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Twentieth Century *Plays*

AMERICAN

Eight Representative Selections

EDITED BY

RICHARD A. CORDELL

PURDUE UNIVERSITY

THIRD EDITION

THE RONALD PRESS COMPANY ♣ NEW YORK

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TO GRETCHEN CORDELL

PREFACE

THIS NEW edition of TWENTIETH CENTURY PLAYS, AMERICAN, contains only two plays of the original edition of 1934—*Street Scene* and *The Green Pastures*, two theatre classics untouched by the passing years. From the second edition (1939) three additional plays are retained *Anna Christie*, which in perspective seems more surely than ever one of Eugene O'Neill's best dramas; *The Silver Cord*, Sidney Howard's powerful psychological play; and *Winterset*, Maxwell Anderson's masterpiece. For the third edition three plays have been added, all representing the best work of three of our most distinguished playwrights. Robert Sherwood's *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* is good theatre as well as stirring history; Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes* is included as a notable example of masterly craftsmanship and skillful characterization. George Kaufman and Marc Connelly's *Beggar on Horseback*, the satire of which, unfortunately, baffles too many alumni of the modern American high school, has been replaced by the gentler but no less artful comedy *The Late George Apley*, by Kaufman and John P. Marquand.

These eight plays, all of which were written and produced since 1920, and all of which have achieved an honored place in our dramatic literature, do not, perhaps, represent "types" of drama; for good plays are not always easily tagged and pigeonholed. They do, however, provide considerable variety for classroom study or general reading—fantasy, raw and refined naturalism, satirical comedy, poetic tragedy, psychological drama, and episodic biographical drama in the modern realistic manner. Bibliographies and brief reading lists are appended for those desiring further study or playreading. The introductions provide information about the playwrights and their work, and suggestions for interpretation and appreciation of the plays. This anthology may be used as a textbook in drama study, or for supplementary reading in literature or composition courses; for the general reader it brings together eight masterpieces of the American stage.

We live in the golden age of American drama. Our plays are well received in England, and are frequently performed in the state and municipal theatres of the Continent. The fact that residents of Stockholm probably have the opportunity to see finished productions of more good American plays than have the natives of some of our own large cities points to the still imperfect organization of the American theatre, but is also a tribute to the excellence, maturity, and universality of our drama.

As a sampling of the best in American drama the contents of this volume may surprise the reader with its contemporary flavor, but our dramatic literature began to achieve maturity and excellence only after the beginning of the First World War. In the older histories of American literature there is no mention of American dramatists; in an article on the new drama in the *New York Nation* in 1910 only British playwrights are mentioned; in a similar article in the *Bookman* in 1913 by Clayton Hamilton, the author discusses the new realism in British plays but hunts in vain for an American play to compare with them in vigor. Yet only a year later in the *American Magazine* Walter Pritchard Eaton writes of an incipient revolt against the commercial theatre; at that time nearly all the theatres in the United States were controlled by a small group of speculators in New York City—never had an art been forced so ruthlessly to serve Mammon. American contemporaries of Barrie, Shaw, Synge, Galsworthy, Maugham, Barker, and Hankin were Klein, Belasco, Sheldon, Ade, and Fitch. Americans who were reading Hardy, George Moore, Conrad, Edith Wharton, and Dreiser had to content themselves in the theatre with a native drama of incredible triviality.

The American theatre, however, had enjoyed a vigorous existence for more than a century, and American playwrights had contributed generously to it. Every American town with a population of ten thousand or more had its theatre, fed by a constant stream of "road shows" for nine months of the year. In Lafayette, Indiana, for example—and it can be assumed that Lafayette's theatrical history of these years was typical of that of most small American cities—from 1909 to 1914 over one hundred plays were performed by touring companies each year. To be sure many of the productions were crude, many of the plays cheap farce or melodrama; but there were also plays by Shaw, Barrie, Bernstein, Rostand, Brieux, Maugham, Ibsen, and Shakespeare; and Maude Adams, Richard Mansfield, John Drew, Mrs. Fiske, and the Abbey Players came to Lafayette.

Although the theatre flourished, American drama itself languished. Until late in the nineteenth century there was practically no attempt to use honestly the materials of American life for dramatic material. In the drama as in other departments of American letters romanticism lingered on long after it had collapsed as a literary force in Europe. The titles of popular nineteenth century American plays betray their exoticism or other romantic elements: *The Gladiator*, *Francesca da Rimini*, *The Heart of Maryland*, *Zanina*, *Heartsease*, *Soldiers of Fortune*, etc. Although our drama was divorced from literature, it was vigorous and popular. Such favorites as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (with a street parade at noon), *In Old Kentucky*, and *Rip Van Winkle* were annual visitors to many American towns.

Although an American drama of consequence did not emerge until about 1915, there were some interesting pioneers who provided the American theatre in the early years of the twentieth century with plays decidedly superior to those of the preceding century. The Civil War dramas of Bronson Howard were enormously popular, but too romantic and sentimental to survive. Clyde Fitch was the most highly praised dramatist before Eugene O'Neill and the first American playwright to gain any critical attention abroad. Under the influence of Scribe he fashioned dexterous, well-made plays with considerable surface realism, and in his best comedies, such as *The Truth* and *The City*, successfully introduced social satire. Although considered theatrically effective in their day, none of his plays has held the stage. William Vaughn Moody in *The Great Divide* attempted a study of Eastern conventions and Western liberalism which fails to convince modern readers. Augustus Thomas was another popular playwright, but the introduction of elements of contemporary interest into his plays was not successful. Percy Mackaye was an experimentalist for more than thirty years, but in the face of extravagant praise from literary historians one must admit that he has had little or no influence on the contemporary drama and stage. George Ade and George M. Cohan were purveyors of unliterary entertainment distinguished by vitality and surface smartness. Other popular but unimportant playwrights of the early years of the twentieth century were David Belasco, Charles Klein, Edward Sheldon, William Gillette, Eugene Walter, and Louis Anspacker.

Some time between 1910 and 1916 began the new American drama, which was destined to take honorable position alongside the contemporary European drama. It might be said to have begun in 1913 with the founding of the Little Theatre in Chicago under the direction of Maurice Browne; or in 1914 with the publication of Eugene O'Neill's first plays; or in 1915 with the beginning of three important non-commercial theatre organizations: The Provincetown Players, the Washington Square Players (out of which grew the Theatre Guild), and the Neighborhood Players; or in 1916 with the first public performance of O'Neill's plays. Since 1916 the growth of the Little Theatre movement over the United States has been phenomenal, and since 1919 the Theatre Guild has achieved financial prosperity with no concession to what history has assumed to be popular taste. We now actually have some municipal theatres in the United States, including the New York City Center of Music and Drama, and one state theatre—in Virginia. The vigorous activities of such organizations as the Hedgerow Theatre, Equity-Library Theatre, National Theatre Conference, Provincetown Playhouse, Group Theatre, Experimental Theatre,

Inc., Studio Theatre and Dramatic Workshop of the New School for Social Research, Davenport Free Theatre—to list a few out of many—indicate that the American theatre is living and experimental, and gradually freeing itself from Broadway commercial shackles. The study of drama in schools and universities has become almost universal, and hundreds of plays are performed annually in campus theatres, many of which are more attractive and modern than most of the playhouses in our large cities. The Federal Theatre, under the able direction of Hallie Flanagan, was responsible for hundreds of stimulating productions in all parts of the country, for some daring experiments in technique, and for encouragement of native writers. Thousands of young Americans during the war saw their first plays when Katharine Cornell and Maurice Evans brought the theatre to them. In general the intellectual level of American drama and public taste have risen sharply. For the millions who must content themselves with the photographs (moving) of plays, there have been many satisfactory films: *Winterset*, *Street Scene*, *Major Barbara*, *Pygmalion*, *What Every Woman Knows*, *Private Lives*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Brief Encounter*, *Animal Kingdom*, *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*, *The Little Foxes*, *Anna Christie*.

Among recent playwrights not represented in this collection a dozen are especially worthy of mention. S. N. Behrman is our foremost writer of polished, sophisticated comedy. His best plays are distinguished by their urbanity, wit, and sharp awareness of ideas and attitudes that concern alert and discerning people today: *End of Summer*, *Biography*, *Rain from Heaven*, and *The Talley Method*. George Kelly has written two plays of authentic realism: *The Show-off* and *Craig's Wife*. Philip Barry is a writer of subtle comedies with some serious implications, such as *In a Garden*, *White Wings*, *Animal Kingdom*, *Philadelphia Story*. Susan Glaspell's plays, such as *The Verge* and *Alison's House*, are intelligent and psychologically sound, but too delicate and literary for the theatre. Among the regional plays, those dealing with the Southern mountaineers and the poor whites have attracted most attention. *Sun-up*, by Lulu Vollmer, *Hell Bent for Heaven*, by Hatcher Hughes, *The Field God*, by Paul Green; and *Tobacco Road*, by Jack Kirkland, a crude mixture of raw humor, brutality, gripping drama, and sociology. Clifford Odets has excited extravagant critical interest with such thesis plays as *Waiting for Lefty* and *Paradise Lost*. Sidney Kingsley in *Dead End* and *The Patriots* has expounded his liberal views in terms of effective drama. The list is difficult to exhaust—Thornton Wilder, Tennessee Williams, Paul Osborn, John Steinbeck, Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse, Clare Boothe, Rose Franken, Edward and Jerome Chodorov, Sophie Treadwell, John Wexley, Lynn Riggs, Robert Turney—and many others. This truly is the great age of American drama.

Dr. Frank W. Chandler collaborated in previous editions of TWENTIETH CENTURY PLAYS. The editor wishes to express his appreciation of the invaluable scholarly work of Dr. Chandler, and of his many shrewd suggestions which have been utilized to advantage.

RICHARD A. CORDELL

March 14, 1947

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AMERICAN PLAYS

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ANNA CHRISTIE

(1921)

BY

EUGENE O'NEILL

CHARACTERS

"JOHNNY-THE-PRIEST"

TWO LONGSHOREMEN

A POSTMAN

LARRY, *bartender*

CHRIS CHRISTOPHERSON, *captain of the barge* Simeon Winthrop

MARTHY OWEN

ANNA CHRISTOPHERSON, *Chris's daughter*

THREE MEN OF A STEAMER'S CREW

MAT BURKE, *a stoker*

JOHNSON, *deckhand on the barge*

SCENES

ACT I

"Johnny-the-Priest's" saloon near the water front, New York City.

ACT II

The barge, *Simeon Winthrop*, at anchor in the harbor of Provincetown, Mass Ten days later.

ACT III

Cabin of the barge, at dock in Boston. A week later.

ACT IV

The same. Two days later.

EUGENE O'NEILL

ALTHOUGH the American drama is still partly dependent upon the commercial theatre for its inspiration and existence, it has in the past twenty-five years won a measure of independence from the tyranny of the box-office. Only a few years ago pessimists announced the imminent death of the legitimate (an amusing and possibly significant use of this objective) theatre, and the advent of the talking pictures deepened the gloom. But although America lacked great repertory theatres such as those in Manchester, Birmingham, and Dublin, experimental theatres sprang up, the Little Theatre movement spread over the entire nation, colleges everywhere promoted the study of modern drama, plays were published and widely read, and the Theatre Guild of New York City was formed with thousands of subscribers. Today, for the first time in history, every commercial playhouse in New York could disappear without jeopardizing the position which the new American drama has won for itself. For the new emancipation many groups and individuals deserve credit: gallant pioneers like the Provincetown Players; notable non-commercial theatres such as those in New Orleans, Dallas, San Antonio, Pasadena, and Cleveland; intrepid producers like Stuart Walker, Eva Le Gallienne, Orson Welles, and Jasper Deeter, the work of George Pierce Baker, Allardyce Nicoll, De Marcus Brown, Glenn Hughes, George Reynolds, and many others in the universities, and such experimental playwrights as Elmer Rice, John Howard Lawson, Susan Glaspell, Maxwell Anderson, Paul Green, Sidney Kingsley, and Eugene O'Neill. When such writers have reached the commercial stage, it has not always been through their own initiative. The stubborn refusal of Eugene O'Neill after his "successes" at the Macdougall Street Theatre even to talk with David Belasco was typical of the artist's independence.

Eugene O'Neill, considered by many critics our greatest American dramatist and by a few our foremost man of letters since Mark Twain, is the first American playwright to gain a truly international reputation. His plays have been performed in practically all the capitals of Europe and in China and Japan; as a matter of fact, his plays are revived far more frequently in Prague and Moscow than in New York and Chicago. Many Continental critics rank him with Shaw, Pirandello, and Synge, but most British critics are somewhat skeptical of his importance. O'Neill was born in the Barrett House, corner of Forty-third Street and Broadway, New York City, on October 16, 1888, son of the celebrated actor James O'Neill. The family name suggests correctly his Celtic ancestry, which in part accounts for the high strain of mysticism and poetry at times transfiguring (and confusing) his naturalism. He was educated in Catholic boarding schools and a preparatory school, and attended Princeton one year. At the age of nineteen he began the *Wanderjahre* which were to help prepare him for his ultimate profession. He was employed by a mail-order firm; he prospected for gold in Honduras; he was assistant manager of his father's theatrical company and acted minor roles in popular melodramas; he fell under the spell of Jack London and Joseph Conrad and yielded to the urge of the sea, becoming an able seaman and shipping to South America, Europe, and Africa; at one time he was "down and out" in a South American port; he became a newspaper reporter; his health finally broke and he was a patient for nine months in a

tuberculosis sanitarium, where the desire to write plays first seized him; he studied under Professor Baker in the famous 47 Workshop at Harvard; and, finally, he identified himself with the Provincetown Players, who made possible the first productions of his plays in New York. He reached Broadway and the commercial theatre in 1920 when *Beyond the Horizon* won the Pulitzer Prize. From 1920 to 1935 he was the most provocative and widely publicized of American playwrights, but he has so persistently avoided the limelight that he has become almost a legendary figure. He at present (1938) lives in the Pacific Northwest and is hard at work on a series of eight plays which are to trace the fortunes of one American family from the seventeenth century to the present. This project will probably occupy him for several years.

Critical opinion of O'Neill's work is as varied in nature as is the work itself. Some critics, notably George Jean Nathan and Barrett Clark, praise him extravagantly; others, St. John Ervine and Bernard de Voto for example, dismiss him as a pretentious and somewhat arty playwright of the second rank. Whatever place in the history of dramatic literature he will eventually achieve, there will be no question as to his importance in the history of the non-profit theatre. Like Noel Coward he has become the critical victim of a limited repertoire of pat phrases, often inappropriate because of his love of experiment and his reluctance to repeat himself, it is his complete work that must give the measure of his greatness, for no one play has fulfilled his true greatness. He began with one-act plays of the sea and sea-faring people. In *Ile, Bound East for Cardiff*, *The Moon of the Caribbees*—excellent brief plays—he drew directly upon the experiences and acquaintances of his wanderyears to good effect, bringing a distinct note of naturalism into American drama. *Beyond the Horizon* (1920), although somewhat mechanical in structure and unnecessarily morose, is perhaps his most nearly moving tragedy, a relentless story of frustration and defeat. *The Emperor Jones* (1920) is a powerful and original expressionistic drama of terror, in which the mounting fear is aided by the effective, if theatrical, use of the tom-tom off stage. *The Hairy Ape* (1922) marks a further venture in expressionism; it is the tragedy of the proletariat—a man who “has lost his harmony with nature and not yet found harmony in his soul.” *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (1923) deals with the hopeless marriage of a negro and a white girl. *Desire under the Elms* (1924) is bleak and sordid, without the universal significance of great tragedy. *The Great God Brown* (1926), which has been called both the most profound and the silliest American play, is notable for the use of masks to show the dual nature of its characters, but its obtrusive symbolism and its vagueness result often in confusion and mere pretentiousness. Even more baffling is *Lazarus Laughed* (1927), his most imaginative and poetic drama, dealing with Lazarus after his return from the grave. *Marco Millions* (1928) is a romantic satire of a modern Babbitt in an ancient setting. *Strange Interlude* (1928) is a Freudian melodrama in nine acts which tries to utilize the sweep of the novel for the stage and which employs a fresh use of the soliloquy and the aside. Its great length and technical innovations are striking, but the play has no particular significance. *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931), a trilogy, modernizes the story of Agamemnon and Electra in a somewhat violently melodramatic manner. *Ah, Wilderness!* (1933) is a gently nostalgic yet ironic comedy which critics, probably unjustly, dismiss as unimportant because it is merely intelligible and highly entertaining—lacking those fierce and morose qualities which they feel earmark great drama.

Wide reading in the works of the Greek dramatists and in Strindberg, Ibsen, Nietzsche, Freud, Conrad, Bierce, and Hardy is reflected in O'Neill's plays, but one finds no evidence of mere imitation. Many who feel his power, however, deny him a place among the great writers. They point out the absence of normal, healthy, sane people in his plays; his obsession with the lurid aspects of psychoanalysis; his magnifying dramatic

irony into a scourging sadism; his inability often to endow his characters with genuine humanity and passion; his light without sweetness, his dark without reason. St. John Ervine is his bitterest detractor. "Mr. O'Neill is, in drama, very much what D. H. Lawrence is in the novel: force without direction. He lets off an immense amount of steam, but the train does not move; it stands still in the station from which it is supposed to be removing at the rate of seventy or eighty miles an hour. It never arrives at its destination because it never starts from its point of departure. His characters do not rise out of themselves: they stay where Mr. O'Neill puts them" The Editor of *The Saturday Review of Literature* asserted that O'Neill did not deserve the Nobel Prize for Literature, which was awarded to him in 1936. These dissenters, however, are in the minority. O'Neill is generally considered one of the world's leading dramatists.

It is possible that the best of O'Neill is to be found in the simpler plays—the one-act plays of the sea, *Ah, Wilderness!* and *Anna Christie*; and in the two plays where he most successfully employs expressionism, *The Emperor Jones* and *The Hairy Ape*. *Anna Christie* (1921), which also won a Pulitzer Prize, is his most realistic play, but its realism is often that of the theatre; one does not feel here reality itself as in the plays of Chekhov. The characters and the materials of the play the author lifted from his own experiences and observations. There is something elemental and broadly primitive about *Anna Christie* as there had been in O'Neill's own life after he left college. The materials of which *Anna Christie* is composed—sailors, booze, guns, saloons, prostitutes, the elemental passions—O'Neill was acquainted with. He had lived at Jimmy-the-Priest's, and old Chris he knew. If there is melodrama in the play, one must remember that simple, unsophisticated people resort naturally to the melodramatic gesture when they are moved. Neither does O'Neill reject romance, even pathos, as inelegant. Although the sea is used as a symbol, the overtones of symbolism do not affect the strong note of realism. Perhaps the exposition is overdone (although the first act in itself is a great piece of dramatic writing), for there is little justification in telling the audience twice about Anna's past. It is possible that the powerful confession scene would be even more exciting if the audience, too, were uncertain about Anna's early life. Although O'Neill has selected a protagonist who is uneducated, slangy, almost inarticulate, he manages to express through her, convincingly, the burning ironies that should ordinarily come from one of greater intelligence and vocabulary. The play has been criticized for its conventional ending, but the author denies, oddly enough, that it ends happily. He maintains that it ends not with a period but with a comma; in fact he once thought of calling the play *Comma*. "My ending seems to have a definiteness about it which is misleading—a happy-ever-after which I did not intend. I relied on the father's last speech of superstitious uncertainty to let my theme flow on and on." ". . . the play has no ending . . . The curtain falls Behind it their lives go on." This is a somewhat amusing defense of what in the theatre has always been considered a happy ending. He could just as reasonably deny that *Ah, Wilderness!*—or *As You Like It*—has a happy ending.

ANNA CHRISTIE

ACT ONE

SCENE — “JOHNNY-THE-PRIEST’S” saloon near South Street, New York City. The stage is divided into two sections, showing a small back room on the right. On the left, forward, of the bar-room, a large window looking out on the street. Beyond it, the main entrance—a double swinging door. Farther back, another window. The bar runs from left to right nearly the whole length of the rear wall. In back of the bar, a small showcase displaying a few bottles of case goods, for which there is evidently little call. The remainder of the rear space in front of the large mirrors is occupied by half-barrels of cheap whisky of the “nickel-a-shot” variety, from which the liquor is drawn by means of spigots. On the right is an open doorway leading to the back room. In the back room are four round wooden tables with five chairs grouped about each. In the rear, a family entrance opening on a side street.

It is late afternoon of a day in fall. As the curtain rises, JOHNNY is discovered. “JOHNNY-THE-PRIEST” deserves his nickname. With his pale, thin, clean-shaven face, mild blue eyes and white hair, a cassock would seem more suited to him than the apron he wears. Neither his voice nor his general manner dispels this illusion which has made him a personage of the water front. They are soft and bland. But beneath all his mildness one senses the man behind the mask—cynical, callous, hard as nails. He is lounging at ease behind the bar, a pair of spectacles on his nose, reading an evening paper.

Two longshoremen enter from the street, wearing their working aprons, the button of the union pinned conspicuously on the caps pulled sideways on their heads at an aggressive angle.

FIRST LONGSHOREMAN [as they range themselves at the bar]. Gimme a shock Number Two.

[He tosses a coin on the bar.]

SECOND LONGSHOREMAN. Same here

[JOHNNY sets two glasses of barrel whisky before them.]

FIRST LONGSHOREMAN. Here’s luck! [The other nods. They gulp down their whisky.]

SECOND LONGSHOREMAN [putting money on the bar]. Give us another

FIRST LONGSHOREMAN. Gimme a scoop this time—lager and porter. I’m dry

SECOND LONGSHOREMAN. Same here

[JOHNNY draws the lager and porter and sets the big, foaming schooners before them. They drink down half the contents and start to talk together hurriedly in low tones. The door on the left is swung open and LARRY enters. He is a boyish, red-cheeked, rather good-looking young fellow of twenty or so.]

LARRY [nodding to JOHNNY—cheerily]. Hello, boss

JOHNNY. Hello, Larry. [With a glance at his watch.] Just on time

[LARRY goes to the right behind the bar, takes off his coat, and puts on an apron.]

FIRST LONGSHOREMAN [abruptly]. Let’s drink up and get back to it.

[They finish their drinks and go out left. THE POSTMAN enters as they leave. He exchanges nods with JOHNNY and throws a letter on the bar.]

THE POSTMAN. Addressed care of you, Johnny. Know him?

JOHNNY [picks up the letter, adjusting his spectacles. LARRY comes and peers over his shoulders. JOHNNY reads very slowly]. Christopher Christopherson

THE POSTMAN [helpfully]. Square-head name.

LARRY. Old Chris—that’s who.

JOHNNY. Oh, sure. I was forgetting

Chris carried a hell of a name like that. Letters come here for him sometimes before, I remember now. Long time ago, hough.

THE POSTMAN. It'll get him all right hen?

JOHNNY. Sure thing. He comes here whenever he's in port.

THE POSTMAN [*turning to go*]. Sailor, eh?

JOHNNY [*with a grin*]. Captain of a coal barge.

THE POSTMAN [*laughing*]. Some job! Well, s'long.

JOHNNY. S'long. I'll see he gets it. [*THE POSTMAN goes out. JOHNNY scrutinizes the letter*] You got good eyes, Larry. Where's it from?

LARRY [*after a glance*]. St. Paul. That'll be in Minnesota, I'm thinkin' Looks like a woman's writing, too, the old divil!

JOHNNY. He's got a daughter somewhere out West, I think he told me once. [*He puts the letter on the cash register*] Come to think of it, I ain't seen old Chris in a dog's age. [*Putting his overcoat on, he comes around the end of the bar*] Guess I'll be gettin' home. See you tomorrow.

LARRY. Good-night to ye, boss.

[*As JOHNNY goes toward the street door, it is pushed open and CHRISTOPHER CHRISTOPHERSON enters. He is a short, broad-shouldered man of about fifty, with a round, weather-beaten, red face from which his light blue eyes peer short-sightedly, twinkling with a simple good humor. His large mouth, overhung by a thick, drooping, yellow mustache, is childishly self-willed and weak, of an obstinate kindness. A thick neck is jammed like a post into the heavy trunk of his body. His arms with their big, hairy, freckled hands, and his stumpy legs terminating in large flat feet, are awkwardly short and muscular. He walks with a clumsy, rolling gait. His voice, when not raised in a hollow boom, is toned down to a sly, confidential half-whisper with something vaguely plaintive in its quality. He is dressed in a wrinkled, ill-fitting dark suit of shore clothes, and wears a faded cap of gray cloth over his mop of grizzled, blond hair. Just now his face beams with a too-blissful happiness, and he has evidently been drinking. He reaches his hand out to JOHNNY.*]

CHRIS. Hello, Yohnny! Have drink on me. Come on, Larry. Give us drink. Have

one yourself. [*Putting his hand in his pocket*] Ay gat money—plenty money. . . .

JOHNNY [*shakes CHRIS by the hand*]. Speak of the devil. We was just talkin' about you.

LARRY [*coming to the end of the bar*]. Hello, Chris. Put it there.

[*They shake hands*]

CHRIS [*beaming*]. Give us drink.

JOHNNY [*with a grin*]. You got a half-snootful now. Where'd you get it?

CHRIS [*grinning*]. Oder fallar on oder barge—Irish fallar—he gat bottle whisky and we drank it, yust us two. Dot whisky gat kick, by yingo! Ay yust come ashore. Give us drink, Larry. Ay was little drunk, not much. Yust feel good. [*He laughs and commences to sing in a nasal, high-pitched quaver*]

"My Yosephine, come aboard de ship
Long time Ay wait for you.

De moon, she shi-i-i-ine. She looka yus like you.

Tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee."

[*To the accompaniment of this last he waves his hand as if he were conducting an orchestra*]

JOHNNY [*with a laugh*]. Same old Yosie, eh Chris?

CHRIS. You don't know good song when you hear him. Italian fallar on oder barge, he learn me dat. Give us drink.

[*He throws change on the bar*]

LARRY [*with a professional air*]. What's your pleasure, gentlemen?

JOHNNY. Small beer, Larry.

CHRIS. Whisky—Number Two.

LARRY [*as he gets their drinks*]. I'll take a cigar on you.

CHRIS [*lifting his glass*]. Skoal!

[*He drinks.*]

JOHNNY. Drink hearty.

CHRIS [*immediately*]. Have oder drink.

JOHNNY. No. Some other time. Got to go home now. So you've just landed? Where are you in from this time?

CHRIS. Norfolk. Ve make slow voyage—dirty vedder—yust fog, fog, fog, all bloody time! [*There is an insistent ring from the doorbell at the family entrance in the back room. CHRIS gives a start—hurriedly*] Ay go open, Larry. Ay forgat. It was Marthy. She come with me.

[*He goes into the back room.*]

LARRY [*with a chuckle*]. He's still got that same cow livin' with him, the old fool!

JOHNNY [*with a grin*]. A sport, Chris is. Well, I'll beat it home. S'long.

[*He goes to the street door.*]

LARRY. So long, boss.

JOHNNY. Oh—don't forget to give him his letter.

LARRY I won't.

[JOHNNY goes out. In the meantime, CHRIS has opened the family entrance door, admitting MARTHY. She might be forty or fifty. Her jowly, mottled face, with its thick red nose, is streaked with interlacing purple veins. Her thick, gray hair is piled anyhow in a greasy mop on top of her round head. Her figure is flabby and fat; her breath comes in wheezy gasps; she speaks in a loud, mannish voice, punctuated by explosions of hoarse laughter. But there still twinkles in her blood-shot blue eyes a youthful lust for life which hard usage has failed to stifle, a sense of humor mocking, but good-tempered. She wears a man's cap, doublebreasted man's jacket, and a grimy, calico skirt. Her bare feet are encased in a man's brogans several sizes too large for her, which gives her a shuffling, wobbly gait.]

MARTHY [grumblingly]. What yuh tryin' to do, Dutchy—keep me standin' out there all day?

[She comes forward and sits at the table in the right corner, front.]

CHRIS [mollifyingly]. Ay'm sorry, Marthy. Ay talk to Yohnny. Ay forgot. What you goin' take for drink?

MARTHY [appeased]. Gimme a scoop of lager an' ale.

CHRIS. Ay go bring him back. [He returns to the bar.] Lager and ale for Marthy, Larry. Whisky for me

[He throws change on the bar.]

LARRY. Right you are. [Then remembering, he takes the letter from in back of the bar.] Here's a letter for you—from St. Paul, Minnesota—and a lady's writin'.

[He grins.]

CHRIS [quickly—taking it]. Oh, den it come from my daughter, Anna. She live dere. [He turns the letter over in his hands uncertainly.] Ay don't gat letter from Anna—must be a year.

LARRY [jokingly]. That's a fine fairy tale to be tellin'—your daughter! Sure I'll bet it's some bum.

CHRIS [soberly]. No. Dis come from Anna. [Engrossed by the letter in his hand—uncertainly.] By golly, Ay tank Ay'm too drunk for read dis letter from Anna. Ay tank Ay sat down for a minute. You bring drinks in back room, Larry.

[He goes into the room on right.]

MARTHY [angrily]. Where's my lager an' ale, yuh big stiff?

CHRIS [preoccupied]. Larry bring him.

[He sits down opposite her. LARRY brings in the drinks and sets them on the table. He and MARTHY exchange nods of recognition. LARRY stands looking at CHRIS curiously. MARTHY takes a long draught of her schooner and heaves a huge sigh of satisfaction, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand. CHRIS stares at the letter for a moment—slowly opens it, and, squinting his eyes, commences to read laboriously, his lips moving as he spells out the words. As he reads his face lights up with an expression of mingled joy and bewilderment.]

LARRY. Good news?

MARTHY [her curiosity also aroused]. What's that yuh got—a letter, fur Gawd's sake?

CHRIS [pauses for a moment, after finishing the letter, as if to let the news sink in—then suddenly pounds his fist on the table with happy excitement]. Py yiminy! Yust tank, Anna say she's comin' here right away! She gat sick on yob in St. Paul, she say. It's short letter, don't tal me much more'n dat. [Beaming.] Py golly, dat's good news all at one time for ole fallar! [Then turning to MARTHY, rather shamefacedly.] You know, Marthy, Ay've tole you Ay don't see my Anna since she vas little gel in Sweden five year ole.

MARTHY. How old'll she be now?

CHRIS. She must be—lat me see—she must be twenty year ole, py Yo!

LARRY [surprised]. You've not seen her in fifteen years?

CHRIS [suddenly growing somber—in a low tone]. No. Ven she vas little gel, Ay vas bo'sun on vindjammer. Ay never gat home only few time dem year. Ay'm fool sailor fallar. My voman—Anna's mother—she gat tired wait all time Sweden for me ven Ay don't never come. She come dis country, bring Anna, dey go out Minnesota, live with her cousins on farm. Den ven her mo'der die ven Ay vas on voyage, Ay tank it's better dem cousins keep Anna. Ay tank it's better Anna live on farm, den she don't know dat ole daval, sea, she don't know fa'der like me.

LARRY [with a wink at MARTHY]. This girl, now, 'll be marryin' a sailor herself, likely. It's in the blood.

CHRIS [suddenly springing to his feet and smashing his fist on the table in a rage]. No, py God! She don't do dat!

MARTHY [grasping her schooner hastily]

—*angrily*] Hey, look out, yuh nut! Wanta spill my suds for me?

LARRY [*amazed*]. Oho, what's up with you? Ain't you a sailor yourself now, and always been?

CHRIS [*slowly*] Dat's yust vhy Ay say it. [*Forcing a smile*] Sailor vas all right fallar, but not for marry gel No Ay know dat. Anna's mo'der, she know it, too.

LARRY [*as CHRIS remains sunk in gloomy reflection*]. When is your daughter comin'? Soon?

CHRIS [*roused*]. Py yiminy, Ay forgat. [*Reads through the letter hurriedly*.] She say she come right away, dat's all.

LARRY. She'll maybe be comin' here to look for you, I s'pose.

[*He returns to the bar, whistling. Left alone with MARTHY, who stares at him with a twinkle of malicious humor in her eyes, CHRIS suddenly becomes desperately ill-at-ease. He fidgets, then gets up hurriedly*]

CHRIS. Ay gat speak with Larry Ay be right back [*Mollifyingly*] Ay bring you oder drink

MARTHY [*emptying her glass*]. Sure. That's me [*As he retreats with the glass she guffaws after him derisively*]

CHRIS [*to LARRY in an alarmed whisper*] Py yingo, Ay gat gat Marthy shore off barge before Anna come! Anna raise hell if she find dat out. Marthy raise hell, too, for go, py golly!

LARRY [*with a chuckle*] Serve ye right, ye old divil—havin' a woman at your age!

CHRIS [*scratching his head in a quandary*]. You tal me lie for tal Marthy, Larry, so's she gat off barge quick.

LARRY She knows your daughter's comin' Tell her to get the hell out of it.

CHRIS No. Ay don't like make her feel bad

LARRY You're an old mush! Keep your girl away from the barge, then She'll likely want to stay ashore anyway. [*Curiously*] What does she work at, your Anna?

CHRIS She stay on dem cousins' farm till two year ago Dan she gat yob nurse gel in St. Paul. [*Then shaking his head resolutely*] But Ay don't vant for her gat yob now. Ay vant for her stay with me.

LARRY [*scornfully*] On a coal barge! She'll not like that, I'm thinkin'.

MARTHY [*shouts from next room*]. Don't I get that bucket o' suds, Dutchy?

CHRIS [*startled—in apprehensive confusion*]. Yes, Ay come, Marthy.

LARRY [*drawing the lager and ale, hands it to CHRIS—laughingly*] Now

you're in for it! You'd better tell her straight to get out!

CHRIS [*shaking in his boots*]. Py golly.

[*He takes her drink in to MARTHY and sits down at the table. She sips it in silence. LARRY moves quietly close to the partition to listen, grinning with expectation. CHRIS seems on the verge of speaking, hesitates, gulps down his whisky desperately as if seeking for courage. He attempts to whistle a few bars of "Yosephine" with careless bravado, but the whistle peters out futilely. MARTHY stares at him keenly, taking in his embarrassment with a malicious twinkle of amusement in her eye. CHRIS clears his throat*]

Marthy—

MARTHY [*aggressively*]. Wha's that? [*Then, pretending to fly into a rage, her eyes enjoying CHRIS' misery*.] I'm wise to what's in back of your nut, Dutchy Yuh want to git rid o' me, huh?—now she's comin'. Gimme the bum's rush ashore, huh? Lemme tell yuh, Dutchy, there ain't a square-head workin' on a boat man enough to git away with that Don't start nothin' yuh can't finish!

CHRIS [*miserably*]. Ay don't start nutting, Marthy.

MARTHY [*glares at him for a second—then cannot control a burst of laughter*] Ho-ho! yuh're a scream, Square-head—an honest-ter-Gawd knockout! Ho-ho!

[*She wheezes, panting for breath*]

CHRIS [*with childish pique*]. Ay don't see nutting for laugh at.

MARTHY. Take a slant in the mirror and yuh'll see. Ho-ho! [*Recovering from her mirth—chuckling, scornfully*] A square-head tryin' to kid Marthy Owen at this late day!—after me campin' with barge men the last twenty years. I'm wise to the game, up, down, and sideways I ain't been born and dragged up on the water front for nothin' Think I'd make trouble, huh? Not me! I'll pack up me duds an' beat it I'm quittin' yuh, get me? I'm tellin' yuh I'm sick of stickin' with yuh, and I'm leavin' yuh flat, see? There's plenty of other guys on other barges waitin' for me Always was, I always found. [*She claps the astonished CHRIS on the back*.] So cheer up, Dutchy! I'll be offen the barge before she comes. You'll be rid o' me for good—and me o' you—good riddance for both of us. Ho-ho!

CHRIS [*seriously*] Ay don't tank dat. You vas good gel, Marthy.

MARTHY [*grinning*]. Good girl? Aw, can the bull! Well, yuh treated me square,

yuhself. So it's fifty-fifty. Nobody's sore at nobody. We're still good frien's, huh?

[LARRY returns to bar]

CHRIS [beaming now that he sees his troubles disappearing]. Yes, py golly.

MARTHY. That's the talkin'! In all my time I tried never to split with a guy with no hard feelin's. But what was yuh so scared about—that I'd kick up a row? That ain't Marthy's way. [Scornfully.] Think I'd break my heart to lose yuh? Commit suicide, huh? Ho-ho! Gawd! The world's full o' men if that's all I'd worry about! [Then with a grin, after emptying her glass.] Blow me to another scoop, huh? I'll drink your kid's health for yuh.

CHRIS [eagerly]. Sure tang. Ay go gat him. [He takes the two glasses into the bar.] Oder drink. Same for both.

LARRY [getting the drinks and putting them on the bar]. She's not such a bad lot, that one.

CHRIS [jovially]. She's good gel, Ay tal you! Py golly, Ay calabrate now! Give me whisky here at bar, too. [He puts down money. LARRY serves him.] You have drink, Larry

LARRY [virtuously]. You know I never touch it.

CHRIS. You don't know what you miss. Skoal! [He drinks—then begins to sing loudly.] "My Yosephine, come board de ship —"

[He picks up the drinks for MARTHY and himself and walks unsteadily into the back room, singing]

"De moon, she shi-i-i-me. She looks yust like you

Tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee"

MARTHY [grinning, hands to ears]. Gawd!

CHRIS [sitting down]. Ay'm good singer, yes? Ve drink, eh? Skoal! Ay calabrate! [He drinks.] Ay calabrate 'cause Anna's coming home. You know, Marthy, Ay never write for her to come, 'cause Ay tank Ay'm no good for her. But all time Ay hope like hell some day she vant for see me and den she come. And dat's vay it happen now, py yiminy! [His face beaming.] What you tank she look like, Marthy? Ay bet you she's fine, good, strong gel, pooty like hell! Living on farm made her like dat. And Ay bet you some day she marry good, steady land fallar here in East, have home all her own, have kits—and dan Ay'm ole grandfader, py golly! And Ay go visit dem every time Ay gat in port near! [Bursting with joy.] By yiminy crickens, Ay calabrate dat! [Shouts.]

Bring oder drink, Larry! [He smashes his fist on the table with a bang.]

LARRY [coming in from bar—irritably]. Easy there! Don't be breakin' the table, you old goat!

CHRIS [by way of reply, grins foolishly and begins to sing]

"My Yosephine, come board de ship —"

MARTHY [touching CHRIS' arm persuasively]. You're soused to the ears, Dutchy. Go out and put a feed into you. It'll sober you up. [Then as CHRIS shakes his head obstinately.] Listen, yuh old nut! Yuh don't know what time your kid's liable to show up. Yuh want to be sober when she comes, don't yuh?

CHRIS [aroused—gets unsteadily to his feet]. Py golly, yes.

LARRY. That's good sense for you. A good beef-stew'll fix you. Go round the corner.

CHRIS. All right. Ay be back soon, Marthy

[CHRIS goes through the bar and out the street door]

LARRY He'll come round all right with some grub in him.

MARTHY Sure.

[LARRY goes back to the bar and resumes his newspaper. MARTHY sips what is left of her schooner reflectively. There is the ring of the family entrance bell LARRY comes to the door and opens it a trifle—then, with a puzzled expression, pulls it wide. ANNA CHRISTOPHERSON enters. She is a tall, blond, fully-developed girl of twenty, handsome after a large, Viking-daughter fashion but now run down in health and plainly showing all the outward evidences of belonging to the world's oldest profession. Her youthful face is already hard and cynical beneath its layer of make-up. Her clothes are the tawdry finery of peasant stock turned prostitute. She comes and sinks wearily in a chair by the table, left front.]

ANNA Gimme a whisky—ginger ale on the side. [Then, as LARRY turns to go, forcing a winning smile at him.] And don't be stingy, baby.

LARRY [sarcastically]. Shall I serve it in a pail?

ANNA [with a hard laugh] That suits me down to the ground. [LARRY goes into the bar. The two women size each other up with frank stares. LARRY comes back with the drink which he sets before ANNA and returns to the bar again. ANNA downs her drink at a gulp. Then, after a moment,

as the alcohol begins to rouse her, she turns to MARTHY with a friendly smile] Gee, I needed that bad, all right, all right!

MARTHY [*nodding her head sympathetically*]. Sure—yuh look all in. Been on a bat?

ANNA. No—traveling—day and a half on the train Had to sit up all night in the dirty coach, too. Gawd, I thought I'd never get here!

MARTHY [*with a start—looking at her intently*]. Where'd yuh come from, huh?

ANNA St Paul—out in Minnesota

MARTHY [*staring at her in amazement—slowly*]. So—yuh're— [*She suddenly bursts out into hoarse, ironical laughter.*] Gawd!

ANNA All the way from Minnesota, sure. [*Flaring up*] What you laughing at? Me?

MARTHY [*hastily*]. No, honest, kid I was thinkin' of somethin' else

ANNA [*mollified—with a smile*]. Well, I wouldn't blame you, at that Guess I do look rotten—yust out of the hospital two weeks I'm going to have another 'ski What d'you say? Have something on me?

MARTHY. Sure I will. T'anks [*She calls*] Hey, Larry! Little service!

[*He comes in*]

ANNA Same for me.

MARTHY. Same here

[*LARRY takes their glasses and goes out*]

ANNA. Why don't you come sit over here, be sociable. I'm a dead stranger in this burg—and I ain't spoke a word with no one since day before yesterday

MARTHY Sure thing

[*She shuffles over to ANNA'S table and sits down opposite her LARRY brings the drinks and ANNA pays him*]

ANNA Skoal! Here's how! [*She drinks*]

MARTHY. Here's luck!

[*She takes a gulp from her schooner*]

ANNA [*taking a package of Sweet Caporal cigarettes from her bag*]. Let you smoke in here, won't they?

MARTHY [*doubtfully*]. Sure [*Then with evident anxiety*] On'y trow it away if yuh hear someone comin'.

ANNA [*lighting one and taking a deep inhale*]. Gee, they're fussy in this dump, ain't they? [*She puffs, staring at the table top. MARTHY looks her over with a new penetrating interest, taking in every detail of her face. ANNA suddenly becomes conscious of this appraising stare—resentfully.*] Ain't nothing wrong with me, is there? You're looking hard enough.

MARTHY [*irritated by the other's tone—scornfully*]. Ain't got to look much. I

got your number the minute you stepped in the door

ANNA [*her eyes narrowing*]. Ain't you smart! Well, I got yours, too, without no trouble. You're me forty years from now. That's you!

[*She gives a hard little laugh*]

MARTHY [*angrily*]. Is that so? Well, I'll tell you straight, kiddo, that Marthy Owen never— [*She catches herself up short—with a grin*] What are you and me scrappin' over? Let's cut it out, huh? Me, I don't want no hard feelin's with no one. [*Extending her hand*] Shake and forget it, huh?

ANNA [*shakes her hand gladly*]. Only too glad to. I ain't looking for trouble. Let's have 'nother. What d'you say?

MARTHY [*shaking her head*]. Not for mine I'm full up. And you— Had anythin' to eat lately?

ANNA. Not since this morning on the train.

MARTHY Then yuh better go easy on it, hadn't yuh?

ANNA [*after a moment's hesitation*]. Guess you're right. I got to meet someone, too. But my nerves is on edge after that rotten trip.

MARTHY Yuh said yuh was just outa the hospital?

ANNA Two weeks ago. [*Leaning over to MARTHY confidentially*] The joint I was in out in St Paul got raided That was the start. The judge give all us girls thirty days The others didn't seem to mind being in the cooler much Some of 'em was used to it. But me, I couldn't stand it It got my goat right—couldn't eat or sleep or nothing I never could stand being caged up nowheres I got good and sick and they had to send me to the hospital. It was nice there. I was sorry to leave it, honest!

MARTHY [*after a slight pause*]. Did yuh say yuh got to meet someone here?

ANNA Yes. Oh, not what you mean. It's my Old Man I got to meet. Honest! It's funny, too I ain't seen him since I was a kid—don't even know what he looks like—yust had a letter every now and then This was always the only address he give me to write him back. He's yanitor of some building here now—used to be a sailor

MARTHY [*astonished*]. Janitor!

ANNA. Sure. And I was thinking maybe, seeing he ain't never done a thing for me in my life, he might be willing to stake me to a room and eats till I get rested up. [*Wearily*] Gee, I sure need that rest!

I'm knocked out. [*Then resignedly*] But I ain't expecting much from him. Give you a kick when you're down, that's what all men do. [*With sudden passion.*] Men, I hate 'em—all of 'em! And I don't expect he'll turn out no better than the rest. [*Then with sudden interest*] Say, do you hang out around this dump much?

MARTHY. Oh, off and on

ANNA. Then maybe you know him—my Old Man—or at least seen him?

MARTHY. It ain't old Chris, is it?

ANNA. Old Chris?

MARTHY. Chris Christopherson, his full name is

ANNA [*excitedly*] Yes, that's him! Anna Christopherson—that's my real name—only out there I called myself Anna Christie So you know him, eh?

MARTHY [*evasively*] Seen him about for years.

ANNA Say, what's he like, tell me, honest?

MARTHY. Oh, he's short and —

ANNA [*impatiently*]. I don't care what he looks like. What kind is he?

MARTHY [*earnestly*]. Well, yuh can bet your life, kid, he's as good an old guy as ever walked on two feet. That goes!

ANNA [*pleased*]. I'm glad to hear it. Then you think he'll stake me to that rest cure I'm after?

MARTHY [*emphatically*] Surest thing you know. [*Disgustedly*] But where'd yuh get the idea he was a janitor?

ANNA He wrote me he was himself

MARTHY. Well, he was lyn' He ain't He's captain of a barge—five men under him

ANNA [*disgusted in her turn*]. A barge? What kind of a barge?

MARTHY. Coal, mostly

ANNA A coal barge! [*With a harsh laugh*] If that ain't a swell job to find your long lost Old Man working at! Gee, I knew something'd be bound to turn out wrong—always does with me That puts my idea of his giving me a rest on the bum.

MARTHY. What d'yuh mean?

ANNA I s'pose he lives on the boat, don't he?

MARTHY. Sure. What about it? Can't you live on it, too?

ANNA [*scornfully*]. Me? On a dirty coal barge! What d'you think I am?

MARTHY [*resentfully*]. What d'yuh know about barges, huh? Bet yuh ain't ever seen one. That's what comes of his bringing yuh up inland—away from the old devil sea—where yuh'd be safe—Gawd!

[*The irony of it strikes her sense of humor and she laughs hoarsely.*]

ANNA [*angrily*]. His bringing me up! Is that what he tells people! I like his nerve! He let them cousins of my Old Woman's keep me on their farm and work me to death like a dog.

MARTHY. Well, he's got queer notions on some things. I've heard him say a farm was the best place for a kid.

ANNA. Sure. That's what he'd always answer back—and a lot of crazy stuff about staying away from the sea—stuff I couldn't make head or tail to. I thought he must be nutty

MARTHY He is on that one point. [*Casually.*] So yuh didn't fall for life on the farm, huh?

ANNA. I should say not! The old man of the family, his wife, and four sons—I had to slave for all of 'em. I was only a poor relation, and they treated me worse than they dare treat a hired girl. [*After a moment's hesitation—somerberly.*] It was one of the sons—the youngest—started me—when I was sixteen. After that, I hated 'em so I'd killed 'em all if I'd stayed So I run away—to St. Paul.

MARTHY [*who has been listening sympathetically*] I've heard Old Chris talkin' about your bein' a nurse girl out there. Was that all a bluff yuh put up when yuh wrote him?

ANNA. Not on your life, it wasn't It was true for two years I didn't go wrong all at one jump Being a nurse girl was just what finished me Taking care of other people's kids, always listening to their bawling and crying, caged in, when you're only a kid yourself and want to go out and see things. At last I got the chance—to get into that house And you bet your life I took it! [*Defiantly*] And I ain't sorry neither [*After a pause—with bitter hatred.*] It was all men's fault—the whole business It was men on the farm ordering and beating me—and giving me the wrong start. Then when I was a nurse, it was men again hanging around, bothering me, trying to see what they could get. [*She gives a hard laugh*] And now it's men all the time. Gawd, I hate 'em all, every mother's son of 'em! Don't you?

MARTHY Oh, I dunno. There's good ones and bad ones, kid You've just had a run of bad luck with 'em, that all. Your Old Man, now—old Chris—he's a good one

ANNA [*skeptically*]. He'll have to show me.

MARTHY. Yuh kept right on writing

him yuh was a nurse girl still, even after yuh was in the house, didn't yuh?

ANNA. Sure. [*Cynically.*] Not that I think he'd care a darn.

MARTHY. Yuh're all wrong about him, kid. [*Earnestly.*] I know Old Chris well for a long time. He's talked to me 'bout you lots o' times. He thinks the world o' you, honest he does.

ANNA. Aw, quit the kiddin'!

MARTHY. Honest! Only, he's a simple old guy, see? He's got nutty notions. But he means well, honest. Listen to me, kid—*[She is interrupted by the opening and shutting of the street door in the bar and by hearing CHRIS' voice.]* Ssssh!

ANNA. What's up?

CHRIS [*who has entered the bar. He seems considerably sobered up.*] Py golly, Larry, dat grub tasted good. Marthy in back?

LARRY. Sure—and another tramp with her.

[CHRIS starts for the entrance to the back room.]

MARTHY [*to ANNA in a hurried, nervous whisper*] That's him now. He's comin' in here. Brace up!

ANNA. Who? *[CHRIS opens the door.]*

MARTHY [*as if she were greeting him for the first time.*] Why hello, Old Chris. *[Then before he can speak, she shuffles hurriedly past him into the bar, beckoning him to follow her.]* Come here. I wanta tell yuh somethin'. *[He goes out to her. She speaks hurriedly in a low voice.]* Listen! I'm goin' to beat it down to the barge—pack up me duds and blow. That's her in there—your Anna—just come—waitin' for yuh. Treat her right, see? She's been sick. Well, s'long *[She goes into the back room—to ANNA.]* S'long, kid. I gotta beat it now. See yuh later.

ANNA [*nervously*] So long. *[MARTHY goes quickly out of the family entrance.]*

LARRY [*looking at the stupefied CHRIS curiously.*] Well, what's up now?

CHRIS [*vaguely*]. Nutting—nutting. *[He stands before the door to the back room in an agony of embarrassed emotion—then he forces himself to a bold decision, pushes open the door and walks in. He stands there, casts a shy glance at ANNA, whose brilliant clothes, and, to him, heightened appearance, awe him terribly. He looks about him with pitiful nervousness as if to avoid the appraising look with which she takes in his face, his clothes, etc.—his voice seeming to plead for her forbearance.]* Anna!

ANNA [*acutely embarrassed in her turn.*]

Hello—father. She told me it was you. I just got here a little while ago.

CHRIS [*goes slowly over to her chair.*] It's good—for see you—after all dem years, Anna.

[He bends down over her. After an embarrassed struggle they manage to kiss each other.]

ANNA [*a trace of genuine feeling in her voice*] It's good to see you, too.

CHRIS [*grasps her arms and looks into her face—then overcome by a wave of fierce tenderness.*] Anna lilla! Anna lilla!

[Takes her in his arms.]

ANNA [*shrinks away from him, half-frightened.*] What's that—Swedish? I don't know it. *[Then as if seeking relief from the tension in a voluble chatter.]* Gee, I had an awful trip coming here. I'm all in. I had to sit up in the dirty coach all night—couldn't get no sleep, hardly—and then I had a hard job finding this place. I never been in New York before, you know, and—

CHRIS [*who has been staring down at her face admiringly, not hearing what she says—impulsively.*] You know you was awful pooty gel, Anna? Ay bet all men see you fall in love with you, py yiminy!

ANNA [*repelled—harshly.*] Cut it! You talk same as they all do.

CHRIS [*hurt—humbly.*] Ain't no harm for your fader talk dat vay, Anna.

ANNA [*forcing a short laugh.*] No—course not. Only—it's funny to see you and not remember nothing. You're like—a stranger.

CHRIS [*sadly.*] Ay s'pose. Ay never come home only few times ven you was kit in Sveden. You don't remember dat?

ANNA. No. [*Resentfully.*] But why didn't you never come home them days? Why didn't you never come out West to see me?

CHRIS [*slowly.*] Ay tank, after your mo'der die, ven Ay vas away on voyage, it's better for you you don't never see me! *[He sinks down in the chair opposite her dejectedly—then turns to her—sadly.]* Ay don't know, Anna, why Ay never come home Sveden in old year. Ay vant come home end of every voyage. Ay vant see your mo'der, your two bro'der before dey vas drowned, you ven you vas born—but—Ay—don't go. Ay sign on oder ships—go South America, go Australia, go China, go every port all over world many times—but Ay never go aboard ship sail for Sveden. Ven Ay gat money for pay passage home as passenger den—*[He bows his head guiltily.]* Ay forgat and Ay spend

all money. Ven Ay tank again, it's too late. [*He sighs.*] Ay don't know why but dat's vay with most sailor fallar, Anna. Dat ole daval sea make dem crazy fools with her dirty tricks. It's so.

ANNA [*who has watched him keenly while he has been speaking—with a trace of scorn in her voice*]. Then you think the sea's to blame for everything, eh? Well, you're still workin' on it, ain't you, spite of all you used to write me about hating it. That dame was here told me you was captain of a coal barge—and you wrote me you was yanitor of a building!

CHRIS [*embarrassed but lying glibly*]. Oh, Ay vork on land long time as yanitor. Yust short time ago Ay got dis yob cause Ay vas sick, need open air

ANNA [*skeptically*]. Sick? You? You'd never think it.

CHRIS And, Anna, dis ain't real sailor yob. Dis ain't real boat on sea. She's yust old tub—like piece of land with house on it dat float. Yob on her ain't sea yob. No. Ay don't gat yob on sea, Anna, if Ay die first. Ay swear dat ven you mo'der die. Ay keep my word, py yingo!

ANNA [*perplexed*]. Well, I can't see no difference [*Dismissing the subject.*] Speaking of being sick, I been there myself—yust out of the hospital two weeks ago.

CHRIS [*immediately all concern*]. You, Anna? Py golly! [*Anxiously*] You feel better now, dough, don't you? You look little tired, dat's all!

ANNA [*wearily*]. I am. Tired to death. I need a long rest and I don't see much chance of getting it.

CHRIS. What you mean, Anna?

ANNA. Well, when I made up my mind to come to see you, I thought you was a yanitor—that you'd have a place where, maybe, if you didn't mind having me, I could visit a while and rest up—till I felt able to get back on the job again.

CHRIS [*eagerly*]. But Ay gat place, Anna—nice place. You rest all you want, py yiminy! You don't never have to vork as nurse gel no more. You stay with me, py golly!

ANNA [*surprised and pleased by his eagerness—with a smile*]. Then you're really glad to see me—honest?

CHRIS [*pressing one of her hands in both of his*]. Anna, Ay like see you like hell, Ay tal you! And don't you talk no more about gattin' yob. You stay with me. Ay don't see you for long time, you don't forgot dat. [*His voice trembles.*] Ay'm gattin' ole. Ay gat no one in world but you.

ANNA [*touched—embarrassed by this unfamiliar emotion*]. Thanks. It sounds good to hear someone—talk to me that way. Say, though—if you're so lonely—it's funny—why ain't you ever married again?

CHRIS [*shaking his head emphatically—after a pause*]. Ay love your mo'der too much for ever do dat, Anna.

ANNA [*impressed—slowly*]. I don't remember nothing about her. What was she like? Tell me.

CHRIS Ay tal you all about everytang—and you tal me all tangs happen to you. But not here now. Dis ain't good place for young gel, anyway. Only no good sailor fallar come here for gat drunk. [*He gets to his feet quickly and picks up her bag.*] You come with me, Anna. You need lie down, gat rest.

ANNA [*half rises to her feet, then sits down again*]. Where're you going?

CHRIS. Come. Ve gat on board.

ANNA [*disappointedly*]. On board your barge, you mean? [*Dryly*] Nix for mine! [*Then seeing his crestfallen look—forcing a smile.*] Do you think that's a good place for a young girl like me—a coal barge?

CHRIS [*dully*]. Yes, Ay tank. [*He hesitates—then continues more and more pleadingly*] You don't know how nice it's on barge, Anna. Tug come and ve gat towed out on voyage—yust water all round, and sun, and fresh air, and good grub for make you strong, healthy gel. You see many tangs you don't see before. You gat moonlight at night, maybe, see steamer pass; see schooner make sail—see everytang dat's pooty. You need take rest like dat. You work too hard for young gel already. You need vacation, yes!

ANNA [*who has listened to him with a growing interest—with an uncertain laugh*]. It sounds good to hear you tell it. I'd sure like a trip on the water, all right. It's the barge idea has me stopped. Well, I'll go down with you and have a look—and maybe I'll take a chance. Gee, I'd do anything once.

CHRIS [*picks up her bag again*]. Ve go, eh?

ANNA. What's the rush? Wait a second. [*Forgetting the situation for a moment, she relapses into the familiar form and flashes one of her winning trade smiles at him.*] Gee, I'm thirsty.

CHRIS [*sets down her bag immediately—hastily*]. Ay'm sorry, Anna. What you tank you like for drink, eh?

ANNA [*promptly*]. I'll take a— [*Then suddenly reminded—confusedly.*] I don't know What'a they got here?

CHRIS [*with a grin*]. Ay don't tank dey got much fancy drink for young gel in dis place, Anna. Yinger ale—sas-prilla, maybe.

ANNA [*forcing a laugh herself*]. Make it sas, then.

CHRIS [*coming up to her—with a wink*]. Ay tal you, Anna, ve calabrate, yes—dis one time because ve meet after many year [*In a half whisper, embarrassedly*] Dey gat good port wine, Anna. It's good for you, Ay tank—httle bit—for give you appetite. It ain't strong, neider One glass don't go to your head, Ay promise

ANNA [*with a half hysterical laugh*]. All right I'll take port

CHRIS. Ay go gat him.

[*He goes to the bar As soon as the door closes, ANNA starts to her feet.*]

ANNA [*picking up her bag—half-aloud—stammeringly*]. Gawd, I can't stand this! I better beat it.

[*Then she lets her bag drop, stumbles over to her chair again, and covering her face with her hands, begins to sob*]

LARRY [*putting down his paper as CHRIS comes up—with a grin*]. Well, who's the blond?

CHRIS [*proudly*]. Dat vas Anna, Larry.

LARRY [*in amazement*]. Your daughter, Anna?

[*CHRIS nods LARRY lets a long, low whistle escape him and turns away embarrassedly*]

CHRIS Don't you tank she vas pooty gel, Larry?

LARRY [*rising to the occasion*]. Sure! A peach!

CHRIS. You bet you! Give me drink for take back—one port vine for Anna—she calabrate dis one time with me—and small beer for me.

LARRY [*as he gets the drinks*]. Small beer for you, eh? She's reformin' you already.

CHRIS [*pleased*]. You bet! [*He takes the drinks As she hears him coming, ANNA hastily dries her eyes, tries to smile. CHRIS comes in and sets the drinks down on the table—stares at her for a second anxiously—patting her hand*] You look tired, Anna. Vell, Ay make you take good long rest now. [*Picking up his beer*] Come, you drink vine. It put new life in you. [*She lifts her glass—he grins*] Skoal, Anna! You know dat Svedish word?

ANNA. Skoal! [*Downing her port at a gulp like a drink of whisky—her lips trembling.*] Skoal? Guess I know that word, all right!

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT TWO

SCENE—*Ten days later The stern of the deeply-laden barge, Simeon Winthrop, at anchor in the outer harbor of Provincetown, Mass. It is ten o'clock at night Dense fog shrouds the barge on all sides, and she floats motionless on a calm. A lantern set up on an immense coil of thick hawser sheds a dull, filtering light on objects near it—the heavy steel bits for making fast the tow lines, etc. In the rear is the cabin, its misty windows glowing wanly with the light of a lamp inside The chimney of the cabin stove rises a few feet above the roof. The doleful tolling of bells, on Long Point, on ships at anchor, breaks the silence at regular intervals.*

As the curtain rises, ANNA is discovered standing near the coil of rope on which the lantern is placed. She looks healthy, transformed, the natural color has come back to her face. She has on a black oilskin coat, but wears no hat She is staring out into the fog astern with an expression of awed wonder The cabin door is pushed open and CHRIS appears. He is dressed in yellow oilskins—coat, pants, sou'wester—and wears high sea-boots.

CHRIS [*the glare from the cabin still in his eyes, peers blinkingly astern*] Anna! [*Receiving no reply, he calls again, this time with apparent apprehension*] Anna!

ANNA [*with a start—making a gesture with her hand as if to impose silence—in a hushed whisper*]. Yes, here I am. What d'you want?

CHRIS [*walks over to her—solicitously*]. Don't you come turn in, Anna? It's late—after four bells. It ain't good for you stay out here in fog, Ay tank.

ANNA. Why not? [*With a trace of strange exultation*] I love this fog! Honest! It's so— [*She hesitates, groping for a word*] Funny and still I feel as if I was—out of things altogether.

CHRIS [*sputting disgustedly*]. Fog's vorst one of her dirty tricks, py yingo!

ANNA [*with a short laugh*]. Beefing about the sea again? I'm getting so's I love it, the little I've seen.

CHRIS [*glancing at her moodily*]. Dat's foolish talk, Anna. You see her more, you don't talk dat vay. [*Then seeing her irritation, he hastily adopts a more cheerful tone.*] But Ay'm glad you like it on barge. Ay'm glad it makes you feel good again. [*With a placating grin*] You like live like dis alone with ole fa'der, eh?

ANNA. Sure I do. Everything's been so different from anything I ever come across before. And now—this fog—Gee, I wouldn't have missed it for nothing. I never thought living on ships was so different from land. Gee, I'd yust love to work on it, honest I would, if I was a man. I don't wonder you always been a sailor.

CHRIS [*vehemently*]. Ay ain't sailor, Anna. And dis ain't real sea. You only see nice part. [*Then as she doesn't answer, he continues hopefully*] Vell, fog lift in morning, Ay tank.

ANNA [*the exultation again in her voice*]. I love it! I don't give a rap if it never lifts! [*CHRIS fidgets from one foot to the other worriedly. ANNA continues slowly, after a pause*] It makes me feel clean—out here—'s if I'd taken a bath.

CHRIS [*after a pause*]. You better go in cabin read book. Dat put you to sleep.

ANNA. I don't want to sleep. I want to stay out here—and think about things.

CHRIS [*walks away from her toward the cabin—then comes back*]. You act funny tonight, Anna.

ANNA [*her voice rising angrily*]. Say, what're you trying to do—make things rotten? You been kind as kind can be to me and I certainly appreciate it—only don't spoil it all now. [*Then, seeing the hurt expression on her father's face she forces a smile*] Let's talk of something else. Come. Sit down here.

[*She points to the coil of rope.*]

CHRIS [*sits down beside her with a sigh*]. It's gattin' pooty late in night, Anna. Must be near five bells.

ANNA [*interestedly*]. Five bells? What time is that?

CHRIS. Half past ten.

ANNA. Funny I don't know nothing about sea talk—but those cousins was always talking crops and that stuff. Gee, wasn't I sick of it—and of them!

CHRIS. You don't like live on farm, Anna?

ANNA. I've told you a hundred times I hated it. [*Decidedly*] I'd rather have one drop of ocean than all the farms in the world! Honest! And you wouldn't like a farm, neither. Here's where you belong. [*She makes a sweeping gesture seaward.*]

But not on a coal barge. You belong on a real ship, sailing all over the world.

CHRIS [*moodily*]. Ay've done dat many year, Anna, when Ay vas damn fool.

ANNA [*disgustedly*]. Oh, rats! [*After a pause she speaks musingly.*] Was the men in our family always sailors—as far back as you know about?

CHRIS [*shortly*]. Yes. Damn fools! All men in our village on coast, Sveden, go to sea. Ain't nutting else for dem to do. My fa'der die on board ship in Indian Ocean. He's buried at sea. Ay don't never know him only little bit. Den my tree bro'der, older'n me, dey go on ships. Den Ay go, too. Den my mo'der she's left all 'lone. She die pooty quick after dat—all 'lone. Ve vas all away on voyage when she die. [*He pauses sadly.*] Two my bro'der dey gat lost on fishing boat same like your bro'ders vas drowned. My oder bro'der, he save money, give up sea, den he die home in bed. He's only one dat ole devil don't kill. [*Defiantly*] But me, Ay bet you Ay die ashore in bed, too!

ANNA. Were all of 'em yust plain sailors?

CHRIS. Able body seaman, most of dem. [*With a certain pride.*] Dey vas all smart seaman, too—A one. [*Then after hesitating a moment—shyly*] Ay vas bo'-sun.

ANNA. Bo'sun?

CHRIS. Dat's kind of officer.

ANNA. Gee, that was fine. What does he do?

CHRIS [*after a second's hesitation, plunged into gloom again by his fear of her enthusiasm*]. Hard vork all time. It's rotten, Ay tal you, for go to sea [*Determined to disgust her with sea life—volubly.*] Dey're all fool fallar, dem fallar in our family. Dey all vork rotten yob on sea for nutting, don't care nutting but yust gat big pay day in pocket, gat drunk, gat robbed, ship away again on oder voyage. Dey don't come home. Dey don't do anytang like good man do. And dat ole devil, sea, sooner, later she swallow dem up.

ANNA [*with an excited laugh*]. Good sports, I'd call 'em. [*Then hastily.*] But say—listen—did all the women of the family marry sailors?

CHRIS [*eagerly—seeing a chance to drive home his point*]. Yes—and it's bad on dem like hell worst of all. Dey don't see deir men only once in long while. Dey set and wait all 'lone. And vhen deir boys grows up, go to sea, dey sit and wait some more. [*Vehemently.*] Any gel marry sailor,

she's crazy fool! Your mo'der she tal you same tang if she vas alive

[*He relapses into an attitude of somber brooding*]

ANNA [*after a pause—dreamily*]. Funny! I do feel sort of—nutty, tonight. I feel old.

CHRIS [*mystified*] Ole?

ANNA. Sure—like I'd been living a long, long time—out here in the fog [*Frowning perplexedly*] I don't know how to tell you yust what I mean. It's like I'd come home after a long visit away some place. It all seems like I'd been here before lots of times—on boats—in this same fog. [*With a short laugh*] You must think I'm off my base.

CHRIS [*gruffly*] Anybody feel funny dat vay in fog

ANNA [*persistently*] But why d'you s'pose I feel so—so—like I'd found something I'd missed and been looking for—'s if this was the right place for me to fit in? And I seem to have forgot—everything that's happened—like it didn't matter no more. And I feel clean, somehow—like you feel yust after you've took a bath. And I feel happy for once—yes, honest!—happier than I ever have been anywhere before! [*As CHRIS makes no comment but a heavy sigh, she continues wonderingly*] It's nutty for me to feel that way, don't you think?

CHRIS [*a grim foreboding in his voice*]. Ay tank Ay'm damn fool for bring you on voyage, Anna.

ANNA [*impressed by his tone*] You talk—nutty tonight yourself. You act 's if you was scared something was going to happen.

CHRIS Only God know dat, Anna

ANNA [*half-mockingly*] Then it'll be Gawd's will, like the preachers say—what does happen.

CHRIS [*starts to his feet with fierce protest*]. No! Dat ole davil sea, she ain't God! [*In the pause of silence that comes after his defiance a hail in a man's husky, exhausted voice comes faintly out of the fog to port*] "Ahoy!"

[*CHRIS gives a startled exclamation*]

ANNA [*jumping to her feet*]. What's that?

CHRIS [*who has regained his composure—sheepishly*]. Py golly, dat scare me for minute. It's only some fallar hail, Anna—loose his course in fog. Must be fisherman's power boat. His engine break down, Ay guess. [*The "ahoy" comes again through the wall of fog sounding much nearer this time*. CHRIS goes over to the port bul-

wark.] Sound from dis side. She come in from open sea. [*He holds his hands to his mouth, megaphone-fashion, and shouts back*.] Ahoy, dere! What's trouble?

THE VOICE [*this time sounding nearer but up forward toward the bow*] Heave a rope when we come alongside [*Then irritably*] Where are ye, ye scut?

CHRIS. Ay hear dem rowing. Dey come up by bow, Ay tank. [*Then shouting out again*.] Dis vay!

THE VOICE Right ye are!

[*There is a muffled sound of oars in oarlocks*.]

ANNA [*half to herself—resentfully*]. Why don't that guy stay where he belongs?

CHRIS [*hurriedly*]. Ay go up bow. All hands asleep 'cepting fallar on vatch. Ay gat heave line to dat fallar. [*He picks up a coil of rope and hurries off toward the bow*. ANNA walks back toward the extreme stern as if she wanted to remain as much isolated as possible. She turns her back on the proceedings and stares out into the fog. THE VOICE is heard again shouting "Ahoy" and CHRIS answering "Dis vay." Then there is a pause—the murmur of excited voices—then the scuffling of feet. CHRIS appears from around the cabin to port. He is supporting the limp form of a man dressed in dungarees, holding one of the man's arms around his neck. The deckhand, JOHNSON, a young blond Swede, follows him, helping along another exhausted man similar fashion. ANNA turns to look at them. CHRIS stops for a second—volubly.] Anna! You come help, vill you? You find whisky in cabin. Dese fallars need drink for fix dem. Dey vas near dead

ANNA [*hurrying to him*]. Sure—but who are they? What's the trouble?

CHRIS. Sailor fallars. Deir steamer gat wrecked. Dey been five days in open boat—four fallars—only one left able stand up. Come, Anna. [*She precedes him into the cabin, holding the door open while he and JOHNSON carry in their burdens. The door is shut, then opened again as JOHNSON comes out. CHRIS' voice shouts after him*] Go gat oder fallar, Yohnson.

JOHNSON. Yes, sir.

[*He goes. The door is closed again. MAT BURKE stumbles in around the port side of the cabin. He moves slowly, feeling his way uncertainly, keeping hold of the port bulwark with his right hand to steady himself. He is stripped to the waist, has on nothing but a pair of dirty dungaree pants*

He is a powerful, broad-chested six-footer, his face handsome in a hard, rough, bold, defiant way. He is about thirty, in the full power of his heavy-muscled immense strength. His dark eyes are bloodshot and wild for sleeplessness. The muscles of his arms and shoulders are lumped in knots and bunches, the veins of his fore-arms stand out like blue cords. He finds his way to the coil of hawser and sits down on it facing the cabin, his back bowed, head in his hands, in an attitude of spent weariness.]

BURKE [*talking aloud to himself*]. Row, ye divil! Row! [*Then lifting his head and looking about him*] What's this tub? Well, we're safe anyway—with the help of God. [*He makes the sign of the cross mechanically. JOHNSON comes along the deck to port, supporting the fourth man, who is babbling to himself incoherently. BURKE glances at him disdainfully*] Is it losing the small wits ye iver had, ye are? Deck-scrubbing scut! [*They pass him and go into the cabin, leaving the door open. BURKE sags forward wearily.*] I'm bate out—bate out entirely

ANNA [*comes out of the cabin with a tumbler quarter-full of whisky in her hand. She gives a start when she sees BURKE so near her, the light from the open door falling full on him. Then, overcoming what is evidently a feeling of repulsion, she comes up beside him*]. Here you are. Here's a drink for you. You need it, I guess.

BURKE [*lifting his head slowly—consciously*]. Is it dreaming I am?

ANNA [*half smiling*]. Drink it and you'll find it ain't no dream

BURKE. To hell with the drink—but I'll take it just the same. [*He tosses it down*] Ahah! I'm needin' that—and 'tis fine stuff [*Looking up at her with frank, grinning admiration*] But 'twasn't the booze I meant when I said, was I dreaming I thought you was some mermaid out of the sea come to torment me. [*He reaches out to feel of her arm*] Aye, rale flesh and blood, divil a less.

ANNA [*coldly. Stepping back from him*]. Cut that.

BURKE. But tell me, isn't this a barge I'm on—or isn't it?

ANNA. Sure.

BURKE. And what is a fine handsome woman the like of you doing on this scow?

ANNA [*coldly*]. Never you mind. [*Then half-amused in spite of herself*] Say, you're

a great one, honest—starting right in kidding after what you been through.

BURKE [*delighted—proudly*]. Ah, it was nothing—aisy for a rale man with guts to him, the like of me. [*He laughs.*] All in the day's work, darlin'. [*Then, more seriously but still in a boastful tone, confidentially*] But I won't be denying 'twas a damn narrow squeak. We'd all ought to be with Davy Jones at the bottom of the sea, be rights. And only for me, I'm telling you, and the great strength and guts is in me, we'd be being scoffed by the fishes this minute!

ANNA [*contemptuously*]. Gee, you hate yourself, don't you? [*Then turning away from him indifferently*] Well, you'd better come in and lie down. You must want to sleep

BURKE [*stung—rising unsteadily to his feet with chest out and head thrown back—resentfully*]. Lie down and sleep, is it? Divil a wink I'm after having for two days and nights and divil a bit I'm needing now. Let you not be thinking I'm the like of them three weak scuts come in the boat with me. I could lick the three of them sitting down with one hand tied behind me. They may be bate out, but I'm not—and I've been rowing the boat with them lying in the bottom not able to raise a hand for the last two days we was in it. [*Furiously, as he sees this is making no impression on her.*] And I can lick all hands on this tub, wan be wan tired as I am!

ANNA [*sarcastically*]. Gee, ain't you a hard guy! [*Then, with a trace of sympathy, as she notices him swaying from weakness*] But never mind that fight talk. I'll take your word for all you've said. Go on and sit down out here, anyway, if I can't get you to come inside. [*He sits down weakly*] You're all in, you might as well own up to it.

BURKE [*fiercely*]. The hell I am!

ANNA [*coldly*]. Well, be stubborn then for all I care. And I must say I don't care for your language. The men I know don't pull that rough stuff when ladies are around

BURKE [*getting unsteadily to his feet again—in a rage*]. Ladies! Ho-ho! Divil mend you! Let you not be making game of me. What would ladies be doing on this bloody hulk? [*As ANNA attempts to go to the cabin, he lurches into her path*] Aisy, now! You're not the old Square-head's woman, I suppose you'll be telling me next—living in his cabin with him, no less! [*Seeing the cold, hostile expression on ANNA'S face, he suddenly changes*

his tone to one of boisterous joviality. But I do be thinking, iver since the first look my eyes took at you, that it's a fool you are to be wasting yourself—a fine, handsome girl—on a stumpy runt of a man like that old Swede. There's too many strapping great lads as the sea would give their heart's blood for one kiss of you!

ANNA [*scornfully*]. Lads like you, eh?

BURKE [*grinning*]. Ye take the words out o' my mouth. I'm the proper lad for you, if it's meself do be saying it. [*With a quick movement he puts his arms about her waist*] Whisht, now, me daisy! Himself's in the cabin. It's wan of your kisses I'm needing to take the tiredness from me bones. Wan kiss, now!

[*He presses her to him and attempts to kiss her*]

ANNA [*struggling fiercely*]. Leggo of me, you big mutt!

[*She pushes him away with all her might BURKE, weak and tottering, is caught off his guard. He is thrown down backward and, in falling, hits his head a hard thump against the bulkhead. He lies there still, knocked out for the moment ANNA stands for a second, looking down at him frightenedly. Then she kneels down beside him and raises his head to her knee, staring into his face anxiously for some sign of life*]

BURKE [*stirring a bit—mutteringly*]. God stiffen it!

[*He opens his eyes and blinks up at her with vague wonder*]

ANNA [*letting his head sink back on the deck, rising to her feet with a sigh of relief*]. You're coming to all right, eh? Gee, I was scared for a moment I'd killed you.

BURKE [*with difficulty rising to a sitting position—scornfully*]. Killed, is it? It'd take more than a bit of a blow to crack my thick skull [*Then looking at her with the most intense admiration*] But, glory be, it's a power of strength is in them two fine arms of yours. There's not a man in the world can say the same as you, that he seen Mat Burke lying at his feet and him dead to the world.

ANNA [*rather remorsefully*]. Forget it. I'm sorry it happened, see? [*Burke rises and sits on bench. Then severely*] Only you had no right to be getting fresh with me. Listen, now, and don't go getting any more wrong notions. I'm on this barge because I'm making a tiip with my father. The captain's my father. Now you know.

BURKE. The old square—the old Swede, I mean?

ANNA Yes.

BURKE [*rising—peering at her face*]. Sure I might have known it if I wasn't a bloody fool from birth. Where else'd you get that fine yellow hair is like a golden crown on your head.

ANNA [*with an amused laugh*] Say, nothing stops you, does it? [*Then attempting a severe tone again*] But don't you think you ought to be apologizing for what you said and done yust a minute ago, instead of trying to kid me with that mush?

BURKE [*indignantly*]. Mush! [*Then bending forward toward her with very intense earnestness*] Indade and I will ask your pardon a thousand times—and on my knees, if ye like. I didn't mean a word of what I said or did [*Resentful again for a second*] But divil a woman in all the ports of the world has iver made a great fool of me that way before!

ANNA [*with amused sarcasm*]. I see You mean you're a lady-killer and they all fall for you.

BURKE [*offended Passionately*]. Leave off your fooling! 'Tis that is after getting my back up at you [*Earnestly*] 'Tis no lie I'm telling you about the women [*Ruefully*] Though it's a great jackass I am to be mistaking you, even in anger, for the like of them cows on the water-front is the only women I've met up with since I was growed to a man. [*As ANNA shrinks away from him at this, he hurries on pleadingly*] I'm a hard, rough man and I'm not fit, I'm thinking, to be kissing the shoe-soles of a fine, dacent girl the like of yourself. 'Tis only the ignorance of your kind made me see you wrong. So you'll forgive me, for the love of God, and let us be friends from this out. [*Passionately*] I'm thinking I'd rather be friends with you than have any wish for anything else in the world

[*He holds out his hand to her shyly*]

ANNA [*looking queerly at him, perplexed and worried, but moved and pleased in spite of herself—takes his hand uncertainly*]. Sure.

BURKE [*with boyish delight*] God bless you! [*In his excitement he squeezes her hand tight*]

ANNA Ouch!

BURKE [*hastily dropping her hand—ruefully*]. Your pardon, Miss. 'Tis a clumsy ape I am. [*Then simply—glancing down his arm proudly*] It's great power I have in

my hand and arm, and I do be forgetting it at times.

ANNA [*nursing her crushed hand and glancing at his arm, not without a trace of his own admiration*]. Gee, you're some strong, all right.

BURKE [*delighted*]. It's no lie, and why shouldn't I be, with me shoveling a million tons of coal in the stokeholes of ships since I was a lad only. [*He pats the coil of hawser invitingly*]. Let you sit down, now, Miss, and I'll be telling you a bit of myself, and you'll be telling me a bit of yourself, and in an hour we'll be as old friends as if we was born in the same house. [*He pulls at her sleeve shyly*]. Sit down now, if you please.

ANNA [*with a half laugh*]. Well— [*She sits down*] But we won't talk about me, see? You tell me about yourself and about the wreck.

BURKE [*flattered*]. I'll tell you, surely But can I be asking you one question, Miss, has my head in a puzzle?

ANNA [*guardedly*]. Well—I dunno—what is it?

BURKE. What is it you do when you're not taking a trip with the Old Man? For I'm thinking a fine girl the like of you ain't living always on this tub.

ANNA [*uneasily*]. No—of course I ain't [*She searches his face suspiciously, afraid there may be some hidden insinuation in his words. Seeing his simple frankness, she goes on confidently*] Well, I'll tell you I'm a governess, see? I take care of kids for people and learn them things.

BURKE [*impressed*]. A governess, is it? You must be smart, surely

ANNA. Let's not talk about me. Tell me about the wreck, like you promised me you would

BURKE [*importantly*]. 'Twas this way, Miss Two weeks out we ran into the devil's own storm, and she sprang wan hell of a leak up for'ard. The skipper was hoping to make Boston before another blow would finish her, but ten days back we met up with another storm the like of the first, only worse. Four days we was in it with green seas raking over her from bow to stern. That was a terrible time, God help us. [*Proudly*] And if 'twasn't for me and my great strength, I'm telling you—and it's God's truth—there'd been mutiny itself in the stokehole. 'Twas me held them to it, with a kick to wan and a clout to another, and they not caring a damn for the engineers any more, but fearing a clout of my right arm more than they'd fear the sea itself.

[*He glances at her anxiously, eager for her approval*.]

ANNA [*concealing a smile—amused by this boyish boasting of his*]. You did some hard work, didn't you?

BURKE [*promptly*]. I did that! I'm a divil for sticking it out when them that's weak give up. But much good it did anyone! 'Twas a mad, fightin' scramble in the last seconds with each man for himself. I disremember how it come about, but there was the four of us in wan boat and when we raised high on a great wave I took a look about and divil a sight there was of ship or men on top of the sea

ANNA [*in a subdued voice*]. Then all the others was drowned?

BURKE. They was, surely.

ANNA [*with a shudder*]. What a terrible end!

BURKE [*turns to her*]. A terrible end for the like of them swabs does live on land, maybe. But for the like of us does be roaming the seas, a good end, I'm telling you—quick and clane.

ANNA [*struck by the word*]. Yes, clean That's yust the word for—all of it—the way it makes me feel.

BURKE. The sea, you mean? [*Interstedly*] I'm thinking you have a bit of it in your blood, too Your Old Man wasn't only a barge rat—begging your pardon—all his life, by the cut of him

ANNA. No, he was bo'sun on sailing ships for years And all the men on both sides of the family have gone to sea as far back as he remembers, he says. All the women have married sailors, too.

BURKE [*with intense satisfaction*]. Did they, now? They had spirit in them It's only on the sea you'd find rale men with guts is fit to wed with fine, high-tempered girls [*then he adds half-boldly*] the like of yourself.

ANNA [*with a laugh*]. There you go kiddin' again [*Then seeing his hurt expression—quickly*] But you was going to tell me about yourself. You're Irish, of course I can tell that.

BURKE [*stoutly*]. Yes, thank God, though I've not seen a sight of it in fifteen years or more.

ANNA [*thoughtfully*]. Sailors never do go home hardly, do they? That's what my father was saying.

BURKE. He wasn't telling no lie. [*With sudden melancholy*] It's a hard and lonesome life, the sea is. The only women you'd meet in the ports of the world who'd be willing to speak you a kind word isn't woman at all. You know the kind I mane

and they're a poor, wicked lot, God forgive them. They're looking to steal the money from you only.

ANNA [*her face averted—rising to her feet—agitatedly*]. I think—I guess I'd better see what's doing inside.

BURKE [*afraid he has offended her—be-seechingly*]. Don't go, I'm saying! Is it I've given you offense with the talk of the like of them? Don't heed it at all! I'm clumsy in my wits when it comes to talking proper with a girl the like of you. And why wouldn't I be? Since the day I left home for to go to sea punching coal, this is the first time I've had a word with a rale, dacent woman. So don't turn your back on me now, and we beginning to be friends.

ANNA [*turning to him again—forcing a smile*]. I'm not sore at you, honest.

BURKE [*gratefully*]. God bless you!

ANNA [*changing the subject abruptly*]. But if you honestly think the sea's such a rotten life, why don't you get out of it?

BURKE [*surprised*]. Work on land, is it? [*She nods. He spits scornfully*]. Digging spuds in the muck from dawn to dark, I suppose? [*Vehemently*]. I wasn't made for it, Miss.

ANNA [*with a laugh*]. I thought you'd say that.

BURKE [*argumentatively*]. But there's good jobs and bad jobs at sea, like there'd be on land. I'm thinking if it's in the stoke-hole of a proper liner I was, I'd be able to have a little house and be home to it wan week out of four. And I'm thinking that maybe then I'd have the luck to find a fine dacent girl—the like of yourself, now—would be willing to wed with me.

ANNA [*turning away from him with a short laugh—uneasily*]. Why, sure. I won't?

BURKE [*edging up close to her—exultantly*]. Then you think a girl the like of yourself might maybe not mind the past at all but only be seeing the good herself put in me?

ANNA [*in the same tone*]. Why, sure.

BURKE [*passionately*]. She'd not be sorry for it, I'd take my oath! 'Tis no more drinking and roving about I'd be doing then, but giving my pay day into her hand and staying at home with her as meek as a lamb each night of the week I'd be in port.

ANNA [*moved in spite of herself and troubled by this half-concealed proposal—with a forced laugh*]. All you got to do is find the girl.

BURKE. I have found her!

ANNA [*half-frightenedly—trying to laugh it off*]. You have? When? I thought you was saying—

BURKE [*boldly and forcefully*]. This night. [*Hanging his head—humbly*]. If she'll be having me. [*Then raising his eyes to hers—simply*]. 'Tis you I mean.

ANNA [*is held by his eyes for a moment—then shrinks back from him with a strange, broken laugh*]. Say—are you—going crazy? Are you trying to kid me? Proposing—to me?—for Gawd's sake! on such short acquaintance?

[CHRIS comes out of the cabin and stands staring blinkingly astern. When he makes out ANNA in such intimate proximity to this strange sailor, an angry expression comes over his face.]

BURKE [*following her—with fierce, pleading insistence*]. I'm telling you there's the will of God in it that brought me safe through the storm and fog to the wan spot in the world where you was! Think of that now, and isn't it queer—

CHRIS. Anna! [*He comes toward them, raging, his fists clenched*]. Anna, you gat in cabin, you hear!

ANNA [*all her emotions immediately transformed into resentment at his bullying tone*]. Who d'you think you're talking to—a slave?

CHRIS [*hurt—his voice breaking—pleadingly*]. You need gat rest, Anna. You gat sleep. [*She does not move. He turns on BURKE furiously*]. What you doing here, you sailor fallar? You ain't sick like oders. You gat in fo'c'stle. Dey give you bunk. [*Threateningly*]. You hurry, Ay tal you!

ANNA [*impulsively*]. But he is sick. Look at him. Look at him. He can hardly stand up.

BURKE [*straightening and throwing out his chest—with a bold laugh*]. Is it giving me orders ye are, me bucko? Let you look out, then! With wan hand, weak as I am, I can break ye in two and fling the pieces over the side—and your crew after you. [*Stopping abruptly*]. I was forgetting. You're her Old Man and I'd not raise a fist to you for the world.

[His knees sag, he wavers and seems about to fall. ANNA utters an exclamation of alarm and hurries to his side.]

ANNA [*taking one of his arms over her shoulder*]. Come on in the cabin. You can have my bed if there ain't no other place.

BURKE [*with jubilant happiness—as they proceed toward the cabin*]. Glory be to God, is it holding my arm about your

neck you are! Anna! Anna! Sure it's a sweet name is suited to you.

ANNA [*guiding him carefully*]. Sssh! Sssh!

BURKE. Whisht, is it? Indade, and I'll not. I'll be roaring it out like a fog horn over the sea! You're the girl of the world and we'll be marrying soon and I don't care who knows it!

ANNA [*as she guides him through the cabin door*]. Sssh! Never mind that talk. You go to sleep.

[*They go out of sight in the cabin.*

CHRIS, who has been listening to BURKE'S last words with open-mouthed amazement stands looking after them desperately.]

CHRIS [*turns suddenly and shakes his fist out at the sea—with bitter hatred*]. Dat's your dirty trick, damn ole daval, you! [*Then in a frenzy of rage*] But, py God, you don't do dat! Not vvhile Ay'm living! No, py God, you don't!

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT THREE

SCENE—*The interior of the cabin on the barge, Simeon Winthrop (at dock in Boston)—a narrow, low-ceilinged compartment the walls of which are painted a light brown with white trimmings. In the rear on the left, a door leading to the sleeping quarters. In the far left corner, a large locker-closet, painted white, on the door of which a mirror hangs on a nail. In the rear wall, two small square windows and a door opening out on the deck toward the stern. In the right wall, two more windows looking out on the port deck. White curtains, clean and stiff, are at the windows. A table with two cane-bottomed chairs stands in the center of the cabin. A dilapidated wicker rocker, painted brown, is also by the table.*

It is afternoon of a sunny day about a week later. From the harbor and docks outside, muffled by the closed door and windows, comes the sound of steamers' whistles and the puffing snort of the donkey engines of some ship unloading nearby.

As the curtain rises, CHRIS and ANNA are discovered. ANNA is seated in the rocking-chair by the table, with a newspaper in her hands. She is not reading but staring straight in front of her. She looks unhappy, troubled,

frowningly concentrating on her thoughts. CHRIS wanders about the room, casting quick, uneasy side glances at her face, then stopping to peer absent-mindedly out of the window. His attitude betrays an overwhelming, gloomy anxiety which has him on tenterhooks. He pretends to be engaged in setting things ship-shape, but this occupation is confined to picking up some object, staring at it stupidly for a second, then aimlessly putting it down again. He clears his throat and starts to sing to himself in a low, doleful voice: "My Yosephine, come board de ship. Long time Ay wait for you"

ANNA [*turning on him, sarcastically*]. I'm glad someone's feeling good [*Wearily*] Gee, I sure wish we was out of this dump and back in New York

CHRIS [*with a sigh*]. Ay'm glad when ve sail again, too. [*Then, as she makes no comment, he goes on with a ponderous attempt at sarcasm*] Ay don't see vhy you don't like Boston, dough. You have good time here, Ay tank. You go ashore all time, every day and night veek ve've been here. You go to movies, see show, gat all kinds fun— [*His eyes hard with hatred*] All with that damn Irish fallar!

