has a place for me in his business now. He sells barbecue equipment to people.

MOLLY

To people?

LIONEL

Yes, to people. For their back yards, and he wants my help.

MOLLY

But . . . but you're going to be a religious leader.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

LIONEL

I didn't say I wouldn't be, or I may end up religious without leading anybody at all. But wherever I end up, I'm getting out of here. I've made up my mind. This place is a fake.

MOLLY

These oyster shells are real and so is the turtle. He just hasn't got his own head and feet. They're wooden. \*

LIONEL

To me this place is a fake. I chose it for protection, and it doesn't work out.

MOLLY

It doesn't work out?

LIONEL

Molly, you know that. I've been saying it to you in a thousand different ways. You know it's not easy for me to leave. Places that don't work out are ten times tougher to leave than any other places in the world.

MRS. CONSTABLE

My sisters used to have cherry contests. They stuffed themselves with cherries all week long and counted up the pits on Saturday. It made them feel exuberant.

MOLLY

I can't eat cherries.

MRS. CONSTABLE

I couldn't either. I'd eat a few and I'd feel sick. But that

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

never stopped me. I never missed a single contest I despised cherry contests, but I couldn't stand being left out. Never. Every week I'd sneak off to the woods with bags full of cherries. I'd sit on a log and pit each cherry with a knife. Then I'd bury the fruit in a deep hole and fill it up with dirt. I cheated so hard to be in them, and I didn't even like them. I was so scared to be left out.

LIONEL

They are harder to leave, Molly, places that don't work out. I know it sounds crazy, but they are. Like it's three times harder for me to leave now than when I first came here, and in those days I liked the decorations. Molly, don't look so funny. I can explain it all some other way. (*Indicates oyster-shell door*) Suppose I kept on closing that door against the ocean every night because the ocean made me sad and then one night I went to open it and I couldn't even find the door. Suppose I couldn't tell it apart from the wall any more. Then it would be too late and we'd be shut in here forever once and for all. It's not going to happen, Molly. I won't let it happen. We're going away—you and me. We're getting out of here. We're not playing cards in this oyster cocktail bar until we're old.

MOLLY

(*Turns and looks up the stairs and then back to LIONEL*)

If we had a bigger light bulb we could play in the bedroom upstairs.

LIONEL

(*Walking away*)

You're right Molly, dead right. We could do just that. We

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

could play cards up there in that God-forsaken bedroom upstairs.

*(Exits.)*

**MRS. CONSTABLE**

*(Gets up and goes to MOLLY)*

Molly, call him back.

**MOLLY**

No, I'm going upstairs.

**MRS. CONSTABLE**

It's time . . . Go . . . go with Lionel.

**MOLLY**

My mother's coming. I'm going to her birthday supper.

**MRS. CONSTABLE**

Don't go there . . .

**MOLLY**

I'm late. I must change my dress.

*(She exits up the stairs.)*

**MRS. CONSTABLE**

*(Stumbling about and crossing to the bar)*

You're hanging on just like me. If she brought you her love you wouldn't know her. You wouldn't know who she was. (MRS. CONSTABLE *sinks into a chair below the bar*. GERTRUDE *enters. She is pale, distraught. She does not see MRS. CONSTABLE*) Hello, Gertrude Eastman Cuevas.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

*(Trying to conceal the strain she is under)*

Hello, Mrs. Constable. How are you?

MRS. CONSTABLE

How are you making out?

GERTRUDE

Molly wrote me you were still here. Where is she?

MRS. CONSTABLE

You look tired.

GERTRUDE

Where is Molly? (LIONEL *enters*) Lionel! How nice to see you! Where's Molly?

LIONEL

I . . . I didn't know you were coming.

GERTRUDE

Didn't you?

LIONEL

I didn't expect to see you. How are you, Mrs. Eastman Cuevas? How was your trip? When did you arrive?

GERTRUDE

Well, around two . . . But I *had* to wait . . . They were driving me here . . . Didn't you *know* I was coming?

LIONEL

No, I didn't.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

*(Uneasily)*

But I wrote Molly. I told her I was coming. I wanted to get here for my birthday. I wrote Molly that. Didn't she tell you about it? I sent her a letter. The paper was very sweet. I was sure that she would show it to you. There's a picture of a little Spanish dancer on the paper with a real lace mantilla pasted round her head. Didn't she show it to you?

LIONEL

*(Brooding)*

No.

GERTRUDE

That's strange. I thought she would. I have others for her too. A toreador with peach satin breeches and a macaw with real feathers.

LIONEL

*(Unheeding)*

She never said anything about it. She never showed me any letter.

GERTRUDE

That's strange. I thought . . . I thought . . . *(She hesitates, feeling the barrier between them. Tentative)* Macaws are called guacamayos down there.

LIONEL

Are they?

GERTRUDE

Yes, they are. Guacamayos . . .

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

LIONEL

What's the difference between them and parrots?

GERTRUDE

They're bigger! Much bigger.

LIONEL

Do they talk?

GERTRUDE

Yes, they do, but parrots have a better vocabulary, Lionel, my birthday supper's tonight. I suppose you can't come. You work late at night, don't you?

LIONEL

I work at night, but not for long . . .

GERTRUDE

You'll work in the day then?

LIONEL

No.

GERTRUDE

Then when will you work?

LIONEL

I'm quitting.

GERTRUDE

What?

LIONEL

I'm quitting this job. I'm getting out.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

Getting out. What will you do? Where will you work?

LIONEL

I'm quitting. I'm going.  
(*He exits.*)

GERTRUDE

Lionel . . . Wait . . . Where are you going?

MRS. CONSTABLE

Come on over here and talk to me . . . You need a drink.

GERTRUDE

Where is she? Where's Molly?

MRS. CONSTABLE

She's gone down on the rocks, hunting for mussels.

GERTRUDE

Hunting for mussels? But she knew I was coming. Why isn't she here? I don't understand. Didn't she get my letter?

MRS. CONSTABLE

(*Dragging GERTRUDE rather roughly to a table*)  
Sit down . . . You look sick.

GERTRUDE

I'm not sick ... I'm just tired, exhausted, that's all. They've worn me out in a thousand different ways. Even today . . . I wanted to see Molly the second we arrived, but I had to wait. I tried to rest. I had a bad dream. It's hanging over me still. But I'll be all right in a little bit. I'll be fine as soon as I see Molly. I'm just tired, that's all.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MRS. CONSTABLE

I'm glad you're well. How is Mrs. Lopez? If I were a man, I'd marry Mrs. Lopez. She'd be my type. We should both have been men. Two Spanish men, married to Mrs. Lopez.

GERTRUDE

She was part of the whole thing! The confusion . . . the racket . . . the pandemonium.

MRS. CONSTABLE

I like Mrs. Lopez, and I'm glad she's fat.

GERTRUDE

There were twelve of us at table every meal.

MRS. CONSTABLE

When?

GERTRUDE

All these months down in Mexico. Twelve of us at least. Old ladies, babies, men, little girls, everyone jabbering, the noise, the screeching never stopped ... The cooks, the maids, even the birds ...

MRS. CONSTABLE

Birds?

GERTRUDE

Dirty noisy parrots, trailing around loose. There was a big one called Pepe, with a frightening beak.

MRS. CONSTABLE

*(Rather delighted)*

Pepe?

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

Their pet, their favorite . . . Crazy undisciplined bird, always climbing up the table leg and plowing through the food.

MRS. CONSTABLE

*(Ingenuous)*

Didn't you like Pepe?

GERTRUDE

*(Dejected, as if in answer to a sad question, not irritated)*

No, I didn't like Pepe. I didn't like anything. Where's Molly?

*(Going to oyster-shell door.)*

MRS. CONSTABLE

When are you going back?

GERTRUDE

Back? I'm never going back. I've made up my mind. From now on I'm staying in the house up here. It was a terrible mistake. I told him that. I told him that when he had to be there he could go by himself. We had a terrible fight . . . It was disgusting. When he stood there saying that men should never have given us the vote, I slapped him.

MRS. CONSTABLE

I never voted. I would vote all right if I could only register.

GERTRUDE

He's a barbarian. A subnormal human being. But it doesn't matter. He can stay down there as long as he likes. I'll be up here, where I belong, near Molly. *(Face clouding over)* What was he saying before? What did he mean?

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MRS. CONSTABLE

Who?

GERTRUDE

Lionel. He said he was quitting. He said he was leaving, getting out of here.

MRS. CONSTABLE

Lionel's sick of the Lobster Bowl. I'm not. Molly likes it too, more than Lionel.