ANNA [*with weary scorn*]. Oh, for heaven's sake, are you off on that again? Where's the harm in his taking me around? D'you want me to sit all day and night in this cabin with you—and knit? Ain't I got a right to have as good a time as I can?

CHRIS. It ain't right kind of fun—not with that fallar, no.

ANNA. I been back on board every night by eleven, ain't I? [*Then struck by some thought—looks at him with keen suspicion—with rising anger*] Say, look here, what d'you mean by what you yust said?

CHRIS [*hastily*]. Nutting but what Ay say, Anna.

ANNA. You said "ain't right" and you said it funny. Say, listen, here, you ain't trying to insinuate that there's something wrong between us, are you?

CHRIS [*horrified*]. No, Anna! No, Ay swear to God, Ay never tank dat!

ANNA [*mollified by his very evident sincerity—sitting down again*]. Well, don't you never think it neither if you want me ever to speak to you again [*Angrily again*]. If I ever dreamt you thought that, I'd get the hell out of this barge so quick you couldn't see me for dust.

CHRIS [*soothingly*]. Ay wouldn't never dream— [*Then after a second's pause, reprovingly*] You vas getting learn to svear. Dat ain't nice for young gel, you tank?

ANNA [*with a faint trace of a smile*]. Excuse me. You ain't used to such language, I know. [*Mockingly*] That's what your taking me to sea has done for me.

CHRIS [*indignantly*]. No, it ain't me. It's dat damn sailor fallar learn you bad tangs

ANNA. He ain't a sailor. He's a stoker.

CHRIS [*forcibly*]. Dat vas million times worse, Ay tal you! Dem fallars dat vork below shoveling coal vas de dirtiest, rough gang of no-good fallars in vorld!

ANNA. I'd hate to hear you say that to Mat.

CHRIS. Oh, Ay tal him same tang. You don't gat it in head Ay'm scared of him yust 'cause he vas stronger'n Ay vas [*Menacingly*] You don't gat for fight with fists with dem fallars Dere's oder vay for fix him

ANNA [*glancing at him with sudden alarm*]. What d'you mean?

CHRIS [*sullenly*] Nutting

ANNA You'd better not I wouldn't start no trouble with him if I was you He might forget some time that you was old and my father—and then you'd be out of luck

CHRIS [*with smoldering hatred*] Vell, yust let him! Ay'm ole bird maybe, but Ay bet Ay show him trick or two

ANNA [*suddenly changing her tone—persuasively*] Aw come on, be good What's eating you, anyway? Don't you want no one to be nice to me except yourself?

CHRIS [*placated—coming to her—eagerly*]. Yes, Ay do, Anna—only not fallar on sea But Ay like for you marry steady fallar got good yob on land. You have little home in country all your own—

ANNA [*rising to her feet—brusquely*]. Oh, cut it out! [*Scornfully*] Little home in the country! I wish you could have seen the little home in the country where you had me in jail till I was sixteen! [*With rising irritation*] Some day you're going to get me so mad with that talk, I'm going to turn loose on you and tell you—a lot of things that'll open your eyes.

CHRIS [*alarmed*]. Ay don't vant— ANNA. I know you don't; but you keep on talking yust the same

CHRIS. Ay don't talk no more den, Anna

ANNA. Then promise me you'll cut out

saying nasty things about Mat Burke every chance you get.

CHRIS [*evasive and suspicious*] Why? You like dat fallar—very much, Anna?

ANNA. Yes, I certainly do! He's a regular man, no matter what faults he's got. One of his fingers is worth all the hundreds of men I met out there—inland

CHRIS [*his face darkening*] Maybe you tank you love him, den?

ANNA [*defiantly*]. What of it if I do?

CHRIS [*scowling and forcing out the words*]. Maybe—you tank you—marry him?

ANNA [*shaking her head*]. No! [*CHRIS' face lights up with relief ANNA continues slowly, a trace of sadness in her voice*] If I'd met him four years ago—or even two years ago—I'd have jumped at the chance, I tell you that straight And I would now—only he's such a simple guy—a big kid—and I ain't got the heart to fool him [*She breaks off suddenly*] But don't never say again he ain't good enough for me It's me ain't good enough for him

CHRIS [*snorts scornfully*] Py yiminy, you go crazy, Ay tank!

ANNA [*with a mournful laugh*] Well, I been thinking I was myself the last few days [*She goes and takes a shawl from a hook near the door and throws it over her shoulders*] Guess I'll take a walk down to the end of the dock for a minute and see what's doing I love to watch the ships passing Mat'll be along before long, I guess Tell him where I am, will you?

CHRIS [*despondently*]. All right, Ay tal him.

[ANNA goes out the doorway in rear.

CHRIS follows her out and stands on the deck outside for a moment looking after her. Then he comes back inside and shuts the door. He stands looking out of the window—mutter—"Dirty ole devil, you" Then he goes to the table, sets the cloth straight mechanically, picks up the newspaper ANNA has let fall to the floor and sits down in the rocking-chair. He stares at the paper for a while, then puts it on table, holds his head in his hands and sighs drearily. The noise of a man's heavy footsteps comes from the deck outside and there is a loud knock on the door CHRIS starts, makes a move as if to get up and go to the door, then thinks better of it and sits still. The knock is repeated—then as no answer comes, the door is flung open and MAT BURKE appears. CHRIS scowls at the intruder and his hand

instinctively goes back to the sheath knife on his hip. BURKE is dressed up—wears a cheap blue suit, a striped cotton shirt with a black tie, and black shoes newly shined. His face is beaming with good humor.

BURKE [as he sees CHRIS—in a jovial tone of mockery]. Well, God bless who's here! [He bends down and squeezes his huge form through the narrow doorway] And how is the world treating you this afternoon, Anna's father?

CHRIS [sullenly]. Pooty goot—if it ain't for some fallars.

BURKE [with a grin]. Meaning me, do you? [He laughs] Well, if you ain't the funny old crank of a man! [Then soberly] Where's herself? [CHRIS sits dumb, scowling, his eyes averted. BURKE is irritated by this silence.] Where's Anna, I'm after asking you?

CHRIS [hesitating—then grouchy]. She go down end of dock.

BURKE. I'll be going down to her, then. But first I'm thinking I'll take this chance when we're alone to have a word with you. [He sits down opposite CHRIS at the table and leans over toward him] And that word is soon said. I'm marrying your Anna before this day is out, and you might as well make up your mind to it whether you like it or no.

CHRIS [glaring at him with hatred and forcing a scornful laugh]. Ho-ho! Dat's easy for say!

BURKE. You mean I won't? [Scornfully.] Is it the like of yourself will stop me, are you thinking?

CHRIS. Yes, Ay stop it, if it come to vorst

BURKE [with scornful pity]. God help you!

CHRIS. But ain't no need for me do dat. Anna—

BURKE [smiling confidently]. Is it Anna you think will prevent me?

CHRIS. Yes.

BURKE. And I'm telling you she'll not. She knows I'm loving her, and she loves me the same, and I know it.

CHRIS. Ho-ho! She only have fun. She make big fool of you, dat's all!

BURKE [unshaken—pleasantly]. That's a lie in your throat, devil mend you!

CHRIS. No, it ain't lie. She tal me yust before she go out she never marry fallar like you.

BURKE. I'll not believe it. 'Tis a great old liar you are, and a devil to be making a power of trouble if you had your way. But 'tis not trouble I'm looking for, and

me sitting down here. [Earnestly] Let us be talking it out now as man to man. You're her father, and wouldn't it be a shame for us to be at each other's throats like a pair of dogs, and I married with Anna? So out with the truth, man alive. What is it you're holding against me at all?

CHRIS [a bit placated, in spite of himself, by BURKE'S evident sincerity—but puzzled and suspicious]. Vell—Ay don't vant for Anna get married. Listen, you fallar. Ay'm a ole man. Ay don't see Anna for fifteen year. She vas all Ay gat in world. And now ven she come on first trip—you tank Ay vant her leave me 'lone again?

BURKE [heartily]. Let you not be thinking I have no heart at all for the way you'd be feeling.

CHRIS [astounded and encouraged—trying to plead persuasively]. Den you do right tang, eh? You ship away again, leave Anna alone [Cajolingly] Big fallar like you dat's on sea, he don't need vife. He gat new gel in every port, you know dat.

BURKE [angrily for a second]. God stiffen you! [Then controlling himself—calmly] I'll not be giving you the lie on that. But devil take you, there's a time comes to every man, on sea or land, that isn't a born fool, when he's sick of the lot of them cows, and wearing his heart out to meet up with a fine dacent girl, and have a home to call his own and be rearing up children in it. 'Tis small use you're asking me to leave Anna. She's the wan woman of the world for me, and I can't live without her now, I'm thinking.

CHRIS. You forgot all about her in one veek out of port, Ay bet you!

BURKE. You don't know the like I am. Death itself wouldn't make me forget her. So let you not be making talk to me about leaving her. I'll not, and be damned to you! It won't be so bad for you as you'd make out at all. She'll be living here in the States, and her married to me. And you'd be seeing her often so—a sight more often than ever you saw her the fifteen years she was growing up in the West. It's quare you'd be the one to be making great trouble about her leaving you when you never laid eyes on her once in all them years.

CHRIS [guiltily]. Ay taught it vas better Anna stay away, grow up inland where she don't ever know ole devil, sea.

BURKE [scornfully]. Is it blaming the sea for your troubles ye are again, God

help you? Well, Anna knows it now. 'Twas in her blood, anyway.

CHRIS. And Ay don't vant she ever know no-good fallar on sea—

BURKE. She knows one now.

CHRIS [*banging the table with his fist—furiously*]. Dat's yust it! Dat's yust what you are—no-good sailor fallar! You tank Ay lat her life be made sorry by you like her mo'der's vas by me! No, Ay sveal! She don't marry you if Ay gat kill you first!

BURKE [*looks at him a moment, in astonishment—then laughing uproariously*]. Ho-ho! Glory be to God, it's bold talk you have for a stumpy runt of a man!

CHRIS [*threateningly*]. Vell—you see!

BURKE [*with grinning defiance*] I'll see, surely! I'll see myself and Anna married this day, I'm telling you. [*Then with contemptuous exasperation*] It's quare fool's blather you have about the sea done this and the sea done that You'd ought to be 'shamed to be saying the like, and you an old sailor yourself. I'm after hearing a lot of it from you and a lot more that Anna's told me you do be saying to her, and I'm thinking it's a poor weak thing you are, and not a man at all!

CHRIS [*darkly*] You see if Ay'm man—maybe quicker'n you tank.

BURKE [*contemptuously*]. Yerra, don't be boasting I'm thinking 'tis out of your wits you've got with fright of the sea. You'd be wishing Anna married to a farmer, she told me. That'd be a swate match, surely! Would you have a fine girl the like of Anna lying down at nights with a muddy scut stinking of pigs and dung? Or would you have her tied for life to the like of them skinny, shriveled swabs does be working in cities?

CHRIS Dat's lie, you fool!

BURKE. 'Tis not 'Tis your own mad notions I'm after telling. But you know the truth in your heart, if great fear of the sea has made you a liar and coward itself. [*Pounding the table*] The sea's the only life for a man with guts in him isn't afraid of his own shadow! 'Tis only on the sea he's free, and him roving the face of the world, seeing all things, and not giving a damn for saving up money, or stealing from his friends, or any of the black tricks that a landlubber'd waste his life on 'Twas yourself knew it once, and you a bo'sun for years.

CHRIS [*sputtering with rage*]. You vas crazy fool, Ay tal you!

BURKE. You've swallowed the anchor. The sea gives you a clout once, knocked

you down, and you're not man enough to get up for another, but lie there for the rest of your life howling bloody murder. [*Proudly*]. Isn't it myself the sea has nearly drowned, and me battered and bate till I was that close to hell I could hear the flames roaring, and never a groan out of me till the sea gave up and it seeing the great strength and guts of a man was in me?

CHRIS [*scornfully*]. Yes, you vas hell of fallar, hear you tal it!

BURKE [*angrily*] You'll be calling me a liar once too often, me old bucko! Wasn't the whole story of it and my picture itself in the newspapers of Boston a week back? [*Looking CHRIS up and down belittlingly*]. Sure I'd like to see you in the best of your youth do the like of what I done in the storm and after 'Tis a mad lunatic, screeching with fear, you'd be this minute!

CHRIS. Ho-ho! You vas young fool! In ole years when Ay vas on windyammer, Ay vas through hundred storms vorse'n dat! Ships vas ships den—and men dat sail on dem vas real men. And now what you gat on steamers? You gat fallars on deck don't know ship from mud-scow. [*With a meaning glance at BURKE*] And below deck you gat fallars yust know how for shovel coal—might yust as vell vork on coal vagon ashore!

BURKE [*stung—angrily*] Is it casting insults at the men in the stokehole ye are, ye old ape? God stiffen you! Wan of them is worth any ten stock-fish-swilling Square-heads ever shipped on a windbag!

CHRIS [*his face working with rage, his hand going back to the sheath-knife on his hip*] Irish svine, you!

BURKE [*tauntingly*] Don't ye like the Irish, ye old baboon? 'Tis that you're needing in your family, I'm telling you—an Irishman and a man of the stokehole—to put guts in it so that you'll not be having grandchildren would be fearful cowards and jackasses the like of yourself!

CHRIS [*half rising from his chair—in a voice choked with rage*]. You look out!

BURKE [*watching him intently—a mocking smile on his lips*] And it's that you'll be having, no matter what you'll do to prevent; for Anna and me'll be married this day, and no old fool the like of you will stop us when I've made up my mind.

CHRIS [*with a hoarse cry*]. You don't! [*He throws himself at BURKE, knife in hand, knocking his chair over backwards. BURKE springs to his feet*

quickly in time to meet the attack. He laughs with the pure love of battle. The old Swede is like a child in his hands BURKE does not strike or mistreat him in any way, but simply twists his right hand behind his back and forces the knife from his fingers. He throws the knife into a far corner of the room—tauntingly.]

BURKE. Old men is getting childish should'n't play with knives. [*Holding the struggling CHRIS at arm's length—with a sudden rush of anger, drawing back his fist.*] I've half a mind to hit you a great clout will put sense in your square head. Kape off me now, I'm warning you!

[He gives CHRIS a push with the flat of his hand which sends the old Swede staggering back against the cabin wall, where he remains standing, panting heavily, his eyes fixed on BURKE with hatred, as if he were only collecting his strength to rush at him again.]

BURKE [*warningly*]. Now don't be coming at me again, I'm saying, or I'll flatten you on the floor with a blow, if 'tis Anna's father you are itself! I've not patience left for you [*Then with an amused laugh*] Well, 'tis a bold old man you are just the same, and I'd never think it was in you to come tackling me alone.

[A shadow crosses the cabin windows. Both men start. ANNA appears in the doorway.]

ANNA [*with pleased surprise as she sees BURKE*]. Hello, Mat. Are you here already? I was down— [*She stops, looking from one to the other, sensing immediately that something has happened*] What's up? [*Then noticing the overturned chair—in alarm*] How'd that chair get knocked over? [*Turning on BURKE reproachfully*] You ain't been fighting with him, Mat—after you promised?

BURKE [*his old self again*]. I've not laid a hand on him, Anna. [*He goes and picks up the chair, then turning on the still questioning ANNA—with a reassuring smile*] Let you not be worried at all. 'Twas only a bit of an argument we was having to pass the time till you'd come.

ANNA. It must have been some argument when you got to throwing chairs. [*She turns on CHRIS*] Why don't you say something? What was it about?

CHRIS [*relaxing at last—avoiding her eyes—sheepishly*]. Ve was talking about ships and fallars on sea.

ANNA [*with a relieved smile*]. Oh—the old stuff, eh?

BURKE [*suddenly seeming to come to a*

bold decision—with a defiant grin at CHRIS] He's not after telling you the whole of it. We was arguing about you mostly.

ANNA [*with a frown*]. About me?

BURKE. And we'll be finishing it out right here and now in your presence if you're willing.

[He sits down at the left of table.]

ANNA [*uncertainly—looking from him to her father*] Sure. Tell me what it's all about

CHRIS [*advancing toward the table—protesting to BURKE*]. No! You don't do dat, you! You tal him you don't vant for hear him talk, Anna

ANNA But I do. I want this cleared up

CHRIS [*miserably afraid now*]. Vell, not now, anyvay. You vas going ashore, yes? You ain't got time—

ANNA [*firmly*]. Yes, right here and now. [*She turns to BURKE*] You tell me, Mat, since he don't want to.

BURKE [*draws a deep breath—then plunges in boldly*]. The whole of it's in a few words only. So's he'd make no mistake, and him hating the sight of me, I told him in his teeth I loved you. [*Passionately*] And that's God's truth, Anna, and well you know it!

CHRIS [*scornfully—forcing a laugh*]. Ho-ho! He tal same tang to gel every port he go!

ANNA [*shrinking from her father with repulsion—resentfully*]. Shut up, can't you? [*Then to BURKE—feelingly*] I know it's true, Mat. I don't mind what he says.

BURKE [*humbly grateful*]. God bless you!

ANNA. And then what?

BURKE. And then— [*Hesitatingly*] And then I said— [*He looks at her pleadingly.*] I said I was sure—I told him I thought you have a bit of love for me, too [*Passionately*] Say you do, Anna! Let you not destroy me entirely, for the love of God!

[He grasps both her hands in his two.]

ANNA [*deeply moved and troubled—forcing a trembling laugh*]. So you told him that, Mat? No wonder he was mad. [*Forcing out the words*] Well, maybe it's true, Mat. Maybe I do. I been thinking and thinking—I didn't want to, Mat, I'll own up to that—I tried to cut it out—but— [*She laughs helplessly*] I guess I can't help it anyhow. So I guess I do, Mat. [*Then with a sudden joyous defiance.*] Sure I do! What's the use of kidding myself different? Sure I love you, Mat!

CHRIS [*with a cry of pain*]. Anna!

[*He sits crushed*]

BURKE [*with a great depth of sincerity in his humble gratitude*]. God be praised!

ANNA [*assertively*]. And I ain't never loved a man in my life before, you can always believe that—no matter what happens.

BURKE [*goes over to her and puts his arms around her*]. Sure I do be believing iver y word you iver said or iver will say. And 'tis you and me will be having a grand, beautiful life together to the end of our days!

[*He tries to kiss her. At first she turns away her head—then, overcome by a fierce impulse of passionate love, she takes his head in both her hands and holds his face close to hers, staring into his eyes. Then she kisses him full on the lips*]

ANNA [*pushing him away from her—forcing a broken laugh*]. Good-by

[*She walks to the doorway in rear—stands with her back toward them, looking out. Her shoulders quiver once or twice as if she were fighting back her sobs*]

BURKE [*too in the seventh heaven of bliss to get any correct interpretation of her word—with a laugh*]. Good-by, is it? The devil you say! I'll be coming back at you in a second for more of the same! [*To CHRIS, who has quickened to instant attention at his daughter's good-by, and has looked back at her with a stirring of foolish hope in his eyes*]. Now, me old bucko, what'll you be saying? You heard the words from her own lips. Confess I've bate you. Own up like a man when you're bate fair and square. And here's my hand to you— [*Holds out his hand*] And let you take it and we'll shake and forget what's over and done, and be friends from this out.

CHRIS [*with implacable hatred*]. Ay don't shake hands with you fallar—not while Ay live!

BURKE [*offended*]. The back of my hand to you then, if that suits you better. [*Growling*]. 'Tis a rotten bad loser you are, devil mend you!

CHRIS. Ay don't lose. [*Trying to be scornful and self-convincing*]. Anna say she like you little bit but you don't hear her say she marry you, Ay bet.

[*At the sound of her name ANNA has turned round to them. Her face is composed and calm again, but it is the dead calm of despair*]

BURKE [*scornfully*]. No, and I wasn't hearing her say the sun is shining either.

CHRIS [*doggedly*]. Dat's all right. She don't say it, yust same.

ANNA [*quietly—coming forward to them*]. No, I didn't say it, Mat.

CHRIS [*eagerly*]. Dere! You hear!

BURKE [*misunderstanding her—with a grin*]. You're waiting till you do be asked, you mane? Well, I'm asking you now. And we'll be married this day, with the help of God!

ANNA [*gently*]. You heard what I said, Mat—after I kissed you?

BURKE [*alarmed by something in her manner*]. No—I disremember.

ANNA I said good-by. [*Her voice trembling*] That kiss was for good-by, Mat.

BURKE [*terrified*]. What d'you mane?

ANNA. I can't marry you, Mat—and we've said good-by. That's all.

CHRIS [*unable to hold back his exultation*]. Ay know it! Ay know dat vas so!

BURKE [*pumping to his feet—unable to believe his ears*]. Anna! Is it making game of me you'd be? 'Tis a quare time to joke with me, and don't be doing it, for the love of God.

ANNA [*looking him in the eyes—steadily*]. D'you think I'd kid you? No, I'm not joking, Mat. I mean what I said.

BURKE. Ye don't! Ye can't! 'Tis mad you are, I'm telling you!

ANNA [*fixedly*]. No, I'm not.

BURKE [*desperately*]. But what's come over you so sudden? You was saying you loved me—

ANNA I'll say that as often as you want me to. It's true.

BURKE [*bewilderedly*]. Then why—what, in the devil's name— Oh, God help me, I can't make head or tail to it at all!

ANNA. Because it's the best way out I can figure, Mat. [*Her voice catching*] I been thinking it over and thinking it over day and night all week. Don't think it ain't hard on me, too, Mat.

BURKE. For the love of God, tell me then, what is it that's preventing you wedding me when the two of us has love? [*Suddenly getting an idea and pointing at CHRIS—exasperatedly*] Is it giving heed to the like of that old fool ye are, and him hating me and filling your ears full of bloody lies against me?

CHRIS [*getting to his feet—raging triumphantly before ANNA has a chance to get in a word*]. Yes, Anna believe me, not you! She know her old fa'der don't lie like you.

ANNA [*turning on her father angrily*]. You sit down, d'you hear? Where do you

come in butting in and making things worse? You're like a devil, you are! [*Harshly.*] Good Lord, and I was beginning to like you, beginning to forget all I've got held up against you!

CHRIS [*crushed feebly*]. You ain't got nutting for hold against me, Anna.

ANNA. Ain't I yust! Well, lemme tell you— [*She glances at BURKE and stops abruptly*] Say, Mat, I'm s'prised at you. You didn't think anything he said—

BURKE [*glumly*]. Sure, what else would it be?

ANNA. Think I've ever paid any attention to all his crazy bull? Gee, you must take me for a five-year-old kid.

BURKE [*puzzled and beginning to be irritated at her too*]. I don't know how to take you, with your saying this one minute and that the next.

ANNA. Well, he has nothing to do with it.

BURKE. Then what is it has? Tell me, and don't keep me waiting and sweating blood.

ANNA [*resolutely*]. I can't tell you—and I won't. I got a good reason—and that's all you need to know. I can't marry you, that's all there is to it. [*Distractedly*] So, for Gawd's sake, let's talk of something else.

BURKE. I'll not! [*Then fearfully*] Is it married to someone else you are—in the West maybe?

ANNA [*vehemently*]. I should say not.

BURKE [*regaining his courage*]. To the devil with all other reasons then. They don't matter with me at all. [*He gets to his feet confidently, assuming a masterful tone*] I'm thinking you're the like of them women can't make up their mind till they're drove to it. Well, then, I'll make up your mind for you bloody quick [*He takes her by the arms, grinning to soften his serious bullying.*] We've had enough of talk! Let you be going into your room now and be dressing in your best and we'll be going ashore.

CHRIS [*aroused—angrily*]. No, py God, she don't do that!

[*Takes hold of her arm.*]

ANNA [*who has listened to BURKE in astonishment. She draws away from him, instinctively repelled by his tone, but not exactly sure if he is serious or not—a trace of resentment in her voice*]. Say, where do you get that stuff?

BURKE [*imperiously*]. Never mind, now! Let you go get dressed, I'm saying. [*Then turning to CHRIS.*] We'll be seeing who'll win in the end—me or you.

CHRIS [*to ANNA—also in an authoritative tone*]. You stay right here, Anna, you hear!

[*ANNA stands looking from one to the other of them as if she thought they had both gone crazy. Then the expression of her face freezes into the hardened sneer of her experience*]

BURKE [*violently*]. She'll not! She'll do what I say! You've had your hold on her long enough. It's my turn now.

ANNA [*with a hard laugh*]. Your turn? Say, what am I, anyway?

BURKE. 'Tis not what you are, 'tis what you're going to be this day—and that's wedded to me before night comes. Hurry up now with your dressing.

CHRIS [*commandingly*]. You don't do one tang he say, Anna!

[*ANNA laughs mockingly*]

BURKE. She will, so!

CHRIS. Ay tal you she don't! Ay'm her fa'der.

BURKE. She will in spite of you. She's taking my orders from this out, not yours.

ANNA [*laughing again*]. Orders is good!

BURKE [*turning to her impatiently*]. Hurry up now, and shake a leg. We've no time to be wasting. [*Irritated as she doesn't move*] Do you hear what I'm telling you?

CHRIS. You stay dere, Anna!

ANNA [*at the end of her patience—blazing out at them passionately*]. You can go to hell, both of you! [*There is something in her tone that makes them forget their quarrel and turn to her in a stunned amazement* ANNA laughs wildly] You're just like all the rest of them—you two! Gawd, you'd think I was a piece of furniture! I'll show you! Sit down now! [*As they hesitate—furiously*] Sit down and let me talk for a minute. You're all wrong, see? Listen to me! I'm going to tell you something—and then I'm going to beat it [*To BURKE—with a harsh laugh*] I'm going to tell you a funny story, so pay attention. [*Pointing to CHRIS*] I've been meaning to turn it loose on him every time he'd get my goat with his bull about keeping me safe inland. I wasn't going to tell you, but you've forced me into it. What's the dif? It's all wrong anyway, and you might as well get cured that way as any other. [*With hard mocking*] Only don't forget what you said a minute ago about it not mattering to you what other reason I got so long as I wasn't married to no one else.

BURKE [*manfully*]. That's my word, and I'll stick to it!

ANNA [*laughing bitterly*]. What a chance! You make me laugh, honest! Want to bet you will? Wait 'n see! [*She stands at the table rear, looking from one to the other of the two men with her hard, mocking smile. Then she begins, fighting to control her emotion and speak calmly.*] First thing is, I want to tell you two guys something. You was going on 's if one of you had got to own me. But nobody owns me, see?—cepting myself. I'll do what I please and no man, I don't give a hoot who he is, can tell me what to do! I ain't asking either of you for a living. I can make it myself—one way or other. I'm my own boss. So put that in your pipe and smoke it! You and your orders!

BURKE [*protestingly*]. I wasn't meaning it that way at all and well you know it. You've no call to be raising this rumpus with me [*Pointing to CHRIS*] 'Tis him you've a right—

ANNA. I'm coming to him. But you—you did mean it that way, too. You sounded—just like all the rest [*Hysterically*] But, damn it, shut up! Let me talk for a change!

BURKE. 'Tis quare, rough talk, that—for a decent girl the like of you!

ANNA [*with a hard laugh*]. Decent? Who told you I was? [*CHRIS is sitting with bowed shoulders, his head in his hands. She leans over him in exasperation and shakes him violently by the shoulder.*] Don't go to sleep, Old Man! Listen here, I'm talking to you now!

CHRIS [*straightening up and looking about as if he were seeking a way to escape—with frightened foreboding in his voice*]. Ay don't vant for hear it. You was going out of head, Ay tank, Anna.

ANNA [*violently*]. Well, living with you is enough to drive anyone off their nut. Your bunk about the farm being so fine! Didn't I write you year after year how rotten it was and what a dirty slave them cousins made of me? What'd you care? Nothing! Not even enough to come out and see me! That crazy bull about wanting to keep me away from the sea don't go down with me! You just didn't want to be bothered with me! You're like all the rest of 'em!

CHRIS [*feebly*]. Anna! It ain't so—

ANNA [*not heeding his interruption—revengefully*]. But one thing I never wrote you. It was one of them cousins that you think is such nice people—the youngest son—Paul—that started me wrong. [*Lowly*] It wasn't none of my fault. I hated him worse'n hell and he knew it. But he was

big and strong—[*pointing to BURKE*]—like you!

BURKE [*half springing to his feet—his fists clenched*]. God blarst it!

[*He sinks slowly back in his chair again, the knuckles showing white on his clenched hands, his face tense with the effort to suppress his grief and rage.*]

CHRIS [*in a cry of horrified pain*]. Anna!

ANNA [*to him—seeming not to have heard their interruptions*]. That was why I run away from the farm. That was what made me get a yob as nurse girl in St. Paul. [*With a hard, mocking laugh*] And you think that was a nice yob for a girl, too, don't you? [*Sarcastically*] With all of them nice inland fellers yust looking for a chance to marry me, I s'pose. Marry me? What a chance! They wasn't looking for marrying. [*As BURKE lets a groan of fury escape him—desperately*] I'm owning up to everything fair and square. I was caged in, I tell you—yust like in jail—taking care of other people's kids—listening to 'em bawling and crying day and night—when I wanted to be out—and I was lonesome—lonesome as hell! [*With a sudden weariness in her voice*] So I give up finally. What was the use? [*She stops and looks at the two men. Both are motionless and silent. CHRIS seems in a stupor of despair, his house of cards fallen about him. BURKE'S face is livid with the rage that is eating him up, but he is too stunned and bewildered yet to find a vent for it. The condemnation she feels in their silence goads ANNA into a harsh, strident defiance.*] You don't say nothing—either of you—but I know what you're thinking. You're like all the rest! [*To CHRIS—furiously*] And who's to blame for it, me or you? If you'd even acted like a man—if you'd even had been a regular father and had me with you—maybe things would be different!

CHRIS [*in agony*]. Don't talk dat vay, Anna! Ay go crazy! Ay von't listen!

[*Puts his hands over his ears.*]

ANNA [*infuriated by his action—stridently*]. You will too listen! [*She leans over and pulls his hands from his ears—with hysterical rage*] You—keeping me safe inland—I wasn't no nurse girl the last two years—I lied when I wrote you—I was in a house, that's what!—yes, that kind of a house—the kind sailors like you and Mat goes to in port—and your nice inland men, too—and all men, God damn 'em! I hate 'em! Hate 'em!

[*She breaks into hysterical sobbing, throwing herself into the chair and hiding her face in her hands on the table. The two men have sprung to their feet.*]

CHRIS [*whimpering like a child*] Anna! Anna! It's a lie! It's a lie!

[*He stands wringing his hands together and begins to weep*]

BURKE [*his whole great body tense like a spring—dully and gropingly*] So that's what's in it!

ANNA [*raising her head at the sound of his voice—with extreme mocking bitterness*]. I s'pose you remember your promise, Mat? No other reason was to count with you so long as I wasn't married already. So I s'pose you want me to get dressed and go ashore, don't you? [*She laughs*] Yes, you do!

BURKE [*on the verge of his outbreak—stammeringly*] God stiffen you!

ANNA [*trying to keep up her hard, bitter tone, but gradually letting a note of pitiful pleading creep in*] I s'pose if I tried to tell you I wasn't—that—no more you'd believe me, wouldn't you? Yes, you would! And if I told you that yust getting out in this barge, and being on the sea had changed me and made me feel different about things, 's if all I'd been through wasn't me and didn't count and was yust like it never happened—you'd laugh, wouldn't you? And you'd die laughing sure if I said that meeting you that funny way that night in the fog, and afterwards seeing that you was straight goods stuck on me, had got me to thinking for the first time, and I sized you up as a different kind of man—a sea man as different from the ones on land as water is from mud—and that was why I got stuck on you, too. I wanted to marry you and fool you, but I couldn't. Don't you see how I've changed? I couldn't marry you with you believing a lie—and I was shamed to tell you the truth—till the both of you forced my hand, and I seen you was the same as all the rest. And now, give me a bawling out and beat it, like I can tell you're going to. [*She stops, looking at BURKE. He is silent, his face averted, his features beginning to work with fury. She pleads passionately.*] Will you believe it if I tell you that loving you has made me—clean? It's the straight goods, honest! [*Then as he doesn't reply—bitterly.*] Like hell you will! You're like all the rest!

BURKE [*blazing out—turning on her in a perfect frenzy of rage—his voice trembling with passion*]. The rest, is it?

God's curse on you! Clane is it? You slut, you, I'll be killing you now!

[*He picks up the chair on which he has been sitting and, swinging it high over his shoulder, springs toward her. CHRIS rushes forward with a cry of alarm, trying to ward off the blow from his daughter. ANNA looks up into BURKE'S eyes with the fearlessness of despair. BURKE checks himself, the chair held in the air.*]

CHRIS [*wildly*]. Stop, you crazy fool! You vant for murder her!

ANNA [*pushing her father away brusquely, her eyes still holding BURKE'S*] Keep out of this, you! [*To BURKE—dully*] Well, ain't you got the nerve to do it? Go ahead! I'll be thankful to you, honest. I'm sick of the whole game.

BURKE [*throwing the chair away into a corner of the room—helplessly*] I can't do it, God help me, and your two eyes looking at me [*Furiously*] Though I do be thinking I'd have a good right to smash your skull like a rotten egg. Was there iver a woman in the world had the rottenness in her that you have, and was there iver a man the like of me was made the fool of the world, and me thinking thoughts about you, and having great love for you, and dreaming dreams of the fine life we'd have when we'd be wedded! [*His voice high pitched in a lamentation that is like a keen*] Yerra, God help me! I'm destroyed entirely and my heart is broken in bits! I'm asking God Himself, was it for this He'd have me roaming the earth since I was a lad only, to come to black shame in the end, where I'd be giving a power of love to a woman is the same as others you'd meet in any hooker-shanty in port, with red gowns on them and paint on their grinning mugs, would be sleeping with any man for a dollar or two!

ANNA [*in a scream*]. Don't, Mat! For Gawd's sake! [*Then raging and pounding on the table with her hands.*] Get out of here! Leave me alone! Get out of here!

BURKE [*his anger rushing back on him*]. I'll be going, surely! And I'll be drinking sloos of whisky will wash that black kiss of yours off my lips; and I'll be getting dead rotten drunk so I'll not remember if 'twas iver born you was at all; and I'll be shipping away on some boat will take me to the other end of the world where I'll never see your face again!

[*He turns toward the door*]

CHRIS [*who has been standing in a stupor—suddenly grasping BURKE by the*

arm—stupidly]. No, you don't go. Ay tank maybe it's better Anna marry you now.

BURKE [*shaking CHRIS off—furiously*]. Lave go of me, ye old ape! Marry her, is it? I'd see her roasting in hell first! I'm shipping away out of this, I'm telling you! [*Pointing to ANNA—passionately*]. And my curse on you and the curse of Almighty God and all the Saints! You've destroyed me this day and may you lie awake in the long nights, tormented with thoughts of Mat Burke and the great wrong you've done him!

ANNA [*in anguish*] Mat!

[*But he turns without another word and strides out of the doorway ANNA looks after him wildly, starts to run after him, then hides her face in her outstretched arms, sobbing CHRIS stands in a stupor, staring at the floor*]

CHRIS [*after a pause, dully*]. Ay tank Ay go ashore, too

ANNA [*looking up, wildly*]. Not after him! Let him go! Don't you dare—

CHRIS [*somberly*]. Ay go for gat drink.

ANNA [*with a harsh laugh*]. So I'm driving you to drink, too, eh? I s'pose you want to get drunk so's you can forget—like him?

CHRIS [*bursting out angrily*]. Yes, Ay want! You tank Ay like hear dem tangs. [*Breaking down—weeping*]. Ay tank you vasn't dat kind of gel, Anna.

ANNA [*mockingly*]. And I s'pose you want me to beat it, don't you? You don't want me here disgracing you, I s'pose?

CHRIS. No, you stay here! [*Goes over and pats her on the shoulder, the tears running down his face*] Ain't your fault, Anna, Ay know dat. [*She looks up at him, softened He bursts into rage*] It's dat ole daval, sea, do this to me! [*He shakes his fist at the door*] It's her dirty tricks! It vas all right on barge with yust you and me Den she bring dat Irish fallar in fog, she make you like him, she make you fight with me all time! If dat Irish fallar don't never come, you don't never tal me dem tangs, Ay don't never know, and every-tang's all right. [*He shakes his fist again*]. Dirty ole daval!

ANNA [*with spent weariness*]. Oh, what's the use? Go on ashore and get drunk

CHRIS [*goes into room on left and gets his cap. He goes to the door, silent and stupid—then turns*] You wait here, Anna?

ANNA [*dully*]. Maybe—and maybe not. Maybe I'll get drunk, too. Maybe I'll—But what the hell do you care what I do? Go on and beat it

[*CHRIS turns stupidly and goes out. ANNA sits at the table, staring straight in front of her.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT FOUR

SCENE—Same as Act Three, about nine o'clock of a foggy night two days later. The whistles of steamers in the harbor can be heard The cabin is lighted by a small lamp on the table. A suit case stands in the middle of the floor. ANNA is sitting in the rocking-chair She wears a hat, is all dressed up as in Act One Her face is pale, looks terribly tired and worn, as if the two days just past had been ones of suffering and sleepless nights. She stares before her despondently, her chin in her hands. There is a timid knock on the door in rear ANNA jumps to her feet with a startled exclamation and looks toward the door with an expression of mingled hope and fear.

ANNA [*faintly*]. Come in. [*Then summoning her courage—more resolutely*] Come in [*The door is opened and CHRIS appears in the doorway. He is in a very bleary, bedraggled condition, suffering from the after-effects of his drunk A tin pail full of foaming beer is in his hand He comes forward, his eyes avoiding ANNA'S He mutters stupidly*] It's foggy

ANNA [*looking him over with contempt*]. So you come back at last, did you? You're a fine looking sight! [*Then jeeringly*] I thought you'd beaten it for good on account of the disgrace I'd brought on you.

CHRIS [*wincing—faintly*]. Don't say dat, Anna, please!

[*He sits in a chair by the table, setting down the can of beer, holding his head in his hands*]

ANNA [*looks at him with a certain sympathy*]. What's the trouble? Feeling sick?

CHRIS [*dully*]. Inside my head feel sick.

ANNA. Well, what d'you expect after being soused for two days? [*Resentfully*] It serves you right. A fine thing—you leaving me alone on this barge all that time!

CHRIS [*humbly*]. Ay'm sorry, Anna.

ANNA [*scornfully*]. Sorry!

CHRIS. But Ay'm not sick inside head vay you mean. Ay'm sick from tank too much about you, about me

ANNA. And how about me? D'you suppose I ain't been thinking, too?

CHRIS. Ay'm sorry, Anna. [*He sees her bag and gives a start*] You pack your bag, Anna? You was going—?

ANNA [*forcibly*]. Yes, I was going right back to what you think.

CHRIS. Anna!

ANNA. I went ashore to get a train for New York. I'd been waiting and waiting till I was sick of it. Then I changed my mind and decided not to go today. But I'm going first thing tomorrow, so it'll all be the same in the end.

CHRIS [*raising his head—pleadingly*] No, you never do dat, Anna!

ANNA [*with a sneer*]. Why not, I'd like to know?

CHRIS. You don't never gat to do—dat vay—no more, Ay tal you. Ay fix dat up all right.

ANNA [*suspiciously*]. Fix what up?

CHRIS [*not seeming to have heard her question—sadly*]. You vas waiting, you say? You vasn't waiting for me, Ay bet.

ANNA [*callously*]. You'd win.

CHRIS For dat Irish fallar?

ANNA [*defiantly*]. Yes—if you want to know! [*Then with a forlorn laugh*] If he did come back it'd only be 'cause he wanted to beat me up or kill me, I suppose. But even if he did, I'd rather have him come than not show up at all. I wouldn't care what he did.

CHRIS. Ay guess it's true you vas in love with him all right.

ANNA. You guess!

CHRIS [*turning to her earnestly*]. And Ay'm sorry for you like hell he don't come, Anna!

ANNA [*softened*]. Seems to me you've changed your tune a lot.

CHRIS. Ay've been tanking, and Ay guess it vas all my fault—all bad tangs dat happen to you. [*Pleadingly*] You try for not hate me, Anna. Ay'm crazy ole fool, dat's all.

ANNA. Who said I hated you?

CHRIS. Ay'm sorry for everytang Ay do wrong for you, Anna. Ay vant for you be happy all rest of your life for make up! It make you happy marry dat Irish fallar, Ay vant it, too.

ANNA [*dully*]. Well, there ain't no chance. But I'm glad you think different about it, anyway.

CHRIS [*supplicatingly*]. And you tank—maybe—you forgive me sometime?

ANNA [*with a wan smile*]. I'll forgive you right now.

CHRIS [*seizing her hand and kissing it—brokenly*]. Anna lilla! Anna lilla!

ANNA [*touched but a bit embarrassed*] Don't bawl about it. There ain't nothing to forgive, anyway. It ain't your fault, and it ain't mine, and it ain't his neither. We're all poor nuts, and things happen, and we yust get mixed in wrong, that's all.

CHRIS [*eagerly*]. You say right tang, Anna, py golly! It ain't nobody's fault! [*Shaking his fist*] It's dat ole davi! sea!

ANNA [*with an exasperated laugh*]. Gee, won't you ever can that stuff? [*CHRIS relapses into injured silence. After a pause ANNA continues curiously*] You said a minute ago you'd fixed something up—about me. What was it?

CHRIS [*after a hesitating pause*]. Ay'm shipping away on sea again, Anna.

ANNA [*astounded*]. You're—what?

CHRIS. Ay sign on steamer sail tomorrow. Ay gat my ole yob—bo'sun. [*ANNA stares at him. As he goes on, a bitter smile comes over her face*] Ay tank dat's best tang for you. Ay only bring you bad luck, Ay tank. Ay make your mo'der's life sorry. Ay don't vant make yours dat way, but Ay do yust same. Dat ole davi! sea, she make me Yonah man ain't no good for nobody. And Ay tank now it ain't no use fight with sea. No man dat live going to beat her, py yingo!

ANNA [*with a laugh of helpless bitterness*]. So that's how you've fixed me, is it?

CHRIS. Yes, Ay tank if dat ole davi! gat me back she leave you alone den.

ANNA [*bitterly*]. But, for Gawd's sake, don't you see you're doing the same thing you've always done? Don't you see—? [*But she sees the look of obsessed stubbornness on her father's face and gives it up helplessly.*] But what's the use of talking? You ain't right, that's what. I'll never blame you for nothing no more. But how you could figure out that was fixing me—!

CHRIS. Dat ain't all. Ay gat dem fallars in steamship office to pay you all money coming to me every month while Ay'm away.

ANNA [*with a hard laugh*]. Thanks. But I guess I won't be hard up for no small change.

CHRIS [*hurt—humbly*]. It ain't much, Ay know, but it's plenty for keep you so you never gat go back—

ANNA [*shortly*]. Shut up, will you? We'll talk about it later, see?

CHRIS [*after a pause—ingratiatingly*]. You like Ay go ashore look for dat Irish fallar, Anna?

ANNA [*angrily*]. Not much! Think I want to drag him back?

CHRIS [*after a pause—uncomfortably*]. Py golly, dat booze don't go vell. Give me fever, Ay tank. Ay feel hot like hell.

[*He takes off his coat and lets it drop on the floor. There is a loud thud*]

ANNA [*with a start*]. What you got in your pocket, for Pete's sake—a ton of lead? [*She reaches down, takes the coat and pulls out a revolver—looks from it to him in amazement*] A gun? What were you doing with this?

CHRIS [*sheepishly*]. Ay forget. Ain't nothing. Ain't loaded, anyway.

ANNA [*breaking it open to make sure—then closing it again—looking at him suspiciously*]. That ain't telling me why you got it?

CHRIS. Ay'm ole fool. Ay got it when Ay go ashore first Ay tank den it's all fault of dat Irish fallar.

ANNA [*with a shudder*]. Say, you're crazier than I thought. I never dreamt you'd go that far

CHRIS [*quickly*]. Ay don't Ay gat better sense right away. Ay don't never buy bullets even It ain't his fault, Ay know.

ANNA [*still suspicious of him*]. Well, I'll take care of this for a while, loaded or not.

[*She puts it in the drawer of table and closes the drawer*]

CHRIS [*placatingly*]. Throw it overboard if you vant Ay don't care. [*Then after a pause*] Py golly, Ay tank Ay go lie down. Ay feel sick [*ANNA takes a magazine from the table. CHRIS hesitates by her chair.*] Ve talk again before Ay go, yes?

ANNA [*dully*]. Where's this ship going to?

CHRIS Cape Town Dat's in South Africa She's British steamer called London-derry [*He stands hesitatingly—finally blurts out*] Anna—you forgive me sure?

ANNA [*wearily*]. Sure I do. You ain't to blame. You're yust—what you are—like me

CHRIS [*pleadingly*]. Den—you lat me kiss you again once?

ANNA [*raising her face—forcing a wan smile*]. Sure. No hard feelings.

CHRIS [*kisses her brokenly*]. Anna lilla! Ay— [*He fights for words to express himself, but finds none—miserably—with a sob*] Ay can't say it. Good-night, Anna.

ANNA. Good-night. [*He picks up the can of beer and goes slowly into the room on left, his shoulders bowed, his head sunk forward dejectedly. He closes the door after*

him. ANNA turns over the pages of the magazine, trying desperately to banish her thoughts by looking at the pictures. This fails to distract her, and flinging the magazine back on the table, she springs to her feet and walks about the cabin distractedly, clenching and unclenching her hands. She speaks aloud to herself in a tense, trembling voice.] Gawd, I can't stand this much longer! What am I waiting for anyway?—like a damn fool! [*She laughs helplessly, then checks herself abruptly, as she hears the sound of heavy footsteps on the deck outside. She appears to recognize these and her face lights up with joy. She gasps.*] Mat!

[*A strange terror seems suddenly to seize her. She rushes to the table, takes the revolver out of drawer and crouches down in the corner, left, behind the cupboard. A moment later the door is flung open and MAT BURKE appears in the doorway. He is in bad shape—his clothes torn and dirty, covered with sawdust as if he had been grovelling or sleeping on barroom floors. There is a red bruise on his forehead over one of his eyes, another over one cheekbone, his knuckles are skinned and raw—plain evidence of the fighting he has been through on his "bat."* His eyes are bloodshot and heavy-lidded, his face has a bloated look. But beyond these appearances—the results of heavy drinking—there is an expression in his eyes of wild mental turmoil, of impotent animal rage baffled by its own abject misery]

BURKE [*peers blinkingly about the cabin—hoarsely*]. Let you not be hiding from me, whoever's here—though 'tis well you know I'd have a right to come back and murder you. [*He stops to listen. Hearing no sound, he closes the door behind him and comes forward to the table. He throws himself into the rocking-chair—despondently.*] There's no one here, I'm thinking, and 'tis a great fool I am to be coming. [*With a sort of dumb, uncomprehending anguish*] Yerra, Mat Burke, 'tis a great jackass you've become and what's got into you at all, at all? She's gone out of this long ago, I'm telling you, and you'll never see her face again. [*ANNA stands up, hesitating, struggling between joy and fear. BURKE'S eyes fall on ANNA'S bag. He leans over to examine it.*] What's this? [*Joyfully.*] It's hers. She's not gone! But where is she? Ashore? [*Darkly.*] What would she be doing ashore on this rotten night? [*His face suddenly*

convulsed with grief and rage.] 'Tis that, is it? Oh, God's curse on her! [*Raging*] I'll wait till she comes and choke her dirty life out.

[*ANNA starts, her face grows hard. She steps into the room, the revolver in her right hand by her side*]

ANNA [*in a cold, hard tone*]. What are you doing here?

BURKE [*wheeling about with a terrified gasp*]. Glory be to God!

[*They remain motionless and silent for a moment, holding each other's eyes*]

ANNA [*in the same hard voice*]. Well, can't you talk?

BURKE [*trying to fall into an easy, careless tone*]. You've a year's growth scared out of me, coming at me so sudden and me thinking I was alone

ANNA You've got your nerve butting in here without knocking or nothing What'd you want?

BURKE [*airily*]. Oh, nothing much I was wanting to have a last word with you, that's all.

[*He moves a step toward her*]

ANNA [*sharply—raising the revolver in her hand*]. Careful now! Don't try getting too close. I heard what you said you'd do to me.

BURKE [*noticing the revolver for the first time*]. Is it murdering me you'd be now, God forgive you? [*Then with a contemptuous laugh*] Or is it thinking I'd be frightened by that old tin whistle?

[*He walks straight for her*]

ANNA [*wildly*]. Look out, I tell you!

BURKE [*who has come so close that the revolver is almost touching his chest*] Let you shoot, then! [*Then with sudden wild grief*] Let you shoot, I'm saying, and be done with it! Let you end me with a shot and I'll be thanking you, for it's a rotten dog's life I've lived the past two days since I've known what you are, till I'm after wishing I was never born at all!

ANNA [*overcome—letting the revolver drop to the floor, as if her fingers had no strength to hold it—hysterically*]. What'd you want coming here? Why don't you beat it? Go on!

[*She passes him and sinks down in the rocking-chair.*]

BURKE [*following her—mournfully*]. 'Tis right you'd be asking why did I come. [*Then angrily*] 'Tis because 'tis a great weak fool of the world I am, and me tormented with the wickedness you'd told of yourself, and drinking oceans of booze that'd make me forget. Forget? Divil a word I'd forget, and your face grinning

always in front of my eyes, awake or asleep, till I do be thinking a madhouse is the proper place for me.

ANNA [*glancing at his hands and face—scornfully*]. You look like you ought to be put away some place. Wonder you wasn't pulled in. You been scrapping, too, ain't you?

BURKE. I have—with every scut would take off his coat to me! [*Fiercely*] And each time I'd be hitting one a clout in the mug, it wasn't his face I'd be seeing at all, but yours, and me wanting to drive you a blow would knock you out of this world where I wouldn't be seeing or thinking more of you.

ANNA [*her lips trembling pitifully*]. Thanks!

BURKE [*walking up and down—dis-tractedly*]. That's right, make game of me! Oh, I'm a great coward surely, to be coming back to speak with you at all You've a right to laugh at me.

ANNA. I ain't laughing at you, Mat.

BURKE [*unheeding*]. You to be what you are, and me to be Mat Burke, and me to be drove back to look at you again! 'Tis black shame is on me!

ANNA [*resentfully*]. Then get out. No one's holding you!

BURKE [*bewilderedly*]. And me to listen to that talk from a woman like you and be frightened to close her mouth with a slap! Oh, God help me, I'm a yellow coward for all men to spit at! [*Then furiously*] But I'll not be getting out of this till I've had me word. [*Raising his fist threateningly*] And let you look out how you drive me! [*Letting his fist fall helplessly*]. Don't be angry now! I'm raving like a real lunatic, I'm thinking, and the sorrow you put on me has my brains drowned in grief. [*Suddenly bending down to her and grasping her arm intensely*]. Tell me it's a lie, I'm saying! That's what I'm after coming to hear you say

ANNA [*dully*]. A lie? What?

BURKE [*with passionate entreaty*]. All the badness you told me two days back Sure it must be a lie! You was only making game of me, wasn't you? Tell me 'twas a lie, Anna, and I'll be saying prayers of thanks on my two knees to the Almighty God!

ANNA [*terribly shaken—faintly*] I can't, Mat. [*As he turns away—implovingly*]. Oh, Mat, won't you see that no matter what I was I ain't that any more? Why, listen! I packed up my bag this afternoon and went ashore. I'd been waiting here all alone for two days, thinking maybe you'd

come back—thinking maybe you'd think over all I'd said—and maybe—oh, I don't know what I was hoping! But I was afraid to even go out of the cabin for a second, honest—afraid you might come and not find me here. Then I gave up hope when you didn't show up and I went to the railroad station. I was going to New York. I was going back—

BURKE [*hoarsely*] God's curse on you!

ANNA. Listen, Mat. You hadn't come, and I'd gave up hope. But—in the station—I couldn't go. I'd bought my ticket and everything [*She takes the ticket from her dress and tries to hold it before his eyes*]. But I got to thinking about you—and I couldn't take the train—I couldn't! So I come back here—to wait some more. Oh, Mat, don't you see I've changed? Can't you forgive what's dead and gone—and forget it?

BURKE [*turning on her—overcome by rage again*] Forget, is it? I'll not forget till my dying day, I'm telling you, and me tormented with thoughts [*In a frenzy*]. Oh, I'm wishing I had wan of them fornenst me this minute and I'd beat him with my fists till he'd be a bloody corpse! I'm wishing the whole lot of them will roast in hell till the Judgment Day—and yourself along with them, for you're as bad as they are.

ANNA [*shuddering*] Mat! [*Then after a pause—in a voice of dead, stony calm*]. Well, you've had your say. Now you better beat it.

BURKE [*starts slowly for the door—hesitates—then after a pause*]. And what'll you be doing?

ANNA. What difference does it make to you?

BURKE. I'm asking you!

ANNA [*in the same tone*]. My bag's packed and I got my ticket. I'll go to New York tomorrow.

BURKE [*helplessly*]. You mean—you'll be doing the same again?

ANNA [*stony*]. Yes.

BURKE [*in anguish*]. You'll not! Don't torment me with that talk! 'Tis a she-devil you are sent to drive me mad entirely!

ANNA [*her voice breaking*]. Oh, for Gawd's sake, Mat, leave me alone! Go away! Don't you see I'm licked? Why d'you want to keep on kicking me?

BURKE [*indignantly*]. And don't you deserve the worst I'd say, God forgive you?

ANNA. All right. Maybe I do. But don't rub it in. Why ain't you done what you

said you was going to? Why ain't you got that ship was going to take you to the other side of the earth where you'd never see me again?

BURKE. I have.

ANNA [*startled*]. What—then you're going—honest?

BURKE. I signed on today at noon, drunk as I was—and she's sailing tomorrow.

ANNA. And where's she going to?

BURKE. Cape Town.

ANNA [*the memory of having heard that name a little while before coming to her—with a start, confusedly*]. Cape Town? Where's that? Far away?

BURKE. 'Tis at the end of Africa. That's far for you.

ANNA [*forcing a laugh*]. You're keeping your word all right, ain't you? [*After a slight pause—curiously*]. What's the boat's name?

BURKE. The Londonderry.

ANNA [*it suddenly comes to her that this is the same ship her father is sailing on*]. The Londonderry! It's the same—Oh, this is too much! [*With wild, ironical laughter*]. Ha-ha-ha!

BURKE. What's up with you now?

ANNA. Ha-ha-ha! It's funny, funny! I'll die laughing!

BURKE [*irritated*]. Laughing at what?

ANNA. It's a secret. You'll know soon enough. It's funny. [*Controlling herself—after a pause—cynically*]. What kind of a place is this Cape Town? Plenty of dames there, I suppose?

BURKE. To hell with them! That I may never see another woman to my dying hour!

ANNA. That's what you say now, but I'll bet by the time you get there you'll have forgot all about me and start in talking the same old bull you talked to me to the first one you meet.

BURKE [*offended*]. I'll not, then! God mend you, is it making me out to be the like of yourself you are, and you taking up with this one and that all the years of your life?

ANNA [*angrily assertive*]. Yes, that's júst what I do mean! You been doing the same thing all your life, picking up a new girl in every port. How're you any better than I was?

BURKE [*thoroughly exasperated*]. Is it no shame you have at all? I'm a fool to be wasting talk on you and you hardened in badness I'll go out of this and lave you alone forever. [*He starts for the door—then stops to turn on her furiously.*]

And I suppose 'tis the same lies you told them all before that you told to me?

ANNA [*indignantly*]. That's a lie! I never did!

BURKE [*miserably*]. You'd be saying that, anyway.

ANNA [*forcibly, with growing intensity*]. Are you trying to accuse me—of being in love—really in love—with them?

BURKE. I'm thinking you were, surely.

ANNA [*furiously, as if this were the last insult—advancing on him threateningly*]. You mutt, you! I've stood enough from you. Don't you dare. [*With scornful bitterness*.] Love 'em! Oh, my Gawd! You damn thick-head! Love 'em? [*Savagely*] I hated 'em, I tell you! Hated 'em, hated 'em, hated 'em! And may Gawd strike me dead this minute and my mother, too, if she was alive, if I ain't telling you the honest truth!

BURKE [*immensely pleased by her vehemence—a light beginning to break over his face—but still uncertain, torn between doubt and the desire to believe—helplessly*]. If I could only be believing you now!

ANNA [*distractedly*]. Oh, what's the use? What's the use of me talking? What's the use of anything? [*Pleadingly*] Oh, Mat, you mustn't think that for a second! You mustn't! Think all the other bad about me you want to, and I won't kick, 'cause you've a right to. But don't think that! [*On the point of tears*] I couldn't bear it! It'd be yust too much to know you was going away where I'd never see you again—thinking that about me!

BURKE [*after an inward struggle—tensely—forcing out the words with difficulty*]. If I was believing—that you'd never had love for any other man in the world but me—I could be forgetting the rest, maybe.

ANNA [*with a cry of joy*]. Mat!

BURKE [*slowly*]. If 'tis truth you're after telling, I'd have a right, maybe, to believe you'd changed—and that I'd changed you myself till the thing you'd been all your life wouldn't be you any more at all.

ANNA [*hanging on his words—breathlessly*]. Oh, Mat! That's what I been trying to tell you all along!

BURKE [*simply*]. For I've a power of strength in me to lead men the way I want, and women, too, maybe, and I'm thinking I'd change you to a new woman entirely, so I'd never know, or you either, what kind of woman you'd been in the past at all.

ANNA. Yes, you could, Mat! I know you could!

BURKE. And I'm thinking 'twasn't your fault, maybe, but having that old ape for a father that left you to grow up alone, made you what you was. And if I could be believing 'tis only me you—

ANNA [*distractedly*]. You got to believe it, Mat! What can I do? I'll do anything, anything you want to prove I'm not lying!

BURKE [*suddenly seems to have a solution. He feels in the pocket of his coat and grasps something—solemnly*]. Would you be willing to swear an oath, now—a terrible, fearful oath would send your soul to the divils in hell if you was lying?

ANNA [*eagerly*]. Sure, I'll swear, Mat—on anything!

BURKE [*takes a small, cheap old crucifix from his pocket and holds it up for her to see*]. Will you swear on this?

ANNA [*reaching out for it*]. Yes Sure I will Give it to me.

BURKE [*holding it away*]. 'Tis a cross was given me by my mother, God rest her soul. [*He makes the sign of the cross mechanically*] I was a lad only, and she told me to keep it by me if I'd be waking or sleeping and never lose it, and it'd bring me luck. She died soon after. But I'm after keeping it with me from that day to this, and I'm telling you there's great power in it, and 'tis great bad luck it's saved me from and me roaming the seas, and I having it tied round my neck when my last ship sunk, and it bringing me safe to land when the others went to their death [*Very earnestly*] And I'm warning you now, if you'd swear an oath on this, 'tis my old woman herself will be looking down from Hivin above, and praying Almighty God and the Saints to put a great curse on you if she'd hear you swearing a lie!

ANNA [*awed by his manner—superstitiously*]. I wouldn't have the nerve—honest—if it was a lie But it's the truth and I ain't scared to swear. Give it to me.

BURKE [*handing it to her—almost frightenedly, as if he feared for her safety*]. Be careful what you'd swear, I'm saying.

ANNA [*holding the cross gingerly*]. Well—what do you want me to swear? You say it

BURKE. Swear I'm the only man in the world ivir you felt love for.

ANNA [*looking into his eyes steadily*] I swear it.

BURKE. And that you'll be forgetting from this day all the badness you've done and never do the like of it again.

ANNA [*forcibly*]. I swear it! I swear it by God!

BURKE. And may the blackest curse of God strike you if you're lying. Say it now!

ANNA. And may the blackest curse of God strike me if I'm lying!

BURKE [*with a stupendous sigh*]. Oh, glory be to God, I'm after believing you now!

[He takes the cross from her hand, his face beaming with joy, and puts it back in his pocket. He puts his arm about her waist and is about to kiss her when he stops, appalled by some terrible doubt.]

ANNA [*alarmed*]. What's the matter with you?

BURKE [*with sudden fierce questioning*]. Is it Catholic ye are?

ANNA [*confused*]. No. Why?

BURKE [*filled with a sort of bewildered foreboding*]. Oh, God, help me! [*With a dark glance of suspicion at her*] There's some devil's trickery in it, to be swearing an oath on a Catholic cross and you wan of the others.

ANNA [*distractedly*]. Oh, Mat, don't you believe me?

BURKE [*miserably*]. If it isn't a Catholic you are—

ANNA. I ain't nothing. What's the difference? Didn't you hear me swear?

BURKE [*passionately*]. Oh, I'd a right to stay away from you—but I couldn't! I was loving you in spite of it all and wanting to be with you, God forgive me, no matter what you are. I'd go mad if I'd not have you! I'd be killing the world—

[He seizes her in his arms and kisses her fiercely.]

ANNA [*with a gasp of joy*]. Mat!

BURKE [*suddenly holding her away from him and staring into her eyes as if to probe into her soul—slowly*]. If your oath is no proper oath at all, I'll have to be taking your naked word for it and have you anyway. I'm thinking—I'm needing you that bad!

ANNA [*hurt—reproachfully*]. Mat! I swore, didn't I?

BURKE [*defiantly, as if challenging fate*]. Oath or no oath, 'tis no matter. We'll be wedded in the morning, with the help of God [*Still more defiantly*]. We'll be happy now, the two of us, in spite of the devil!

[He crushes her to him and kisses her again. The door on the left is pushed open and CHRIS appears in the doorway. He stands blinking at them. At

first the old expression of hatred of BURKE comes into his eyes instinctively. Then a look of resignation and relief takes its place. His face lights up with a sudden happy thought. He turns back into the bedroom—reappears immediately with the tin can of beer in his hand—grinning.]

CHRIS. Ve have a drink on this, py golly!

[They break away from each other with startled exclamations.]

BURKE [*explosively*]. God stiffen it!

[He takes a step toward CHRIS threateningly.]

ANNA [*happily—to her father*]. That's the way to talk! [*With a laugh*] And sav, it's about time for you and Mat to kiss and make up. You're going to be shipmates on the Londonderry, did you know it?

BURKE [*astounded*]. Shipmates— Has himself—

CHRIS [*equally astounded*]. Ay vas bo'sun on her

BURKE. The devil! [*Then angrily*] You'd be going back to sea and leaving her alone, would you?

ANNA [*quickly*]. It's all right, Mat. That's where he belongs, and I want him to go. You got to go, too; we'll need the money. [*With a laugh, as she gets the glasses*] And as for me being alone, that runs in the family, and I'll get used to it [*Pouring out their glasses*] I'll get a little house somewhere and I'll make a regular place for you two to come back to,—wait and see. And now you drink up and be friends.

BURKE [*happily—but still a bit resentful against the old man*]. Sure! [*Clinking his glass against CHRIS'*] Here's luck to you!

CHRIS [*subdued—his face melancholy*]. Skoal

BURKE [*to ANNA, with a wink*]. You'll not be lonesome long. I'll see to that, with the help of God. 'Tis himself here will be having a grandchild to ride on his foot, I'm telling you!

ANNA [*turning away in embarrassment*]. Quit the kidding now

[She picks up her bag and goes into the room on left. As soon as she is gone BURKE relapses into an attitude of gloomy thought. CHRIS stares at his beer absent-mindedly. Finally BURKE turns on him.]

BURKE. Is it any religion at all you have, you and your Anna?

CHRIS [*surprised*]. Why yes. Ve vas Lutheran in ole country.

BURKE [*horried*]. Luthers, is it? [*Then with a grim resignation, slowly, aloud to himself.*] Well, I'm damned then surely. Yerra, what's the difference? 'Tis the will of God, anyway.

CHRIS [*moodily preoccupied with his own thoughts—speaks with somber premonition as ANNA re-enters from the left*]. It's funny. It's queer, yes—you and me shipping on same boat dat vay. It ain't right. Ay don't know—it's dat funny vay ole daval sea do her vorst dirty tricks, yes. It's so.

[*He gets up and goes back and, opening the door, stares out into the darkness*]

BURKE [*nodding his head in gloomy acquiescence—with a great sigh*]. I'm fearing maybe you have the right of it for once, divil take you.

ANNA [*forcing a laugh*]. Gee, Mat, you ain't agreeing with him, are you? [*She comes forward and puts her arm about his shoulder—with a determined gayety*] Aw say, what's the matter? Cut out the gloom. We're all fixed now, ain't we, me and you? [*Pours out more beer into his glass and fills one for herself—slaps him on the back.*] Come on! Here's to the sea, no matter what! Be a game sport and drink to that! Come on!

[*She gulps down her glass* BURKE banishes his superstitious premonitions with a defiant jerk of his head, grins up at her, and drinks to her toast]

CHRIS [*looking out into the night—lost in his somber preoccupation—shakes his*

head and mutters]. Fog, fog, fog, all bloody time. You can't see where you vas going, no. Only dat ole daval, sea—she knows!

[*The two stare at him. From the harbor comes the muffled, mournful wail of steamers' whistles*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

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ABE LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS

Published (1938)

BY

ROBERT EMMET SHERWOOD

CHARACTERS

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ABE LINCOLN	AGGIE GALE
ANN RUTLEDGE	GOBEY
BEN MATTLING	STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS
JUDGE BOWLING GREEN	WILLIE LINCOLN
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JOSHUA SPEED	ROBERT LINCOLN
TRUM COGDAL	THE LINCOLNS' MAID
JACK ARMSTRONG	CRIMMIN
BAB	BARRICK
FEARGUS	STURVESON
JASP	JED
SETH GALE	KAVANAGH
NANCY GREEN	MAJOR
WILLIAM HERNDON	
ELIZABETH EDWARDS	SOLDIERS, RAILROAD MEN,
MARY TODD	TOWNSPEOPLE
THE EDWARDS' MAID	

SCENES

ACT ONE: In and about New Salem, Illinois, in the 1830's

Scene I —Mentor Graham's cabin near New Salem, Illinois

Scene II.—The Rutledge Tavern, New Salem

Scene III.—Bowling Green's house near New Salem

ACT TWO: In and about Springfield, Illinois, in the 1840's

Scene IV.—Law office of Stuart and Lincoln on the second floor of the Court House in Springfield, Illinois

Scene V.—Parlor of the Edwards house in Springfield

Scene VI.—Again the law office

Scene VII.—On the prairie, near New Salem

Scene VIII.—Again the parlor of the Edwards house

ACT THREE: In Springfield, 1858-61

Scene IX —A speakers' platform in an Illinois town

Scene X.—Parlor of the Lincolns' home

Scene XI.—Lincoln campaign headquarters in the Illinois State House

Scene XII.—The yards of the railroad station at Springfield

ROBERT EMMET SHERWOOD

ROBERT SHERWOOD was born in 1896 in New Rochelle, New York. He received his schooling at Milton Academy and at Harvard, where he was a student from 1914 to 1917. When he was rejected by the United States army because of his height (he is more than six and one half feet tall), he joined the famous Canadian "Black Watch," with which he served until 1919. He was gassed at Vimy Ridge and badly wounded, and was hospitalized in England for several months. When an undergraduate at Harvard and editor of the *Lampoon*, he had written a clever parody of *Vanity Fair* which so pleased the editors of that incomparable magazine of a generation ago that they offered him a job. As soon as he was out of the army, he became dramatic editor of *Vanity Fair*. He soon moved on to *Life* as co-editor and motion picture critic—the first conscientious and expert film reviewer on the staff of any important American magazine. After 1928 he devoted his talents to playwriting and scenario work. Like many young European and American intellectuals, in the eighteen years following the war he became cynically pessimistic over the state of the world, and loudly pacifistic. But the rising menace of fascism together with his searching study of Lincoln won him away from his defeatism to a sound faith in the principles of democracy. He became a thorn in the flesh to appeasers and isolationists—in fact, Sherwood has every right to feel gratified when he enumerates his enemies. During the Second World War he was an influential adviser to the President of the United States, and was entrusted by the government with special assignments which gave him an actual participation in history in the making rarely enjoyed by men of letters. After the war he resumed his profession of playwright.

Sherwood exhibits almost as much versatility as Elmer Rice, avoiding, however, mere fantasy and expressionism. His first play was *The Road to Rome* (1927), a witty, anti-heroic tale of the Roman wars with satire of a modern pointing. (In Indianapolis a group of army officers ostentatiously left the theatre in the middle of a performance of *The Road to Rome*, much as the Crown Prince of Germany had flounced out of the house during the first performance of Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion* in Berlin.) *The Love Nest* (1928) and *The Queen's Husband* (1929) are lively but conventional comedies, and *Waterloo Bridge* (1930) suggests with some accuracy the atmosphere of war-time London and has a wistful pathos. But much better is *Reunion in Vienna* (1931), the most successful artificial comedy of manners written up to that time by an American. It is sophisticated, adult, witty, Continental in flavor—it might have been written by Molnar. *Acropolis* (1933), *The Petrified Forest* (1935), and *Idiot's Delight* (1936) all have a dolorous theme: the decline of civilization, the imminent triumph of materialism and barbarism. The expiring civilization of the Periclean Age is compared with our own; economic disaster and totalitarian ruthlessness have undermined our world and made intellectual men of good will mere anachronisms, and the universal triumph of man's most idiotic delight—war—means the end of all civilized values. Of these three plays *The Petrified Forest* is worth reading, if only for its melodramatic drive; its philosophy of defeatism, conditioned to some extent by the widespread economic depression, accurately reflects the cynical temper of the time. In 1936 he successfully adapted Jacques Deval's bright comedy *Tovarich* for American and British production. Among Sherwood's film plays are those of his own dramas, as well as the scenarios of such notable films as *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *The Ghost Goes West*, and *Rebecca*.

Then, partly through the study of the young Lincoln, especially in Carl Sandburg's *The Prairie Years*; partly through his awareness of the growing cloud of Hitlerism; and possibly through

his association with Elmer Rice, S. N. Behrman, Sidney Howard, and Maxwell Anderson in the Playwrights' Company (organized in 1937), he became more and more interested in social and political problems. He finally took his stand as an ardent liberal in the best sense of that abused term. Like Jefferson and Lincoln he places human rights above property rights, human dignity and right above expediency. He has written three plays since emerging from his Slough of Despond: *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1938), *There Shall Be No Night* (1940), and *The Rugged Path* (1945). *There Shall Be No Night* is a quiet thesis play, sincere, somber, moving, untheatrical. A cultivated Finnish family is a victim of the Russian assault: the father, a world-famous scientist, and the son are killed; the mother must return to her native America—if she can. But Sherwood tries, not very successfully, for a final optimism, as the title hints "The noise of battle is not the death rattle of civilization; it is only the death rattle of the beast in man." When Russia suddenly was invaded by the German armies, and many Americans began to cast a jaundiced eye on Mannerheim's totalitarianism in Finland, the play became obsolete at once, and a quick change was made: in the rewriting Greece replaced Finland, and Germany replaced Russia. There is a danger in making plays too topical. When Bernard Shaw's *Geneva* toured Canada in 1940, the author once a week by air mail kept the play up to date on a rapidly changing political situation. *The Rugged Path*, though sincere, impressed audiences as a sort of dramatized editorial, too rhetorical in spots, a bit too pious in its final note.

Abe Lincoln in Illinois has already taken a firm place among the great American plays. It is not a perfect play—the perfect play has not yet been written, it is disjointed, and Lincoln's inspiring growth from a somewhat shiftless, pessimistic, but fearless and witty young man into a liberal statesman of national fame, a man won to positive action against his own deep desire, takes place largely between the episodes of the play. But this is mere quibbling. The greatness, tenderness, faith in democracy, mystical melancholy, and common humanity of Lincoln are ably and convincingly portrayed, without heroics, romanticizing, or sentimentalizing. Sherwood allows Lincoln to speak for himself: his own words and speeches are used, although the playwright in confining the great Lincoln story to the two-hour traffic of the stage sometimes shifts passages from letters to addresses, or from one speech to another; but no falsification of Lincoln's attitudes results. Only one scene is fictitious—Number Seven. Sherwood explains that he wanted to include one incident that might help explain Lincoln's "astonishing metamorphosis from a man of doubt to a man of passionate conviction and decisive action." For dramatic concentration the answer to Douglas in Scene Nine includes passages from several other speeches, but Lincoln's convictions are not misrepresented. Of the other characters, perhaps Ann Rutledge is more a figure of legend than the romanticist would like to admit. Edwards, Mary Todd, Speed, and Bowling Green are in no way remolded for the purposes of the drama.

Readers cannot help detecting the modern application of Lincoln's remarks on historical trends and events of his day. Lincoln progressed from irresoluteness and vacillation to firmness and a condemnation of appeasement. His views concerning individual liberty, race discrimination, persecution (physical or mental) of minority groups, the right of labor to strike, economic and social as well as political democracy—all are attitudes that the very timid or reactionary would reject even today. Abe's speech in Scene Nine and his impassioned farewell speech to his Springfield neighbors should be read and reread: it is difficult to find a better statement of what America stands for—or should stand for.

ABE LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS

ACT ONE

SCENE I

MENTOR GRAHAM'S cabin near New Salem, Illinois. Late at night. There is one rude table, piled with books and papers. Over it hangs an oil lamp, the only source of light.

[*At one side of the table sits MENTOR GRAHAM, a sharp but patient school-teacher. Across from him is ABE LINCOLN—young, gaunt, tired but intent, dressed in the ragged clothes of a backwoodsman. He speaks with the drawl of southern Indiana—an accent which is more Kentuckian than Middle-Western. MENTOR is leaning on the table. ABE'S chair is tilted back, so that his face is out of the light. MENTOR turns a page in a grammar book.*]

MENTOR The Moods. [*MENTOR closes the book and looks at ABE*] Every one of us has many moods. You yourself have more than your share of them, Abe. They express the various aspects of your character. So it is with the English language—and you must try to consider this language as if it were a living person, who may be awkward and stumbling, or pompous and pretentious, or simple and direct. Name me the five moods.

ABE. The Indicative, Imperative, Potential, Subjunctive, and Infinitive.

MENTOR. And what do they signify?

ABE. The Indicative Mood is the easy one. It just indicates a thing—like “He loves,” “He is loved”—or, when you put it in the form of a question, “Does he love?” or “Is he loved?” The Imperative Mood is used for commanding, like “Get out and be damned to you.”

MENTOR [*smiling*]. Is that the best example you can think of?

ABE. Well—you can put it in the Bible way—“Go thou in peace.” But it's still imperative.

MENTOR. The mood derives its name from the implication of command. But you can use it in a very different sense—in the form of the humblest supplication.

ABE. Like “Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses.”

MENTOR [*reaching for a newspaper in mess on the table*]. I want you to read this—it's a speech delivered by Mr. Webster before the United States Senate. A fine document, and a perfect usage of the Imperative Mood in its hortatory sense. Here it is. Read this—down here. [*He leans back to listen.*]

ABE [*takes paper, leans forward into the lights and reads*]. “Sir,” the Senator continued, in the rich deep tones of the historic church bells of his native Boston, “Sir—I have not allowed myself to look beyond the Union, to see what might be hidden in the dark recess behind. While the Union lasts . . .”

[*ABE has been reading in a monotone, without inflection.*]

MENTOR [*testily*]. Don't read it off as if it were an inventory of Denton Offut's groceries. Imagine that you're making the speech before the Senate, with the fate of your country at stake. Put your own life into it!

ABE. I couldn't use words as long as Dan'l Webster.

MENTOR. That's what you're here for—to learn! Go ahead.

ABE [*reading slowly, gravely*]. “While the Union lasts, we have high prospects spread out before us, for us and our children. Beyond that, I seek not to penetrate the veil. God grant that in my day, at least, the curtain may not rise.”

MENTOR. Notice the use of verbs from here on.

ABE [*reads*]. “When my eyes shall be turned to behold for the last time the sun in heaven, may I not see him shining on the broken and dishonored fragments of a once glorious Union; on States dismembered, discordant, belligerent; on a land rent with civil feuds, or drenched, it may be, in fraternal blood! Let their last feeble glance rather behold the glorious ensign of the republic, now known and honored throughout the earth, not a single star of it obscured, bearing for its motto no such miserable interrogatory . . .”

[*He stumbles over the pronunciation.*]

MENTOR. Interrogatory.

ABE [*continuing*]. “. . . interrogatory as

'What is all this worth?' Nor, those other words of delusion and folly, 'Liberty first and Union afterwards'; but everywhere, spread all over in characters of living light, that other sentiment, dear to every true American heart—Liberty and Union . . .'

MENTOR. Emphasize the "*and*."

ABE. "Liberty *and* Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!" [*He puts the paper back on the table.*] He must have had 'em up on their feet cheering with *that*, all right.

MENTOR. Some cheered, and some spat, depending on which section they came from.

ABE. What was he talking about?

MENTOR. It was in the debate over the right of any state to secede from the Union. Hayne had pleaded South Carolina's cause—pleaded it ably. He said that just as we have liberty as individuals—so have we liberty as states—to go as we please. Which means, if we don't like the Union, as expressed by the will of its majority, then we can leave it, and set up a new nation, or many nations—so that this continent might be as divided as Europe. But Webster answered him all right. He proved that without Union, we'd have precious little liberty left. Now—go on with the Potential Mood.

ABE. That signifies possibility—usually of an unpleasant nature. Like, "If I ever get out of debt, I will probably get right back in again."

MENTOR [*smiles*]. Why did you select that example, Abe?

ABE. Well—it just happens to be the thought that's always heaviest on my mind.

MENTOR. Is the store in trouble again?

ABE [*calmly*]. Yes. Berry's drunk all the whiskey we ought to have sold, and we're going to have to shut up any day now. I guess I'm my father's own son. Give me a steady job, and I'll fail at it.

MENTOR. You haven't been a failure here, Abe. There isn't a manjack in this community that isn't fond of you and anxious to help you get ahead.

ABE [*with some bitterness*]. I know—just like you, Mentor, sitting up late nights, to give me learning, out of the goodness of your heart. And now, Josh Speed and Judge Green and some of the others I owe money to want to get me the job of post-master, thinking that maybe I can handle *that*, since there's only one mail comes in a week. I've got friends, all right—the best friends. But they can't change my luck, or maybe it's just my nature.

MENTOR. What you want to do is get out of New Salem. This poor little forgotten town will never give any one any opportunity.

ABE. Yes—I've thought about moving,

think about it all the time. My family have always been movers, shifting about, never knowing what they were looking for, and whatever it was, never finding it. My old father ambled from Virginia, to one place after another in Kentucky, where I was born, and then into Indiana, and then here in Illinois. About all I can remember of when I was a boy was hitching up, and then unhitching, and then hitching up again.

MENTOR. Then get up and go, Abe. Make a new place for yourself in a new world.

ABE. As a matter of fact, Seth Gale and me have been talking a lot about moving—out to Kansas or Nebraska territory. But—wherever I go—it'll be the same story—more friends, more debts.

MENTOR. Well, Abe—just bear in mind that there are always two professions open to people who fail at everything else—there's school-teaching, and there's politics.

ABE. Then I'll choose school-teaching. You go into politics, and you may get elected.

MENTOR. Yes—there's always that possibility.

ABE. And if you get elected, you've got to go to the city. I don't want none of that.

MENTOR. What did I say about two negatives?

ABE. I meant, any of that.

MENTOR. What's your objection to cities, Abe? Have you ever seen one?

ABE. Sure. I've been down river twice to New Orleans. And, do you know, every minute of the time I was there, I was scared?

MENTOR. Scared of what, Abe?

ABE. Well—it sounds kind of foolish—I was scared of people.

MENTOR [*laughs*]. Did you imagine they'd rob you of all your gold and jewels?

ABE [*serious*]. No. I was scared they'd kill me.

MENTOR [*also serious*]. Why? Why should they want to kill you?

ABE. I don't know.

MENTOR [*after a moment*]. You think a lot about death, don't you?

ABE. I've had to, because it has always seemed to be so close to me—always—as far back as I can remember. When I was no higher than this table, we buried my mother. The milksick got her, poor creature. I helped Paw make the coffin—whittled the pegs for it with my own jackknife. We buried her in a timber clearing beside my grandmother, old Betsy Sparrow. I used to go there often and look at the place—used to watch the deer running over her grave with their little feet. I never could kill a deer after that. One time I caught hell from Paw because when he was taking aim I knocked his gun up. And I always compare the looks of those deer

with the looks of men—like the men in New Orleans—that you could see had murder in their hearts.

MENTOR [*after a moment*]. You're a hopeless mess of inconsistency, Abe Lincoln.

ABE. How do you mean, Mentor?

MENTOR. I've never seen any one who is so friendly and at the same time so misanthropic.

ABE. What's that?

MENTOR. A misanthrope is one who distrusts men and avoids their society.

ABE. Well—maybe that's how I am. Oh—I like people, well enough—when you consider 'em one by one. But they seem to look different when they're put into crowds, or mobs, or armies. But I came here to listen to you, and then I do all the talking.

MENTOR. Go right on, Abe. I'll correct you when you say things like "caught hell."

ABE [*grins*]. I know. Whenever I get talking about Paw, I sort of fall back into his language. But—you've got your own school to teach tomorrow. I'll get along.

[*He stands up.*]

MENTOR. Wait a minute. . . . [*He is fishing about among the papers. He takes out a copy of an English magazine.*] There's just one more thing I want to show you. It's a poem. [*He finds the place in the magazine where it is.* You read it, Abe.

[*He hands ABE the magazine.*]

[*ABE seats himself on the edge of the table, and holds the magazine under the light.*]

ABE [*reads*]. "'On Death,' written at the age of nineteen by the late John Keats 'Can death be sleep, when life is but a dream,

And scenes of bliss pass as a phantom by?
The transient [*he hesitates on that word*]
pleasures as a vision seem,

And yet we think the greatest pain's to die

[*He moves closer to the light.*]

How strange it is that man on earth should roam,

And lead a life of woe, but not forsake

His rugged path—nor dare he view alone

His future doom—which is but to awake.'"

He looks at MENTOR. That sure is good, Mentor. It's fine!

[*He is reading it again, to himself, when the lights fade.*]

SCENE II

The Rutledge Tavern, New Salem. Noon on the Fourth of July. It is a large room, with log walls, but with curtains on the windows and pictures on the walls to give it an air of dressiness. The pictures include likenesses of all the Presidents from Washington to Jackson, and there is also a picture (evi-

dently used for campaign purposes) of Henry Clay. At the left is a door leading to the kitchen. At the back, toward the right, is the main entrance, which is open. The sun is shining brightly. The furniture of the room consists of two tables, two benches, and various chairs and stools.

[*BEN MATTLING is seated on a bench at the rear of the room. He is an ancient, paunchy, watery-eyed veteran of the Revolution, and he wears a cocked hat and the tattered but absurd semblance of a Colonial uniform. JUDGE BOWLING GREEN and NINIAN EDWARDS come in, followed by JOSHUA SPEED. BOWLING is elderly, fat, gentle. NINIAN is young, tall, handsome, prosperous. JOSH is quiet, mild, solid, thoughtful, well-dressed.*]

BOWLING [*as they come in*]. This is the Rutledge Tavern, Mr. Edwards. It's not precisely a gilded palace of refreshment.

NINIAN. Make no apologies, Judge Green. As long as the whiskey is wet.

[*JOSH has crossed to the door at the left. He calls off.*]

JOSH. Miss Rutledge.

ANN [*appearing at the door*]. Yes, Mr. Speed?

JOSH. Have you seen Abe Lincoln?

ANN. No. He's probably down at the foot races.

[*She goes back into the kitchen. JOSH turns to BOWLING.*]

JOSH. I'll find Abe and bring him here.

NINIAN. Remember, Josh, we've got to be back in Springfield before sundown.

[*JOSH has gone out.*]

BOWLING [*to MATTLING*]. Ah, good day, Uncle Ben. Have a seat, Mr. Edwards.

[*They cross to the table at the right.*]

BEN. Good day to you, Bowling.

[*ANN comes in from the kitchen.*]

ANN. Hello, Judge Green.

BOWLING. Good morning, Ann. We'd be grateful for a bottle of your father's best whiskey.

ANN. Yes, Judge. [*She starts to go off.*]

BEN [*stopping her*]. And git me another mug of that Barbadoes rum.

ANN. I'm sorry, Mr. Mattling, but I've given you one already and you know my father said you weren't to have any more till you paid for . . .

BEN. Yes, wench—I know what your father said. But if a veteran of the Revolutionary War is to be denied so much as credit, then this country has forgot its gratitude to them that made it.

BOWLING. Bring him the rum, Ann. I'll be happy to pay for it.

[*TRUM COGDAL comes in. He is elderly, pernickety.*]

BEN [*reluctantly*] I have to say thank you, Judge.

TRUM. Ann, bring me a pot of Sebago tea.

ANN. Mr. Cogdal.

[*She goes out at the left. TRUM sits down at the table.*]

BOWLING. Don't say a word, Ben.

TRUM. Well, Mr. Edwards—what's your impression of our great and enterprising metropolis?

NINIAN. Distinctly favorable, Mr. Cogdal. I could not fail to be impressed by the beauty of your location, here on this hilltop, in the midst of the prairie land

TRUM. Well, we're on the highroad to the West—and when we get the rag, tag, and bobtail cleaned out of here, we'll grow. Yes, sir—we'll grow!

NINIAN [*politely*]. I'm sure of it.

[*ANN has returned with the whiskey, rum and tea.*]

BOWLING. Thank you, Ann.

ANN. Has the mud-wagon come in yet?

TRUM. No. I been waiting for it.

BOWLING. Not by any chance expecting a letter, are you, Ann?

ANN. Oh, no—who'd be writing to me, I'd like to know?

BOWLING. Well—you never can tell what might happen on the Fourth of July. [*He and NINIAN lift their glasses*] But I beg to wish you all happiness, my dear. And let me tell you that Mr. Edwards here is a married man, so you can keep those lively eyes to yourself.

ANN [*giggles*]. Oh, Judge Green—you're just joking me! [*She goes to the kitchen*]

NINIAN. A mighty pretty girl.

TRUM. Comes of good stock, too.

NINIAN. With the scarcity of females in these parts, it's a wonder some one hasn't snapped her up.

BOWLING. Some one has. The poor girl promised herself to a man who called himself McNiel—it turned out his real name's McNamar. Made some money out here and then left town, saying he'd return soon. She's still waiting for him. But your time is short, Mr. Edwards; so if you tell us just what it is you want in New Salem, we'll do our utmost to . . .

NINIAN. I'm sure you gentlemen know what I want.

TRUM. Naturally, you want votes. Well you've got mine. Anything to frustrate that tyrant, Andy Jackson.

[*He shakes a finger at the picture of ANDREW JACKSON.*]

NINIAN. I assure you that I yield to none in my admiration for the character of our

venerable president, but when he goes to the extent of ruining our banking structure, destroying faith in our currency and even driving sovereign states to the point of secession—then, gentlemen, it is time to call a halt.

BOWLING. We got two more years of him—if the old man lives that long. You can't make headway against his popularity.

NINIAN. But we can start now to drive out his minions here in the government of the state of Illinois. We have a great battle cry: "End the reign of Andrew Jackson"

[*JACK ARMSTRONG and three others of the Clary's Grove boys have come in during this speech. The others are named BAB, FEARGUS and JASP. They are the town bullies—boisterous, good-natured but tough.*]

JACK [*going to the door at the left*]. Miss Rutledge!

ANN [*appearing in the doorway*]. What do you want, Jack Armstrong?

JACK. Your humble pardon, Miss Rutledge, and we will trouble you for a keg of liquor.

BAB. And we'll be glad to have it quick, because we're powerful dry.

ANN. You get our of here—you get out of here right now—you low scum!

JACK. I believe I said a keg of liquor. Did you hear me say it, boys?

FEARGUS. That's how it sounded to me, Jack

JASP. Come along with it, Annie—

ANN. If my father were here, he'd take a gun to you, just as he would to a pack of prairie wolves

JACK. If your Paw was here, he'd be scareder than you. 'Cause he knows we're the wildcats of Clary's Grove, worse'n any old wolves, and we're a-howlin', and a-spittin' for drink. So get the whiskey, Miss Annie, and save your poor old Paw a lot of expenses for damages to his property. [*ANN goes*]

TRUM [*in an undertone to NINIAN*]. That's the rag, tag, and bobtail I was . . .