GERTRUDE

Molly. She couldn't like it here, not after our life in the ocean house.

MRS. CONSTABLE

Tell me more, Gertrude Eastman Cuevas. Did you enjoy the scenery?

GERTRUDE

What?

MRS. CONSTABLE

Down in Mexico.

GERTRUDE

I didn't enjoy anything. How could I, the way they lived? It wasn't even civilized.

MRS. CONSTABLE

*(Merrily)*

Great big lunches every day.

GERTRUDE

There were three or four beds in every single room.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MRS. CONSTABLE

Who was in them?

GERTRUDE

Relatives, endless visiting relatives, snapping at each other, jabbering half the night. No wonder I look sick. (*Sadly to herself*) But I'll be fine soon. I know it. I will ... as soon as I see Molly. If only she'd come back ... (To MRS. CONSTABLE) Which way did she go? Do you think I could find her?

MRS. CONSTABLE

She always goes a different way.

GERTRUDE

She couldn't like it in this ugly place. It's not true!

MRS. CONSTABLE

They take long walks down the beach or go digging for clams. They're very polite. They invite me along. But I never accept. I know they'd rather go off together, all by themselves.

GERTRUDE

(*Alarmed*)

All by themselves!

MRS. CONSTABLE

When they play cards at night, I like to watch them. Sometimes I'm asleep on that bench, but either way I'm around. Inez doesn't know about it. She goes to bed early. She thinks I leave here at a reasonable hour. She's never found out. I take off my shoes and I wade home at dawn.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

I don't know what's happening to the people in this world.  
(*Leaves* MRS. CONSTABLE.)

MRS. CONSTABLE

Why don't you go back to Mexico, Gertrude Eastman Cuevas, go back to Pepe? (GERTRUDE *looks in disgust at* MRS. CONSTABLE. *More gently*) Then have a drink.

GERTRUDE

(*Fighting back a desire to cry*)

I don't like to drink.

MRS. CONSTABLE

Then what do you like? What's your favorite pleasure?

GERTRUDE

I don't know. I don't know. I don't like pleasures. I . . . I like idealism and backbone and ambition. I take after my father. We were both very proud. We had the same standards, the same ideals. We both loved grit and fight.

MRS. CONSTABLE

You loved grit and fight.

GERTRUDE

We were exactly alike. I was his favorite. He loved me more than anyone in the world!

MRS. CONSTABLE

(*Faintly echoing*)

More than anyone in the world...

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

*(Picking up one of the two boxes she brought with her and brooding over it)*

It was a senseless dream, a nightmare.

MRS. CONSTABLE

What's in the box?

GERTRUDE

Little macaroons. I bought them for Molly on the way up. I thought she'd like them. Some of them are orange and some are bright pink. *(Shakes the box and broods again, troubled, haunted by the dream)* They were so pretty...

MRS. CONSTABLE

Aren't they pretty any more?

GERTRUDE

I had a dream about them just now, before I came. I was running very fast through the night trying to get to Molly, but I couldn't find the way. I kept losing all her presents. Everything I'd bought her I kept scattering on the ground. Then I was in a cold room with my father and she was there too. I asked him for a gift. I said, "I want something to give to my child," and he handed me this box . . . *(Fingering the actual box)* I opened it up, and took out a macaroon and I gave it to Molly. *(Long pause. She looks haunted, deeply troubled)* When she began to eat it, I saw that it was hollow, just a shell filled with dust. Molly's lips were gray with dust. Then I heard him . . . I heard my father. *(Excited)* He was laughing. He was laughing at me! *(She goes away from MRS.*

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

CONSTABLE *to collect herself*) I've loved him so. I don't know what's happening to me. I've never been this way. I've always thrown things off, but now even foolish dreams hang over me. I can't shake anything off. I'm not myself ... I... (*Stiffening against the weakness*) When I was in the ocean house ... (*Covering her face with her hands and shaking her head, very softly, almost to herself*) Oh, I miss it so ... I miss it so.

MRS. CONSTABLE

Houses! I hate houses. I like public places. Houses break your heart. Come and be with me in the Lobster Bowl. They gyp you, but it's a great place. They gyp you, but I don't care.

GERTRUDE

It was a beautiful house with a wall and a garden and a view of the sea.

MRS. CONSTABLE

Don't break your heart, Mrs. Eastman dear, don't . . .