JACK. And what are you mumblin' about, old measely-weasely Trum Cogdal—with your cup of tea on the Fourth of July?

BAB. He's a cotton-mouthed traitor and I think we'd better whip him for it.

FEARGUS [*at the same time*]. Squeeze that air tea outen him, Jack.

JASP [*shouting*]. Come on you, Annie, with that liquor!

JACK. And you, too, old fat-pot Judge Bowling Green that sends honest men to prison—and who's the stranger? Looks kind of damn elegant for New Salem

BOWLING. This is Mr. Ninian Edwards of Springfield, Jack—and for the Lord's sake,

shut up, and sit 'down, and behave yourselves

JACK. Ninian Edwards, eh! The Governor's son, I presume. Well—well!

NINIAN [*amiably*]. You've pliced me.

JACK. No wonder you've got a New Orleans suit of clothes and a gold fob and a silver-headed cane. I reckon you can buy the best of everything with that steamin' old pirate land-grabber for a Paw. I guess them fancy pockets of yours are pretty well stuffed with the money your Paw stole from us taxpayers—eh, Mr Edwards?

BAB Let's take it often him, Jack.

FEARGUS. Let's give him a lickin', Jack.

JACK [*still to NINIAN*]. What you come here for anyway? Lookin' for a fight? Because if that's what you're a-cravin', I'm your man—wrasslin', clawin', bitin', and tearin'.

ANN [*coming in*]. Jack Armstrong, here's your liquor! Drink it and go away.

[*ANN carries four mugs*]

JASP. He told you to bring a keg!

JACK [*contemplating the mugs*]. One little noggin apiece? Why—that ain't enough to fill a hollow tooth! Get the keg, Annie.

FEARGUS. Perhaps she can't tote it I'll get it, Jack. [*He goes out into the kitchen*]

ANN [*desperate*]. Aren't there any of you men can do anything to protect decent people from these ruffians?

NINIAN. I'll be glad to do whatever I . . .

[*He starts to rise*]

BOWLING [*restraining him*]. I'd be rather careful, Mr. Edwards.

JACK That's right, Mr Edwards. You be careful. Listen to the old Squire He's got a round pot but a level head He's seen the Clary's Grove boys in action, and he can tell you you might get that silver-headed cane rammed down your gullet. Hey, Bab—you tell him what we did to Hank Spears and Gus Hocheimer. Just tell him!

BAB. Jack nailed the two of 'em up in a barr'l and sent 'em rollin' down Salem hill and it jumped the bank and fotched up in the river and when we opened up the barr'l they wasn't inclined to move much.

JACK. Of course, it'd take a bigger barr'l to hold you and your friend here, Squire, but I'd do it for you and I'd do it for any by God rapsallions and sons of thieves that come here a-preachin' treachery and disunion and pisenin' the name of Old Hickory, the people's friend

[*FEARGUS returns with the keg.*]

BEN. Kill him, boys! You're the only real Americans we got left!

NINIAN [*rising*]. If you gentlemen will step outside, I'll be glad to accommodate you with the fight you seem to be spoiling for.

TRUM. You're committing suicide, Mr. Edwards.

JACK. Oh, no—he ain't. We ain't killers—we're just bone crushers. After a few months, you'll be as good as new, which ain't saying much. You bring that keg, Feargus.

[*They are about to go when ABE appears in the door. He now is slightly more respectably dressed, wearing a battered claw-hammer coat and pants that have been "foxed" with buckskin. He carries the mail. Behind him is JOSH SPEED.*]

ABE. The mud-wagon's in! Hello, Jack. Hello, boys. Ain't you fellers drunk yet? Hello, Miss Ann. Got a letter for you.

[*There is a marked shyness in his attitude toward ANN.*]

ANN. Thank you, Abe.

[*She snatches the letter and runs out with it*]

BEN. Abe, there's goin' to be a fight!

NINIAN [*to JACK*]. Well—come on, if you're coming

JACK. All right, boys.

ABE Fight? Who—and why?

JACK. This is the son of Ninian Edwards, Abe. Come from Springfield lookin' for a little crotch hoist and I'm amun' to oblige.

[*ABE looks NINIAN over*]

BOWLING. Put a stop to it, Abe. It'd be next door to murder.

JACK. You shut your trap, Pot Green. Murder's too good for any goose-livered enemy of Andy Jackson. Come on, boys!

ABE. Wait a minute, boys. Jack, have you forgotten what day it is?

JACK. No, I ain't! But I reckon the Fourth is as good a day as any to whip a politician!

ABE [*amiably*]. Well, if you've just got to fight, Jack, you shouldn't give preference to strangers. Being postmaster of this thriving town, I can rate as a politician, myself, so you'd better try a fall with me—[*He thrusts JACK aside and turns to NINIAN.*] And as for you, sir, I haven't the pleasure of your acquaintance; but my name's Lincoln, and I'd like to shake hands with a brave man.

NINIAN [*shaking hands with ABE*]. I'm greatly pleased to know you, Mr. Lincoln.

ABE. You should be Because I come here just in time to save you quite some embarrassment, not to mention injury. Oh, got a couple of letters for you, Bowling, and here's your *Cincinnati Journal*, Trum.

JACK. Look here, Abe—you're steppin' into something that ain't none of your business. This is a private matter of patriotic honor . . .

ABE. Everything in this town is my business, Jack. It's the only kind of business I've got. And besides—I saw Hannah down by the grove and she says to tell you to come on

to the picnic and that means *now* or she'll give the cake away to the Straders children and you and the boys'll go hungry. So get moving.

FEARGUS [to JACK]. Are you goin' to let Abe talk you out of it?

ABE. Sure he is. [He turns to TRUM.] Say, Trum—if you ain't using that *Journal* for a while, would you let me have a read?

TRUM. By all means, Abe. Here you are.

[He tosses the paper to ABE.]

ABE. Thanks. [He turns again to JACK.] You'd better hurry, Jack, or you'll get a beating from Hannah.

[He starts to take the wrapper off, as he goes over to a chair at the left. JACK looks at ABE for a moment, then laughs.]

JACK [to NINIAN]. All right! Abe Lincoln's saved your hide. I'll consent to callin' off the fight just because he's a friend of mine.

ABE [as he sits]. And also because I'm the only one around here you can't lick.

JACK. But I just want to tell you, Mr. Ninian Edwards, Junior, that the next time you come around here a-spreadin' pisen and . . .

ABE. Go on, Jack. Hannah's waiting.

JACK [walking over to ABE]. I'm going, Abe. But I warn you—you'd better stop this foolishness of readin'—readin'—readin', mornin', noon, and night, or you'll be gettin' soft and you won't be the same fightin' man you are now—and it would break my heart to see you licked by anybody, includin' me! [He laughs, slaps ABE on the back, then turns to go.] Glad to have met you, Mr. Edwards.

[He goes out, followed by BAB and JASP.]

FEARGUS picks up the keg and starts after them.]

NINIAN [to JACK]. It's been a pleasure.

ABE Where'd you get that keg, Feargus?

FEARGUS [nervously]. Jack told me to take it outen Mis' Rutledge's kitchen and I . . .

ABE. Well—put it down. . . . If you see Seth Gale, tell him I've got a letter for him.

FEARGUS. I'll tell him, Abe.

[FEARGUS puts down the keg and goes.]

JOSH SPEED laughs and comes up to the table.]

JOSH. Congratulations, Ninian. I shouldn't have enjoyed taking you home to Mrs. Edwards after those boys had done with you.

NINIAN [grinning]. I was aware of the certain consequences, Josh. [He turns to ABE.] I'm deeply in your debt, Mr. Lincoln.

ABE. Never mind any thanks, Mr. Edwards. Jack Armstrong talks big but he means well.

NINIAN. Won't you join us in a drink?

ABE. No, thank you.

[He's reading the paper. BOWLING fills the glasses.]

BOWLING. I'm going to have another! I don't mind telling you, I'm still trembling.

[He hands a glass to NINIAN, then drinks himself.]

TRUM. You see, Mr. Edwards. It's that very kind of lawlessness that's holding our town back.

NINIAN. You'll find the same element in the capital of our nation, and everywhere else, these days. [He sits down and drinks.]

ABE. Say, Bowling! It says here that there was a riot in Lyons, France. [He reads.] "A mob of men, deprived of employment when textile factories installed the new sewing machines, re-enacted scenes of the Reign of Terror in the streets of this prosperous industrial center. The mobs were suppressed only when the military forces of His French Majesty took a firm hand. The rioters carried banners inscribed with the incendiary words, 'We will live working or die fighting!'" [ABE looks at the group at the right.] That's Revolution!

BOWLING. Maybe, but it's a long way off from New Salem.

JOSH. Put the paper down, Abe. We want to talk to you.

ABE. Me? What about?

[He looks curiously at JOSH, BOWLING, and NINIAN.]

JOSH. I brought Mr. Edwards here for the sole purpose of meeting you—and with his permission, I shall tell you why.

NINIAN. Go right ahead, Josh.

[All are looking intently at ABE.]

JOSH. Abe—how would you like to run for the State Assembly?

ABE. When?

JOSH. Now—for the election in the fall.

ABE. Why?

NINIAN. Mr. Lincoln, I've known you for only a few minutes, but that's long enough to make me agree with Josh Speed that you're precisely the type of man we want. The whole Whig organization will support your candidacy.

ABE. This was all your idea, Josh?

JOSH [smiling]. Oh, no, Abe—you're the people's choice!

TRUM. What do you think of it, Bowling?

BOWLING [heartily]. I think it's as fine a notion as I ever heard. Why, Abe—I can hear you making speeches, right and left, taking your stand on all the issues—secession, Texas, the National Bank crisis, abolitionism—it'll be more fun than we ever had in our lives!

ABE [rising]. Isn't anybody going to ask what I think?

JOSH *[laughs]*. All right, Abe—I'll ask you.

ABE *[after a moment's pause]*. It's a comical notion, all right—and I don't know if I can give you an answer to it offhand. But my first, hasty impression is that I don't think much of it.

BOWLING. Don't overlook the fact that, if elected, your salary would be three whole dollars a day.

ABE. That's fine money. No doubt of that. And I see what you have in mind, Bowling. I owe you a considerable sum of money; and if I stayed in the legislature for, say, twenty years I'd be able to pay off—let me see—two dollars and a half a day. . . .

[He is figuring it up on his fingers.]

BOWLING. I'm not thinking about the debts, Abe.

ABE. I know you ain't, Bowling. But I've got to. And so should you, Mr. Edwards. The Whig party is the party of sound money and God save the National Bank, ain't it?

NINIAN. Why, yes—among other things . . .

ABE. Well, then—how would it look if you put forward a candidate who has demonstrated no earning power but who has run up the impressive total of fifteen hundred dollars of debts?

BOWLING *[to NINIAN]*. I can tell you something about those debts Abe started a grocery store in partnership with an unfortunate young man named Berry. Their stock included whiskey, and Berry started tapping the keg until he had consumed all the liquid assets. So the store went bankrupt—and Abe voluntarily assumed all the obligations. That may help to explain to you, Mr. Edwards, why we think pretty highly of him around here.

NINIAN. It's a sentiment with which I concur most heartily.

ABE. I thank you one and all for your kind tributes, but don't overdo them, or I'll begin to think that three dollars a day ain't enough!

JOSH. What's the one thing that you want most, Abe? You want to learn. This will give you your chance to get at a good library, to associate with the finest lawyers in the State.

ABE. I've got a copy of Blackstone already. Found it in an old junk barrel. And how can I tell you that the finest lawyers would welcome association with me?

NINIAN. You needn't worry about that. I saw how you dealt with those ruffians. You quite obviously know how to handle men.

ABE. I can handle the Clary's Grove boys because I can outwaddle them—but I can't go around Sangamon County throwing all the voters.

BOWLING *[laughing]*. I'll take a chance on that, Abe.

ABE *[to NINIAN]*. Besides—how do you know that my political views would agree with yours? How do you know I wouldn't say the wrong thing?

NINIAN. What are your political leanings, Mr. Lincoln?

ABE. They're all toward staying out. . . . What sort of leanings did you want?

NINIAN. We have a need for good conservative men to counteract all the radical firebrands that have swept over this country in the wake of Andrew Jackson. We've got to get this country back to first principles!

ABE. Well—I'm conservative, all right. If I got into the legislature you'd never catch me starting any movements for reform or progress. I'm pretty certain I wouldn't even have the nerve to open my mouth.

JOSH *[laughs]*. I told you, Ninian—he's just the type of candidate you're looking for.

[NINIAN laughs too, and rises.]

NINIAN *[crossing toward ABE]*. The fact is, Mr. Lincoln, we want to spike the rumor that ours is the party of the more privileged classes. That is why we seek men of the plain people for candidates. As postmaster, you're in an excellent position to establish contacts. While delivering letters, you can also deliver speeches and campaign literature, with which our headquarters will keep you supplied.

ABE. Would you supply me with a suit of store clothes? A candidate mustn't look too plain.

NINIAN *[smiling]*. I think even that could be arranged, eh, Judge?

BOWLING. I think so.

NINIAN *[pompously]*. So—think it over, Mr. Lincoln, and realize that this is opportunity unlimited in scope. Just consider what it means to be starting up the ladder in a nation which is now expanding southward, across the vast area of Texas; and westward, to the Empire of the Californias on the Pacific Ocean. We're becoming a continent, Mr. Lincoln—and all that we need is men! *[He looks at his watch]*. And now, gentlemen, if you will excuse me—I must put in an appearance at the torch-light procession in Springfield this evening, so I shall have to be moving on. Good-by, Mr. Lincoln. This meeting has been a happy one for me.

ABE *[shaking hands]*. Good-by, Mr. Edwards. Good luck in the campaign.

NINIAN. And the same to you.

[All at the right have risen and are starting to go, except BEN MATTLING, who is still sitting at the back, drinking.]

ABE. Here's your paper, Trum.

TRUM. Go ahead and finish it, Abe. I won't be looking at it yet awhile.

ABE. Thanks, Trum. I'll leave it at your house. [*TRUM and NINIAN have gone.*]

BOWLING. I'll see you later, Abe. Tell Ann I'll be back to pay for the liquor.

ABE. I'll tell her, Bowling.

[*BOWLING goes. JOSH is looking at ABE, who, after a moment, turns to him.*]

ABE. I'm surprised at you, Josh. I thought you were my friend.

JOSH. I know, Abe. But Ninian Edwards asked me is there anybody in that God-forsaken town of New Salem that stands a chance of getting votes, and the only one I could think of was you. I can see you're embarrassed by this—and you're annoyed. But—whether you like it or not—you've got to grow; and here's your chance to get a little scrap of importance.

ABE. Am I the kind that wants importance?

JOSH. You'll deny it, Abe—but you've got a funny kind of vanity—which is the same as saying you've got some pride—and it's badly in need of nourishment. So, if you'll agree to this—I don't think you'll be sorry for it or feel that I've betrayed you.

ABE [*grins*]. Oh—I won't hold it against you, Josh. [*He walks away and looks out the door.*] But that Mr. Ninian Edwards—he's rich and he's prominent and he's got a high-class education. Politics to him is just a kind of game. And maybe I'd like it if I could play it his way [*He turns to JOSH.*] But when you get to reading Blackstone, not to mention the Bible, you can't help feeling maybe there's some serious responsibility in the giving of laws—and maybe there's something more important in the business of government than just getting the Whig Party back into power.

[*SETH GALE comes in. He is a young, husky frontiersman, with flashes of the sun of Western empire in his eyes.*]

SETH. Hey, Abe—Feargus said you've got a letter for me.

ABE [*fishing in his mail pouch*]. Yes.

SETH. Hello, Mr. Speed.

JOSH. How are you, Mr. Gale?

ABE. Here you are, Seth.

[*He hands him a letter. SETH takes it to the right, sits down and starts to read.*]

JOSH. I've got to get home to Springfield, Abe, but I'll be down again in a week or so.

ABE. I'll be here, Josh.

[*JOSH goes. ABE sits down again at the right, picks up his paper, but doesn't read it. BEN stands up and comes down a bit unsteadily.*]

BEN [*angrily*]. Are you going to do it,

Abe? Are you goin' to let them make you into a candidate?

ABE. I ain't had time to think about it yet.

BEN. Well—I tell you to stop thinkin' before it's too late. Don't let 'em get you. Don't let 'em put you in a store suit that's the uniform of degradation in this miserable country. You're an honest man, Abe Lincoln. You're a good-for-nothin', debt-ridden loafer—but you're an honest man. And you have no place in that den of thieves that's called gov'ment. They'll corrupt you as they've corrupted the whole damn United States. Look at Washington, look at Jefferson, and John Adams—[*he points grandly to the pictures*—where are they today? Dead! And everything they stood for and fought for and won—that's dead too.

[*ANN comes in to collect the mugs from the table at the left. ABE looks at her.*]

Why—we'd be better off if we was all black niggers held in the bonds of slavery. They get fed—they get looked after when they're old and sick [*ANN goes.*] But you don't care—you ain't listenin' to me, neither . . .

[*He starts slowly toward the door.*]

ABE. Of course I'm listening, Ben.

BEN. No, you ain't. I know. You're goin' to the assembly and join the wolves who're feedin' off the carcass of Liberty.

[*He goes out.*]

ABE. You needn't worry. I'm not going.

[*ANN comes in. She crosses to the right to pick up the glasses. She seems extremely subdued. ABE looks at her, curiously.*]

ABE. Bowling Green said to tell you he'd be back later, to pay you what he owes.

ANN [*curtly*]. That's all right.

[*ANN puts the glasses and bottle on a tray and picks it up. ABE jumps to his feet.*]

ABE. Here, Ann. Let me take that.

ANN [*irritably*]. No—leave it alone! I can carry it! [*She starts across to the left.*]

ABE. Excuse me, Ann. . . .

ANN [*stopping*]. Well?

ABE. Would you come back after you're finished with that? I—I'd like to talk to you.

[*SETH has finished the letter. Its contents seem to have depressed him.*]

ANN. All right. I'll talk to you—if you want.

[*She goes out. SETH crosses toward ABE, who, during the subsequent dialogue, is continually looking toward the kitchen.*]

SETH. Abe . . . Abe—I got a letter from my folks back in Maryland. It means—I guess I've got to give up the dream we had of moving out into Nebraska territory.

ABE. What's happened, Seth?

SETH [*despondently*]. Well—for one thing, the old man's took sick, and he's pretty feeble.

ABE. I'm sorry to hear that.

SETH. So am I. They've sent for me to come back and work the farm. Measly little thirty-six acres—sandy soil. I tell you, Abe, it's a bitter disappointment to me, when I had my heart all set on going out into the West. And the worst of it is—I'm letting you down on it, too.

ABE [*with a glance toward the kitchen*]. Don't think about that, Seth. Maybe I won't be able to move for a while myself. And when your father gets to feeling better, you'll come back . . .

SETH. He won't get to feeling better. Not at his age. I'll be stuck there, just like he was. I'll be pushed in and cramped all the rest of my life, till the malaria gets me, too. . . . Well—there's no use crying about it. If I've got to go back East, I've got to go.

[*ANN comes back.*]

I'll tell you good-by, Abe, before I leave.

[*He goes. ABE turns and looks at ANN, and she at him.*]

ANN. Well—what is it, Abe?

ABE [*rising*]. I just thought—you might like to talk to me.

ANN [*sharply*]. What about?

ABE. That letter you got from New York State.

ANN. What do you know about that letter?

ABE. I'm the postmaster. I know more than I ought to about people's private affairs. I couldn't help seeing that that was the handwriting of Mr. McNiel. And I couldn't help seeing, from the look on your face, that the bad news you've been afraid of has come.

[*ANN looks at him with surprise. He is a lot more observant than she had thought.*]

ANN. Whatever the letter said it's no concern of yours, Abe.

ABE. I know that, Ann. But—it appears to me that you've been crying—and it makes me sad to think that something could have hurt you. The thing is—I think quite a lot of you—always have—ever since I first came here, and met you. I wouldn't mention it, only when you're distressed about something it's a comfort sometimes to find a pair of ears to pour your troubles into—and the Lord knows my ears are big enough to hold a lot.

[*Her attitude of hostility softens and she rewards him with a tender smile.*]

ANN. You're a Christian gentleman, Abe Lincoln.

ABE. No, I ain't. I'm a plain, common sucker with a shirt-tail so short I can't sit on it.

ANN [*laughs*]. Well—sit down, anyway, Abe—here, by me.

ABE. Why—it'd be a pleasure.

[*He crosses and sits near her.*]

ANN. You can always say something to make a person laugh, can't you?

ABE. Well—I don't even have to say anything. A person just has to look at me.

ANN. You're right about that letter, Abe. It's the first I've heard from him in months—and now he says he's delayed by family troubles and doesn't know when he'll be able to get to New Salem again. By which he probably means—never.

ABE. I wouldn't say that, Ann.

ANN. I would. [*She looks at him.*] I reckon you think I'm a silly fool for ever having promised myself to Mr. McNiel.

ABE. I think no such thing. I liked him myself, and still do, and whatever reasons he had for changing his name I'm sure were honorable. He's a smart man, and a handsome one—and I—I wouldn't blame any girl for—loving him.

ANN [*too emphatically*]. I guess I don't love him, Abe. I guess I couldn't love anybody that was as—as faithless as that.

ABE [*trying to appear unconcerned*]. Well, then. There's nothing to fret about. Now—poor Seth Gale—he got some really bad news. His father's sick and he has to give up his dream which was to go and settle out West.

ANN [*looks at him*]. I don't believe you know much about females, Abe.

ABE. Probably I don't—although I certainly spend enough time thinking about 'em.

ANN. You're a big man, and you can lick anybody, and you can't understand the feelings of somebody who is weak. But—I'm a female, and I can't help thinking what they'll be saying about me—all the old gossips, all over town. They'll make it out that he deserted me, I'm a rejected woman. They'll give me their sympathy to my face, but they'll snigger at me behind my back.

[*She rises and crosses toward the right.*]

ABE. Yes—that's just about what they would do. But—would you let them disturb you?

ANN [*rising*]. I told you—it's just weakness—it's just vanity. It's something you couldn't understand, Abe.

[*She has crossed to the window and is staring out. ABE twists in his chair to look at her.*]

ABE. Maybe I can understand it, Ann. I've got a kind of vanity myself. Josh Speed said so, and he's right. . . . It's—it's nothing but vanity that's kept me from declaring my inclinations toward you. [*She turns, amazed, and looks at him.*] You see, I don't like to be sniggered at, either. I know what I am—and I know what I look like—and I know that I've got nothing to offer any girl that I'd be in love with.

ANN. Are you saying that you're in love with me, Abe?

ABE [*with deep earnestness*]. Yes—I am saying that. [*He stands up, facing her. She looks intently into his eyes.*] I've been loving you—a long time—with all my heart. You see, Ann—you're a particularly fine girl. You've got sense, and you've got bravery—those are two things that I admire particularly. And you're powerful good to look at, too. So—it's only natural I should have a great regard for you. But—I don't mean to worry you about it, Ann. I only mentioned it because—if you would do me the honor of keeping company with me for a while, it might shut the old gossips' mouths. They'd figure you'd chucked McNeil for—for someone else. Even me.

ANN [*going to him*]. I thought I knew you pretty well, Abe. But I didn't.

ABE [*worried*]. Why do you say that? Do you consider I was too forward, in speaking out as I did?

ANN [*gravely*]. No, Abe. . . . I've always thought a lot of you—the way I thought you were. But—the idea of love between you and me—I can't say how I feel about that, because now you're like some other person, that I'm meeting for the first time.

ABE [*quietly*]. I'm not expecting you to feel anything for me. I'd never dream of expecting such a thing.

ANN. I know that, Abe. You'd be willing to give everything you have and never expect anything in return. Maybe you're different in that way from any man I've ever heard of. And I can tell you this much—now, and truthfully—if I ever do love you, I'll be happy about it—and lucky, to be loving a good, decent man. . . . If you just give me time—to think about it. . . .

ABE [*unable to believe his eyes and ears*]. You mean—if you took time—you might get in your heart something like the feeling I have for you?

ANN [*with great tenderness*]. I don't know, Abe. [*She clutches his lapel.*] But I do know that you're a man who could fill any one's heart—yes, fill it and warm it and make it glad to be living.

[*ABE covers her hand with his.*]

ABE. Ann—I've always tried hard to believe what the orators tell us—that this is a land of equal opportunity for all. But I've never been able to credit it, any more than I could agree that God made all men in his own image. But—if I could win you, Ann—I'd be willing to disbelieve everything I've ever seen with my own eyes, and have faith in everything wonderful that I've ever read in poetry books. [*Both are silent for a moment. Then ANN turns away.*] But—I'm not asking you to say anything now. And I won't ask you

until the day comes when I know I've got a right to.

[*He turns and walks quickly toward the door, picking up his mail pouch.*]

ANN. Abe! Where are you going?

ABE. I'm going to find Bowling Green and tell him a good joke.

[*He grins. He is standing in the doorway.*]

ANN. A joke? What about?

ABE. I'm going to tell him that I'm a candidate for the assembly of the State of Illinois. [*He goes.*]

[*The light fades.*]

SCENE III

BOWLING GREEN'S house near New Salem.

It is a small room, but the walls are lined with books and family pictures. In the center is a table with a lamp on it. Another light—a candle in a glass globe—is on a bureau at the right. There are comfortable chairs on either side of the table, and a sofa at the left. At the back, toward the left, is the front door. A rifle is leaning against the wall by the door. There is another door in the right wall. Toward the right, at the back, is a ladder fixed against the wall leading up through an opening to the attic. It is late in the evening, a year or so after Scene II. A storm is raging outside.

[*BOWLING is reading aloud from a sort of pamphlet. His comfortable wife, NANCY, is listening and sewing.*]

BOWLING. "And how much more interesting did the spectacle become when, starting into full life and animation, as a simultaneous call for 'Pickwick' burst from his followers, that illustrious man slowly mounted into the Windsor chair, on which he had been previously seated, and addressed the club himself had founded."

[*BOWLING chuckles. NANCY laughs.*]

NANCY. He sounds precisely like you, Bowling. [*There is a knock at the door.*]

NANCY [*nervous*]. That's not Abe's knock. Who can it be?

BOWLING [*rising*]. We don't know yet, my dear.

NANCY. It's a strange hour for any one to be calling. You'd better have that gun ready. [*BOWLING unbolts and opens the door. It is JOSH SPEED.*]

BOWLING. Why—Josh Speed!

JOSH. Good evening, Bowling.

BOWLING. We haven't seen you in a coon's age.

NANCY. Good evening, Mr. Speed.

JOSH. Good evening, Mrs. Green. And I

beg you to forgive me for this untimely intrusion.

NANCY. We're delighted to see you. Take your wrap off.

JOSH. Thank you I've just come down from Springfield. I heard Abe Lincoln was in town and I was told I might find him here.

BOWLING. He's been sleeping here, up in the attic.

NANCY. But he's out at the Rutledge Farm, tending poor little Ann.

JOSH. Miss Rutledge? What's the matter with her?

NANCY. She's been taken with the brain sickness. It's the most shocking thing. People have been dying from it right and left.

BOWLING. But Ann's young. She'll pull through, all right. Sit down, Josh.

JOSH. Thank you.

[*He sits. BOWLING places the pamphlet on the top of the bookcase and stands there, filling his pipe.*]

NANCY. I suppose you know that Abe came rushing down from Vandalia the moment he heard she was taken. He's deeply in love with her.

BOWLING. Now, Nancy—don't exaggerate [*JOSH is listening to all this, intently*]

JOSH. So Abe is in love I wondered what has been the matter with him lately.

NANCY. Why, it's written all over his poor, homely face.

JOSH. The last time I saw him, he seemed pretty moody. But when I asked him what was wrong, he said it was his liver.

BOWLING [*laughing*]. That sounds more likely. Has he been getting on well in the Assembly?

JOSH. No. He has just been sitting there—drawing his three dollars a day—and taking no apparent interest in the proceedings. Do you fancy that Miss Rutledge cares anything for him?

NANCY. Indeed she does! She broke her promise to that Mr. McNiel because of her feelings for Abe!

JOSH. Has he any notion of marrying her?

NANCY. It's the only notion of his life right now. And the sooner they are married, the better for both of them.

BOWLING [*seating himself*]. Better for her, perhaps—but the worse for him.

NANCY [*finishing her sewing*]. And why? The Rutledges are fine people, superior in every way to those riff-raff Hankses and Lincolns that are Abe's family!

BOWLING. I think you feel as I do, Josh. Abe has his own way to go and—sweet and pretty as Ann undoubtedly is—she'd only be a hindrance to him.

JOSH. I guess it wouldn't matter much if she could give him a little of the happiness he's never had.

NANCY [*rising*]. That's just it! I think as much of Abe as you do, Bowling. But we can't deny that he's a poor man, and he's failed in trade, and he's been in the legislature for a year without accomplishing a blessed thing . . .

[*She goes to the bookcase to put her sewing-basket away*]

BOWLING. He could go to Springfield and set up a law practice and make a good thing of it. Ninian Edwards would help him to get started. And he'd soon forget little Ann. He has just happened to fasten on her his own romantic ideal of what's beautiful and unattainable. Let him ever attain her, and she'd break his heart.

NANCY [*seating herself*]. Do you agree with Bowling on that, Mr. Speed?

JOSH [*sadly*]. I can't say, Mrs. Green. I've abandoned the attempt to predict anything about Abe Lincoln. The first time I ever saw him was when he was piloting that steamboat, the *Talisman*. You remember how she ran into trouble at the dam. I had a valuable load of goods aboard for my father's store, and I was sure that steamboat, goods, and all were a total loss. But Abe got her through. It was a great piece of work I thought, "Here is a reliable man." So I cultivated his acquaintance, believing, in my conceit, that I could help him to fame and fortune. I soon learned differently. I found out that he has plenty of strength and courage in his body—but in his mind he's a hopeless hypochondriac. He can split rails, push a plough, crack jokes, all day—and then sit up all night reading "Hamlet" and brooding over his own fancied resemblance to that melancholy prince. Maybe he's a great philosopher—maybe he's a great fool. I don't know what he is.

BOWLING [*laughs*]. Well—if only Ann had sense enough to see all the things you saw, Josh, she'd be so terrified of him she'd run all the way back to York State and find McNiel. At least, *he's* not complicated.

NANCY [*with deeper emotion*]. You're talking about Abe Lincoln as if he were some problem that you found in a book, and it's interesting to try to figure it out. Well—maybe he is a problem—but he's also a man, and a miserable one. And what do you do for his misery? You laugh at his comical jokes and you vote for him on election day and give him board and lodging when he needs it. But all that doesn't give a scrap of satisfaction to Abe's soul—and never will. Because the one thing he needs is a woman with the will to face life for him.

BOWLING. You think he's afraid to face it himself?

NANCY. He is! He listens too much to the whispers that he heard in the forest where he grew up, and where he always goes now when he wants to be alone. They're the whispers of the women behind him—his dead mother—and her mother, who was no better than she should be. He's got that awful fear on him, of not knowing what the whispers mean, or where they're directing him. And none of your back-slapping will knock that fear out of him. Only a woman can free him—a woman who loves him truly, and believes in him. . . . [*There is a knock on the door.*]

BOWLING. That's Abe now.

[*He gets up and opens it.*]

[*ABE is there, bareheaded, wet by the storm. He now wears a fairly respectable dark suit of clothes. He looks older and grimmer.*]

BOWLING. Why, hello, Abe! We've been sitting up waiting for you. Come on in out of the wet!

[*ABE comes in. BOWLING shuts the door behind him.*]

NANCY. We were reading "The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club" when Mr. Speed came in.

ABE. Hello, Josh. Glad to see you.

JOSH. Hello, Abe.

[*ABE turns to NANCY.*]

ABE. Nancy . . .

NANCY. Yes, Abe?

ABE. She's dead.

BOWLING. Ann? She's dead?

ABE. Yes. Tonight the fever suddenly got worse. They couldn't seem to do anything for it.

[*NANCY gives BOWLING a swift look, then goes quickly to ABE and takes his hand.*]

NANCY. Oh, Abe—I'm so sorry. She was such a dear little girl! Every one who knew her will join in mourning for her.

ABE. I know they will. But it won't do any good. She's dead.

BOWLING. Sit down, Abe, and rest yourself.

ABE. No—I'm not fit company for anybody. I'd better be going.

[*He turns toward the door.*]

JOSH [*stopping him*]. No, you don't, Abe. You'll stay right here.

BOWLING. You better do what Josh tells you.

NANCY. Come here, Abe. Please sit down. [*ABE looks from one to the other, then obediently goes to a chair and sits.*] Your bed is ready for you upstairs when you want it.

ABE [*dully*]. You're the best friends I've got in the world, and it seems a pretty poor way to reward you for all that you've given

me, to come here now, and inflict you with a corpse.

BOWLING. This is your home, Abe. This is where you're loved.

ABE. Yes, that's right. And I love you, Bowling and Nancy. But I loved her more than everything else that I've ever known.

NANCY. I know you did, Abe. I know it.

ABE. I used to think it was better to be alone. I was always most contented when I was alone. I had queer notions that if you got too close to people, you could see the truth about them, that behind the surface they're all insane, and they could see the same in you. And then—when I saw her, I knew there could be beauty and purity in people—like the purity you sometimes see in the sky at night. When I took hold of her hand and held it, all fear, all doubt, went out of me. I believed in God. I'd have been glad to work for her until I die, to get for her everything out of life that she wanted. If she thought I could do it, then I could. That was my belief. . . . And then I had to stand there, as helpless as a twig in a whirlpool, I had to stand there and watch her die. And her father and mother were there, too, praying to God for her soul. "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord!" That's what they kept on saying. But I couldn't pray with them. I couldn't give any devotion to one who has the power of death, and uses it [*He has stood up, and is speaking with more passion*] I'm making a poor exhibition of myself—and I'm sorry—but—I can't stand it. I can't live with myself any longer. I've got to die and be with her again, or I'll go crazy! [*He goes to the door and opens it. The storm continues.*] I can't bear to think of her out there alone!

[*NANCY looks at BOWLING with frantic appeal. He goes to ABE, who is standing in the doorway, looking out.*]

BOWLING [*with great tenderness*]. Abe . . . I want you to go upstairs and see if you can't get some sleep. . . . Please, Abe—as a special favor to Nancy and me.

ABE [*after a moment*]. All right, Bowling.

[*He turns and goes to the ladder.*]

NANCY. Here's a light for you, dear Abe.

[*She hands him the candle.*]

ABE. Thank you, Nancy . . . Good night [*He goes up the ladder into the attic.*]

[*They all look up after him.*]

NANCY [*tearful*]. Poor, lonely soul.

[*BOWLING cautions her to be quiet.*]

JOSH. Keep him here with you, Mrs. Green. Don't let him out of your sight.

BOWLING. We won't, Josh.

JOSH. Good night.

[*He picks up his hat and cloak and goes.*]

BOWLING. Good night, Josh.

[He closes and bolts the door, then comes down to the table and picks up the lamp.]

[NANCY looks up once more, then goes out at the right. BOWLING follows her out, carrying the lamp with him. He closes the door behind him, so that the only light on the stage is the beam from the attic.]

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE IV

Law office of Stuart and Lincoln on the second floor of the Court House in Springfield, Illinois. A sunny summer's afternoon, some five years after the preceding scene. The room is small, with two windows and one door, upstage, which leads to the hall and staircase. At the right is a table and chair, at the left an old desk, littered with papers. At the back is a ramshackle bed, with a buffalo robe thrown over it. Below the windows are some rough shelves, sagging with law books. There is an old wood stove. On the wall above the desk is hung an American flag, with 26 stars. Between the windows is an election poster, for Harrison and Tyler, with a list of Electors, the last of whom is Ab'm Lincoln, of Sangamon.

[BILLY HERNDON is working at the table. He is young, slight, serious-minded, smouldering. He looks up as ABE comes in. ABE wears a battered plug hat, a light alpaca coat, and carries an ancient, threadbare carpet-bag. He is evidently not in a talkative mood. His boots are caked in mud. He is only thirty-one years old, but his youth was buried with Ann Rulledge. He leaves the office door open, and lettered on it we see the number 4, and the firm's name—Stuart & Lincoln, Attorneys & Counsellors at Law.]

BILLY How de do, Mr. Lincoln? Glad to see you back.

ABE Good day, Billy.

[He sets down the carpet-bag, takes off his hat and puts it on his desk.]

BILLY How was it on the circuit, Mr. Lincoln?

ABE About as usual.

BILLY Have you been keeping in good health?

ABE Not particularly. But Doc Henry dosed me enough to keep me going.

[He sits down at the desk and starts looking at letters and papers that have accumulated during his absence. He takes little interest

in them, pigeonholing some letters unopened.]

BILLY Did you have occasion to make any political speeches?

ABE Oh—they got me up on the stump a couple of times. Ran into Stephen Douglas—he was out campaigning, of course—and we had some argument in public.

BILLY [greatly interested] That's good! What issues did you and Mr. Douglas discuss?

ABE Now—don't get excited, Billy. We weren't taking it serious. There was no blood shed . . . What's the news here?

BILLY Judge Stuart wrote that he arrived safely in Washington and the campaign there is getting almost as hot as the weather. Mrs. Fraim stopped in to say she couldn't possibly pay your fee for a while.

ABE I should hope not. I ought to be paying her, seeing as I defended her poor husband and he hang'd.

[BILLY hands him a letter and watches him intently while he reads it.]

BILLY That was left here by hand, and I promised to call it especially to your attention. It's from the Elijah P. Lovejoy League of Freemen. They want you to speak at an Abolitionist rally next Thursday evening. It'll be a very important affair.

ABE [reflectively] It's funny, Billy—I was thinking about Lovejoy the other day—trying to figure what it is in a man that makes him glad to be a martyr. I was on the boat coming from Quincy to Alton, and there was a gentleman on board with twelve Negroes. He was shipping them down to Vicksburg for sale—had 'em chained six and six together. Each of them had a small iron clevis around his wrist, and this was chained to the main chain, so that those Negroes were strung together precisely like fish on a trotline. I gathered they were being separated forever from their homes—mothers, fathers, wives, children—whatever families the poor creatures had got—going to be whipped into perpetual slavery, and no questions asked. It was quite a shocking sight.

BILLY [excited] Then you will give a speech at the Lovejoy rally?

ABE [wearily] I doubt it. That Freemen's League is a pack of hell-roaring fanatics. Talk reason to them and they scorn you for being a mealy-mouth. Let 'em make their own noise.

[ABE has opened a letter. He starts to read it.

BILLY looks at him with resentful disappointment, but he knows too well that any argument would be futile. He resumes his work. After a moment, BOWLING GREEN comes in, followed by JOSH SPEED.]

BOWLING. Are we interrupting the majesty of the Law?

ABE [*heartily*]. Bowling! [*He jumps up and grasps BOWLING'S hand.*] How are you, Bowling?

BOWLING. Tolerably well, Abe—and glad to see you.

ABE. This is Billy Herndon—Squire Green, of New Salem. Hello, Josh.

JOSH. Hello, Abe.

BILLY [*shaking hands with BOWLING*]. I'm proud to know you, sir. Mr. Lincoln speaks of you constantly.

BOWLING. Thank you, Mr. Herndon. Are you a lawyer, too?

BILLY [*seriously*]. I hope to be, sir. I'm serving here as a clerk in Judge Stuart's absence.

BOWLING. So now you're teaching others, Abe?

ABE. Just providing a bad example.

BOWLING. I can believe it. Look at the mess on that desk. Shameful!

ABE. Give me another year of law practice and I'll need a warehouse for the overflow. . . . But—sit yourself down, Bowling, and tell me what brings you to Springfield.

[*BOWLING sits. JOSH has sat on the couch, smoking his pipe. BILLY is again at the table.*]

BOWLING. I've been up to Lake Michigan—fishing—came in today on the steam-cars—scared me out of a year's growth. But how are you doing, Abe? Josh says you're still broke, but you're a great social success.

ABE. True—on both counts. I'm greatly in demand at all the more elegant functions. You remember Ninian Edwards?

BOWLING. Of course.

ABE. Well, sir—I'm a guest at his mansion regularly. He's got a house so big you could race horses in the parlor. And his wife is one of the Todd family from Kentucky. Very high-grade people. They spell their name with two D's—which is pretty impressive when you consider that one was enough for God.

JOSH. Tell Bowling whom you met over in Rochester.

ABE. The President of the United States!

BOWLING. You don't tell me so!

ABE. Do you see that hand?

[*He holds out his right hand, palm upward.*]

BOWLING. Yes—I see it.

ABE. It has shaken the hand of Martin Van Buren!

BOWLING [*laughing*]. Was the President properly respectful to you, Abe?

ABE. Indeed he was! He said to me, "We've been hearing great things of you in Washington." I found out later he'd said the same thing to every other cross-roads poli-

tician he'd met. [*He laughs.*] But Billy Herndon there is pretty disgusted with me for associating with the wrong kind of people. Billy's a firebrand—a real, radical abolitionist—and he can't stand anybody who keeps his mouth shut and abides by the Constitution. If he had his way, the whole Union would be set on fire and we'd all be burned to a crisp. Eh, Billy?

BILLY [*grimly*]. Yes, Mr. Lincoln. And if you'll permit me to say so, I think you'd be of more use to your fellow-men if you allowed some of the same incendiary impulses to come out in you.

ABE. You see, Bowling? He wants me to get down into the blood-soaked arena and grapple with all the lions of injustice and oppression.

BOWLING. Mr. Herndon—my profound compliments.

BILLY [*rising and taking his hat*]. Thank you, sir. [*He shakes hands with BOWLING, then turns to ABE*] I have the writ prepared in the Willcox case. I'll take it down to the Clerk of Court to be attested.

ABE. All right, Billy.

BILLY [*to BOWLING*]. Squire Green—Mr. Lincoln regards you and Mr. Speed as the best friends he has on earth, and I should like to beg you, in his presence, for God's sake drag him out of this stagnant pool in which he's rapidly drowning himself. Good day, sir—good day, Mr. Speed.

JOSH. Good day, Billy.

[*BILLY has gone.*]

BOWLING. That's a bright young man, Abe. Seems to have a good grasp of things.

ABE [*looking after BILLY*]. He's going downstairs to the Clerk's office, but he took his hat. Which means that before he comes back to work, he'll have paid a little visit to the Chenery House saloon.

BOWLING. Does the boy drink?

ABE. Yes. He's got great fires in him, but he's putting 'em out fast. . . . Now—tell me about New Salem.

[*He leans against the wall near the window.*]

BOWLING. Practically nothing of it left.

ABE. How's that blessed wife of yours?

BOWLING. Nancy's busier than ever, and more than ever concerned about your innermost thoughts and yearnings. In fact, she instructed me expressly to ask what on earth is the matter with you?

ABE [*laughs*]. You can tell her there's nothing the matter. I've been able to pay off my debts to the extent of some seven cents on the dollar, and I'm sound of skin and skeleton.

BOWLING. But why don't we hear more from you and of you?

ABE. Josh can tell you. I've been busy.

BOWLING. What at?

ABE. I'm a candidate.

JOSH [*pointing to the poster*]. Haven't you noticed his name? It's here—at the bottom of the list of Electors on the Whig ticket.

ABE. Yes, sir—if old Tippecanoe wins next fall, I'll be a member of the Electoral College.

BOWLING. The Electoral College! And is that the best you can do?

ABE. Yes—in the limited time at my disposal. I had a letter from Seth Gale—remember—he used to live in New Salem and was always aiming to move West. He's settled down in Maryland now and has a wife and a son. He says that back East they're powerful worried about the annexation of Texas.

BOWLING. They have reason to be. It would probably mean extending slavery through all the territories, from Kansas and Nebraska right out to Oregon and California. That would give the South absolute rule of the country—and God help the rest of us in the free states.

JOSH. It's an ugly situation, all right. It's got the seeds in it of nothing more nor less than civil war.

ABE. Well, if so, it'll be the abolitionists' own fault. They know where this trouble might lead, and yet they go right on agitating. They ought to be locked up for disturbing the peace, all of them.

BOWLING. I thought you were opposed to slavery, Abe. Have you changed your mind about it?

ABE [*ambles over to the couch and sprawls on it*]. No. I am opposed to slavery. But I'm even more opposed to going to war. And, on top of that, I know what you're getting at, both of you. [*He speaks to them with the utmost good nature.*] You're following Billy Herndon's lead—troubling your kind hearts with concerns about me and when am I going to amount to something. Is that it?

BOWLING. Oh, no, Abe. Far be it from me to interfere in your life.

JOSH. Or me, either. If we happen to feel that, so far, you've been a big disappointment to us, we'll surely keep it to ourselves.

ABE [*laughs*]. I'm afraid you'll have to do what I've had to do—which is, learn to accept me for what I am. I'm no fighting man. I found that out when I went through the Black Hawk War, and was terrified that I might have to fire a shot at an Indian. Fortunately, the Indians felt the same way, so I never saw one of them. Now, I know plenty of men who like to fight; they're willing to kill, and not scared of being killed. All right. Let them attempt to the battles that have to be fought.

BOWLING. Peaceable men have sometimes been of service to their country.

ABE. They may have been peaceable when they started, but they didn't remain so long after they'd become mixed in the great brawl of politics. [*He sits up.*] Suppose I ran for Congress and got elected. I'd be right in the thick of that ugly situation you were speaking of. One day I might have to cast my vote on the terrible issue of war or peace. It might be war with Mexico over Texas, or war with England over Oregon; or even war with our own people across the Ohio River. What attitude would I take in deciding which way to vote? "The Liberal attitude," of course. And what is the Liberal attitude? To go to war, for a tract of land, or a moral principle? Or to avoid war at all costs? No, sir. The place for me is in the Electoral College, where all I have to do is vote for the President whom everybody else elected four months previous.

BOWLING. Well, Abe—you were always an artful dodger—and maybe you'll be able to go on to the end of your days avoiding the clutch of your own conscience

[*NINIAN EDWARDS comes in. He is a little stouter and more prosperous.*]

ABE—JOSH. Hello, Ninian.

NINIAN. Hello. I saw Billy Herndon at the Chenery House and he said you were back from the circuit. [*He sees BOWLING.*] Why—it's my good friend Squire Green. How do do?—and welcome to Springfield.

[*He shakes hands with BOWLING.*]

BOWLING. Thank you, Mr. Edwards.

NINIAN. I just called in, Abe, to tell you you must dine with us. And, Squire, Mrs. Edwards would be honored to receive you, if your engagements will permit—and you, too, Josh.

JOSH. Delighted!

NINIAN. We're proudly exhibiting my sister-in-law, Miss Mary Todd, who has just come from Kentucky to grace our home. She's a very gay young lady—speaks French like a native, recites poetry at the drop of a hat, and knows the names and habits of all the flowers. I've asked Steve Douglas and some of the other eligibles to meet her, so you boys had better get in early.

BOWLING. My compliments to Mrs. Edwards, but my own poor wife awaits me impatiently, I hope.

NINIAN. I appreciate your motives, Squire, and applaud them. You'll be along presently, Abe?

ABE. I wouldn't be surprised.

NINIAN. Good. You'll meet a delightful young lady. And I'd better warn you she's going to survey the whole field of matrimonial prospects and select the one who promises the most. So you'd better be on your guard, Abe, unless you're prepared to lose your standing as a free man.

ABE. I thank you for the warning, Ninian.

NINIAN. Good day to you, Squire. See you later, Josh *[He goes out.]*

ABE. There, Bowling—you see how things are with me. Hardly a day goes by but what I'm invited to meet some eager young female who has all the graces, including an ability to speak the language of diplomacy.

BOWLING. I'm sorry, Abe, that I shan't be able to hear you carrying on a flirtation in French. *[ABE looks at him, curiously.]*

ABE. I'm not pretending with you, Bowling—or you, Josh. I couldn't fool you any better than I can fool myself. I know what you're thinking about me, and I think so, too. Only I'm not so merciful in considering my own shortcomings, or so ready to forgive them, as you are. But—you talk about civil war—there seems to be one going on inside me all the time. Both sides are right and both are wrong and equal in strength. I'd like to be able to rise superior to the struggle—but—it says in the Bible that a house divided against itself cannot stand, so I reckon there's not much hope. One of these days, I'll just split asunder, and part company with myself—and it'll be a good riddance from both points of view. However—come on *[He takes his hat.]* You've got to get back to Nancy, and Josh and I have got to make a good impression upon Miss Mary Todd, of Kentucky.

[He waves them to the door. As they go out, the light fades.]

SCENE V

Parlor of the Edwards house in Springfield.

An evening in November, some six months after the preceding scene. There is a fireplace at the right, a heavily curtained bay window at the left, a door at the back leading into the front hall. At the right, by the fireplace, are a small couch and an easy chair. There is another couch at the left, and a table and chairs at the back. There are family portraits on the walls. It is all moderately elegant.

[NINIAN is standing before the fire, in conversation with ELIZABETH, his wife. She is high-bred, ladylike—excessively so. She is, at the moment, in a state of some agitation.]

ELIZABETH. I cannot believe it! It is an outrageous reflection on my sister's good sense.

NINIAN. I'm not so sure of that. Mary has known Abe for several months, and she has had plenty of chance to observe him closely.

ELIZABETH. She has been entertained by him, as we all have. But she has been far more attentive to Edwin Webb and Stephen Douglas and many others who are distinctly eligible.

NINIAN. Isn't it remotely possible that she sees more in Abe than you do?

ELIZABETH. Nonsense! Mr. Lincoln's chief virtue is that he hides no part of his simple soul from any one. He's a most amiable creature, to be sure, but as the husband of a high-bred, high-spirited young lady . . .

NINIAN. Quite so, Elizabeth. Mary is high-spirited! That is just why she set her cap for him.

[ELIZABETH looks at him sharply, then laughs.]

ELIZABETH. You're making fun of me, Ninian. You're deliberately provoking me into becoming excited about nothing.

NINIAN. No, Elizabeth—I am merely trying to prepare you for a rude shock. You think Abe Lincoln would be overjoyed to capture an elegant, cultivated girl, daughter of the President of the Bank of Kentucky, descendant of a long line of English gentlemen. Well, you are mistaken . . .

[MARY TODD comes in. She is twenty-two—short, pretty, remarkably sharp. She stops short in the doorway, and her suspecting eyes dart from ELIZABETH to NINIAN.]

MARY. What were you two talking about?

NINIAN. I was telling your sister about the new song the boys are singing.

"What is the great commotion, motion, Our country through?"

It is the ball a-rolling on

For Tippecanoe and Tyler, too—for Tippecanoe . . ."

MARY *[with a rather grim smile]* I compliment you for thinking quickly, Ninian. But you were talking about me! *[She looks at ELIZABETH, who quails a little before her sister's determination.]* Weren't you?

ELIZABETH. Yes, Mary, we were.

MARY. And quite seriously, I gather.

NINIAN. I'm afraid that our dear Elizabeth has become unduly alarmed . . .

ELIZABETH *[snapping at him]*. Let me say what I have to say! *[She turns to MARY.]* Mary—you must tell me the truth. Are you—have you ever given one moment's serious thought to the possibility of marriage with Abraham Lincoln? *[MARY looks at each of them, her eyes flashing.]* I promise you, Mary, that to me such a notion is too far beyond the bounds of credibility to be . . .

MARY. But Ninian has raised the horrid subject, hasn't he? He has brought the evil scandal out into the open, and we must face

it, fearlessly. Let us do so at once, by all means. I shall answer you, Elizabeth: I have given more than one moment's thought to the possibility you mentioned—and I have decided that I shall be Mrs. Lincoln. [*She seats herself on the couch. NINIAN is about to say, "I told you so," but thinks better of it. ELIZABETH can only gasp and gape.*] I have examined, carefully, the qualifications of all the young gentlemen, and some of the old ones, in this neighborhood. Those of Mr. Lincoln seem to me superior to all others, and he is my choice.

ELIZABETH Do you expect me to congratulate you upon this amazing selection?

MARY. No! I ask for no congratulations, nor condolences, either.

ELIZABETH [*turning away*]. Then I shall offer none.

NINIAN. Forgive me for prying, Mary—but have you as yet communicated your decision to the gentleman himself?

MARY [*with a slight smile at NINIAN*]. Not yet. But he is coming to call this evening, and he will ask humbly for my hand in marriage, and, after I have displayed the proper amount of surprise and confusion, I shall murmur, timidly, "Yes!"

ELIZABETH [*pitiful*]. You make a brave jest of it, Mary. But as for me, I am deeply and painfully shocked. I don't know what to say to you. But I urge you, I beg you, as your elder sister, responsible to our father and our dear mother for your welfare . . .

MARY [*with a certain tenderness*]. I can assure you, Elizabeth—it is useless to beg or command. I have made up my mind.

NINIAN I admire your courage, Mary, but I should like

ELIZABETH. I think, Ninian, that that is a matter for discussion solely between my sister and myself!

MARY. No! I want to hear what Ninian has to say. [*To NINIAN.*] What is it?

NINIAN. I only wondered if I might ask you another question.

MARY [*calmly*]. You may.

NINIAN. Understand, my dear—I'm not quarreling with you. My affection for Abe is eternal—but—I'm curious to know—what is it about him that makes you choose him for a husband?

MARY [*betraying her first sign of uncertainty*]. I should like to give you a plain, simple answer, Ninian. But I cannot.

ELIZABETH [*jumping at this*]. Of course you cannot! You're rushing blindly into this. You have no conception of what it will mean to your future.

MARY. You're wrong about that, Elizabeth. This is not the result of wild, tempestuous infatuation. I have not been swept

off my feet. Mr. Lincoln is a Westerner, but that is his only point of resemblance to Young Lochinvar. I simply feel that of all the men I've ever known, he is the one whose life and destiny I want most to share.

ELIZABETH. Haven't you sense enough to know you could never be happy with him? His breeding—his background—his manner—his whole point of view . . . ?

MARY [*gravely*]. I could not be content with a "happy" marriage in the accepted sense of the word. I have no craving for comfort and security.

ELIZABETH. And have you a craving for the kind of life you would lead? A miserable cabin, without a servant, without a stitch of clothing that is fit for exhibition in decent society?

MARY [*raising her voice*]. I have not yet tried poverty, so I cannot say how I should take to it. But I might well prefer it to anything I have previously known—so long as there is forever before me the chance for high adventure—so long as I can know that I am always going forward, with my husband, along a road that leads across the horizon.

[*This last is said with a sort of mad intensity.*]

ELIZABETH. And how far do you think you will go with any one like Abe Lincoln, who is lazy and shiftless and prefers to stop constantly along the way to tell jokes?

MARY [*rising, furious*]. He will *not* stop, if I am strong enough to make him go on! And I am strong! I know what *you* expect of me. You want me to do precisely as you have done—and marry a man like Ninian!—and I know many, that are *just* like him! But with all due respect to my dear brother-in-law—I don't want that—and I won't have it! Never! You live in a house with a fence around it—presumably to prevent the common herd from gaining access to your sacred precincts—but really to prevent you, yourselves, from escaping from your own narrow lives. In Abraham Lincoln I see a man who has split rails for other men's fences, but who will never build one around himself!

ELIZABETH. What are you *saying*, Mary? You are talking with a degree of irresponsibility that is not far from sheer madness . . .

MARY [*scornfully*]. I imagine it does seem like insanity to you! You married a man who was settled and established in the world, with a comfortable inheritance, and no problems to face. And you've never made a move to change your condition, or improve it. You consider it couldn't be improved. To you, all this represents perfection. But it doesn't to me! I want the chance to *shape* a new life, for myself, and for my husband. Is that irresponsibility? [*A MAID appears*]

MAID. Mr. Lincoln, ma'am.

ELIZABETH. He's here.

MARY [*firmly*]. I shall see him!

MAID. Will you step in, Mr. Lincoln?

[*ABE comes in, wearing a new suit, his hair nearly neat.*]

ABE. Good evening, Mrs. Edwards. Good evening, Miss Todd. Ninian, good evening.

ELIZABETH. Good evening.

MARY. Good evening, Mr. Lincoln.

[*She sits on the couch at the left.*]

NINIAN. Glad to see you, Abe.

[*ABE sees that there is electricity in the atmosphere of this parlor. He tries hard to be affably casual.*]

ABE. I'm afraid I'm a little late in arriving, but I ran into an old friend of mine, wife of Jack Armstrong, the champion rowdy of New Salem. I believe you have some recollection of him, Ninian.

NINIAN [*smiling*]. I most certainly have. What's he been up to now?

ABE [*stands in front of the fireplace*]. Oh, he's all right, but Hannah, his wife, is in fearful trouble because her son Duff is up for murder and she wants me to defend him. I went over to the jail to interview the boy and he looks pretty tolerably guilty to me. But I used to give him lessons in the game of marbles while his mother foxed my pants for me. [*He turns to ELIZABETH.*] That means, she sewed buckskin around the legs of my pants so I wouldn't tear 'em to shreds going through underbrush when I was surveying. Well—in view of old times, I felt I had to take the case and do what I can to obstruct the orderly processes of justice.

NINIAN [*laughs, with some relief*]. And the boy will be acquitted. I tell you, Abe—this country would be law-abiding and peaceful if it weren't for you lawyers. But—if you will excuse Elizabeth and me, we must hear the children's prayers and see them safely abed.

ABE. Why—I'd be glad to hear their prayers, too.

NINIAN. Oh, no! You'd only keep them up till all hours with your stories. Come along, Elizabeth.

[*ELIZABETH doesn't want to go, but doesn't know what to do to prevent it.*]

ABE [*to ELIZABETH*]. Kiss them good night, for me.

NINIAN. We'd better not tell them you're in the house, or they'll be furious.

ELIZABETH [*making one last attempt*]. Mary! Won't you come with us and say good night to the children?

NINIAN. No, my dear. Leave Mary here—to keep Abe entertained.

[*He guides ELIZABETH out, following her*]

MARY [*with a little laugh*]. I don't blame

Ninian for keeping you away from those children. They all adore you.

ABE. Well—I always seemed to get along well with children. Probably it's because they never want to take me seriously.

MARY. You understand them—that's the important thing . . . But—do sit down, Mr. Lincoln.

[*She indicates that he is to sit next to her.*]

ABE. Thank you—I will.

[*He starts to cross to the couch to sit beside*

MARY. *She looks at him with melting eyes. The lights fade.*]

SCENE VI

Again the Law Office. It is afternoon of New Year's Day, a few weeks after the preceding scene.

[*ABE is sitting, slumped in his chair, staring at his desk. He has his hat and overcoat on. A muffler is hanging about his neck, untied. JOSH SPEED is half-sitting on the table at the right. He is reading a long letter, with most serious attention. At length he finishes it, refolds it very carefully, stares at the floor.*]

ABE. Have you finished it, Josh?

JOSH. Yes.

ABE. Well—do you think it's all right?

JOSH. No, Abe—I don't [*ABE turns slowly and looks at him.*] I think the sending of this letter would be a most grave mistake—and that is putting it mildly and charitably.

ABE. Have I stated the case too crudely?

[*ABE, is evidently in a serious state of distress, although he is making a tremendous effort to disguise it by speaking in what he intends to be a coldly impersonal tone. He is struggling mightily to hold himself back from the brink of nervous collapse.*]

JOSH. No—I have no quarrel with your choice of words. None whatever. If anything, the phraseology is too correct. But your method of doing it, Abe! It's brutal, it's heartless, it's so unworthy of you that I—I'm at a loss to understand how you ever thought you could do it this way.

ABE. I've done the same thing before with a woman to whom I seemed to have become attached. She approved of my action.

JOSH. This is a different woman. [*He walks over to the window, then turns again toward ABE.*] You cannot seem to accept the fact that women are human beings, too, as variable as we are. You act on the assumption that they're all the same one—and that one is a completely unearthy being of your own conception. This letter isn't written to

Mary Todd—it's written to yourself. Every line of it is intended to provide salve for your own conscience.

ABE [*rising; coldly*]. Do I understand that you will not deliver it for me?

JOSH. No, Abe—I shall not.

ABE [*angrily*]. Then some one else will!

JOSH [*scornfully*]. Yes. You could give it to the minister, to hand to the bride when he arrives for the ceremony. But—I hope, Abe, you won't send it till you're feeling a little calmer in your mind.

ABE [*vehemently, turning to JOSH*]. How can I ever be calm in my mind until this thing is settled, and out of the way, once and for all? Have you got eyes in your head, Josh? Can't you see that I'm desperate?

JOSH. I can see that plainly, Abe. I think your situation is more desperate even than you imagine, and I believe you should have the benefit of some really intelligent medical advice.

ABE [*seating himself at BILLY'S table*]. The trouble with me isn't anything that a doctor can cure.

JOSH. There's a good man named Dr. Drake, who makes a specialty of treating people who get into a state of mind like yours, Abe . . .

ABE [*utterly miserable*]. So that's how you've figured it! I've done what I've threatened to do many times before: I've gone crazy. Well—you know me better than most men, Josh—and perhaps you're not far off right. I just feel that I've got to the end of my rope, and I must let go, and drop—and where I'll land, I don't know, and whether I'll survive the fall, I don't know that either. . . . But—this I do know: I've got to get out of this thing—I can't go through with it—I've got to have my release!

[*JOSH has turned to the window. Suddenly he turns back, toward ABE*]

JOSH Ninian Edwards is coming up. Why not show this letter to him and ask for his opinion . . .

ABE [*interrupting, with desperation*]. No, no! Don't say a word of any of this to him! Put that letter in your pocket. I can't bear to discuss this business with him, now.

[*JOSH puts the letter in his pocket and crosses to the couch.*]

JOSH. Hello, Ninian.

NINIAN [*heartily, from off*]. Hello, Josh! Happy New Year!

[*NINIAN comes in. He wears a handsome, fur-trimmed great-coat, and carries two silver-headed canes, one of them in a baize bag, which he lays down on the table at the right.*]

NINIAN. And Happy New Year, Abe—in fact, the happiest of your whole life!

ABE. Thank you, Ninian. And Happy New Year to you.

NINIAN [*opening his coat*]. That didn't sound much as if you meant it. [*He goes to the stove to warm his hands*] However, you can be forgiven today, Abe. I suppose you're inclined to be just a wee bit nervous. [*He chuckles and winks at JOSH*] God—but it's cold in here! Don't you ever light this stove?

ABE. The fire's all laid. Go ahead and light it, if you want.

NINIAN [*striking a match*]. You certainly are in one of your less amiable moods today.

[*He lights the stove.*]

JOSH. Abe's been feeling a little under the weather.

NINIAN. So it seems. He looks to me as if he'd been to a funeral.

ABE. That's where I have been.

NINIAN [*disbelieving*]. What? A funeral on your wedding day?

JOSH. They buried Abe's oldest friend, Bowling Green, this morning.

NINIAN [*shocked*]. Oh—I'm mighty sorry to hear that, Abe. And—I hope you'll forgive me for—not having known about it.

ABE. Of course, Ninian.

NINIAN. But I'm glad you were there, Abe, at the funeral. It must have been a great comfort to his family.

ABE. I wasn't any comfort to any one. They asked me to deliver an oration, a eulogy of the deceased—and I tried—and I couldn't say a thing. Why do they expect you to strew a lot of flowery phrases over anything so horrible as a dead body? Do they think that Bowling Green's soul needs quotations to give it peace? All that mattered to me was that he was a good, just man—and I loved him—and he's dead.

NINIAN. Why didn't you say that, Abe?

ABE [*rising*]. I told you—they wanted an oration.

NINIAN. Well, Abe—I think Bowling himself would be the first to ask you to put your sadness aside in the prospect of your own happiness, and Mary's—and I'm only sorry that our old friend didn't live to see you two fine people married. [*He is making a gallant attempt to assume a more cheerily nuptial tone*] I've made all the arrangements with the Reverend Dresser, and Elizabeth is preparing a bang-up dinner—so you can be sure the whole affair will be carried off handsomely and painlessly.

[*BILLY HERNDON comes in. He carries a bottle in his coat pocket, and is already more than a little drunk and sullen, but abnormally articulate.*]

Ah, Billy—Happy New Year!

BILLY. The same to you, Mr. Edwards.

[*He puts the bottle down on the table and takes his coat off.*]

NINIAN. I brought you a wedding present, Abe. Thought you'd like to make a brave show when you first walk out with your bride. It came from the same place in Louisville where I bought mine.

[*He picks up one of the canes and hands it proudly to ABE, who takes it and inspects it gravely.*]

ABE. It's very fine, Ninian. And I thank you.

[*He takes the cane over to his desk and seats himself.*]

NINIAN. Well—I'll frankly confess that in getting it for you, I was influenced somewhat by consideration for Mary and her desire for keeping up appearances. And in that connection—I know you'll forgive me, Josh, and you, too, Billy, if I say something of a somewhat personal nature.

BILLY [*truculent*]. If you want me to leave you, I shall be glad to. . . .

NINIAN. No, please, Billy—I merely want to speak a word or two as another of Abe's friends; it's my last chance before the ceremony. Of course, the fact that the bride is my sister-in-law gives me a little added responsibility in wishing to promote the success of this marriage. [*He crosses to ABE*] And a success it will be, Abe . . . if only you will bear in mind one thing: you must keep a tight rein on her ambition. My wife tells me that even as a child, she had delusions of grandeur—she predicted to one and all that the man she would marry would be President of the United States. [*He turns to JOSH.*] You know how it is—every boy in the country plans some day to be President, and every little girl plans to marry him. [*Again to ABE.*] But Mary is one who hasn't entirely lost those youthful delusions. So I urge you to beware. Don't let her talk you into any gallant crusades or wild goose chases. Let her learn to be satisfied with the estate to which God hath brought her. With which, I shall conclude my pre-nuptial sermon. [*He buttons his coat.*] I shall see you all at the house at five o'clock, and I want you to make sure that Abe is looking his prettiest.

JOSH. Good-by, Ninian.

[*NINIAN goes out. ABE turns again to the desk and stares at nothing. BILLY takes the bottle and a cup from his desk and pours himself a stiff drink. He raises the cup toward ABE.*]

BILLY [*hushily*]. Mr. Lincoln, I beg leave to drink to your health and happiness . . . and to that of the lady who will become your wife.

[*ABE makes no response. BILLY drinks it down, then puts the cup back on the table.*]

You don't want to accept my toast because you think it wasn't sincere. And I'll admit I've made it plain that I've regretted the step you've taken. I thought that in this marriage, you were lowering yourself—you were trading your honor for some exalted family connections. . . . I wish to apologize for so thinking. . . .

ABE. No apologies required, Billy.

BILLY. I doubt that Miss Todd and I will ever get along well together. But I'm now convinced that our aims are the same—particularly since I've heard the warnings delivered by her brother-in-law. [*A note of scorn colors his allusion to NINIAN*] If she really is ambitious for you—if she will never stop driving you, goading you—then I say, God bless her, and give her strength!

[*He has said all this with ABE'S back to him. BILLY pours himself another drink, nearly emptying the large bottle. ABE turns and looks at him*]

ABE. Have you had all of that bottle today?

BILLY. This bottle? Yes—I have.

JOSH. And why not? It's New Year's Day!

BILLY [*looking at JOSH*]. Thank you, Mr. Speed. Thank you for the defense. And I hope you will permit me to propose one more toast [*He takes a step toward ABE*] To the President of the United States, and Mrs. Lincoln! [*He drinks.*]

ABE [*grimly*]. I think we can do without any more toasts, Billy.

BILLY. Very well! That's the last one—until after the wedding. And then, no doubt, the Edwards will serve us with the costliest champagne. And, in case you're apprehensive, I shall be on my best behavior in that distinguished gathering!

ABE. There is not going to be a wedding. [*BILLY stares at him, and then looks at JOSH, and then again at ABE*] I have a letter that I want you to deliver to Miss Todd.

BILLY. What letter? What is it?

ABE. Give it to him, Josh. [*JOSH takes the letter out of his pocket, and puts it in the stove. ABE jumps up.*] You have no right to do that!

JOSH. I know I haven't! But it's done. [*ABE is staring at JOSH.*] And don't look at me as if you were planning to break my neck. Of course you could do it, Abe—but you won't. [*JOSH turns to BILLY.*] In that letter, Mr. Lincoln asked Miss Todd for his release. He told her that he had made a mistake in his previous protestations of affection for her, and so he couldn't go through with a marriage which could only lead to endless pain and misery for them both.

ABE [*deeply distressed*]. If that isn't the truth, what is?

JOSH. I'm not disputing the truth of it. I'm only asking you to tell her so, to her face, in the manner of a man.

ABE. It would be a more cruel way. It would hurt her more deeply. For I couldn't help blurting it all out—all the terrible things I didn't say in that letter. [*He is speaking with passion.*] I'd have to tell her that I have hatred for her infernal ambition—that I don't want to be ridden and driven, upward and onward through life, with her whip lashing me, and her spurs digging into me! If her poor soul craves importance in life, then let her marry Stephen Douglas. He's ambitious, too. . . . I want only to be left alone!

[*He sits down again and leans on the table.*]

JOSH [*bitterly*]. Very well, then—tell her all that! It will be more gracious to admit that you're afraid of her, instead of letting her down flat with the statement that your ardor, such as it was, has cooled.

[*BILLY has been seething with a desire to get into this conversation. Now, with a momentary silence, he plunges*]

BILLY. May I say something?

ABE. I doubt that you're in much of a condition to contribute . . .

JOSH. What is it, Billy?

BILLY [*hotly*]. It's just this. Mr. Lincoln, you're not abandoning Miss Mary Todd No! You're only using her as a living sacrifice, offering her up, in the hope that you will thus gain forgiveness of the gods for your failure to do your own great duty!

ABE [*smouldering*]. Yes! My own great duty. Every one feels called upon to remind me of it, but no one can tell me what it is.

BILLY [*almost tearful*]. I can tell you! I can tell you what is the duty of every man who calls himself an American! It is to perpetuate those truths which were once held to be self-evident that all men are created equal—that they are endowed with certain inalienable rights—that among these are the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

ABE [*angrily*]. And are those rights denied to me?

BILLY. Could you ever enjoy them while your mind is full of the awful knowledge that two million of your fellow beings in this country are slaves? Can you take any satisfaction from looking at that flag above your desk, when you know that ten of its stars represent states which are willing to destroy the Union—rather than yield their property rights in the flesh and blood of those slaves? And what of all the States of the future? All the territories of the West—clear out to the Pacific Ocean? Will they be the homes of free men?

Are you answering *that* question to your own satisfaction? That is your flag, Mr. Lincoln, and you're proud of it. But what are you doing to save it from being ripped into shreds?

[*ABE jumps to his feet, towers over BILLY and speaks with temper restrained, but with great passion.*]

ABE. I'm minding my own business—that's what I'm doing! And there'd be no threat to the Union if others would do the same. And as to slavery—I'm sick and tired of this righteous talk about it. When you know more about law, you'll know that those property rights you mentioned are guaranteed by the Constitution. And if the Union can't stand on the Constitution, then let it fall!

BILLY. The hell with the Constitution! This is a matter of the rights of living men to freedom—and those came before the Constitution! When the Law denies those rights, then the Law is wrong, and it must be changed, if not by moral protest, then by force! There's no course of action that isn't justified in the defense of freedom! And don't dare to tell me that any one in the world knows that better than you do, Mr. Lincoln. You, who honor the memory of Elijah Lovejoy and every other man who ever died for that very ideal!

ABE [*turning away from him*]. Yes—I honor them—and envy them—because they could believe that their ideals are *worth* dying for [*He turns to JOSH and speaks with infinite weariness.*] All right, Josh—I'll go up now and talk to Mary—and then I'm going away. . . .

JOSH. Where, Abe?

ABE [*dully*]. I don't know.

[*He goes out and closes the door after him. After a moment, BILLY rushes to the door, opens it, and shouts after ABE.*]

BILLY. You're quitting, Mr. Lincoln! As surely as there's a God in Heaven, He knows that you're running away from your obligations to Him, and to your fellow-men, and your own immortal soul!

JOSH [*drawing BILLY away from the door*]. Billy—Billy—leave him alone. He's a sick man.

BILLY [*sitting down at the table*]. What can we do for him, Mr. Speed? What can we do?

[*BILLY is now actually in tears.*]

JOSH. I don't know, Billy. [*He goes to the window and looks out.*] He'll be in such a state of emotional upheaval, he'll want to go away by himself, for a long time. Just as he did after the death of poor little Ann Rutledge. He'll go out and wander on the prairies, trying to grope his way back into the wilderness from which he came. There's nothing we can

do for him, Billy. He'll have to do it for himself.

BILLY [*fervently*]. May God be with him!
[*The lights fade.*]

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SCENE VII

On the prairie, near New Salem. It is a clear, cool, moonlit evening, nearly two years after the preceding scene. In the foreground is a campfire. Around it are packing cases, blanket rolls and one ancient trunk. In the background is a covered wagon, standing at an angle, so that the opening at the back of it is visible to the audience.

[*SETH GALE is standing by the fire, holding his seven-year-old son, JIMMY, in his arms. The boy is wrapped up in a blanket.*]

JIMMY. I don't want to be near the fire, Paw. I'm burning up. Won't you take the blanket off me, Paw?

SETH. No, son. You're better off if you keep yourself covered.

JIMMY. I want some water, Paw. Can't I have some water?

SETH. Yes! Keep quiet, Jimmy! Gobey's getting the water for you now.

[*He looks off to the right, and sees JACK ARMSTRONG coming.*]

Hello, Jack, I was afraid you'd got lost.

JACK [*coming in*]. I couldn't get lost anywhere around New Salem. How's the boy?

SETH [*with a cautionary look at JACK*]. He—he's a little bit thirsty. Did you find Abe?

JACK. Yes—it took me some time because he'd wandered off—went out to the old cemetery across the river to visit Ann Rutledge's grave.

SETH. Is he coming here?

JACK. He said he'd better go get Doc Chandler who lives on the Winchester Road. He'll be along in a while. [*He comes up to JIMMY.*] How you feelin', Jimmy?

JIMMY. I'm burning . . .

[*AGGIE appears, sees JACK.*]

AGGIE. Oh—I'm glad you're back, Mr. Armstrong.

JACK. There'll be a doctor here soon, Mrs. Gale.

AGGIE. Thank God for that! Bring him into the wagon, Seth. I got a nice, soft bed all ready for him.

SETH. You hear that, Jimmy? Your ma's fixed a place where you can rest comfortable.

[*AGGIE retreats into the wagon.*]

JIMMY. When'll Gobey come back? I'm thirstv. When'll he bring the water?

SETH. Right away, son. You can trust Gobey to get your water.

[*He hands JIMMY into the wagon*]

JACK. He's worse, ain't he?

SETH [*in a despairing tone*]. Yes. The fever's been raging something fierce since you left. It'll sure be a relief when Abe gets here. He can always do something to put confidence in you.

JACK. How long since you've seen Abe, Seth.

SETH. Haven't laid eyes on him since I left here—eight—nine years ago. We've corresponded some.

JACK. Well—you may be surprised when you see him. He's changed plenty since he went to Springfield. He climbed up pretty high in the world, but he appears to have slipped down lately. He ain't much like his old comical self.

SETH. Well, I guess we all got to change. [*He starts up, hearing GOBEY return*] Aggie! [*GOBEY, a Negro, comes in from the left, carrying a bucket of water. AGGIE appears from the wagon*] Here's Gobey with the water.

GOBEY. Yes, Miss Aggie. Here you are. [*He hands it up.*]

AGGIE. Thanks, Gobey.

[*She goes back into the wagon*]

GOBEY. How's Jimmy now, Mr. Seth?

SETH. About the same.

GOBEY [*shaking his head*]. I'll get some more water for the cooking.

[*He picks up a kettle and a pot and goes.*]

SETH [*to JACK*]. It was a bad thing to have happen, all right—the boy getting sick—when we were on an expedition like this. No doctor—no way of caring for him.

JACK. How long you been on the road, Seth?

SETH. More than three months. Had a terrible time in the Pennsylvania Mountains, fearful rains and every stream flooded. I can tell you, there was more than one occasion when I wanted to turn back and give up the whole idea. But—when you get started—you just can't turn . . . [*He is looking off right.*] Say! Is that Abe coming now?

JACK [*rising*]. Yep. That's him.

SETH [*delighted*]. My God, look at him! Store clothes and a plug hat! Hello—Abe!

ABE. Hello, Seth. [*He comes on and shakes hands, warmly.*] I'm awful glad to see you again, Seth.

SETH. And me, too, Abe.

ABE. It did my heart good when I heard you were on your way West. Where's your boy?

SETH. He's in there—in the wagon. . . .

[*Aggie has appeared from the wagon.*]

AGGIE. Is that the doctor?

SETH. No. Aggie—this is the man I was

telling you about I wanted so much to see. This is Mr. Abe Lincoln—my wife, Mrs. Gale.

ABE. Pleased to meet you, Mrs. Gale.

AGGIE. Pleased to meet you, Mr. Lincoln.

ABE. Doc Chandler wasn't home. They said he was expected over at the Boger farm at midnight. I'll go there then and fetch him.

SETH. It'll be a friendly act, Abe.

AGGIE. We'll be in your debt, Mr. Lincoln.

ABE. In the meantime, Mrs. Gale, I'd like to do whatever I can. . . .

SETH. There's nothing to do, Abe. The boy's got the swamp fever, and we're just trying to keep him quiet.

AGGIE [*desperately*]. There's just one thing I would wish—is there any kind of a preacher around this God-forsaken place?

SETH [*worried*]. Preacher?

ABE. Do you know of any, Jack?

JACK. No. There ain't a preacher within twenty miles of New Salem now.

AGGIE. Well—I only thought if there was, we might get him here to say a prayer for Jimmy.

[*She goes back into the wagon. SETH looks after her with great alarm*]

SETH. She wants a preacher. That looks as if she'd given up, don't it?

JACK. It'd probably just comfort her.

ABE. Is your boy very sick, Seth?

SETH. Yes—he is.

JACK. Why don't you speak a prayer, Abe? You could always think of somethin' to say.

ABE. I'm afraid I'm not much of a hand at praying. I couldn't think of a blessed thing that would be of any comfort.

SETH. Never mind. It's just a—a religious idea of Aggie's. Sit down, Abe.

ABE [*looking at the wagon*]. So you've got your dream at last, Seth. You're doing what you and I used to talk about—you're moving.

SETH. Yes, Abe. We got crowded out of Maryland. The city grew up right over our farm. So—we're headed for a place where there's more room. I wrote you—about four months back—to tell you we were starting out, and I'd like to meet up with you here. I thought it was just possible you might consider joining in this trip.

ABE. It took a long time for your letter to catch up with me, Seth. I've just been drifting—down around Indiana and Kentucky where I used to live [*He sits down on a box*]. Do you aim to settle in Nebraska?

SETH. No, we're not going to stop there. We're going right across the continent—all the way to Oregon.

ABE [*deeply impressed*]. Oregon?

JACK. Sure. That's where they're all headin' for now.

SETH. We're making first for a place called Westport Landing—that's in Kansas right on the frontier—where they outfit the wagon trains for the far West. You join up there with a lot of others who are like-minded, so you've got company when you're crossing the plains and the mountains.

ABE. It's staggering—to think of the distance you're going. And you'll be taking the frontier along with you.

SETH. It may seem like a fool-hardy thing to do—but we heard too many tales of the black earth out there, and the balance of rainfall and sunshine.

JACK. Why don't you go with them, Abe? That country out west is gettin' settled fast. Why—last week alone, I counted more than two hundred wagons went past here—people from all over—Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Vermont—all full of jubilation at the notion of gettin' land. By God, I'm goin' too, soon as I can get me a wagon. They'll need men like me to fight the Indians for 'em—and they'll need men with brains, like you, Abe, to tell 'em how to keep the peace.

ABE [*looking off*]. It's a temptation to go, I can't deny that.

JACK. Then what's stoppin' you from doin' it? You said yourself you've just been driftin'.

ABE. Maybe that's it—maybe I've been drifting too long. . . . [*He changes the subject*]. Is it just the three of you, Seth?

SETH. That's all. The three of us and Goby, the nigger.

ABE. Is he your slave?

SETH. Goby? Hell, no! He's a free man! My father freed his father twenty years ago. But we've had to be mighty careful about Goby. You see, where we come from, folks are pretty uncertain how they feel about the slave question, and lots of good free niggers get snaked over the line into Virginia and then sold down river before you know it. And when you try to go to court and assert their legal rights, you're beaten at every turn by the damned, dirty shyster lawyers. That's why we've been keeping well up in free territory on this trip.

ABE. Do you think it will be free in Oregon?

SETH. Of course it will! It's got to. . . .

ABE [*bitterly*]. Oh no, it hasn't, Seth. Not with the politicians in Washington selling out the whole West piece by piece to the slave traders.

SETH [*vehemently*]. That territory has got to be free! If this country ain't strong enough to protect its citizens from slavery, then we'll cut loose from it and join with Canada. Or, better yet, we'll make a new country out there in the far west.

ABE [*gravely*]. A new country?

SETH. Why not?

ABE. I was just thinking—old Mentor Graham once said to me that some day the United States might be divided up into many hostile countries, like Europe.

SETH. Well—let it be! Understand—I love this country and I'd fight for it. And I guess George Washington and the rest of them loved England and fought for it when they were young—but they didn't hesitate to cut loose when the government failed to play fair and square with 'em. . . .

JACK. By God, if Andy Jackson was back in the White House, he'd run out them traitors with a horsewhip!

ABE. It'd be a bad day for us Americans, Seth, if we lost you, and your wife, and your son.

SETH [*breaking*]. My son!—Oh—I've been talking big—but it's empty talk. If he dies—there won't be enough spirit left in us to push on any further. What's the use of working for a future when you know there won't be anybody growing up to enjoy it. Excuse me, Abe—but I'm feeling pretty scared.

ABE [*suddenly rises*]. You mustn't be scared, Seth. I know I'm a poor one to be telling you that—because I've been scared all my life. But—seeing you now—and thinking of the big things you've set out to do—well, it's made me feel pretty small. It's made me feel that I've got to do something, too, to keep you and your kind in the United States of America. You mustn't quit, Seth! Don't let anything beat you—don't you ever give up!

[*AGGIE comes out of the wagon. She is very frightened.*]

AGGIE Seth!

SETH. What is it, Aggie?

AGGIE. He's worse, Seth! He's moaning in his sleep, and he's gasping for breath . . .

[*She is crying. SETH takes her in his arms.*]

SETH. Never mind, honey. Never mind When the doctor gets here, he'll fix him up in no time. It's all right, honey. He'll get well.

ABE. If you wish me to, Mrs. Gale—I'll try to speak a prayer. [*They look at him.*]

JACK. That's the way to talk, Abe!

SETH. We'd be grateful for anything you might say, Abe.

[*ABE takes his hat off. As he starts speaking, GOBEY comes in from the left and stops reverently to listen.*]

ABE. Oh God, the father of all living, I ask you to look with gentle mercy upon this little boy who is here, lying sick in this covered wagon. His people are travelling far, to seek a new home in the wilderness, to do your work, God, to make this earth a good place for your children to live in. They can see

clearly where they're going, and they're not afraid to face all the perils that lie along the way. I humbly beg you not to take their child from them. Grant him the freedom of life. Do not condemn him to the imprisonment of death. Do not deny him his birthright. Let him know the sight of great plains and high mountains, of green valleys and wide rivers. For this little boy is an American, and these things belong to him, and he to them. Spare him, that he too may strive for the ideal for which his fathers have labored, so faithfully and for so long. Spare him and give him his fathers' strength—give us all strength, O God, to do the work that is before us. I ask you this favor, in the name of *your* son, Jesus Christ, who died upon the Cross to set men free. Amen.

GOBEY [*with fervor*]. Amen!

SETH and AGGIE [*murmuring*]. Amen!

[*ABE puts his hat on.*]

ABE. It's getting near midnight. I'll go over to the Boger farm and get the doctor.

[*He goes out.*]

SETH. Thank you, Abe.

AGGIE. Thank you—thank you, Mr Lincoln.

GOBEY. God bless you, Mr. Lincoln!
[*The lights fade quickly*]

SCENE VIII

Again the parlor of the Edwards house A few days after preceding scene

[*MARY is seated, reading a book After a moment, the MAID enters.*]

MAID. Miss Mary—Mr. Lincoln is here.

MARY. Mr. Lincoln!

[*She sits still a moment in an effort to control her emotions, then sharply closes the book and rises.*]

MAID. Will you see him, Miss Mary?

MARY. Yes—in one moment.

[*The MAID goes off. MARY turns, drops her book on the sofa, then moves over toward the right, struggling desperately to compose herself. At the fireplace, she stops and turns to face ABE as he enters*]

I'm glad to see you again, Mr Lincoln.

[*There is considerable constraint between them. He is grimly determined to come to the point with the fewest possible words; she is making a gallant, well-bred attempt to observe the social amenities.*]

ABE. Thank you, Mary. You may well wonder why I have thrust myself on your mercy in this manner.

MARY [*quickly*]. I'm sure you're always welcome in Ninian's house.

ABE. After my behavior at our last meeting here, I have not been welcome company for myself.

MARY. You've been through a severe illness. Joshua Speed has kept us informed of it. We've been greatly concerned.

ABE. It is most kind of you.

MARY. But you're restored to health now—you'll return to your work, and no doubt you'll be running for the assembly again—or perhaps you have larger plans?

ABE. I have no plans, Mary. [*He seems to brace himself*] But I wish to tell you that I am sorry for the things that I said on that unhappy occasion which was to have been our wedding day.

MARY. You need not say anything about that, Mr. Lincoln. Whatever happened then, it was my own fault.

ABE [*Disturbed by this unforeseen avowal*]. Your fault! It was my miserable cowardice . . .

MARY. I was blinded by my own self-confidence! I—I loved you [*For a moment her firm voice falters, but she immediately masters that tendency toward weakness*.] And I believed I could make you love me. I believed we might achieve a real communion of spirit, and the fire of my determination would burn in you. You would become a man and a leader of men! But you didn't wish that. [*She turns away*.] I knew you had strength—but I did not know you would use it, all of it, to resist your own magnificent destiny.

ABE [*deliberately*]. It is true, Mary—you once had faith in me which I was far from deserving. But the time has come, at last, when I wish to strive to deserve it. [*MARY looks at him sharply*] When I behaved in that shameful manner toward you, I did so because I thought that our ways were separate and could never be otherwise. I've come to the conclusion that I was wrong. I believe that our destinies are together, for better or for worse, and I again presume to ask you to be my wife. I fully realize, Mary, that taking me back now would involve humiliation for you.

MARY [*flaring*]. I am not afraid of humiliation, if I know it will be wiped out by ultimate triumph! But there can be no triumph unless you yourself are sure. What was it that brought you to this change of heart and mind?

ABE. On the prairie, I met an old friend of mine who was moving West, with his wife and child, in a covered wagon. He asked me to go with him, and I was strongly tempted to do so. [*There is great sadness in his tone—but he seems to collect himself, and turns to her again, speaking with a sort of resignation*.] But then I knew that was not my direction. The

way I must go is the way you have always wanted me to go.

MARY. And you will promise that never again will you falter, or turn to run away?

ABE. I promise, Mary—if you will have me—I shall devote myself for the rest of my days to trying—to do what is right—as God gives me power to see what is right.

[*She looks at him, trying to search him. She would like to torment him, for a while, with artful indecision. But she can not do it*]

MARY. Very well, then—I shall be your wife. I shall fight by your side—till death do us part. [*She runs to him and clutches him*.] Abe! I love you—oh, I love you! Whatever becomes of the two of us, I'll die loving you!

[*She is sobbing wildly on his shoulder*.]

[*Awkwardly, he lifts his hands and takes hold of her in a loose embrace. He is staring down at the carpet, over her shoulder*.]

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE IX

A speakers' platform in an Illinois town. It is a summer evening in the year 1858. A light shines down on the speaker at the front of the platform.

[*At the back of the platform are three chairs. At the right sits JUDGE STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS—at the left, ABE, who has his plug hat on and makes occasional notes on a piece of paper on his knee. The chair in the middle is for NINIAN, acting as Moderator, who is now at the front of the platform*]

NINIAN. We have now heard the leading arguments from the two candidates for the high office of United States Senator from Illinois—Judge Stephen A. Douglas and Mr. Abraham Lincoln. A series of debates between these two eminent citizens of Illinois has focused upon our state the attention of the entire nation, for here are being discussed the vital issues which now affect the lives of all Americans and the whole future history of our beloved country. According to the usual custom of debate, each of the candidates will now speak in rebuttal. . . . Judge Douglas.

[*NINIAN retires and sits, as DOUGLAS comes forward. He is a brief but magnetic man, confident of his powers*.]

DOUGLAS. My fellow citizens: My good friend, Mr. Lincoln, has addressed you with his usual artless sincerity, his pure, homely

charm, his perennial native humor. He has even devoted a generously large portion of his address to most amiable remarks upon my fine qualities as a man, if not as a statesman. For which I express deepest gratitude. But—at the same time—I most earnestly beg you not to be deceived by his seeming innocence, his carefully cultivated spirit of good will. For in each of his little homilies lurk concealed weapons. Like Brutus, in Shakespeare's immortal tragedy, Mr. Lincoln is an honorable man. But, also like Brutus, he is an adept at the art of inserting daggers between an opponent's ribs, just when said opponent least expects it. Behold me, gentlemen—I am covered with scars. And yet—somehow or other—I am still upright. Perhaps because I am supported by that sturdy prop called "Truth." Truth—which, crushed to earth by the assassin's blades, doth rise again! Mr. Lincoln makes you laugh with his pungent anecdotes. Then he draws tears from your eyes with his dramatic pictures of the plight of the black slave labor in the South. Always, he guides you skilfully to the threshold of truth, but then, as you are about to cross it, diverts your attention elsewhere. For one thing—he never, by any mischance, makes reference to the condition of labor here in the North! Oh, no! Perhaps New England is so far beyond the bounds of his parochial ken that he does not know that tens of thousands of working men and women in the textile industry are now on STRIKE! And why are they on strike? Because from early morning to dark of night—fourteen hours a day—those "free" citizens must toil at shattering looms in soulless factories and never see the sun; and then, when their fearful day's work at last comes to its exhausted end, these ill-clad and undernourished laborers must trudge home to their foul abodes in tenements that are not fit habitations for rats! What kind of Liberty is this? And if Mr. Lincoln has not heard of conditions in Massachusetts—how has it escaped his attention that here in our own great state no wheels are now turning on that mighty railroad, the Illinois Central? Because its oppressed workers are also on STRIKE! Because they too demand a living wage! So it is throughout the North. Hungry men, marching through the streets in ragged order, promoting riots, because they are not paid enough to keep the flesh upon the bones of their babies! What kind of Liberty is *this*? And what kind of equality? Mr. Lincoln harps constantly on this subject of equality. He repeats over and over the argument used by Lovejoy and other abolitionists: to wit, that the Declaration of Independence having declared all men free and equal, by divine

law, thus Negro equality is an inalienable right. Contrary to this absurd assumption stands the verdict of the Supreme Court, as it was clearly stated by Chief Justice Taney in the case of Dred Scott. The Negroes are established by this decision as an inferior race of beings, subjugated by the dominant race, enslaved and, therefore, *property*—like all other property! But Mr. Lincoln is inclined to dispute the constitutional authority of the Supreme Court. He has implied, if he did not say so outright, that the Dred Scott decision was a prejudiced one, which must be over-ruled by the voice of the people. Mr. Lincoln is a lawyer, and I presume, therefore, that he knows that when he seeks to destroy public confidence in the integrity, the inviolability of the Supreme Court, he is preaching *revolution*! He is attempting to stir up odium and rebellion in this country against the constituted authorities; he is stimulating the passions of men to resort to violence and to mobs, instead of to the law. He is setting brother against brother! There can be but one consequence of such inflammatory persuasion—and that is *Civil War*! He asks me to state my opinion of the Dred Scott decision, and I answer him unequivocally by saying, "I take the decisions of the Supreme Court as the law of the land, and I intend to obey them as such!" Nor will I be swayed from that position by all the rantings of all the fanatics who preach "racial equality," who ask us to vote, and eat, and sleep, and marry with Negroes! And I say further—Let each State mind its own business and leave its neighbors alone. If we will stand by that principle, then Mr. Lincoln will find that this great republic can exist forever divided into free and slave states. We can go on as we have done, increasing in wealth, in population, in power, until we shall be the admiration and the terror of the world!

[*He glares at the audience, then turns, mopping his brow, and resumes his seat*]
NINIAN [rising] Mr. Lincoln.

[*ABE glances at his notes, takes his hat off, puts the notes in it, then rises slowly and comes forward. He speaks quietly, reasonably. His words come from an emotion so profound that it needs no advertisement*]

ABE. Judge Douglas has paid tribute to my skill with the dagger. I thank him for that, but I must also admit that he can do more with that weapon than I can. He can keep ten daggers flashing in the air at one time. Fortunately, he's so good at it that none of the knives ever falls and hurts anybody. The Judge can condone slavery in the South and protest hotly against its extension to the North. He can crowd loyalty to the Union and defense of states' sovereignty into

the same breath. Which reminds me—and I hope the Judge will allow me one more homely little anecdote, because I'd like to tell about a woman down in Kentucky. She came out of her cabin one day and found her husband grappling with a ferocious bear. It was a fight to the death, and the bear was winning. The struggling husband called to his wife, "For heaven's sake, *help* me!" The wife asked what could *she* do? Said the husband, "You could at least *say* something encouraging." But the wife didn't want to seem to be taking sides in this combat, so she just hollered, "Go it, husband—go it, bear!" Now, you heard the Judge make allusion to those who advocate voting and eating and marrying and sleeping with Negroes. Whether he meant me specifically, I do not know. If he did, I can say that just because I do not want a colored woman for a slave, I don't necessarily want her for a wife. I need not have her for either I can just leave her alone. In some respects, she certainly is not my equal, any more than I am the Judge's equal, in some respects; but in her natural right to eat the bread she earns with her own hands without asking leave of some one else, she is my equal, and the equal of all others. And as to sleeping with Negroes—the Judge may be interested to know that the slave states have produced more than four hundred thousand mulattoes—and I don't think many of them are the children of abolitionists. That word "abolitionists" brings to mind New England, which also has been mentioned. I assure Judge Douglas that I have been there, and I have seen those cheerless brick prisons called factories, and the workers trudging silently home through the darkness. In those factories, cotton that was picked by black slaves is woven into cloth by white people who are separated from slavery by no more than fifty cents a day. As an American, I cannot be proud that such conditions exist. But—as an American—I can ask: would any of those striking workers in the North elect to change places with the slaves in the South? Will they not rather say, "The remedy is in our hands!" And, still as an American, I can say—thank God we live under a system by which men have the *right* to strike! I am not preaching rebellion. I don't have to. This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it. If the founding fathers gave us anything, they gave us that. And I am not preaching disrespect for the Supreme Court. I am only saying that the decisions of mortal men are often influenced

by unjudicial bias—and the Supreme Court is composed of mortal men, most of whom, it so happens, come from the privileged class in the South. There is an old saying that judges are just as honest as other men, and not more so; and in case some of you are wondering who said that, it was Thomas Jefferson. [*He has half turned to DOUGLAS.*] The purpose of the Dred Scott decision is to make property, and nothing but property, of the Negro in all states of the Union. It is the old issue of property rights versus human rights—an issue that will continue in this country when these poor tongues of Judge Douglas and myself shall long have been silent. It is the eternal struggle between two principles. The one is the common right of humanity, and the other the divine right of kings. It is the same spirit that says, "You toil and work and earn bread, and I'll eat it." Whether those words come from the mouth of a king who bestrides his people and lives by the fruit of their labor, or from one race of men who seek to enslave another race, it is the same tyrannical principle. As a nation, we began by declaring, "All men are created equal." There was no mention of any exceptions to the rule in the Declaration of Independence. But we now practically read it, "All men are created equal except Negroes." If we accept this doctrine of race or class discrimination, what is to stop us from decreasing in the future that "All men are created equal except Negroes, foreigners, Catholics, Jews, or—just poor people?" That is the conclusion toward which the advocates of slavery are driving us. Many good citizens, North and South, agree with the Judge that we should accept that conclusion—don't stir up trouble—"Let each State mind its own business." That's the safer course, for the time being. But—I advise you to watch out! When you have enslaved any of your fellow beings, dehumanized him, denied him all claim to the dignity of manhood, placed him among the beasts, among the damned, are you quite sure that the demon you have thus created will not turn and rend *you*? When you begin qualifying freedom, watch out for the consequences to *you*! And I am not preaching civil war. All I am trying to do—now, and as long as I live—is to state and restate the fundamental virtues of our democracy, which have made us great, and which can make us greater. I believe most seriously that the perpetuation of those virtues is now endangered, not only by the honest proponents of slavery, but even more by those who echo Judge Douglas in shouting, "Leave it alone!" This is the complacent policy of indifference to evil, and that policy I cannot but hate. I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery

itself. I hate it because it deprives our republic of its just influence in the world; enables the enemies of free institutions everywhere to taunt us as hypocrites; causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity; and especially because it forces so many good men among ourselves into an open war with the very fundamentals of civil liberty, denying the good faith of the Declaration of Independence, and insisting that there is no right principle of action but *self-interest*. . . . In his final words tonight, the Judge said that we may be "the terror of the world." I don't think we want to be that. I think we would prefer to be the encouragement of the world, the proof that man is at last worthy to be free. But—we shall provide no such encouragement, unless we can establish our ability as a nation to live and grow. And we shall surely do neither if these states fail to remain *united*. There can be no distinction in the definitions of liberty as between one section and another, one race and another, one class and another. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." This government can not endure permanently, half slave and half free!

[*He turns and goes back to his seat*]
[*The lights fade.*]

SCENE X

Parlor of the Edwards home, now being used by the Lincolns. Afternoon of a day in the early Spring of 1860.

[*ABE is sitting on the couch at the right, with his seven-year-old son, TAD, on his lap. Sitting beside them is another son, WILLIE, aged nine. The eldest son, ROBERT, a young Harvard student of seventeen, is sitting by the window, importantly smoking a pipe and listening to the story ABE has been telling the children. JOSHUA SPEED is sitting at the left.*]

ABE. You must remember, Tad, the roads weren't much good then—mostly nothing more than trails—and it was hard to find my way in the darkness. . . .

WILLIE. Were you scared?

ABE. Yes—I was scared.

WILLIE. Of Indians?

ABE. No—there weren't any of them left around here. I was afraid I'd get lost, and the boy would die, and it would be all my fault. But, finally, I found the doctor. He was very tired, and wanted to go to bed, and he grumbled a lot, but I made him come along with me then and there.

WILLIE. Was the boy dead?

ABE. No, Willie. He wasn't dead. But he

was pretty sick. The doctor gave him a lot of medicine.

TAD. Did it taste bad, Pa?

ABE. I presume it did. But it worked. I never saw those nice people again, but I've heard from them every so often. That little boy was your age, Tad, but now he's a grown man with a son almost as big as you are. He lives on a great big farm, in a valley with a river that runs right down from the tops of the snow mountains. . . .

[*MARY comes in.*]

MARY. Robert! You are smoking in my parlor!

ROBERT [*wearily*]. Yes, Mother.

[*He rises*]

MARY. I have told you that I shall not tolerate tobacco smoke in my parlor or, indeed, in any part of my house, and I mean to . . .

ABE. Come, come, Mary—you must be respectful to a Harvard man. Take it out to the woodshed, Bob.

ROBERT. Yes, Father.

MARY. And this will not happen again!

ROBERT. No, Mother. [*He goes out.*]

ABE. I was telling the boys a story about some pioneers I knew once.

MARY. It's time for you children to make ready for your supper

[*The CHILDREN promptly get up to go.*]

WILLIE. But what happened after that, Pa?

ABE. Nothing. Everybody lived happily ever after. Now run along.

[*WILLIE and TAD run out*]

JOSH. What time is it, Mary?

MARY. It's hearily half past four.

[*She is shaking the smoke out of the curtains.*]

JOSH. Half past four, Abe. Those men will be here any minute.

ABE [*rising*]. Good Lord!

MARY [*turning sharply to ABE*]. What men?

ABE. Some men from the East. One of them's a political leader named Crimmin—and there's a Mr. Sturveson—he's a manufacturer—and . . .

MARY [*impressed*]. Henry D. Sturveson?

ABE. That's the one—and also the Reverend Dr. Barrick from Boston.

MARY [*sharply*]. What are they coming here for?

ABE. I don't precisely know—but I suspect that it's to see if I'm fit to be a candidate for President of the United States. [*MARY is, for the moment, speechless*] I suppose they want to find out if we still live in a log cabin and keep pigs under the bed . . .

MARY [*in a fury*]. And you didn't tell me!

ABE. I'm sorry, Mary—the matter just slipped my . . .

MARY. You forgot to tell me that we're having the most important guests who ever crossed the threshold of my house!

ABE. They're not guests. They're only here on business.

MARY [*bitterly*]. Yes! Rather important business, it seems to me. They want to see us as we *are*—crude, sloppy, vulgar Western barbarians, living in a house that reeks of foul tobacco smoke.

ABE We can explain about having a son at Harvard.

MARY. If I'd only *known*! If you had only given me a little time to prepare for them. Why didn't you put on your best suit? And those filthy old boots!

ABE Well, Mary, I clean forgot. . . .

MARY I declare, Abraham Lincoln, I believe you would have treated me with much more consideration if I had been your slave, instead of your wife! You have never, for one moment, stopped to think that perhaps I have some interests, some concerns, in the life we lead together.

ABE. I'll try to clean up my boots a little, Mary.

[*He goes out, glad to escape from this painful scene. MARY looks after him. Her lip is quivering. She wants to avoid tears.*]

MARY [*seating herself, bitterly*]. You've seen it all, Joshua Speed. Every bit of it—courtship, if you could call it that, change of heart, change back again, and marriage, eighteen years of it. And you probably think just as all the others do—that I'm a bitter, nagging woman, and I've tried to kill his spirit, and drag him down to my level. . . .

[*JOSH rises and goes over to her.*]

JOSH [*quietly*]. No, Mary. I think no such thing. Remember, I know Abe, too.

MARY. There never could have been another man such as he is! I've read about many that have gone up in the world, and all of them seemed to have to fight to assert themselves every inch of the way, against the opposition of their enemies and the lack of understanding in their own friends. But he's never had any of that. He's never had an enemy, and every one of his friends has always been completely confident in him. Even before I met him, I was told that he had a glorious future, and after I'd known him a day, I was sure of it myself. But he didn't believe it—or, if he did, secretly, he was so afraid of the prospect that he did all in his power to avoid it. He had some poem in his mind, about a life of woe, along a rugged path, that leads to some future doom, and it has been an obsession with him. All these years, I've tried and tried to stir him out of it, but all my efforts have been like so many puny waves, dashing against the Rock of

Ages. And now, opportunity, the greatest opportunity, is coming here, to him, right into his own house. And what can I do about it? He *must* take it! He *must* see that this is what he was meant for! But I can't persuade him of it! I'm tired—I'm tired to death! [*The tears now come.*] I thought I could help to shape him, as I knew he should be, and I've succeeded in nothing—but in breaking myself. . . . [*She sobs bitterly.*]

[*JOSH sits down beside her and pats her hand.*]

JOSH [*tenderly*]. I know, Mary. But—there's no reason in heaven and earth for you to reproach yourself. Whatever becomes of Abe Lincoln is in the hands of a God who controls the destinies of all of us, including lunatics, and saints. [*ABE comes back.*]

ABE [*looking down at his boots*]. I think they look all right now, Mary.

[*He looks at MARY, who is now trying hard to control her emotion.*]

MARY. You can receive the gentlemen in here. I'll try to prepare some refreshment for them in the dining-room.

[*She goes out. ABE looks after her, miserably.*]

There are a few moments of silence. At length, ABE speaks, in an off-hand manner.

ABE I presume these men *are* pretty influential.

JOSH They'll have quite a say in the delegations of three states that may swing the nomination away from Seward.

ABE Suppose, by some miracle, or fluke, they did nominate me; do you think I'd stand a chance of winning the election?

JOSH An excellent chance, in my opinion. There'll be four candidates in the field, bumping each other, and opening up the track for a dark horse.

ABE. But the dark horse might run in the wrong direction.

JOSH Yes—you can always do that, Abe. I know I wouldn't care to bet two cents on you.

ABE [*grinning*]. It seems funny to be comparing it to a horse-race, with an old, spavined hack like me. But I've had some mighty energetic jockeys—Mentor Graham, Bowling Green, Bill Herndon, you, and Mary—most of all, Mary.

JOSH [*looking at ABE*]. They don't count now, Abe. You threw 'em all, long ago. When you finally found yourself running against poor little Douglas, you got the bit between your teeth and went like greased lightning. You'd do the same thing to him again, if you could only decide to get started, which you probably won't. . . .

[*The doorbell jangles. JOSH gets up.*]

ABE. I expect that's them now.

JOSH. I'll go see if I can help Mary. [*He starts for the door but turns and looks at ABE, and speaks quietly.*] I'd just like to remind you, Abe—there are pretty nearly thirty million people in this country; most of 'em are common people, like you. They're in serious trouble, and they need somebody who understands 'em, as you do. So—when these gentlemen come in—try to be a little bit polite to them. [*ABE grins. JOSH looks off.*] However—you won't listen to any advice from me.

[*JOSH goes. The door is opened by a MAID and STURVESON, BARRICK, and CRIMMIN come in. STURVESON is elderly, wealthy, and bland. BARRICK is a soft Episcopalian dignitary CRIMMIN is a shrewd, humorous fixer.*]

ABE. Come right in, gentlemen. Glad to see you again, Mr. Crimmin.

[*They shake hands*]

CRIMMIN. How de do, Mr. Lincoln? This is Dr. Barrick of Boston, and Mr. Sturveson, of Philadelphia.

DR. BARRICK. Mr. Lincoln.

STURVESON. I'm honored, Mr. Lincoln.

LINCOLN. Thank you, sir. Pray sit down, gentlemen.

STURVESON. Thank you [*They sit*]

CRIMMIN. Will Mrs. Lincoln seriously object if I light a seegar?

LINCOLN. Go right ahead! I regret that Mrs. Lincoln is not here to receive you, but she will join us presently. [*He sits down.*]

BARRICK [*with great benignity*]. I am particularly anxious to meet Mrs. Lincoln, for I believe, with Mr. Longfellow, that "as unto the bow the cord is, so unto the man is woman."

STURVESON [*very graciously*]. And we are here dealing with a bow that is stout indeed. [*ABE bows slightly in acknowledgment of the compliment.*] And one with a reputation for shooting straight. So you'll forgive us, Mr. Lincoln, for coming directly to the point.

ABE. Yes, sir. I understand that you wish to inspect the prairie politician in his native lair, and here I am.

STURVESON. It is no secret that we are desperately in need of a candidate—one who is sound, conservative, safe—and clever enough to skate over the thin ice of the forthcoming campaign. Your friends—and there's an increasingly large number of them throughout the country—believe that you are the man.

ABE. Well, Mr. Sturveson, I can tell you that when first I was considered for political office—that was in New Salem, twenty-five years ago—I assured my sponsors of my conservatism. I have subsequently proved it, by never progressing anywhere.

BARRICK [*smiling*]. Then you agree that you are the man we want?

ABE. I'm afraid I can't go quite that far in self-esteem, Dr. Barrick, especially when you have available a statesman and gentleman as eminent as Mr. Seward, who, I believe, is both ready and willing.

STURVESON. That's as may be. But please understand that this is not an inquisition. We merely wish to know you better, to gain a clearer idea of your theories on economics, religion, and national affairs, in general. To begin with—in one of your memorable debates with Senator Douglas, your opponent indulged in some of his usual demagoguery about industrial conditions in the North, and you replied shrewdly that whereas the slaves in the South . . .

ABE. Yes, I remember the occasion. I replied that I was thankful that laborers in free states have the right to strike. But that wasn't shrewdness, Mr. Sturveson. It was just the truth.

STURVESON. It has gained for you substantial support from the laboring classes, which is all to the good. But it has also caused a certain amount of alarm among business men, like myself.

ABE. I cannot enlarge on the subject. It seems obvious to me that this nation was founded on the supposition that men have the right to protest, violently if need be, against authority that is unjust or oppressive [*He turns to BARRICK*]. The Boston Tea Party was a kind of strike. So was the Revolution itself. [*Again to STURVESON*]. So was Nicholas Biddle's attempt to organize the banks against the Jackson administration.

STURVESON. Which is all perfectly true—but—the days of anarchy are over. We face an unprecedented era of industrial expansion—mass production of every conceivable kind of goods—railroads and telegraph lines across the continent—all promoted and developed by private enterprise. In this great work, we must have a free hand, and a firm one, Mr. Lincoln. To put it bluntly, would you, if elected, place the interests of labor above those of capital?

ABE. I cannot answer that, bluntly, or any other way; because I cannot tell what I should do, if elected.

STURVESON. But you must have inclinations toward one side or the other . . .

ABE. I think you know, Mr. Sturveson, that I am opposed to slavery.

BARRICK. And we of New England applaud your sentiments! We deplore the inhumanity of our Southern friends in . . .

ABE [*to BARRICK*]. There are more forms of slavery than that which is inflicted upon the Negroes in the South. I am opposed to all

of them. [*He turns again to STURVESON.*] I believe in our democratic system—the just and generous system which opens the way to all—gives hope to all, and consequent energy and progress and improvement of condition to all, including employer and employee alike.

BARRICK. We support your purpose, Mr. Lincoln, in steadfastly proclaiming the rights of men to resist unjust authority. But I am most anxious to know whether you admit One Authority to whom devotion is unquestioned?

ABE. I presume you refer to the Almighty?

BARRICK. I do

ABE. I think there has never been any doubt of my submission to His will.

BARRICK. I'm afraid there is a great deal of doubt as to your devotion to His church.

ABE. I realize that, Doctor. They say I'm an atheist, because I've always refused to become a church member.

BARRICK. What have been the grounds of your refusal?

ABE. I have found no churches suitable for my own form of worship. I could not give assent without mental reservations to the long, complicated statements of Christian doctrine which characterize their Articles of Belief and Confessions of Faith. But I can promise you, Dr. Barrick—I shall gladly join any church at any time if its sole qualification for membership is obedience to the Saviour's statement of Law and Gospel: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" . . . But—I beg you gentlemen to excuse me for a moment. I believe Mrs. Lincoln is preparing a slight collation, and I must see if I can help with it . . .

CRIMMIN. Certainly, Mr. Lincoln. [*ABE goes, closing the door behind him. CRIMMIN looks at the door, then turns to the others.*] Well?

BARRICK. The man is unquestionably an infidel. An idealist—in his curious, primitive way—but an infidel!

STURVESON. And a radical!

CRIMMIN. A radical? Forgive me, gentlemen, if I enjoy a quiet laugh at that.

STURVESON. Go ahead and enjoy yourself, Crimmin—but I did not like the way he evaded my direct question. I tell you he's as unscrupulous a demagogue as Douglas. He's a rabble rouser!

CRIMMIN. Of course he is! As a dealer in humbug, he puts Barnum himself to shame.

STURVESON. Quite possibly—but he is not safe!

CRIMMIN. Not safe, eh? And what do you mean by that?

STURVESON. Just what I say. A man who devotes himself so whole-heartedly to currying favor with the mob develops the mob mentality. He becomes a preacher of discontent, of mass unrest. . . .

CRIMMIN. And what about Seward? If we put him up, he'll start right in demanding liberation of the slaves—and then there will be discontent and unrest! I ask you to believe me when I tell you that this Lincoln is safe—in economics and theology and everything else. After all—what is the essential qualification that we demand of the candidate of our party? It is simply this: that he be able to get himself elected! And there is the man who can do that. [*He points off-stage.*]

STURVESON [*smiling*]. I should like to believe you!

BARRICK. So say we all of us!

CRIMMIN. Then just keep faith in the eternal stupidity of the voters, which is what *he* will appeal to. In that uncouth rail splitter you may observe one of the smoothest, slickest politicians that ever hoodwinked a yokel mob! You complain that he evaded your questions. Of course he did, and did it perfectly! Ask him about the labor problem, and he replies, "I believe in democracy." Ask his views on religion, and he says, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Now—you know you couldn't argue with that, either of you. I tell you, gentlemen, he's a vote-getter if I ever saw one. His very name is right—Abraham Lincoln! Honest Old Abe! He'll play the game with us now, and he'll go right on playing it when we get him into the White House. He'll do just what we tell him. . . .

BARRICK [*cautioning him*]. Careful, Mr. Crimmin. . . . [*ABE returns.*]

ABE. If you gentlemen will step into the dining-room, Mrs. Lincoln would be pleased to serve you with a cup of tea.

BARRICK. Thank you.

STURVESON. This is most gracious.

[*He and BARRICK move off toward the door.*]

ABE. Or perhaps something stronger for those who prefer it.

[*STURVESON and BARRICK go. CRIMMIN is looking for a place to throw his cigar.*]

ABE [*heartily*]. Bring your seegar with you, Mr. Crimmin!

CRIMMIN. Thank you—thank you.

[*He smiles at ABE, gives him a slap on the arm, and goes out, ABE following. The lights fade.*]

SCENE XI

Lincoln campaign headquarters in the Illinois State House. The evening of Election Day

November 6th, 1860. It is a large room with a tall window opening out on to a wide balcony. There are doors upper right and upper left. At the left is a table littered with newspapers and clippings. There are many chairs about, and a liberal supply of spittoons. At the back is a huge chart of the thirty-three states, with their electoral votes, and a space opposite each side for the posting of bulletins. A short ladder gives access to Alabama and Arkansas at the top of the list. On the wall at the left is an American flag. At the right is a map of the United States, on which each state is marked with a red, white, or blue flag.

[*ABE is sitting at the table, with his back to the audience, reading newspaper clippings. He wears his hat and has spectacles on. MRS. LINCOLN is sitting at the right of the table, her eyes darting nervously from ABE, to the chart, to the map. She wears her bonnet, tippet and muff. ROBERT LINCOLN is standing near her, studying the map. NINIAN EDWARDS is sitting at the left of the table and JOSH SPEED is standing near the chart. They are both smoking cigars and watching the chart. The door at the left is open, and through it the clatter of telegraph instruments can be heard. The window is partly open, and we can hear band music from the square below, and frequent cheers from the assembled mob, who are watching the election returns flashed from a magic lantern on the State House balcony. Every now and then, a telegraph operator named JED comes in from the left and tacks a new bulletin up on the chart. Another man named PHIL is out on the balcony taking bulletins from JED*]

ROBERT. What do those little flags mean, stuck into the map?

JOSH. Red means the state is sure for us. White means doubtful. Blue means hopeless.

[*ABE tosses the clipping he has been reading on the table and picks up another. JED comes in and goes up to pin bulletins opposite Illinois, Maryland, and New York*]

NINIAN [*rising to look*] Lincoln and Douglas neck and neck in Illinois.

[*JOSH and ROBERT crowd around the chart.*]

JOSH. Maryland is going all for Breckenridge and Bell. Abe—you're nowhere in Maryland.

MARY [*with intense anxiety*]. What of New York?

JED [*crossing to the window*]. Say, Phil—when you're not getting bulletins, keep that

window closed. We can't hear ourselves think.

PHIL. All right. Only have to open 'er up again. [*He closes the window.*]

MARY. What does it say about New York? [*JED goes.*]

NINIAN. Douglas a hundred and seven—thousand—Lincoln a hundred and six thousand.

MARY [*desperately, to ABE*]. He's winning from you in New York, Abe!

JOSH. Not yet, Mary. These returns so far are mostly from the city, where Douglas is bound to run the strongest

ABE [*interested in a clipping*]. I see the New York Herald says I've got the soul of a Uriah Heep encased in the body of a baboon.

[*He puts the clipping aside and starts to read another*]

NINIAN [*who has resumed his seat*] You'd better change that flag on Rhode Island from red to white, Bob. It looks doubtful to me.

[*ROBERT, glad of something to do, changes the flag as directed*]

MARY. What does it look like in Pennsylvania, Ninian?

NINIAN. There's nothing to worry about there, Mary. It's safe for Abe. In fact, you needn't worry at all.

MARY [*very tense*]. Yes. You've been saying that over and over again all evening. There's no need to worry. But how can we help worrying when every new bulletin shows Douglas ahead?

JOSH. But every one of them shows Abe gaining.

NINIAN [*mollifying*]. Just give them time to count all the votes in New York and then you'll be on your way to the White House.

MARY. Oh, why don't they hurry with it? Why don't those returns come in?

ABE [*preoccupied*]. They'll come in, soon enough.

[*BILLY HERNDON comes in from the right. He has been doing a lot of drinking but has hold of himself*]

BILLY. That mob down there is sickening! They cheer every bulletin that's flashed on the wall, whether the news is good or bad. And they cheer every picture of every candidate, including George Washington, with the same, fine, ignorant enthusiasm.

JOSH. That's logical. They can't tell 'em apart.

BILLY [*to ABE*]. There are a whole lot of reporters down there. They want to know what will be your first official action after you're elected.

NINIAN. What do you want us to tell 'em, Abe?

ABE [*still reading*]. Tell 'em I'm thinking of growing a beard.

JOSH. A beard?

NINIAN [*amused*]. Whatever put that idea into your mind?

ABE [*picking up another clipping*]. I had a letter the other day from some little girl. She said I ought to have whiskers, to give me more dignity. And I'll need it—if elected.

[*JED arrives with new bulletins. BILLY, NINIAN, JOSH, and ROBERT huddle around JED, watching him post the bulletins.*]

MARY. What do they say now?

[*JED goes to the window and gives some bulletins to PHIL.*]

MARY. Is there anything new from New York?

NINIAN. Connecticut—Abe far in the lead. That's eleven safe electoral votes anyway. Missouri—Douglas thirty-five thousand—Bell thirty-three—Breckenridge sixteen—Lincoln eight. . . .

[*Cheers from the crowd outside until PHIL closes the window. JED returns to the office at the left.*]

MARY. What are they cheering for?

BILLY. They don't know!

ABE [*with another clipping*]. The Chicago *Times* says, "Lincoln breaks down! Lincoln's heart fails him! His tongue fails him! His legs fail him! He fails all over! The people refuse to support him! They laugh at him! Douglas is champion of the people! Douglas skins the living dog!"

[*He tosses the clipping aside. MARY stands up.*]

MARY [*her voice is trembling*]. I can't stand it any longer!

ABE. Yes, my dear—I think you'd better go home. I'll be back before long.

MARY [*hysterical*]. I won't go home! You only want to be rid of me. That's what you've wanted ever since the day we were married—and before that. Anything to get me out of your sight, because you hate me! [*Turning to JOSH, NINIAN, and BILLY.*] And it's the same with all of you—all of his friends—you hate me—you wish I'd never come into his life.

JOSH. No, Mary.

[*ABE has stood up, quickly, at the first storm signal. He himself is in a fearful state of nervous tension—in no mood to treat MARY with patient indulgence. He looks sharply at NINIAN and at the others.*]

ABE. Will you please step out for a moment?

NINIAN. Certainly, Abe.

[*He and the others go into the telegraph office. JOSH gestures to ROBERT to go with them. ROBERT casts a black look at*

his mother and goes. . . . ABE turns on MARY with strange savagery.]

ABE. Damn you! Damn you for taking every opportunity you can to make a public fool of me—and yourself! It's bad enough, God knows, when you act like that in the privacy of our own home. But here—in front of people! You're not to do that again. Do you hear me? You're never to do that again!

[*MARY is so aghast at this outburst that her hysterical temper vanishes, giving way to blank terror.*]

MARY [*in a faint, strained voice*]. Abe! You cursed at me. Do you realize what you did? You cursed at me.

[*ABE has the impulse to curse at her again, but with considerable effort, he controls it.*]

ABE [*in a strained voice*]. I lost my temper, Mary. And I'm sorry for it. But I still think you should go home rather than endure the strain of this—this Death Watch.

[*She stares at him, uncomprehendingly, then turns and goes to the door.*]

MARY [*at the door*]. This is the night I dreamed about, when I was a child, when I was an excited young girl, and all the gay young gentlemen of Springfield were courting me, and I fell in love with the least likely of them. This is the night when I'm waiting to hear that my husband has become President of the United States. And even if he does—it's ruined, for me. It's too late. . . .

[*She opens the door and goes out. ABE looks after her, anguished, then turns quickly, crosses to the door at the left and opens it.*]

ABE [*calling off*]. Bob!

[*ROBERT comes in.*]

Go with your mother.

ROBERT. Do I have to?

ABE. Yes! Hurry! Keep right with her till I get home.

[*ROBERT has gone. ABE turns to the window. PHIL opens it.*]

PHIL. Do you think you're going to make it, Mr. Lincoln?

ABE. Oh—there's nothing to worry about. CROWD OUTSIDE [*singing*].

Old Abe Lincoln came out of the wilderness

Out of the wilderness

Out of the wilderness

Old Abe Lincoln came out of the wilderness

Down in Illinois!

[*NINIAN, JOSH, BILLY, and JED come in, the latter to post new bulletins. After JED has communicated these, PHIL again closes the window. JED goes.*]

NINIAN. It looks like seventy-four electoral votes sure for you. Twenty-seven more probable. New York's will give you the election.

[*ABE walks around the room. JOSH has been looking at ABE.*]

JOSH. Abe, could I get you a cup of coffee?

ABE. No, thanks, Josh.

NINIAN. Getting nervous, Abe?

ABE. No. I'm just thinking what a blow it would be to Mrs. Lincoln if I should lose.

NINIAN. And what about me? I have ten thousand dollars bet on you.

BILLY [scornfully]. I'm afraid that the loss to the nation would be somewhat more serious than that.

JOSH. How would you feel, Abe?

ABE [sitting on the chair near the window]. I guess I'd feel the greatest sense of relief of my life.

[JED comes in with a news despatch.]

JED. Here's a news despatch.

[He hands it over and goes.]

NINIAN [reads]. "Shortly after nine o'clock this evening, Mr. August Belmont stated that Stephen A. Douglas has piled up a majority of fifty thousand votes in New York City and carried the state."

BILLY. Mr. Belmont be damned!

[CRIMMIN comes in, smoking a cigar, looking contented.]

CRIMMIN. Good evening, Mr. Lincoln. Good evening, gentlemen—and how are you feeling now? [They all greet him.]

NINIAN. Look at this, Crimmin

[He hands the despatch to CRIMMIN.]

CRIMMIN [smiles]. Well—Belmont is going to fight to the last ditch, which is just what he's lying in now. I've been in Chicago and the outlook there is cloudless. In fact, Mr. Lincoln, I came down tonight to protect you from the office-seekers. They're lining up downstairs already. On the way I counted four Ministers to Great Britain and eleven Secretaries of State.

[JED has come in with more bulletins to put on the chart and then goes to the window to give PHIL the bulletins.]

BILLY [at the chart]. There's a bulletin from New York! Douglas a hundred and eighty-three thousand—Lincoln a hundred and eighty-one thousand! [JED goes]

JOSH. Look out, Abe! You're catching up!

CRIMMIN. The next bulletin from New York will show you winning. Mark my words, Mr. Lincoln, this election is all wrapped up tightly in a neat bundle, ready for delivery on your doorstep tonight. We've fought the good fight, and we've won!

ABE [pacing up and down the room]. Yes—we've fought the good fight—in the dirtiest campaign in the history of corrupt politics. And if I have won, then I must cheerfully pay my political debts. All those who helped to nominate and elect me must be paid off. I have been gambled all around, bought and sold a hundred times. And now I must fill all the dishonest pledges made in my name.

NINIAN. We realize all that, Abe—but the fact remains that you're winning. Why, you're even beating the coalition in Rhode Island!

ABE. I've got to step out for a moment.

[He goes out at the right.]

NINIAN [cheerfully]. Poor Abe.

CRIMMIN. You gentlemen have all been close friends of our Candidate for a long time, so perhaps you could answer a question that's been puzzling me considerably. Can I possibly be correct in supposing that he doesn't want to win?

JOSH. The answer is—yes.

CRIMMIN [looking toward the right]. Well—I can only say that, for me, this is all a refreshingly new experience.

BILLY [belligerently]. Would you want to become President of the United States at this time? Haven't you been reading the newspapers lately?

CRIMMIN. Why, yes—I try to follow the events of the day.

BILLY [in a rage]. Don't you realize that they've raised ten thousand volunteers in South Carolina? They're arming them! The Governor has issued a proclamation saying that if Mr. Lincoln is elected, the State will secede tomorrow, and every other state south of the Dixon line will go with it. Can you see what that means? War! Civil War! And he'll have the whole terrible responsibility for it—a man who has never wanted anything in his life but to be let alone, in peace!

NINIAN. Calm down, Billy. Go get yourself another drink. [JED rushes in.]

JED. Mr. Edwards, here it is!

[He hands a news despatch to NINIAN, then rushes to the window to attract PHIL'S attention and communicate the big news]

NINIAN [reads]. "At 10:30 tonight the New York Herald conceded that Mr. Lincoln has carried the state by a majority of at least twenty-five thousand and has won the election!" [He tosses the despatch in the air] He's won! He's won! Hurrah!

[All on the stage shout, cheer, embrace, and slap each other]

BILLY. God be praised! God be praised!

CRIMMIN. I knew it! I never had a doubt of it!

[JED is on the balcony, shouting through a megaphone.]

JED. Lincoln is elected! Honest Old Abe is our next President!

[A terrific cheer ascends from the crowd below. ABE returns. They rush at him. BILLY shakes hands with him, too deeply moved to speak.]

NINIAN. You've carried New York, Abe! You've won! Congratulations!

CRIMMIN. My congratulations, Mr President. This is a mighty achievement for all of us. [*JED comes in and goes to ABE*]

JED. My very best, Mr. Lincoln!

ABE [*solemnly*]. Thank you—thank you all very much.

[*He comes to the left. JOSH is the last to shake his hand.*]

JOSH. I congratulate you, Abe.

ABE Thanks, Josh

NINIAN. Listen to them, Abe Listen to that crazy, howling mob down there

CRIMMIN. It's all for you, Mr Lincoln.

NINIAN. Abe, get out there and let 'em see you!

ABE. No I don't want to go out there. I—I guess I'll be going on home, to tell Mary.

[*He starts toward the door. A short, stocky officer named KAVANAGH comes in from the right. He is followed by two SOLDIERS*]

CRIMMIN. This is Captain Kavanagh, Mr President.

KAVANAGH [*salutes*]. I've been detailed to accompany you, Mr. Lincoln, in the event of your election.

ABE. I'm grateful, Captain. But I don't need you

KAVANAGH. I'm afraid you've got to have us, Mr Lincoln I don't like to be alarming, but I guess you know as well as I do what threats have been made.

ABE [*wearily*]. I see . . . Well—Good night, Josh—Ninian—Mr Crimmin—Billy Thank you for your good wishes.

[*He starts for the door. The others bid him good night, quietly*]

KAVANAGH One moment, Sir. With your permission, I'll go first

[*He goes out, ABE after him, the two other SOLDIERS follow. The light fades.*]

SCENE XII

The yards of the railroad station at Springfield The date is February 11, 1861 At the right, at an angle toward the audience, is the back of a railroad car. From behind this, off to the upper left, runs a ramp. Flags and bunting are draped above. In a row downstage are SOLDIERS, with rifles and bayonets fixed, and packs on their backs, standing at ease. Off to the left is a large CROWD, whose excited murmuring can be heard.

[*KAVANAGH is in the foreground. A BRAKEMAN with a lantern is inspecting the wheels of the car, at the left. A WORKMAN is at the right, polishing the rails of the car. KAVANAGH is pacing*

up and down, chewing a dead cigar. He looks at his watch A swaggering MAJOR of militia comes down the ramp from the left]

MAJOR. I want you men to form up against this ramp. [*To KAVANAGH, with a trace of scorn.*] You seem nervous, Mr. Kavanagh

KAVANAGH. Well—I am nervous. For three months I've been guarding the life of a man who doesn't give a damn what happens to him. I heard today that they're betting two to one in Richmond that he won't be alive to take the oath of office on March the 4th.

MAJOR. I'd like to take some of that money. The State Militia is competent to protect the person of our Commander-in-Chief.

KAVANAGH I hope the United States Army is competent to help. But those Southerners are mighty good shots. And I strongly suggest that your men be commanded to keep watch through every window of every car, especially whenever the train stops—at a town, or a tank, or anywhere. And if any alarm is sounded, at any point along the line . . .

MAJOR [*a trifle haughty*]. There's no need to command my men to show courage in an emergency

KAVANAGH No slur was intended, Major—but we must be prepared in advance for everything.

[*A brass band off to the left strikes up the campaign song, "Old Abe Lincoln came out of the wilderness" The crowd starts to sing it, more and more voices taking it up A CONDUCTOR comes out of the car and looks at his watch There is a commotion at the left as NINIAN and ELIZABETH EDWARDS, and JOSH, BILLY, and CRIMMIN come in and are stopped by the SOLDIERS. The MAJOR goes forward, bristling with importance*]

MAJOR. Stand back, there! Keep the crowd back there, you men!

NINIAN. I'm Mr. Lincoln's brother-in-law.

MAJOR. What's your name?

KAVANAGH. I know him, Major. That's Mr. and Mrs. Edwards, and Mr. Speed and Mr. Herndon with them. I know them all. You can let them through.

MAJOR. Very well. You can pass.

[*They come down to the right. The MAJOR goes off at the left.*]

CRIMMIN. How is the President feeling today? Happy?

NINIAN. Just as gloomy as ever.

BILLY [emotionally]. He came down to the office, and when I asked him what I should do about the sign, "Lincoln and Herndon," he said, "Let it hang there. Let our clients understand that this election makes no difference to the firm. If I live, I'll be back some time, and then we'll go right on practising just as if nothing had happened."

ELIZABETH. He's always saying that—"If I live" . . .

[A tremendous cheer starts and swells offstage at the left. The MAJOR comes on briskly.]

MAJOR [to KAVANAGH]. The President has arrived! [To his men.] Attention!

[The MAJOR strides down the platform and takes his position by the car, looking off to the left.]

KAVANAGH [to NINIAN and the others]. Would you mind stepping back there? We want to keep this space clear for the President's party.

[They move upstage, at the right. The cheering is now very loud.]

MAJOR Present—Arms!

[The SOLDIERS come to the Present. The Major salutes. Preceded by SOLDIERS who are looking sharply to the right and left, ABE comes in from the left, along the platform. He will be fifty-two years old tomorrow. He wears a beard. Over his shoulders is his plaid shawl. In his right hand, he carries his carpetbag; his left hand is leading TAD. Behind him are MARY, ROBERT, and WILLIE, and the MAID. All, except MARY, are also carrying bags. She carries a bunch of flowers. When they come to the car, ABE hands his bag up to the CONDUCTOR, then lifts TAD up. MARY, ROBERT, WILLIE, and the MAID get on board, while ABE steps over to talk to NINIAN and the others. During this, there is considerable commotion at the left, as the CROWD tries to surge forward.]

MAJOR [rushing forward]. Keep 'em back! Keep 'em back, men!

[The SOLDIERS have broken their file on the platform and are in line, facing the CROWD. KAVANAGH and his MEN are close to ABE. Each of them has his hand on his revolver, and is keeping a sharp lookout.]

KAVANAGH. Better get on board, Mr. President.

[ABE climbs up on to the car's back platform. There is a great increase in the cheering when the CROWD sees him. They shout: "Speech! Speech! Give us a speech, Abel! Speech, Mr. President! Hurray for Old Abel!" etc. . . ABE

turns to the CROWD, takes his hat off and waves it with a half-hearted gesture. The cheering dies down.]

NINIAN. They want you to say something, Abe.

[For a moment, ABE stands still, looking off to the left.]

ABE My dear friends—I have to say good-by to you. I am going now to Washington, with my new whiskers—of which I hope you approve.

[The CROWD roars with laughter at that. More shouts of "Good Old Abe!" In its exuberant enthusiasm, the CROWD again surges forward, at and around the SOLDIERS, who shout, "Get back, there! Stand back, you!"]

ABE [to the MAJOR]. It's all right—let them come on. They're all old friends of mine.

[The MAJOR allows his MEN to retreat so that they form a ring about the back of the car. KAVANAGH and his MEN are on the car's steps, watching The CROWD—an assortment of townspeople, including some Negroes—fills the stage.]

ABE No one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feelings of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of you people, I owe everything. I have lived here a quarter of a century, and passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return. I am called upon to assume the Presidency at a time when eleven of our sovereign states have announced their intention to secede from the Union, when threats of war increase in fierceness from day to day. It is a grave duty which I now face. In preparing for it, I have tried to enquire, what great principle or ideal is it that has kept this Union so long together? And I believe that it was not the mere matter of separation of the colonies from the motherland, but that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty to the people of this country and hope to all the world. This sentiment was the fulfillment of an ancient dream, which men have held through all time, that they might one day shake off their chains and find freedom in the brotherhood of life. We gained democracy, and now there is the question whether it is fit to survive. Perhaps we have come to the dreadful day of awakening, and the dream is ended. If so, I am afraid it must be ended forever. I cannot believe that ever again will men have the opportunity we have had. Perhaps we should admit that, and concede that our ideals of liberty and equality are decadent and doomed. I have heard of

an eastern monarch who once charged his wise men to invent him a sentence which would be true and appropriate in all times and situations. They presented him the words, "And this too shall pass away." That is a comforting thought in time of affliction—"And this too shall pass away." And yet—[suddenly he speaks with quiet but urgent authority]—let us believe that it is not true! Let us live to prove that we can cultivate the natural world that is about us, and the intellectual and moral world that is within us, so that we may secure an individual, social, and political prosperity, whose course shall be forward, and which, while the earth endures, shall not pass away. . . . I commend you to the care of the Almighty, as I hope that in your prayers you will remember me . . . Good-by, my friends and neighbors

[He leans over the railing of the car platform to say good-by to NINIAN, ELIZABETH, JOSH, BILLY, and CRIMMIN, shaking each by the hand. The band off-stage strikes up "John Brown's Body." The cheering swells. The CONDUCTOR looks at his watch and speaks to the MAJOR, who gets on board the train. The CROWD on stage is shouting "Good-by, Abe," "Good-by, Mr. Lincoln," "Good luck, Abe," "We trust you, Mr. Lincoln." As the band swings into the refrain, "Glory, Glory Hallelujah," the CROWD starts to sing, the number of voices increasing with each word. KAVANAGH tries to speak to ABE but can't be heard. He touches ABE'S arm, and ABE turns on him quickly.]

KAVANAGH. Time to pull out, Mr. President. Better get inside the car.

[These words cannot be heard by the audience in the general uproar of singing NINIAN, ELIZABETH, JOSH and BILLY are up on the station platform.

The SOLDIERS are starting to climb up on to the train. ABE gives one last wistful wave of his hat to the CROWD, then turns and goes into the car, followed by KAVANAGH, the MAJOR, and the SOLDIERS. The band reaches the last line of the song.]

ALL [singing]. "His soul goes marching on"

[The BRAKEMAN, downstage, is waving his lantern. The CONDUCTOR swings aboard. The CROWD is cheering, waving hats and handkerchiefs. The shrill screech of the engine whistle sounds from the right.]

CURTAIN

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The Magnificent Yankee, Emmet Lavery

CHARACTERS

ABRAHAM KAPLAN	MAE JONES
GRETA FIORENTINO	DICK MCGANN
EMMA JONES	VINCENT JONES
OLGA OLSEN	DR. JOHN WILSON
WILLIE MAUPRANT	OFFICER HARRY MURPHY
ANNA MAURRANT	A MILKMAN
DANIEL BUCHANAN	A LETTER-CARRIER
FRANK MAURRANT	AN ICE-MAN
GEORGE JONES	TWO COLLEGE GIRLS
STEVE SANKEY	A MUSIC STUDENT
AGNES CUSHING	MARSHALL JAMES HENRY
CARL OLSEN	FRED CULLEN
SHIRLEY KAPLAN	AN OLD-CLOTHES MAN
FILIPPO FIORENTINO	AN INTERNE
ALICE SIMPSON	AN AMBULANCE DRIVER
LAURA HILDEBRAND	A FURNITURE MOVER
MARY HILDEBRAND	TWO NURSE-MAIDS
CHARLIE HILDEBRAND	POLICEMEN
SAMUEL KAPLAN	TWO APARTMENT HUNTERS
ROSE MAURRANT	PASSERS-BY
HARRY EASTER	

There is only one setting, which is described in detail in the text. The action takes place on an evening in June, and on the morning and afternoon of the following day.

ELMER RICE

ELMER RICE (REIZENSTEIN) was born in New York City in 1892 and has lived there most of his life. Rice attended the public schools and received from the New York Law School in 1912 his LL.B. degree *cum laude*. At the age of twenty-one he secured a position as managing clerk in an important law office and seemed destined for a career in law. Then one day to the horror of his family he announced that he had resigned his position and was going to write plays. He sent copies of *On Trial* to two New York managers, both of whom accepted it at once. The play was a sweeping success, and the American imagination was fired by the Alger career of its youthful author—another flowering of the favorite American legend. Rice confesses to a deep dislike of the legal profession, a dislike he has dramatized in four of his plays. For twenty years he has been writing plays, some of them in collaboration with such authors as Hatcher Hughes, Dorothy Parker, and Philip Barry.

Rice is one of the most original playwrights, interested in experimenting; like O'Neill he scorns to repeat himself like most "popular" playwrights with their machine-made plays. His first play, *On Trial*, is almost trite in plot, and its dialogue is quite without literary charm, its novelty lies in its construction, termed by its author "an experiment in dramatic technique." *On Trial* was the first play to employ the flash-back method of telling a story, working backward from effect to cause—a means of creating suspense which became especially popular in the moving-picture. It was nine years before he again attracted critical attention, this time with *The Adding Machine* (1923), an expressionistic drama produced by the Theatre Guild. It was the first experiment in the new technique with an American setting. Expressionism abandons the method of realism and attempts to suggest the inner significance of events rather than portray the outside fact. Rice says, "To achieve this end the dramatist often finds it expedient to depart entirely from objective reality and to employ symbols, condensations, and a dozen devices which, to the conservative, must seem arbitrarily fantastic." The theme of *The Adding Machine* is one often used in expressionistic drama—the soul-destroying ugliness, intolerance, and monotony of the machine age. *Street Scene* (1929) was followed by two popular successes, *The Left Bank* (1931), a dull and vulgar play about some worthless expatriates in Paris, and *Counsellor-at-law* (1931), a drama of clever portraiture and skillful manipulation of detail, but of no particular theme or significance. In addition Rice has written a farce (*See Naples and Die*), a tragedy (*The Subway*), a comedy (*Wake Up, Jonathan*), and a humorous mystery play (*Cock Robin*). *We, the People* (1933), a kaleidoscopic picture of America during the depression, is notable for its naturalism and vigor and for the successful characterization of almost a small army of people, but it sags artistically under its weight of angry partisanship and propaganda. Elmer Rice is the most versatile of American dramatists.

Street Scene, says its author, "is an attempt to portray objectively certain aspects of life in a mean quarter of New York. It depends for its effect upon the introduction of a great variety of metropolitan types and the accumulation of innumerable incidents which are designed to produce a totality of effect in the same manner in which a painter achieves his effects by piling up innumerable minute brush strokes." In *Street Scene* Rice employs realism very successfully as a dramatic form. Balzac has been called a "Shakespeare smothered in detail"; many readers object to the unimaginative catalogue of details often

found in Balzac, Whitman, Sinclair Lewis, and Theodore Dreiser. But in Elmer Rice, as in Arnold Bennett and Thomas Wolfe, details enliven rather than smother the interest. Realism in *Street Scene* rises above mere photographic imitation of life—it is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Here one finds not only the minutiae of life, but the very rhythm of life; and through it all is an elusive beauty that redeems the play from sordid naturalism and lifts it above drab pageantry. Besides, there is an unobtrusive theme of universal implication—the faith that individuals need not be victims of environment, the assurance that each must find his strength within him.

The ending of the play is poignant and correct; after the intense melodrama of the murder scene, there is a Shakespearean-like alleviation at the close, but with no sacrificing of truth for that literary lie, the “happy ending.” The tragedy is swiftly effaced by the inevitable resumption of the daily habits of the other tenants. Prospective renters come on the stage, Mrs. Fiorentino resumes her window-seat, Mrs. Jones’s taste for morbid speculation is naturally whetted by the recent tragedy, a sailor and two girls stroll slowly across the stage—and the curtain falls. This is a long remove from the tableau endings of the old plays!

The author has recently revealed how he was badgered by social organizations and workers who protested against the unflattering portrait of Miss Simpson, the social worker. Remembering his own boyhood in New York and his acquaintance with all types of workers (he was for some time director of dramatics in a social settlement), he stubbornly refused to sanctify Miss Simpson. In the cinema version, however, to protect the sensibilities of movie-goers, all “damns” were removed and, strangely, all references to Mussolini and the Prince of Wales. When the WPA Theatre Project was launched, Rice was made regional director for New York, but he resigned when he felt that too strict a censorship was being imposed upon his productions. In 1934 two new plays, *Judgment Day* and *Between Two Worlds* were so harshly criticized in the New York press that Rice made a public reply, savage in tone, and announced that he was quitting the commercial theatre forever. *Judgment Day* is a tumultuous melodrama based directly on the Reichstag-fire trial. It is a furious attack on Hitler and his regime. The play was only moderately successful in New York but was enthusiastically received in London in 1937. *Between Two Worlds* is a talky play with a social purpose and darkly critical of practically everything in contemporary society. This play probably deserves the censure it received from the critics. Rice also is the author of a long, realistic novel of New York life, *Imperial City* (1937).

American Landscape (1938) is an essay-like thesis play which reflects the confusion of that tragic year, but which itself is confused and undramatic. *Two on an Island* (1940) is a simple O. Henry sort of romance in Manhattan, pleasant and warmly humorous. *Flight to the West* (1941) is an excellent melodrama, implausible but exciting, with an unusual setting—the interior of a huge Clipper plane en route from Lisbon to New York. *A New Life* (1943) is also anti-fascist, but a crude and feeble play. *Dream Girl* (1945) is a delightful and often very funny fantasy which won for its author the critics’ praise—for the first time in nearly fifteen years.

STREET SCENE

ACT I

SCENE.—*The exterior of a "walk-up" apartment house, in a mean quarter of New York. It is of ugly brownstone and was built in the '90's. Between the pavement of large, gray flagstones and the front of the house, is a deep and narrow "area-way," guarded by a rusted, ornamental iron railing. At the right, a steep flight of rotting wooden steps leads down to the cellar and to the janitor's apartment, the windows of which are just visible above the street level. Spanning the area-way is a "stoop" of four shallow stone steps, flanked on either side by a curved stone balustrade. Beyond the broad fourth step, another step leads to the double wooden outer doors of the house, and as these are open, the vestibule, and the wide, heavy glass-paneled entrance door beyond are visible. Above the outer doors is a glass fanlight, upon which appears the half obliterated house number. At the left side of the doorway is a sign which reads: "Flat To-Let. 6 Rooms. Steam Heat."*

On either side of the stoop are the two narrow windows of the ground-floor apartments. In one of the windows, at the left, is a sign bearing the legend: "Prof. Filippo Fiorentino. Music for all occasions. Also instruction." Above, are the six narrow windows of the first-floor apartments, and above that, the stone sills of the second-floor windows can just be seen.

To the left of the house, part of the adjoining building is visible: the motor entrance to a storage warehouse. Crude boarding across the large driveway and rough planks across the sidewalks and curb indicate that an excavation is in progress. On the boarding is painted in rude lettering: "Keep Out"; and at the curb is a small barrel bearing a sign with the words: "Street Closed." To the wall of the warehouse is affixed a brass plate, bearing the name: "Patrick Mulcahy Storage Warehouse Co. Inc."

To the right of the house, scaffolding and a wooden sidewalk indicate that the house next door is being demolished. On the scaffolding is a large, wooden sign reading: "Manhattan House-Wrecking Corp."

In the close foreground, below the level of the curb, is a mere suggestion of the street.

AT RISE: *The house is seen in the white glare of an arc-light, which is just off-stage to the right. The windows in the janitor's apartment are lighted, as are also those of the ground-floor apartment, at the right, and the two windows at the extreme left of the first-floor. A dim, red light is affixed to the boarding of the excavation at the left.*

In the lighted ground-floor window, at the right of the doorway, ABRAHAM KAPLAN is seated, in a rocking-chair, reading a Yiddish newspaper. He is a Russian Jew, well past sixty: clean-shaven, with thick gray hair, hooked nose, horn-rimmed spectacles. To the left of the doorway, GRETA FIORANTINO is leaning out of the window. She is forty, blonde, ruddy-faced and stout. She wears a wrapper of light, flowered material and a large pillow supports her left arm and her ample, uncorseted bosom. In her right hand is a folding paper fan, which she waves languidly.

Throughout the act and, indeed, throughout the play, there is constant noise. The noises of the city rise, fall, intermingle: the distant roar of "L" trains, automobile sirens, and the whistles of boats on the river; the rattle of trucks and the indeterminate clanking of metals; fire-engines, ambulances, musical instruments, a radio, dogs barking, and human voices calling, quarreling and screaming with laughter. The noises are subdued and in the background, but they never wholly cease.

A moment after the rise of the curtain, an elderly man enters at the right and walks into the house, exchanging a

nod with MRS. FIORENTINO. A MAN, munching peanuts, crosses the stage from left to right.

A VOICE [off-stage]. Char-lie!

[EMMA JONES appears at the left. She is middle-aged, tall and rather bony. She carries a small parcel.]

MRS. FIORENTINO [*she speaks with a faint German accent*]. Good evening, Mrs. Jones.

MRS. JONES [*stopping beneath MRS. FIORENTINO'S window*]. Good evenin', Mrs. F. Well, I hope it's hot enough for you.

MRS. FIORENTINO. Ain't it joost awful? When I was through with the dishes, you could take my clothes and joost wring them out.

MRS. JONES. Me, too. I ain't got a dry stitch on me.

MRS. FIORENTINO. I took off my shoes and my corset and made myself nice and comfortable, and to-night before I go to bed, I take a nice bath.

MRS. JONES. The trouble with a bath is, by the time you're all through, you're as hot as when you started. [*As OLGA OLSEN, a thin, anemic Scandinavian, with untidy fair hair, comes up the cellar steps and onto the sidewalk*] Good evenin', Mrs. Olsen. Awful hot, ain't it?

MRS. OLSEN [*coming over to the front of the stoop*]. Yust awful. Mrs. Forentiner, my hoosban' say vill you put de garbage on de doom-vaider?

MRS. FIORENTINO. Oh, sure, sure! I didn't hear him vistle [*As MRS. JONES starts to cross to the stoop*]. Don't go 'vay, Mrs. Jones.

[*She disappears from the window*]

MRS. OLSEN [*pushing back some wisps of hair*]. I tank is more cooler in de cellar.

MRS. JONES [*sitting on the stoop and fanning herself with her parcel*]. Phew! I'm just about ready to pass out.

MRS. OLSEN. My baby is crying, crying all day.

MRS. JONES. Yeah, I often say they mind the heat more'n we do. It's the same with dogs. My Queenie has jes' been layin' aroun' all day.

MRS. OLSEN. The baby get new teet'. It hurt her.

MRS. JONES. Don't tell me! If you was to know what I went t'roo with my Vincent. Half the time, he used to have convulsions

[WILLIE MAURRANT, a disorderly boy of twelve, appears at the left, on roller skates. He stops at the left of

the stoop and takes hold of the railing with both hands.]

WILLIE [*raising his head and bawling*]. Hey, Ma!

MRS. JONES [*disapprovingly*]. If you want your mother, why don't you go upstairs, instead o' yellin' like that?

WILLIE [*without paying the slightest attention to her, bawls louder*]. Hey, Ma!

MRS. MAURRANT [*appearing at one of the lighted first-floor windows*]. What do you want, Willie?

[*She is a fair woman of forty, who looks her age, but is by no means unattractive*]

WILLIE. Gimme a dime, will ya? I wanna git a cone.

MRS. MAURRANT [*to MRS. OLSEN and MRS. JONES*]. Good evening.

MRS. OLSEN and MRS. JONES. Good evenin', Mrs. Maurrant.

MRS. MAURRANT [*to WILLIE*]. How many cones did you have to-day, already?

WILLIE [*belligerently*]. I'm hot! All de other guys is havin' cones. Come on, gimme a dime

MRS. MAURRANT. Well, it's the last one. [*She disappears*]

MRS. JONES. You certainly don't talk very nice to your mother. [*To MRS. OLSEN*] I'd like to hear one o' mine talkin' that way to me!

MRS. MAURRANT [*appearing at the window*]. Remember, this is the last one.

WILLIE. Aw right. T'row it down.

[MRS. FIORENTINO reappears and leans out of the window again]

MRS. MAURRANT. Catch it!

[*She throws out a twist of newspaper.*]

WILLIE scrambles for it, hastily extracts the dime, drops the newspaper on the pavement and skates off, at the left.]

MRS. FIORENTINO [*twisting her neck upwards*]. Good evening, Mrs. Maurrant.

MRS. MAURRANT. Good evening, Mrs. Fiorentino. [*Calling after WILLIE*] And don't come home too late, Willie!

[*But WILLIE is already out of earshot*]

MRS. FIORENTINO. Why don't you come down and be sociable?

MRS. MAURRANT. I'm keeping some supper warm for my husband. [*A slight pause*] Well, maybe I will for just a minute.

[*She leaves the window. The lights in her apartment go out*]

MRS. FIORENTINO. She has her troubles with dot Willie.

MRS. JONES. I guess it don't bother

her much. [*Significantly.*] She's got her mind on other things.

MRS. OLSEN [*looking about cautiously and coming over to the left of the stoop between the two women.*] He vas comin' again to-day to see her.

MRS. JONES [*rising excitedly, and leaning over the balustrade.*] Who—Sankey?

MRS. OLSEN [*nodding.*] Yes.

MRS. FIORENTINO. Are you sure, Mrs. Olsen?

MRS. OLSEN. I seen him. I vas doostin' de halls.

MRS. FIORENTINO. Dot's terrible!

MRS. JONES. Wouldn't you think a woman her age, with a grown-up daughter—!

MRS. OLSEN. Two times already dis week, I see him here.

MRS. JONES. I seen him, meself, one day last week. He was comin' out o' the house, jest as I was comin' in wit' de dog. "Good mornin', Mrs. Jones," he says to me, as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. "Good mornin'," says I, lookin' him straight in the eye— [*Breaking off suddenly, as the vestibule door opens.*] Be careful, she's comin'.

[*MRS MAURRANT comes out of the house and stops, for a moment, on the top step.*]

MRS. MAURRANT. Goodness, ain't it hot! I think it's really cooler upstairs.

[*She comes down the steps to the sidewalk.*]

MRS. JONES. Yeah, jes' what I was sayin', meself I feel like a wet dish-rag.

MRS. MAURRANT. I would have liked to go to the Park concert to-night, if Rose had got home in time I don't get much chance to go to concerts. My husband don't care for music But Rose is more like me—just crazy about it

MRS. JONES. Ain't she home yet?

MRS. MAURRANT. No I think maybe she had to work overtime

MRS. JONES. Well, all mine ever comes home for is to sleep.

MRS. FIORENTINO. The young girls nowadays—!

MRS. OLSEN. My sister was writin' me in Schweden is same t'ing—

MRS. JONES. It ain't only the young ones, either.

[*A baby is heard crying in the cellar.*]

OLSEN'S VOICE [*from the cellar.*] Ol—ga!

[*A MAN, in a dinner jacket and straw hat, appears at the left, whistling a*

jazz tune. He crosses the stage and goes off at the right.]

MRS. OLSEN [*hurrying to the right.*] I betcha the baby, she's cryin' again.

OLSEN'S VOICE. Ol—ga!

MRS. OLSEN. Yes. I come right away.

[*She goes down the cellar steps.*]

MRS. JONES. What them foreigners don't know about bringin' up babies would fill a book.

MRS. FIORENTINO [*a little huffily.*] Foreigners know joost as much as other people, Mrs. Jones. My mother had eight children and she brought up seven.

MRS. JONES [*tactfully.*] Well, I'm not sayin' anythin' about the Joimans. The Joimans is different—more like the Irish. What I'm talkin' about is all them square-heads an' Polacks—[*with a glance in KAPLAN'S direction.*]—an' Jews.

BUCHANAN'S VOICE [*from a third-story window.*] Good evening, ladies.

THE WOMEN [*in unison, looking upward.*] Oh, good evening, Mr. Buchanan.

BUCHANAN'S VOICE. Well, is it hot enough for you?

MRS. JONES. I'll say!

BUCHANAN'S VOICE. I was just sayin' to my wife, it's not the heat I mind as much as it is the humidity.

MRS. JONES. Yeah, that's it! Makes everything stick to you.

MRS. MAURRANT. How's your wife feeling in this weather?

BUCHANAN'S VOICE. She don't complain about the weather. But she's afraid to go out of the house. Thinks maybe she couldn't get back in time, in case—you know.

MRS. JONES [*to the other women.*] I was the same way with my Vincent—afraid to take a step. But with Mae, I was up an' out till the very last minute.

MRS. FIORENTINO [*craning her neck upward.*] Mr. Buchanan, do you think she would eat some nice minestrone—good Italian vegetable-soup?

BUCHANAN'S VOICE. Why, much obliged, Mrs. F., but I really can't get her to eat a thing.

MRS. JONES [*rising and looking upward.*] Tell her she ought to keep up her strength. She's got two to feed, you know.

BUCHANAN'S VOICE. Excuse me, she's calling.

MRS. JONES [*crossing to the railing, at the left of MRS. FIORENTINO.*] You'd think it was him that was havin' the baby.

MRS. MAURRANT. She's such a puny little thing.

MRS. FIORENTINO [*with a sigh*]. Well, that's the way it goes. The little skinny ones have them and the big strong ones don't.

MRS. MAURRANT. Don't take it that way, Mrs. Fiorentino. You're a young woman, yet.

MRS. FIORENTINO [*shaking her head*]. Oh, well!

MRS. JONES. My aunt, Mrs. Barclay, was forty-two— [*Breaking off.*] Oh, good evenin', Mr. Maurrant!

[*FRANK MAURRANT appears, at the left, with his coat on his arm. He is tall, powerfully built man of forty-five, with a rugged, grim face*]

MRS. FIORENTINO. Good evening, Mr. Maurrant.

MAURRANT. 'Evenin'. [*He goes to the stoop and seats himself, mopping his face.*] Some baby of a day!

MRS. MAURRANT. Have you been working all this while, Frank?

MAURRANT. I'll say I've been workin'. Dress-rehearsin' since twelve o'clock, with lights—in this weather. An' to-morra I gotta go to Stamford, for the try-out.

MRS. MAURRANT. Oh, you're going to Stamford to-morrow?

MAURRANT. Yeah, the whole crew's goin'. [*Looking at her*] What about it?

MRS. MAURRANT. Why, nothing. Oh, I've got some cabbage and potatoes on the stove for you.

MAURRANT. I just had a plate o' beans at the Coffee Pot. All I want is a good wash. I been sweatin' like a horse, all day.

[*He rises and goes up the steps*]

MRS. FIORENTINO. My husband, too; he's sweating terrible.

MRS. JONES. Mine don't. There's some people that just naturally do, and then there's others that don't.

MAURRANT [*to MRS. MAURRANT*]. Is anybody upstairs?

MRS. MAURRANT. No. Willie's off playing with the boys. I can't keep him home.

MAURRANT. What about Rose?

MRS. MAURRANT. I think maybe she's working overtime.

MAURRANT. I never heard o' nobody workin' nights in a real-estate office.

MRS. MAURRANT. I thought maybe on account of the office being closed to-morrow— [*To the others.*] Mr. Jacobson, the head of the firm, died Tuesday, and to-morrow's the funeral, so I thought maybe—

MRS. JONES. Yeah. Leave it to the

Jews not to lose a workin' day, wi makin' up for it.

MAURRANT [*to MRS. MAURRANT*]. She shouldn't be stayin' out nights wi us knowin' where she is.

MRS. MAURRANT. She didn't : word about not coming home.

MAURRANT. That's what I'm s ain't it? It's a mother's place to what her daughter's doin'.

MRS. FIORENTINO [*soothingly*]. Things are different nowadays, Mr Maurrant, from what they used to be.

MAURRANT. Not in my family, t! not goin' to be no different. Not so as I got somethin' to say.

A GIRL'S VOICE [*off-stage*]. Rover! Red Rover! Let Freddie over!

[*GEORGE JONES, a short, plump, red-faced man, cigar in n comes out of the house, as M. RANT enters the vestibule*]

JONES Hello, Mr Maurrant.

MAURRANT [*curtly*]. 'Evenin'. [*He enters the house. JONES looks him in surprise, for a moment.*

MAURRANT seats herself on stoop]

JONES. Good evenin', ladies.

MRS. FIORENTINO and MAURRANT. Good evening, Mr

JONES [*seating himself on the balustrade*]. What's the matter with hubby, Mrs Maurrant? Guess he's the heat, huh?

MRS. MAURRANT. He's been w! till just now and I guess he's a little MRS. JONES. Men are all alike T all easy to get along with, so lo! everything's goin' the way they want But once it don't—good night!

MRS. FIORENTINO. Yes, dot's Mrs Jones.

JONES. Yeah, an' what about wo

MRS. MAURRANT. I guess it's the same with the women. I often it's a shame that people don't get better, together. People ought to be to live together in peace and quiet, out making each other miserable.

MRS. JONES. The way I look you get married for better or wors if it turns out to be worse, why al can do is make the best of it.

MRS. MAURRANT. I think the ble is people don't make allowances. don't realize that everybody wants a word, now and then. After all, we human, and we can't just go aloi

ourselves, all the time, without ever getting a kind word.

[While she is speaking, STEVE SANKEY appears, at the right. He is in the early thirties, and is prematurely bald. He is rather flashily dressed, in a patently cheap, light-gray suit, and a straw hat, with a plaid band. As he appears, MRS. JONES and MRS. FIORENTINO exchange a swift, significant look.]

SANKEY [stopping at the right of the stoop and removing his hat]. Good evening, folks! Is it hot enough for you?

THE OTHERS. Good evening.

MRS. MAURRANT [self-consciously].

Good evening, Mr. Sankey

[Throughout the scene, MRS. MAURRANT and SANKEY try vainly to avoid looking at each other.]

SANKEY. I don't know when we've had a day like this. Hottest June fifteenth in forty-one years. It was up to ninety-four at three P.M.

JONES. Six dead in Chicago. An' no relief in sight, the evenin' paper says.

[MAURRANT appears at the window of his apartment and stands there, looking out.]

MRS. FIORENTINO. It's joost awful!

SANKEY. Well, it's good for the milk business. You know the old saying, it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good.

MRS. MAURRANT. Yes You hardly get the milk in the morning, before it turns sour.

MRS. JONES. I'm just after pourin' half-a-bottle down the sink.

[MAURRANT leaves the window.]

MRS. FIORENTINO. You shouldn't throw it away You should make—what do you call it?—schmier-kas'.

SANKEY. Oh, I know what you mean—pot-cheese My wife makes it, too, once in a while.

MRS. MAURRANT. Is your wife all right again, Mr. Sankey? You were telling me last time, she had a cold.

[MRS. JONES and MRS. FIORENTINO exchange another look.]

SANKEY. Was I? Oh, sure, sure That was a couple weeks ago. Yes, sure, she's all right again. That didn't amount to anything much.

MRS. JONES. You got a family, too, ain't you?

SANKEY. Yes. Yes, I have. Two little girls. Well, I got to be going along. [He goes to the left of the stoop and stops again.] I told my wife I'd go down to the drugstore and get her some nice cold

ginger-ale. You want something to cool you off in this kind of weather.

MRS. JONES [as SANKEY passes her]. If you ask me, all that gassy stuff don't do you a bit of good.

SANKEY. I guess you're right, at that. Still it cools you off. Well, good night, folks. See you all again.

[He strolls off, at the left, with affected nonchalance; but when he is almost out of sight, he casts a swift look back at MRS. MAURRANT. A dowdy WOMAN, wheeling a dilapidated baby carriage, appears at the left, and crosses the stage.]

JONES. What's his name—Sankey?

MRS. JONES. Yeah—Mr. Sankey.

MRS. MAURRANT. He's the collector for the milk company.

[AGNES CUSHING comes out of the house. She is a thin, dried-up woman, past fifty.]

MISS CUSHING [coming down the steps]. Good evening.

THE OTHERS. Good evening, Miss Cushing.

MRS. MAURRANT. How is your mother to-day, Miss Cushing?

MISS CUSHING [pausing at the left of the stoop]. Why, she complains of the heat. But I'm afraid it's really her heart. She's seventy-two, you know. I'm just going down to the corner to get her a little ice cream.

[As she goes off at the left, OLSEN, the janitor, a lanky Swede, struggles up the cellar steps with a large, covered, tin garbage-barrel. The others look around in annoyance, as he bangs the garbage barrel upon the pavement.]

OLSEN. Phew! Hot!

[He mops his face and neck with a dingy handkerchief, then lights his pipe and leans against the railing.]

MRS. JONES [significantly, as she crosses to the center of the stoop and sits]. Between you and I, I don't think her mother's got long for this world. Once the heart starts goin' back on you—!

MRS. MAURRANT. Poor soul! She'll have nothing at all when her mother dies. She's just spent her whole life looking after her mother.

MRS. JONES. It's no more than her duty, is it?

MRS. FIORENTINO. You could not expect that she should neglect her mother.

A VOICE [off-stage]. Char-lie!

MRS. MAURRANT. It's not a matter of neglecting. Only—it seems as if a per-

son should get more out of life than just looking after somebody else.

MRS. JONES. Well, I hope to tell you, after all I've done for mine, I expect 'em to look after me, in my old age.

MRS. MAURRANT. I don't know. It seems to me you might just as well not live at all, as the way she does. [*Rising, with affected casualness*] I don't know what's become of Willie. I think I'd better walk down to the corner and look for him. My husband don't like it if he stays out late.

[*She goes off, at the left. They all watch her, in dead silence, until she is out of earshot. Then the storm breaks*]

MRS. JONES [*rising excitedly*]. Didja get that? Goin' to look for Willie! Can ya beat it?

MRS. FIORENTINO. It's joost terrible!

JONES. You think she's just goin' out lookin' for this guy Sankey?

MRS. JONES [*scornfully*]. Ain't men the limit? What do you think he come walkin' by here for? [*Mincingly*] Just strolled by to get the wife a little ginger-ale. A fat lot he cares whether his wife has ginger-ale!

MRS. FIORENTINO. Two little girls he's got, too!

JONES. Yeah, that ain't right—a bird like that, wit' a wife an' two kids of his own

MRS. FIORENTINO. The way he stands there and looks and looks at her!

MRS. JONES. An' what about the looks she was givin' him! [*Seating herself again*] You'd think he was the Prince of Wales, instead of a milk-collector. And didja get the crack about not seein' him for two weeks?

MRS. FIORENTINO. And joost to-day he was upstairs, Mrs. Olsen says.

[*OLSEN approaches the stoop and removes his pipe from his mouth*]

OLSEN [*pointing upwards*]. Some day, hee hoosban' is killing him.

[*He replaces his pipe and goes back to his former position.*]

MRS. FIORENTINO. Dot would be terrible!

JONES. He's li'ble to, at that. You know, he's got a wicked look in his eye, dat baby has.

MRS. JONES. Well, it's no more than he deserves, the little rabbit—goin' around breakin' up people's homes. [*Mockingly*] Good evenin', folks! Jes' like Whozis on the radio.

JONES. D'ya think Maurrant is wise to what's goin' on?

MRS. JONES. Well, if he ain't, there must be somethin' the matter with him. But you never can tell about men. They're as blind as bats. An' what I always say is, in a case like that, the husband or the wife is always the last one to find out.

[*MISS CUSHING, carrying a small paper bag, hurries on, at the left, in a state of great excitement.*]

MISS CUSHING [*breathlessly, as she comes up the left of the stoop*]. Say, what do you think! I just saw them together—the two of them!

MRS. JONES [*rising excitedly*]. What did I tell you?

MRS. FIORENTINO. Where did you see them, Miss Cushing?

MISS CUSHING. Why, right next door, in the entrance to the warehouse. They were standing right close together. And he had his hands up on her shoulders. It's awful, isn't it?

JONES. Looks to me like this thing is getting pretty serious.

MRS. JONES. You didn't notice if they was kissin' or anythin', did you?

MISS CUSHING. Well, to tell you the truth, Mrs. Jones, I was so ashamed for her, that I hardly looked at all.

JONES [*sotto voce, as the house door opens*]. Look out! Maurrant is coming.

[*A conspirators' silence falls upon them, as MAURRANT, pipe in mouth, comes out of the house*]

MISS CUSHING [*tremulously*]. Good evening, Mr. Maurrant.

MAURRANT [*on the top step*]. 'Evenin'. [*To the others.*] What's become of me wife?

MRS. JONES. Why, she said she was goin' around the corner to look for Willie.

MAURRANT [*grunts*]. Oh.

MRS. JONES. They need a lot of lookin' after, when they're that age.

[*A momentary silence.*]

MISS CUSHING. Well, I think I'd better get back to my mother.

[*She goes up the steps.*]

MRS. JONES, MRS. FIORENTINO, and JONES. Good night, Miss Cushing.

MISS CUSHING. Good night. [*As she passes MAURRANT.*] Good night, Mr. Maurrant.

MAURRANT. 'Night.

[*She looks at him swiftly, and goes into the vestibule*]

A BOY'S VOICE [*off-stage*]. Red Rover! Red Rover! Let Mary come over! [*As MISS CUSHING enters the house.*]

SHIRLEY KAPLAN appears at the ground-floor window, at the extreme right, with a glass of steaming tea in her hand. She is a dark, unattractive Jewess, past thirty. She wears a light house-dress. KAPLAN goes on reading.]

HIRLEY [to the neighbors outside; speaks with the faintest trace of accent]. Good evening.

THE OTHERS [not very cordially]. Od evenin'.

HIRLEY. It's been a terrible day, n't it?

ONES and MRS. JONES. Yeah.

HIRLEY [going to the other window]. Papa, here's your tea. Haven't you shed your paper yet? It makes it so with the lights on.

KAPLAN [lowering his newspaper]. Oil it! Oil right! Put it out! Put it out! ere is anahoo, notting to read in de ers Notting but deevorce, skendal, and iders.

He speaks with a strong accent, over-emphatically and with much gesticulation. He puts his paper away, removes his glasses, and starts to drink his tea.]

HIRLEY. There doesn't seem to be a ath of air, anywhere

No one answers. SHIRLEY goes away from the window and puts out the lights.]

MRS. JONES [sotto voce]. You uldn't think anybody would want to d that Hebrew writin', would ya? I it's see how they make head or tail out it, meself.

ONES I guess if you learn it when i're a kid—

MRS. JONES [suddenly]. Well, will i look at your hubby, Mrs. F.! He's e got his hands full!

She looks towards the left, greatly amused. SHIRLEY reappears at the window at the extreme right, and seats herself on the sill.]

MRS. FIORENTINO [leaning far out]. st look at him! [Calling] Lippo, be shul you don't drop any!

LIPPO [off-stage]. 'Allo, Margherita! *They all watch in amusement, as Filippo Fiorentino, a fat Italian, with thick black hair and mustache, comes on at the left. He is clutching a violin in his left arm and balancing five ice-cream cones in his right hand.]*

LIPPO [shouting]. Who wantsa da ice-cream cone? Nice fresha ice-cream cone!

MRS. FIORENTINO. Lippo, you will drop them!

MRS. JONES [going up to him]. Here, gimme your violin.

[She relieves him of the violin and he shifts two of the cones to his left hand.]

LIPPO [as MRS. JONES hands the violin to MRS. FIORENTINO]. T'ank you, Meeses Jones. 'Ere's for you a nica, fresha ice-cream cone.

[MRS. FIORENTINO puts the violin on a chair behind her.]

MRS. JONES [taking a cone]. Why thank you very much, Mr. F.

LIPPO [going up to the window]. Meeses Fiorentino, 'ere's for you a nica, fresha ice-cream cone.

MRS. FIORENTINO [taking the cone]. It makes me too fat.

LIPPO. Ah, no! Five, ten poun' more, nobody can tell da deef!

[He laughs aloud at his own joke and crosses to the stoop.]

MRS. JONES [enjoying her cone]. Ain't he a sketch, though?

LIPPO. Meester Jones, you eata da cone, ha?

JONES. Why, yeah, I will at that. Thanks. Thanks.

LIPPO. Meester Maurrant?

MAURRANT. Naw; I got me pipe.

LIPPO. You lika better da pipe den da ice cream? *[Crossing the stoop.]* Meesa Kaplan, nica, fresha cone, yes?

SHIRLEY. No, thanks. I really don't want any.

LIPPO. Meester Kaplan, yes?

KAPLAN [waving his hand]. No, no! Tenks, tenks!

MRS. JONES [to JONES]. You oughta pay Mr. F. for the cones.

JONES [reluctantly reaching into his pocket]. Why, sure.

LIPPO [excitedly]. Ah, no, no! I don't taka da mon'. I'm treata da whole crowd. I deen' know was gona be such a biga crowd or I bringa doz'. *[Crossing to OLSEN.]* Meester Olsen, you lika da cone, ha?

OLSEN. Sure. Much oblige'.

[He takes the pipe from his mouth and solidly licks the cone.]

LIPPO [seating himself on the stoop, with a long sigh of relaxation]. Aaah! *[He tastes the cone and smacking his lips, looks about for approval.]* Ees tasta good, ha?

JONES [his mouth full]. You betcha!

MRS. JONES. It cools you off a little.

LIPPO. Sure. Dassa right. Cool you off. *[He pulls at his clothing and sits on the*

stoop.] I'm a wat, wat—like I jus' come outa da bad-tub. Ees 'ota like hal in da Park. Two, t'ree t'ousan' people, everybody sweatin'—ees smal lika menageria.

[While he is speaking, ALICE SIMPSON, a tall, spare spinster, appears at the right. She goes up the steps, enters the vestibule, and is about to push one of the buttons on the side wall.]

MRS. JONES [*sotto voce*]. She's from the Charities. [Coming over to the stoop and calling into the vestibule.] If you're lookin' for Mrs. Hildebrand, she ain't home yet.

MISS SIMPSON [*coming to the doorway*]. Do you know when she'll be back?

MRS. JONES. Well, she oughta be hush by now. She jus' went around' to the Livingston. That's the pitcher-theayter.

MISS SIMPSON [*outraged*]. You mean she's gone to a moving-picture show?

OLSEN [*calmly*]. She's comin' now.

LIPPO [*rising to his feet and calling vehemently*]. Mees Hil'brand! Hurry up! Hurry up! Ees a lady here.

[He motions violently to her to hurry.]

LAURA HILDEBRAND appears at the right, with her two children, CHARLIE and MARY. She is a small, rather young woman, with a manner of perpetual bewilderment. Both children are chewing gum, and MARY comes on skipping a rope and chanting: "Apple, peach, pear, plum, banana." CHARLIE carefully avoids all the cracks in the sidewalk.]

MISS SIMPSON [*coming out on the steps*]. Well, good evening, Mrs. Hildebrand!

MRS. HILDEBRAND [*flustered*]. Good evening, Miss Simpson.

MISS SIMPSON. Where have you been?—to a moving-picture show?

MRS. HILDEBRAND. Yes ma'am.

MISS SIMPSON. And where did you get the money?

MRS. HILDEBRAND. It was only seventy-five cents.

MISS SIMPSON. Seventy-five cents is a lot, when you're being dispossessed and dependent upon charity. I suppose it came out of the money I gave you to buy groceries with.

MRS. HILDEBRAND. We always went, Thursday nights, to the pictures when my husband was home.

MISS SIMPSON. Yes, but your husband isn't home. And as far as anybody knows, he has no intention of coming home.

KAPLAN [*leaning forward out of his*

window]. Ees dis your conception of charity?

SHIRLEY. Papa, why do you interfere?

MISS SIMPSON [*to KAPLAN*]. You'll please be good enough to mind your own business.

KAPLAN. You should go home and read in your Bible de life of Christ.

MRS. JONES [*to MRS. FIORENTINO*]. Will you listen to who's talkin' about Christ!

MISS SIMPSON [*turning her back on KAPLAN and speaking to MRS. HILDEBRAND*]. You may as well understand right now that nobody's going to give you any money to spend on moving-picture shows.

LIPPO. Ah, wotsa da matter, lady? [He thrusts his hand into his pocket and takes out a fistful of coins.] 'Ere, you taka da mon', you go to da pitcha, ever' night. [He forces the coins into MRS. HILDEBRAND'S hand.] An' here's for da bam-bini.

[He gives each child a nickel.]

MRS. FIORENTINO [*to MRS. JONES*]. Dot's why we never have money.

MRS. HILDEBRAND [*bewildered*]. I really oughtn't to take it.

LIPPO. Sure! Sure! I got plenta mon'.

MISS SIMPSON [*disgustedly*]. We'd better go inside. I can't talk to you here, with all these people.

MRS. HILDEBRAND [*meekly*]. Yes, ma'am.

[She follows MISS SIMPSON into the house, her children clinging to her.]

MRS. JONES. Wouldn't she give you a pain?

LIPPO. I tella you da whola troubl'. She's a don' gotta nobody to sleepa wit'.

[The men laugh.]

MRS. JONES [*to MRS. FIORENTINO*]. Ain't he the limit!

MRS. FIORENTINO [*greatly pleased*]. Tt!

LIPPO. Somebody go sleepa wit' her, she's alla right, Meester Jones, 'ow 'bout you?

[SHIRLEY, embarrassed, leaves the window.]

JONES [*with a sheepish grin*]. Naw, I guess not.

LIPPO. Wot'sa matter? You 'fraid you' wife, ha? Meester Maurrant, how 'bout you?

[MAURRANT emits a short laugh.]

MRS. FIORENTINO [*delighted*]. Lippo, you're just awful.

LIPPO [*enjoying himself hugely*]. Alla ri'. Ahma gonna go myself!

[*He laughs boisterously. The others laugh too.*]

MRS. JONES [*suddenly*]. Here's your wife, now, Mr. Maurrant.

[*A sudden silence falls upon them all, as MRS. MAURRANT approaches at the left. A swift glance apprises her of MAURRANT'S presence.*]

LIPPO. 'Allo, Meeses Maurrant. Why you don' come to da concerto?

MRS. MAURRANT. Well, I was waiting for Rose, but she didn't get home. [*To MAURRANT, as she starts to go up the steps.*] Is she home yet, Frank?

MAURRANT. No, she ain't. Where you been all this while?

MRS. MAURRANT. Why, I've been out looking for Willie.

MAURRANT. I'll give him a good fannin', when I get hold of him.

MRS. MAURRANT. Ah, don't whip him, Frank, please don't. All boys are wild like that, when they're that age.

JONES. Sure! My boy Vincent was the same way. An' look at him, to-day—drivin' his own taxi an' makin' a good livin'!

LIPPO [*leaning on the balustrade*]. Ees jussa same t'ing wit' me. W'en Ahm twelva year, I run away—I don' never see my parent again.

MAURRANT. That's all right about that. But it ain't gonna be the way in my family.

MRS. MAURRANT [*as MISS SIMPSON comes out of the house*]. Look out, Frank. Let the lady pass.

MISS SIMPSON. Excuse me.

[*They make way for her, as she comes down the steps. MRS. MAURRANT seats herself on the stoop.*]

LIPPO. Meeses Hil'brand, she gotta de tougha luck, ha! To-morra, dey gonna t'row 'er out in da street, ha?

MISS SIMPSON [*stopping at the right of the stoop and turning towards him*]. Yes, they are. And if she has any place to sleep, it will only be because the Charities find her a place. And you'd be doing her a much more neighborly act, if you helped her to realize the value of money, instead of encouraging her to throw it away.

LIPPO [*with a deprecatory shrug*]. Ah, lady, no! I give 'er coupla dollar, maka 'er feel good, maka me feel good—dat don' 'urt nobody.

[*SHIRLEY reappears at the window.*]

MISS SIMPSON. Yes it does. It's bad for her character.

KAPLAN [*throwing away his cigarette and laughing aloud*]. Ha! You mek me leff!

MISS SIMPSON [*turning angrily*]. Nobody's asking your opinion.

KAPLAN. Dot's oll right. I'm taling you wit'out esking. You hoid maybe already dot poem:

"Organized charity, measured and iced,
In der name of a kushus, statistical
Christ."

MISS SIMPSON [*fiercely*]. All the same, you Jews are the first ones to run to the Charities.

[*She strides angrily off at the right.*]

LIPPO, affecting a mincing gait, pretends to follow her.]

KAPLAN [*leaning out of the window*]. Come back and I'll tal you somet'ing will maybe do good your kerecter.

MRS. FIORENTINO. Lippo!

MRS. JONES [*highly amused*]. Look at him, will ya?

LIPPO [*laughing and waving his hand*]. Gooda-bye, lady!

[*He comes back to the stoop.*]

KAPLAN [*to the others*]. Dey tou out in de street a mudder vit' two children, and dis female comes and preaches to her bourgeois morelity.

MRS. JONES [*to MRS. FIORENTINO*]. He's shootin' off his face again.

SHIRLEY. Papa, it's time to go to bed!