GERTRUDE

I was happy in my house. There was nothing wrong. I had a beautiful life. I had Molly. I was busy teaching her. I had a full daily life. Everything was fine. There was nothing wrong. I don't know why I got frightened, why I married again. It must have been ... it must have been because we had no money. That was it ... We had so little money, I got frightened for us both ... I should never have married. Now my life's lost its meaning ... I have nightmares all the time. I lie awake in the night trying to think of just one standard or one ideal but something foolish pops into my head

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

like Fula Lopez wearing city shoes and stockings to the beach. I've lost my daily life, that's all. I've lost Molly. My life has no meaning now. It's their fault. It's because I'm living their way. But I'm back now with Molly. I'm going to be fine again . . . She's coming with me tonight to my birthday supper . . . It's getting dark out. Where is she? (LIONEL enters at bar with basket of glasses) Lionel. Wait . . .

LIONEL

What is it?

GERTBUDE

What did you mean just now.

LIONEL

When?

GERTRUDE

Before . . . when I came in. You said you were going, getting out.

LIONEL

I am. I sent a wire just now.

GERTRUDE

Wire?

LIONEL

Yes, to my brother. I'm going to St. Louis. He has a business there.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

But you can't do that! I've come back. You won't have to live in this stupid Lobster Bowl. You're going to be living in a house with *me*.

LIONEL

We'll never make a life, sticking around here. I've made up my mind. We're going away...

GERTRUDE

You talk like a child.

LIONEL

(*Interrupting*)

I'm not staying here.

GERTRUDE

You're running away . . . You're running home to your family . . . to your brother. Don't you have any backbone, any fight?

LIONEL

I don't care what you think about me! It's Molly that. . .

GERTRUDE

What about Molly!

LIONEL

I've got to get Molly out of here, far away from everything she's ever known. It's her only chance.

GERTRUDE

You're taking her away from *me*. That's what you're doing.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

LIONEL

You're like a wall around Molly, some kind of shadow between us. She lives . . .

GERTRUDE

*(Interrupting, vehement)*

*I'm not a shadow any more. I've come back and I'm staying here, where I belong with Molly!* (LIONEL *looks at her with an expression of bitterness and revulsion*) What is it? Why do you look at me that way?

LIONEL

What way?

GERTRUDE

As if I was some terrible witch . . . That's it, some terrible witch!

LIONEL

You're using her. You need Molly. You don't love her. You're using her . . .

GERTRUDE

You don't know what you're talking about. You don't know anything about me or Molly. You never could. You never will. When she married she was desperate. She cried like a baby and she begged me to stay. But you want to drag her away from me—from her mother. She loves me more than anyone on earth. She needs me. In her heart she's still a child.

LIONEL

If you get what you want shell stay that way. Let her go, if you love her at all, let her go away .. . Don't stop her . . .

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

I can't stop her. How can I? She'll do what she likes, but I won't stand here watching while you drag her away. I'll talk to her myself. I'll ask her what she wants, what she'd really like to do. She has a right to choose.

LIONEL

To choose?

GERTRUDE

Between going with you and staying with me!

*(LIONEL is silent. After a moment he walks away from GERTRUDE. Then to himself as if she were no longer there.)*

LIONEL

This morning she was holding her wedding dress up to the light.

GERTRUDE

*(Proud)*

She's going to wear it to my birthday supper. It's a party dress, after all.

LIONEL

*(Not really answering)*

She didn't say anything to me. She just held her dress up to the light.

GERTRUDE

Go and find her. Get her now. Bring her back . . . tell her I'm here.

LIONEL

If you go half way up those stairs and holler . . .

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

No, Mrs. Constable said she was hunting mussels on the beach.

LIONEL

She's upstairs. (LIONEL goes up to landing and calls) Molly! Your mother's here. She wants you. Come on down. Your mother's back.

(MOLLY enters down stairs. LIONEL backs away and lurks in the shadows near the bar.)

GERTRUDE

(Tentative, starts forward to embrace her, but stops)

Molly, how pretty you look! How lovely ... and your wedding dress.

MOLLY

(Spellbound, as if looking at something very beautiful just behind GERTRUDE)

I took it out this morning for your birthday.

GERTRUDE

I'm glad, darling. How are you? Are you well, Molly? Are you all right?

MOLLY

Yes, I am.