KAPLAN [*irritably*]. Lat me alone, Shoiley. [*Rising and addressing the others.*] Dees cherities are notting but anudder dewise for popperizing de verking-klesses. W'en de lendlords steal from de verkers a million dollars, dey give to de Cherities a t'ousand.

MAURRANT. Yeah? Well, who's puttin' her out on the street? What about the lan'lord here? He's a Jew, ain't he?

MRS. JONES. I'll say he's a Jew! Isaac Cohen!

KAPLAN. Jews oder not Jews—wot has dis got to do vit' de question? I'm not toking relegion, I'm toking economics. So long as de keptalist klesses—

MAURRANT [*interrupting*]. I'm talkin' about if you don't pay your rent you gotta move.

MRS. MAURRANT. It doesn't seem right, though, to put a poor woman out of her home.

MRS. FIORENTINO. And for her husband to run away—dot vos not right either.

LIPPO. I betcha 'e's got 'nudder woman. He find a nice blonda chicken, 'e run away.

MRS. JONES. There ought to be a law against women goin' around, stealin' other women's husbands.

MRS. FIORENTINO. Yes, dot's right, Mrs. Jones.

MAURRANT. Well, what I'm sayin' is, it ain't the landlord's fault.

KAPLAN. Eet's de folt of our economic system. So long as de institution of priwate property exeests, de verkers will be at de moicy of de property-owning klesses.

MAURRANT. That's a lot o' bushwa! I'm a woikin' man, see? I been payin' dues for twenty-two years in the Stage-Hands Union. If we're not gettin' what we want, we call a strike, see?—and then we get it.

LIPPO. Sure! Eees same wit' me. We gotta Musician Union. We getta pay for da rehears', we getta pay for da over-time —

SHIRLEY. That's all right when you belong to a strong union. But when a union is weak, like the Teachers' Union, it doesn't do you any good.

MRS. JONES [*to MRS. FIORENTINO*]. Can y' imagine that?—teachers belongin' to a union!

KAPLAN [*impatiently*]. Oll dese unions eecomplish notting wotever. Oll dis does not toch de fundamental problem. So long as de tuls of industry are in de hands of de kepitalist klesses, ve vill hev exploitation and sloms and —

MAURRANT. T' hell wit' all dat hooley! I'm makin' a good livin' an' I'm not doin' any kickin'.

OLSEN [*removing his pipe from his mouth*]. Ve got prosperity, in dis country.

JONES. You said somethin'!

KAPLAN. Sure, for de reech is planty prosperity! Mister Morgan rides in his yacht and upstairs dey toin a voman vit' two children in de street.

MAURRANT. And if you was to elect a Socialist president to-morra, it would be the same thing.

MRS. FIORENTINO. Yes, dot's right, Mr. Maurrant.

JONES. You're right!

KAPLAN. Who's toking about electing presidents? Ve must put de tuls of industry in de hends of de vorking-klesses and dis ken be accomplished only by a sushal revolution!

MAURRANT. Yeah? Well, we don't want no revolutions in this country, see?

[*General chorus of assent.*]

MRS. JONES. I know all about that stuff—teachin' kids there ain't no Gawd an' that their gran'fathers was monkeys.

JONES [*rising, angrily*]. Free love, like they got in Russia, huh?

[*KAPLAN makes a gesture of impatient disgust, and sinks back into his chair*]

MAURRANT. There's too goddam many o' you Bolshevikis runnin' aroun' loose. If you don't like the way things is run here, why in hell don't you go back where you came from?

SHIRLEY. Everybody has a right to his own opinion, Mr. Maurrant.

MAURRANT. Not if they're against law and order, they ain't. We don't want no foreigners comin' in, tellin' us how to run things.

MRS. FIORENTINO. It's nothing wrong to be a foreigner. Many good people are foreigners.

LIPPO. Sure! Looka Eetalian. Looka Cristoforo Colombo! 'E'sa firs' man discov' America—e's Eetalian, jussa like me

MAURRANT. I'm not sayin' anythin' about that —

OLSEN [*removing his pipe*]. Firs' man is Lief Ericson.

LIPPO [*excitedly, going towards OLSEN*]. Wassa dat?

OLSEN. Firs' man is Lief Ericson.

LIPPO. No! No! Colombo! Cristoforo Colomb'—e'sa firs' man discov' America—ever-body knowa dat!

[*He looks about appealingly*]

MRS. JONES. Why, sure, everybody knows that.

JONES. Every kid learns that in school.

SHIRLEY. Ericson was really the first discoverer —

LIPPO [*yelling*]. No! Colomb!

SHIRLEY. But Columbus was the first to open America to settlement.

LIPPO [*happily, as he goes back to the stoop*]. Sure, dassa wot Ahm say—Colomb' is firs'.

OLSEN. Firs' man is Lief Ericson.

[*LIPPO taps his forehead, significantly.*]

LIPPO. Looka wot Eetalian do for America—e build bridge, 'e build railroad, 'e build subway, 'e dig sewer. Wit'out Eetalian, ees no America.

JONES. Like I heard a feller sayin': the Eye-talians built New York, the Irish run it an' the Jews own it. [*Laughter*]

MRS. FIORENTINO [*convulsed*]. Oh! Dot's funny!

JONES [*pleased with his success*]. Yep; the Jews own it all right.

MAURRANT. Yeah, an' they're the ones that's doin' all the kickin'.

SHIRLEY. It's no disgrace to be a Jew, Mr. Maurrant.

MAURRANT. I'm not sayin' it is. All I'm sayin' is, what we need in this country is a little more respect for law an' order. Look at what's happenin' to people's homes, with all this divorce an' one thing an' another. Young girls goin' around smokin' cigarettes an' their skirts up around their necks. An' a lot o' long-haired guys talkin' about free love an' birth control an' breakin' up decent people's homes. I tell you it's time somethin' was done to put the fear o' God into people!

MRS. JONES. Good for you, Mr. Maurrant!

JONES. You're damn right.

MRS. FIORENTINO. Dot's right, Mr. Maurrant!

MRS. MAURRANT. Sometimes, I think maybe they're only trying to get something out of life.

MAURRANT. Get somethin', huh? Somethin' they oughtn't to have, is that it?

MRS. MAURRANT. No; I was only thinking——

MAURRANT. Yeah, you were only thinkin', huh?

KAPLAN [*rising to his feet again*]. De family is primerly an economic institution.

MRS. JONES [*to MRS. FIORENTINO*]. He's in again.

KAPLAN. W'en priwate property is ebolished, de family will no longer hev eny reason to exeest.

SHIRLEY. Can't you keep quiet, Papa?

MAURRANT [*belligerently*]. Yeah? Is that so? No reason to exist, huh? Well, it's gonna exist, see? Children respectin' their parents an' doin' what they're told, get me? An' husbands an' wives, lovin' an' honorin' each other, like they said they would, when they was spliced—an' any dirty sheeny that says different is li'ble to get his head busted open, see?

MRS. MAURRANT [*springing to her feet*]. Frank!

SHIRLEY [*trying to restrain KAPLAN*]. Papa!

KAPLAN. Oll right! I should argue vit a low-kless gengster.

MAURRANT [*raging*]. Who's a gangster? Why, you goddam——

[*He makes for the balustrade.*]

MRS. MAURRANT [*seizing his arm*]. Frank!

JONES [*seizing the other arm*]. Hey! Wait a minute! Wait a minute!

MAURRANT. Lemme go!

SHIRLEY [*interposing herself*]. You should be ashamed to talk like that to an old man!

[*She slams down the window.*]

MAURRANT. Yeah? [*To MRS. MAURRANT and JONES.*] All right, lemme go! I ain't gonna do nothin'.

[*They release him. SHIRLEY expostulates with KAPLAN and leads him away from the window.*]

MRS. JONES [*who has run over to the right of the stoop*]. Maybe if somebody handed him one, he'd shut up with his talk for a while.

LIPPO. 'E talka lika dat een Eetaly, Mussolini's gonna geeve 'eem da castor-oil.

MRS. JONES [*laughing*]. Yeah? Say, that's a funny idea!

[*Still chuckling, she goes back to the railing at the left of the stoop*]

JONES. No kiddin', is that what they do?

MRS. FIORENTINO. Yes, dot's true. My husband read it to me in the Italian paper

MRS. MAURRANT. Why must people always be hurting and injuring each other? Why can't they live together in peace?

MAURRANT [*mockingly*]. Live in peace! You're always talkin' about livin' in peace!

MRS. MAURRANT. Well, it's true, Frank. Why can't people just as well be kind to each other?

MAURRANT. Then let 'im go live with his own kind.

JONES [*coming down the steps*]. Yeah, that's what I say. [*As MRS. JONES laughs aloud*] What's eatin' you?

MRS. JONES. I was just thinkin' about the castor-oil

[*MAURRANT seats himself on the right balustrade*]

LIPPO. Sure, 'esa funny fell', Mussolini. [*Doubling up in mock pain*] 'E geeve 'em da pain in da belly, dey no can talk. [*Suddenly*] Look! 'Eresa da boy. 'Esa walk along da street an' reada da book. Datsa da whola troub': reada too much book.

[*While LIPPO is speaking, SAMUEL KAPLAN appears at the left. He is twenty-one, slender, with dark, unruly hair and a sensitive, mobile face. He is hatless, and his coat is slung over one shoulder. He walks along*

slowly, absorbed in a book. As he approaches the stoop, SHIRLEY, in a kimono, appears at the closed window, opens it, and is about to go away again, when she sees SAM.]

SHIRLEY [calling]. Sam!

SAM [looking up]. Hello, Shirley.

SHIRLEY. Are you coming in?

SAM. No, not yet. It's too hot to go to bed.

SHIRLEY. Well, I'm tired. And Papa's going to bed, too. So don't make a noise when you come in.

SAM. I won't.

SHIRLEY. Good night.

SAM. Good night.

[SHIRLEY goes away from the window.]

SAM [to the others, as he seats himself on the curb to the right of the stoop]. Good evening!

SEVERAL. 'Evening.

LIPPO [approaching SAM]. 'Ow you lika da concerto? I see you sittin' in da fronta seat.

SAM. I didn't like it. Why don't they play some real music, instead of all those Italian organ-grinder's tunes?

LIPPO [excitedly]. Wotsa da matter? You don't lika da Verdi?

SAM. No, I don't. It's not music!

LIPPO. Wot you call music—da Tschai-kov', ha?

[He hums derisively a few bars from the first movement of the *Symphonie Pathétique*.]

SAM. Yes, Tschai-kovsky—and Beethoven. Music that comes from the soul.

MRS. MAURRANT. The one I like is —

[She hums the opening bars of Mendelssohn's *Spring Song*.]

LIPPO. Dotsa da Spreeng Song from da Mendelson.

MRS. MAURRANT. Yes! I love that.

[She goes on humming softly.]

MRS. FIORENTINO. And the walzer von Johann Strauss.

[She hums the *Wienerwald Waltz*.]

MRS. JONES. Well, gimme a good jazz band, every time.

LIPPO [protesting]. Ah no! Ees not music, da jazz. Ees breaks your ear.

[He imitates the discordant blaring of a saxophone.]

JONES [bored]. Well, I guess I'll be on me way.

MRS. JONES. Where are you goin'?

JONES. Just around to Callahan's to shoot a little pool. Are you comin' along, Mr. Maurrant?

MAURRANT I'm gonna wait awhile.

[A MAN, with a club-foot, appears at the right and crosses the stage.]

MRS. JONES [as JONES goes toward the right]. Don't be comin' home lit, at all hours o' the mornin'.

JONES [over his shoulder]. Aw, lay off dat stuff! I'll be back in a half-an-hour. [He goes off, at the right.]

A VOICE [off-stage]. Char-lie!

MRS. JONES. Him an' his pool! Tomorrow he won't be fit to go to work, again.

SAM [who has been awaiting a chance to interrupt]. When you hear Beethoven, it expresses the struggles and emotions of the human soul.

LIPPO [waving him aside]. Ah, ees no good, da Beethoven. Ees alla time sad, sad. Ees wanna maka you cry. I don't wanna cry, I wanna laugh. Eetalian music ees make you 'appy. Ees make you feel good.

MRS. MAURRANT [applauding]. Yes, I like that, too.

LIPPO. Ah, ees bew-tiful! Ees maka you feela fine. Ees maka you wanna dance

[Executes several dance steps.]

MRS. FIORENTINO [rising]. Vait, Lippo, I vill give you music.

[She goes away from the window. The lights go on, in the Fiorentino apartment.]

LIPPO [calling after her]. Playa Puccini, Margherita! [He hums an air from *Madame Butterfly*. Then as MRS. FIORENTINO begins to play the waltz from *La Bohème* on the piano.] Ah! La Bohème! Bew-tiful! Who'sa gonna dance wit' me? Messes Maurrant, 'ow 'bout you?

MRS. MAURRANT [with an embarrassed laugh]. Well, I don't know.

[She looks timidly at MAURRANT, who gives no sign.]

LIPPO. Ah, come on! Dansa wit' me!

[He takes her by the hand.]

MRS. MAURRANT. Well, all right, I will.

LIPPO. Sure, we hava nica dance.

[They begin to dance on the sidewalk.]

LIPPO [to MAURRANT]. Your wife ees dansa swell.

MRS. MAURRANT [laughing]. Oh, go on, Mr. Fiorentino! But I always loved to dance!

[They dance on. SANKEY appears, at the left, carrying a paper bag, from which the neck of a ginger-ale bottle protrudes. MAURRANT sees him and rises.]

MRS. JONES [following MAUR-

RANT'S stare and seeing SANKEY]. Look out! You're blockin' traffic!

SANKEY [*stopping at the left of the stoop*]. I see you're having a little dance. [MRS. MAURRANT sees him and stops dancing. LIPPO leans against the right balustrade, panting. The music goes on.]

SANKEY. Say, go right ahead. Don't et me stop you.

MRS. MAURRANT. Oh, that's all right. [I guess we've danced about enough.

[*She goes up the steps, ill at ease.*]

SANKEY. It's a pretty hot night for dancing.

MRS. MAURRANT. Yes, it is.

SANKEY [*going towards the right*]. Well, I got to be going along. Good night, folks.

THE OTHERS [*except MAURRANT*]. Good night.

LIPPO [*as he seats himself at the left of the stoop*]. Stoppa da music, Margherita!

[*The music stops* SANKEY goes off, at the right. MRS. MAURRANT goes quickly up the steps]

MAURRANT [*stopping her*]. Who's that bird?

MRS. MAURRANT. Why, that's Mr. Sankey. He's the milk-collector.

MAURRANT. Oh, he is, is he? Well, what's he hangin' around here for?

MRS. MAURRANT. Well, he lives just down the block, somewhere.

MRS. JONES. He's just been down to the drug-store, gettin' some ginger-ale for his wife

MAURRANT. Yeah? Well, what I want to know is, why ain't Rose home yet?

MRS. MAURRANT. I told you, Frank—

MAURRANT. I know all about what you told me. What I'm sayin' is, you oughta be lookin' after your kids, instead of doin' so much dancin'.

MRS. MAURRANT. Why, it's the first time I've danced, in I don't know when.

MAURRANT. That's all right, about that. But I want 'em home, instead o' battin' around the streets, hear me?

[*While he is speaking, WILLIE appears sobbing, at the left, his clothes torn and his face scratched. He is carrying his skates*]

MRS. MAURRANT [*coming down the steps*]. Why, Willie, what's the matter? [*Reproachfully, as WILLIE comes up to her, sniffing.*] Have you been fighting again?

WILLIE [*with a burst of indignation*].

Well, dat big bum ain't gonna say dat to me. I'll knock da stuffin's out o' him, dat's what I'll do!

MAURRANT [*tensely, as he comes down the steps*]. Who's been sayin' things to you?

WILLIE. Dat big bum, Joe Connolly, dat's who! [*Blubbering*] I'll knock his goddam eye out, next time!

MRS. MAURRANT. Willie!

MAURRANT [*seizing WILLIE'S arm*]. Shut up your swearin', do you hear?—or I'll give you somethin' to bawl for. What did he say to you, huh? What did he say to you?

WILLIE [*struggling*]. Ow! Leggo my arm!

MRS. MAURRANT. What difference does it make what a little street-loafer like that says?

MAURRANT. Nobody's askin' you! [*To WILLIE*] What did he say? [*He and MRS. MAURRANT exchange a swift involuntary look; then MAURRANT releases the boy.*] G'wan up to bed now, an' don't let me hear no more out o' you. [*Raising his hand.*] G'wan now. Beat it!

[*WILLIE ducks past MAURRANT and hurries up the steps and into the vestibule*]

MRS. MAURRANT. Wait, Willie, I'll go with you. [*She goes up the steps, then stops and turns*] Are you coming up, Frank?

MAURRANT. No I ain't. I'm goin' around to Callahan's for a drink, an' if Rose ain't home, when I get back, there's gonna be trouble.

[*Without another glance or word, he goes off at the right. MRS. MAURRANT looks after him for a moment, with a troubled expression*]

MRS. MAURRANT [*entering the vestibule*]. Well, good night, all.

THE OTHERS. Good night.

[*SAM rises. As MRS. MAURRANT and WILLIE enter the house, MRS. FIORENTINO reappears at the window.*]

MRS. FIORENTINO. Lippo!

[*She sees that something is wrong*]

MRS. JONES. Say, you missed it all! [*SAM, about to go up the steps, stops at the right of the stoop*]

MRS. FIORENTINO [*eagerly*]. Vat?

MRS. JONES [*volubly*]. Well, they was dancin', see? An' who should come along but Sankey!

MRS. FIORENTINO. Tt!

[*A light appears in the MAURRANT apartment.*]

MRS. JONES. Well, there was the three

o' them—Mr. Maurrant lookin' at Sankey as if he was ready to kill him, an' Mrs. Maurrant as white as a sheet, an' Sankey, as innocent as the babe unborn.

MRS. FIORENTINO. Did he say something?

MRS. JONES. No, not till after Sankey was gone. Then he wanted to know who he was an' what he was doin' here. "He's the milk-collector," she says.

MRS. FIORENTINO. It's joost awful.

MRS. JONES. Oh, an' then Willie comes home.

LIPPO. Da boy tella 'eem 'is mamma ees a whore an' Willie leeck 'im.

MRS. JONES. Well, an' what else is she?

SAM *[unable longer to restrain himself]*. Stop it! Stop it! Can't you let her alone? Have you no hearts? Why do you tear her to pieces, like a pack of wolves? It's cruel, cruel!

[He chokes back a sob, then dashes abruptly into the house.]

LIPPO *[rising to his feet and yelling after him]*. Wotsa matter you?

MRS. JONES. Well, listen to him, will you! He must be goin' off his nut, too.

LIPPO. 'Esa reada too mucha book. Ees bad for you.

MRS. FIORENTINO. I think he is lovin' the girl.

MRS. JONES. Yeah? Well, that's all the Maurrants need is to have their daughter get hooked up wit' a Jew. It's a fine house to be livin' in, ain't it, between the Maurrants upstairs, an' that bunch o' crazy Jews down here.

[A GIRL appears at the left, glancing apprehensively, over her shoulder, at a MAN who is walking down the street behind her. They cross the stage and go off, at the right.]

MRS. JONES *[as MRS. OLSEN comes up the cellar steps and over to the stoop]*. Well, good night.

MRS. FIORENTINO. Good night, Mrs. Jones.

LIPPO. Goo' night, Meeses Jones.

MRS. JONES. Wait a minute, Mrs. Olsen. I'll go with you.

[MRS. JONES and MRS. OLSEN enter the house. OLSEN yawns mightily, knocks the ashes from his pipe, and goes down the cellar steps. WILLIE MAURRANT leans out of the window and spits into the area-way. Then he leaves the window and turns out the light. A POLICEMAN appears, at the right, and strolls across the stage.]

LIPPO *[who has gone up the steps]*.

Margherita, eef I ever ketcha you sleepin' wit' da meelkman, Ahm gonna breaka your neck.

MRS. FIORENTINO *[yawning]*. Stop your foolishness, Lippo, and come to bed!

[LIPPO laughs and enters the house.]

MRS. FIORENTINO *takes the pillow off the window-sill, closes the window, and starts to pull down the shade.*

ROSE MAURRANT and HARRY EASTER *appear at the left. ROSE is a pretty girl of twenty, cheaply but rather tastefully dressed. EASTER is about thirty-five, good-looking, and obviously prosperous.*

MRS. FIORENTINO. Good evening, Miss Maurrant.

ROSE *[as they pass the window]*. Oh, good evening, Mrs. Fiorentino.

[ROSE and EASTER cross to the stoop.]

MRS. FIORENTINO *looks at them a moment, then pulls down the shade and turns out the lights*

ROSE *[stopping at the foot of the steps]*. Well, this is where I live, Mr Easter. *[She extends her hand]* I've had a lovely time.

EASTER *[taking her hand]*. Why, you're not going to leave me like this, are you? I've hardly had a chance to talk to you.

ROSE *[laughing]*. We've been doing nothing but talking since six o'clock.

[She tries gently to extricate her hand]

EASTER *[still holding it]*. No, we haven't. We've been eating and dancing. And now, just when I want to talk to you—*[He puts his other arm around her.]*

Rose —

ROSE *[rather nervously]*. Please don't, Mr. Easter. Please let go. I think there's somebody coming.

[She frees herself, as the house-door opens and MRS. OLSEN appears in the vestibule. They stand in silence, as MRS. OLSEN puts the door off the latch, tries it to see that it is locked, dims the light in the vestibule and comes out on the stoop.]

MRS. OLSEN *[as she comes down the steps]*. Goot evening, Miss Maurrant.

[She darts a swift look at EASTER and crosses to the cellar steps.]

ROSE. Good evening, Mrs. Olsen. How's the baby?

MRS. OLSEN. She vas cryin' all the time. I tank she vas gettin' new teet'.

ROSE. Oh, the poor little thing! What a shame!

MRS. OLSEN *[as she goes down the*

steps]. Yes, ma'am. Goot night, Miss Maurrant.

ROSE. Good night, Mrs. Olsen. [*To EASTER.*] She's got the cutest little baby you ever saw.

EASTER [*rather peevisly*]. Yeah? That's great. [*Taking ROSE'S hand again*] Rose, listen—

ROSE. I've really got to go upstairs now, Mr. Easter. It's awfully late.

EASTER. Well, can't I come up with you, for a minute?

ROSE [*positively*]. No, of course not!

EASTER. Why not?

ROSE. Why, we'd wake everybody up. Anyhow, my father wouldn't like it.

EASTER. Aren't you old enough to do what you like?

ROSE. It's not that. Only I think when you're living with people, there's no use doing things you know they don't like. [*Embarrassed.*] Anyhow, there's only the front room and my little brother sleeps there. So good night, Mr Easter.

EASTER [*taking both her hands*]. Rose—I'm crazy about you.

ROSE. Please let me go, now.

EASTER. Kiss me good night.

ROSE. No.

EASTER. Why not, hm?

ROSE. I don't want to.

EASTER. Just one kiss.

ROSE. No.

EASTER. Yes!

[*He takes her in his arms and kisses her. ROSE frees herself and goes to the right of the stoop.*]

ROSE [*her bosom heaving*]. It wasn't nice of you to do that.

EASTER [*going over to her*]. Why not? Didn't you like it? Hm?

ROSE. Oh, it's not that.

EASTER. Then what is it, hm?

ROSE [*turning and facing him*]. You know very well what it is. You've got a wife, haven't you?

EASTER. What of it? I tell you I'm clean off my nut about you.

ROSE [*nervously, as the house-door opens*]. Look out! Somebody's coming.

[*EASTER goes to the other side of the stoop and they fall into a self-conscious silence, as MRS. JONES comes out of the house, leading an ill-conditioned dog.*]

MRS. JONES [*as she comes down the steps*]. Oh, good evenin'.

[*She stares at EASTER, then goes towards the right.*]

ROSE. Good evening, Mrs. Jones. It's been a terrible day, hasn't it?

MRS. JONES. Yeah. Awful. [*Stopping.*] I think your father's been kinda worried about you.

ROSE. Oh, has he?

MRS. JONES. Yeah. Well, I gotta give Queenie her exercise. Good night.

[*She stares at EASTER again, then goes off at right.*]

ROSE. Good night, Mrs. Jones. [*To EASTER*] I'll soon have all the neighbors talking about me.

EASTER [*going over to her again*]. What can they say, hm?—that they saw you saying good night to somebody on the front door-step?

ROSE. They can say worse than that—and what's more they will, too.

EASTER. Well, why not snap out of it all?

ROSE. Out of what?

EASTER [*indicating the house*]. This! The whole business. Living in a dirty old tenement like this; working all day in a real-estate office, for a measly twenty-five a week. You're not going to try to tell me you like living this way, are you?

ROSE. No, I can't say that I like it, especially. But maybe it won't always be this way. Anyhow, I guess I'm not so much better than anybody else.

EASTER [*taking her hand*]. Do you know what's the matter with you? You're not wise to yourself. Why, you've got just about everything, you have. You've got looks and personality and a bean on your shoulders—there's nothing you haven't got. You've got It, I tell you.

ROSE. You shouldn't keep looking at me, all the time, at the office. The other girls are beginning to pass hints about it.

EASTER [*releasing her hand, genuinely perturbed*]. Is that a fact? You see, that shows you! I never even knew I was looking at you. I guess I just can't keep my eyes off you. Well, we've got to do something about it.

ROSE [*nervously snapping the clasp of her hand-bag*]. I guess the only thing for me to do is to look for another job.

EASTER. Yes, that's what I've been thinking, too. [*As she is about to demur.*] Wait a minute, honey! I've been doing a little thinking and I've got it all doped out. The first thing you do is to throw up your job, see?

ROSE. But—

EASTER. Then you find yourself a nice, cozy apartment somewhere. [*As she is about to interrupt again.*] Just a minute, now! Then you get yourself a job on the stage.

ROSE. How could I get a job on the stage?

EASTER. Why, as easy as walking around the block. I've got three or four friends in the show-business. Ever hear of Harry Porkins?

ROSE. No.

EASTER. Well, he's the boy that put on Mademoiselle Marie last year. He's an old pal of mine, and all I'd have to say to him is—[*putting his arm around her shoulder*]"Harry, here's a little girl I'm interested in," and he'd sign you up in a minute.

ROSE. I don't think I'd be any good on the stage.

EASTER. Why, what are you talking about, sweetheart? There's a dozen girls, right now, with their names up in electric lights, that haven't got half your stuff. All you got to do is go about it in the right way—put up a little front, see? Why, half the game is nothing but bluff. Get yourself a classy little apartment, and fill it up with trick furniture, see? Then you doll yourself up in a flock of Paris clothes and you throw a couple or three parties and you're all set. [*Taking her arm*] Wouldn't you like to be on Broadway?

ROSE. I don't believe I ever could be.

EASTER. Isn't it worth trying? What have you got here, hm? This is no kind of racket for a girl like you [*Taking her hand*]. You do like me a little, don't you?

ROSE. I don't know if I do or not.

EASTER. Why, sure you do. And once you get to know me better, you'd like me even more. I'm no Valentino, but I'm not a bad scout. Why, think of all the good times we could have together—you with a little apartment and all. And maybe we could get us a little car.

ROSE. And what about your wife?

EASTER [*letting go her hand*]. The way I figure it is, she doesn't have to know anything about it. She stays up there in Bronxville, and there are lots of times business keeps me in New York. Then, in the Summer, she goes to the mountains. Matter of fact, she's going next week and won't be back until September.

ROSE [*shaking her head and going towards the stoop*]. I don't think it's the way I'd want things to be.

EASTER. Why, there's nothing really wrong about it.

ROSE. Maybe there isn't. But it's just the way I feel about it, I guess.

EASTER. Why, you'd get over that in no time. There's lots of girls—

ROSE. Yes. I know there are. But

you've been telling me all along I'm different.

EASTER. Sure, you're different. You're in a class by yourself. Why, sweetheart—

[*He tries to take her in his arms.*]

ROSE [*pushing him away*]. No. And you mustn't call me sweetheart.

EASTER. Why not?

ROSE. Because I'm not your sweetheart.

EASTER. I want you to be—

[*A sudden yell of pain is heard from upstairs. They both look up, greatly startled.*]

EASTER. My God, what's that—a murder?

ROSE. It must be poor Mrs. Buchanan. She's expecting a baby.

EASTER. Why does she yell like that? God, I thought somebody was being killed.

ROSE. The poor thing! [*With sudden impatience, she starts up the steps.*] I've got to go, now. Good night.

EASTER [*taking her hand*]. But, Rose—

ROSE [*freeing her hand quickly*]. No, I've got to go. [*Suddenly*] Look, there's my father. There'll only be an argument, if he sees you.

EASTER. All right, I'll go.

[*He goes towards the left, as MAURRANT appears at the right*]

ROSE [*going up to the top step*]. Good night.

EASTER. Good night.

[*He goes off, at the left. ROSE begins searching in her hand-bag for her latch-key.*]

ROSE [*as MAURRANT approaches*]. Hello, Pop.

MAURRANT [*stopping at the foot of the steps*]. Who was that you was talkin' to?

ROSE. That's Mr. Easter. He's the manager of the office.

MAURRANT. What's he doin' here? You been out wit' him?

ROSE. Yes, he took me out to dinner.

MAURRANT. Oh, he did, huh?

ROSE. Yes, I had to stay late to get out some letters. You see, Pop, the office is closed to-morrow, on account of Mr. Jacobson's funeral—

MAURRANT. Yeah, I know all about that. This is a hell of a time to be gettin' home from a dinner.

ROSE. Well, we danced afterwards.

MAURRANT. Oh, you danced, huh? With a little pettin' on the side, is that it?

ROSE [*rather angrily as she seats herself on the left balustrade*]. I don't see

why you can never talk to me in a nice way.

MAURRANT. So you're startin' to go on pettin' parties, are you?

ROSE. Who said I was on a petting party?

MAURRANT. I suppose he didn't kiss you or nothin', huh?

ROSE. No, he didn't! And if he did —

MAURRANT. It's your own business, is that it? [*Going up the steps*] Well, I'm gonna make it my business, see? Is this bird married? [*ROSE does not answer.*] I t'ought so! They're all alike, them guys—all after the one thing. Well, get this straight. No married men ain't gonna come nosin' around my family, get me?

ROSE [*rising agitatedly, as the house-door opens*]. Be quiet, Pop! There's somebody coming.

MAURRANT. I don't care!

[*BUCHANAN hurries out of the house. He is a small and pasty young man—a typical "white-collar slave" He has hastily put on his coat and trousers over his pajamas and his bare feet are in slippers*]

BUCHANAN [*as he comes down the steps*]. I think the baby's coming!

ROSE [*solicitously*]. Can I do anything, Mr. Buchanan?

BUCHANAN [*as he hurries towards the left*]. No, I'm just going to phone for the doctor.

ROSE [*coming down the steps*]. Let me do it, and you go back to your wife.

BUCHANAN. Well if you wouldn't mind. It's Doctor John Wilson. [*Handing her a slip of paper.*] Here's his number. And the other number is her sister, Mrs. Thomas. And here's two nickels Tell them both to come right away. She's got terrible pains. [*Another scream from upstairs*] Listen to her! I better go back.

[*He dashes up the steps and into the house.*]

ROSE. Oh, the poor woman! Pop, tell Ma to go up to her. Hurry!

MAURRANT. Aw, all right!

[*He follows BUCHANAN into the house. ROSE hurries off at the left, just as MAE JONES and DICK MCGANN appear. MAE is a vulgar shop-girl of twenty-one; DICK, a vacuous youth of about the same age. MAE is wearing DICK'S straw hat and they are both quite drunk*]

MAE [*to ROSE*]. Hello, Rose. What's your hurry?

ROSE [*without stopping*]. It's Mrs. Buchanan. I've got to phone to the doctor.

[*She hurries off.*]

DICK [*as they approach the stoop*]. Say, who's your little friend?

MAE. Oh, that's Rose Maurrant. She lives in the house.

DICK. She's kinda cute, ain't she?

MAE [*seating herself on the stoop*]. Say, accordin' to you, anythin' in a skirt is kinda cute—providin' the skirt is short enough.

DICK. Yeah, but they ain't any of 'em as cute as you, Mae.

MAE [*yawning and scratching her leg*]. Yeah?

DICK. Honest, I mean it. How 'bout a little kiss?

[*He puts his arms about her and plants a long kiss upon her lips. She submits, with an air of intense boredom*]

DICK [*removing his lips*]. Say, you might show a little en-thoo-siasm.

MAE [*rouging her lips*]. Say, you seem to think I oughta hang out a flag, every time some bozo decides to wipe off his mouth on me.

DICK. De trouble wit' you is you need another little snifter.

[*He reaches for his flask.*]

MAE. Nope! I can't swallow any more o' that rotten gin o' yours.

DICK. Why, it ain't so worse. I don't mind it no more since I had that brass linn' put in me stomach. Well, happy days!

[*He takes a long drink.*]

MAE [*rising indignantly*]. Hey, for God's sake, what are you doin'—emptyin' the flask?

DICK [*removing the flask from his lips*]. I t'ought you didn't want none.

MAE. Can't you take a joke?

[*She snatches the flask from him and drains it, kicking out at DICK, to prevent his taking it from her*]

DICK [*snatching the empty flask*] Say, you wanna watch your step, baby, or you're l'ble to go right up in a puff o' smoke.

MAE [*whistling*]. Phew! Boy! I feel like a tree-alarm fire! Say, what de hell do dey make dat stuff out of?

DICK. T'ree parts dynamite an' one part army-mule. Dey use it for blastin' out West.

MAE [*bursting raucously into a jazz tune*]. Da-da-da-da-dee! Da-da-da-da-dee!

[*She executes some dance steps.*]

DICK. Say, shut up, will ya? You'll be wakin' the whole neighborhood.

MAE [*boisterously*]. What the hell dc I

care? Da-da-da-da-dee! Da-da-da-da-dee!
[Suddenly amorous, as she turns an unsteady pirouette.] Kiss me, kid!

DICK. I'll say!

[They lock in a long embrace. SAM, coatless, his shirt-collar open, appears at the window, watches the pair for a moment, and then turns away, obviously disgusted. They do not see him.]

DICK [taking MAE'S arm]. Come on!

MAE. Wait a minute! Where y' goin'?

DICK. Come on, I'm tellin' ya! Fred Henessy gimme de key to his apartment. Dere won't be nobody dere.

MAE [protesting feebly]. I oughta go home. [Her hand to her head.] Oh, baby! Say, nail down dat sidewalk, will ya?

DICK. Come on!

[ROSE appears, at the left]

MAE. Sweet papa! [She kisses DICK noisily; then bursts into song again.] Da-da-da-da-dee! Da-da-da-da-dee! [As they pass ROSE.] Hello, Rose. How's de milk-man?

DICK [raising his hat with drunken politeness]. Goo' night, sweetheart.

[They go off, at the left. MAE'S snatches of song dying away in the distance. ROSE stands still, for moment, choking back her mortification]

BUCHANAN'S VOICE. Miss Maurrant, did you get them?

ROSE [looking up]. Why yes, I did. The doctor will be here right away. And Mrs. Thomas said it would take her about an hour.

[VINCENT JONES appears at the right and stops near the stoop. He is a typical New York taxicab driver, in a cap. ROSE does not see him]

BUCHANAN'S VOICE. She's got terrible pains. Your mother's up here, with her. [MRS. BUCHANAN is heard calling faintly] I think she's calling me.

[ROSE goes towards the stoop and sees VINCENT.]

VINCENT. Hello, Rosie.

ROSE. Good evening.

[She tries to pass, but he blocks her way]

VINCENT. What's your hurry?

ROSE. It's late.

VINCENT. You don't wanna go to bed, yet. Come on, I'll take you for a ride in me hack. [He puts his arm about her.]

ROSE. Please let me pass.

[SAM appears at the window. They do not see him.]

VINCENT [enjoying ROSE'S struggle to escape]. You got a lot o' stren'th, ain't

you? Say, do you know, you're gettin' fat?

[He passes one hand over her body.]

ROSE. Let me go, you big tough.

SAM [simultaneously]. Take your hands off her!

[He climbs quickly out of the window and onto the stoop. VINCENT, surprised, releases ROSE and steps to the sidewalk. ROSE goes up the steps. SAM, trembling with excitement and fear, stands on the top step. VINCENT glowers up at him]

VINCENT. Well, look who's here! [Mockingly.] Haster gesehn de fish in de Bowery? [Menacingly.] What de hell do you want?

SAM [chokingly]. You keep your hands off her!

VINCENT. Yeah? [Sawing the air with hands.] Oi, Jakie! [He suddenly lunges forward, seizes SAM'S arm, pulls him violently by the right hand down the steps and swings him about, so that they stand face to face, to the left of the stoop. ROSE comes down between them.] Now what o' ya got t' say?

ROSE. Let him alone!

SAM [inarticulately]. If you touch her again—

VINCENT [mockingly]. If I touch her again—! [Savagely.] Aw, shut up, you little kike bastard!

[He brushes ROSE aside and putting his open hand against SAM'S face, sends him sprawling to the pavement]

ROSE. You big coward.

[Her fists clenched.]

VINCENT [standing over SAM]. Get up, why don't you?

ROSE [crossing to Sam]. If you hit him again, I'll call my father.

VINCENT [as MRS. JONES and the dog appear at the right]. Gee, don't frighten me like dat. I got a weak heart.

[He is sobered, nevertheless. SAM picks himself up.]

VINCENT [as MRS. JONES approaches]. Hello, Ma.

MRS. JONES [with maternal pride]. Hello, Vincent. What's goin' on here?

VINCENT. Oh, jus' a little friendly argument. Ikey Finkelstein don't like me to say good evenin' to his girl friend.

ROSE. You'd better keep your hands to yourself, hereafter.

VINCENT. Is dat so? Who said so, huh?

MRS. JONES. Come on, Vincent. Come on upstairs. I saved some stew for you

VINCENT. All right, I'm comin'. [To ROSE.] Good night, dearie.

[He makes a feint at SAM, who starts back in terror. VINCENT laughs.]

MRS. JONES. Aw, let 'im alone, Vincent.

VINCENT [as he goes up the steps]. Who's touchin' him? A little cockroach like dat, ain't woi't' my tune. [To ROSE] Some sheik you picked out for yourself!

[He enters the vestibule and opens the door with his latch-key]

MRS. JONES [going up the steps]. You seem to have plenty of admirers, Miss Maurrant. [Pausing on the top step.] But I guess you come by it natural.

[ROSE does not reply. MRS. JONES follows VINCENT into the house.

ROSE averts her head to keep back the tears. SAM stands facing the house, his whole body quivering with emotion. Suddenly he raises his arms, his fists clenched.]

SAM [hysterically, as he rushes to the foot of the stoop]. The dirty bum! I'll kill him!

ROSE [turning and going to him]. It's all right, Sam. Never mind.

SAM [sobbing]. I'll kill him; I'll kill him!

[He throws himself on the stoop and, burying his head in his arms, sobs hysterically. ROSE sits beside him and puts her arm about him]

ROSE. It's all right, Sam. Everything's all right. Why should you pay any attention to a big tough like that? [SAM does not answer. ROSE caresses his hair and he grows calmer.] He's nothing but a loafer, you know that. What do you care what he says?

SAM [without raising his head]. I'm a coward.

ROSE. Why no, you're not, Sam.

SAM Yes, I am. I'm a coward.

ROSE Why, he's not worth your little finger, Sam. You wait and see. Ten years from now, he'll still be driving a taxi and you—why, you'll be so far above him, you won't even remember he's alive.

SAM. I'll never be anything

ROSE. Why, don't talk like that, Sam. A boy with your brains and ability. Graduating from college with honors and all that! Why, if I were half as smart as you, I'd be just so proud of myself!

SAM. What's the good of having brains, if nobody ever looks at you—if nobody knows you exist?

ROSE [gently]. I know you exist, Sam.

SAM. It wouldn't take much to make you forget me.

ROSE. I'm not so sure about that. Why do you say that, Sam?

SAM. Because I know. It's different with you. You have beauty—people look at you—you have a place in the world—

ROSE. I don't know. It's not so easy, being a girl—I often wish I were a man. It seems to me that when you're a man, it's so much easier to sort of—be yourself, to kind of be the way you feel. But when you're a girl, it's different. It doesn't seem to matter what you are, or what you're thinking or feeling—all that men seem to care about is just the one thing. And when you're sort of trying to find out just where you're at, it makes it hard. Do you see what I mean? [Hesitantly.] Sam, there's something I want to ask you—

[She stops.]

SAM [turning to her]. What is it, Rose?

ROSE I wouldn't dream of asking anybody but you. [With a great effort] Sam, do you think it's true—what they're saying about my mother?

[SAM averts his head, without answering]

ROSE [wretchedly]. I guess it is, isn't it?

SAM [agitatedly]. They were talking here, before—I couldn't stand it any more! [He clasps his head and, springing to his feet, goes to the right of the stoop.] Oh, God, why do we go on living in this sewer?

ROSE [appealingly]. What can I do, Sam? [SAM makes a helpless gesture.] You see, my father means well enough, and all that, but he's always been sort of strict and—I don't know—sort of making you freeze up, when you really wanted to be nice and loving. That's the whole trouble, I guess; my mother never had anybody to really love her. She's sort of gay and happy-like—you know, she likes having a good time and all that. But my father is different. Only—the way things are now—everybody talking and making remarks, all the neighbors spying and whispering—it sort of makes me feel—

[She shudders.] I don't know—!

SAM [coming over to her again]. I wish I could help you, Rose.

ROSE You do help me, Sam—just by being nice and sympathetic and talking things over with me. There's so few people you can really talk to, do you know what I mean? Sometimes, I get to feeling that I'm all alone in the world and that—

[*A scream of pain from MRS. BUCHANAN.*]

ROSE [*springing to her feet*]. Oh, just listen to her!

SAM. Oh, God!

ROSE. The poor thing! She must have terrible pains.

SAM. That's all there is in life—nothing but pain. From before we're born, until we die! Everywhere you look, oppression and cruelty! If it doesn't come from Nature, it comes from humanity—humanity trampling on itself and tearing at its own throat. The whole world is nothing but a blood-stained arena, filled with misery and suffering. It's too high a price to pay for life—life isn't worth it!

[*He seats himself despairingly on the stoop*]

ROSE [*putting her hand on his shoulder*]. Oh, I don't know, Sam. I feel blue and discouraged, sometimes, too. And I get a sort of feeling of, oh, what's the use. Like last night. I hardly slept all night, on account of the heat and on account of thinking about—well, all sorts of things. And this morning, when I got up, I felt so miserable. Well, all of a sudden, I decided I'd walk to the office. And when I got to the Park, everything looked so green and fresh, that I got a kind of feeling of, well, maybe it's not so bad, after all. And then, what do you think?—all of a sudden, I saw a big lilac-bush, with some flowers still on it. It made me think about the poem you said for me—remember?—the one about the lilacs.

SAM [*quoting*].

"When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd
And the great star early droop'd in the
western sky in the night,

I mourn'd and yet shall mourn, with
ever-returning Spring."

[*He repeats the last line.*]

I mourn'd and yet shall mourn, with ever-returning Spring? Yes!

ROSE. No, not that part. I mean the part about the farm-house. Say it for me, Sam. [*She sits at his feet*]

SAM. "In the door-yard, fronting an old farm-house, near the white-washed palings,
Stands the lilac-bush, tall-growing, with heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
With many a pointed blossom, rising delicate, with the perfume strong I love,
With every leaf a miracle—and from this bush in the door-yard,
With delicate-color'd blossoms and heart-shaped leaves of rich green
A sprig with its flower I break."

ROSE [*eagerly*]. Yes, that's it! That's just what I felt like doing—breaking off a little bunch of the flowers. But then I thought, maybe a policeman or somebody would see me, and then I'd get into trouble; so I didn't.

BUCHANAN'S VOICE. Miss Maurrant! Miss Maurrant!

[*SAM and ROSE spring to their feet and look up.*]

ROSE. Yes?

BUCHANAN'S VOICE. Do you mind phoning to the doctor again? She's getting worse.

ROSE. Yes, sure I will. [*She starts to go*] Wait! Maybe this is the doctor now.

BUCHANAN'S VOICE [*excitedly as DR. WILSON appears at the left*]. Yes, that's him. Mrs. Maurrant! Tell her the doctor's here! Doctor, I guess you're none too soon.

DR. WILSON [*a seedy, middle-aged man in a crumpled Panama*]. Plenty of time. Just don't get excited.

[*He throws away his cigarette and enters the vestibule. The mechanical clicking of the door-latch is heard as DR. WILSON goes into the house*]

ROSE. I hope she won't have to suffer much longer.

MAURRANT [*appearing at the window in his under-shirt*]. Rose!

ROSE [*rather startled*]. Yes, Pop, I'll be right up.

MAURRANT. Well, don't be makin' me call you again, d'ya hear?

ROSE. I'm coming right away.

[*MAURRANT leaves the window.*]

ROSE. I'd better go up now, Sam.

SAM. Do you have to go to bed, when you're told, like a child?

ROSE. I know, Sam, but there's so much wrangling goes on, all the time, as it is, what's the use of having any more? Good night, Sam. There was something I wanted to talk to you about, but it will have to be another time.

[*She holds out her hand. SAM takes it and holds it in his*]

SAM [*trembling and rising to his feet*].

Rose, will you kiss me?

ROSE [*simply*]. Why, of course I will, Sam.

[*She offers him her lips. He clasps her in a fervent embrace, to which she submits but does not respond.*]

ROSE [*freeing herself gently*]. Don't be discouraged about things, Sam. You wait and see—you're going to do big things, some day. I've got lots of confidence in you.

SAM [*turning away his head*]. I wonder if you really have, Rose?

ROSE. Why, of course, I have! And don't forget it! Good night. I hope it won't be too hot to sleep.

SAM. Good night, Rose.

[*He watches her, as she opens the door with her latch-key and goes into the house. Then he goes to the stoop, and, seating himself, falls into a reverie. A POLICEMAN appears at the right and strolls across, but SAM is oblivious to him. In the distance, a home-comer sings drunkenly. A light appears, in the MAURRANT hall-bedroom, and a moment later, ROSE comes to the window and leans out.*]

ROSE [*calling softly*]. Hoo-hoo! Sam! [SAM looks up, then rises.] Good night, Sam.

[*She wafts him a kiss*] SAM [*with deep feeling*]. Good night, Rose dear.

[*She smiles at him. Then she pulls down the shade. SAM looks up for a moment, then resumes his seat. A scream from MRS. BUCHANAN makes him shudder. A deep rhythmic snoring emanates from the FIORENTINO apartment. A steamboat whistle is heard. The snoring in the FIORENTINO apartment continues. SAM raises his clenched hands to heaven. A distant clock begins to strike twelve. SAM'S arms and head drop forward.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS SLOWLY

ACT II

Daybreak, the next morning. It is still quite dark and comparatively quiet. The rhythmic snoring in the FIORENTINO apartment is still heard, and now and then, a distant "L" train or speeding automobile. A moment after the rise of the curtain, JONES appears, at the right, on his way home from the speakeasy. He reels, slightly, but negotiates the steps and entrance-door, without too much difficulty. It grows lighter—and noisier. The street-light goes out. The OLSEN baby begins to cry. An alarm clock rings. A dog barks. A canary begins to sing. Voices are heard. The house-door opens and DR. WILSON comes out, passing JONES, at the top of the stoop. DR. WILSON stands on the steps and yawns the yawn of an over-tired man.

Then he lights a cigarette and goes towards the left.

BUCHANAN'S VOICE. Doctor!

DR. WILSON [*stopping and looking up*]. Well?

BUCHANAN'S VOICE. What if she does wake up?

DR. WILSON [*sharply*]. She won't, I've told you! She's too exhausted. The best thing you can do is lie down and get some sleep yourself.

[*As he goes off at the left, MAE and DICK appear. They walk slowly and listlessly and far apart.*]

DICK [*as they reach the stoop*]. Well, goo' night.

MAE [*with a yawn, as she finds her latch-key*]. Goo' night. [*Going up the steps and looking towards the FIORENTINO apartment*] Aw, shut up, you wop!

DICK [*his dignity wounded*]. How 'bout kissin' me good night?

MAE [*venomously, from the top step*]. For God's sake, ain't you had enough kissin' for one night!

[*She enters the vestibule and puts the key in the lock. The ringing of an alarm clock is heard.*]

DICK [*raising his voice*]. Well, say, if that's the way you feel about it—

MAE. Aw, go to hell!

[*She enters the house. The alarm clock has stopped ringing.*]

DICK. You dirty little tart!

[*He stands, muttering to himself, for a moment, then goes off at the right, passing the POLICEMAN, who looks at him, suspiciously. The sounds of a Swedish quarrel are heard from the janitor's apartment. The baby is still crying. As the POLICEMAN goes left, a MILKMAN appears, whistling and carrying a rack of full milk-bottles.*]

THE POLICEMAN. Hello, Louie.

[*The snoring in the FIORENTINO apartment stops.*]

THE MILKMAN. Hello, Harry. Goin' to be another scorcher.

THE POLICEMAN. You said it.

[*He goes off at the left.*] [The MILKMAN crosses to the cellar steps. MAE appears at the hall-bedroom window of the JONES' apartment, and removes her dress over her head. The MILKMAN, about to go down the steps, sees her and stops to watch. MAE, about to slip out of her step-in, sees him, throws him an angry look and pulls down the shade. The MILKMAN grins and goes down

the cellar steps. CHARLIE HILDEBRAND comes out of the house. He is chewing gum and as he comes out to the top of the stoop he scatters the wrappings of the stick of gum on the stoop. Then he jumps down the four steps of the stoop, in one jump, and goes off at the left, pulling the chewing-gum out in a long ribbon, and carefully avoiding all the cracks in the pavement. A YOUNG WORKMAN, carrying a kit of tools and a tin lunchbox, appears at the left, extinguishes the red light on the excavation, and opening the door, goes in. A TRAMP comes on at the right and shuffles across. He sees a cigar butt on the pavement, picks it up and pockets it, as he exits at the left. ROSE, in her nightgown, appears at the window, yawns slightly and disappears. It is daylight now. The baby stops crying. MRS. OLSEN comes up the cellar steps. She goes up the stoop, turns out the light in the vestibule, and takes the door off the latch. The MILKMAN comes up the cellar steps, his tray laden with empty bottles, and goes off, whistling, at the left. SAM, coatless, a book in his hand, appears at the window. He looks out for a moment, then climbs out on the stoop, looks up at ROSE'S window, then seats himself and begins to read. WILLIE comes out of the house.]

WILLIE [chanting, as he comes down the steps]. Fat, Fat the water-rat, Fifty bullets in his hat.

SAM. Hello, Willie. Is Rose up yet?

WILLIE [without stopping or looking at him]. Yeah I don't know I guess so.

[He turns a somersault and goes off at the left, continuing his chanting. SAM glances up at ROSE'S window again, then resumes his book. MRS. JONES and her dog come out of the house.]

MRS. JONES [haughtily, as she comes down the steps]. Mornin'.

SAM [scarcely looking up from his book]. Good morning.

[MRS. JONES and the dog go off at the right. A middle-aged workman, carrying a large coil of wire, appears at the left and goes to the door of the excavation. MRS. OLSEN comes out of the house and exits into the basement.]

THE WORKMAN [calling]. You down there, Eddie?

A VOICE [from the depths]. Yeah!

THE WORKMAN. All right!

[He climbs down into the excavation. ROSE comes to window and pulls up the shade. WILLIE and CHARLIE can be heard, offstage left, engaged in an earnest conversation.]

CHARLIE [offstage]. He could not!

WILLIE [offstage]. He could so!

[They appear at left. Each has under his arm a paper bag, from which a loaf of bread protrudes.]

CHARLIE. I'll betcha he couldn't.

WILLIE. I'll betcha he could.

CHARLIE. I'll betcha a million dollars he couldn't.

WILLIE. I'll betcha five million dollars he could. Hold that! [He hands CHARLIE his loaf of bread and turns a cart-wheel.] Bet you can't do it.

CHARLIE. Bet I can.

[He puts both loaves of bread on the pavement, attempts a cart-wheel and fails.]

WILLIE [laughing raucously]. Haw-haw! Told you you couldn't!

CHARLIE. Can you do this?

[He turns a back somersault.]

WILLIE. Sure—easy! [He turns a back somersault. They pick up their loaves of bread again. WILLIE'S drops out of the bag, but he dusts it, with his hand, and replaces it.] How many steps can you jump up?

CHARLIE. Three.

[He jumps up three steps.]

WILLIE. I can do four.

CHARLIE. Let's see you.

[WILLIE, the bread under his arm, jumps up the four steps, undisturbed by SAM'S presence. He drops the bread, and is about to replace it in the bag, but gets a better idea. He inflates the bag and explodes it with a blow of his fist. CHARLIE looks on, in admiration and envy.]

ROSE [appearing at the window]. Willie, we're waiting for the bread.

WILLIE [holding it up]. All right! Cantcha see I got it?

[He enters the house, followed by CHARLIE.]

SAM [rising]. Hello, Rose.

ROSE. Hello, Sam.

SAM. Come down.

ROSE. I haven't had breakfast yet. [Calling into the room.] Yes! He's on his way up.

MISS CUSHING [coming out of the house]. Good morning.

[She looks inquiringly from SAM to ROSE.]

SAM [impatiently]. Good morning.

[A middle-aged NUN appears at the right, accompanied by a scrawny child of about fourteen. They walk across the stage.]

ROSE. Good morning, Miss Cushing.

[MISS CUSHING goes off, at the left, glancing back at ROSE and SAM.]

ROSE. I'm going to Mr. Jacobson's funeral. [Calling into the room] Yes, I'm coming. [To SAM.] Breakfast's ready. I'll be down as soon as the dishes are done.

[She disappears. SAM looks up at the window, for a moment, then begins to read again. MRS. FIORENTINO appears at the window, at the extreme left, with a double armful of bedding, which she deposits upon the window-sill. Then she goes away again.]

SHIRLEY [appearing at the window]. Sam, breakfast is ready.

SAM. I don't want any breakfast.

SHIRLEY. What do you mean, you don't want any breakfast? What kind of a business is that, not to eat breakfast?

SAM. Do I have to eat breakfast, if I don't want to?

SHIRLEY. You've got your head so full of that Rose Maurant upstairs, that you don't want to eat or sleep or anything, any more.

SAM. If I don't feel like eating, why should I eat? [Bursting out] You're always telling me "Eat!" "Don't eat!" "Get up!" "Go to bed!" I know what I want to do, without being told.

SHIRLEY. I don't see, just when you're graduating from college, why you want to get mixed up with a little batzimer like that!

SAM. It's always the same thing over again with you. You never can get over your race prejudice. I've told you a hundred times that the Jews are no better than anybody else.

SHIRLEY. I'm not talking about that! Look at the kind of family she comes from. What's her father? Nothing but an illiterate rough-neck. And her mother—

SAM [indignantly]. Are you starting, too?

KAPLAN'S VOICE. Shoi-ley!

SHIRLEY. Wait a minute, Papa's calling. [Into the room] All right, Papa! [To SAM.] Come in, Sam, or Papa will be making long speeches again.

SAM [impatiently]. All right! All right! I'll come.

[A young SHOPGIRL, smiling to herself, appears at the right and walks across the stage. SAM rises and goes into the house. SHIRLEY leaves the

window. BUCHANAN, emerging from the house, collarless and unshaven, encounters SAM in the vestibule.]

BUCHANAN [eagerly]. Good morning! SAM [abruptly]. Good morning.

[He enters the house. BUCHANAN looks back at him, then comes down the steps. MRS. FIORENTINO raises the drawn shade and opens the window.]

MRS. FIORENTINO. Good morning, Mr. Buchanan.

BUCHANAN. Oh, good morning, Mrs. Fiorentino. [Going over to the left balustrade.] I guess you know that the baby came last night, don't you?

MRS. FIORENTINO. No! I did not hear a word about it.

BUCHANAN. Why, I thought she'd wake up the whole neighborhood, the way she was yelling. Three-thirty this morning, the baby came I been up the whole night.

[An old LETTER-CARRIER, coatless, appears at the right.]

MRS. FIORENTINO. A boy, is it?

BUCHANAN. No, it's a girl. I guess we'll call her Mary, after my mother.

LETTER-CARRIER [going up the steps] Mornin'.

MRS. FIORENTINO. Good morning. Any letters for me?

LETTER-CARRIER [from the top of the steps] No, not a thing.

BUCHANAN [turning toward him]. I was just telling Mrs. Fiorentino, I had a little addition to my family last night.

LETTER-CARRIER. Your first, is it?

BUCHANAN [hastening to explain]. Well, we've only been married a little over a year.

LETTER-CARRIER. Well, I've had seven, an' I'm still luggin' a mail-bag at sixty-two.

[He goes into the vestibule and puts the mail into the letter-boxes.]

MRS. FIORENTINO. How is your wife?

BUCHANAN. Well, she had a pretty hard time of it. Her sister's up there with her. And Mrs. Maurant was up, nearly all night. I don't know what we'd have done without her.

LETTER-CARRIER [coming down the steps]. It don't pay to let 'em have their own way, too much. That's where I made my mistake.

[As the LETTER-CARRIER goes off, at the left, LIPPO appears at the window behind his wife, and tickles her.]

MRS. FIORENTINO [startled]. Lippo!

BUCHANAN. Morning. I was just telling your wife—

MRS. FIORENTINO. Lippo, what do you think? Mr. Buchanan has a little girl!

LIPPO. Ah, dotsa fine! Margherita, why don' you have da baby, ha?

MRS. FIORENTINO [*abruptly*]. I must go and make the coffee.

[*She goes away from the window. OLSEN goes half-way up the steps and leans against the railing, smoking his pipe.*]

A VOICE [*offstage left*]. Oh-h! Corn! Sweet corn!

LIPPO. Ees funny t'ing. You gotta da leetle, skeeny wife an she's hava da baby. My Margherita, she's beeg an' fat an' she no can hava da baby.

BUCHANAN. Well, that's the way o' the world, I guess.

[*As he goes off, at the left, an ICE-MAN appears, trundling a three-wheeled cart, filled with ice.*]

LIPPO. Buon giorno, Mike.

MIKE. Buon giorno, signore. Come sta?

LIPPO. Benissimo. Fa molto caldo ancora, oggi.

MIKE. Sì, sì, signore. Bisognerà abbastanza ghiaccio. Twen'y-fi' cent, ha?

LIPPO. No, no, e troppo.

MIKE. Twen'y cent? Eesa melta fas'.

LIPPO. Alla right. Gimme twen'y cent.

MIKE. Sì, sì, signore. Sure.

[*As he wheels the cart to the cellar-entrance and begins to chop a block of ice, a MAN in shirt-sleeves strides in from the left and stops at the curb, as though seeing some one in a house across the street*]

THE MAN [*angrily*]. Well, what about it? We've been waiting a half an hour!

A VOICE. I'll be right over!

THE MAN. Yeah? Well, make it snappy!

[*He strides off at left, muttering angrily.*]

ROSE comes out of the house and stands in the doorway, looking for SAM. Then she comes out on the stoop and peers into the KAPLAN apartment. As she turns away, she sees LIPPO.]

ROSE [*crossing to the left of the stoop*]. Good morning.

LIPPO. Gooda mornin', Meesa Maur rant.

[*MIKE goes down into the cellar, with a chunk of ice*]

ROSE. It's awful hot again, isn't it?

LIPPO. You don' like?

ROSE. I don't sleep very well, when it's hot.

LIPPO. No? Ahm sleepa fine. E Eetaly, where Ahm born, is much mo 'ot like 'ere. Een summer, ees too 'ot f workin'. Ees too 'ot only for sleepi W'en Ahm leetla boy, Ahm sleepa, sleep whola day. I don't wear no clo's—nawth: only leetle short pair pants. I lay dov on groun' under da lemon-tree, Ahm sleep whola day.

ROSE. Under a lemon-tree! That mu have been nice.

LIPPO. Ees smella sweet, lemon-tr! Where Ahm born ees t'ousan' lemon-tr! Lemon an' olive an' arancia.

ROSE. Oh, that must be lovely!

LIPPO. Ah, ees bew-tiful! Ees mu bewtiful place in whole worl'. You he about Sorrent', ha?

ROSE. No, I don't think I ever did.

LIPPO [*incredulously*]. You never he about Sorrent'?

ROSE. No, I don't know much abt geography. Is it a big place?

LIPPO. Ees not vera beeg—but eve body know Sorrent'. Sorrento gentile! bella Sorrento! You hear about Napoli Baia di Napoli?

ROSE. Oh yes, the Bay of Naples! Is near there?

LIPPO. Sure, ees on Bay of Napoli. I bew-tiful! Ees alla blue Sky blue, wa' blue, sun ees shine alla time.

ROSE. Oh, how lovely.

[*MIKE comes up the cellar-steps, chucks another block of ice, and goes down the cellar-steps with it*]

LIPPO. An' ees Vesuvio, too. You he about Vesuvio?—ees beeg volcano.

ROSE. Oh yes, sure I saw a pictu once, called The Last Days of Pompei and it showed Mount Vesuvius, w smoke coming out of the top.

LIPPO. Da's right. An' night-time, i fire come out, maka da sky red

ROSE. Didn't it frighten you?

LIPPO. Ah no, ees nawthin' to be afra Ees jus' volcano.

ROSE. I'd love to go to Italy. It mu be awfully pretty. But I don't suppose ever will.

LIPPO. W'y sure! Some day you gon marry reech fella; 'e's taka you Eetaly ever'where.

ROSE. I guess there's not much char of that. Rich fellows aren't going arou looking for girls like me to marry. Ar how, I don't think money is everythi do you?

LIPPO. Ees good to hava money. D w'y Ahm come to America Een Eeta ees bewtiful, but ees no money. 'Ere

not bewtiful, but ees plenty money. Eees better to 'ave money.

[An elderly MAN, in the gray uniform of a special officer, comes out of the house, filling his pipe from a tobacco-box]

THE MAN. Good mornin'.

ROSE. Good morning, Mr. Callahan. [The MAN drops the empty tobacco-tin on the sidewalk and goes off slowly at the left.] I don't think I'd be happy, just marrying a man with money, if I didn't care for him, too.

LIPPO [laughing]. Wotsa matter, ha? You lova da kettle kike, ha?

ROSE. Why no, I don't. I don't love anybody—at least, I don't think I do. But it's not on account of his being a Jew.

LIPPO. No, ees no good—Jew. 'E's only t'ink about money, money—all'a time money.

ROSE. But Sam isn't like that, a bit. He's only interested in poetry and things like that.

[The ICE-MAN comes up out of the cellar and trundles off his cart at the right]

MRS FIORENTINO [calling]. Lipppo! Breakfast!

LIPPO [calling]. Alla right, Margherita! [To ROSE] You marry fella wit' lot o' money Ees much better.

[He goes away from the window, as MISS CUSHING appears, at the left, carrying a paper bag]

ROSE. How's your mother to-day, Miss Cushing?

MISS CUSHING. She's not feeling so good to-day.

ROSE. It's too bad she's not feeling well

MISS CUSHING. I'm afraid it's her heart. At her age, you know——!

[As she enters the house, TWO COLLEGE GIRLS of nineteen appear at the right]

FIRST GIRL [as they appear]. I don't understand it.

SECOND GIRL. Convex is this way; and concave is this way.

FIRST GIRL. That I know.

SECOND GIRL. When you're near-sighted, they give you convex glasses, and when you're far-sighted, they give you concave.

FIRST GIRL. That I didn't know.

SECOND GIRL. Of course, you know it. Didn't we have it in psychology?

FIRST GIRL [as they disappear at left]. I don't remember.

[WILLIE comes out of the house, on

his way to school. He is hatless, and carries his books under his arm.]

ROSE [intercepting him at the top of the stoop]. Why, Willie, the way you look! Your collar's all open.

WILLIE. I know it. De button came off.

ROSE. Why didn't you ask Ma to sew it on for you?

WILLIE. She ain't dere. She's up at Buchanan's.

ROSE. Well, wait till I see if I have a pin. [She searches in her hand-bag.]

WILLIE [starting down the steps] Aw, it's all right de way it is.

ROSE [following him to the sidewalk]. No, it isn't. You can't go to school like that. [Producing a safety-pin.] Now, hold still, while I fix it.

WILLIE [squirming]. Aw, fer de love o' Mike——!

ROSE. You'll get stuck, if you don't hold still. There, that looks better, now. And you didn't comb your hair, either.

WILLIE [trying to escape]. Say, lemme alone, cantcha?

ROSE [taking a comb out of her hand-bag and combing his hair]. You can't go to school looking like a little street-loafer.

WILLIE. Aw, you gimme a pain in de——

ROSE. You're getting big enough to comb your own hair, without being told. There! Now you look very nice.

WILLIE. So's your old man!

[He runs toward the left kicking the empty tobacco-tin ahead of him, then stops, turns and deliberately rumples his hair]

ROSE [indignantly, as WILLIE runs off]. Why, Willie!

[MRS. JONES and the dog appear at the right. OLSEN knocks the ashes out of his pipe and goes down into the cellar. MRS. MAURRANT comes out of the house]

ROSE. Hello, Ma.

MRS. JONES [at the steps]. Good mornin'.

ROSE and MRS. MAURRANT. Good morning, Mrs. Jones.

MRS. JONES. How's little Mrs. Buchanan gettin' on?

MRS. MAURRANT. Well, she's sleeping now, poor thing. She was so worn out, she just went off into a sound sleep. I really didn't think, last night, she'd have the strength to pull through it.

MRS. JONES. Well, it's somethin' we all got to go through. I been through

enough with mine, I hope to tell you. Not that they didn't turn out all right.

MRS. MAURRANT. I wouldn't give up having mine for anything in the world.

MRS. JONES. Well, after all, what more does any woman want than watchin' her kids grow up an' a husband to look out for her?

MRS. MAURRANT. Yes, that's true.

MRS. JONES. Yes, and the world would be a whole lot better off, if there was more that lived up to it. [*Starting up the steps*] Well, I gotta get my Mae up out o' bed. Gawd knows what time she got in, this mornin'. [*She enters the vestibule, then stops and turns*] If you don't mind my bein' so bold, Mrs Maurrant—an' I don't mind sayin' it in front of your daughter, either—I'd think twice before I'd let any child o' mine bring a Jew into the family.

ROSE [*with a show of temper*]. I don't see what it has to do with you, Mrs. Jones.

MRS. JONES. There's no need to get huffy about it. I'm only advisin' you for your own good. I'm sure it don't make no difference to me what you do. Come on, Queenie. [*She goes into the house*]

ROSE. Well, of all the nerve I ever heard in my life—! She and those wonderful children of hers!

MRS. MAURRANT [*coming half way down the steps*]. The best way is not to pay any attention to her. There's lots of people like that, in the world—they never seem to be happy, unless they're making trouble for somebody. Did Willie go to school?

ROSE. Yes, he did. It's awful the way he goes around, looking like a little tough. And the language he uses, too.

MRS. MAURRANT. I know. I just don't seem able to manage him, any more.

ROSE. I sometimes wonder if it wouldn't be better for us all, if we moved out to the suburbs somewhere—you know, some place in Jersey or Staten Island.

MRS. MAURRANT. I don't think Pop would do it. [*As MAURRANT comes out of the house, carrying a much-battered satchel*] Are you leaving now, Frank?

MAURRANT [*from the top of the stoop*]. Looks like it, don't it. Where you been all this while?

MRS. MAURRANT. Why, you know where I've been, Frank—up to Mrs. Buchanans's.

MAURRANT. Yeah? An' where are you goin' now?

MRS. MAURRANT. Just around to

Kraus's to get a chicken. I thought I'd make her chicken-soup, to give her strength.

MAURRANT. Say, how about lookin' after your own home and lettin' the Buchanans look after theirs?

MRS. MAURRANT. All I'm trying to do is to be a little neighborly. It's the least anybody can do, with the poor thing hardly able to lift her hand.

MAURRANT. That's all right about that! [*Coming down the steps.*] A woman's got a right to stay in her own home, lookin' after her husband an' children

MRS. MAURRANT [*going towards him*]. What e'se have I been doing all these years, I'd like to know?

MAURRANT. Well, just see that you don't forget it that's all—or there's li'ble to be trouble.

MRS. MAURRANT [*putting her hand on his arm*]. All right, Frank. Don't say any more, please. When will you be back—to-morrow?

MAURRANT. I don't know when I'll be back. Whenever I'm t'roo wit' me work—that's when. What are you so anxious to know for, huh?

MRS. MAURRANT. Why, I just asked, that's all.

MAURRANT. Oh, you just asked, huh? Just in case somebody wanted to come aroun' callin', is that it?

MRS. MAURRANT. No, it isn't. It isn't anything of the kind. You got no right to talk to me like that, in front of my own daughter. You got no right. No, you haven't!

[*She turns away and hurries off, abruptly, at the left*]

ROSE. Ma!

[*She starts to run after her mother*]

MAURRANT [*imperiously*]. Come back here, you! [*ROSE hesitates*] Come back, hear me? [*ROSE turns and comes slowly back*] You stay right here

[*He puts down his satchel and takes a flask from his pocket*]

ROSE. Why do you talk to her like that?

MAURRANT. Nobody's askin' you.

ROSE. If you were only a little nicer to her, maybe everything would be different.

MAURRANT. Yeah? Where's she got any kick comin'? Ain't I always been a good husband to her? Ain't I always looked after her? [*He takes a drink.*]

ROSE. It's not that, Pop. It's somebody to be sort of nice to her that she wants—sort of nice and gentle, the way she is to you. That's all it is.

MAURRANT [*turning to her*]. So she's got you headed the same way, has she? Goin' out nights with married men, huh?

ROSE. You don't need to worry about me, Pop. I can take care of myself, all right.

MAURRANT. No daughter o' mine ain't gonna go that way. I seen too many o' those kind around the theayter.

ROSE. Things are different, nowadays, Pop. I guess maybe you don't realize that. Girls aren't the way they used to be—sort of soft and helpless. A girl nowadays knows how to look out for herself. But not her, Pop; she needs somebody to look after her.

MAURRANT. Aw, can all that talk! You been listenin' to them bolsheviks, that's the trouble. But I'm gonna keep you straight, by God, or I'll know the reason why.

ROSE. I guess I've got a right to think about things for myself.

MAURRANT. Yeah? Well, don't let me ketch that other bozo comin' around here, either—that's all I got to say.

ROSE [*hesitantly, going up to him*]. Pop, listen—couldn't we get a little house somewhere—Queens or somewhere like that?

MAURRANT. What's the idea?

ROSE. Well, I don't know. I sort of thought it would be nice for all of us. And maybe if Ma had a nice little home and some real nice neighbors—do you see what I mean?

MAURRANT. This place suits me all right.

ROSE. You can get some real nice little houses, that don't cost such an awful lot. And I wouldn't mind helping to pay for it. And once we had it all fixed up—

MAURRANT. Forget it! I don't know when I'll be back. [*As he starts to go right*] An' remember what I tol' you, hear?

MRS. JONES [*appearing at her window with a tin dust-pan*]. Good morning, Mr Maurrant. You off on a little trip?

MAURRANT [*curtly*]. Yeah.

[*He goes off. MRS. JONES empties the dust-pan out of the window and goes away. KAPLAN comes out of the house, a bundle of newspapers under his arm. He walks slowly and painfully, with the aid of a heavy stick.*]

KAPLAN [*at the foot of the steps*]. Vy do you look so sed, hm?

ROSE [*turning, and sitting on the right balustrade*]. Oh, good morning, Mr. Kaplan.

KAPLAN. A young girl, like you, should not look so sed.

ROSE. I'm not sad, especially, only—

KAPLAN. You got troubles, hm?

ROSE. I don't know. It's just sort of everything.

KAPLAN. Velt-schmerz you got, hm? Vit' my boy Sem is de same t'ing. Dees vay you feel only when you are young. Ven you get old like me, you tink only: "Moch longer I von't be here."

ROSE. Why should things be the way they are, Mr. Kaplan? Why must people always be fighting and having troubles, instead of just sort of being happy together?

KAPLAN. My dear yong leddy, ef I could enser dis quastion, I would be de greatest benefactor thet de verld hes ever known. Dees is som'ting vich all de philosophers hev been unable to enser. De ones thet believe in God, say de davil is responsible; and de ones thet don't believe in God, say 'uman nature is responsible. It is my opinion thet most unheppiness can be traced to economic cosses and thet—

[*CHARLIE and MARY HILDEBRAND have come out of the house, carrying their school-books.*]

MARY. Hello.

ROSE. Hello, Mary. Hello, Charlie.

CHARLIE. Hello.

MARY [*chattily, as they reach the sidewalk*]. We're going to be dispossessed to-day.

ROSE. What a shame!

MARY. Yes ma'am. My father went away and so we couldn't pay the rent.

CHARLIE [*tugging at her arm*]. Aw, come on, Mary.

ROSE. Have you another place to live, Mary?

MARY. No ma'am. But Miss Simpson, from the Charities, says she'll find us a place. She says we must learn to be less extravagant.

CHARLIE. Come ahead, will you?

MARY. I'm going to school now. Good-bye.

ROSE. Good-bye.

[*The children go off, at the left.*]

KAPLAN. More troubles!

ROSE. I know. Isn't it awful to think of them being turned out in the street like that?

KAPLAN. In a ciivilized verld, soch t'ings could not heppen.

ROSE. You mean if there were different laws?

KAPLAN. No laws! We got already too

many laws. Ve must have ection, not laws. De verking-klesses must t'row off de yoke of kepitalism, and ebolish wage-slavery.

ROSE. But wouldn't people still be unkind to each other and fight and quarrel among themselves?

KAPLAN. My dear young ledly, so long as ve keep men in slavery, dey vill behave like sleeves. But wance ve establish a verld based upon 'uman needs and not upon 'uman greed—

ROSE. You mean people will begin being nice to each other and making allowances and all?

KAPLAN. All dees vill come. Wot ve hev now is a wicious soicle. On de one hend, ve hev a rotten economic system—

ROSE. Excuse me, here's my mother.

[*She goes towards the left, as MRS. MAURRANT approaches, a paper package in her hand. KAPLAN goes off, at the right.*]

MRS. MAURRANT [*as ROSE comes up to her*]. Did he go?

[*They stop on the pavement, at the left of the stoop.*]

ROSE. Yes.

MRS. MAURRANT. I got a little chicken, to make Mrs. Buchanan some soup.

ROSE. He had a flask with him, Ma. I hope he doesn't start drinking.

MRS. MAURRANT. What did he say—anything?

ROSE. No, only the way he always talks. I tried to talk to him about buying a house, somewhere, but he wouldn't listen.

MRS. MAURRANT. No, I knew he wouldn't.

ROSE. It doesn't seem to be any use trying to get him to listen to anything.

MRS. MAURRANT. It's always been that way. I've always tried to be a good wife to him, Rose. But it never seems to make any difference to him.

ROSE. I know, Ma.

MRS. MAURRANT. And I've tried to be a good mother, too.

ROSE. I know, Ma. I know just the way you feel about it.

MRS. MAURRANT [*appealingly*]. Do you, Rose?

ROSE. Yes, Ma, I do. Honest I do.

MRS. MAURRANT. I've always tried to make a nice home for him and to do what's right. But it doesn't seem to be any use.

ROSE. I know, Ma. [*Hesitantly.*] But it's on account of—

[*She stops.*]
MRS. MAURRANT. Are you going to

start, too? Are you going to start like all the others?

[*She turns away and bursts into tears*].

ROSE [*fondling her*]. Don't, Ma. Please don't.

MRS. MAURRANT. I thought you'd be the one that would feel different.

ROSE. I do, Ma—really I do.

MRS. MAURRANT. What's the good of being alive, if you can't get a little something out of life? You might just as well be dead.

ROSE. Look out, Ma. Somebody's coming.

[*A smartly dressed girl, with one side of her face covered with cotton and adhesive tape, appears at the left and crosses the stage. At the same time, JONES comes out of the house. ROSE and MRS. MAURRANT stand in awkward silence, as he comes down the stoop and approaches them.*]

JONES. Well, is it hot enough for you, to-day?

ROSE. It's awful, isn't it?

JONES [*as he goes towards the left*]. You said it. Still along about January, we'll all be wishin' we had a little o' this weather.

[*He exits. MRS. MAURRANT goes towards the stoop*].

ROSE. Ma, listen. If I say something, will you listen to me?

MRS. MAURRANT. Yes, sure I will, Rose. I'll listen to anything you say, only—

ROSE. Well, what I was thinking was, if he didn't come around here so much, maybe. Do you see what I mean, Ma?

MRS. MAURRANT [*constrainedly*]. Yes, Rose.

ROSE [*putting her arm around her*]. It's on account of all that's going around—everybody in the whole house. You see what I mean, don't you, Ma?

MRS. MAURRANT. Every person in the world has to have somebody to talk to. You can't live without somebody to talk to. I'm not saying that I can't talk to you, Rose, but you're only a young girl and it's not the same thing.

ROSE. It's only on account of Pop. I'm scared of what he's likely to do, if he starts drinking.

MRS. MAURRANT. Well, I'll see, Rose. Sometimes I think I'd be better off if I was dead.

ROSE. If there was only something I could do.

MRS. MAURRANT. There isn't any—

thing anybody could do. It's just the way things are, that's all.

[BUCHANAN appears at the left. They turn and face him, as he approaches.]

MRS. MAURRANT. Oh, Mr. Buchanan, I got a little chicken, so that I could make her some good, nourishing soup.

BUCHANAN. Well, say, you got to let me pay you for it.

MRS. MAURRANT. Oh, never mind about that. We'll have the chicken for supper to-night. Did you have her medicine made up?

BUCHANAN. Yes, I got it right here. I called up the office and they told me not to come down to-day.

MRS. MAURRANT. Well, that's very nice. It'll be a comfort to her to have you around.

BUCHANAN. Yes, that's what I thought, too. Well, I'd better be getting upstairs. [He goes up the steps.]

MRS. MAURRANT. I'll be up later, with the soup.

BUCHANAN. Well, thanks. [Stopping at the top of the stoop and turning to her.] You've been a mighty good neighbor, Mrs. Maurrant. [He enters the house.]

MRS. MAURRANT. He's an awful nice young feller—so nice and gentle. And he's always trying to be so helpful. It makes you feel sort of sorry for him.

[SHIRLEY comes out of the house, carrying a large wicker bag, which contains her lunch and school-books. She takes a post-card out of the mailbox.]

MRS. MAURRANT [going up the steps]. Well, I'd better go and start this chicken. Are you coming home for lunch, Rose?

ROSE. Yes, I'll be back, as soon as the funeral's over.

MRS. MAURRANT. Oh, all right. [As she sees SHIRLEY.] Good morning.

SHIRLEY [coming out of the vestibule, reading the post-card] Good morning.

ROSE. Good morning.

[MRS. MAURRANT goes into the house. The shade of MAE'S window flies up and she is seen, for an instant, dressed only in her step-in. She yawns noisily and turns away from the window.]

ROSE. It's another awful hot day, isn't it? [Seating herself on the stoop.]

SHIRLEY. Yes, and when you have to keep forty children quiet—! Well, thank goodness, in two weeks, school closes. Otherwise, I think I'd go crazy.

ROSE. Well, you get a nice, long vacation, anyhow.

SHIRLEY. Not much vacation for me. I'm taking Summer courses at Teachers College. [She looks at ROSE a moment, hesitates, and then comes down the steps.] Miss Maurrant, if you don't mind, I want to talk to you about my brother, Sam.

ROSE. Why certainly, Miss Kaplan.

SHIRLEY. I guess you know he's only finishing college, this month—

ROSE. Yes, of course, I do.

SHIRLEY. Then he has to go three years to law-school and pass the bar examination, before he can be a full-fledged lawyer.

ROSE. Yes, it takes a long time.

SHIRLEY. A long time and lots of money. And before a young lawyer begins to make his own living, that takes a long time, too. It will be ten years, maybe, before he's making enough to support himself and a family. [Looking away.] Then, it's time enough for him to think about marriage.

ROSE. You don't mean me and Sam, Miss Kaplan?

SHIRLEY. Yes, that's just what I mean.

ROSE. Why, we're just good friends, that's all.

SHIRLEY. I know how it is with a boy like Sam, Miss Maurrant. He thinks he's a man, already; but he's nothing but a boy. If you're such a good friend, you shouldn't take his mind away from his work.

ROSE. But I haven't meant to, Miss Kaplan—honest I haven't.

SHIRLEY. I've had to work hard enough to get him as far as he is. And I have my father to take care of, too. The few dollars he makes, writing for the radical papers, don't even pay the rent. Believe me, every dollar I make goes.

ROSE. I know. Sam's often told me how much he owes to you.

SHIRLEY. He doesn't owe me anything. I don't care about the money. Only he should be thinking about his work and not about other things.

ROSE. Yes, he should be thinking about his work. But don't you think there are other things in the world, too, besides just work?

SHIRLEY. Don't you think I know that? I know that just as well as you do. Maybe, you think I'm only an old-maid school-teacher, without any feelings.

ROSE. Oh, I don't—really I don't!

SHIRLEY [turning her head away]. Maybe I'm not a movie vamp, with dim-

ples—but I could have had my chances, too. Only, I wanted to give Sam an education.

ROSE. I haven't tried to vamp Sam, honestly I haven't. We just seemed sort of naturally to like each other.

SHIRLEY. Why must you pick out Sam? You could get other fellows. Anyhow, it's much better to marry with your own kind. When you marry outside your own people nothing good ever comes of it. You can't mix oil and water.

ROSE. I don't know. I think if people really care about each other—

SHIRLEY. He's nothing but a baby. He sees a pretty face and, right away, he forgets about everything else.

ROSE [*with a flash of temper*]. I know I haven't as much brains as Sam, or as you, either, if that's what you mean.

SHIRLEY [*contritely, going towards her*]. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. I haven't got anything against you. Only, he's all I've got in the world. What else have I got to live for?

SAM [*appearing at the extreme right window, with a cup of coffee and a piece of coffee-cake*]. Hello, Rose.

ROSE. Hello, Sam.

SHIRLEY [*in a low tone*]. Please don't tell him what I said.

[*SAM goes to the other window.*]

ROSE. Oh no, I won't.

[*SHIRLEY hurries off, at the left.*]

ROSE [*rising and turning towards Sam*]. Sam—

SAM [*holding out the coffee-cake*]. Want some coffee-cake?

ROSE No. [*Going up the steps.*] Sam, there's something I want to ask you, before I forget. Is there any special way you have to act in a synagogue?

SAM [*eating throughout*]. In a synagogue?

ROSE. Yes. The funeral I'm going to is in a synagogue, and I thought there might be some special thing you have to do. Like in church, you know, a girl is always supposed to keep her hat on.

SAM. I don't know. I've never in my life been in a synagogue.

ROSE. Didn't you ever go to Sunday-school, or anything like that?

SAM. No.

ROSE. That's funny. I thought everybody went, once in a while. How about when your mother died?

SAM. She was cremated. My parents were always rationalists.

ROSE. Didn't they believe in God or anything?

SAM. What do you mean by God?

ROSE [*puzzled*]. Well—you know what I mean. What anybody means—God. Somebody that sort of loves us and looks after us, when we're in trouble.

SAM [*sitting on the window-sill*]. That's nothing but superstition—the lies that people tell themselves, because reality is too terrible for them to face.

ROSE. But, Sam, don't you think it's better to believe in something that makes you a little happy, than not to believe in anything and be miserable all the time?

SAM. There's no such thing as happiness. That's an illusion, like all the rest.

ROSE Then, what's the use of living?

SAM [*brushing the last crumbs off his hands*]. Yes, what is the use?

ROSE. Why, you oughtn't to talk like that, Sam—a person with all the talent and brains that you've got I know things aren't just the way you want them to be. But they aren't for anybody. They aren't for me, either.

SAM. Then, why don't we get out of it together?

ROSE. I don't see just how we could do that, Sam.

SAM. It would be easy enough—ten cents' worth of carbohc acid.

ROSE Why, Sam, you don't mean kill ourselves!

SAM Is your life so precious to you that you want to cling to it?

ROSE. Well, yes. I guess it is.

SAM. Why? Why? What is there in life to compensate for the pain of living?

ROSE. There's a lot. Just being alive—breathing and walking around just looking at the faces of people you like and hearing them laugh. And seeing the pretty things in the store-windows And roughhousing with your kid brother. And—oh, I don't know—listening to a good band, and dancing— Oh, I'd hate to die! [*Earnestly*] Sam, promise you won't talk about killing yourself, any more.

SAM What difference would it make to you, if I did?

ROSE. Don't talk like that, Sam! You're the best friend I've ever had

[*She puts her hand on his.*]

SAM I can't think of anything but you.

ROSE. There's something I want to ask your advice about, Sam. It's about what I started to tell you about, last night. A man I know wants to put me on the stage.

SAM [*releasing her hand and drawing back*] What man?

ROSE A man that works in the office. He knows a manager and he says he'll

help me get started. You see, what I thought was, that if I could only get out of here and have a decent place to live and make a lot of money, maybe everything would be different, not only for me, but for Ma and Pop and Willie.

SAM. But don't you know what he wants, this man?

ROSE. Nobody gives you anything for nothing, Sam. If you don't pay for things in one way, you do in another.

SAM. Rose, for God's sake, you mustn't! [VINCENT JONES comes out of the house]

ROSE [seeing VINCENT in the vestibule]. Look out, Sam, here's that tough, from upstairs.

[She goes over to the left of the stoop]

VINCENT [in the doorway]. Hello, Rosie. Been here, all night, talkin' to the little yit? [ROSE does not answer]

VINCENT [turning to Sam]. Hello, motzers! Shake!

[He leans over the balustrade and seizes SAM'S hand, in a crushing grip]

SAM [writhing with pain]. Let me go!

VINCENT [with a loud laugh, as he goes down the steps]. Fightin' Kaplan, de pride o' Jerusalem! [He looks at them both, then laughs again] Fer cryin' out loud!

ROSE. Oh, if there was only some way of getting out of here! [SAM puts the back of his hand to his forehead and turns away] I sometimes think I'd just like to run away.

SAM [without turning]. Yes!

ROSE. Anywhere—it wouldn't matter where—just to get out of this

SAM [turning]. Why shouldn't we do it?

ROSE [rather startled, coming over to the right balustrade]. Would you go with me, Sam?

SAM. Yes—anywhere

ROSE. I've heard that people are much nicer and friendlier, when you get outside of New York. There's not so much of a mad rush, other p'aces. And being alone, you could sort of work things out for yourself. [Suddenly.] Only, what would you do, Sam?

SAM. I could get a job, too.

ROSE. And give up your law-work?

SAM. I'd give up everything, to be with you.

ROSE. No. I wouldn't let you do that, Sam. It's different with me—

[EASTER appears at the right]

EASTER [stopping at the right of the stoop]. Good morning, Miss Maurrant.

[Startled, ROSE turns and sees him, for the first time]

ROSE [none too pleased]. Oh, good morning, Mr. Easter. What brings you in this neighborhood?

EASTER [not very plausibly]. Well, I just happened to have a little business, right around the corner. So, I thought as long as you were going to the funeral, we might just as well go together.

ROSE. Well, I hardly expected to see you around here. [An awkward pause.] Oh, I'd like you to meet my friend, Mr. Kaplan.

EASTER. How do you do, Mr. Kaplan? Glad to know you.

[SAM murmurs something inaudible. An awkward silence.]

ROSE [to SAM]. Mr. Easter is the manager of the office.

[SAM does not reply. Another silence]

ROSE [to EASTER]. It's awful hot again, isn't it?

EASTER. Worse than yesterday. [Approaching the stoop] Tell you what I was thinking. I was thinking, that after the funeral, we might take a run down to the beach, somewhere, and cool off a little.

ROSE. I can't to-day. I've got a lot of things I want to do.

EASTER. Oh, you can do 'em some other day

ROSE. No, really, I can't. [Looking at her watch] Well, I guess it's time we got started

[She comes down the steps]

EASTER. Yes, it is. We'll pick up a cab at the corner.

[MRS MAURRANT appears at her window, looks out, and sees ROSE and EASTER.]

ROSE. Why, I thought I'd walk. It's not far.

EASTER. Too hot, to-day, for any walking.

ROSE [starting to go towards the left]. Not if you keep in the shade.

EASTER. Much more comfortable taking a cab.

ROSE. I'd rather walk.

EASTER. Well, whatever you say. Good morning, Mr. Kaplan. Glad to have met you.

[SAM murmurs an inaudible reply]

ROSE. Good-bye, Sam. I'll see you, later [SAM does not answer. ROSE and EASTER go towards the left, in silence. SAM watches them, intently, trembling with jealousy. MRS. MAURRANT, surprised and disturbed, watches ROSE and EASTER. To EASTER, as they disap-

pear.] It's a lucky thing my father wasn't around.

[SAM suddenly turns and goes into the house. MRS. MAURRANT remains at the window, looking out with obvious expectancy.]

A DISTANT VOICE [offstage left].
Straw-berries! Straw-berries!

[An anemic GIRL of eighteen, with music-roll under her arm, appears at the left. She enters the house and pushes one of the buttons, in the vestibule, then goes to the entrance-door and waits. A moment later, MRS. FIORENTINO appears hastily at the window and whisks away the bed-clothes. After another moment, the latch clicks and the girl enters the house.]

THE VOICE [a little nearer]. Oh-h!
Straw-berries! Straw-berries!

[SANKEY appears at the right. He carries a pencil behind his ear, wears a round cap with a metal-name-plate and a stiff visor, and carries a large black-covered bull-holder. He and MRS. MAURRANT see each other and both become tense with excitement. MRS. MAURRANT beckons to him and he comes over to the railing, under her window.]

MRS. MAURRANT [in a low, tense voice] 'Come up.

SANKEY [looking about, nervously]. Now?

MRS. MAURRANT. Yes. I got to talk to you

SANKEY Is it all right?

MRS. MAURRANT. Yes. He's gone to Stamford

SANKEY How about later?

MRS. MAURRANT No. Rose'll be home in an hour. She's not working to-day

SANKEY. All right

[He looks about again, then goes quickly towards the steps. SAM appears, at the entrance-door. He is about to step out, when he sees SANKEY. He stops and looks at him. SANKEY sees SAM, hesitates a moment, then goes quickly into the house. Meanwhile, MRS. MAURRANT has closed both windows and pulled down the shades. SAM takes a periodical out of the mail-box, then comes out of the house and down the steps. He looks up at the MAURRANT windows, sees the drawn shades, and looks about, in perturbed perplexity, not knowing what to do. At length, he sits down

on the steps of the stoop, tears the wrapper off the periodical—The "Nation"—and begins to read. The girl in LIPPO'S apartment begins playing the piano. This continues throughout the scene. Two untidy and rather coarse-looking men appear, at the left and approach the stoop: JAMES HENRY, a city-marshal, and FRED CULLEN, his assistant. They stop in front of the house. SAM pays no attention to them.]

THE MARSHAL [crossing to the left of the stoop, and taking a paper from his pocket]. Dis is it. [To SAM] Hildebrand live here?

SAM [startled]. What?

THE MARSHAL. I'm askin' you if Hildebrand lives here.

SAM. Yes. Fourth floor.

THE MARSHAL. Better give de janitor a buzz, Fred.

[FRED goes up the steps and rings the janitor's bell, then leans over the left balustrade.]

FRED [bawling]. Hey, janitor.

OLSEN [below] Vell?

FRED Come on out, a minute. [As OLSEN appears below] We got a warrant for Hildebrand.

OLSEN Fourt' floor—Hildebrand.

FRED Yeah, I know. We got a warrant for her.

THE MARSHAL. I'm City Marshal Henry. We got a disposess warrant

OLSEN [coming up the steps]. Oh, sure. You gonna put 'em out?

THE MARSHAL. Yeah, dat's it. Has she got anybody to take de foincher away?

OLSEN [with a shrug]. I don' know.

THE MARSHAL. Well, we'll have t' dump it on de side-walk, den. Go ahead, Fred

[They enter the house. OLSEN leans his elbows on the coping, and smokes his pipe. SAM sits on the steps, deep in troubled thought. A grocery boy, with a full basket, appears at the right, and goes down the cellar-steps. MAE JONES comes out of the house. She stands on the top step, yawns noisily, and goes off, at left. She and SAM do not pay the slightest attention to each other.]

A VOICE [a little nearer]. Straw-berries! Straw-berries!

[MRS. OLSEN comes up the cellar-steps, with a heavy pail of water. OLSEN leans forward to make room for her. She staggers over to the stoop,

almost dropping the pail, and goes up the steps, into the vestibule. OLSEN yawns and goes down into the cellar. MRS. JONES appears, at the window, her hair wet and stringy, a towel pinned about her shoulders, and leans out to dry her hair

AN OLD-CLOTHES MAN [*appearing at left*] I kesh ko! I kesh ko!

[*He wears a battered derby and carries a folded newspaper under his arm. MRS OLSEN on her knees, begins washing up the vestibule. FRED comes out of the house, carrying a worn chair and a large gilt-framed picture, which he deposits on the sidewalk, against the railing, to the left of the stoop*]

AN OLD-CLOTHES MAN [*as if to some one across the street*] Kesh ko? [*To SAM*] Any old klose, mister?

[*SAM pays no attention to him. FRED reenters the house*]

THE OLD-CLOTHES MAN [*to MRS. JONES*] Any ol' klose, Jeddyy?

MRS JONES. Nawthin', I tell you

[*As the OLD-CLOTHES MAN goes off, at the right, MAURRANT appears, still carrying his satchel*]

MRS JONES. Why, hello, Mr Maurrant [*MAURRANT looks up without replying and comes over to the stoop.*] I thought you was off to Stamford.

MAURRANT. I changed me——

[*He stops, to the right of the stoop, and looks up at the drawn shades of his apartment. SAM rises, slowly and rigidly, his eyes glued in fascination upon MAURRANT. MAURRANT'S movements take on a lithe and cat-like quality. Then, slowly and deliberately, he goes towards the steps, his back arched, like a tiger ready to spring*]

SAM [*suddenly blocking the steps*] No! No! For God's sake——!

MAURRANT [*raging*]. Out o' me way, you goddam little rat!

[*He flings SAM violently aside, almost knocking him down. MRS. OLSEN, terrified, rises and shrinks into a corner, as MAURRANT with swift stealthiness enters the house. MRS. JONES leans out, to see what is wrong. SAM rushes down the steps and stands under the MAURRANT windows. The MARSHAL comes out of the house, carrying a wash-boiler, filled with pots*]

SAM [*hysterically*]. Mrs Maurrant! Mrs. Maurrant!

MRS. JONES. What's the matter?

[*The MARSHAL puts the wash-boiler on the balustrade and looks on, in amazement*]

SAM [*to MRS JONES*]. Quick! Run and tell her! Quick!

MRS JONES. What is it? [*Suddenly.*] Oh, Gawd, is he in there?

[*She leaves the window, hastily*]

SAM. Yes! Mrs. Maurrant! Mrs Maurrant!

[*A scream of terror is heard, from the MAURRANT apartment*]

MRS. MAURRANT'S VOICE. Frank! Frank!

[*Two shots are heard, in quick succession, and then a heavy fall. MRS. OLSEN runs out of the vestibule and down into the cellar. SANKEY'S voice is heard, mariculate with fear. Then, one of the shades shoots up, SANKEY appears at the window, coatless, his face deformed by terror. He tries to open the window, but succeeds only in shattering the pane with his elbow. MAURRANT appears behind him and pulls him away from the window. Then another shot is heard*]

THE MARSHAL. For Chris' sake, what's happenin'? Get an ambulance, you!

[*He pushes SAM towards the left, then hurries off, at the right. As SAM runs off, a crowd begins to form. OLSEN comes up from the cellar, followed by the GROCERY-BOY. The two workmen come up, out of the excavation. Two or three of the workmen from the demolished building run on at the right*]

A WORKMAN. What's happening?

A MAN. What is it? A murder?

[*Still others join the crowd: a huckster, a janitor from a neighboring house, a mulatto girl, six or eight women of the neighborhood, some in street-dresses, others in house-dresses or dingy wrappers. LIPPO'S pupil appears, at the window, badly frightened. The crowd surges about, uncertainly, not knowing what has happened, and buzzing with questions, which nobody can answer. While the crowd is still forming, FRED, the MARSHAL'S assistant, appears at the broken window.*]

FRED [*excitedly*]. Grab dat boid! He's comin' down!

A WORKMAN. What boid?

A MAN. Here he is, now!

[*The crowd murmurs with excitement*]

and surges about the stoop, as the house-door opens and MAURRANT appears. His coat is open and his shirt is torn almost to shreds. His face, hands and clothing are covered with blood. He stands, in the doorway, for a moment, surveying the crowd, his eyes glaring.]

FRED. Grab him! Don't let him get away!

[As the crowd makes a concerted movement towards MAURRANT, he whips out an automatic revolver and levels it. The crowd shrinks back. Some of the women scream.]

MAURRANT. Git back! Git back, all o' you!

[The crowd falls back towards the left, to make way for him. With his back to the balustrade, he comes quickly down the steps, and still leveling his revolver at the crowd, retreats backwards to the cellar steps. A man, approaching at the right, comes stealthily up behind him, but MAURRANT senses his presence in time, wheels quickly, menaces the man with his revolver, then rushes down the cellar steps. While all this is happening, the other shade in the MAURRANT apartment flies up and MISS CUSHING opens the window and leans out.]

MISS CUSHING. Hurry up! Get an ambulance! [No one pays any attention to her, as they are all watching MAURRANT. As MAURRANT runs down the cellar steps, the crowd surges forward to the railing, on both sides of the stoop and leans over. A scream from MRS OLSEN is heard from the basement. FRED goes away from the window.] Get an ambulance, somebody!

[Unable to attract any one's attention, she leaves the window]

OLSEN. Olga!

[He hurries down the cellar steps.]

A MAN [calling] Here's a cop! [The crowd looks to the right] Hey! Hurry up!

[A POLICEMAN runs on from the right]

THE POLICEMAN. Where is he?

VOICES IN THE CROWD. He's down the cellar! He ran down the cellar! He went down the steps!

THE POLICEMAN. Get out of the way!

[The POLICEMAN and TWO MEN in the crowd go down the cellar steps.]

VOICES IN THE CROWD. Watch

yourself! Look out, he's got a gun! He's a big guy with his shirt torn!

[The rest of the crowd peers over the railing]

MISS CUSHING [leaning out of ROSE'S window]. Hey, don't you hear me? Get an ambulance!

ANOTHER MAN [looking up]. What's de matter? You want de ambulance?

MISS CUSHING. Yes! Right away!

ANOTHER MAN [to the GROCERY-BOY]. Run aroun' de corner to de hospital, Johnny, an' tell 'em to send de ambulance!

THE GROCERY-BOY. Sure!

MISS CUSHING. Run!

[The GROCERY BOY runs off swiftly at the left. MISS CUSHING leaves the window. Meanwhile, as the POLICEMAN and the TWO MEN have gone down the cellar steps, the MARSHAL has run on, from the right, panting]

THE MARSHAL [as the GROCERY-BOY runs off] Did dey git 'm?

A MAN. He beat it down de cellar.

A WORKMAN. De cop's gone after him.

THE MARSHAL. Why de hell didn' you stop 'im?

[FRED comes out of the house]

A WORKMAN. He had a gun.

FRED. Did somebody go for de ambulance?

A MAN. Yeah. De kid went.

A WOMAN. It's only aroun' de corner.

ANOTHER MAN. Dey'll be here, right away.

[The crowd moves over towards FRED]

THE MARSHAL [pushing his way through the crowd and up the steps]. What de hell happened, Fred?

FRED [as the crowd moves toward the stoop] It's a moider. Dis boid's wife an' some other guy. Jesus, you oughta see de blood.

[Another POLICEMAN runs up, at the left, closely followed by SAM]

FRED. Upstairs, officer! Dere's two o' 'em got shot.

THE POLICEMAN [elbowing his way through the crowd]. Look out o' de way, youse! [He goes up the stoop and crosses to the door] Where's de guy dat did it?

VOICES IN THE CROWD. Down de cellar! He beat it down de steps!

FRED. Dere's another cop after 'im. You better look after dem, upstairs. Foist floor.

SAM [agonized]. Are they dead?

[No one pays any attention to him.]

THE MARSHAL [stopping the POLICEMAN, and exhibiting his badge]. I'm City Marshal Henry. Kin I do anythin'?

POLICEMAN. Don' let anybody in or out! Hear?

THE MARSHAL Yeah, sure!

[The POLICEMAN exits quickly, into the house]

SAM. Are they dead?

[No one notices him The MARSHAL takes up his position in the doorway]

BUCHANAN [appearing at the MAURRANT window] Where's the ambulance?

THE MARSHAL It'll be here, right away Dere's a cop on his way up.

SAM Mr Buchanan! Mr. Buchanan! Are they dead?

[But BUCHANAN has already disappeared. The TWO MEN, who followed the first POLICEMAN into the cellar, now come up the steps. The crowd moves over to the railing, at the right]

THE MARSHAL Did you get him, boys?

ONE OF THE MEN. He must be hidin', somewheres De cop's lookin' for 'im.

ANOTHER MAN. Somebody better call de resolves.

[SAM runs up the steps and tries to enter the house]

THE MARSHAL [seizing him roughly]. You can't get in now! Get back dere!

[He pushes SAM back into the crowd, at the foot of the steps]

THE POLICEMAN [appearing at the MAURRANT window] Hey, call up headquarters and tell 'em to send the resolves Make it quick!

[He goes away from the window]

THE MARSHAL. You go, Fred.

FRED. Sure!

A MAN. Dere's a phone in de warehouse.

[An ambulance bell is heard at the left, as FRED goes quickly towards the left Another spectator hurries on and joins the crowd]

VOICES IN THE CROWD. Dere it is! Dere's de ambulance now! Here dey come!

[The crowd moves over towards the left]

A MAN. Dey won't be able to git past.

THE POLICEMAN [reappearing at the window]. Is dat de ambulance?

THE MARSHAL. Yeah.

[BUCHANAN and MRS. JONES

crowd to the window, behind the POLICEMAN, and, at the other window, LIPPO, MISS CUSHING and MRS. HILDEBRAND appear. A hospital INTERNE and an AMBULANCE-DRIVER come on at the left]

THE POLICEMAN. Hurry up, Doc! She's still breathin'.

THE INTERNE [forcing his way through the crowd]. All right! Better bring the stretcher, Harry

THE AMBULANCE-DRIVER. Yes, sir.

[He hurries off, at the left The INTERNE goes quickly into the house. The crowd attempts to follow, several of its members going up the steps]

THE MARSHAL [pushing them back]. Keep back, now! Back off de stoop, everybody!

[The crowd forms a compact mass about the foot of the steps The persons at the MAURRANT windows have disappeared. FRED hurries on, at the left]

FRED [pushing his way through the crowd and up the steps]. I got 'em. Dey'll be right up Annuder cop jes' wen' in t'roo de warehouse cellar

THE MARSHAL Dey'll git 'im all right. [Looking at his watch] Better git busy wit' dat foincher, Fred. We got two under jobs today.

FRED Yeah, sure, Jimmy.

[He enters the house The AMBULANCE-DRIVER appears at the left, carrying a canvas stretcher]

THE AMBULANCE-DRIVER. Get out o' the way!

THE MARSHAL. Git back, can't youse? What de hell's de matter wit' youse?

[He comes down the steps and violently pushes the crowd back. The AMBULANCE-DRIVER enters the house.]

THE POLICEMAN [at the window]. Are dey bringin' dat stretcher?

THE MARSHAL. On de way up! [To the crowd] Keep back!

[The POLICEMAN leaves the window, LIPPO'S PUPIL, her music-roll under her arm, appears timidly in the doorway]

THE MARSHAL [grabbing her arm roughly]. Where you goin'?

THE GIRL [nervously]. I'm going home

THE MARSHAL. Home? Where do you live?

THE GIRL Ninety-first Street.

THE MARSHAL. What are you doin' here?

THE GIRL. I just came for a music-lesson, that's all.

THE MARSHAL. Yeah? Well, you can't go now.

THE GIRL [*beginning to whimper*]. I want to go home.

THE MARSHAL. You can't go, now. Nobody can leave de house, now.

THE POLICEMAN [*coming out of the house*]. Who's dis kid?

THE MARSHAL. Says she come here to take a music-lesson an' she wants to go home.

THE POLICEMAN [*to the girl*]. Do you know anythin' about this killin'?

THE GIRL. No, I don't. I just heard some shooting, that's all. My mother will be worried, if I don't come home.

THE POLICEMAN. Well, you can't go, now. Get inside dere, out o' de way. Dey'll be bringin' her down, in a minute.

[*He pushes the girl inside the house and comes down the steps*]

THE POLICEMAN. Come on, git back from dem steps! Back now, all o' youse!

[*He and the MARSHAL push the crowd back to the right of the stoop, leaving the steps and the sidewalk in front of them clear. Then he goes up the steps again*]

THE MARSHAL. What did he do? Shoot two of 'em?

THE POLICEMAN. I'll say he did! His wife an' her sweetie. A guy named Sankey. He was dead when I got up dere.

THE MARSHAL. I seen him tryin' to climb out t'roo de winder. An' dis guy grabs 'im an' pulls 'im back.

THE INTERNE [*from the MAURRANT window*]. Officer! Come on up!

[*He leaves the window, as the POLICEMAN exits into the house. Suddenly, SAM utters an exclamation of anguish and, pushing his way out of the crowd, hurries over to the left*]

THE MARSHAL. Hey, you! Where you goin'?

[*SAM ignores him and hurries on.*]

A WOMAN. Look! There's the Maurrant girl!

ANOTHER WOMAN. Who?

A WOMAN. It's her daughter.

[*The crowd murmurs, excitedly, as ROSE comes on quickly, at the left*]

ROSE. What's the matter, Sam? What's the ambulance for? Did anybody get hurt?

SAM. Go away, Rose. Go away.

ROSE. Who is it, Sam? What's the matter? Is it my mother? It's not my mother, is it? [*Clinging to him.*] Sam, is it?

SAM. There's been an accident. Go away, Rose. [*He tries to force her away.*]

ROSE. Tell me what's happened! Tell me!

MISS CUSHING [*appearing at the window*]. They're bringing her down!

ROSE [*with a cry*]. It is my mother!

MISS CUSHING [*seeing her*]. Oh, my God, there's Rose!

[*MRS FIORENTINO, MRS JONES, MRS. HILDEBRAND, LIPPO and BUCHANAN crowd to the MAURRANT windows*]

SAM. Rose! Go away!

[*She pays no attention to him, but stands watching the door, transfixed.*]

THE INTERNE comes briskly out of the house]

THE INTERNE [*to the MARSHAL*]. Hold the door open, will you?

[*He comes down the steps.*]

THE MARSHAL. Sure, Doc!

[*He hurries into the vestibule.*]

THE INTERNE [*to the crowd*]. Keep back, now!

ROSE [*seizing the INTERNE'S arm*]. Doctor! Is she dead?

THE INTERNE. Who are you? Her daughter?

ROSE. Yes, sir I'm her daughter.

THE INTERNE. She's pretty badly hurt. Step aside, now!

[*They step aside, as the AMBULANCE-DRIVER and the POLICEMAN come out of the house, carrying MRS MAURRANT on the stretcher. There is a low murmur from the crowd.*]

THE AMBULANCE-DRIVER. Easy, now

THE POLICEMAN. All right.

[*They come down the steps and go towards the left.*]

ROSE [*running forward and gripping the side of the stretcher*]. Mother! Mother!

MRS. MAURRANT [*opening her eyes, feebly*]. Rose!

[*She tries to lift her hand, but it falls back.*]

THE INTERNE [*pulling ROSE back*]. You mustn't talk to her, now.

[*SAM takes her about the shoulders. They and the INTERNE follow the stretcher off at the left. The crowd swarms after them. FRED comes out of the house, carrying one end of an iron bedstead.*]

CURTAIN

ACT III

Mid-afternoon of the same day. At the left of the stoop is a large roll of bedding. Before the rise of the curtain, and continuing faintly thereafter, a woman can be heard singing scales. OLSEN, his pipe in mouth, is leaning against the railing. Two MEN, furniture movers, appear at left.

ONE OF THE MEN [*picking up the bedding*]. All right. Dat's all, Charlie!

[*The MEN exeunt left. A POLICEMAN comes out of the house, carrying the blood-stained dress of MRS. MAURRANT, and SANKEY'S coat, cap, and bill-holder. He comes down the steps, and exits right. At the left, TWO YOUNG NURSE-MAIDS, in smart uniforms, appear, each wheeling a de-luxe baby-carriage*]

FIRST NURSE-MAID [*seemg the house-number*]. This must be the place, right here—346.

[*They stop, under the MAURRANT window*]

SECOND NURSE-MAID. Yes, I guess it is.

FIRST NURSE-MAID. Yes, this is it, all right. [*Looking up*] Must be right up there, on the first floor, see?

SECOND NURSE-MAID. Yes, sure. [*Excitedly*]. Say, look! You can see where the glass is out of the window. That's where this feller What's-his-name tried to clmb out.

FIRST NURSE-MAID. Oh, yes, I see it! Say, what do you know about that!

SECOND NURSE-MAID [*taking a pink tabloid newspaper from under the hood of the baby-buggy*]. Wait! There's a picture of it, somewhere. [*Turning the pages*]. Here it is. [*They excitedly examine it together, as she reads*:] "Composograph showing Sankey, scantily clad, in a last vain attempt to escape the vengeance of the jealousy-crazed husband, whose home he had destroyed." And there's Maurrant pulling him back. And Mrs. Maurrant trying to get the pistol away from him, see? Look at the blood running down her face, will you?

FIRST NURSE-MAID. It's worse than awful! Can you *imagine* what those two must have felt like, when he walked in on them like that?

SECOND NURSE-MAID. Well, he just happened to be one of the ones that finds out! Believe me, there's lots and lots of husbands that don't know half of what

goes on up-town, while they're down-town making a living

FIRST NURSE-MAID. Say, you're not telling me, are you? If I was to spill all I know, there'd be many a happy home busted up. I wonder if they caught him.

SECOND NURSE-MAID [*as her BABY begins a thin wailing*]. Oh, God, he's in again! [*To the unseen BABY*]. Shut up, a little while, can't you?

[*She shakes the carriage*.]

A POLICEMAN [*appearing at the MAURRANT windows, a tabloid in his hand*]. Keep movin', ladies. No loiterin' aroun' here.

FIRST NURSE-MAID [*eagerly*]. Say, have they caught him, yet?

THE POLICEMAN. Why, ain't you hoid? He was last seen, flyin' over Nova Scotia, on his way to Paris.

FIRST NURSE-MAID. Who are you trying to string, anyhow?

SECOND NURSE-MAID [*coquettishly*]. Say, will you let us come up and look around?

THE POLICEMAN. Why, sure, sure! Bring de babies, too. De commissioner is sovin' tea, up here, at four-thoity.

SECOND NURSE-MAID. You're awful smart, aren't you?

THE POLICEMAN. Yeah, dat's why dey put me on de entertainment committee. I'm Handsome Harry Moiphy, de boy comedian o' Brooklyn.

FIRST NURSE-MAID [*looking at her watch*]. Oh, say, I ought to be getting back. [*Turning her carriage*]. Clarice darling would throw a duck-fit, if she knew I brought her precious Dumplings to a neighborhood like this.

SECOND NURSE-MAID [*turning her carriage*]. There's not so much to see, anyhow. It's nothing but a cheap, common dump.

[*They go towards the left*.]

THE POLICEMAN. Over de river goils. See you in de funny paper.

SECOND NURSE-MAID. Don't you get so fresh.

THE POLICEMAN. Drop in again, when you're in de neighborhood. An' tell Mrs. Vanderbilt, Harry was askin' for her.

[*As the NURSE-MAIDS go off, at the left, EASTER hurries on at the right, several folded newspapers under his arm*.]

EASTER [*to the POLICEMAN, going to the left of the stoop*]. Is Miss Maurrant up there, officer?

THE POLICEMAN. No. There ain't nobody up there but me.

EASTER. You don't happen to know where she is, do you?

THE POLICEMAN. No, I don't. Are you a reporter?

EASTER. Who, me? I'm just a friend of hers. I've got to see her.

THE POLICEMAN. Well, I ain't seen her since she went off to the hospital this mornin'. She ain't been back since.

[*He starts to leave the window.*]

EASTER. Oh, officer!

THE POLICEMAN. Yeah?

EASTER. Have they caught him, yet?

THE POLICEMAN. Naw, not yet. But we'll get 'im, all right!

[*He leaves the window. EASTER remains at the left of the stoop, uncertain whether to go or not. MRS. JONES appears, at the right, carrying several newspapers.*]

MRS. JONES [*to OLSEN*]. Have they caught him yet?

OLSEN [*shaking his head*]. No.

MRS. JONES. I been down at Police Headquarters, all this while— [*Breaking off, as she notices Easter*] Say, what's he want here?

[*OLSEN shrugs his shoulders*]

EASTER [*approaching them*]. Pardon me, but maybe you can tell me where I can find Miss Maurrant?

[*OLSEN shakes his head*]

MRS. JONES. Why no, I can't. I jus' this minute got back from Police Headquarters. Maybe she's aroun' at the hospital.

EASTER. No, I just came from there.

MRS. JONES. Well, I really couldn't say where she is. Was there somethin' special you wanted to see her about?

EASTER. I'm a friend of hers—

MRS. JONES. Yeah, I noticed you talkin' to her, last night, when I took the dog out. [*Staring at him*] Well, I guess she'll need all the friends she's got, now. Imagine a thing like that happenin' right here in this house, at ten o'clock in the mornin'! Everythin' goin' on just as usual, and then, all of a sudden, before you know it, there's two people murdered.

OLSEN. I tal everybody some day he kill her.

MRS. JONES. Well, I ain't sayin' it's right to kill anybody, but if anybody had a reason, he certainly had. You oughta heard some o' the questions they was askin' me down at the Police. I could feel myself gettin' redder an' redder. "Say," I says, "how do you expect me to know things like that?" [*Suddenly, as she looks left:*] Here's Rose now!

EASTER. Where?

[*He turns quickly and hurries to the left, as ROSE appears, carrying four or five packages.*]

MRS. JONES [*to OLSEN*]. He seems to take a pretty friendly interest in her. [*OLSEN nods.*]

ROSE [*anxiously, as she comes up to EASTER, at the left of the stoop*]. Have they caught him yet?

EASTER. Why no, they haven't. I just asked the officer, upstairs.

ROSE Oh, I hope he got away! If they get him, there's no telling what they'll do to him. And what would be the good of that? He never would have done it, if he'd been in his right mind.

EASTER I only heard about it, a little while ago. So I went right around to the hospital. But they said you'd left.

ROSE [*going to the steps*]. She never opened her eyes again. They did everything they could for her, but it didn't help.

EASTER. Here, let me take your bundles

ROSE. No, it's all right. I think I'll just sit down for a minute

[*She sits on the stoop and puts the packages beside her*]

EASTER. Can't I get you something? A drink or something?

ROSE. No, I'm all right. It's so hot. [*She puts her hand to her head*] And all those people asking me a lot of questions.

MRS. JONES [*approaching the stoop*]. Are you feelin' dizzy or anythin'?

ROSE. No, I'll be all right in a minute. MRS. JONES. Well, I was gonna say, if you want to go up to my flat an' lay down for a minute—

ROSE. No, thanks; I don't want to lie down. I've got to go upstairs to get some things

EASTER. Why, say, you don't want to go up there!

ROSE. I've got to; there's some things I need.

EASTER. Well, let me get them for you. Or this lady here.

MRS. JONES. Yeah, sure. The place is a sight, up there. You're li'ble to go into a faint or somethin'.

ROSE. I guess nothing can be any worse than what's happened already [*Indicating the bundles*]. I got to change my dress. I bought a white dress for her. And white silk stockings. I want her to look pretty.

MRS. JONES. Yeah, white is the nicest

ROSE. She looks so quiet and natural. You'd think she was asleep.

MRS JONES. It was the same way with my mother. You'd of thought she was gonna get up, the next minute. [*Starting to go up the steps.*] Well, I gotta go up an' get me some lunch. Between everythin' happenin' an' goin' down to Police Headquarters an' all, I ain't had a bite to eat since breakfast [*Stopping on the top step, and looking from ROSE to EASTER*] Well, you certainly never know, when you get up in the mornin', what the day is gonna bring.

[*She enters the house*]

ROSE [*rising*]. Well, I'd better be going up, too. There's a lot of things to attend to.

EASTER. You better let me come up with you

ROSE Why thanks, Mr Easter. But I'd rather go alone, if you don't mind.

EASTER. But, listen here—you can't go through all this alone—a kid like you. That's why I came around. I knew you'd be needing a helping hand.

ROSE That's awfully nice of you, Mr. Easter But I don't need any help, honest I don't.

[*She opens one of the packages.*]

EASTER. Why, you can't handle everything yourself! What about a place to live and all that?

ROSE [*taking a rosette of black crape out of the package*] Well, I don't exactly know, yet I'll have to find some place where Willie and I can live I'd like it to be some place where he wouldn't be running around the streets all the time You see, there's nobody but me to look out for him, now.

[*OLSEN crosses to the cellar* MRS.

JONES appears at her window and furtively peeps out, at ROSE and EASTER.]

ROSE [*as she sees that OLSEN is about to descend the cellar steps*]. Oh, Mr. Olsen!

OLSEN [*stopping*]. Yes ma'am.

ROSE Would you mind lending me a hammer and some tacks? I want to put up this crape.

OLSEN. Yes ma'am; I bring 'em right away.

[*He goes down into the cellar.* MRS. JONES leaves the window.]

EASTER [*insistently*]. But why won't you let me help you out?

ROSE It's terribly nice of you, Mr. Easter. But I'll be able to manage alone, really I will. It isn't as if I wasn't young

and strong and able to take care of myself. But as it is, I'd sort of rather not be under obligations

EASTER. Whv, you wouldn't be under any obligations. I just mean it in a friendly way, that's all.

ROSE. You've been very nice to me and all that, Mr Easter. But—well, I've been sort of thinking things over—you know, about what we talked about last night and all. And I honestly don't think I'd care about going on the stage.

EASTER. Say, you've got me all wrong, Rose! Just forget all about that, will you? I just want to help you out, that's all. [*Taking a step towards her.*] I think you're one swell kid, and I want to do something for you. I'm not trying to put anything over on you.

[*SHIRLEY appears, at the left, carrying her school-bag, from which a newspaper protrudes*]

ROSE Well, that's nice and friendly of you, Mr Easter. And if I ever do need any help —

SHIRLEY [*catching sight of ROSE*]. Rose! You poor thing! [*She runs up to ROSE and throws her arms about her.*] It's terrible—terrible!

ROSE Yes, it is But I sort of had a feeling, all along, that something terrible was going to happen.

[*OLSEN comes up the steps, with a hammer and a box of tacks*]

SHIRLEY. How could he do such a thing! I couldn't believe it when I read it.

ROSE He was out of his mind, when he did it Oh, I only hope he got away! [*As OLSEN approaches.*] Oh, thanks, Mr. Olsen.

OLSEN. I do it.

ROSE [*giving him the crape*]. Oh, would you, please? Right up there, I think.

[*She indicates the left of the doorway.*]

OLSEN [*going up the steps*]. Sure.

ROSE [*going to EASTER and extending her hand*]. Thanks for coming around, Mr. Easter. I don't know when I'll be able to get back to the office.

EASTER. Why, that's all right about that. Only, in the meantime, I wish —

ROSE If I need any help, I'll let you know [*With a tone of finality in her voice*] Good-bve.

EASTER All right; but don't forget. [*He hesitates, then decides to go*] Well, good-bye. [*He goes off at left*]

ROSE I've got to go up and get some things that Willie and I need Sam went to call for him at school and take him

around to my aunt's. You see, I didn't want him coming back here. He's only a little kid, after all.

SHIRLEY. Oh, it's such a terrible thing! I can't believe it yet.

OLSEN [*holding up the crape*]. Dis vay?

ROSE. Yes, like that. [*Hesitantly, as she picks up her bundles.*] Miss Kaplan, it's sort of silly of me, I guess. But I'm kind of afraid to go up there alone. I wonder if you'd mind coming up with me.

[*OLSEN tucks up the crape.*]

SHIRLEY. Anything I can do for you, poor child!

[*She and ROSE go up the steps*]

ROSE. Thanks ever so much [*To OLSEN.*] Thanks, Mr. Olsen. It's awfully nice of you.

[*She and SHIRLEY enter the house.*]

OLSEN exits down the cellar steps.

KAPLAN appears, at his window, and seating himself, begins to read a newspaper. An under-sized MAN and a tall, athletic WOMAN appear at the right. They are dressed for tennis, and carry tennis-rackets]

A MAN [*as they cross*]. He would say that.

A WOMAN. So I just looked at him for a moment, without saying anything. And then, I said: "My dear boy," I said. "What do you expect anyhow, in this day and age?" I said, "Why even Frankl has to do a black bathroom, occasionally," I said

A MAN [*as they disappear at the left*]. Exactly! And what did he say to that?

[*BUCHANAN comes out of the house, and, seeing KAPLAN at the window, stops at the right balustrade*]

BUCHANAN. Well, there's been some excitement around here, to-day.

KAPLAN [*looking up from his paper*]. Dees is a terrible t'ing vich hes happened.

BUCHANAN. I'll say it is! You know, the way I look at it, he didn't have a right to kill the both of them like that. Of course I'm not saying what she did was right, either.

KAPLAN. How ken ve call ourselves civilized, ven ve see thet sax jealousy hes de power to avaken in us de primitive pessions of de sevege?

BUCHANAN [*rather bewildered by this*]. Yes, that's true, too. Of course, you can't expect a man to stand by and see his home broken up. But murdering them, like that, is going a little too far. Well, I got to go and phone the doctor. This

thing's given my wife a relapse. She thought a lot of Mrs. Maurrant.

[*He goes down the steps, and off at the left, as LIPPO appears, at the right.*]

LIPPO [*stopping in front of KAPLAN'S window*]. Dey don' ketcha Maurrant, ha?

KAPLAN. I haven't hoid anyt'ing foider.

LIPPO. He'sa gonna gat da 'lectrica-chair, ha?

KAPLAN. De blood-lust of our enlightened population must be setisfied! De Chreestian state will kerry out to de last letter de Mosaic law.

LIPPO. Eef Ahm ketcha my wife sleepin' wit' 'nudder man, Ahm gonna keela 'er, too.

[*SAM hurries on at the left.*]

KAPLAN. So you t'ink thet merriage should give to de hosband de power of life and det' and thet—

SAM [*going up the steps*]. Papa, is there any news of Maurrant?

KAPLAN. I hev heard notting.

SAM. The police are going to make me testify against him. What can I do, Papa?

KAPLAN. You ken do notting.

SAM. How can I send a man to the electric-chair? How can I? I tried to stop him, Papa. I tried to warn her— [*He stops short, as several shots are heard off-stage, at the left*] What's that?

LIPPO [*excitedly*]. Dey finda 'im!

[*He runs off, at the left, followed by*]

SAM. KAPLAN leans out of the window and, a moment later, MRS. FIORENTINO out of hers. In the Maurrant apartment, the POLICEMAN leans out and ROSE and SHIRLEY appear in the hall bedroom window. ROSE is wearing a mourning-dress OLSEN comes up the cellar steps and runs off at left. MRS. OLSEN comes up the steps. Several MEN and WOMEN appear, at the right, and run off, at the left]

ROSE [*agitatedly*]. Is that him?

THE POLICEMAN. Must be!

[*Voices are heard shouting, in the distance, and then another shot The POLICEMAN leaves the window.*]

ROSE Oh, God! They wouldn't shoot him, would they?

[*She leaves the window.*]

SHIRLEY [*following her*]. Rose!

[*Two or three more persons appear at the right and run off at the left. The POLICEMAN runs out of the house, as BUCHANAN appears at the left.*]

BUCHANAN [*excitedly*]. They got him! [*The POLICEMAN runs off, at the left.*]

SHIRLEY reappears at the MAURRANT window.

MRS. JONES [*calling*]. Have they got him?

BUCHANAN. Yes! He was hiding in the furnace, down at 322. [*As ROSE comes out of the house.*] They found him, Miss Maurrant!

ROSE [*her hand to her heart*]. Oh! Is he hurt?

BUCHANAN. I don't know. He fired at the cops and they fired back. I was just passing the house, when it happened

MRS. JONES [*leaning far out*]. Here they come!

[She leaves the window The low murmur of the approaching crowd can be heard, off-stage left]

ROSE. Where? [*She comes down the stoop and looks off, at the left*] Oh!

[She covers her eyes and turns away]

MRS. FIORENTINO. You better come inside.

SHIRLEY. Come up, Rose

BUCHANAN. Yes, you better

[He takes her by the arm.]

ROSE [*resisting*]. No No Please let me alone I want to see him

[She leans against the railing Meanwhile, the murmur and tramp of the approaching crowd has grown nearer and nearer]

MRS. FIORENTINO. Look at him, vill you!

[MISS CUSHING comes out of the house, and stands on the stoop, followed a moment later, by MRS. JONES. MAURRANT appears at the left, between two POLICEMEN Behind him a third POLICEMAN holds back a swarming crowd, which includes SAM and LIPPO MAURRANT'S clothes are torn, and his right arm is in a crude sling. Sweat, blood and grime have made him almost unrecognizable The POLICEMEN, too, show evidences of a struggle]

ROSE [*running forward*]. Pop! Are you hurt?

MAURRANT [*seeing her for the first time*]. Rose!

ONE OF THE POLICEMEN [*to whom MAURRANT is manacled*]. Keep back, miss!

MAURRANT. It's me daughter! Fer Chris' sake, boys, lemme talk to me daughter! Maybe I'll never be seein' her again!

FIRST POLICEMAN. Give 'im a woid wit' her.

[He is the OFFICER who was on duty in the MAURRANT apartment.]

SECOND POLICEMAN [*after a moment's hesitation*]. Well, all right. [*Savagely to Maurrant.*] But don't try to pull nothin', hear?

FIRST POLICEMAN [*to the crowd*]. Keep back, youse!

MAURRANT. Rose! You're wearin' a black dress, Rose!

ROSE. Oh, Pop, why did you do it? Why did you?

MAURRANT. I must o' been out o' me head, Rose Did she say anythin'?

ROSE. She never opened her eyes again.

MAURRANT. I'd been drinkin', Rose—see what I mean?—an' all the talk that was goin' around I just went clean off me nut, that's all

ROSE. What'll they do to you, Pop?

MAURRANT. It's the chair for me, I guess But I don't care—let 'em give me the chair I deserve it all right. But it's her, I'm thinkin' of, Rose—the way she looked at me I oughtn't to done it, Rose

ROSE. She was always so good and sweet

MAURRANT. Don't I know it? I ain't no murderer—you ought to be the one to know that, Rose I just went out o' me head, that's all it was.

SECOND POLICEMAN. All right, that's all now Come on!

MAURRANT. Gimme a minute, can't you? She's me daughter. Gimme a chance, can't you? What's gonna happen to you, Rose?

ROSE. I'll be all right, Pop. You don't need to worry about me

MAURRANT. I ain't been a very good father, have I?

ROSE. Don't worry about that, Pop.

MAURRANT. It ain't that I ain't meant to be. It's just the way things happened to turn out, that's all Keep your eyes on Willie, Rose Don't let Willie grow up to be a murderer, like his Pop

ROSE. I'm going to do all I can for him, Pop.

MAURRANT. You're a good girl, Rose. You was always a good girl.

ROSE [*breaking down*]. Oh, Pop!

[She throws her arms about his neck and buries her head against him. MAURRANT sobs hoarsely.]

FIRST POLICEMAN [*gently*]. Come on, now, miss.

[He and SAM take ROSE away from MAURRANT]

SECOND POLICEMAN. All right Come on, Charlie.

[They go towards the right, the crowd swarming behind them. Straggling]

along at the very end of the crowd, is an unkempt WOMAN, wheeling a ramshackle baby-carriage. MRS. JONES and MISS CUSHING fall in with the crowd. ROSE gradually recovers her self-control, and stands at the stoop, with SAM beside her. The others watch the receding crowd for a moment. Then KAPLAN and MRS. FIORENTINO leave their windows. The FIRST POLICEMAN enters the house, followed by LIPPO. MRS. OLSEN goes to the cellar. SHIRLEY looks down at ROSE and SAM, for a moment, then abruptly leaves the window.]

SAM [*taking ROSE by the arm*]. Rose, you better come inside.

ROSE No, I'm all right again, Sam—honestly I am. [*Trying to regain her self-composure*] What about Willie, Sam?

SAM. I told him an accident had happened.

ROSE. It's better to break it to him, that way. But I'll have to tell him, I guess. He'd only find it out himself, tomorrow, with the papers all full of it. I saw Mrs. Sankey, down at Police Headquarters. It's terrible for her, with two little children.

SHIRLEY [*appearing at the MAUR-RANT window, a covered pot in her hand*]. Rose!

ROSE [*looking up*]. Yes, Miss Kaplan?

SHIRLEY. There's a chicken here, that I found on the gas-stove.

ROSE. A chicken?

SHIRLEY. Yes. The policeman says he smelt it cooking, this morning, so he turned off the gas.

ROSE. Oh, I remember, now. My mother said she was going to make some soup for poor Mrs. Buchanan, upstairs.

SHIRLEY. It won't keep long, in this weather.

ROSE. No. I really think Mrs. Buchanan ought to have the good of it.

SHIRLEY. All right. I'll take it up to her.

ROSE. Thanks ever so much, Miss Kaplan. [*SHIRLEY leaves the window*] It's only a few hours ago that she was standing right here, telling me about the chicken. And then, she went upstairs, and the next I saw of her, they were carrying her out. [*Abruptly, as she starts to go up the steps*]. Well, I've got to go up and get my things.

SAM. I must talk to you! What are you going to do, Rose?

ROSE. Well, I haven't really had any

time to do much thinking. But I really think the best thing I could do would be to get out of New York. You know, like we were saying, this morning—how things might be different, if you only had a chance to breathe and spread out a little. Only when I said it, I never dreamt it would be this way.

SAM. If you go, I'll go with you.

ROSE. But, Sam dear—

SAM. I don't care anything about my career. It's you—you—I care about. Do you think I can stay here, stifling to death, in this slum, and never seeing you? Do you think my life means anything to me, without you?

ROSE. But, Sam, we've got to be practical about it. How would we manage?

SAM. I don't care what I do. I'll be a day-laborer; I'll dig sewers—anything. [*Taking her passionately in his arms*]. Rose, don't leave me!

ROSE. I like you so much, Sam. I like you better than anybody I know.

SAM. I love you, Rose. Let me go with you!

ROSE. It would be so nice to be with you. You're different from anybody I know. But I'm just wondering how it would work out.

SAM. If we have each other, that's the vital thing, isn't it? What else matters but that?

ROSE. Lots of things, Sam. There's lots of things to be considered. Suppose something was to happen—well, suppose I was to have a baby, say. That sometimes happens, even when you don't want it to. What would we do, then? We'd be tied down then, for life, just like all the other people around here. They all start out loving each other and thinking that everything is going to be fine—and before you know it, they find out they haven't got anything and they wish they could do it all over again—only it's too late.

SAM. It's to escape all that, that we must be together. It's only because we love each other and belong to each other, that we can find the strength to escape.

ROSE [*shaking her head*]. No, Sam.

SAM. Why do you say no?

ROSE. It's what you said just now—about people belonging to each other. I don't think people ought to belong to anybody but themselves. I was thinking, that if my mother had really belonged to herself, and that if my father had really belonged to himself, it would never have

happened. It was only because they were always depending on somebody else, for what they ought to have had inside themselves. Do you see what I mean, Sam? That's why I don't want to belong to anybody, and why I don't want anybody to belong to me.

SAM. You want to go through life alone?—never loving any one, never having any one love you?

ROSE. Why, of course not, Sam! I want to love more than anything else in the world. But loving and belonging aren't the same thing. [*Putting her arms about him*] Sam, dear, listen. If we say good-bye now, it doesn't mean that it has to be forever. Maybe some day, when we're older and wiser, things will be different. Don't look as if it were the end of the world, Sam!

SAM. It is the end of my world.

ROSE. It isn't, Sam! If you'd only believe in yourself, a little more, things wouldn't look nearly so bad. Because once you're sure of yourself, the things that happen to you, aren't so important. The way I look at it, it's not what you do that matters so much; it's what you are [*Warmly*] I'm so fond of you, Sam. And I've got such a lot of confidence in you. [*Impulsively*] Give me a nice kiss!

[*SAM takes her in his arms and kisses her, passionately. A gawky GIRL of seventeen—one of LIPPO'S pupils, appears at the left, and looks at them, scandalized. Then she goes into the vestibule and rings the bell. The door clicks and she enters the house, as SHIRLEY comes out, carrying a wicker suit-case. SHIRLEY looks at SAM and ROSE*]

ROSE [*to SHIRLEY*]. I was just telling Sam, that I think I'll soon be going away from New York.

[*SAM looks at her, for a moment, in agony, then goes abruptly into the house*]

SHIRLEY. I put your things in this suit-case.

[*She comes down to the pavement. The GIRL, in the FIORENTINO apartment, begins tuning her violin.*]

ROSE [*taking the suit-case*]. You've been awfully nice to me. Don't worry about Sam, Miss Kaplan. Everything will be all right with him.

SHIRLEY. I hope so.

[*From the FIORENTINO apartment, come the strains of Dvorák's Humoresque, jerkily played on a violin.*]

ROSE. Oh, I just know it will! [*Extending her hand.*] Good-bye, Miss Kaplan.

SHIRLEY. Good-bye, Rose. [*Impulsively.*] You're a sweet girl!

[*She hugs and kisses her.*]

ROSE. I hope I'll see you, again.

SHIRLEY [*crying*]. I hope so, Rose.

[*ROSE takes up the suit-case and goes off at the left. SHIRLEY stands watching her.*]

KAPLAN [*re-appearing at his window*]. Shooley, vot's de metter again vit Sem? He's crying on de bed.

SHIRLEY. Let him alone, Papa, can't you?

[*She turns and enters the house. KAPLAN sighs and, seating himself at the window, opens a newspaper. A shabby, middle-aged COUPLE appear at the right, and approach the stoop.*]

THE MAN [*reading the To-Let sign*]. Here's a place. Six rooms. Want to take a look at it?

[*A group of children off-stage left, begin singing The Farmer in the Dell. This continues until after the curtain is down*]

THE WOMAN. All right. No harm lookin'. Ring for the janitor. [*The MAN goes up the stoop and rings the janitor's bell*] Somebody must o' just died.

THE MAN. Yeah, maybe that's why they're movin' out. [*Wiping his face with a handkerchief*] Phoo! Seems to be gettin' hotter every minute.

[*MRS. FIORENTINO seats herself, at her window, a sewing-basket in her lap. MRS. JONES and MISS CUSHING appear at the right, busily engaged in conversation*]

MISS CUSHING. The poor little thing!

MRS. JONES [*as they go up the steps*]. Well, you never can tell with them quiet ones. It wouldn't surprise me a bit, if she turned out the same way as her mother. She's got a gentleman friend, that I guess ain't hangin' around for nothin'. I seen him, late last night, and this afternoon, when I come home from the police—

[*She is still talking, as they enter the house. MRS. OLSEN comes up the cellar steps. A SAILOR appears at the left, with two GIRLS, an arm about the waist of each. They stroll slowly across.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE END

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But for the Grace of God, Leopold Atlas
Counsellor-at-law, Elmer Rice
Dead End, Sidney Kingsley
London Wall, John Van Druten
Juno and the Paycock, Sean O'Casey

THE GREEN PASTURES

1930

BY

MARC CONNELLY

CHARACTERS

MR. DESHEE, <i>the Preacher</i>	FIRST GAMBLER
MYRTLE	SECOND GAMBLER
FIRST BOY	VOICE IN SHANTY
SECOND BOY	NOAH
FIRST COOK	NOAH'S WIFE
A VOICE	SHEM
SECOND COOK	FIRST WOMAN
FIRST MAN ANGEL	SECOND WOMAN
FIRST MAMMY ANGEL	THIRD WOMAN
A STOUT ANGEL	FIRST MAN
A SLENDER ANGEL	FLATFOOT
ARCHANGEL	HAM
GABRIEL	JAPHETH
GOD	FIRST CLEANER
CHOIR LEADER	SECOND CLEANER
CUSTARD MAKER	ABRAHAM
ADAM	ISAAC
EVE	JACOB
CAIN	MOSES
CAIN'S GIRL	ZIPPORAH
ZEBI	AARON
CAIN THE SIXTH	A CANDIDATE MAGICIAN
BOY GAMBLER	PHARAOH
GENERAL	KING OF BABYLON
HEAD MAGICIAN	PROPHET
FIRST WIZARD	HIGH PRIEST
SECOND WIZARD	CORPORAL
JOSHUA	HEZDREL
FIRST SCOUT	SECOND OFFICER
MASTER OF CEREMONIES	

SCENES

PART I

1. The Sunday School
2. A Fish Fry
3. A Garden
4. Outside the Garden
5. A Roadside
6. A Private Office
7. Another Roadside and a House
8. A House
9. A Hillside
10. A Mountain Top

PART II

1. The Private Office
2. The Mouth of a Cave
3. A Throne Room
4. The Foot of a Mountain
5. A Cabaret
6. The Private Office
7. Outside a Temple
8. Another Fish Fry

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Green Pastures is an attempt to present certain aspects of a living religion in the terms of its believers. The religion is that of thousands of Negroes in the deep South. With terrific spiritual

hunger and the greatest humility, these untutored black Christians—many of whom cannot even read the book which is the treasure house of their faith—have adapted the contents of the Bible to the consistencies of their everyday lives.

Unburdened by the differences of more educated theologians, they accept the Old Testament as a chronicle of wonders which happened to people like themselves in vague but actual places, and of rules of conduct, true acceptance of which will lead them to a tangible, three-dimensional Heaven. In this Heaven, if one has been born in a district where fish fries are popular, the angels do have magnificent fish fries through an eternity somewhat resembling a series of earthly holidays. The Lord Jehovah will be the promised comforter, a just but compassionate patriarch, the summation of all the virtues His follower has observed in the human beings about him. The Lord may look like the Reverend Mr. Dubois, as our Sunday-School teacher speculates in the play, or he may resemble another believer's own grandfather. In any event, His face will be familiar to the one who has come for his reward.

The author is indebted to Mr. Roark Bradford, whose retelling of several of the Old Testament stories in "Ol' Man Adam an' His Chillun" first stimulated his interest in this point of view.

One need not blame a hazy memory of the Bible for the failure to recall the characters of Hezdrel, Zeba and others in the play. They are the author's apocrypha, but he believes persons much like them have figured in the meditations of some of the old Negro preachers, whose simple faith he has tried to translate into a play.

MARC CONNELLY

IN A way *The Green Pastures* is the least original of modern dramas, for it is a mystery play and mystery plays are exactly as old as the English drama itself. As early as the tenth century dramatizations of Biblical stories were performed in the churches, and for a thousand years the Biblical drama has been kept alive through the activities of the church, or commercial groups, or community enterprise as in Freiburg and Oberammergau. Nevertheless, *The Green Pastures* was hailed universally as an original work of genius, as it is from a psychological point of view—the drama of the Old Testament as it might be imagined by an old Negro preacher. Samuel Butler said that every man creates God in his own image and likeness. Certainly the early mystery plays picture the God and Bible characters of the Medieval imagination, just as early Italian religious paintings are peopled by Italians in contemporary dress. In a similar way *The Green Pastures* pictures Old Testament scenes and characters as the Louisiana Negro might fancy them. The German dramatist Hauptmann in *Hannele* (1893) anticipates the manner of *The Green Pastures* when he presents on the stage the religious beliefs of the dying child. The American play is, nevertheless, a highly original treatment of an old theme—one can ask no more of an artist.

Marcus Cook Connelly is one of a number of competent American playwrights who have helped liberate our drama from foreign patterns. The plays of Kaufman, Connelly, Rachel Crothers, Sidney Howard, Paul Green, and George Kelly are almost without exception American in subject matter and flavor; and while those of Eugene O'Neill, Elmer Rice, Philip Barry, and Robert Sherwood show at times the influence of European naturalism, expressionism, or high comedy, these dramatists are far from mere imitators. Connelly was born in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, in 1890, and was educated at Trinity Hall in Washington, Pennsylvania. Like Kaufman, Stallings, Anderson, and Sidney Howard he became a journalist, working on various Pittsburgh newspapers. Most of his plays have been collaborations. *Dulcy* (1921), *To the Ladies* (1922), *Merton of the Movies* (1922), and *Beggar on Horseback* (1924) with George Kaufman; *The Wild Man of Borneo* (1927) with Herman Mankiewicz. He has written alone *The Wisdom Tooth* (1926), a fantastical story of an uncourageous young man, and *The Green Pastures* (1930), which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for the year. He has also written lyrics for several musical comedies. In recent years he has been busy as a Broadway producer and a scenario writer, and has written one new play, *Flowers of Virtue* (1942). Like nearly every other noted contemporary American playwright except Eugene O'Neill, in this he tried his hand at an anti-fascist play, but *Flowers of Virtue* suffers from the same confusion of satirical and dramatic content that has made all of them unsatisfactory—except Lillian Hellman's *Watch on the Rhine* and S. N. Behrman's *Rain from Heaven*. Robert Sherwood's stirring *There Shall Be No Night* seems less a protest against fascism than against the brutal overwhelming of a small, civilized nation by a bullying neighbor state. John Steinbeck's *The Moon Is Down* in 1942 disappointed many, who did not regard the portrayal of the fascist invader as sufficiently harsh.

Connelly read Roark Bradford's *Ol' Man Adam an' His Chillun*, a collection of Negro stories, and was fired by the idea of the book—the Southern Negro's conception of the Bible stories and of the Lord himself. The hero of the play is the "Lawd," who is no abstraction but to the Negro imagination a real man, a glorified old-fashioned preacher,

who inhabits a tangible, three-dimensional heaven of fish fries, spiritual singers, and an endless supply of ten-cent cigars. The Lord is not the pompous, cruel tyrant of the early Puritans, but kindly and fatherly, the Lord of a more easy-going race with a lazy and imaginative love of life. He is not altogether omniscient (a notion beyond the simple Negro's comprehension) but learns through experience and acquires a sort of human wistfulness as the play develops. The other Old Testament characters are less forbidding than the Noah and Moses of the Calvinists' gallery; in fact, the play is lifted by a tenderness and quiet dignity to a plane of poetic beauty. Not that the play lacks humor; rich comedy mingles with the tragedy of the great epic, but the laughter it excites is without condescension and irreverence.

More than any other modern play *The Green Pastures* needs to be seen and heard as well as read. The magnificent spirituals accompanying the scenes heighten the rich effect immeasurably; in fact, the spirituals themselves affect the vocabulary and rhythm of the whole play, especially those scenes in which actual incidents from the Bible are developed and paraphrased. The colorful settings of the New York production were designed by Robert Edmund Jones, and the excellent Negro actors, headed by Richard B. Harrison as the "Lawd," almost literally lived their parts on the stage.

Criticism has not been entirely laudatory. As might be expected, from the South has come some expression of misgiving as to the value of the play—"But who on earth *cares* about Negro psychology?" asked one Southern woman) and from England some defense of the British censor's persistent refusal to license the play for public performance. Intelligent British playgoers, however, chafe under the censor's refusal to license a play in which the Lord walks the boards, and their spirited criticism is perhaps strengthening the growing opposition to this obsolete office.

THE GREEN PASTURES

PART ONE

SCENE I.—*A corner in a Negro church.*
Ten CHILDREN and an elderly PREACHER.

The costumes are those that might be seen in any lower Louisiana town at Sunday-School time. As the curtain rises, MR. DESHEE, the preacher, is reading from a Bible. The CHILDREN are listening with varied degrees of interest. Three or four are wide-eyed in their attention. Two or three are obviously puzzled, but interested, and the smallest ones are engaged in more physical concerns. One is playing with a little doll, and another runs his finger on all the angles of his chair.

DESHEE. "An' Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, an' begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; an' called his name Seth. An' de days of Adam, after he had begotten Seth, were eight hundred years! an' he begat sons an' daughters, an' all de days dat Adam lived were nine hundred an' thirty years; an' he died An' Seth lived a hundred an' five years an' begat Enos; an' Seth lived after he begat Enos eight hundred an' seven years an' begat sons and daughters. An' all de days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years; an' he died." An' it go like dat till we come to Enoch an' de book say. "An' Enoch lived sixty an' five years and begat Methuselah." Den it say: "An' all de days of Methuselah were nine hundred an' sixty an' nine years an' he died." An' dat was de oldest man dat ever was. Dat's why we call ol' Mr. Gurney's mammy ol' Mrs. Methuselah, caize she's so ol'. Den a little later it tell about another member of de fam'ly. His name was Noah. Maybe some of you know about him already. I'm gonter tell you all about him next Sunday. Anyway dat's de meat an' substance of de first five chapters of Genesis. Now, how you think you gonter like de Bible?

MYRTLE. I think it's jest wonderful, Mr. Deshee. I can't understand any of it.

FIRST BOY. Why did dey live so long, Mr. Deshee?

DESHEE. Why? Caize dat was de way God felt.

SECOND BOY. Dat made Adam a way back.

DESHEE. Yes, he certainly 'way back by de time Noah come along. Want to ask me any mo' questions?

SECOND BOY. What de worl' look like when de Lawd begin, Mr. Deshee?

DESHEE. How yo' mean what it look like?

MYRTLE. Carlisle mean who was in N'Orleans den.

DESHEE. Dey wasn't nobody in N'Orleans on 'count dey wasn't any N'Orleans. Dat's de whole idea I tol' you at de end of de first Chapter. Yo' got to git yo' minds fixed. Dey wasn't any Rampart Street. Dey wasn't any Canal Street. Dey wasn't any Louisiana. Dey wasn't nothin' on de earth at all caize fo' de reason dey wasn't any earth.

MYRTLE. Yes, but what Carlisle wanten know is—

DESHEE [*interrupting and addressing little boy who has been playing with his chair and paying no attention*]. Now Randolph, if you don't listen, how yo' gonter grow up and be a good man? Yo' wanten grow up an' be a transgressor?

LITTLE BOY [*frightened*]. No.

DESHEE. You tell yo' mammy yo' sister got to come wid you next time. She kin git things done in time to bring you to de school. You content yo'self. [*The little boy straightens up in his chair.*] Now, what do Carlisle want to know?

CARLISLE. How He decide He want de worl' to be right yere and how He git de idea He wanted it?

MYRTLE. Caize de Book say, don't it, Mr. Deshee?

DESHEE. De Book say, but at de same time dat's a good question. I remember when I was a little boy de same thing recurred to me. An' ol' Mr. Dubois, he was a wonderful preacher at New Hope Chapel over in East Gretna, he said: "De answer is dat de Book ain't got time to go into all de details." And he was right. You know sometimes I think de Lawd

expects us to figure out a few things for ourselves. We know that at one time dey wasn't anything except Heaven, we don't know jest where it was but we know it was dere. Maybe it was everywhere. Den one day de Lawd got the idea He'd like to make some places. He made de sun and de moon, de stars. An' He made de earth.

MYRTLE. Who was aroun' den, nothin' but angels?

DESHEE. I suppose so.

FIRST BOY. What was de angels doin' up dere?

DESHEE. I suppose dey jest flew aroun' and had a good time. Dey wasn't no sin, so dey musta had a good time.

FIRST BOY. Did dey have picnics?

DESHEE. Sho, dey had the nicest kind of picnics. Dey probably had fish fries, wid b'iled custard and ten-cent seegars for de adults. God gives us humans lotsa ideas about havin' good times. Maybe det were things he'd seen de angels do. Yes, sir, I bet dey had a fish fry every week.

MYRTLE. Did dey have Sunday School, too?

DESHEE. Yes, dey musta had Sunday School for de cherubs.

MYRTLE. What did God look like, Mr. Deshee?

DESHEE. Well, nobody knows exactly what God looked like. But when I was a little boy I used to imagine dat He looked like de Reverend Dubois. He was de finest-looking ol' man I ever knew. Yes, I used to bet de Lawd looked exactly like Mr. Dubois in de days when He walked de earth in de shape of a natchel man.

MYRTLE. When was dat, Mr. Deshee?

DESHEE. Why, when He was gettin' things started down heah. When He talked to Adam and Eve and Noah and Moses and all dem. He made mighty men in dem days. But aldo they was awful mighty dey always knew dat He was beyond dem all. Pretty near one o'clock, time fo' you chillun to go home to dinner, but before I let you go I wan' you to go over wid me de main facts of de first lesson. What's de name of de book?

CHILDREN. Genesis.

DESHEE. Dat's right. And what's de other name?

CHILDREN. First Book of Moses.

DESHEE. Dat's right. And dis yere's Chapter One. [*The lights begin to dim.*] "In de beginnin' God created de heaven and de earth. An' de earth was widout form an' void. An' de darkness was upon de face of de deep."

SCENE II.—*In the darkness many voices are heard singing "Rise, Shine, Give God the Glory." They sing it gayly and rapidly. The lights go up as the second verse ends. The chorus is being sung diminuendo by a mixed company of angels. That is, they are angels in that they wear brightly colored robes and have wings protruding from their backs. Otherwise they look and act like a company of happy Negroes at a fish fry. The scene itself is a pre-Creation Heaven with compromises.*

In the distance is an unbroken stretch of blue sky. Companionable varicolored clouds billow down to the floor of the stage and roll overhead to the branches of a live oak tree which is up left. The tree is leafy and dripping with Spanish moss, and with the clouds makes a frame for the scene. In the cool shade of the tree are the usual appurtenances of a fish fry; a large kettle of hot fat set on two small parallel logs, with a fire going underneath, and a large rustic table formed by driving four stakes into the ground and placing planks on top of the small connecting boards. On the table are piles of biscuits and corn bread and the cooked fish in dish pans. There are one or two fairly large cedar or crock "churns" containing boiled custard, which looks like milk. There is a gourd dipper beside the churns and several glasses and cups of various sizes and shapes from which the custard is drunk.

The principal singers are marching two by two in a small area at the R. of the stage. Two MAMMY ANGELS are attending to the frying beside the kettle. Behind the table a MAN ANGEL is skinning fish and passing them to the cooks. Another is ladling out the custard. A MAMMY ANGEL is putting fish on bread for a brood of cherubs, and during the first scene they seat themselves on a grassy bank upstage. Another MAMMY ANGEL is clapping her hands disapprovingly and beckoning a laughing BOY CHERUB down from a cloud a little out of her reach.

Another MAMMY ANGEL is solicitously slapping the back of a GIRL CHERUB who has a large fish sandwich in her hand and a bone in her throat. There is much movement about the table, and during the first few min-

utes several individuals go up to the table to help themselves to the food and drink. Many of the WOMEN ANGELS wear hats and a few of the MEN are smoking cigars. A large boxful is on the table. There is much laughter and chatter as the music softens, but continues during the early part of the action. The following short scenes are played almost simultaneously.

FIRST COOK [at kettle, calling off]. Hurry up, Cajey. Dis yere fat's cryin' fo' mo' feesh.

A VOICE [off stage]. We comin', fas' we kin. Dey got to be ketched, ain't dey? We cain't say, "C'm'on, little fish. C'm'on an' git fried," kin we?

SECOND COOK [at table]. De trouble is de mens is all worm fishin'.

FIRST MAN ANGEL [at tab'e]. Whut dif'runce do it make? Yo' all de time got to make out like somebody's doin' somethin' de wrong way.

SECOND COOK [near table]. I s'pose you got de per'fec' way fo' makin' bait

FIRST MAN ANGEL. I ain't sayin' dat. I is sayin' whut's wrong wid worm fishin'.

SECOND COOK. Whut's wrong wid worm fishin'? Ever'thing, dat's all. Dey's only one good way fo' catfishin', an' dat's minny fishin'. Anybody know dat.

FIRST MAN ANGEL. Well, it jest so happen dat minny fishin' is de doggondest fool way of fishin' dey is. You kin try minny fishin' to de cows come home an' all you catch'll be de backache. De trouble wid you, sister, is you jest got minny fishin' on de brain.

SECOND COOK. Go right on, loud mouf. You tell me de news. My, my! You jest de wisest person in de worl'. First you, den de Lawd God.

FIRST MAN ANGEL [to the custard ladler]. You cain't tell dem nothin'. [Walks away to the custard churn] Does you try to 'splain some simple fac' dey git man-deaf.

FIRST MAMMY ANGEL [to CHERUB on the cloud]. Now, you heerd me. [The CHERUB assumes several mocking poses, as she speaks.] You fly down yere. You wanten be put down in de sin book? [She goes to the table, gets a drink for herself and points out the CHERUB to one of the men behind the table]. Dat baby must got imp blood in him he so vexin'. [She returns to her position under

the cloud.] You want me to fly up dere an' slap you down? Now, I tol' you.

[The CHERUB starts to come down.]

STOUT ANGEL [to the CHERUB with a bone in her throat]. I tol' you you was too little fo' catfish. What you wanten git a bone in yo' froat fo'?

[She slaps the CHERUB'S BACK.]

SLENDER ANGEL [leisurely eating a sandwich as she watches the back-slapping]. What de trouble wid Leonetta?

STOUT ANGEL. She got a catfish bone down her froat. [To the CHERUB] Dog-gone, I tol' you to eat grinnel instead.

SLENDER ANGEL. Ef'n she do git all dat et, she gonter have a belly-ache.

STOUT ANGEL. Ain't I tol' her dat? [To CHERUB] Come on now; let go dat bone. [She slaps CHERUB'S back again. The bone is dislodged and the CHERUB grins her relief.] Dat's good.

SLENDER ANGEL [comfortingly]. Now she all right.

STOUT ANGEL. Go on an' play wid yo' cousins. [The CHERUB joins the CHERUBS sitting on the embankment. The concurrency of scenes ends here.] I ain't see you lately, Lily. How you been?

SLENDER ANGEL. Me, I'm fine. I been visitin' my mammy. She waitin' on de welcome table over by de throne of grace.

STOUT ANGEL. She always was pretty holy.

SLENDER ANGEL. Yes, ma'am. She like it dere. I guess de Lawd's took quite a fancy to her.

STOUT ANGEL. Well, dat's natural. I declare yo' mammy one of de finest lady angels I know.

SLENDER ANGEL. She claim you best one she know.

STOUT ANGEL. Well, when you come right down to it, I suppose we is all pretty near perfect'.

SLENDER ANGEL. Yes, ma'am. Why is dat, Mis' Jenny?

STOUT ANGEL. I s'pose it's caize de Lawd He don' 'low us 'sociatin' wid de devil any mo' so dat dey cain' be no mo' sinnin'.

SLENDER ANGEL. Po' ol' Satan. Whutevah become of him?

STOUT ANGEL. De Lawd put him some place I s'pose.

SLENDER ANGEL. But dey ain't any place but Heaven, is dey?

STOUT ANGEL. De Lawd could make a place, couldn't He?

SLENDER ANGEL. Dat's de truth. Dey's one thing confuses me though.

STOUT ANGEL. What's dat?

SLENDER ANGEL. I do a great deal of travelin' an' I ain't never come across any place but Heaven anywhere. So if de Lawd kick Satan out of Heaven jest whereat did he go? Dat's my question.

STOUT ANGEL. You bettah let de Lawd keep His own secrets, Lily. De way things is goin' now dey ain't been no sinnin' since dey give dat scamp a kick in de pants. Nowadays Heaven's free of sin an' if a lady wants a little constitutional she kin fly 'til she wing-weary widout gittin' insulted.

SLENDER ANGEL. I was jest a baby when Satan lef'. I don't even 'member what he look like.

STOUT ANGEL. He was jest right fo' a devil. [*An ARCHANGEL enters. He is older than the others and wears a white beard. His clothing is much darker than that of the others and his wings a trifle more imposing.*] Good mo'nin', Archangel.

[*Others say good morning*]

ARCHANGEL. Good mo'nin', folks. I wonder kin I interrupt' de fish fry an' give out de Sunday-School cyards? [*Cries of "Suttlingly!" "Mah goodness, yes!"—etc. The marching CHOIR stops*] You kin keep singin' if you want to. Why don' you sing "When de Saints Come Marchin' In"? Seem to me I ain' heard dat lately. [*The CHOIR begins "When de Saints Come Marchin' In," rather softly, but does not resume the marching. The ARCHANGEL looks off left*] All right, bring 'em yere. [*A prim-looking WOMAN TEACHER-ANGEL enters, shepherding ten BOY and GIRL CHERUBS. The TEACHER carries ten beribboned diplomas, which she gives to the ARCHANGEL. The CHERUBS are dressed in stiffly starched white suits and dresses, the little girls having enormous ribbons at the backs of their dresses and smaller ones in their hair and on the tips of their wings. They line up in front of the ARCHANGEL and receive the attention of the rest of the company. The CHOIR sings through the ceremony.*] Now den, cherubs, why is you yere?

CHILDREN. Because we so good.

ARCHANGEL. Dat's right. Now who de big boss?

CHILDREN. Our dear Lawd.

ARCHANGEL. Dat's right. When you all grow up what you gonter be?

CHILDREN. Holy angels at de throne of grace.

ARCHANGEL. Dat's right. Now, you passed yo' 'xaminations and it gives me

great pleasure to hand out de cyards for de whole class. Gineeva Chaproe. [*The FIRST GIRL CHERUB goes to him and gets her diploma. The CHOIR sings loudly and resumes marching, as the ARCHANGEL calls out another name—and presents diplomas.*] Corey Moulter. [*SECOND GIRL CHERUB gets her diploma*] Nootzie Winebush. [*THIRD GIRL CHERUB.*] Harriet Prancy. [*FOURTH GIRL CHERUB*] I guess you is Brozain Stew't. [*He gives the FIFTH GIRL CHERUB the paper. Each of the presentations has been accompanied by hand-clapping from the bystanders.*] Now you boys know yo' own names. Suppose you come yere and help me git dese 'sorted right?

[*BOY CHERUBS gather about him and receive their diplomas. The little GIRLS have scattered about the stage, joining groups of the ADULT ANGELS. The angel GABRIEL enters. He is bigger and more elaborately winged than even the ARCHANGEL, but he is also much younger and beardless. His costume is less conventional than that of the other men, resembling more the Gabriel of the Doré drawings. His appearance causes a flutter among the others. They stop their chattering with the CHILDREN. The CHOIR stops as three or four audible whispers of "Gabriel!" are heard. In a moment the heavenly company is all attention*]

GABRIEL [*lifting his hand*]. Gangway! Gangway for de Lawd God Jehovah!

[*There is a reverent hush and GOD enters. He is the tallest and biggest of them all. He wears a white shirt with a white bow tie, a long Prince Albert coat of black alpaca, black trousers and congress gaiters. He looks at the assemblage. There is a pause. He speaks in a rich, bass voice.*]

GOD Is you been baptized?

OTHERS [*chanting*]. Certainly, Lawd.

GOD Is you been baptized?

OTHERS. Certainly, Lawd.

GOD [*with the beginning of musical notation*]. Is you been baptized?

OTHERS [*now half-singing*]. Certainly Lawd. Certainly, certainly, certainly, Lawd.

[*They sing the last two verses with equivalent part division.*]

Is you been redeemed?

Certainly, Lawd.

Is you been redeemed?

Certainly, Lawd.

Is you been redeemed?

Certainly, Lawd. Certainly, certainly, certainly, Lawd.

Do you bow mighty low?

Certainly, Lawd.

Do you bow mighty low?

Certainly, Lawd.

Do you bow mighty low?

Certainly, Lawd. Certainly, certainly, certainly, Lawd.

[As the last response ends all heads are bowed. GOD looks at them for a moment; then lifts His hand.]

GOD. Let de fish fry proceed

[EVERY ONE rises. The ANGELS relax and resume their maudible conversations. The activity behind the table and about the cauldron is resumed. Some of the CHOIR members cross to the table and get sandwiches and cups of the boiled custard. Three or four of the CHILDREN in the Sunday-School class and the girl who had the bone in her throat affectionately group themselves about GOD as he speaks with the ARCHANGEL. He pats their heads, they hang to his coat-tails, etc.]

ARCHANGEL. Good mo'nin', Lawd.

GOD. Good mo'nin', Deacon. You lookin' pretty spry

ARCHANGEL. I cain' complain. We just been givin' our cyards to de chillun.

GOD. Dat's good

[A small CHERUB, his feet braced against one of GOD'S shoes, is using GOD'S coat tail as a trapeze. One of the COOKS offers a fish sandwich which GOD politely declines.]

FIRST MAMMY ANGEL. Now, you leave go de Lawd's coat, Herman. You heah me?

GOD. Dat's all right, sister. He jest playin'.

FIRST MAMMY ANGEL. He playin' too rough.

[GOD picks up the CHERUB and spansks him good-naturedly. The CHERUB squeals with delight and runs to his mother. GABRIEL advances to GOD with a glass of the custard.]

GABRIEL. Little b'iled custud, Lawd?

GOD. Thank you very kindly. Dis looks nice.

CUSTARD MAKER [offering a box]. Ten-cent seegar, Lawd?

GOD [taking it]. Thank you, thank you. How de fish fry goin'? [Ad lib cries of "O.K. Lawd," "Fine an' dandy, Lawd,"

"De best one yit, Lawd," etc. To the CHOIR.] How you shouters gittin' on?

CHOIR LEADER. We been marchin' and singin' de whole mo'nin'.

GOD. I heerd you. You gittin' better all de time. You gittin' as good as de one at de throne. Why don' you give us one dem ol' time jump-ups?

CHOIR LEADER. Anythin' you say, Lawd. [To the OTHERS.] "So High!"

[The CHOIR begins to sing "So High You Can't Get Over It." They sing softly, but do not march. An ANGEL offers his cigar to GOD from which He can light His own.]

GOD. No, thanks. I'm gonter save dis a bit

[He puts His cigar in His pocket and listens to the singers a moment. Then He sips His custard. After the second sip, a look of displeasure comes on His face.]

GABRIEL. What's de matter, Lawd?

GOD [sipping again]. I ain't jest sure, yit. Dey's something 'bout dis custahd

[Takes another sip.]

CUSTARD MAKER. Ain't it all right, Lawd?

GOD. It don't seem seasoned jest right. You make it?

CUSTARD MAKER. Yes, Lawd. I put everythin' in it like I allus do. It's supposed to be perfect.

GOD. Yeah. I kin taste de eggs and de cream and de sugar. [Suddenly.] I know what it is. It needs jest a little bit mo' firmament

CUSTARD MAKER. Dey's firmament in it, Lawd.

GOD. Maybe, but it ain't enough

CUSTARD MAKER. It's all we had, Lawd. Dey ain't a drap in de jug

GOD. Dat's all right. I'll jest r'ar back an' pass a miracle. [CHOIR stops singing.] Let it be some firmament! An' when I say let it be some firmament, I don't want jest a little bitty dab o' firmament, caize I'm sick an' tired of runnin' out of it when we need it. Let it be a whole mess of firmament! [The stage has become misty until GOD and the heavenly company are obscured. As He finishes the speech there is a burst of thunder. As the stage grows darker.] Dat's de way I like it

[Murmurs from the others: "Dat's a lot of firmament!" "My, dat is firmament!" "Look to me like he's created rain," etc.]

FIRST MAMMY ANGEL [when the stage is dark]. Now, look, Lawd, dat's too

much firmament. De cherubs is gettin' all wet.

SECOND MAMMY ANGEL. Look at my Carlotta, Lawd. She's soaked to de skin. Dat's plenty too much firmament.

GOD. Well, 'co'se we don't want de chillun to ketch cold. Can't you dreem it off?

GABRIEL. Dey's no place to dreem it, Lawd.

FIRST MAMMY ANGEL. Why don't we jest take de babies home, Lawd?

GOD. No, I don't wanta bust up de fish fry. You angels keep quiet an I'll pass another miracle. Dat's always de trouble wid miracles. When you pass one you always gotta r'ar back an' pass another. *[There is a hush]* Let dere be a place to dreem off dis firmament. Let dere be mountains and valleys an' let dere be oceans an' lakes. An' let dere be rivers and bayous to dreem it off in, too. As a matter of fac' let dere be de earth. An' when dat's done let dere be de sun, an' let it come out and dry my cherubs' wings.

[The lights go up until the stage is bathed in sunlight. On the embankment upstage there is now a waist-high wrought iron railing such as one sees on the galleries of houses in the French quarter of New Orleans. The CHERUBS are being examined by their parents and there is an ad lib. murmur of, "You all right, honey?" "You feel better now, Albert?" "Now you all dry, Vangy?" until the ARCH-ANGEL, who has been gazing in awe at the railing, drowns them out.]

ARCHANGEL. Look yere!

[There is a rush to the embankment accompanied by exclamations, "My goodness!" "What's dis?" "I declah!" etc. GABRIEL towers above the group on the middle of the embankment. GOD is wrapped in thought, facing the audience. The CHOIR resumes singing "So High You Can't Get Over It" softly. The babbling at the balustrade dies away as the people lean over the railing. GABRIEL turns and faces GOD indicating the earth below the railing with his left hand.]

GABRIEL. Do you see it, Lawd?

GOD *[quietly, without turning his head upstage]* Yes, Gabriel.

GABRIEL. Looks mighty nice, Lawd

GOD. Yes.

[GABRIEL turns and looks over the railing.]

GABRIEL *[gazing down]* Yes, suh. Dat'd make mighty nice farming country.

Jest look at dat South forty over dere. You ain't going to let dat go to waste is you, Lawd? Dat would be a pity an' a shame.

GOD *[not turning]*. It's a good earth. *[GOD turns, room is made for Him beside GABRIEL on the embankment.]* Yes I ought to have somebody to enjoy it. *[He turns, facing the audience. The others, save for the CHOIR who are lined up in two rows of six on an angle up right, continue to look over the embankment.]* Gabriel! *[GOD steps down from the embankment two paces.]*

GABRIEL *[joining him]*. Yes, Lawd.

GOD. Gabriel, I'm goin' down dere.

GABRIEL. Yes, Lawd.

GOD. I want you to be my working boss yere while I'm gone.

GABRIEL. Yes, Lawd.

GOD. You know dat matter of dem two stars?

GABRIEL. Yes, Lawd.

GOD. Git dat fixed up! You know dat sparrow dat fell a little while ago? 'Tend to dat, too.

GABRIEL. Yes, Lawd.

GOD. I guess dat's about all. I'll be back Saddy. *[To the CHOIR.]* Quiet, angels. *[The CHOIR stops singing. Those on the embankment circle downstage. GOD goes to embankment. Turns and faces the company.]* I'm gonter pass one more miracle. You all gonter help me an' not make a soun' caize it's one of the most important miracles of all *[Nobody moves.]* GOD turns, facing the sky and raises His arms above His head *[Let there be man.]*

[There is growing roll of thunder as stage grows dark. The CHOIR bursts into "Hallelujah," and continues until the lights go up on the next scene.]

SCENE III.—Enclosing the stage is a heterogeneous cluster of cottonwood, camphor, live oak, and sycamore trees, youpon and turkey berry bushes, with their purple and red berries, sprays of fern-like indigo fiera and splashes of various Louisiana flowers. In the middle of the stage, disclosed when the mistiness at rise grows into warm sunlight, stands ADAM

He is a puzzled man of thirty, of medium height, dressed in the clothing of the average field hand. He is bare-headed. In the distance can be heard the CHOIR continuing. "Bright Mansions Above" A bird begins to sing. ADAM smiles and turns to look at the source

of this novel sound. He senses his strength and raises his forearms, his fists clenched. With his left hand he carefully touches the muscles of his upper right arm. He smiles again, realizing his power. He looks at his feet which are stretched wide apart. He stamps once or twice and now almost laughs in his enjoyment. Other birds begin trilling and ADAM glances up joyfully toward the foliage. GOD enters.

GOD Good mo'nin', Son.

ADAM [*with a little awe*]. Good mo'nin', Lawd.

GOD. What's yo' name, Son?

ADAM Adam

GOD Adam which?

ADAM [*frankly, after a moment's puzzled groping*]. Jest Adam, Lawd.

GOD Well, Adam, how dey treatin' you? How things goin'?

ADAM Well, Lawd, you know it's kind of a new line of wukk.

GOD. You'll soon get the hang of it. You know yo' kind of a new style with me.

ADAM. Oh, I guess I'm gonter make out all right soon as I learn de ropes.

GOD. Yes, I guess you will. Yo' a nice job.

ADAM. Yes, Lawd.

GOD. Dey's jest one little thing de matter with you. Did you notice it?

ADAM. Well, now you mentioned it, Lawd, I kind of thought dey was somethin' wrong.

GOD. Yes suh, you ain't quite right. Adam, you need a family. De reason for dat is in yo' heart you is a family man. [*Flicking the ash off His cigar*] I'd say dat was de main trouble at de moment.

ADAM [*smiling*]. Yes sir. [*His smile fades and he is puzzled again*] At de same time—dey's one thing puzzlin' me, Lawd. Could I ask you a question?

GOD. Why, certainly, Adam.

ADAM. Lawd, jest what is a family?

GOD. I'm gonter show you. [*Indicates a spot.*] Jest lie down dere, Adam. Make out like you was goin' to slumber.

ADAM [*gently*]. Yes, Lawd.

[*He lies down. GOD stands beside him and as He raises His arms above His head the lights go down. In the darkness GOD speaks.*]

GOD. Eve. [*Lights go up. EVE is standing beside ADAM. She is about twenty-six, and quite pretty. She is dressed like a country girl. Her gingham dress is quite*

new and clean. GOD is now at the other side of the stage, looking at them critically. EVE looks at ADAM in timid wonder and slowly turns her head until she meets the glance of GOD. ADAM stands beside EVE. They gaze at each other for a moment. GOD smiles.] Now you all right, Eve. [*ADAM and EVE face Him.*] Now I'll tell you what I'm gonter do. I'm gonter put you in charge here. I'm gonter give you de run of dis whole garden. Eve, you take care of dis man an' Adam, you take care of dis woman. You belong to each other. I don' want you to try to do much caize yo' both kind of experiment wid me an' I ain't sho' whether yo' could make it. You two jest enjoy yo' self Drink de water from de little brooks an' de wine from de grapes an' de berries, an' eat de food dat's hangin' for you in de trees. [*He pauses, startled by a painful thought*] Dat is, in all but one tree. [*He pauses. Then, not looking at them*] You know what I mean, my children?

ADAM and EVE. Yes, Lawd

[*They slowly turn their heads left, toward the branches of an offstage tree. Then they look back at GOD.*]

ADAM Thank you, Lawd.

EVE Thank you, Lawd.

GOD. I gotter be gittin' along now I got a hund'ed thousan' things to do 'fo' you take yo' nex' breath. Enjoy yo'-selves—

[*GOD exits. ADAM and EVE stand looking after Him for a moment, then each looks down and watches their hands meet and clasp After a moment they lift their heads slowly until they are again gazing at the tree*]

EVE Adam.

ADAM [*looking at the tree, almost in terror*]. What?

EVE [*softly as she too continues to look at the tree*]. Adam.

[*The CHOIR begins singing "Turn You Round" and as the lights go down the CHOIR continues until there is blackness. The CHOIR suddenly stops. The following scene is played in the darkness*]

MR. DESHEE'S VOICE. Now, I s'pose you chillun know what happened after God made Adam 'n' Eve Do you?

FIRST GIRL'S VOICE. I know, Mr. Deshee.

MR. DESHEE'S VOICE. Jest a minute, Randolph. Didn't I tell you you gotta tell yo' mammy let yo' sister bring you? Carlisle, take way dat truck he's eatin'.

You sit by him, see kin you keep him quiet. Now, den, Myrtle, what happened?

FIRST GIRL'S VOICE. Why, den dey ate de fo'bidden fruit and den dey got driv' out de garden.

MR. DESHEE'S VOICE. An' den what happened?

FIRST GIRL'S VOICE. Den dey felt ver' bad.

MR. DESHEE'S VOICE. I don' mean how dey feel, I mean how dey do. Do dey have any children or anything like dat?

FIRST GIRL'S VOICE. Oh, yes, suh, dey have Cain 'n' Abel.

MR. DESHEE'S VOICE. Dat's right, dey have Cain an' Abel.

BOY'S VOICE. Dat was a long time after dey got married, wasn't it, Mr. Deshee? My mammy say it was a hundred years

MR. DESHEE'S VOICE. Well, nobody kin be so sure. As I tol' you befo' dey was jest beginnin' to be able to tell de time an' nobody was any too sure 'bout anythin' even den. So de bes' thing to do is jest realize dat de thing happened an' don't bother 'bout how many years it was. Jest remember what I told you about it gittin' dark when you go to sleep an' it bein' light when you wake up. Dat's de way time went by in dem days. One thing we do know an' dat was dis boy Cain was a mean rascal.

[*The lights go up on the next scene.*]

SCENE IV.—A roadside.

CAIN, a husky young Negro, stands over the body of the dead ABEL. Both are dressed as laborers. CAIN is looking at the body in awe, a rock in his right hand. GOD enters.

GOD. Cain, look what you done to Abel

CAIN. Lawd, I was min'in' my own business and he come monkeyin' aroun' wit' me. I was wukkin' in de fiel' an' he was sittin' in de shade of de tree. He say "Me, I'd be skered to git out in dis hot sun. I be 'fraid my brains git cooked. Co'se you ain't got no brains so you ain't in no danger." An' so I up and flang de rock. If it miss 'im all right, an' if it hit 'im all right. Dat's de way I feel.

GOD. All right, but I'm yere to tell you dat's called a crime. When de new Judge is done talkin' to you you'll be draggin' a ball and chain de rest of yo' life.

CAIN. Well, what'd he want to come monkeyin' aroun' me fo' den? I was jest plowin', min'in' my own business, and not payin' him no min', and yere he come makin' me de fool. I'd bust anybody what make me de fool.

GOD. Well, I ain't sayin' you right an' I ain't sayin' you wrong. But I do say was I you I'd jest git myself down de road 'til I was clean out of de county. An' you better take an' git married an' settle down an' raise some chillun. Dey ain't nothin' to make a man fo'git his troubles like raisin' a family. Now, you better git.

CAIN. Yessuh.

[CAIN walks off. GOD watches him from the forestage and as the lights begin to dim looks off. The CHOIR begins "Run, Sinner, Run."]

GOD. Adam an' Eve, you better try again. You better have Seth an' a lot mo' chillun.

[*There is darkness. The CHOIR continues until the lights go up on the next scene.*]

SCENE V.—CAIN is discovered walking on an unseen treadmill. A middle distance of trees, hillsides and shrubbery passes him on an upper treadmill. Behind is the blue sky. He stops under the branches of a tree to look at a sign on a fence railing. Only half the tree is visible on the stage. The sign reads, "NOD PARISH COUNTY LINE."

CAIN [*sitting down with a sigh of relief under a tree*] At las'! Phew! [*Wipes his forehead with a handkerchief*] Feels like I been walkin' fo'ty years [*He looks back*] Well, dey cain' git me now. Now I kin raise a fam'ly. [*An idea occurs to him, and suddenly he begins looking right and left*] Well, I'll be hit by a mule! Knock me down for a trustin' baby! Where I gonter git dat family? Dat preacher fooled me. [*He is quite dejected*] Doggone!

CAIN'S GIRL [*off stage*]. Hello, Country Boy!

[CAIN glances up to the offstage branches of the tree]

CAIN. Hey-ho, Good-lookin'! Which way is it to town?

CAIN'S GIRL [*off stage*]. What you tryin' to do? You tryin' to mash me? I be doggone if it ain't gittin' so a gal cain't hardly leave de house 'out some of dese fast men ain' passin' remarks at her

CAIN. I ain' passin' remarks.

CAIN'S GIRL [*off stage*]. If I thought you was tryin' to mash me, I'd call de police an' git you tooken to de first precinct.

CAIN. Look yere, gal, I ast you a question, an' if you don' answer me I'm gonter bend you 'cross my pants an' burn you up.

CAIN'S GIRL [*off stage*]. I'm comin' down.

[*CAIN takes his eyes from the tree.*]

CAIN. Yes, an' you better hurry.

[*CAIN'S GIRL enters. She is as large as CAIN, wickedly pretty, and somewhat flashily dressed. She smiles at CAIN.*]

CAIN'S GIRL. I bet you kin handle a gal mean wid dem big stout arms of your'n I sho' would hate to git you mad at me, Country Boy.

CAIN [*smiling*]. Come yere [*She goes a little closer to him*] Don't be 'fraid, I ain' so mean

CAIN'S GIRL. You got two bad-lookin' eyes. I bet yo' hot coffee 'mong de women folks

CAIN. I ain' never find out What was you doin' in dat tree?

CAIN'S GIRL. Jest coolin' myself in de element.

CAIN. Is you a Nod Parish gal?

CAIN'S GIRL. Bo'n an' bred

CAIN. You know yo' kinda pretty.

CAIN'S GIRL. Who tol' you dat?

CAIN. Dese yere two bad eyes of mine.

CAIN'S GIRL. I bet you say dat to everybody all de way down de road.

CAIN. Comin' down dat road I didn't talk to nobody.

CAIN'S GIRL. Where you boun' for, Beautiful?

CAIN. I'm jest seein' de country. I thought I might settle down yere fo' a spell. Yo' live wit' yo' people?