GERTRUDE

(Going to table)

I have something for you. A bracelet! (She hooks necklace around MOLLY'S neck) And a necklace! They're made of real silver. Oh, how sweet you look! How pretty you look in sil-

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

ver! Just like a little girl, just as young as you looked when we were in the ocean house together. The ocean house, Molly! I miss it so. Don't you?

MOLLY

I knew you'd come back.

*(They sit down.)*

GERTRUDE

I knew it, too, from the beginning. They were strangers—all of them. I couldn't bear it. Nothing, really nothing meant anything to me down there, nothing at all. And you, darling, are you happy? What do you do in this terrible ugly place?

MOLLY

In the afternoon we hunt for mussels, sometimes, and at night we play cards ... Lionel and me.

GERTRUDE

*(Uneasily)*

I spoke to Lionel just now.

MOLLY

Did you?

GERTRUDE

Yes, about St. Louis.

MOLLY

*(Darkening)*

Oh!

**no**

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

LIONEL

*(Coming over to them from the bar)*

Yes, Molly. I'm arranging things now for the trip tomorrow. My mind's made up. If you're not coming with me, I'm going by myself. I'm coming down in a little while and you've got to tell me what you're going to do.

*(LIONEL exits upstairs.)*

GERTRUDE

You see. With or without you he's determined to go. Don't look frightened, Molly. I won't allow you to go. You're coming with me, with your mother, where you belong. I never should have let you marry. I never should have left you. I'll never leave you again, darling. You're mine, the only one I have . . . my own blood . . . the only thing I'm sure of in the world. *(She clasps MOLLY greedily to her breast)* We're going soon, but we've got to wait for them, Mrs. Lopez and Frederica. They're calling for us here. You're coming with me and you're never going back. Tonight, when you go to bed, you can wear my gown, the one you've always loved with the different colored tulips stitched around the neck. *(She notices MOLLY'S strange expression and the fact that she has recoiled just a little)* What is it, dear? Don't you like the gown with the tulips any more? You used to . . .

MOLLY

*(As if from far away)*

I like it

GERTRUDE

Tomorrow, after Lionel has gone, I'll come back to pack you up. *(Fingering the necklace)* Did you like the paper with the dancing girl on it?

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MOLLY

I have your letter here.

GERTRUDE

There are different ones at home—a toreador with peach satin breeches and a macaw with real feathers . . . (*It is obvious to her that MOLLY is not listening*) You've seen them, dear . . . Those big parrots . . . (*Anxiously*) Haven't you?

MOLLY

What?

GERTRUDE

(*Trying to ignore MOLLY'S coldly remote behavior*)

How could you bear it here in this awful public place after our life together in the ocean house?

MOLLY

I used to go back and look into the garden . . . over the wall. Then the people moved in and I didn't go there any more. But, after a while...

GERTRUDE

(*Cutting in*)

I'll make it all up to you, darling. You'll have everything you want.

MOLLY

It was all right after a while. I didn't mind so much. It was like being there . . .

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

What, Molly? What was like being there?

MOLLY

After a while I could sit in that booth, and if I wanted to I could imagine I was home in the garden . . . inside the summerhouse.

GERTRUDE

That's over, Molly. That's over now. All over. I have a wonderful surprise for you, darling. Can you guess?

MOLLY

*(Bewildered)*

I don't know. I don't know.

GERTRUDE

I ordered the platform built, and the trellis, and I know where I can get the vines. Fully grown vines, heavy with leaves . . . just like the ones . . . *(She is stopped again by MOLLY'S expression. Then, touching her face apologetically)* I know, I know. I don't look well. I look sick. But I'm not... I'm not sick.

MOLLY

No, you don't look sick. You look . . . different.

GERTRUDE

It's then: fault. It's because I'm living their way. But soon I'll be the same again, my old self.

*(Enter MRS. LOPEZ and FREDERICA carrying paper bags.)*

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MRS. LOPEZ

Inez! Inez! ya llegamos . . .

GERTRUDE

Here they are.

INEZ

*(Coming downstairs with a heavy tread)*

Something tells me I hear Fula Lopez, the girl I love . . .