CAIN'S GIRL. Co'se I does

CAIN. 'Spouse dey'd like to take in a boarder?

CAIN'S GIRL. Be nice if dey would, wouldn't it?

CAIN. I think so. You got a beau?

CAIN'S GIRL. Huh-uh!

CAIN [*smiling*]. You has now.

CAIN'S GIRL. I guess—I guess if you wanted to kiss me an' I tried to stop you, you could pretty nearly crush me wit' dem stout arms.

CAIN. You wouldn't try too much, would you?

CAIN'S GIRL. Maybe for a little while.

CAIN. An' den what?

CAIN'S GIRL. Why don' we wait an' see?

CAIN. When would dat be?

CAIN'S GIRL. To-night. After supper. Think you kin walk a little further now, City Boy?

CAIN. Yeh, I ain't so weary now.

[*She takes his hand.*]

CAIN'S GIRL. What yo' name?

[*Takes his arm.*]

CAIN. Cain

CAIN'S GIRL. Then I'm Cain's Gal. Come on, honey, an' meet de folks.

[*They go out. The CHOIR is heard singing "You Better Mind," as GOD enters. GOD watches the vanishing CAIN and his girl.*]

GOD [*after shaking His head*] Bad business I don' like de way things is goin' atall.

[*The stage is darkened. The CHOIR continues singing until the lights go up on the next scene.*]

SCENE VI—GOD'S private office in Heaven.

It is a small room, framed by tableau curtains. A large window up center looks out on the sky. There is a battered roll-top desk. On the wall next to the window is a framed religious o'eograph with a calendar attached to it underneath. A door is at the left. A hat rack is on the wall above the door. There are two or three cheap pine chairs beside the window, and beyond the door. In front of the desk is an old swivel armchair which creaks every time GOD leans back in it. The desk is open and various papers are stuck in the pigeonholes. Writing implements, etc. are on the desk. On a shelf above the desk is a row of law books. A cuspidor is near the desk, and a waste basket by it. The general atmosphere is that of the office of a Negro lawyer in a Louisiana town. As the lights go up GOD takes a fresh cigar from a box on the desk and begins puffing it without bothering to light it. There is no comment on this minor miracle from GABRIEL who is sitting in one of the chairs with a pencil and several papers in his hand. The singing becomes pianissimo.

GABRIEL [*looking at the papers*]. Well, I guess dat's about all de impo'tant business this mornin', Lawd.

GOD. How 'bout dat cherub over to Archangel Montgomery's house?

GABRIEL. Where do dey live, Lawd?
[*The singing stops.*]

GOD. Dat little two-story gold house, over by de pearly gates.

GABRIEL. Oh, dat Montgomery. I thought you was referrin' to de ol' gentleman. Oh, yeh. [*He sorts through the papers and finds one he is looking for.*] Yere it 'tis. [*Reads.*] "Cherub Christina Montgomery; wings is moltn' out of season an' nobody knows what to do."

GOD. Well, now, take keer of dat. You gotter be more careful, Gabe.

GABRIEL. Yes, Lawd.

[*Folds the papers and puts them in a pocket. GOD turns to His desk, takes another puff or two of the cigar, and with a pencil, begins checking off items on a sheet of paper before Him. His back is turned toward GABRIEL. GABRIEL takes his trumpet from the hat rack and burnishes it with his robe. He then wets his lips and puts the mouthpiece to his mouth.*]

GOD [*without turning around*]. Now, watch yo'self, Gabriel.

GABRIEL. I wasn't goin' to blow, Lawd. I jest do dat every now an' den so I can keep de feel of it.

[*He leans trumpet against the wall.*]

GOD picks up the papers and swings

His chair around toward GABRIEL.]

GOD. What's dis yere about de moon?

GABRIEL [*suddenly remembering*]. Oh! De moon people say it's beginnin' to melt a little, on 'count caize de sun's so hot.

GOD. It's goin' 'roun' 'cordin' to schedule, ain't it?

GABRIEL. Yes, Lawd.

GOD. Well, tell 'em to stop groanin'. Dere's nothin' de matter wid dat moon. Trouble is so many angels is flyin' over dere on Saddy night. Dey git to beatin' dere wings when dey dancin' an' dat makes de heat. Tell dem dat from now on dancin' 'roun' de moon is sinnin'. Dey got to stop it. Dat'll cool off de moon [*He swings back and puts the paper on the desk. He leans back in the chair comfortably, His hands clasped behind His head.*] Is dere anythin' else you ought to remind me of?

GABRIEL. De prayers, Lawd.

GOD [*puzzled, slowly swinging chair around again*]. De prayers?

GABRIEL. From mankind. You know, down on de earth.

GOD. Oh, yeh, de poor little earth. Bless my soul, I almos' forgot about dat.

Mus' be three or four hund'ed years since I been down dere. I wasn't any too pleased wid dat job.

GABRIEL [*laughing*]. You know you don' make mistakes, Lawd.

GOD [*soberly, with introspective detachment*]. So dey tell me [*He looks at GABRIEL, then through the window again*] So dey tell me. I fin' I kin be displeased though, an' I was displeased wid de mankind I las' seen. Maybe I ought to go down dere agin—I need a little holiday.

GABRIEL. Might do you good, Lawd.

GOD. I think I will. I'll go down an' walk de earth agin an' see how dem poor humans is makin' out. What time is it, by de sun an' de stars?

GABRIEL [*glancing out of the window*]. Jest exactly half-past, Lawd.

[*GOD is taking His hat and stick from the hat rack.*]

GOD [*opening the door*]. Well, take keer o' yo'self. I'll be back Saddy.

[*He exits. The stage is darkened. The CHOIR begins "Dere's No Hidin' Place," and continues until the lights go up on the next scene.*]

SCENE VII.—GOD is walking along a country road. He stops to listen. Church bells are heard in the distance.

GOD. Dat's nice. Nice an' quiet. Dat's de way I like Sunday to be. [*The sound is broken by a shrill voice of a girl. It is ZEBBA singing a "blues."*] Now, dat ain't so good. [*GOD resumes His walk and the upper treadmill brings on a tree stump on which ZEBBA is sitting. She is accompanying her song with a ukulele. GOD and the treadmills stop. When the stump reaches the center of the stage, it is seen that ZEBBA is a rouged and extremely flashily dressed chippy of about eighteen.*] Stop dat!

ZEBBA. What's de matter wid you, Country Boy? Pull up yo' pants.

[*She resumes singing.*]

GOD. Stop dat!

ZEBBA [*stops again*]. Say, listen to me, Banjo Eyes. What right you got to stop a lady enjoyin' herself?

GOD. Don't you know dis is de Sabbath? Da's no kin' o' song to sing on de Lawd's day.

ZEBBA. Who care 'bout de Lawd's day, anymo'? People jest use Sunday now to git over Saddy.

GOD. You a awful sassy little girl.

ZEB. I come fum sassy people! We even speak mean of de dead.

GOD. What's yo' name?

ZEB. [*flirtatiously*]. "What's my name?" Ain't you de ol'-time gal hunter! Fast, "What's my name?" den I s'pose, what would it be like if you tried to kiss me? You preachers is de debbils

GOD I ain't aimin' to touch you, daughter. [*A sudden sternness frightens ZEB. She looks at him sharply.*] What is yo' name?

ZEB. Zeba.

GOD. Who's yo' fam'ly?

ZEB. I'm de great-great-gran'daughter of Seth.

GOD. Of Seth? But Seth was a good man.

ZEB. Yeh, he too good, he die of holiness.

GOD An' yere's his little gran'daughter reekin' wid cologne. Ain't nobody ever tol' you yo' on de road to Hell?

ZEB. [*smiling*]. Sho' dat's what de preacher say Exceptin' of course, I happens to know dat I'm on de road to de picnic groun's, an' at de present time I'm waitin' to keep a engagement wid my sweet papa. He don' like people talkin' to me.

[*CAIN THE SIXTH enters. He is a young buck, wearing a "box" coat and the other flashy garments of a Rampart Street swell*]

CAIN THE SIXTH Hello, sugah! [*He crosses in front of God and faces ZEB*] Hello, mamma! Sorry I'm late, baby, but de gals in de barrel-house jest wouldn't let me go Doggone, one little wirehead swore she'd tear me down.

[*ZEB smiles and takes his hand*]

GOD. What's yo' name, son?

CAIN THE SIXTH [*contemptuously; without turning*]. Soap 'n' water, Country Boy.

GOD [*sternly*]. What's yo' name, son?

[*CAIN slowly turns and for a moment his manner is civil*]

CAIN THE SIXTH. Cain the Sixth.

GOD. I was afraid so.

CAIN THE SIXTH [*his impudence returning*]. You a new preacher?

GOD. Where you live?

CAIN THE SIXTH. Me, I live mos' any place.

GOD. Yes, an' you gonter see dem all. Is de udder young men all like you?

CAIN THE SIXTH [*smiling*]. De gals don't think so.

[*He turns towards ZEB again, picks*

her up and sits on the stump with the laughing ZEB on his lap]

ZEB. Dey ain't nobody in de worl' like my honey-cake

[*CAIN kisses her and she resumes her song GOD watches them. ZEB finishes a verse of the song and begins another softly CAIN THE SIXTH'S eyes have been closed during the singing*]

CAIN THE SIXTH [*his eyes closed*]. Is de preacher gone?

[*ZEB looks quickly at GOD without seeing him, and then looks off. She stops the song.*]

ZEB. Yeh, I guess he walks fast.

[*CAIN pushes her off his lap and rises.*]

CAIN THE SIXTH [*with acid sweetness*]. Dey tell me las' night you was talkin' to a creeper man, baby

ZEB. Why, you know dey ain't nobody in de world fo' me but you.

CAIN THE SIXTH [*smiling*]. I know dey ain't I even got dat guaranteed. [*Takes a revolver from his pocket.*] See dat, baby?

ZEB. Sho' I see it, honey.

CAIN THE SIXTH Dat jest makes me positive [*Puts the gun back*]

ZEB. [*pushing him back on the stump*]. You don' wanten believe dem stories, papa

CAIN THE SIXTH [*with sinister lightness*]. No, I didn't believe dem, baby. Co'se dat big gorilla, Flatfoot, from de other side of de river is in town ag'in.

ZEB. Dat don' mean nothin'. Flatfoot ain't nothin' to me

CAIN THE SIXTH [*sitting again*]. Co'se he ain't. Go 'head, sing some mo', baby [*ZEB resumes singing*]

GOD. Bad business [*The treadmills start turning. GOD resumes his walk. ZEB, still singing, and CAIN THE SIXTH recede with the landscape GOD is again alone on the country road There is a twitter of birds. GOD looks up and smiles*] De birds is goin' 'bout dere business, all right. [*A patch of flowers goes by, black-eyed Susans, conspicuously*] How you flowers makin' out? [*Children's voices answer, "We O K Lawd"*] Yes, an' you looks very pretty [*Children's voices: "Thank you, Lawd"*] The flowers pass out of sight [*It's only de human bein's makes me downhearted. Yere's as nice a Sunday as dey is turnin' out anywhere, an' nobody makin' de right use of it. [Something ahead of him attracts his attention. His face brightens.] Well, now dis is 'mo' like it. Now dat's nice to*

see people prayin'. It's a wonder dey don' do it in de church. But I fin' I don' min' it if dey do it outdoors.

GAMBLER. Oh, Lawd, de smoke-house is empty. Oh, Lawd, lemme git dem groceries. Oh, Lawd, lemme see dat little six. [*He casts the dice.*] Wham! Dere she is, frien's.

[*Exclamations from the others: "Well, damn my eyes!" "Doggone, dat's de eighth pass he make." "For God's sake, can't you ever crap?" etc. The BOY is picking up the money*]

GOD. Gamblin'! [*Looks over the group's shoulders.*] An' wid frozen dice!

BOY GAMBLER. Dey's a dolla' 'n' a half talkin' fo' me. How much you want of it, Riney?

FIRST GAMBLER I take fo' bits. Wait a minute. Mebbe I take a little mo'.

[*He counts some money in his hand.*]

SECOND GAMBLER [*glancing up at GOD*]. Hello, Liver Lips. [*To the others.*] Looka ol' Liver Lips.

[*The others look up and laugh good-naturedly, repeating "Liver Lips."*]

FIRST GAMBLER. Ain't his pockets high from de groun'? Ol' High-Pockets.

[*The others keep saying "Ole Liver Lips" "Ol' Liver Lips don't like to see people dcin'." "Dat's a good name, 'High Pockets'"*]

BOY GAMBLER [*to others*]. Come on, you gonter fade me or not?

[*GOD seizes the BOY'S ears and drags him to his feet. The others do not move, but watch, amused*]

GOD. Come yere, son Why, yo' jest a little boy. Gamblin' an' sinnin' [*GOD looks at the BOY'S face*] You been chewin' tobacco, too, like you was yo' daddy. [*GOD sniffs*] An' you been drinkin' sonny-kick-mammy wine You oughta be 'shamed [*To the others.*] An' you gamblers oughta be 'shamed, leadin' dis boy to sin.

FIRST GAMBLER. He de bes' crap shooter in town, mister.

GOD. I'm gonter tell his mammy. I bet she don' know 'bout dis

FIRST GAMBLER No, she don' know. [*The others laugh*] She don' know anythin'.

SECOND GAMBLER. Dat's de God's truth

FIRST GAMBLER See kin you beat 'im, High Pockets Dey's a dolla' open yere.

GOD. I ain't gonter beat 'im. I'm gonter teach 'im. I may have to teach you all.

[*He starts walking from them. The BOY*

sticks out his tongue the moment GOD'S back is turned.]

BOY GAMBLER. If you fin' my mammy you do mo'n I kin Come on, gamblers, see kin you gimme a little action. Who wants any part of dat dollar?

[*The treadmill carries them off. The FIRST GAMBLER is heard saying: "I'll take anoder two bits," and the others, "Gimme a dime's wo'th," "I ain't only got fifteen cents left," etc., as they disappear*]

GOD [*walking*]. Where's dat little boy's home? [*The front of a shanty appears and GOD stops in front of the door*] Yere's de place. It ain't any too clean, either.

[*Knocks on the door with his cane.*]

VOICE IN SHANTY. Who dar?

GOD Never you min' who's yere. Open de door

VOICE IN SHANTY. You gotta search warrant?

GOD I don' need one.

VOICE IN SHANTY. Who you wanten see?

GOD I wanten see de mammy of de little gamblin' boy.

VOICE IN SHANTY. You mean little Johnny Rucker?

GOD. Dat may be his name.

VOICE IN SHANTY. Well, Mrs. Rucker ain't home

GOD Where's she at?

VOICE IN SHANTY. Who, Mrs. Rucker?

GOD You heerd me

VOICE IN SHANTY. Oh, she run away las' night wid a railroad man She's eloped.

GOD Where's Rucker?

VOICE IN SHANTY He's flat under de table. He so drunk he cain't move.

GOD Who are you?

VOICE IN SHANTY. I'se jest a fren' an' neighbor. I come in las' night to de party, an' everybody in yere's dead drunk but me. De only reason I kin talk is I drank some new white mule I made myself, an' it burn my throat so I can't drink no mo'. You got any mo' questions?

GOD. Not for you.

[*The shanty begins to move off as GOD starts walking again*]

VOICE IN SHANTY Good riddance, I say. [*Shanty disappears*]

GOD. Dis ain't gittin' me nowheres. All I gotta say dis yere mankind I been peoplin' my earth wid sho' ain't much. [*He stops and looks back*] I got good min' to wipe 'em all off an' people de earth wid angels. No. Angels is all right, singin' an' playin' an' flyin' around, but

dey ain't much on workin' de crops and buildin' de levees No, suh, mankind's jest right for my earth, if he wasn't so dog-gone sinful. I'd rather have my earth peopled wit' a bunch of channel catfish, dan I would mankin' an' his sin. I jest ain't stan' sin.

[*He is about to resume his walk when NOAH enters. NOAH is dressed like a country preacher. His coat is of the "hammer-tail" variety. He carries a prayer book under his arm.*]

NOAH. Mo'nin', brother.

GOD. Mo'nin', brother. I declare you look like a good man.

NOAH. I try to be, brother. I'm de preacher yere. I don't think I seen you to de meetin'. [*They resume walking*]

GOD I jest come to town a little while ago an' I been pretty busy

NOAH Yeh, mos' everybody say dey's pretty busy dese days. Dey so busy dey can't come to meetin'. It seem like de mo' I preaches de mo' people ain't got time to come to church. I ain't hardly got enough members to fill up de choir. I gotta do de preachin' an' de bassin' too.

GOD. Is dat a fac'?

NOAH Yes, suh, brother. Everybody is mighty busy, gamblin', good-timin', and goin' on You jest wait, though When Gabriel blow de horn you gonter fin' dey got plenty of time to punch chunks down in Hell. Yes, suh.

GOD Seems a pity. Dey all perfec'ly healthy?

NOAH. Oh, dey healthy, all right Dey jest all lazy, and mean, and full of sin. You look like a preacher, too, brother.

GOD. Well, I am, in a way.

NOAH. You jest passin' through de neighborhood?

GOD. Yes. I wanted to see how things was goin' in yo' part of de country, an' I been feelin' jest 'bout de way you do. It's enough to discourage you

NOAH Yes, but I gotta keep wres'lin' wid 'em Where you boun' for right now, brother?

GOD. I was jest walkin' along. I thought I might stroll on to de nex' town

NOAH Well, dat's a pretty good distance. I live right yere [*He stops walking*] Why don' you stop an' give us de pleasure of yo' comp'ny for dinner? I believe my ol' woman has kilt a chicken.

GOD. Why, dat's mighty nice of you, brother. I don't believe I caught yo' name.

NOAH. Noah, jest brother Noah. Dis is ny home, brother. Come right in.

[*GOD and NOAH start walking to-*

wards NOAH'S house which is coming into view on the treadmill. The stage darkens, the CHOIR sings "Feastin' Table," and when the lights go up again, the next scene is disclosed.]

SCENE VIII.—Interior of NOAH'S house

The ensemble suggests the combination living-dining room in a fairly prosperous Negro's cabin Clean white curtains hang at the window A table and chairs are in the center of the room There is a cheerful checked tablecloth on the table, and on the wall, a framed, highly colored picture reading "God Bless Our Home." NOAH'S WIFE, an elderly Negress, simply and neatly dressed, GOD and NOAH are discovered grouped about the table.

NOAH. Company, darlin'. [*NOAH'S WIFE takes NOAH'S and GOD'S hats.*] Dis gemman's a preacher, too. He's jest passin' through de country

GOD Good mo'nin', sister

NOAH'S WIFE. Good mo'nin'. You jest ketch me when I'm gittin' dinner ready You gonter stay with us?

GOD If I ain't intrudin'. Brother Noah suggested—

NOAH'S WIFE. You set right down yere. I got a chicken in de pot an' it'll be ready in 'bout five minutes I'll go out de back an' call Shem, Ham 'n' Japheth [*To GOD*] Dey's our sons Dey live right acrost de way but always have Sunday dinner wid us. You mens make yo'selves comf'table.

GOD. Thank you, thank you very kindly.

NOAH. You run along, we all right.

[*GOD and NOAH seat themselves.*

NOAH'S WIFE exits]

GOD. You got a fine wife, Brother Noah.

NOAH She pretty good woman

GOD Yes, suh, an' you got a nice little home. Have a ten-cent seegar?

[*GOD offers him one.*]

NOAH. Thank you, much obliged.

[*Both men lean back restfully in their chairs*]

GOD Jest what seems to be the main trouble 'mong mankind, Noah?

NOAH. Well, it seems to me dat de main trouble is dat de whol' distric' is wide open. Now you know dat makes fo' loose livin'. Men folks spen's all dere time

fightin', loafin' an' gamblin', an' makin' bad likker.

GOD What about de women?

NOAH. De women is worse dan de men. If dey ain't makin' love powder dey out beg, borrow an' stealin' money for policy tickets. Doggone, I come in de church Sunday 'fo' las' 'bout an' hour befo' de meetin' was to start, and dere was a woman stealin' de altar cloth She was goin' to hock it. Dey ain't got no moral sense. Now you take dat case las' month, over in East Putney. Case of dat young Willy Roback

GOD What about him?

NOAH Dere is a boy sebenteen years old Doggone, if he didn't elope with his aunt. Now, you know, dat kin' of goin' on is bad fo' a neighborhood.

GOD Terrible, terrible.

NOAH. Yes, suh Dis use' to be a nice, decent community I been doin' my best to preach de Word, but seems like every time I preach de place jest goes a little mo' to de dogs. De good Lawd only knows what's gonter happen.

GOD Dat's de truth.

[*There is a pause. Each puffs his cigar. Suddenly NOAH grasps his knee, as if it were paining him, and twists his foot*]

NOAH Huh!

GOD What's de matter?

NOAH. I jest got a twitch. My buck-aguer I guess. Every now and den I gets a twitch in de knee. Might be a sign of rain.

GOD That's just what it is Noah, what's de mos' rain you ever had 'round dese parts?

NOAH. Well, de water come down fo' six days steady last April an' de ribber got so swole it bust down de levee up 'bove Freeport. Raise cain all de way down to de delta.

GOD What would you say was it to rain for forty days and forty nights?

NOAH I'd say dat was a *complete* rain!

GOD Noah, you don't know who I is, do you?

NOAH [*puzzled*]. Yo' face looks easy, but I don't think I recall de name. [*GOD rises slowly, and as He reaches His full height there is a crash of lightning, a moment's darkness, and a roll of thunder. It grows light again. NOAH is on his knees in front of GOD*] I should have known you. I should have seen de glory.

GOD. Dat's all right, Noah. You didn't know who I was.

NOAH. I'm jes' ol' preacher Noah, Lawd, an' I'm yo' servant. I ain't very much, but I'se all I got.

GOD. Sit down, Noah. Don't let me hear you sham in' yo'self, caize yo' a good man. [*Timidly NOAH waits until GOD is seated, and then sits, himself*] I jest wanted to fin' out if you was good, Noah. Dat's why I'm walkin' de earth in de shape of a natchel man. I wish dey was mo' people like you. But, far as I kin see, you and yo' family is de only respectable people in de worl'.

NOAH Dey jest all poor sinners, Lawd

GOD I know I am your Lawd. I am a god of wrath and vengeance an' dat's why I'm gonter destroy dis worl'.

NOAH [*almost in a whisper. Drawing back*]. Jest as you say, Lawd.

GOD. I ain't gonter destroy you, Noah. You and yo' fam'ly, yo' sheep an' cattle, an all de udder things dat ain't human I'm gonter preserve. But de rest is gotta go. [*Takes a pencil and a sheet of paper from His pocket*] Look yere, Noah. [*NOAH comes over and looks over His shoulder*] I want you to buid me a boat I want you to call it de "Ark", and I want it to look like dis. [*He is drawing on the paper. Continues to write as He speaks*] I want you to take two of every kind of animal and bird dat's in de country I want you to take seeds an' sprouts an' everything like dat an' put dem on dat Ark, because dere is gonter be all dat rain Dey's gonter be a deluge, Noah, an' dey's goin' to be a flood. De levees is gonter bust an' everything dat's fastened down is comin' loose, but it ain't gonter float long, caize I'm gonter make a storm dat'll sink everythin' from a hencoop to a barn. Dey ain't a ship on de sea dat'll be able to fight dat tempest. Dey all got to go Everythin'. Everythin' in dis pretty worl' I made, except one thing, Noah You an' yo' fam'ly an' de things I said are going to ride dat storm in de Ark. Yere's de way it's to be.

[*He hands NOAH the paper. NOAH takes it and reads*]

NOAH [*pause Looks at paper again*]. Yes, suh, dis seems to be complete. Now 'bout de animals, Lawd, you say you want everythin'?

GOD Two of everythin'.

NOAH. Dat would include jayraffes an' hippopotamusses?

GOD Everythin' dat is.

NOAH. Dey was a circus in town las' week. I guess I kin fin' dem. Co'se I kin git all de rabbits an' possums an' wil'

turkeys easy. I'll sen' de boys out. Hum, I'm jest wonderin' —

GOD. 'Bout what?

NOAH. 'Bout snakes? Think you'd like snakes, too?

GOD. Certainly I want snakes.

NOAH. Oh, I kin git snakes, lots of 'em. Co'se, some of 'em's a little dangerous. Maybe I better take a kag of likker, too?

GOD. You can have a kag of likker

NOAH [*musingly*]. Yes, suh, dey's a awful lot of differ'nt kin's of snakes, come to think about it. Dey's water moccasins, cotton-moufs, rattlers—mus' be a hund'ed kin's of other snakes down in de swamps. Maybe I better take two kags of likker.

GOD [*mildly*]. I think de one kag's enough.

NOAH. No. I better take two kags. Besides I kin put one on each side of de boat, an' balance de ship wid dem as well as havin' dem fo' medicinal use

GOD. You kin put one kag in de middle of de ship.

NOAH [*buoyantly*]. Jest as easy to take de two kags, Lawd

GOD I think one kag's enough.

NOAH Yes, Lawd, but you see forty days an' forty nights —

[*There is a distant roll of thunder.*]

GOD [*firmly*]. One kag, Noah.

NOAH. Yes, Lawd One kag.

[*The door in the back opens and NOAH'S WIFE enters with a tray of dishes and food*]

NOAH'S WIFE. Now, den, gen'lemen, if you'll jest draw up cheers

[*The stage is darkened The CHOIR is heard singing "I Want to Be Ready." They continue in the darkness until the lights go up on the next scene.*]

SCENE IX—*In the middle of the stage is the Ark. On the hillside, below the Ark, a dozen or more men and women, townspeople, are watching NOAH, SHEM, HAM, and JAPHETH on the deck of the Ark The three sons are busily nailing boards on the cabin. NOAH is smoking a pipe He wears a silk hat, captain's uniform and a "slicker."*

NOAH [*to Shem*]. You, Shem, tote up some ol' rough lumber; don't bring up any planed-up lumber, caize dat ain't fo' de main deck.

SHEM. Pretty near supper time, daddy.

NOAH Maybe 'tis, but I got de feelin' we ought to keep goin'.

FIRST WOMAN. You gonter work all night, Noah, maybe, huh?

NOAH [*without looking at her*]. If de speerit move me.

SECOND WOMAN. Look yere, Noah, why'n't you give up all dis damn foolishness? Don't you know people sayin' yo' crazy? What you think you doin' anyway?

NOAH. I'se buildin' a Ark. [*Other men and women join those in the foreground*] Ham, you better stop for a while 'n see whether dey bringin' de animals up all right. [*He looks at his watch.*] Dey ought to be pretty near de foot o' de hill by dis time; if dey ain't you wait fo' dem and bring 'em yo'se'f.

[*HAM goes down a ladder at the side of the ship and exits during the following scene. The newcomers in group have been speaking to some of the early arrivals*]

SECOND WOMAN [*to THIRD WOMAN, one of the newcomers*]. No, you don't mean it!

THIRD WOMAN I do so. Dat's what de talk is in de town

FIRST MAN You hear dat, Noah? Dey say yo' ol' lady is tellin' everybody it's gonter rain fo' fo'ty days and fo'ty nights. You know people soon gonter git de idea you all crazy.

NOAH Lot I keer what you think [*To JAPHETH*] Straighten up dem boards down dere, Japheth.

[*Indicating floor of deck*]

FIRST MAN [*to THIRD WOMAN*]. Was I you, I wouldn't go 'round with Mrs. Noah any more, lady. First thing you know you'll be gittin' a hard name, too.

THIRD WOMAN Don't I know?

SECOND WOMAN. A lady cain't be too partic'lar dese days

[*ZEBE and FLATFOOT, a tall, black, wicked-looking buck, enter, their arms around each other's waist*]

ZEBE Dere it is, baby Was I lyin'?

FLATFOOT Well, I'll be split in two!

FIRST MAN. What you think of it, Flatfoot?

FLATFOOT. I must say! Look like a house wit' a warpin' cellar

NOAH Dis yere vessel is a boat

FLATFOOT. When I was a little boy dey used to build boats down near de ribber, where de water was

[*The others laugh*]

NOAH. Dis time it's been arranged to have de water come up to de boat. [*JAPHETH looks belligerently over the*

rail of the Ark at FLATFOOT. To JAPHETH.] Keep yo' shirt on, son

SECOND WOMAN [*to THIRD WOMAN*]. Now, you see de whole fam'-ly's crazy.

THIRD WOMAN. Listen, dey ain't gonter 'tamine me It was me dat started resolvin' dem both out o' de buryin' society.

ZEBA. When all dis water due up yere, Noah?

NOAH. You won't know when it gits yere, daughter.

ZEBA. Is she goin' to be a side-wheeler, like de Bessy-Belle?

FLATFOOT. No! If she was a side-wheeler she'd get her wheels all clogged wid sharks. She gonter have jus' one great big stern wheel, like de *Commodore*. Den if dey ain't 'nuf water why de big wheel kin stir some up.

[*General laughter. Two or three of the GAMBLERS enter and join the group, followed by CAIN THE SIXTH*]

CAIN THE SIXTH. Dere's de fool an' his monument, jest like I said!

[*The GAMBLERS and CAIN THE SIXTH roar with laughter, slap their legs, etc. The members of the main group talk sotto voce to each other as CAIN THE SIXTH catches ZEBA'S eye. FLATFOOT is on her right and is not aware of CAIN THE SIXTH'S presence*]

NOAH. See how dey makin' out inside, son.

[*Stops hammering JAPHETH exits into Ark. NOAH turns and gazes towards the east*]

CAIN THE SIXTH. He'llo, honey.

ZEBA [*frightened but smiling*]. Hello, sugah

CAIN THE SIXTH [*pleasantly*]. Ain' dat my ol' frien' Flatfoot wid you?

ZEBA. Why, so 'tis! [*FLATFOOT is now listening. To FLATFOOT*] He's got a gun

CAIN THE SIXTH. No, I ain't.

[*He lifts his hands over his head ZEBA quickly advances and runs her hands lightly over his pockets.*]

ZEBA [*relieved*]. I guess he ain't.

CAIN THE SIXTH. No, I ain't got no gun for my ol' friend, Flatfoot

[*He walks up to him.*]

FLATFOOT [*smiling*]. Hi, Cain. How's de boy?

[*CAIN quickly presses his chest against FLATFOOT'S, his downstage arm sweeps around FLATFOOT'S body*

and his hand goes up to the small of FLATFOOT'S back]

CAIN THE SIXTH [*quietly, but triumphantly*] I got a little knife fo' him.

[*FLATFOOT falls dead The laughter of the others stops and they look at the scene. ZEBA for a moment is terrified, her clenched hand pressed to her mouth. She looks at CAIN THE SIXTH, who is smiling at her. He tosses the knife on the ground and holds his hands out to her. She goes to him, smiling*]

ZEBA. You sho' take keer of me, honey.

CAIN THE SIXTH. Dat's caize I think yo' wo'th takin' keer of. [*To the others*] It's all right, folks. I jest had to do a little cleanin' up

FIRST WOMAN [*smiling*]. You is de quicke's scoundrel.

FIRST GAMBLER. It was a nice quick killin' Who was he?

SECOND WOMAN [*casually*]. Dey called him Flatfoot From over de river. He wa'n't any good. He owed me for washin' for over a year.

THIRD WOMAN. Used to peddle muggles Said it had a kick like reg'lar snow. Wasn't no good

SECOND GAMBLER. Think we ought to bury him?

FIRST MAN. No, just leave him dere. Nobody comes up yere, 'cept ol' Manatee.

[*Indicates NOAH. Cries of "Ol' Manatee! Ol' Manatee, dat's good!"*]

NOAH [*still looking off*] You bettah pray, you po' chillun.

[*They all laugh*] FIRST WOMAN. We bettah pray? You bettah pray, Ol' Manatee?

ZEBA. You bettah pray for rain.

[*Laughter again*]

NOAH. Dat's what I ain't doin', sinners. Shem! Japheth! [*To others, as he points off Patter of rain*] Listen!

CAIN THE SIXTH [*casually*] Dog-gone, I believe it is gonter shower a little

FIRST GAMBLER. It do looks like rain.

FIRST WOMAN. I think I'll git on home. I got a new dress on.

ZEBA. Me, too I wants to keep lookin' nice fo' my sweet papa

[*She pats CAIN THE SIXTH'S cheek. CAIN THE SIXTH hugs her*]

NOAH [*almost frantically*]. Ham! Is de animals dere?

HAM [*off stage*]. Yes, sir, dere yere. We're comin'.

NOAH. Den bring 'em on.

[*SHEM and JAPHETH come on deck*

with their hammers. The stage begins to darken.]

THIRD WOMAN. I guess we all might go home 'til de shower's over. Come on, papa.

SECOND GAMBLER. See you after supper, Noah. [*Crowd starts moving off*]

NOAH. God's gittin' ready to start, my sons. Let's git dis plankin' done.

ZEBa. Put a big Texas on it, Noah, an' we'll use it fo' excursions.

[There is a distant roll of thunder, there are cries of "Good night, Admiral." "See you later." "So long, Manatee," as the crowd goes off. The thunder rumbles again. There is the sound of increasing rain. The hammers of SHEM and JAPHETH sound louder and are joined by the sounds of other hammerers. There is a flash of lightning. The CHOIR begins "Dey Ol' Ark's a-Moving," the sounds on the Ark become faster and louder. The rush of rain grows heavier]

NOAH. Hurry! Hurry! Where are you, Ham?

HAM [*just off stage*]. Yere I am, Father, wid de animals.

NOAH. God's give us His sign. Send 'em up de gangplank.

[An inclined plane is thrown against the Ark from the side of the stage by HAM, who cracks a whip.]

HAM. Get on, dere.

[The heads of two elephants are seen]

NOAH. Bring 'em on board! De Lawd is strikin' down de worl'!

[The singing and the noises reach fortissimo as HAM cracks his whip again, and the rain falls on the stage. The stage is darkened. The CHOIR continues singing in the darkness.]

SCENE X.—*When the lights go up on the scene, the Ark is at sea. Stationary waves run in front of it. The hillside has disappeared. The Ark is in the only lighted area.*

SHEM is smoking a pipe on the deck, leaning on the rail. A steamboat whistle blows three short and one long blast. SHEM is surprised. In a moment HAM appears, also with a pipe, and joins SHEM at the rail.

SHEM. Who'd you think you was signalin'?

HAM. Dat wasn't me, dat was daddy.

SHEM. He think he gonter git a reply?

HAM. I don' know. He's been gittin' a heap of comfort out of dat likker.

SHEM. De kag's nearly empty, ain't it?

HAM. Pretty nearly almos'. [*They look over the rail. A pause*] Seen anythin'?

SHEM. Dis mornin' I seen somethin' over dere migh'a' been a fish.

HAM. Dat's de big news of de week.

SHEM. How long you think dis trip's gonter las'?

HAM. I don' know! Rain fo'ty days 'n' fo'ty nights an' when dat stop' I thought sho' we'd come up ag'inst a san' bar o' somethin'. Looks now like all dat rain was jest a little incident of de trip. [*The whistle blows again.*] Doggone! I wish he wouldn't do dat. Fust thing we know he'll wake up dem animals ag'in.

[JAPHETH appears]

SHEM. What de matter wit' de ol' man, Jape?

JAPHETH. Doggone, he say he had a dream dat we're nearly dere. Dat's why he pullin' de whistle cord. See kin he git a' answer. [*He looks over the rail*] Look to me like de same ol' territory.

[MRS. NOAH appears on deck]

NOAH'S WIFE. You boys go stop yo' paw pullin' dat cord. He so full of likker he think he's in a race.

JAPHETH. He claim he know what he's doin'.

NOAH'S WIFE. I claim he gittin' to be a perfec' nuisance. Me an' yo' wives can't hardly heah ou'selves think. [*NOAH appears, his hat rakishly tilted on his head. He goes to the railing and looks out*] You 'spectin' company?

NOAH. Leave me be, woman. De watah don't look so rough to-day. De ol' boat's ridin' easier.

NOAH'S WIFE. Ridin' like a ol' mule!

NOAH. Yes, suh, de air don't feel so wet. Shem! 'Spose you sen' out 'nother dove. [*SHEM goes into the Ark*] Ham, go git de soundin' line. Jape, keep yo' eye on de East.

[JAPHETH goes to the end of the boat]

NOAH'S WIFE. As fo' you, I s'pose you'll help things along by takin' a little drink

NOAH. Look yere, who's de pilot of dis vessel?

NOAH'S WIFE. Ol' Mister Dumb Luck, Noah. Well, see dat's where you don' know anythin'.

NOAH'S WIFE. I s'pose you ain't drunk as a fool?

NOAH [*cordially*]. I feel congenial.

NOAH'S WIFE. An' you look it. You look jest wonderful. I wonder if you'd feel so congenial if de Lawd was to show up?

NOAH. De Lawd knows what I'm doin', don' you worry 'bout dat

NOAH'S WIFE. I wouldn't say anythin' ag'inst de Lawd. He suttinly let us know dey'd be a change in de weather. But I bet even the Lawd wonders sometimes why He ever put you in charge.

NOAH. Well, you let de Lawd worry 'bout dat.

[SHEM appears with the dove]

SHEM. Will I leave her go, Paw?

NOAH. Leave 'er go. [There's a chorus of "Good Luck, Dove," from the group as the dove flies off stage. HAM appears with the sounding line] Throw 'er over, boy.

[HAM proceeds to do so]

NOAH'S WIFE. An' another thing —

HAM Hey.

NOAH [rushing to his side] What is it?

HAM Only 'bout a inch! Look!

[They lean over.]

JAPHETH. It's gettin' light in de East.

[As HAM works the cord up and down,

NOAH and NOAH'S WIFE turn to-

ward JAPHETH. The CHOIR begins

"My Soul Is a Witness for the Lord."]

NOAH. Praise de Lawd, so it is

NOAH'S WIFE. Oh, dat's pretty.

NOAH [to HAM]. An' de boat's stopped. We've landed. Shem, go down 'n' drag de fires an' dreen de boiler. Yo' go help 'im, Ham.

JAPHETH. Look, Paw.

[The dove wings back to the Ark with an olive branch in its mouth]

NOAH. 'N' yere's de little dove wid greenery in its mouth! Take 'er down, Jape, so she kin tell de animals. [JAPHETH exits after SHEM and HAM carrying the dove. To MRS. NOAH] Now, maybe you feel little different.

NOAH'S WIFE [contritely]. It was jes' gettin' to be so trespas. I'm sorry, Noah.

NOAH. Dat's all right, ol' woman. [NOAH'S WIFE exits, NOAH looks about him. The lights have changed and the water piece is gone and the ark is again on the hillside. Two mountains can be seen in the distance and a rainbow slowly appears over the Ark. The singing has grown louder.] Thank you, Lawd, thank you very much indeed. Amen.

[The singing stops with the "Amen."]

GOD appears on the deck.]

GOD. Yo' welcome, Noah,

[NOAH turns and sees him.]

NOAH O, Lawd, it's wonderful.

GOD [looking about Him]. I sort of like it. I like de way you handled de ship, too, Noah.

NOAH. Was you watchin', Lawd?

GOD. Every minute. [He smiles.] Didn't de ol' lady light into you?

NOAH [apologetically]. She was kinda restless.

GOD. That's all right I ain't blamin' nobody. I don't even min' you cussin' an' drinkin'. I figure a steamboat cap'n on a long trip like you had has a right to a little redeye, jest so he don' go crazy.

NOAH Thank you, Lawd. What's de orders now?

GOD. All de animals safe?

NOAH Dey all fin'n' dandy, Lawd.

GOD. Den I want you to open dat star-board door, an' leave 'em all out. Let 'em go down de hill. Den you an' de family take all de seeds 'n' de sprouts an' begin plantin' ag'in I'm startin' all over, Noah.

[NOAH exits. GOD looks around]

GOD. Well, now we'll see what happens. [GOD listens with a smile, as noises accompanying the debarking of the animals are heard. They are the cracks of whips, the voices of the men on the Ark, shouting: "Git along dere." "Whoa, take it easy." "Duck yo' head." "Keep in line dere," etc. Over the Ark there is a burst of centrifugal shadows, and the sound of a myriad of wings. GOD smiles at the shadows] Dat's right, birds, fin' yo' new homes [Bird twitters are heard again. GOD listens a moment and rests an arm on the railing He speaks softly] Gabriel, kin you spare a minute?

[GABRIEL appears.]

GABRIEL. Yes, Lawd?

[The sounds from the other side of the Ark are by now almost hushed The LORD indicates the new world with a wave of the hand]

GOD Well, it's did

GABRIEL [respectfully, but with no enthusiasm]. So I take notice.

GOD. Yes, suh, startin' all over again.

GABRIEL. So I see

GOD [looking at him suddenly]. Don't seem to set you up much.

GABRIEL Well, Lawd, you see— [He hesitates] 'Tain't none of my business.

GOD What?

GABRIEL. I say, I don' know very much about it.

GOD I know you don'. I jest wanted you to see it [A thought strikes Him] Co'se, it ain' yo' business, Gabe It's my business. 'Twas my idea. De whole thing was my idea. An' every bit of it's my business 'n' nobody else's. De whole thing rests

on my shoulders. I declare, I guess dat's why I feel so solemn an' serious, at dis particklar time. You know dis thing's turned into quite a proposition.

GABRIEL [*tenderly*]. But, it's all right, Lawd, as you say, it's did.

GOD. Yes, suh, it's did. [*Sighs deeply. Looks slowly to the right and the left. Then softly.*] I only hope it's goin' to work out all right.

CURTAIN

PART TWO

SCENE I.—GOD'S Office again.

Somewhere the CHOIR is singing: "A City Called Heaven." In the office are TWO WOMEN CLEANERS. One is scrubbing the floor, the other dusting the furniture. The one dusting stops and looks out the window. There is a whirr and a distant faint boom. The CHOIR stops.

FIRST CLEANER. Dat was a long way off.

SECOND CLEANER [*at window*]. Yes ma'am. An' dat must 'a' been a big one. Doggone, de Lawd mus' be mad fo' sho', dis mo'nin'. Dat's de fo'ty-six' thunde'bolt since breakfast.

FIRST CLEANER I wonder where at He's pitchin' dem.

SECOND CLEANER. My goodness, don' you know?

FIRST CLEANER [*a little hurt*]. Did I know I wouldn't ask de question.

SECOND CLEANER. Every one of dem's bound fo' de earth.

FIRST CLEANER. De earth? You mean dat little ol' dreenin' place?

SECOND CLEANER. Dat's de planet. [*Another faint whirr and boom.*] Dere goes another.

FIRST CLEANER. Well, bless me. I didn't know dey was thunde'bolts.

SECOND CLEANER. Wha'd you think dey was?

FIRST CLEANER [*above desk*]. I wasn't sho', but I thought maybe He might be whittlin' a new star o' two, an' de noise was just de chips fallin'.

SECOND CLEANER. Carrie, where you been? Don' you know de earth is de new scandal? Ever'body's talkin' 'bout it.

FIRST CLEANER. Dey kep' it from me.

SECOND CLEANER. Ain't you noticed de Lawd's been unhappy lately?

FIRST CLEANER [*thoughtfully*]. Yeah, He ain't been His old self.

SECOND CLEANER. What did you think was de matteh? Lumbago?

FIRST CLEANER [*petulantly*]. I didn't know. I didn't think it was fo' me t'in-quiet.

SECOND CLEANER. Well, it jest so happens dat de Lawd is riled as kin be by dat measly little earth. Or I should say de scum dat's on it.

FIRST CLEANER. Dat's mankind down dere.

SECOND CLEANER. Dey mus' be scum, too, to git de Lawd so wukked up.

FIRST CLEANER. I s'pose so. [*Another whirr and boom.*] Looks like He's lettin dem feel de wrath. Ain' dat a shame to plague de Lawd dat way?

SECOND CLEANER. From what I hear dey been beggin' fo' what dey're gittin'. My brother flew down to bring up a saint de other day and he say from what he see mos' of de population down dere has made de debil king an' dey wukkin' in three shifts fo' him.

FIRST CLEANER. You cain't blame de Lawd.

SECOND CLEANER. Co'se you cain't. Dem human bein's 'd make anybody bile oveh. Ev'rytime de Lawd try to do sompin' fo' dem, doggone if dey don't stant some new ruckus.

FIRST CLEANER. I take notice He's been wukkin' in yere mo' dan usual.

SECOND CLEANER I wish He'd let us ladies fix it up. Wouldn't take a minute to make dis desk gold-plated.

FIRST CLEANER. I s'pose He likes it dis way. De Lawd's kind o' ol' fashioned in some ways. I s'pose He keeps dis office plain an' simple on purpose.

SECOND CLEANER [*finishing her work*]. I don' see why.

FIRST CLEANER [*looking off*]. Well, it's kind of a nice place to come to when He's studyin' somethin' impo'tant. 'Most evahthin' else in heaven's so fin' 'n' gran', maybe ev'ry now an' den He jest gits sick an' tired of de glory.

[*She is also collecting her utensils.*]

SECOND CLEANER. Maybe so. Jest de same I'd like to have a free hand wid dis place for a while, so's I could gold it up. [*GOD appears in the doorway.*]

GOD. Good mo'nin', daughters.

FIRST and SECOND CLEANERS. Good mo'nin', Lawd. We was jest finishin'.

GOD. Go ahead den, daughters.

[*Goes to the window*]
FIRST and SECOND CLEANERS. Yes,

Lawd. [*Exeunt. Off stage.*] Good mo'nin, Gabriel.

[*Off stage GABRIEL says, "Good mo'nin, sisters," and enters immediately. He stands in the doorway for a moment watching GOD—a notebook and pencil in his hand.*]

GOD What's de total?

GABRIEL [*consulting the book*]. Eighteen thousand nine hund'ed an' sixty for de mo'nin'. Dat's includin' de village wid de fo'tune tellers. Dey certainly kin breed fast.

GOD [*solemnly*]. Dey displease me. Dey displease me greatly.

GABRIEL. Want some more bolts, Lawd?

GOD [*looking through window*]. Look at 'em dere. Squirmin' an' fightin' an' bearin' false witness. Listen to dat liar, dere. He don' intend to marry dat little gal. He don' even love her. What did you say?

GABRIEL. Should I git mo' bolts?

GOD. Wait a minute [*He carefully points His finger down through the window*]. I'm goin' to git dat wicked man myself. [*From a great distance comes an agonized cry: "Oh, Lawd!" God turns from the window*] No use gittin' mo' thunde'bolts Dey don' do de trick. [*He goes to the swivel chair and sits.*] It's got to be somethin' else.

GABRIEL. How would it be if you was to doom 'em all ag'in, like dat time you sent down be flood? I bet dat would make dem mind.

GOD You see how much good de flood did. Dere dey is, jest as bad as ever.

GABRIEL. How about cleanin' up on de whole mess of 'em and sta'tin' all over ag'in wid some new kind of animal?

GOD. An' admit I'm licked?

GABRIEL [*ashamedly*]. No, of co'se not, Lawd.

GOD. No, suh No, suh. Man is a kind of pet of mine and it ain't right fo' me to give up tryin' to do somethin' wid him. Doggone, mankin' *mus'* be all right at de core or else why did I ever bother wid him in de first place? [*Sits at desk.*]

GABRIEL. It's jest dat I hates to see you worryin' about it, Lawd.

GOD. Gabe, dere ain't anythin' worth while anywheres dat didn't 'cause somebody some worryin'. I ain't never tol' you de trouble I had gittin' things started up yere. Dat's a story in itself. No, suh, de more I keep on bein' de Lawd de more I know I got to keep improvin' things. An' dat takes time and worry. De main trou-

ble wid mankin' is he takes up so much of my time. He ought to be able to help hisself a little [*He stops suddenly and cogitates.*] Hey, dere! I think I got it!

GABRIEL [*eagerly*]. What's de news?

GOD [*still cogitating*]. Yes, suh, dat seems like an awful good idea.

GABRIEL Tell me, Lawd

GOD. Gabriel, have you noticed dat every now an' den, mankin' turns out some pretty good specimens?

GABRIEL Dat's de truth.

GOD Yes, suh. Dey's ol' Abraham and Isaac an' Jacob an' all dat family.

GABRIEL. Dat's so, Lawd.

GOD. An' every one of dem boys was a hard wukker an' a good citizen. We got to admit dat.

GABRIEL. Dey wouldn't be up yere flyin' wid us if dey hadn't been.

GOD. No, suh. An' I don' know but what de answer to de whole trouble is right dere

GABRIEL. How you mean, Lawd?

GOD Why, doggone it, de good man is de man dat keeps busy. I mean I been goin' along on de principle dat he was something like you angels—dat you ought to be able to give him somethin' an' den jest let him sit back an' enjoy it Now dat I recollect' I put de first one down dere to take keer o' dat garden an' den I let him go ahead an' do nothin' but git into mischief [*He rises.*] Sure, *dat's* it. He ain't *built* jest to fool 'roun' an' not do nothin'. Gabe, I'm gonter try a new scheme.

GABRIEL [*eagerly*]. What's de scheme, Lawd?

GOD. I'll tell you later. Send in Abraham, Isaac an' Jacob [*A voice outside calls: "Right away, Lawd!"*] You go tell dem to put dem bolts back in de boxes. I ain' gonter use dem ag'in a while.

GABRIEL. O. K., Lawd.

GOD. Was you goin' anywhere near de Big Pit?

GABRIEL. I could go.

GOD. Lean over de brink and tell Satan he's jest a plain fool if he thinks he kin beat anybody as big as me.

GABRIEL. Yes, suh, Lawd. Den I'll spit right in his eye.

[*GABRIEL exits. GOD looks down through the window again to the earth below*]

GOD. Dat new polish on de sun makes it powerful hot. [*He "r'ar back."*] Let it be jest a little bit cooler. [*He feels the*

air.] Dat's nice. [*Goes to His desk. A knock on the door.*] Come in.

[*ABRAHAM, ISAAC and JACOB enter. All are very old men, but the beard of ABRAHAM is the longest and whitest, and they suggest their three generations. They have wings that are not quite so big as those of the native angels.*]

ISAAC. Sorry we so long comin', Lawd. But Pappy and me had to take de boy [*pointing to JACOB*] over to git him a can of wing ointment.

GOD. What was de matter, son?

JACOB. Dey was chafin' me a little. Dey fine now, thank you, Lawd.

GOD. Dat's good. Sit down an' make yo'selves comf'table [*The three sit. MEN: "Thank you, Lawd."*] Men, I'm goin' to talk about a little scheme I got. It's one dat's goin' to affec' yo fam'lies an' dat's why I 'cided I'd talk it over wid you, 'fo' it goes into ee-fect. I don' know whether you boys know it or not, but you is about de three best men of one fam'ly dat's come up yere since I made little apples. Now I tell you what I'm gonter do. Seein' dat you human bein's cain't 'preciate anythin' lessen you fust wukk to git it and den keep strugglin' to hold it, why I'm gonter turn over a very valuable piece of property to yo' fam'ly, and den see what kin dey do with it. De rest of de worl' kin go jump in de river fo' all I keer. I'm gonter be lookin' out fo' yo' descendants only. Now den, seein' dat you boys know de country pretty tho'ly, where at does you think is de choice piece of property in de whole worl'? Think it over for a minute. I'm gonter let you make de s'lection.

ABRAHAM. If you was to ask me, Lawd, I don't think dey come any better dan de Land of Canaan.

GOD [*to ISAAC and JACOB*]. What's yo' feelin' in de matter?

JACOB [*after a nod from ISAAC*]. Pappy an' me think do we get a pick, dat would be it.

GOD [*goes to window again; looks out*]. De Land of Canaan. Yes, I guess dat's a likely neighborhood. It's all run over wid Philistines and things right now, but we kin clean dat up. [*He turns from the window and resumes His seat*] All right. Now who do you boys think is best of yo' men to put in charge down dere? You see I ain't been payin' much attention to anybody in partic'lar lately.

ISAAC. Does you want de brainiest or de holiest, Lawd? [*MEN look up.*]

GOD. I want de holiest. I'll make him brainy. [*MEN appreciate the miracle.*]

ISAAC [*as ABRAHAM and JACOB nod to him*]. Well, if you want A Number One goodness, Lawd, I don't know where you'll git more satisfaction dan in a great-great-great-great grandson of mine.

GOD. Where's he at?

ISAAC. At de moment I b'lieve he's in de sheep business over in Midian County. He got in a little trouble down in Egypt, but 't'wan't his doin'. He killed a man dat was abusin' one of our boys in de brick works. Of co'se you know old King Pharaoh's got all our people in bondage.

GOD. I heard of it. [*With some ire*] Who did you think put them dere? [*The visitors lower their heads.*] It's all right, boys. [*All rise*] I'm gonter take dem out of it. An' I'm gonter turn over de whole Land of Canaan to dem. An' do you know whose gonter lead dem dere? Yo' great, great, great grandson Moses, ain't it?

ISAAC Yes, Lawd

GOD [*smiling*]. Yes. I been noticin' him.

ABRAHAM. It's quite a favor fo' de fam'ly, Lawd.

GOD. Dat's why I tol' you. You see, it so happens I love yo' fam'ly, an' I delight to honor it. Dat's all, gen'lemen. [*The three others rise and cross to the door, murmuring, "Yes, Lawd," "Thank you, Lawd," "Much obliged, Lawd," etc*] The CHOIR begins, "*My Lord's A-Writin' All De Time*" pianissimo GOD stands watching the men leave] Enjoy yo' selves. [*He goes to the window. The singing grows softer. He speaks through the window to the earth*] I'm comin' down to see you, Moses, an' dis time my scheme's got to wukk.

[*The stage is darkened. The singing grows louder and continues until the lights go up on the next scene.*]

SCENE II.—*The tableau curtains frame the opening of a cave, which is dimly lighted. A large turkey-berry bush is somewhere near the foreground. MOSES is seated on the grass eating his lunch from a basket in his lap. ZIPPORAH, his wife, stands watching him. He is about forty, ZIPPORAH somewhat younger. They are dressed inconspicuously. MOSES stutters slightly when he speaks. He looks up to see ZIPPORAH smiling.*

MOSES. What you smilin at, Zipporah?

ZIPPORAH. Caize you enjoyin' yo'-self.

MOSES You is a good wife, Zipporah.

ZIPPORAH. You is a good husband, Moses [*MOSES wipes his mouth with a handkerchief and begins putting into the basket the various implements of the meal which had been on the ground about him*] Why you suppose it's so dark yere to-day? Dey's no rain in de air

MOSES. Seems like it's jest aroun' dis cave. Yo' father's house is got de sun on it [*He looks in another direction*] Looks all clear down toward Egypt

ZIPPORAH. Co'se it *would* be fine weather in Egypt De sky looks all right. Maybe it's gonter rain jest right yere Why don't you move de sheep over to de other pasture?

MOSES [*a bit puzzled*] I don't know. It got dark like dis befo' you come along wid de dinner a.n' I was gonter stop you on de top of de hill. Den somethin' kep' me yere.

ZIPPORAH S'pose it could be de Lawd warnin' you dat dey's 'Gyptians hangin' 'roun'?

MOSES Dey may have fo'gotten all about dat killin' by now. Dey got a new Pharaoh down dere

ZIPPORAH An' I hear he's jest as mean to yo' peorle as his pappy was I wouldn't put it pas' him to send soljahs all the way up yere fo' you

MOSES Dat's all right. De Lawd's looked after me so far, I don't 'spect him to fall down on me now. You better be gittin' home

ZIPPORAH [*taking the basket*] I'll be worryin' about you

MOSES [*kissing her and then smiling*]. 'Parently de Lawd ain't. He knows I'm safe as kin be. Lemme see you feel dat way

ZIPPORAH You is a good man, Moses

MOSES. I's a lucky man [*ZIPPORAH exits with the basket. MOSES looks up at the sky*] Dat's funny. De sun seems to be shinin' every place but right yere. It's shinin' on de sheep. Why ain't dey no clouds dere?

GOD [*off stage*]. Caize I want it to be like dat, Moses

MOSES [*looking about him*]. Who's dat?

GOD [*off stage again*]. I'm de Lawd, Moses

MOSES [*smiling*] Dat's what you say. Dis yere shadow may be de Lawd's wuk, but dat voice soun' pretty much to me like my ol' brother Aaron.

GOD [*off stage*] Den keep yo' eyes open son. [*The turkey-berry bush begins to glow and then turns completely red. MOSES looks at it fascinated*] Maybe you notice de bush ain't burnin' up.

MOSES Dat's de truth.

[*MOSES is full of awe but not frightened*]

GOD [*off stage*]. Now you believe me? MOSES Co'se I does It's wonderful.

[*The light in the bush dies and GOD appears from behind it*]

GOD. No, it ain't Moses. It was jest a trick.

MOSES. 'Scuse me doubtin' you, Lawd. I always had de feelin' you wuz takin' keer of me, but I never 'spected you'd fin' time to talk wid me pussunly. [*He laughs.*] Dat was a good trick, Lawd. I'se seen some good ones, but dat was de beatenest.

GOD Yo' gonter see lots bigger tricks dan dat. Moses. In fac', yo' gonter perfo'm dem

MOSES [*incredulously*] Me? I'm gonter be a tricker?

GOD Yes, suh.

MOSES An' do magic? Lawd, my mouth ain't got de quick talk to go wid it.

GOD. It'll come to you now

MOSES [*now cured of stuttering*]. Is I goin' wid a circus?

GOD [*slowly and solemnly*]. Yo' is goin' down into Egypt, Moses, and lead my people out of bondage To do dat I'm gonter make you de bes' tricker in de worl'.

MOSES [*a little frightened*]. Egypt! You know I killed a man dere, Lawd. Won't dey kill me?

GOD Not when dey see yo' tricks. You ain't skeered, is you?

MOSES [*simply and bravely*]. No, suh, Lawd

GOD. Den yere's what I'm gonter do. Yo' people is my chillun, Moses I'm sick and tired o' de way ol' King Pharaoh is treatin' dem, so I'se gonter take dem away, and yo' gonter lead dem. You gonter lead 'em out of Egypt an' across de river Jordan It's gonter take a long time, and you ain't goin' on no excursion train. Yo' gonter wukk awful hard for somethin' yo' goin' to fin' when de trip's over.

MOSES What's dat, Lawd?

GOD. It's de Land of Canaan. It's de bes' land I got. I've promised it to yo' people, an' I'm gonter give it to dem.

MOSES Co'se, ol' King Pharaoh will do everything he kin to stop it.

GOD. Yes, an' dat's where de tricks come in. Dey tell me he's awful fond of tricks.

MOSES. I hear dat's *all* he's fon' of. Dey say if you cain't take a rabbit out of a hat you cain't even git in to see him.

GOD. Wait'll you see de tricks you an' me's goin' to show him.

MOSES [*delightedly*]. Doggone! Huh, Lawd?

GOD. Yes, suh. Now de fust trick —

[*God is lifting a stick which He carries.*]

MOSES. Jest a minute, Lawd. [*God halts the demonstration*] I'm gonter learn de tricks and do just like you tell me, but I *know* it's gonter take me a little time to learn all dat quick talkin'. Cain't I have my brother Aaron go wid me? He's a good man.

GOD. I was gonter have him help you wid de Exodus. I guess he can watch, too.

MOSES. I'll call 'im.

[*He turns as if to shout.*]

GOD. Wait. [*MOSES turns and looks at GOD.*] I'll bring him. [*Softly.*] Aaron!

[*AARON appears between GOD and MOSES in the mouth of the cave. He is a little taller than MOSES and slightly older. He, too, is dressed like a field hand*]

AARON [*blankly*]. Hey!

[*MOSES goes to him, takes his hand and leads him, bewildered, down to where MOSES had been standing alone. AARON then sees GOD*]

MOSES [*almost in a whisper*]. It's all right.

GOD. Don't worry, son, I'm jest showin' some tricks. Bringin' you yere was one of dem. [*AARON stares at GOD as if hypnotized*] Now den, you see dis yere rod? Looks like a ordinary walking stick, don't it?

MOSES. Yes, Lawd.

GOD. Well, it ain't no ordinary walkin' stick, caize look. [*MOSES leans forward.*] When I lays it down on de groun' —

[*The stage is darkened. The CHOIR begins, "Go Down, Moses," and continues until the lights go up on the next scene.*]

SCENE III.—*The throne room of PHARAOH. It suggests a Negro lodge room. The plain board walls are colored by several large parade banners of varying sizes, colors and materials, bordered with gold fringe and tassels*

on them. Some of the inscriptions on them read:

SUBLIME ORDER OF PRINCESS OF
THE HOUSE OF PHARAOH

HOME CHAPTER

MYSTIC BROTHERS OF THE EGYPTIAN
HOME GUARD

LADIES' AUXILIARY, NO. I.

SUPREME MAGICIANS AND WIZARDS
OF THE UNIVERSE

PRIVATE FLAG OF HIS HONOR

OLD KING PHARAOH

ROYAL YOUNG PEOPLE'S

PLEASURE CLUB

ENCHANTED AND INVISIBLE
CADETS OF EGYPT BOYS' BRIGADE

There is one door up right and a window.

The throne, an ordinary armchair with a drapery over its back, is on a dais. PHARAOH is seated on the throne. His crown and garments might be those worn by a high officer in a Negro lodge during a ritual. About the throne itself are high officials, several of them with plumed hats, clothing that suggests military uniforms, and rather elaborate sword belts, swords and scabbards. A few soldiers carrying spears are also in his neighborhood and one or two bearded ancients in brightly colored robes with the word "Wizard" on their conical hats. In the general group of men and women scattered elsewhere in the room Sunday finery is noticeable everywhere. Most of the civilians have bright "parade" ribbons and wear medals. In a cleared space immediately before the throne a CANDIDATE MAGICIAN is performing a sleight-of-hand trick with cards. PHARAOH watches him apathetically. He is receiving earnest attention from a few of the others, but the majority of the men and women are talking quietly among themselves. Beside the CANDIDATE MAGICIAN are several paraphernalia of previously demonstrated tricks.

CANDIDATE MAGICIAN [*holding up some cards*]. Now den, ol' King Pharaoh, watch dis. [*He completes a trick. There is a murmur of "Not Bad," "Pretty Good," etc., from a few of the watchers. PHARAOH makes no comment*] Now, I believe de cyard I ast you to keep sittin' on was de trey of diamonds, wasn't it?

PHARAOH. Yeah.

CANDIDATE MAGICIAN. Den kin I trouble you to take a look at it now? [PHARAOH *half rises to pick up a card he has been sitting on, and looks at it*] I believe you'll now notice dat it's de King of Clubs? [PHARAOH *nods and shows the card to those nearest him. The CANDIDATE MAGICIAN waits for an audible approval and gets practically none*] An' dat, ol' King Pharaoh, completes de puffhomanee.

[*An elderly man in a uniform steps forward*]

GENERAL. On behalf of my nephew I beg Yo' Honor to let him jine de ranks of de royal trickers and magicians.

PHARAOH [*to the two WIZARDS*]. What do de committee think? [*The WIZARDS shake their heads*] Dat's what I thought He ain't good enough. I'd like to help you out, General, but you know a man's got to be a awful good tricker to git in de royal society dese days You better go back an' stedly some mo', son [*He lifts his voice and directs two SOLDIERS guarding the door*] Is de head magician reached de royal waitin' room yit? [*One of the SOLDIERS opens the door to look out*] If he is, send him in.

[*The SOLDIER beckons to some one off stage, throws the door open, and announces to the court*]

SOLDIER. De Head Magician of de land of Egypt

[*A very old and villainous man enters. His costume is covered with cabalistic and zodiacal signs He advances to the KING, the other MAGICIAN and his uncle making way for him. He bows curtly to PHARAOH*]

HEAD MAGICIAN. Good mo'nin', ol' King Pharaoh.

PHARAOH. Mo'nin', Professor. What's de news?

HEAD MAGICIAN. Evahthing's bein' carried out like you said

PHARAOH. How's de killin' of de babies 'mongst de Hebrews comin' 'long?

HEAD MAGICIAN. Jes' like you ordered.

PHARAOH [*genially*]. Dey killed all of 'em, huh?

HEAD MAGICIAN. Do dey see one, dey kill 'em. You teachin' 'em a great lesson. Dey don' like it a-tall.

PHARAOH [*smiling*]. What do dey say?

HEAD MAGICIAN [*pawing the air inarticulately*]. I hates to tell in front of de ladies.

PHARAOH. Dey feels pretty bad, huh?

HEAD MAGICIAN. Dat's jest de beginnin' of it Betwixt de poleece and de soljahs we killed about a thousan' of 'em las' night Dat's purty good

PHARAOH [*thoughtfully*]. Yeh, it's fair. I guess you boys is doin' all you kin. But I fin' I ain't satisfied, though.

HEAD MAGICIAN. How you mean, Yo' Honor?

PHARAOH. I mean I'd like to make dose Hebrew chillun realize dat I kin be even mo' of a pest I mean I hates dem chillun. An' I'm gonter think of a way of makin' 'em even mo' mizzable.

HEAD MAGICIAN But dey ain't anythin' meaner dan killin de babies, King.

PHARAOH Dey must be sump'n Dog-gone, you is my head tricker, you put yo' brains on it. [*To the others*] Quiet, whilst de Head Magician go into de silence

HEAD MAGICIAN [*after turning completely around twice, and a moment's cogitation*]. I tell you what I kin do. All de Hebrews dat ain't out to de buryin' grounds or in de hospitals is laborin' in de brick wukks

PHARAOH. Yeh?

HEAD MAGICIAN [*after a cackling laugh*] How would it be to take de straw away from 'em and tell 'em dey's got to turn out jest as many bricks as usual? Ain't dat nasty?

PHARAOH Purty triflin', but I s'pose it'll have to do for de time bein'. Where's de extreme inner guard? [*One of the military ATTENDANTS comes forward*] Go on out an' tell de sup'intendent to put dat into ee-fect [*The ATTENDANT bows and starts for the door. He stops as PHARAOH calls to him*] Wait a minute! Tell 'im to chop off de hands of anybody dat say he cain't make de bricks dat way. [*The ATTENDANT salutes and exits, the door being opened and closed by one of the SOLDIERS*] Now what's de news in de magic line?

HEAD MAGICIAN. I ain't got very many novelties to-day, King, I been wuk-kin' too hard on de killin's. I'm so tired I don' believe I could lift a wand.

[*There are murmurs of protest from the assemblage.*]

PHARAOH. Doggone, you was to 'a been de chief feature o' de meetin' dis mawnin'. Look at de turn-out you got account of me tellin' 'em you was comin'.

HEAD MAGICIAN. Well dat's de way it is, King Why don' you git de wizards to do some spell castin'?

PHARAOH Dey say it's in de cyards dat dey cain't wukk till high noon. [*He*

glances at the WIZARDS.] Think mebbe you kin cheat a little?

FIRST WIZARD. Oh, dat cain't be done, King.

PHARAOH. Well, we might as well adjourn, den. Looks to me like de whole program's shot to pieces. [*He starts to rise, when there is a furious banging on the door.*] What's de idea, dere? See who dat is. [*The SOLDIERS open the door. MOSES and AARON enter, pushing the two SOLDIERS aside and coming down in front of PHARAOH. The SOLDIERS are bewildered and PHARAOH is angry.*] Say, who tol' you two baboons you could come in yere?

MOSES. Is you ol' King Pharaoh?

PHARAOH. Dat's me. Did you heah what I asked you?

MOSES. My name is Moses, and dis is my brother Aaron.

[*Murmur of "Hebrews" spreads through the room*]

PHARAOH [*in a rage*]. Is you Hebrews?

MOSES. Yes, suh.

PHARAOH [*almost screaming*]. Put 'em to de sword!

[*As the COURTIERs approach, AARON suddenly discloses the rod, which he swings once over his head. The COURTIERs draw back as if their hands had been stung. Cries of "Hey!" "Look out," etc.*]

MOSES. Keep out side dat circle.

[*The COURTIERs nearest MOSES and AARON look at each other, exclaiming ad lib., "Did you feel dat?" "What was dat?" "What's goin' on, heah?" "My hands is stingin'!" etc.*]

PHARAOH [*puzzled but threatening*]. What's de idea yere?

MOSES. We is magicians, ol' King Pharaoh.

PHARAOH [*to the Head Magician*]. Put a spell on 'em. [*The HEAD MAGICIAN stands looking at them, bewildered. To MOSES.*] I got some magicians, too. We'll see who's got de bes' magic. [*MOSES and AARON laugh. Most of the COURTIERs are covering. To the HEAD MAGICIAN.*] Go ahead, give 'em gri-gri.

MOSES. Sure, go ahead

PHARAOH. Hurry up, dey's laughin' at you. What's de matter?

HEAD MAGICIAN. I cain't think of de right spell.

PHARAOH [*now frightened himself*]. You mean dey got even you whupped?

HEAD MAGICIAN. Dey's got a new kind of magic.

PHARAOH [*gazes at HEAD MAGICIAN a moment, bewildered. To the WIZARDS*]. I s'pose if de Professor cain't, you cain't.

FIRST WIZARD. Dat's a new trick, King.

HEAD MAGICIAN [*rubbing his fingers along his palms*]. It's got 'lectricity in it!

PHARAOH. Hm, well dat may make it a little diff'rent. So you boys is magicians, too?

MOSES. Yes, suh.

PHARAOH. Well, we's always glad to see some new trickers in de co't, dat is if dey good. [*He glances about him.*] You look like you is O. K.

MOSES. Dat's what we claims, ol' King Pharaoh. We think we's de best in de worl'.

PHARAOH. You certainly kin talk big. Jest what is it you boys would like?

MOSES. We came to show you some tricks. Den we's goin' to ask you to do somethin' for us.

PHARAOH. Well, I s'pose you know I'm a fool for conjurin'. If a man kin show me some tricks I ain't seen, I goes out of my way to do him a favor.

MOSES. Dat's good. Want to see de first trick?

PHARAOH. It ain't goin' to hurt nobody?

MOSES. Dis one won't.

PHARAOH. Go ahead.

MOSES. Dis yere rod my brother has looks jes' like a walkin' stick, don't it?

[*The COURTIERs now join the KING in interest*]

PHARAOH. Uh huh. Le's see.

[*AARON hands him the rod, which PHARAOH inspects and returns*]

MOSES. Well, look what happens when he lays it on de groun'.

[*AARON places the rod on the second step of the throne. It turns into a life-like snake. There are exclamations from the assemblage.*]

PHARAOH. Dat's a good trick! Now turn it back into a walkin' stick again. [*AARON picks it up and it is again a rod. Exclamations of "Purty good!" "Dat's all right!" "What do you think of that!" etc.*] Say, you is good trickers!

MOSES. You ain't never seen de beat of us. Now I'm goin' to ask de favor.

PHARAOH. Sure, what is it?

MOSES [*solemnly*]. Let de Hebrew chillun go!

PHARAOH [*rises and stares at them. There is a murmur of "Listen to 'im!"*]

"He's got nerve!" "I never in my life!" "My goodness!" etc.]. What did you say?

MOSES. Let de Hebrew chillun go.

[PHARAOH seats himself again.]

PHARAOH [slowly]. Don' you know de Hebrews is my slaves?

MOSES. Yes, suh.

PHARAOH. Yes, suh, my slaves. [There is a distant groaning] Listen, and you kin hear 'em bein' treated like slaves. [He calls toward the window] What was dey doin' den?

MAN NEAR THE WINDOW. Dey's jest gettin' de news down in de brick-yard

PHARAOH. I won't let them go. [He snorts contemptuously] Let's see another trick.

MOSES. Yes, suh, yere's a better one. [He lowers his head] Let's have a plague of de flies

[AARON raises the rod. The room grows dark and a great buzzing of flies is heard. The COURTIERs break out in cries of "Get away fum me!" "Take 'em away!" "De place is filled with flies!" "Dis is terrible!" "Do sump'n, Pharaoh!"]

PHARAOH [topping the others]. All right—stop de trick!

MOSES. Will you let de Hebrews go?

PHARAOH. Sho' I will. Go ahead stop it!

MOSES [also above the others]. Begone!

[The buzzing stops and the room is filled with light again, as AARON lowers the rod. All except MOSES and AARON are brushing the flies from their persons]

PHARAOH [laughing]. Doggone, dat was a good trick! [The others, seeing they are uninjured, join in the laughter, with exclamations of "Doggone!" "You all right?" "Sho' I'm all right." "Didn't hurt me," etc.] You is good trickers.

MOSES. Will you let de Hebrew chillun go?

PHARAOH [sitting down again] Well, I'll tell you, boys. I'll tell you sump'n you didn' know. You take me, I'm a pretty good tricker, an' I jest outtricked you. So, bein' de bes' tricker, I don' think I will let 'em go. You got any mo' tricks yo'-self?

MOSES. Yes, suh. Dis is a little harder one. [AARON lifts the rod.] Gnats in de mill pon', gnats in de clover, gnats in de tater patch, stingin' all over.

[The stage grows dark again. There is the humming of gnats and the slapping

of hands against faces and arms, and the same protests as were heard with the flies, but with more feeling: "I'm gittin' stung to death!" "I'm all stung!" "Dey're like hornets!" "Dey's on my face!" etc.]

PHARAOH. Take 'em away, Moses!

MOSES [his voice drowning the others]. If I do, will you let 'em go?

PHARAOH. Sho' I will, dis time.

MOSES. Do you mean it?

PHARAOH. Co'se I mean it! Doggone, one jest stang me on de nose.

MOSES. Begone! [Lights come up as AARON lowers the rod. There is a moment of general recovery again. PHARAOH rubs his nose, looks at his hands, etc., as do the others.] Now, how about it?

PHARAOH [smiling]. Well, I'll tell you, Moses. Now dat de trick's over—

[MOSES takes a step toward PHARAOH.]

MOSES. Listen, Pharaoh. You been lyin' to me, and I'm gittin' tired of it.

PHARAOH. I ain't lyin', I'm trickin', too. You been trickin' me and I been trickin' you.

MOSES. I see. Well, I got one mo' trick up my sleeve which I didn't aim to wukk unless I had to. Caize when I does it, I can't undo it.

PHARAOH. Wukk it an' I'll trick you right back. I don' say you ain't a good tricker, Moses. You is one of de best I ever seen. But I kin outtrick you. Dat's all.

MOSES. It ain't only me dat's goin' to wukk dis trick. It's me an' de Lawd.

PHARAOH. Who?

MOSES. De Lawd God of Israel.

PHARAOH. I kin outtrick you an' de Lawd too!

MOSES [angrily]. Now you done it, ol' King Pharaoh. You been mean to de Lawd's people, and de Lawd's been easy on you caize you didn' know better. You been givin' me a lot of say-so and no do-so, and I didn' min' dat. But now you've got to braggin' dat you's better dan de Lawd, and dat's too many.

PHARAOH. You talk like a preacher, an' I never did like to hear preachers talk.

MOSES. You ain't goin' to like it any better, when I strikes down de oldes' boy in every one of yo' people's houses.

PHARAOH. Now you've given up trickin' and is jest lyin'. [He rises.] Listen, I'm Pharaoh. I do de strikin' down yere. I strike down my enemies, and dere's no

one in all Egypt kin kill who he wants to, 'ceptin' me.

MOSES. I'm sorry, Pharaoh. Will you let de Hebrews go?

PHARAOH. You heard my word. [AARON is lifting his rod again at a signal from MOSES.] Now, no more tricks or I'll —

MOSES. Oh, Lawd, you'll have to do it, I guess. Aaron, lift de rod.

[*There is a thunderclap, darkness and screams. The lights go up. Several of the younger men on the stage have fallen to the ground or are being held in the arms of the horrified elders.*]

PHARAOH. What have you done yere? Where's my boy?

[*Through the door come four men bearing a young man's body*]

FIRST OF THE FOUR MEN. King Pharaoh.

[PHARAOH drops into his chair, stunned, as the dead boy is brought to the throne]

PHARAOH [grief-stricken] Oh, my son, my fine son.

[*The COURTIERs look at him with mute appeal*]

MOSES. I'm sorry, Pharaoh, but you cain't fight de Lawd. Will you let his people go?

PHARAOH. Let them go

[*The lights go out. The CHOIR begins, "Mary, Don't You Weep," and continues until it is broken by the strains of "I'm Noways Weary and I'm Noways Tired." The latter is sung by many more voices than the former, and the cacophony ends as the latter grows in volume and the lights go up on the next scene.*]

SCENE IV.—*The CHILDREN OF ISRAEL are marching on the treadmill and now singing fortissimo. They are of all ages and most of them are ragged. The men have packs on their shoulders, one or two have hand carts. The line stretches across the stage. It is nearing twilight, and the faces of the assemblage are illumined by the rays of the late afternoon sun. The upper treadmill carries a gradually rising and falling middle distance past the marchers. The foot of a mountain appears; a trumpet call is heard as the foot of the mountain reaches stage center. The marchers halt. The picture now shows the mountain running up out of sight off right. The singing stops. A babel*

of "What's de matter?" "Why do we stop?" "Tain't sundown yet!" "What's happened?" "What's gorn' on?" "What are they blowin' for?" etc. Those looking ahead begin to murmur. "It's Moses," "Moses," "What's happened to him?" The others take up the repetition of "Moses," and MOSES enters, on the arm of AARON. He is now an old man, as is his brother, and he totters toward the center of the stage. Cries of "What's de matter, Moses?" "You ain't hurt, is you?" "Ain't that too bad?" etc. He slowly seats himself on the rock at the foot of the mountain.

AARON. How you feelin' now, brother?

MOSES. I'm so weary, Aaron. Seems like I was took all of a sudden.

AARON. Do we camp yere?

MOSES [pathetically]. No, you got to keep goin'.

AARON. But you cain't go no further to-night, brother.

MOSES. Dis never happened to me befo'.

A YOUNG WOMAN. But you's a ol' man, now, Father Moses. You cain't expect to go as fas' as we kin.

MOSES. But de Lawd said I'd do it. He said I was to show you de Promised Land. Fo'ty years, I bin leadin' you I led you out o' Egypt. I led you past Sinai, and through de wilderness. Oh, I cain't fall down on you now.

AARON. Le's res' yere fo' de night. Den we'll see how you feel in de mo'nin'.

MOSES. We tol' de scouts we'd meet 'em three miles furdur on. I hate fo' 'em to come back all dis way to report. 'Tis gettin' a little dark, ain't it?

AARON. It ain't dark, Brother.

MOSES. No, it's my eyes.

AARON. Maybe it's de dust.

MOSES. No, I jest cain't seem to see. Oh, Lawd, dey cain't have a blind man leadin' 'em! Where is you, Aaron?

AARON. I'se right yere, Moses.

MOSES. Do you think— [Pause.] Oh! Do you think it's de time He said?

AARON. How you mean, Moses?

[*Crowd look from one to another in wonder*]

MOSES. He said I could lead 'em to de Jordan, dat I'd see de Promised Land, and dat's all de further I could go, on account I broke de laws. Little while back I thought I did see a river ahead, and a pretty land on de other side. [Distant shouls "Hooray!"] "Yere dey are!" "Dey

traveled quick," etc.] Where's de young leader of de troops? Where's Joshua?

[The call "Joshua" is taken up by those on the right of the stage, followed almost immediately by "Yere he is!"] "Moses wants you!" etc. JOSHUA enters. He is a fine-looking Negro of about thirty.]

JOSHUA [going to MOSES' side]. Yes, suh.

MOSES. What's de shoutin' 'bout, Joshua?

JOSHUA. De scouts is back wid de news De Jordan is right ahead of us, and Jericho is jest on de other side. Moses, we're dere! [There are cries of "Hallelujah!"] "De Lawd be praised!" "Hooray!" "De Kingdom's comin'!" etc. With a considerable stir among the marchers, several new arrivals crowd in from right, shouting "Moses, we're dere!" JOSHUA seeing the newcomers.] Yere's de scouts.

[Three very ragged and dusty young men advance to MOSES.]

MOSES [as the shouting dies]. So it's de River Jordan?

FIRST SCOUT. Yes, suh.

MOSES. All we got to take is de city of Jericho

FIRST SCOUT. Yes, suh.

MOSES. Joshua, you got to take charge of de fightin' men, an' Aaron's gotta stay by de priests.

JOSHUA. What about you?

MOSES. You are leavin' me behind. Joshua, you gontar get de fightin' men together and take dat city befo' sundown.

JOSHUA. It's a big city, Moses, wid walls all 'round it. We ain't got enough men.

MOSES. You'll take it, Joshua.

JOSHUA. Yes, suh, but how?

MOSES. Move up to de walls wid our people Tell de priests to go wid you with de ram's horns You start marchin' 'roun' dem walls, and den——

JOSHUA. Yes, suh.

MOSES. De Lawd'll take charge, jest as He's took charge ev'y time I've led you against a city. He ain't never failed, has He?

SEVERAL VOICES. No, Moses.

[All raise their heads.]

MOSES. And He ain't goin' to fail us now. [He prays. All bow.] Oh, Lawd, I'm turnin' over our brave young men to you, caize I know you don' want me to lead 'em any further. [Rises.] Jest like you said, I've got to de Jordan but I can't git over it. An' yere dey goin' 'now to take de city of Jericho. In a little while dey'll

be marchin' 'roun' it. An' would you please be so good as to tell 'em what to do? Amen [To JOSHUA.] Go ahead. Ev'ybody follows Joshua now. Give de signal to move on wid ev'ything. [A trumpet is heard.] You camp fo' de night in de city of Jericho.

[MOSES seats himself on the rock.]

JOSHUA. Can't we help you, Moses?

MOSES. You go ahead. De Lawd's got his plans fo' me Soun' de signal to march. [Another trumpet call is heard. The company starts marching off. AARON lingers a moment.] Take care of de Ark of de Covenant, Aaron.

AARON. Yes, brother. Good-bye.

MOSES. Good-bye, Aaron. [The singing is resumed softly and dies away The last of the marchers has disappeared.] Yere I is, Lawd. De chillun is goin' into de Promised Land. [GOD enters from behind the hill. He walks to MOSES, puts His hands on his shoulders.] You's with me, ain't you, Lawd?

GOD. Co'se I is.

MOSES. Guess I'm through, Lawd, Jest like you said I'd be, when I broke de tablets of de law. De ol' machine's broke down.

GOD. Jest what was it I said to you, Moses? Do you remember?

MOSES. You said I couldn't go into de Promised Land.

GOD. Dat's so. But dat ain't all dey was to it.

MOSES. How you mean, Lawd?

GOD. Moses, you been a good man. You been a good leader of my people. You got me angry once, dat's true And when you anger me I'm a God of Wrath. But I never meant you wasn't gontar have what was comin' to you An' I ain't goin' to do you out of it, Moses. It's jest de country acrost de River dat you ain't gontar enter. You gontar have a Promised Land I been gettin' it ready fo' you, fo' a long time. Kin you stand up?

MOSES [rising, with GOD'S help]. Yes, suh, Lawd.

GOD. Come on, I'm goin' to show it to you. We goin' up dis hill to see it. Moses, it's a million times nicer dan de Land of Canaan

[They start up the hill.]

MOSES. I cain't hardly see.

GOD. Don't worry. Dat's jest caize you so old.

[They take a step or two up the hill, when MOSES stops suddenly.]

MOSES. Oh!

GOD. What's de matter?

MOSES. We cain't be doin' dis!

GOD. Co'se we kin!

MOSES. But I fo'got! I fo'got about Joshua and de fightin' men!

GOD. How about 'em?

MOSES. Dey're marchin' on Jericho. I tol' 'em to march aroun' de walls and den de Lawd would be dere to tell 'em what to do.

GOD. Dat's all right. He's dere.

MOSES. Den who's dis helpin' me up de hill?

GOD. Yo' faith, yo' God.

MOSES. And is you over dere helpin' them too, Lawd? Is you goin' to tell dem poor chillun what to do?

GOD. Co'se I is. Listen, Moses. I'll show you how I'm helpin' dem.

[From the distance comes the blast of the rams' horns, the sound of crumbling walls, a roar, and a moment's silence. The CHOIR begins "Joshua Fit de Battle of Jericho" and continues through the rest of the scene.]

MOSES. You did it, Lawd! You've taken it! Listen to de chillun!—dey's in de Land of Canaan at last! You's de only God dey ever was, ain't you, Lawd?

GOD [quietly]. Come on, ol' man.

[They continue up the hill. The stage is darkened.]

MR. DESHEE [in the dark]. But even dat scheme didn' work. Caize after dey got into the Land of Canaan dey went to de dogs again And dey went into bondage again Only dis time it was in de City of Babylon.

[The CHOIR, which has been singing "Cain't Stay Away," stops as the next scene begins.]

SCENE V.—Under a low ceiling is a room vaguely resembling a Negro night club in New Orleans. Two or three long tables run across the room, and on the left is a table on a dais with a gaudy canopy above it. The table bears a card marked "Reserved for King and guests."

Flashy young men and women are seated at the tables. About a dozen couples are dancing in the foreground to the tune of a jazz orchestra. The costumes are what would be worn at a Negro masquerade to represent the debauchees of Babylon.

FIRST MAN. When did yuh git to Babylon?

SECOND MAN. I jes' got in yesterday.

THIRD MAN [dancing]. How do you like dis baby, Joe?

FOURTH MAN. Hot damn! She could be de King's pet!

A WOMAN. Anybody seen my papa?

THIRD MAN. Don' fo'git de dance at de High Priest's home to-morrow.

[The dance stops as a bugle call is heard. Enter Master of Ceremonies.]

MASTER OF CEREMONIES. Stop! To-night's guest of honor, de King of Babylon an' party of five.

[Enter the KING and five girls. The KING has on an imitation ermine cloak over his conventional evening clothes and wears a diamond tiara. All rise as the KING enters, and sing, "Hail, de King of Bab—Bab—Baby—lon."]

KING. Wait till you see de swell table I got. [He crosses the stage to his table. The girls are jabbering.] Remind me to send you a peck of rubies in de mo'nin'.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES. Ev'nin', King!

KING. Good ev'nin'. How's de party goin'?

MASTER OF CEREMONIES. Bes' one we ever had in Babylon, King.

KING. Any Jew boys yere?

MASTER OF CEREMONIES [indicating some of the others]. Lot o' dem yere. I kin go git mo' if you want 'em.

KING. I was really refrerrin' to de High Priest. He's a 'tic'lar frien' o' mine an' he might drop in. You know what he look like?

MASTER OF CEREMONIES. No, suh, but I'll be on de look-out fo' him.

KING. O.K. Now le's have a li'l good time

MASTER OF CEREMONIES. Yes, suh [To the orchestra] Let 'er go, boys.

[The music begins, waiters appear with food and great urns painted gold and silver, from which they pour out wine for the guests. The MASTER OF CEREMONIES exits. The KING'S dancing-girls go to the middle of the floor, and start to dance. The KING puts his arms about the waists of two girls, and draws them to him.]

KING. Hot damn! Da's de way! Let de Jew boys see our gals kin dance better'n dere's. [There is an ad lib. babel of "Da's de truth, King!" "I don' know—we got some good gals, too!" etc.] Dey ain' nobody in de worl' like Babylon gals.

[The dancing grows faster, the watchers keep time with handclaps. The door at the left opens suddenly, and

the PROPHET, a patriarchal, ragged figure, enters. He looks belligerently about the room, and is followed almost immediately by the MASTER OF CEREMONIES.]

PROPHET. Stop!

[The music and the dancers halt.]

KING. What's the idea, bustin' up my party?

MASTER OF CEREMONIES. He said he was expected, King. I thought mebbe he was de—

KING. Did you think he was de High Priest of de Hebrews? Why, he's jest an' ol' bum! T'row dis ole bum out o' yere! De High Priest is a fashion plate. T'row dis ole bum out o' yere!

PROPHET. Stop!

[Those who have been advancing to seize him stop, somewhat amused.]

KING. Wait a minute. Don't throw him out. Let's see what he has to say.

PROPHET. Listen to me, King of Babylon! I've been sent yere by de Lawd God Jehovah. Don't you dare lay a hand on de Prophet!

KING. Oh, you're a prophet, is yuh? Well, you know we don't keer much fo' prophets in dis part of de country.

PROPHET. Listen to me, sons and daughters of Babylon! Listen, you children of Israel dat's given yo'selves over to de evil ways of yo' oppressors! You're all wallowin' like hogs in sin, an' de wrath of Gawd ain't goin' to be held back much longer! I'm tellin' you, repent befo' it's too late. Repent befo' Jehovah casts down de same fire dat burned up Sodom and Gomorrah. Repent befo' de—

[During this scene yells increase as the PROPHET continues. The HIGH PRIEST enters left. He is a fat voluptuary, elaborately clothed in brightly colored robes. He walks in hand in hand with a gaudily dressed "chippy."]

HIGH PRIEST *[noise stops]*. Whoa, dere! What you botherin' the King fo'?

PROPHET *[wheeling]*. And you, de High Priest of all Irsael, walkin' de town wid a dirty li'l tramp

KING. Seems to be a frien' o' yours, Jake.