MRS. LOPEZ

*(Grabbing INEZ and whirling her around)*

Inez . . . Guapa . . . Inez. Aqui estamos . . . que alegria . . . We are coming back from Mexico, Frederica, Fula . . . *(She spots GERTRUDE)* and Eastman Cuevas. *(Then to MOLLY, giving her a big smacking kiss)* Molly . . . Hello, Molly! Inez, guapa, bring us three limonadas, please . . . two for Fula and one for Frederica. Look, look, Eastman Cuevas. We got gorgeous stuff. *(She pulls a chicken out of a bag she is carrying and dangles it for GERTRUDE)* Look and see what a nice one we got... Feel him!

GERTRUDE

No, later at home.

MRS. LOPEZ

Pinch him, see how much fat he got on him.

GERTRUDE

*(Automatically touching chicken for a second)*

He's very nice . . . *(Then swerving around abruptly and showing a stern fierce profile to the audience)* Why is he here?

IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

MRS. LOPEZ

*(Looking stupid)*

Who?

GERTRUDE

The chicken. Why is he here?

MRS. LOPEZ

The chicken? He go home. We put him now with his rice and his peas.

GERTRUDE

*(In a jury manifestly about the chicken. But her rage conceals panic about MOLLY)*

But *what* rice and peas. You know what we're having . . . I ordered it myself . . . It was going to be a light meal . . . something I liked . . . for once . . . we're having jellied consommé and little African lobster tails.

MRS. LOPEZ

*(Crossing back to center tables and stopping near MRS. CONSTABLE)*

That's right, jelly and Africa and this one too.

*(She hoists chicken up in the air with a flourish. Enter MRS. CONSTABLE.)*

MRS. CONSTABLE

A chicken. I hate chickens. I'd rather have a dog.

*(FREDERICA pulls a thin striped horn out of one of the paper bags and blows on it.)*

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

**GERTRUDE**

Frederica, stop that. Stop that at once! I told you I didn't want to hear a single horn on my birthday. This is a party for adults. Put that away. Come along, we're leaving. Well leave here at once.

**FREDERICA**

*(In her pallid voice)*

And Umberto? My uncle . . .

**GERTRUDE**

What about him?

**FREDERICA**

Uncle Umberto say he was calling for us to ride home all together.

**GERTRUDE**

*(Automatically)*

Where *is* he?

**FREDERICA**

He is with Pepe Hernandez, Frederica Gomez, Pacito Sanchez, Pepito Pita Luga . . .

**GERTRUDE**

No more names, Frederica . . . Tell him we're coming. We'll be right along...

**MRS. LOPEZ**

And the limonadas . . . ,

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

Never mind the limonadas. We're leaving here at once ...  
Collect your bundles ... Go on, go along.

*(The Mexicans start to collect everything, and there is the usual confusion and chatter. FREDERICA spills some horns out of her bag. MRS. LOPEZ screams at her, etc. They reach the exit just as INEZ arrives with the limonadas.)*

MRS. LOPEZ

*(Almost weeping, in a pleading voice to GERTRUDE)*  
Look, Eastman Cuevas the limonadas!

FREDERICA

*(Echoing)*

The limonadas . . . Ay!

GERTRUDE

No! There isn't time. I said we were leaving. We're leaving at once . . .

INEZ

*(To MRS. LOPEZ as they exit, including MRS. CONSTABLE)*

Take them along . . . Drink them in the car, for Christ's sake.

MRS. LOPEZ

*(Offstage)*

But the glasses . . .

INEZ

*(Offstage)*

To hell with the glasses. Toss them down the cliff.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

Molly, it's time to go. (MOLLY starts for stairway) Molly, come along. We're going. What is it, Molly? Why are you standing there? You have your silver bracelet on and the necklace to match. We're ready to leave. Why are you waiting? Tonight you'll wear my gown with the tulips on it. I told you that . . . and tomorrow well go and I'll show you the vines. When you see how thick the leaves are and the blossoms, you'll know I'm not dreaming. Molly, why do you look at me like that? What is it? What did you forget?

(LIONEL comes downstairs. GERTRUDE stiffens and pulls MOLLY to her side with a strong hand, holding her there as a guard holds his prisoner.)

GERTRUDE

Lionel, we're going. It's all settled. We're leaving at once. Molly's coming with me and she's not coming back.

MOLLY

(Her voice sticking in her throat)

I . . .

LIONEL

(Seeing her stand there, overpowered by her mother, as if by a great tree, accepts the pattern as utterly hopeless once and for all. Then, after a moment)

Good-bye, Molly. Have a nice time at the birthday supper . . . (Bitterly) You look very pretty in that dress.

(He exits through oyster-shell door.)

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

GERTRUDE

*(After a moment. Calm and firm, certain of her triumph)*

Molly, we're going now. You've said good-bye. There's no point in standing around here any longer.

MOLLY

*(Retreating)*

Leave me alone . . .

GERTRUDE

Molly, what is it? Why are you acting this way?

MOLLY

I want to go out.

GERTRUDE

Molly!

MOLLY

I'm going... I'm going out.

GERTRUDE

*(Blocking her way)*

I'll make it all up to you. I'll give you everything you wanted, everything you've dreamed about.

MOLLY

You told me not to dream. You're all changed . . . You're not like you used to be.

GERTRUDE

I will be, darling. You'll see . . . when we're together. It's

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

going to be the same, just the way it was. Tomorrow well go back and look at the vines, thicker and more beautiful...

MOLLY

I'm going . . . Lionel!

GERTRUDE

*(Blocking her way, fiendish from now on)*

He did it. He changed you. He turned you against me.

MOLLY

Let me go ... You're all changed.

GERTRUDE

You can't go. I won't let you. I can stop you. I can and I will.

*(There is a physical struggle between them near the oyster-shell door.)*

MOLLY

*(Straining to get through the door and calling in a voice that seems to come up from the bottom of her heart)*

Lionell

GERTRUDE

I know what you did ... I didn't want to ... I was frightened, but I knew . . . You hated Vivian. I'm the only one in the world who knows you. (MOLLY *aghast ceases to struggle. They hold for a moment before GERTRUDE releases her grip on MOLLY. Confident now that she has broken her daughters will forever*) Molly, we're going . . . We're going home.

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

**MOLLY**

*(Backing away in horror)*

No!

**GERTRUDE**

Molly, we're going! (MOLLY *continues to retreat*) If you don't (MOLLY, *shaking her head still retreats*) If you don't, I'll tell her! I'll call Mrs. Constable.

**MOLLY**

*(Still retreating)*

No ...

**GERTRUDE**

*(Wild, calling like an animal)*

Mrs. Constable! Mrs. Constable! (To MOLLY, *shaking her*) Do you see what you're doing to me! Do you? (MRS. CONSTABLE *appears in doorway*. GERTRUDE *drags MOLLY brutally out of her corner near the staircase and confronts her with MRS. CONSTABLE*) I have something to tell you, Mrs. Constable. It's about Molly. It's about my daughter . . . She hated Vivian. My daughter hated yours and a terrible ugly thing happened . . . an ugly thing happened on the cliffs . . .

**MRS. CONSTABLE**

*(Defiantly)*

Nothing happened . . . Nothing!

**GERTRUDE**

*(Hanging on to MOLLY, who is straining to go)*

It *had* to happen. I know Molly... I know her jealousy . . . I was her whole world, the only one she loved... She wanted

## IN THE SUMMER HOUSE

me all to herself ... I know that kind of jealousy and what it can do to you ... I know what it feels like to wish someone dead. When I was a little girl ... I ... *(She stops dead as if a knife had been thrust in her heart now. The hand holding MOLLY'S in its hard iron grip slowly relaxes. There is a long pause. Then, under her breath)* Go . . . *(MOLLY'S flight is sudden. She is visible in the blue light beyond the oyster-shell door only for a second. The Mexican band starts playing the wedding song from Act One. GERTRUDE stands as still as a statue. MRS. CONSTABLE approaches, making a gesture of compassion)* The band is playing on the beach. They're playing their music. Go, Mrs. Constable . . . Please.

*(MRS. CONSTABLE exits through oyster-shell door.)*

FREDERICA

*(Entering from street, calling, exuberant)*

Eastman Cuevas! Eastman Cuevas! Uncle Umberto is ready. We are waiting in the car . . . WTiere's Molly? *(She falters at the sight of GERTRUDE'S white face. Then, with awe)* Ay dios . . . Que pasa? Que tiene? Miss Eastman Cuevas, you don't feel happy? *(She unpins a simple bouquet of red flowers and puts it into GERTRUDE'S hand)* For your birthday, Miss Eastman Cuevas . . . your birthday . . .

*(She backs away into the shadows, not knowing what to do next. GERTRUDE is standing rigid, the bouquet stuck in her hand.)*

GERTRUDE

*(Almost in a whisper, as the curtain falls)*

When I was a little girl . . .