HIGH PRIEST *[crossing to the KING with his girl]*. Aw, he's one of dem wild men, like Jeremiah and Isaiah. Don't let him bother you none.

[Pushes PROPHET aside and goes to KING'S table.]

PROPHET. You consort with harlots, an' yo' pollution in the sight of the Lawd. De Lawd God's goin' to smite you down,

jest as he's goin' to smite down all dis wicked world!

[Grabs HIGH PRIEST and turns him around.]

KING *[angrily against the last part of the preceding speech]*. Wait a minute. I'm getting tired of this. Don't throw him out. Jest kill him!

[There is the sound of a shot. The PROPHET falls.]

PROPHET. Smite 'em down, Lawd, like you said. Dey ain't a decent person left in de whole world.

[He dies. MASTER OF CEREMONIES, revolver in hand, looks down at the PROPHET.]

MASTER OF CEREMONIES. He's dead, King.

KING. Some of you boys take him out *[A couple of young men come from the background and walk off with the body.]*

HIGH PRIEST. Don't know whether you should'a done that, King.

KING. Why not?

HIGH PRIEST. I don't know whether de Lawd would like it.

KING. Now, listen, Jake. You know yo' Lawd ain't payin' much attention to dis man's town. Except fo' you boys, it's tho'lly protected by de Gods o' Babylon.

HIGH PRIEST. I know, but jest de same—

KING. Look yere, s'pose I give you a couple hund'ed pieces of silver. Don't you s'pose you kin arrange to persuade yo' Gawd to keep his hands off?

HIGH PRIEST *[ougly]*. Well of co'se we could try. I dunno how well it would work.

[As the HIGH PRIEST speaks, the KING clasps his hands. MASTER OF CEREMONIES enters with bag of money.]

KING. Yere it is.

HIGH PRIEST *[smiling]*. I guess we kin square things up. *[He prays—whiningly]* Oh Lawd, please forgive my po' frien' de King o' Babylon. He didn't know what he was doin' an'—

[There is a clap of thunder, darkness for a second. The lights go up and GOD is standing in the center of the room.]

GOD *[in a voice of doom]*. Dat's about enough. *[The guests are horrified]* I's stood all I kin from you. I tried to make dis a good earth. I helped Adam, I helped Noah, I helped Moses, an' I helped David. What's de grain dat grew out of de seed? Sin! Nothin' but sin throughout de whole world. I've given you ev'y chance. I sent

you warriors and prophets. I've given you laws and commandments, an' you betrayed my trust. Ev'ything I've given you, you've defiled. Ev'y time I've fo'given you, you've mocked me. An' now de High Priest of Israel tries to trifle wid my name. Listen, you chillun of darkness, yo' Lawd is tired. I'm tired of de struggle to make you worthy of de breath I gave you. I put you in bondage ag'in to cure you an' yo' worse dan you was amongst de flesh pots of Egypt. So I renounce you. Listen to the words of yo' Lawd God Jehovah, for dey is de last words yo' ever hear from me. I repent of dese people dat I have made and I will deliver dem no more.

[*There is darkness and cries of "Mercy!" "Have pity, Lawd!" "We didn' mean it, Lawd!" "Forgive us, Lawd!" etc. The CHOIR sings "Death's Gwintery Lay His Cold Icy Hands on Me" until the lights go up on the next scene.*]

SCENE VI.—GOD is writing at His desk.

Outside, past the door, goes HOSEA, a dignified old man, with wings like JACOB'S. God, sensing his presence, looks up from the paper He is examining, and follows him out of the corner of His eye. Angrily He resumes His work as soon as Hosea is out of sight. There is a knock on the door.

GOD. Who is it? [GABRIEL enters.]

GABRIEL. It's de delegation, Lawd.

GOD [wearily]. Tell 'em to come in.

[ABRAHAM, ISAAC, JACOB, and MOSES enter.] Good mo'nin, gen'lmen.

THE VISITORS. Good mo'nin', Lawd.

GOD. What kin I do for you?

MOSES. You know, Lawd. Go back to our people.

GOD [shaking His head]. Ev'ry day fo' hund'eds of years you boys have come in to ask dat same thing. De answer is still de same. I repented of de people I made. I said I would deliver dem no more. Good mo'nin', gen'lmen. [*The four visitors rise and exeunt. GABRIEL remains.*] Gabe, why do dey do it?

GABRIEL. I 'spect dey think you gonter change yo' mind.

GOD [sadly]. Dey don' know me. [*HOSEA again passes the door. His shadow shows on wall. GABRIEL is perplexed, as he watches. GOD again looks surreptitiously over His shoulder at the passing figure.*] I don' like dat, either.

GABRIEL. What, Lawd?

GOD. Dat man.

GABRIEL. He's jest a prophet, Lawd. Dat's jest old Hosea. He jest come up the other day.

GOD. I know. He's one of de few dat's come up yere since I was on de earth last time.

GABRIEL. Ain' been annoyin' you, has he?

GOD. I don' like him walkin' past de door.

GABRIEL. All you got to do is tell him to stop, Lawd.

GOD. Yes, I know. I don' want to tell him. He's got a right up yere or he wouldn' be yere.

GABRIEL. You needn' be bothered by him hangin' aroun' de office all de time. I'll tell 'im. Who's he think he—

GOD. No, Gabe I find it ain't in me to stop him. I sometimes jest wonder why he don' jest come in an' say hello.

GABRIEL. You want him to do that?

[*He moves as if to go to the door.*]

GOD. He never has spoke to me, and if he don't wanta come in, I ain't gonter make him. But dat ain't de worst of it, Gabriel.

GABRIEL. What is, Lawd?

GOD. Ev'y time he goes past de door I hears a voice.

GABRIEL. One of de angels?

GOD [shaking His head]. It's from de earth. It's a man.

GABRIEL. You mean he's prayin'?

GOD. No, he ain't exactly prayin'. He's jest talkin' in such a way dat I got to hssen His name is Hezdrel.

GABRIEL. Is he on de books?

GOD. No, not yet. But ev'y time dat Hosea goes past I hear dat voice.

GABRIEL. Den tell it to stop.

GOD. I find I don' want to do that, either. Dey's gettin' ready to take Jerusalem down dere. Dat was my big fine city. Dis Hezdrel, he's jest one of de defenders. [*Suddenly and passionately, almost wildly.*] I ain't comin' down. You hear me? I ain't comin' down [*He looks at GABRIEL.*] Go ahead, Gabriel. 'Tend to yo' chores. I'm gonter keep wukkin' yere.

GABRIEL. I hates to see you feelin' like dis, Lawd.

GOD. Dat's all right. Even bein' Gawd ain't a bed of roses. [GABRIEL exits. HOSEA'S shadow is on the wall. For a second HOSEA hesitates. GOD looks at the wall. Goes to window.] I hear you. I know yo' fightin' bravely, but I ain't comin' down. Oh, why don' you leave me alone? You know you ain't talkin' to me. Is you

talkin' to me? I cain't stand yo' talkin' dat way. I kin only hear part of what yo' sayin', and it puzzles me. Don' you know you cain't puzzle God? [A pause. Then, tenderly.] Do you want me to come down dere ve'y much? You know I said I wouldn't come down? [Fiercely.] Why don' he answer me a little? [With clenched fists, looks down through the window.] Listen! I'll tell you what I'll do I ain't goin' to promise you anythin', and I ain't goin' to do nothin' to help you. I'm jest feelin' a little low, an' I'm only comin' down to make myself feel a little better, dat's all

[The stage is darkened. CHOIR begins "A Blind Man Stood in de Middle of de Road," and continues until the lights go up on the next scene.]

SCENE VII.—It is a shadowed corner beside the walls of the temple in Jerusalem. The light of camp fires flickers on the figure of HEZDREL, who was ADAM in Part I. He stands in the same position ADAM held when first discovered but in his right hand is a sword, and his left is in a sling. Around him are several prostrate bodies. Pistol and cannon shots, then a trumpet call. Six young men enter from left in command of a CORPORAL. They are all armed.

CORPORAL. De fightin's stopped fo' de night, Hezdrel

HEZDREL. Yes?

CORPORAL. Dey're goin' to begin ag'in at cockcrow. [Man enters, crosses the stage and exits.] Herod say he's goin' to take de temple to-morrow, burn de books and de Ark of de Covenant, and put us all to de sword.

HEZDREL. Yo' ready, ain't you?

EVERYBODY. Yes, Hezdrel.

HEZDREL. Did de food get in through de hole in de city wall?

[Two SOLDIERS enter, cross the stage and exeunt.]

CORPORAL. Yessuh, we's goin' back to pass it out now.

HEZDREL. Good. Any mo' of our people escape to-day?

CORPORAL. Ol' Herod's got de ol' hole covered up now, but fifteen of our people got out a new one we made.

[Other SOLDIERS enter, cross the stage and exeunt.]

HEZDREL. Good. Take dese yere

wounded men back and git 'em took care of.

CORPORAL. Yes, suh.

[They pick up the bodies on the ground and carry them offstage as HEZDREL speaks.]

HEZDREL. So dey gonter take de temple in de mo'nin? We'll be waitin' for 'em. Jest remember, boys, when dey kill us we leap out of our skins, right into de lap of God.

[The MEN disappear with the wounded; from the deep shadow upstage comes God.]

GOD. Hello, Hezdrel—Adam.

HEZDREL [rubbing his forehead]. Who is you?

GOD. Me? I'm jest an ol' preacher, from back in de hills.

HEZDREL. What you doin' yere?

GOD. I heard you boys was fightin'. I jest wanted to see how it was goin'.

HEZDREL. Well, it ain't goin' so well.

GOD. Dey got you skeered, huh?

HEZDREL. Look yere, who is you, a spy in my brain?

GOD. Cain't you see I's one of yo' people?

HEZDREL. Listen, Preacher, we ain't skeered. We's gonter be killed, but we ain't skeered.

GOD. I's glad to hear dat. Kin I ask you a question, Hezdrel?

HEZDREL. What is it?

GOD. How is it you is so brave?

HEZDREL. Caize we got faith, dat's why

GOD. Faith? In who?

HEZDREL. In our dear Lawd God.

GOD. But God say he abandoned ev' one down yere.

HEZDREL. Who say dat? Who dare say dat of the Lawd God of Hosea?

GOD. De God of Hosea?

HEZDREL. You heard me. Look yere, you is a spy in my brain!

GOD. No, I ain't, Hezdrel. I'm jest puzzled. You ought to know dat.

HEZDREL. How come you so puzzled 'bout de God of Hosea?

GOD. I don' know. Maybe I jest don' hear things. You see, I live 'way back in de hills.

HEZDREL. What you want find out?

GOD. Ain't de God of Hosea de same Jehovah dat was de God of Moses?

HEZDREL [contemptuously]. No. Dat ol' God of wrath and vengeance? We have de God dat Hosea preached to us. He's de one God.

GOD. Who's he?

HEZDREL [*reverently*]. De God of mercy.

GOD. Hezdrel, don' you think dey must be de same God?

HEZDREL. I don' know. I ain't bothered to think much about it. Maybe dey is. Maybe our God is de same ol' God. I guess jest got tired of his appearance dat ol' way.

GOD. What you mean, Hezdrel?

HEZDREL. Oh, dat ol' God dat walked de earth in de shape of a man. I guess he lived with man so much dat all he seen was de sins in man. Dat's what made him de God of wrath and vengeance. Co'se he made Hosea. An' Hosea never would a found what mercy was unless dere was a little of it in God, too. Anyway, he ain't a fearsome God no mo'. Hosea showed us dat.

GOD. How you s'pose Hosea found dat mercy?

HEZDREL. De only way he could find it. De only way I found it. De only way any one could find it.

GOD. How's dat?

HEZDREL. Through sufferin'.

GOD [*after a pause*]. What if dey kill you in de mo'nin', Hezdrel?

HEZDREL. If dey do, dey do. Dat's all.

GOD. Herod say he's goin' to burn de temple—

HEZDREL. So he say.

GOD. And burn de Ark an' de books. Den dat's de end of de books, ain't it?

HEZDREL [*buoyantly*]. What you mean? If he burns dem things in dere? Naw. Dem's jest copies.

GOD. Where is de others?

HEZDREL [*tapping his head*]. Dey's a set in yere. Fifteen got out through de hole in the city wall to-day. A hundred and fifty got out durin' de week. Each of 'em is a set of de books. Dey's scattered safe all over de countryside now, jest waitin' to git pen and paper fo' to put 'em down ag'in.

GOD [*proudly*]. Dey cain't lick you, kin dey, Hezdrel?

HEZDREL [*smiling*]. I know dey cain't. [*Trumpet*] You better get out o' yere, Preacher, if you wanta carry de news to yo' people. It'll soon be daylight.

GOD. I'm goin'. [*He takes a step up-stage and stops.*] Want me to take any message?

HEZDREL. Tell de people in de hills dey ain't nobody like de Lawd God of Hosea.

GOD. I will. If dey kill you to-morrow

I'll bet dat God of Hosea'll be waitin' for you.

HEZDREL. I *know* he will.

GOD [*quietly*]. Thank you, Hezdrel.

HEZDREL. Fo' what?

GOD. Fo' tellin' me so much. You see I been so far away, I guess I was jest way behin' de times.

[*He exits. Pause, then trumpet sounds.*]

HEZDREL *paces back and forth once or twice. Another young SOLDIER appears. Other men enter and stand grouped about HEZDREL.*

SECOND OFFICER [*excitedly*]. De cock's jest crowed, Hezdrel. Dey started de fightin' ag'in.

HEZDREL. We's ready for 'em. Come on, boys [*From the darkness upstage comes another group of soldiers*] Dis is de day dey say dey'll git us. Le's fight till de last man goes. What d'you say?

CORPORAL. Le's go, Hezdrel!

HEZDREL [*calling left*]. Give 'em ev'y-thing, boys!

[*There is a movement toward the left, a bugle call and the sound of distant battle. The lights go out. The CHOIR is heard singing, "March On," triumphantly. They continue to sing after the lights go up on the next scene.*]

SCENE VIII—*It is the same setting as the Fish Fry Scene in Part I. The same angels are present but the CHOIR, instead of marching, is standing in a double row on an angle upstage right. GOD is seated in an armchair near center. He faces the audience. As the CHOIR continues to sing, GABRIEL enters, unnoticed by the chattering angels. He looks at GOD, who is staring thoughtfully toward the audience.*

GABRIEL. You look a little pensive, Lawd. [*GOD nods his head.*] Have a seegar, Lawd?

GOD. No thanks, Gabriel.

[*GABRIEL goes to the table, accepts a cup of custard; chats with the angel behind the table for a moment as he sips, puts the cup down and returns to the side of GOD.*]

GABRIEL. You look awful pensive, Lawd. You been sittin' yere, lookin' dis way, an awful long time. Is it somethin' serious, Lawd?

GOD. Very serious, Gabriel.

GABRIEL [*awed by His tone*]. Lawd, is de time come for me to blow?

GOD. Not yet, Gabriel. I'm just thinkin'.
GABRIEL. What about, Lawd?

[*Puts up hand Singing stops.*]

GOD 'Bout somethin' de boy tol' me.
Somethin' 'bout Hosea, and himself. How
dey foun' somethin'.

GABRIEL. What, Lawd?

GOD Mercy. [*A pause*] Through suf-
ferin', he said.

GABRIEL Yes, Lawd.

GOD. I'm tryin' to find it, too It's aw-
ful impo'tant It's awful impo'tant to all
de people on my earth Did he mean dat
even God must suffer?

[*GOD continues to look out over the
audience for a moment and then a
look of surprise comes into His face.
He sighs In the distance a voice cries.*]

THE VOICE. Oh, look at him! Oh, look,
dey goin' to make him carry it up dat high
hill! Dey goin' to nail him to it! Oh, dat's
a terrible burden for one man to carry!

[*GOD rises and murmurs "Yes!" as if
in recognition. The heavenly beings
have been watching Him closely, and
now, seeing Him smile gently, draw
back, relieved All the angels burst into*

*"Hallelujah, King Jesus." GOD con-
tinues to smile as the lights fade away.
The singing becomes fortissimo.*]

CURTAIN

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THE SILVER CORD

(1926)

BY

SIDNEY HOWARD

CHARACTERS

MRS PHELPS

DAVID, *her son*

ROBERT, *her younger son*

CHRISTINA, *David's wife*

HESTER, *Robert's fiancée*

A Maid

The action occurs in the present day in Mrs. Phelps's house, which is situated in one of the more mature residential developments of an eastern American city

SIDNEY HOWARD

ONE OF THE MOST EXPERT and intelligent American playwrights of the 1920's and 1930's was Sidney Howard, whom some critics probably underrated because of his indifference to experimental dramatic forms and controversial social themes. A few years ago an irritating cliché of dramatic criticism was the phrase "the white hope of American drama" with its implication that the theatre was in such a parlous state that it could be saved from oblivion only by revivifying plays of economic or sociological import by Odets or Lawson, some odd bit of rapturous juvenility by Saroyan, or novel productions by Orson Welles. On the contrary, the American theatre has never been so alive and adult as it has been during the past twenty years.

Provincial Broadwayites who regard the drama as a box-office commodity to be gambled with in a restricted area on Manhattan Island often grow pessimistic and weep into their beer over the decline of the theatre. (*The Fabulous Invalid*!) As a matter of fact the decentralization of the American theatre is a hopeful sign: the Broadway commercial playhouse is no more the American theatre than New York is America. And never have there been so many men and women giving rich talent and genius to the theatre. How can one speak lugubriously of the "white hope" (there is something low even in hope, says Emerson) when America's plays in recent years have been written by Howard, Rice, Anderson, O'Neill, Hellman, Kingsley, Kaufman, Sherwood, Behrman—to mention only a few?

Although Howard was not an innovator in technique, he did help dispose of some old taboos in regard to subject matter. His chief claim to eminence, however, is that during two decades when the cinema threatened to smother the real theatre, he wrote a number of thoughtful dramas about credible human beings, dramas that gave, and still give, adults the kind of emotional and intellectual exhilaration that only a well-written and well-produced stage play can give. He was a careful craftsman and built his plays from proper blueprints, but his chief interest was the correct one of characterization. When we remember Howard's own bold convictions and activities, we are struck by the objectivity of his plays; although his characters occasionally discuss some pertinent contemporary issue, Howard never stops the play to broadcast a social message.

Sidney Howard was born in Oakland, California, in 1891, the son of parents of more than average wealth and culture. After graduating from the University of California in 1915, he enrolled in Professor Baker's Workshop at Harvard. Before America entered the war in 1917, he joined an ambulance unit in Greece, and later served in France, where he rose to a captaincy in the Air Force. When the war ended, he became a journalist, but after 1921 gave his talent to stage and screen. In the last years of his life he demonstrated his versatility by dramatizing Humphrey Cobb's bitter novel *Paths of Glory*, by manufacturing the scenario of *Gone with the Wind*, by writing a provocative original drama *The Ghost of Yankee Doodle*, and by participating actively in such organizations as the Dramatists' Guild and the Playwrights' Company. He was killed in an accident on his farm just a few days before the outbreak of the war in 1939.

His skillful adaptations of foreign plays reveal his dramatic genius almost as clearly as do his original plays: from the French, *The Late Christopher Bean*, by René Fauchois; *S. S. Tenacity* and *Michel Auclair*, by Charles Vildrac; *The Last Night of Don Juan*, by Edmond Rostand; *Marseilles*, by Marcel Pagnol; *Ode to Liberty*, by Michel Duran; from the German, *Morals*, by Ludwig Thoma; from the Hungarian, *Olympia*, by Ferenc Molnar, and *Sancho Panza*, by Melchior Lengyel—the list is long and distinguished.

Of his original plays, four at least are sure of places in the repertoire of the American

National Theatre—whenever it arrives. *They Knew What They Wanted* is a modern version of the famous Paolo and Francesca love-story, which had already been treated in a conventional manner by Boker, Phillips, and d'Annunzio. Howard places the setting in California, with which he is familiar, and provides a modern and audacious ending. When the play was awarded the Pulitzer Prize, there were many complaints, for Victorianism still lingered in the American theatre and in American dramatic criticism. The uneuphemistic language and frank treatment of sex pained the genteel. In 1926 the Theatre Guild produced two of Howard's best plays, *Ned McCobb's Daughter* and *The Silver Cord*. *Ned McCobb's Daughter* is distinguished by its delineation of New England characters; Carrie McCobb is a notable addition to the gallery of American dramatic portraits. *Yellow Jack* (1928), inspired by Paul De Kruif's *Microbe Hunters*, is a gripping and intelligent play with the mosquito as villain and science sharing honors with the intrepid physicians and soldiers as hero; nevertheless, human values dominate, and *Yellow Jack* is no thesis play.

The Silver Cord is a masterpiece, one of the finest serious American plays. It does not "date" with the passing years; its reputation increases, and it is the most anthologized of American plays. Its bold theme marks the passing of one of the most ancient and tenacious of taboos—that mother-love is too sacred for scrutiny and analysis. Mrs. Phelps, the protagonist, has all the qualities that make the professional mother dangerous and revolting. She deceives herself as well as her sons concerning the exact nature of her possessive love, but her daughter-in-law, an unsentimental scientist (it was shrewd of Howard to introduce a biologist into the family), relentlessly exposes her abnormality and its causes. Structurally the play is flawless; the exposition is natural, the tempo is swift, the sense of horror grows throughout the play to the powerful final curtain. The dialogue is clear and crisp, there are no superfluous servants or house-guests to clutter, no laborious small-talk to establish the feeling of reality. No other American play has hit a harder blow at sheer sentimentality. It is honest and intelligent and yet not intellectual; it is a work of art but not arty; it is literature and not merely pretentiously literary.

Two objections have been raised against *The Silver Cord*, both with some justification. One is that the two sons are hardly worth fighting for, and consequently that the central conflict (between the mother and the two girls) loses in dramatic power. The other criticism is that the dramatist is not fair to Mrs. Phelps, that he is rabidly partisan and makes her a fanatastic caricature, a "moral gargoyle." He arouses our sympathy too easily with the girls, stacks the cards mercilessly against Mrs. Phelps. In the original production of *The Silver Cord*, both on the stage and on the screen, this possible flaw disappeared in the expert acting of Laura Hope Crews, who gave a touch of wit and comic absurdity to the role, and who made the most of Mrs. Phelps's beauty and charm. The contrast between the mother's surface graciousness and her near-perversion intensifies the horror. In defense of the dramatist it should be pointed out that he allows her to state her case with considerable sincerity and persuasion in the last act, and that only Christina's coldly scientific dissection of the defense prevents some readers or members of the audience from shifting their sympathies to the "self-sacrificing" mother. There is no compromise in the ending. Only the escape of David and the utter triviality of Robert keep the close of the drama from being almost unbearably poignant.

THE SILVER CORD

ACT ONE

A living-room, built and decorated in the best manner of 1905, and cluttered with the souvenirs of maternal love, European travel, and an orthodox enthusiasm for the arts. There is a vast quantity of Braun Clement and Arundel Society reproduction of the Renaissance Italian masters. The piano features Grieg, Sibelius, and Macdowell. A door gives on a spacious hallway. Windows look out over a snow-covered garden.

When the scene opens, *HESTER* is discovered amidst the rotogravure sections of the Sunday papers. She is a lovely, frail phantom of a girl with a look of recent illness about her. She wears the simplest and most charming of house frocks. The doorbell rings. There is the least sound of commotion in the hall. *HESTER* looks up. In a moment, the doors open and *DAVID* enters. He is a personable young man, well enough dressed, and a gentleman. He belongs to the somewhat stolid or unimaginative type which is generally characterized, in this country, as "steady." His smile is slow and wide, his speech slow and to the point. His principal quality is a rare and most charming amiability, but he is clearly lacking in many of the more sophisticated perceptions and he is clearly of a conventional bent in his attitude toward life. The door, as he leaves it open, shows *CHRISTINA*, in the act of shedding her fur coat with the assistance of the maid. She, as *DAVID'S* wife, presents something of a contrast to her husband. She is tall, slender, grave, honest, shy, intelligent, most trusting and, when need be, courageous. She has a scientist's detachment and curiosity, and these serve oddly to emphasize a very individual womanliness which is far removed from the accepted feminine. One suspects that, where *DAVID* is stubborn, she is open-minded, where he is blind,

she is amazingly clear-sighted. That is the difference which makes one the complement of the other. The common quality which brought them together in the holy bonds of matrimony is their mutual candor. *DAVID* is incapable of subtlety; *CHRISTINA* will not bother with it. The result is congeniality. So much for *DAVID* and *CHRISTINA*. *HESTER* rises.

HESTER Hello!

DAVID. Eh? . . . Oh, I beg your pardon! The maid said there wasn't anybody home.

HESTER You're David, aren't you? [*She advances to meet him*] I'm Hester.

DAVID. You're not! [*He goes quickly toward her and shakes hands as CHRISTINA enters*] Well! [*He turns; smiling broadly to CHRISTINA*] Look, Chris! Here's Hester who's going to marry my brother Rob.

CHRISTINA [*with the most charming warmth*] Isn't she lovely!

HESTER Oh, I think you're dears, both of you! [*The two women kiss*] Aren't you hours ahead of time?

CHRISTINA. We caught the one o'clock instead of whatever the other was.

DAVID Where are Mother and Rob?

HESTER. Your mother's drinking tea at . . . Aren't there some people named Donohue?

DAVID Great friends of Mother's. Why aren't you there?

HESTER. Not allowed. I'm having a breakdown.

CHRISTINA Why don't you telephone her, Dave? She'll want to know that you're here.

DAVID. She'll find out soon enough. Where's Rob?

HESTER. Gone skating.

DAVID [*turns to the window*]. On the pond? No. There's no one on the pond.

HESTER. Somewhere else, then.

CHRISTINA [*hovering over the fire*].

Dave, do you suppose I could get some tea? I'm half frozen.

DAVID. Of course you can. I'll order it.
[*To HESTER*] What's the maid's name?
HESTER. Delia.

DAVID. Delia. It used to be Hannah, and before that it was Stacia, who got married to our old coachman, Fred. Well, it's not so bad to be home again!

[*ROBERT enters, very much dressed for skating, and carrying his skates. ROBERT only faintly suggests his brother. He is more volatile, and stammers slightly.*]

ROBERT [*a shout*]. Dave!

DAVID. Hello, Robert! [*They shake hands vigorously*] We were just wondering when you'd come in, and Hester said . . .

HESTER [*speaking at the same time*]. Wasn't it lucky I was here to receive them?

ROBERT [*as he shakes CHRISTINA'S hand*]. I think this is simply magnificent! [*As he strips off his skating things*] How did you get here so soon? We weren't expecting you for . . .

DAVID. We caught the one o'clock.

CHRISTINA. Just.

DAVID. We thought it would be fun to surprise you.

ROBERT. Mother'll drop dead in her tracks

DAVID. How is she?

ROBERT. Oh, she's in fine form . . . [*To CHRISTINA*] You'll adore her.

CHRISTINA. I'm sure I shall.

ROBERT. She is marvellous, isn't she, Hester?

HESTER. She is indeed. . . . Perfectly marvellous!

DAVID. Mother's immense. And I'm glad, for Chris's sake, that things worked out this way. First Chris sees the old house. Then she meets Hester. Then Rob comes breezing in full of health. And, last of all, Mother comes.

ROBERT. It's like a play. I always want things to be like a play. Don't you, Hester?

HESTER. I dunno. Why?

ROBERT. Don't you, Christina? [*But he does not wait for an answer—habit with him in his better humored moments*] You have to tell us you like this old house, you know. Mother and I wouldn't change it for the world.

CHRISTINA [*smiling as she looks around her*]. How about that tea, Dave?

DAVID. Excuse me, Chris! I forgot. . . .

CHRISTINA [*to ROBERT*]. I've been here three minutes, and I'm ordering food already!

ROBERT. Well, let me "do the honors."

DAVID. Honors, hell! Isn't Julia still in the kitchen?

ROBERT. Sure she is.

DAVID. Well, I must see Julia!

[*He goes*]

ROBERT [*to CHRISTINA*]. Julia'll drop dead, too. I expect half the town'll be dropping dead. Dave's always been the Greek god around this place, you know.

HESTER. He should be.

ROBERT. I can remember the time I didn't think so.

[*A door slams. MRS. PHELPS is heard talking in the hall, excitedly*]

MRS. PHELPS. Those bags! Have they come, Delia?

HESTER. Here's your mother now.

CHRISTINA. So soon? How nice!

[*MRS. PHELPS enters. She is pretty, distinguished, stoutish, soft, disarming and, in short, has everything one could possibly ask, including a real gift for looking years younger than her age, which is well past fifty. She boasts a reasonable amount of conventional culture, no great amount of intellect, a superabundant vitality, perfect health, and a prattling spirit. At the moment she is still wearing her hat and furs and she looks wildly about her*]

MRS. PHELPS. Dave! Dave, boy! Where are you, Dave? Where are you? It's Mother, Dave! [*She does not see him in the room, and she is already turning back to the hall without a word or a look for anybody else*] Where are you, Dave? Come here this minute! Don't you hear me, Dave? It's Mother! [*DAVID appears in the hall*] Oh, Dave!

DAVID [*a little abashed by the vigor of this welcome*]. Hello, Mother.

MRS. PHELPS. Dave, is it really you?

DAVID. Guess it must be, Mother.

MRS. PHELPS. Dave, dear!

[*She envelops as much of him as she can possibly reach.*]

DAVID [*prying loose*]. Well! Glad to see us, Mother?

MRS. PHELPS. Glad!

DAVID. You certainly seem to be glad . . . But you haven't spoken to . . .

[*CHRISTINA, at his look, steps forward*]

MRS. PHELPS [*still not seeing her*]. To think I wasn't here!

DAVID. We're ahead of time, you know. Christina . . .

MRS. PHELPS. I must have known somehow. Something just made me put

down my cup and rush home But you're not looking badly. You *are* well, aren't you? I do believe you've put on weight. You must be careful, though, not to take cold this weather. Was the crossing awfully rough? Were you seasick? You haven't been working too hard, have you, Dave, boy?

CHRISTINA [*unable to stand on one foot any longer*]. He hasn't been working at all. Not for weeks!

MRS PHELPS [*she turns at the sound of the strange voice*]. Eh? Oh!

DAVID I've been trying to make you take notice of Christina, Mother.

MRS. PHELPS [*with the utmost warmth*]. Oh, my dear Christina, I am sorry! [*She kisses CHRISTINA on both cheeks*] Seeing this big boy again quite took me off my feet Let me look at you, now. Why, Dave, she's splendid Perfectly splendid! I always knew Dave would choose only the best Didn't I always say so, Dave, boy? [*Which takes her back to DAVID*] Dave, you *have* been working too hard. I don't like those circles under your eyes.

DAVID Nonsense, Mother!

CHRISTINA. I think he looks pretty well

MRS. PHELPS. But only pretty well. I can't help worrying about these big boys of mine. [*Her emotion stops her She turns gallantly to ROBERT.*] Did you skate, Rob?

ROBERT. As a matter of fact, I couldn't. They've been cutting ice on the pond and it's full of holes.

MRS. PHELPS. I must have signs put up tomorrow. Remember that, everybody. If any of you do go out in this freezing cold, don't take the short cut across the pond . . . Dave, boy, this is too good to be true After two whole years away and five, nearly six months married.

[*The maid brings tea*]

DAVID Here's tea.

MRS. PHELPS Sit down here beside me, dear Christina. And, Dave, boy, sit over there where I can see you. Just take my furs, Delia, so I can do my duty in comfort. My boy, my boy, you don't know . . . you don't know how happy I am to have you home again! Just hand me my salts, will you, Robin? This excitement has laid me out. Christina, my dear, how do you take your tea?

[*She sits at the table. ROBIN has fetched her bottle of "Crown Lavender" from somewhere. She motions him to put it down, and proceeds to pour tea.*]

CHRISTINA. Just tea, please. As it comes and nothing in it.

MRS. PHELPS. A real tea drinker! I hope my tea stands the test. [*She passes CHRISTINA her cup and ceases to take any notice of her whatsoever*] Tea, Dave, boy?

DAVID. Please, Mother.

MRS PHELPS. The same old way?

DAVID Yes.

MRS. PHELPS. Tea, Robin?

[*She hands DAVID his cup*]

ROBERT [*busy passing sandwiches and such*] As usual, please.

MRS PHELPS [*very absent-minded about the salts*]. Who do you suppose was asking after you yesterday, Dave, boy? Old George, the doorman, down at the bank You remember old George? He's so thrilled about your coming back! And Mrs Donohue's so thrilled! Such a sweet woman! You know, I'm afraid he's drinking again. You must run right over early tomorrow morning and let her have a look at you. I must have some people in to meet you Some very nice new people who've come here since you went away. Named Clay. He used to be a publisher in Boston, but he gave it up because he says nobody really cares about good books any more. Of course, this house has been a real godsend to him. I must give a big dinner for you, Dave, and ask all our old friends. I do need your cool head, too, on my business. Robin does his best, but he isn't really a business man. You remember the American Telephone I bought? Mr Curtin, at the bank, advises me to sell and take my profit, but I don't think so. What do you think, Dave, boy?

HESTER May I have a cup, please, Mrs Phelps?

MRS PHELPS Hester, my dear, how forgetful of me! How will you have it?

HESTER As usual.

MRS PHELPS Let me see . . . that's cream and sugar?

HESTER. Only cream. No sugar.

MRS PHELPS. Of course. Robin, will you give Hester her tea?

ROBERT [*as he gives HESTER the cup*]. You see, we have to take a back seat now.

MRS. PHELPS. A back seat, Robin?

ROBERT. I'm only warning Hester. She's got to know what to expect in this family when Dave's around.

DAVID Oh, shut up, Rob!

MRS. PHELPS [*smiling*]. My two beaux!

ROBERT. Oh, well! Dave's out in the

great world now, and I'm still the same old homebody I always was. Look at him, Mother!

MRS. PHELPS [*looking*]. Oh, my boy, my boy, if you knew what it means to me to see all my plans and hopes for you fulfilled. I've dreamed of your being an architect ever since . . . ever since . . .

ROBERT. Ever since he first showed an interest in his blocks.

MRS. PHELPS. I have those blocks still, Dave. Do you remember them?

DAVID. Do I remember those blocks!

MRS. PHELPS [*solemnly*]. You must never forget them, because it's quite true what Robin says and, some day, when you have children of your own, I shall show them the foundation stones of their father's great career. If I have one gift, it's the ability to see what people have in them and to bring it out. I saw what David had in him, even then And I brought it out

[*She smiles benignly. There is a brief pause A quizzical frown contracts CHRISTINA'S brow*]

CHRISTINA It seems a risky business.

MRS. PHELPS [*turning with that same start which CHRISTINA'S voice caused before*]. What seems a risky business?

CHRISTINA. The way families have of doing that.

MRS. PHELPS [*setting her tea-cup down a little too deliberately*]. What could be more natural?

HESTER [*coming to CHRISTINA'S rescue from an abyss of boredom*]. I see what Christina means. From blocks to architecture is a long guess You might very easily have guessed wrong, you know. I had some rabbits, once, and I loved 'em Suppose my family had seen what I had in me, then, and brought me up to be a lion tamer?

MRS. PHELPS [*offended*]. Really, Hester!

HESTER. Isn't that just what happens to most of us? Christina's job doesn't sound like the kind parents usually pick out for a girl, though.

ROBERT I'll say it doesn't.

CHRISTINA. My parents did pick it out, though I'm just like the rest

HESTER. Well, it only goes to prove what I was saying. Christina might have been a homebody instead of a scientist. I might have been a lion tamer. If only our parents hadn't had ideas about us!

DAVID. One guess is as good as another. I daresay I wanted to be a fireman. What do little girls want to be?

HESTER. Queens.

CHRISTINA. Wouldn't it be a pleasant world with nothing but queens and firemen in it!

ROBERT. I guess Mother knew. She always does know

HESTER. What I say about children is this ~~Have 'em. Love 'em And then leave 'em be.~~

CHRISTINA [*amused*]. I'm not sure that isn't a very profound remark.

MRS. PHELPS [*making up her mind to investigate this daughter-in-law more closely and, with sudden briskness, taking back the conversation*]. Why don't you two great things take the bags upstairs out of the hall?

DAVID. That's an idea

MRS. PHELPS. Dear Christina's in the little front room, and, Dave, you're in the back in your old room.

DAVID [*surprised*]. I say, Mother . . . can't we . . .

HESTER. Don't they want to be together, Mrs. Phelps? Let me move out of the guest room and then . . .

MRS. PHELPS. Indeed, I'll do nothing of the sort Hester's here for a rest, and I won't upset her Dave can be perfectly comfortable in his old room and so can Christina in front, and it won't hurt them a bit

CHRISTINA. Of course not. . . .

HESTER. But, Mrs Phelps . . .

MRS. PHELPS. Not another word, my dear. [*To CHRISTINA*] This child has danced herself into a decline, and she's got to be taken care of.

DAVID. Right.

ROBERT. Come along, Dave.

MRS. PHELPS. Go and supervise, Hester, and leave me to . . . to visit with my new daughter.

[*DAVE and ROB go, HESTER following*]

HESTER [*as she goes*]. But really, David, I might just as well move I didn't think. And if you and Christina . . .

MRS. PHELPS [*with a broad smile to CHRISTINA*]. Now, my dear, let me give you another cup of tea.

CHRISTINA. Thank you.

MRS. PHELPS. And take your hat off so that I can really see you. I've never seen a lady scientist before

CHRISTINA. I hope I'm not so very different from other women.

MRS. PHELPS. I've quite got over being afraid of you.

CHRISTINA. Afraid of me, Mrs. Phelps?

MRS. PHELPS. Can't you understand

that? My big boy sends me a curt cable to say that he's marrying a charming and talented research geologist.

CHRISTINA Biologist.

MRS. PHELPS. Biologist. It did sound just the least bit in the world improbable.

CHRISTINA. Yes. . . . I can see that.

MRS. PHELPS. Now that I know you, though, I'm very proud to have you for a daughter. Every woman wants a daughter, you know!

CHRISTINA. You're being very nice to me, Mrs. Phelps.

MRS. PHELPS. It isn't at all hard to be nice to you, my dear. Tell me about your tour. You went to Sicily?

CHRISTINA We did, indeed.

MRS. PHELPS Sicily, the home of . . . [*She gives herself up to Sicilian emotion*] . . . of all those great ancient . . . poets and . . . poets To think of your taking my boy to Sicily where I'd always planned to take him! I've never been, you see. How many opportunities we miss! That's what we're always saying of dead people, isn't it? Though, of course, I shouldn't think of calling David dead merely because he's got married I do hope you read *Glorious Apollo* before you went to Venice. When I read it, I felt that I had made a new friend. I always make such close friends of my books, and, you know, there's no friend like a really good book. And there's nothing like a good historical novel to make a city vivid and interesting They do bring things back to one *Glorious Apollo*! What a despicable character that man Byron was! Though I daresay he couldn't have been as bad as was painted. People do exaggerate so Especially writers. Do you know *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*?

CHRISTINA. I'm afraid not. Are they exaggerated?

MRS. PHELPS. Well, of course, they're really fairy tales Only to one with a profoundly religious point of view . . . and, if there's one thing I pride myself on it is my profoundly religious point of view . . . I always keep the *Little Flowers* on the table beside my bed And read in them, you know? I quite brought Robin up on them. Dave never took to them. Though Dave loved his regular fairy tales. His Grimm and his Hans Christian. You read, I hope?

CHRISTINA I can. I sometimes have to.

MRS. PHELPS. Oh, my dear, I only meant that I think it's so important, for David's happiness, that you should be what I call 'a reader' Both my boys

learned their classics at their mother's knee. Their Scott and their Thackeray. And their Dickens. Lighter things too, of course. *Treasure Island* and *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. And you went to Prague, too. Dave wrote me from Prague. Such interesting letters, Dave writes! I wondered why you stayed so long in Prague.

CHRISTINA. It's a charming city, and an architect's paradise Dave and I thought he ought to look at something beside cathedrals and temples. . . . There is domestic architecture, you know.

MRS. PHELPS. Yes, I suppose there is.

CHRISTINA. People *do* want houses. I'm inclined to think houses are more interesting than churches nowadays.

MRS. PHELPS. Oh, nowadays! I'm afraid I've very little use for nowadays. I've always thought it a pity that Dave and Rob couldn't have grown up in Italy in the Renaissance and known such men as . . . well, as Cellini.

CHRISTINA I'm not sure Cellini would have been the ideal companion for a growing boy.

MRS. PHELPS. No? Well, perhaps not. I must certainly take in Prague my next trip abroad It's really been very hard for me to stay home these last two years. But I said to myself Dave must have his fling. I don't like mothers who keep their sons tied to their apron strings. I said. Dave will come home to me a complete man. Though I didn't actually look for his bringing you with him, my dear, and coming home a married man. Still . . . So I stayed home with Robin. And I was glad to. I'm not sure I haven't sometimes neglected Robin for David. Given myself too much to the one, not enough to the other. The first born, you know. We mothers are human, however much we may try not to be Tell me, Christina, you think David is well, don't you?

CHRISTINA Yes, perfectly

MRS. PHELPS. He didn't seem quite himself just now.

CHRISTINA. Perhaps he was embarrassed

MRS. PHELPS. With me? His own mother?

CHRISTINA. Wouldn't I have accounted for it?

MRS. PHELPS. How silly of me not to remember that! Tell me what your plans are—if you have any plans, which I hope you haven't, because I've been making so many for you and such perfect ones

CHRISTINA. Well, as a matter of fact,

we haven't many, but what we have are pretty definite.

MRS. PHELPS. Really! Are they really? What are they?

CHRISTINA. Well, we're going to live in New York, of course.

MRS. PHELPS. Why "New York of course"? It seems to me that you might choose a pleasanter place to live than New York.

CHRISTINA. No doubt of that, Mrs. Phelps. But it does seem a good place for Dave to work and . . .

MRS. PHELPS. Oh, I can't agree with you!

CHRISTINA. I shouldn't have thought there could be two ways about New York for Dave any more than for me.

MRS. PHELPS. For you?

CHRISTINA. It's where my appointment is.

MRS. PHELPS. Your appointment?

CHRISTINA. At the Rockefeller Institute.

MRS. PHELPS. So that's what takes Dave and you to New York? Your geology.

CHRISTINA. Partly. Only it isn't geology. It's biology.

MRS. PHELPS. Of course. Geology's about rocks, isn't it?

CHRISTINA. Largely.

MRS. PHELPS. And biology?

CHRISTINA. Well—about Life.

MRS. PHELPS [*getting it clear*]. So you're a student of Life, my dear I do wish David had called you that instead of the other.

CHRISTINA. I understand how you felt, Mrs. Phelps. I hope you don't hold my job against me.

MRS. PHELPS [*with deep feeling*]. My dearest Christina. I don't! Oh, if you thought that, I should be heart-broken. You've made my darling David happy, my dear, and for that I'm prepared to love everything about you. Even your job. Do you smoke?

CHRISTINA. Yes, thank you. May I?

MRS. PHELPS. Please. And I shall, too. . . . [*They light cigarettes*] Don't you like my lighter?

CHRISTINA. It's sweet. And very handy, I should think.

MRS. PHELPS. A friend sent it me from London. Let me give it to you.

CHRISTINA. Oh, no.

MRS. PHELPS. Please! I've not had a chance yet to give my new daughter anything. My dearest Christina . . . please!

CHRISTINA. Thank you. I shall always keep it and use it.

MRS. PHELPS. I like the little ceremonial gift. . . . Now, about your job Christina. My job?

MRS. PHELPS. As you call it. I don't like to say "profession," because that has such a sinister sound for a woman. And then science is hardly a profession, is it? Rather more of a hobby. You're planning to continue?

CHRISTINA. With my job? Oh, yes.

MRS. PHELPS. Just as though you hadn't married, I mean?

CHRISTINA. I have to, don't I? To earn my right to call myself a biologist . . .

MRS. PHELPS. Do people call you that?

CHRISTINA. I guess they call me "doctor."

MRS. PHELPS. You're *not* a doctor.

CHRISTINA. Technically, I am.

MRS. PHELPS. Oh, I can never agree with you that women make good doctors.

CHRISTINA. We shan't have to argue that point. I've no intention of practicing.

MRS. PHELPS. Not at all? Above all not on David?

CHRISTINA. I shouldn't think of it.

MRS. PHELPS. I remember hearing that doctors never do practice on their own families. I remember that when our doctor here had a baby . . . of course his wife had the baby . . . he called it quite an outsider to deliver the child. I remember how that struck me at the time. Tell me more about yourself, my dear. When Dave cabled me about meeting you and marrying you so suddenly . . .

CHRISTINA. It wasn't so sudden, Mr. Phelps. I spent a good six or seven months turning him down flat.

MRS. PHELPS [*offended*]. Indeed?

CHRISTINA. Dave and I met in Rome last winter. Then he came to Heidelberg, where I was working, and I accepted him. . . . I'd never given him the least encouragement before.

MRS. PHELPS [*as before*]. Indeed?

CHRISTINA. We were married straight off . . . and went to Sicily.

MRS. PHELPS. I didn't know about the preliminaries. Dave never told me. And now you're taking him off to New York.

CHRISTINA. Please don't put it that way.

MRS. PHELPS. I'm stating a fact, my dear girl. After all, you *have* got yourself [*She gets it right this time.*] biology to think of.

CHRISTINA. You can't blame me for that, dear Mrs. Phelps, so long as I think of Dave's work, too

MRS. PHELPS. No . . . So long as you do that. . . . How did you come to select your career?

CHRISTINA. My father was a doctor. I grew up in his hospital. Everything followed quite naturally

MRS. PHELPS. Your father—is he living?

CHRISTINA. He died two years ago. Tragically, but rather splendidly.

MRS. PHELPS. How?

CHRISTINA. He'd been experimenting for years on infantile paralysis and . . .

MRS. PHELPS. And he died of that? [CHRISTINA nods rather solemnly] Is your mother living?

CHRISTINA. Oh, yes, at home.

MRS. PHELPS. At home?

CHRISTINA. In Omaha

MRS. PHELPS [meditatively] Omaha

CHRISTINA. Yes

MRS. PHELPS. Hm . . . And you'll go on with your father's experiments?

CHRISTINA. Oh, no! That's not at all in my line

MRS. PHELPS. What is your line?

CHRISTINA. It's hard to say. I did some rather hard work this last year at Heidelberg on the embryos of chickens. In the egg, you know

MRS. PHELPS. For heaven's sake, what for?

CHRISTINA. Trying to find out something about what makes growth stop.

MRS. PHELPS. Why . . . ?

CHRISTINA. Curiosity, I guess. Now I'm admitting what low people we scientists are. I think that curiosity's all we have. And a little training

MRS. PHELPS. Does David follow your work?

CHRISTINA. No. And I don't expect him to.

MRS. PHELPS. Quite right. David wouldn't be appealed to by rotten eggs . . . Not that he couldn't understand them if they did appeal to him.

CHRISTINA. Of course.

MRS. PHELPS. Isn't the Rockefeller Institute one of those places where they practice vivisection?

CHRISTINA. One of many. Yes. . . .

MRS. PHELPS. Have you . . .

CHRISTINA. What?

MRS. PHELPS. Experimented on animals?

CHRISTINA. Isn't it a part of my

job? Dave understands that. You must try to understand it.

MRS. PHELPS. Very well, I shall try, my dear. Now you must listen to me and try to understand me. . . . Look at me. What do you see? Simply—David's mother. I can't say of you that you're simply David's wife, because, clearly, you're many things beside that. But I am simply his mother. . . . I think, as I talk to you, that I belong to a dead age. I wonder if you think that? In my day, we considered a girl immensely courageous and independent who taught school or gave music lessons. Nowadays, girls sell real estate and become scientists and think nothing of it. Give us our due, Christina. We weren't entirely bustles and smelling salts, we girls who did not go into the world. We made a great profession which I fear may be in some danger of vanishing from the face of the earth. ~~We made a profession of motherhood.~~ That may sound old-fashioned to you. Believe me, it had its value. I was trained to be a wife that I might become a mother [CHRISTINA is about to protest MRS. PHELPS stops her] Your father died of his investigations of a dangerous disease. You called that splendid of him, didn't you? Would you say less of us who gave our lives to being mothers? Mothers of sons, particularly. Listen to me, Christina. David was five, Rob only a little baby, when my husband died. I'd been married six years, not so very happily. I was pretty, as a girl, too. Very pretty [This thought holds her for a second] For twenty-four years, since my husband died, I've given all my life, all my strength to Dave and Rob. They're been my life and my job. They've taken the place of husband and friends both, for me. Where do I stand, now? Rob is marrying. Dave is married already. This is the end of my life and my job. . . . Oh, I'm not asking for credit or praise. I'm asking for something more substantial. I'm asking you my dear, dear Christina, not to take all of my boy's heart. Leave me, I beg you, a little, little part of it. I've earned that much. I'm not sure I couldn't say that you owe that much—as David's mother. I believe I've deserved it. Don't you think I have?

CHRISTINA [deeply moved]. My dear, dear Mrs. Phelps!

MRS. PHELPS. It's agreed then, isn't it, that I'm not to be shut out?

CHRISTINA. Of course you're not!

MRS. PHELPS. Not by you, Christina. Nor by your work?

CHRISTINA. No! No!

MRS. PHELPS. Nor by anything?

CHRISTINA. You must know that I should never come between a mother and her son. You must know that I appreciate what you've done for Dave and all you've always been and meant to him. You *must* know that!

MRS. PHELPS. Christina, my dear, you're a very disarming person. You are indeed. I've known you ten minutes and unloaded my whole heart to you.

CHRISTINA. I'm proud that you trust me.

MRS. PHELPS [*patting her hand*]. Thank you, my dear. And now . . . now that you know how I feel . . . now you won't go to New York, will you? You won't take Dave to New York?

CHRISTINA [*drawing back in alarm*]. But, Mrs. Phelps!

MRS. PHELPS. Because that *would* be coming between mother and son, as you just now said. That could mean only one thing—crowding me out, setting me aside, robbing me. . . .

CHRISTINA [*completely baffled*]. You're quite mistaken, Mrs. Phelps! You've no reason to think any such thing!

MRS. PHELPS. Well, it's nice of you to reassure me, and we don't have to worry about it for some time yet. You'll have plenty of time to see how carefully I've worked everything out for David—and for you, too, my dear. You've a nice, long visit ahead, and . . .

CHRISTINA. I only wish we *had* a nice long visit, Mrs. Phelps.

MRS. PHELPS. What do you mean?

CHRISTINA. I start work at the Institute a week from tomorrow.

MRS. PHELPS [*staggered*]. What *are* you saying, child?

CHRISTINA. We didn't even bring our trunks up, you know.

MRS. PHELPS [*recovering herself*]. I'll not hear of it! A week of David after two years without him? What *are* you thinking of? Don't you realize that David has practically been my sole companion for nearly twenty-five years?

CHRISTINA. You've had Robert, too.

MRS. PHELPS. I'm not thinking so much of Robert, now. He isn't threatened as David is.

CHRISTINA. Threatened, Mrs. Phelps?

MRS. PHELPS. I don't want to see David's career sacrificed.

CHRISTINA. But I'm not planning to sacrifice it.

MRS. PHELPS. You make the word

sound disagreeable. I admire your work, Christina, but I am very clearly of the impression that it may easily obliterate David's work.

CHRISTINA. I don't see any conflict.

MRS. PHELPS. Aren't you taking him to New York, which he simply loathes? To live in a stuffy tenement . . . well, an apartment . . . They're the same thing. . . . Without proper heat or sunshine or food? I told you I'd made plans. I've arranged everything for David's best interest. I can't believe that a girl of your intelligence won't realize how good my arrangements are. I happen to own a very large tract of land here. A very beautiful tract, most desirable for residences. To the north of the Country Club just beside the links. Hilly and wooded. You can see it, off there to the left of the pond. I've had many offers for it, most advantageous offers. But I've held on to it, ever since Dave chose his profession. Pleasant Valley, it's called. I shall change the name to Phelps Manor, and open it. David will have charge. David will lay out the streets, design the gateways, build the houses and make his fortune, his reputation, and his place in the world out of it.

CHRISTINA [*after a pause*]. Don't you mean his place in this part of the world, Mrs. Phelps?

MRS. PHELPS [*positively*]. As well this as any. With me to back him, he's certain of a proper start here, and there can't be any doubt about the outcome. His success is assured here and his happiness and prosperity with it. And yours, too. Don't you see that?

CHRISTINA. It certainly sounds safe enough.

MRS. PHELPS. I knew you'd see. Furthermore, he's never happy in New York.

CHRISTINA. Happiness is very important. Only different people have different ideas of it.

MRS. PHELPS. David's always had my ideas. And they're very sound ones.

CHRISTINA [*politely*]. I'm sure of it. But perhaps they aren't sound for David. I mean, from what I know of him. . . .

MRS. PHELPS. I'm David's mother, my dear. I know him better than you do.

CHRISTINA. I wonder!

MRS. PHELPS. Oh, I do! And I know how little New York has to offer. I know the competition there. I know what the struggle would be. Look at the choice. On the one hand obscurity, a desk in some other man's office, years of hack work and

discouragement. On the other, immediate prominence, unquestionable success . . .

CHRISTINA. With his mother behind him.

MRS. PHELPS. Who better?

CHRISTINA. Oh, I see the difference!

MRS. PHELPS. Yes, don't you! And as to your work, my dear, I'm sure we can keep you busy and contented.

CHRISTINA [*smiling in spite of herself*]. How will you do that?

MRS. PHELPS. Well, it's hard to say, offhand. But if we really set our minds to it. . . . I know! I'm the chairman of our hospital here, and I have a great deal of influence with the doctors. We've a beautiful laboratory. You couldn't ask for anything nicer or cleaner or more comfortable than that laboratory. You do your work in a laboratory, I suppose?

CHRISTINA. Usually.

MRS. PHELPS. I'll take you down in the morning and introduce you to Dr. McClintock, homeopathic, but very agreeable, and he'll show you our laboratory. We've just got in a new microscope, too. Oh, a very fine one! One the High School didn't want any more. You'll simply love our laboratory. Oh, you will! It has a splendid new sink with hot and cold running water and quite a good gas stove, because it's also the nurses' washroom and diet kitchen. And you'll be allowed to putter around as much as you like whenever it isn't in use by the nurses or the real doctors. I can arrange everything perfectly, my dear. I'm certain that, when you see our laboratory, you'll sit right down and write to Mr. Rockefeller, who, I'm told, is a very kind old man at heart, and won't misunderstand in the least, that you've found an opening here that's ever so much more desirable than his old Institute, where you won't be obliged to cut up cats and dogs. You will think it over, won't you? Going to New York, I mean. Taking Dave to New York and ruining all his prospects?

CHRISTINA [*after a pause, in all sincere kindness*]. Mrs. Phelps, the third time I refused Dave, he asked me for a reason. I told him I couldn't throw myself away on a big frog in a small puddle.

MRS. PHELPS. You don't mean that you want him to be a small frog, a mere polliwog, in a great ocean like New York?

CHRISTINA. I'm afraid that's just what I do mean. And when he came back at me three months later with some real sketches and a great deal more humility and with a real job in a real architect's office . . .

MRS. PHELPS. Has David a job? In New York?

CHRISTINA. A chance anyway. With Michaels

MRS. PHELPS Michaels?

CHRISTINA. He's a big man. And he's interested in Dave.

MRS. PHELPS. I don't approve at all. I think it's madness.

CHRISTINA. You may be right. But, isn't it best left to Dave and me?

MRS. PHELPS [*deeply hurt at the implication*]. My dear Christina, if you think I'm trying to interfere, you're quite mistaken. You're very unfair. . . . Only tell me what makes you so sure Dave can succeed in New York.

CHRISTINA. I haven't given a thought to whether he'll succeed or not. That depends on his own talent, doesn't it? As to how much he makes, or how we get on, at first, I don't think that matters either . . . so long as Dave stands really on his own feet.

MRS. PHELPS. Oh, Christina, be honest with yourself. You *are* sacrificing David!

CHRISTINA. How?

MRS. PHELPS. By thinking only of yourself, of course.

CHRISTINA. Won't you believe that I'm thinking of both of us?

MRS. PHELPS. How can I? It's too bad of you, really. It means— [*in despair*] it means that it's all been for nothing!

CHRISTINA. What has?

MRS. PHELPS [*crescendo, as she walks about*]. All, all that I've done for David and given up for him and meant to him!

CHRISTINA. How can you say that?

MRS. PHELPS. I did so want to be friendly with David's wife. If you knew how I've wished and dreamt and prayed for that!

CHRISTINA [*rising herself*]. But can't we be friends?

MRS. PHELPS. Some day you'll have a child of your own and then you may know what I mean, if . . .

CHRISTINA. If what?

MRS. PHELPS [*as a last volley*]. If you don't sacrifice your child, too, to this work of yours.

CHRISTINA [*deeply distressed*]. Mrs. Phelps, I wish you wouldn't feel that. It makes me feel that I've got off on a very wrong foot here. [*ROBERT enters*]

ROBERT. Christina!

CHRISTINA. Yes?

ROBERT. Dave says, if you want a

bath before dinner, you'd better be quick about it.

CHRISTINA. I didn't know it was so late. Thanks. [*She goes to MRS. PHELPS*] You'll see that I do understand, dear Mrs. Phelps. You'll see that it all comes straight somehow and turns out for the best. Life takes care of such things. All we have to do is to keep out of life's way and make the best of things as *healthily* as possible.

MRS. PHELPS. You think I'm selfish.

CHRISTINA. Oh, no! I don't think anything of the sort!

MRS. PHELPS. Because if there's one thing I pride myself on,—I may have many faults,—but I am not selfish. I haven't a selfish hair in my head.

CHRISTINA. I tell you, I understand.

[*She kisses her quickly and goes out*]

ROBERT [*looking curiously after CHRISTINA*]. Mother!

MRS. PHELPS [*wildly*]. Oh, Robin! I'm so lonely! So lonely!

ROBERT [*startled*]. Mother!

MRS. PHELPS. I'm afraid I'm a dreadful coward!

ROBERT. *You, Mother?*

MRS. PHELPS. I ought to have been prepared to lose my two great, splendid sons. I've told myself over and over again that the time would come, and now that it *has* come, I can't face it! She's taking Dave away to New York, away from me, away from all the wonderful plans I've made for him here!

ROBERT. Well, if Dave's fool enough to go!

MRS. PHELPS. I shouldn't do to any woman on earth what she's doing to me!

ROBERT. Of course you wouldn't. But then, Christina isn't your sort, is she?

MRS. PHELPS. You've noticed that, too?

ROBERT. Who *is* your sort, Mother? . . . Oh, it's a wonderful gift you've given us.

MRS. PHELPS. What's that, Robin?

ROBERT. A wonderful ideal of womanhood. You know what I mean.

MRS. PHELPS. No. What?

ROBERT. Your own marvellous self, Mother!

MRS. PHELPS. Dave didn't stop to think of any such ideal, did he?

ROBERT. Oh, Dave!

MRS. PHELPS. Perhaps I shouldn't be hurt. But you can't know what it is to be a mother. I nearly died when Dave was born. Hours and hours I suffered for him, trapped in agony. He was a twelve-pound

baby, you know. If I could be sure of his happiness!

ROBERT. You mustn't ask too much.

MRS. PHELPS. You're right. No mother should expect any woman to love her son as she loves him.

ROBERT. Your sons don't expect any woman to love them as you do.

MRS. PHELPS. Oh, Robin! Is that how you feel?

ROBERT. I think it must be. [*She looks at him, watching him think it all out*] It's a funny business, isn't it? After a woman like you has suffered the tortures of the damned bringing us into the world, and worked like a slave to help us grow up in it, we can't wait to cut loose and give up the one thing we can be sure of! And for what? To run every known risk of disillusion and disappointment.

MRS. PHELPS [*struck by this*]. What is the one thing you can be sure of, Robin?

ROBERT. You are. Don't you know that? Why can't we leave well enough alone?

MRS. PHELPS. Presently you'll be going too, Rob.

ROBERT. Yes . . . I know I shall . . . But nothing will ever come between us, Mother.

MRS. PHELPS. Come over here by the fire, Robin, and let's forget all these unpleasant things [*She goes to sit by the fire*]. Let's have a real old-time talk about nothing at all. Sit down. [*He sits as directed on a stool at her feet*] Head in my lap! [*He obeys*] So! This has shown me something I've always suspected. That you are my son David takes after his father.

ROBERT. Mother!

MRS. PHELPS. Tell me, Robin, what you meant just now when you said that about the one thing you can be sure of. Did you mean that you've had dark thoughts about *your* future?

ROBERT. I must have meant something of the sort.

MRS. PHELPS. Hm. . . . It was dear of you, my great Robin, to say what you did about my being your ideal. You know my dream has always been to see my two boys married and settled down. But happily! Happily! Has Hester come to any decision about where she wants to spend her honeymoon?

ROBERT. Abroad.

MRS. PHELPS. Nothing more definite than just "abroad"?

ROBERT. No. She doesn't care where we go.

MRS. PHELPS. That seems very odd to

me. I took such an interest in my honeymoon. Why, your father and I had every day of it planned, weeks before we were married. . . . Hester hasn't picked out her flat silver yet, either, has she?

ROBERT I don't think so.

MRS. PHELPS. I can't understand it!

ROBERT What?

MRS. PHELPS. Her indifference. It rather shocks me [*She notices that ROBERT is shocked, too*]. But I suppose I'm old-fashioned. Like this room. You must give me a little of your time and taste, Robin, before you're married, and advise me about doing this room over.

ROBERT [*eagerly*]. Have you come to that at last?

MRS. PHELPS. I'm afraid so. How's Hester planning to do your new home?

ROBERT [*his spirits subsiding at once*]. Oh, I don't know.

MRS. PHELPS. You don't mean to say she hasn't made any plans?

ROBERT I've been trying to get her interested in house-hunting.

MRS. PHELPS. And she doesn't care about that either?

ROBERT. She says anything will suit her.

MRS. PHELPS. Does she, indeed! Most girls . . . most *normal* girls, that is, look forward so to having their homes to receive their friends in.

ROBERT She leaves it all to me. She says I know much more about such things than she does.

MRS. PHELPS. How little she understands my poor Robin who ought never to be bothered!

ROBERT Oh, well!

MRS. PHELPS. Do you happen to know if Hester *has* many friends? I mean, many men friends? Did she have lots of suitors beside you?

ROBERT. I daresay she had loads.

MRS. PHELPS. Do you *know* that she had?

ROBERT She never told me so. Why?

MRS. PHELPS. I was wondering. She's been out two years. One does wonder how much a girl has been sought after. But, then, why should she have bothered with others when she thought she could land you? You are rather a catch, you know.

ROBERT. I, Mother?

MRS. PHELPS. Any girl would set her cap for you.

ROBERT. I don't believe Hester did that.

MRS. PHELPS. My dear, I wasn't say-

ing that she did! But why shouldn't she? Only . . .

ROBERT. Only what?

MRS. PHELPS. I can't help wondering if Hester's feeling for you is as *strong* as you think it is [*ROBERT wonders, too*]. I've been wondering for some time, Robin. I've hesitated to speak to you about it. But after what you've just told me . . .

ROBERT. Well, it's too late to worry now.

MRS. PHELPS. I can't help worrying, though. Marriage is such an important step, and you're such a sensitive, shrinking character. It would be too terrible if you had to go through what you were just speaking of—the disillusionment and disappointment. . . . I'm only trying to find out what it is that's come between you two young people.

ROBERT. Nothing has, Mother, Hester isn't you, that's all!

MRS. PHELPS. Nonsense, Robin! . . . It isn't that awful woman I was so worried about when you were at Harvard?

ROBERT I'm not raising a second crop of wild oats.

MRS. PHELPS. Then it *must* be that risk you were speaking of! Oh, why do boys run that risk! Why will they break away!

ROBERT I wish I knew!

MRS. PHELPS. Perhaps your trouble is that— [*after a pause, very low*] that you don't love Hester.

ROBERT Oh, love! I must love her or I wouldn't have asked her to marry me. I guess she loves me in her way. Is her way enough? I'll find that out in time. A man ought to marry.

MRS. PHELPS [*a little more positively*]. You *don't* love Hester, and it isn't fair to her!

ROBERT Yes I do love her! Only I wonder if I'm the marrying kind. Failing the possibility of marrying you, I mean your double.

MRS. PHELPS [*always increasing*]. You don't love Hester.

ROBERT I do, I tell you! Who could help loving her? I mean . . . Good God, what do I mean?

MRS. PHELPS. Either you don't love Hester or Hester doesn't love you.

ROBERT She does love me.

MRS. PHELPS. She may say she does, but I haven't seen her showing it.

ROBERT. Mother!

MRS. PHELPS. You don't love Hester and Hester doesn't love you. It's as simple as that, Robin, and you're making a very

grave mistake to go on with this. These things may be painful, but they're better faced before than after. Children come after, Robin, and then it's too late! Think, Robin! Think before it's too late! And remember, the happiness of three people is at stake!

ROBERT Hester's and mine and . . .

MRS. PHELPS. And mine! And mine! . . . Only, I was wrong to say that! You must put my fate out of your mind just as Dave has done. Let Dave find out for himself what he's done. She won't be able to hold him. She won't have time for a home and children. She won't take any more interest in him than Hester takes in you. But you, Robin, *you* can still be saved! I want to save you from throwing yourself away as Dave has. You will face the facts, won't you?

ROBERT. You mean . . . I'm to . . . to break with Hester?

MRS. PHELPS. You will be a man?

ROBERT [*after a pause*]. Well . . . I'll . . . I'll try, Mother.

MRS. PHELPS [*after a pause*]. When?

ROBERT. Well . . . the . . . the first chance I get.

MRS. PHELPS [*trying not to appear eager*]. Tonight? . . . You'll have your chance tonight, Robin. I'll see that you get it. Promise me to take it?

ROBERT [*after a pause*]. All right. . . . If you think I'd better. . . . All right. . . .

MRS. PHELPS. Oh, thank God for this confidence between us! Thank God I've saved my boy one more tumble! You'll see it won't be so bad to put up with your mother a little longer! You'll see I've still plenty to give you and to do for you!

ROBERT. My blessed, blessed mother!

MRS. PHELPS [*unable to repress her triumph*]. And I won't have to be lonely now! I won't have to be lonely!

ROBERT. No, Mother! No!

[*He takes her in his arms*].

MRS. PHELPS. Kiss me.

[*He does; on the lips, fervently. DAVID comes in, dressed for dinner*].

DAVID. Hello! That's a pretty picture!

. . . Chris'll be down in a minute.

ROBERT. Where's Hester?

DAVID. In Chris's room. I heard them giggling in there. Isn't it grand they've hit it off so well?

ROBERT [*meeting his mother's eyes*]. Isn't it? I'll make a cocktail. [*He goes*].

DAVID. You like Christina, don't you, Mother?

MRS. PHELPS. Didn't you know I should?

DAVID. Sure I did! After all, I couldn't have gone far wrong on a wife, could I? I mean, having you for a mother would make most girls look pretty cheesey. I waited a long time. And all the time I was waiting for Chris! You'll see how wonderful Chris is. Why, she gets better every day. I don't know how I ever pulled it off. I swear I don't. I certainly had luck.

MRS. PHELPS. You're happy?

DAVID. You bet I'm happy!

MRS. PHELPS. You're not going to let your happiness crowd me out entirely, are you, Dave, boy?

DAVID [*amiably irritated*]. Oh, Mother! Lay off!

[*ROBERT returns with shaker and cocktail glasses*].

ROBERT. This is just a preliminary, Mother. We both need it, before we dress.

MRS. PHELPS. Perhaps we do.

DAVID. Shan't we call Chris and Hester?

MRS. PHELPS. No! Just we three!

ROBERT. It'll never be we three any more. I heard them coming as I crossed the hall.

[*He pours the cocktail into the glasses and goes about passing them*].

MRS. PHELPS. My two boys! My big one and my little one!

DAVID [*calls out*]. Hurry up, Chris!

MRS. PHELPS. If I can keep the little corner Christina doesn't need, Dave . . . that's all I ask. . . .

DAVID. Don't you worry, Mother [*CHRISTINA and HESTER enter. They are both dressed appropriately for the evening. CHRISTINA is particularly lovely*]. Here we are!

CHRISTINA. Thank you, Robert

[*They sip their cocktails*].

DAVID. Chris!

CHRISTINA. Yes?

DAVID. Let's tell Mother.

CHRISTINA. Now? In front of everybody?

DAVID. It won't hurt 'em to hear.

CHRISTINA. I don't mind, if they don't.

ROBERT. Mind what?

DAVID. It'll make Mother so happy.

MRS. PHELPS. What will?

DAVID. A surprise. Chris and I have got to spring on you!

MRS. PHELPS. How nice! What is it?

CHRISTINA [*a smiling pause—then*]. In about four months I'm going to have a baby!

HESTER. Oh, Christina, how wonderful!

ROBERT. Are you really!

DAVID. Isn't that a grand surprise, Mother?

MRS PHELPS [*recovering as from a body blow*]. Of course . . . David, I'm very glad, my dear. Very glad. . . . Have you a napkin there, Robin? I've spilled my cocktail all over my dress.

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

The living-room again. It is the same evening, after supper. The lamps are lighted. MRS PHELPS, HESTER, CHRISTINA, DAVID, and ROB are all present. CHRISTINA, HESTER, and DAVID are dressed as we saw them at the end of the first act. ROB wears his dinner coat, and his mother has changed to a simple evening dress. They have only just finished their coffee, and MRS PHELPS is busily showing a collection of photographs which she has in a great Indian basket beside her chair.

CHRISTINA. What were you doing in the sailor suit, Dave?

DAVID. Dancing the hornpipe, I believe.

MRS. PHELPS [*fondly*]. That was at Miss Briggs's dancing school. Do you remember Miss Briggs, David?

DAVID. Do I! The hornpipe must have been something special, Mother.

MRS. PHELPS. I see that I've marked it "Masonic Temple, April 6th, 1904."

DAVID. It must have been special. They don't usually dance hornpipes in Masonic Temples.

CHRISTINA. Did Miss Briggs teach you to be graceful, Dave?

DAVID. She did indeed. As a boy I was a gazelle. But I got over it.

CHRISTINA. I'm just as glad. I've known one or two adult gazelles.

MRS PHELPS. Both David and Robin danced beautifully.

DAVID. I haven't thought of Miss Briggs for years. I remember her so well. She seemed so old to me. She must have been old, too. A good deal older than God. She looked it, in spite of her red hair and her castanets. Spain, she used to say, is the land of the dance.

MRS. PHELPS. She had all the nicest children.

DAVID. Castanets and Spanish shawls . . . and a police whistle. She blew the whistle at the boys for running and sliding.

God knows what dances she taught us. Very different from the steps you indulge in, Hester, with your low modern tastes.

HESTER. Running and sliding sounds very pleasant.

DAVID. We thought that up for ourselves.

MRS. PHELPS. How long ago that all seems! [*She shows another photograph.*] This is David when he was ten weeks old.

CHRISTINA. Oh, David!

HESTER. Let me see. [*CHRISTINA shows her*] What a darling baby! Did they always sit them in shells in those days?

MRS. PHELPS [*just a little coldly*]. It was a fashion, like any other.

CHRISTINA. David on the half shell!

HESTER. Have you ever noticed how much all babies look like Chief Justice Taft?

MRS. PHELPS [*taking the photographs back in ill-concealed irritation*]. David was a beautiful child.

DAVID. I didn't always sit in shells. Mother's got one of me on a white fur rug.

MRS PHELPS. It hangs over my bed to this day.

CHRISTINA. In the nude?

DAVID. No. In an undershirt.

[*HESTER giggles.*]

MRS PHELPS. Fashions change.

CHRISTINA. I suppose they must. David wouldn't think of being photographed in his undershirt, now. Let me see the picture again, Mrs Phelps.

MRS. PHELPS. I think that's enough for this evening.

[*She rises, in great dignity, to put the photographs aside.*]

CHRISTINA. Dear Mrs Phelps, please don't be angry. We were only teasing David. They're awfully interesting pictures.

MRS. PHELPS. Only interesting to me, I'm afraid.

CHRISTINA. Not at all. I loved them. Do show me some more, Mrs. Phelps. Are there many more?

MRS. PHELPS [*still stern about them*]. Dave and Robin were photographed twice every month until they were twelve years old.

HESTER [*calculating rapidly*]. Good Lord! That makes over two hundred and fifty of each!

MRS. PHELPS. I never counted. I used to study their photographs, month by month, just as I did their weight. I wasn't satisfied to watch only their bodies grow.

I wanted a record of the development of their little minds and souls as well I could compare the expression of Dave's eyes, for instance, at nine, with their expression at eight and a half, and see the increased depth. And I was never disappointed.

HESTER. I knew a mother once who called her son "her beautiful black swan."

MRS. PHELPS. I should never have called either of my sons by such a name!

ROBERT. I can remember when you used to call us your Arab steeds!

MRS. PHELPS [*furious*]. Only in fun. Will you put them away, Robin?

[*ROBERT takes the photographs*]

ROBERT. Sure you don't want to go through the rest, Mother?

MRS. PHELPS. I'm afraid of boring Christina. Christina has other interests, of course. Higher interests than her husband. Higher even than children, I suspect

[*There is an abashed, awful pause, at this. CHRISTINA looks hurt and baffled. HESTER is horrified. DAVID, puzzled, rises and goes to the window. ROBERT smiles to himself as he stows the photographs away*]

HESTER [*breaking out*]. Well, of all the . . .

[*CHRISTINA, catching her eye, stops her.*]

MRS. PHELPS [*polite, but dangerous*]. What was it you were about to say, Hester?

HESTER [*recovering herself none too expertly*]. I was just looking at Christina's dress. I was just going to say: "Well, of all the lovely dresses I ever saw, that's the loveliest."

CHRISTINA. It *is* nice, isn't it? I got it in Paris. From Poiret Dave made me.

MRS. PHELPS [*as she studies the dress*]. I've a little woman right here in town who does well enough for me. I know who that dress *would* look well on! Dave, you remember Clara Judd? Such an exquisite figure, Clara had, and such distinction! That dress *wants* distinction and a figure. You might wear it, too, Hester.

[*There is another painful pause. CHRISTINA is really crushed.*]

DAVID [*desperately snatching for a change of subject*]. Look, Chris! The moon's up. You can see the kids coasting down the long hill.

CHRISTINA [*joining him at the window gratefully*]. If I weren't all dressed up, I'd join them!

HESTER. Don't you love coasting?

CHRISTINA [*nodding*]. Once last win-

ter we had a big snowfall at Heidelberg. I'd been all day in the laboratory, I remember, straining my eyes out at a scarlet fever culture for our bacteriology man. Krauss, his name was. They called him "The Demon of the Neckar." The theory was that he used to walk along the river bank, thinking up cruel things to say to his students I never knew such a terrifying man . . . Well, this day I'm talking about, I came out of Krauss's laboratory into the snow. Into Grimm's fairy tales, as Dave knows, because Dave's seen Heidelberg. Another bacteriologist, a dear boy from Marburg, came with me. We looked at the snow, and we wanted to coast . . . We found a small boy with a very large sled and we rented it, *with* the boy, who wouldn't trust us not to steal it. We certainly coasted. We got so ardent, we took the funicular up the Schlossberg and coasted down from there. The lights came out along the Neckar, and the snow turned the colors and colors snow can turn and still we coasted . . . Presently, we had an accident. A bob turned over in front of us with an old man on it. We couldn't stop, and so we just hit the bob and the old man, and you know how that is when you're going fast! . . . We picked ourselves up—or, rather, dug ourselves out—and went to see if we'd hurt the old fellow, and, God save us, it was Krauss himself! . . . I don't mind telling you our hearts sank. We stood there petrified. But we needn't have worried. Krauss didn't mind. He smiled the sweetest smile—you'd *never* have suspected he had it in him!—and touched his cap like a little boy and apologized for his clumsiness. "My age hasn't improved my skill," he said. . . . I could have kissed him. I wasn't quite sure how he'd have taken that, so, instead, I asked him to join us. He was delighted. We kept it up for another hour, we two students and the great god Krauss. "Jugend ist Trunkenheit ohne Wein!" he said. I daresay he was quoting a poem. . . . He couldn't have been a day under seventy. Three months later, he died of an inoperable internal tumor. In his notes, they found an observation he had written on his condition that very day we coasted. Think of a man who could write observations on his approaching death and then go off to coast afterwards! It's what life can be and should be. It's the difference between life and self.

MRS. PHELPS. Hm! . . .

HESTER. I think that's the most marvellous story I've ever heard!

ROBERT. Isn't it marvellous?

HESTER. I wish I'd known such a man!

CHRISTINA. Do you remember the night we coasted in Heidelberg, Dave?

DAVID. Do I? [*To his mother.*] Chris means the night she accepted me!

MRS. PHELPS. Does she really?

DAVID [*dashed, and giving it up*]. Yeah. . . . Let's go outside and watch the kids, Chris. It'll do us good.

CHRISTINA [*seeing his point*] Right! I'd love to! [*They go.*]

MRS. PHELPS. I'm beginning to wonder if Christina's studies at Heidelberg haven't made her just the least little bit in the world pro-German.

HESTER Mrs. Phelps, how can you say such a thing! [*HESTER looks from ROBERT to his mother in amazement.* MRS. PHELPS sits down at the piano and begins to play the easier portions of one of Chopin's nocturnes] I think that was simply inspiring!

MRS. PHELPS. I can't play Chopin if you interrupt me, Hester.

HESTER. I'm sorry. I simply can't get Christina out of my mind.

MRS PHELPS What do you mean?

HESTER I mean that I think she's the most perfect person I've ever seen.

MRS PHELPS. Do you really? Which way did they go, Robin?

ROBERT [*at the window*] Down the front.

MRS PHELPS Can you see them?

ROBERT They're just standing in the road. Now they're moving down under the trees.

MRS PHELPS But they can't even see the long hill from the trees.

ROBERT They're not looking at the long hill.

MRS PHELPS What are they looking at?

ROBERT. Each other. It's quite a romantic picture. Now she's put her head on his shoulder. His arm is around her waist. . . .

MRS. PHELPS. Faugh! Call them in!

[*Her irritation produces a discord in the nocturne. ROBERT moves to go*]

HESTER. Oh, don't, Rob; it's the first chance they've had to be alone together.

MRS. PHELPS. They can be alone without David's catching pneumonia, can't they? She drags him out of doors at night in freezing weather to spoon in the road like a couple of mill hands! I should think she might have some consideration

for her husband's health, let alone for my feelings.

HESTER [*a little hotly*]. In the first place, it was David who dragged her out. In the second, they are in love and do want to be alone. In the third, I don't see any reason for worrying over the health of any man who looks as husky as David does. And in the fourth, if there is any worrying to be done, let me remind you that it's Christina and not David who is going to have a baby. [*MRS. PHELPS breaks off her playing in the middle of a phrase.*] I'm sorry if I've shocked you, but the truth is, you've both shocked me.

ROBERT. How have we shocked you?

HESTER By not being a great deal more thrilled over Christina's baby. When I drank my cocktail to it before dinner, neither of you drank yours. When I wanted to talk about it during dinner, you both changed the subject. You haven't mentioned that baby since dinner, except once, and that was catty! You've known about that baby for over two hours and you aren't excited about it yet! Not what I call excited.

MRS PHELPS. If you'll forgive my saying so, Hester, I'm not sure that an unborn baby is quite the most suitable subject for . . .

HESTER I'm blessed if I see anything bad form about a baby!

ROBERT. No more does Mother—after it's born.

HESTER. I can't wait for that. I love thinking about them. And wondering what they're going to be—I mean, boy or girl. Why, we had bets up on my sister's baby for months before he was born.

MRS PHELPS. I'm not ashamed to be old-fashioned.

HESTER. You ought to be. This is going to be a very remarkable baby. There aren't many born with such parents. And I intend to go right on talking about it with anyone who'll listen to me. Christina doesn't mind. She's just as interested as I am. I've already made her promise to have my sister's obstetrician.

MRS PHELPS Really, Hester!

HESTER I'd go to the ends of the earth for that man. Christina's baby has put me in a very maternal frame of mind.

MRS. PHELPS. Maternal!

HESTER. What I say is: I'm as good as married. I might as well make the best of my opportunities to get used to the idea. Because I intend to have as many babies as possible.

MRS. PHELPS [*glancing at ROBERT*]. Is that why you're marrying Rob, Hester?

HESTER. What better reason could I have? I'm sorry if I've shocked you, but, as I said before, you've shocked me, and that's that.

[*Coolly, MRS. PHELPS goes for the coffee tray. Her eyes meet ROBERT'S and there is no mistaking the intention of the look they give him Then, without a word, she leaves ROBERT and HESTER alone together*]

ROBERT [*starting after her*] Mother! . . . Hester didn't mean . . . Oh. . . [*He turns back to HESTER*] Hester, how could you?

HESTER. I don't know . . . But I don't care if I did!

ROBERT. It doesn't make things any easier for me.

HESTER. Oh, Rob, dear, I *am* sorry!

ROBERT. You've got Mother all ruffled and upset. Now we'll have to smooth her down and have all kinds of explanations and everything. Really, it was too bad of you.

HESTER. I know. I lost my temper. . . . You understand, don't you?

ROBERT. I understand that you're a guest in Mother's house.

HESTER. Is that *all* you understand? Oh, Rob!

ROBERT. I'm sorry, Hester. But, for the moment, I'm thinking of Mother.

HESTER. I see. . . . I'll apologize.

ROBERT. That's up to you.

HESTER. I suppose she'll never forgive me. It isn't this, though.

ROBERT. This?

HESTER. The scene I made.

ROBERT. What do you mean?

HESTER. I don't know . . . Some mothers like the girls their sons marry.

ROBERT. Doesn't that depend on the girls?

HESTER. Not entirely.

ROBERT. You mustn't be unjust to Mother.

HESTER. Rob, I'm a little tired of hearing about your mother. . . . [*Suddenly penitent again.*] Oh, I didn't mean to say that! I didn't mean it a bit! I'm sorry, Rob. . . . Now I'm apologizing to you. Don't you hear me?

ROBERT. Yes, I hear you. What then?

HESTER. Oh, what difference does it make? I'm not marrying your mother. I'm marrying you. And I love you, Rob! I love you!

ROBERT. Yes, my dear.

HESTER. I'll never be bad again.

ROBERT. I'm willing to take your word for it.

HESTER. You'd better be. Oh, you *are* angry with me, Rob!

ROBERT. No. I'm not.

HESTER. You're a queer one.

ROBERT. Think so? How?

HESTER. As a lover. I've never seen another like you.

ROBERT. Haven't you? [*A thought strikes him*] Tell me something, Hester.

HESTER. What?

ROBERT. Have you had many?

HESTER. Many what?

ROBERT. Lovers

HESTER. Oh, Robert, what a thing to say to a lady!

ROBERT. You know what I mean

HESTER. I'm not quite sure I want to answer.

ROBERT. I'm not asking for their names

HESTER. Oh, I shouldn't mind that . . . the truth is . . . I don't know . . .

ROBERT. You must.

HESTER. I don't really. I used to think . . . oh, quite often . . . that one of my beaux was coming to the point . . . but . . .

ROBERT. Yes?

HESTER. But none of them ever did

ROBERT. That surprises me. Why not?

HESTER. I don't think it was entirely lack of allure, Rob

ROBERT. Of course it wasn't!

HESTER. I think it was because I always laughed

ROBERT. You didn't laugh at me.

HESTER. You looked foolish enough, now that I think of it

ROBERT. Yes. I daresay. . . . So I was the only one.

HESTER. Say the only one I didn't laugh at, please. You make me sound so undesirable.

ROBERT. I didn't mean to. Tell me, Hester . . .

HESTER. Anything.

ROBERT. Have you thought what it will mean to be my wife?

HESTER. A very pleasant life.

ROBERT. For you?

HESTER. I certainly hope so.

ROBERT. I don't know that I quite share your enthusiasm for children.

HESTER. You will.

ROBERT. They don't exactly help a career, you know.

HESTER. Have you got a career?

ROBERT. I fully intend to have one

HESTER. I'm glad to hear it.

ROBERT. I've got just as much talent as Dave has.

HESTER. What kind of talent?

ROBERT. I haven't decided. I can draw pretty well. I'm not a bad musician I might decide to compose. I might even write. I've often thought of it. And children, you see . . .

HESTER. I don't know much about careers, but Lincoln had children and adored 'em, and if you can do half as well as he did . . .

ROBERT. Then my preferences aren't to be considered?

HESTER. You just leave things to me. If we're poor, I'll cook and scrub floors. I'll bring up our children. I'll take care of you whether we live in New York or Kamchatka. This business is up to me, Rob. Don't let it worry you.

ROBERT [*crushed*]. I only wanted to make sure you understood my point of view.

HESTER. If I don't, I shall, so let's cut this short [*She goes a little huffily to the window, ROBERT watching her uneasily.*] Hello!

ROBERT. What is it?

HESTER. There goes your mother down the road.

ROBERT [*joining her*]. So it is! What can she be doing?

HESTER. She's fetching her darling David in out of the cold I knew she would.

ROBERT. Hester, would you mind not speaking that way of Mother?

HESTER. Can't she leave them alone for a minute?

ROBERT. She's the worrying kind.

HESTER. Oh, rot!

ROBERT. Evidently you're bent on making things as difficult as possible for me.

HESTER. I'm sorry you feel that.

[*A long irritable pause*]

ROBERT. Hester?

HESTER. Yes?

ROBERT. Have you thought any more about our honeymoon?

HESTER. Didn't we decide to go abroad?

ROBERT. Abroad's a pretty general term. You were to think *where* you wanted to be taken.

HESTER. I left that to you.

ROBERT. You said you "didn't care."

HESTER. I don't.

ROBERT. Nor where we live after . . . nor how.

HESTER. I don't . . . I don't . . . I

want to live with *you*. [*Suddenly warming.*] What's the use of this, Rob?

ROBERT. We've never talked seriously about our marriage before.

HESTER. What is there to say about it?

ROBERT. A great deal.

HESTER. I don't agree. Marriages are things of feeling. They'd better *not* be talked about.

ROBERT. Real marriages can stand discussion!

HESTER. Rob!

ROBERT. What?

HESTER. That wasn't nice.

ROBERT. Wasn't it?

HESTER [*suddenly frightened*]. What's the matter, Rob? I'll talk as seriously as you please. Do I love you? Yes. Am I going to make you a good wife? I hope so, though I *am* only twenty and may make mistakes. Are you going to be happy with me? I hope that, too, but you'll have to answer it for yourself.

ROBERT. I can't answer it.

HESTER. Why can't you?

ROBERT. Because I'm not sure of it.

HESTER. Aren't you, Rob?

ROBERT. These things are better faced before than after.

HESTER. What is it you're trying to say?

ROBERT. If only we could be sure!

HESTER [*stunned*]. So that's it!

ROBERT. Are you so sure you want to marry me?

HESTER. How can I be—now?

ROBERT. Marriage is such a serious thing. You don't realize how serious.

HESTER. Don't I?

ROBERT. No. . . . I hope you won't think harshly of me . . . And, mind you, I haven't said I wanted to break things off. . . . I only want . . .

HESTER. Please, Rob!

ROBERT. No. You've got to hear me out.

HESTER. I've heard enough, thank you!

ROBERT. I'm only trying to look at this thing . . .

HESTER. Seriously . . . I know. . . .

ROBERT. Because, after all, the happiness of three people is affected by it.

HESTER. Three?

ROBERT. As Mother said, before dinner.

HESTER. So you talked this over with your mother?

ROBERT. Isn't that natural?

HESTER. Is your mother the third?

ROBERT. Wouldn't she be?

HESTER. Yes, I suppose she would.

... I think you might tell me what else she had to say.

ROBERT. It was all wise and kind. You may be as hard as you like on me, but you mustn't be hard on poor splendid lonely Mother.

HESTER [*savage—under her breath*]. So she's lonely, too!

ROBERT. You *will* twist my meaning!

HESTER. You *said* "lonely."

ROBERT. Perhaps I did. But Mother didn't. You know, she never talks about herself.

HESTER. I see. What else did she say about us?

ROBERT. Well, you haven't been very interested in planning our future. She notices such things.

HESTER. What else?

ROBERT. She sees through people, you know.

HESTER. Through me?

ROBERT. She thought, as I must say I do, that we didn't love each other quite enough to ... At least, she thought we ought to think very carefully before we ...

HESTER [*gripping his two arms with all her strength, and stopping him*]. If you really want to be free ... if you really want that, Rob, it's all right. It's perfectly all right. ... I'll set you free. ... Don't worry. ... Only you've got to say so. You've got to ... Answer me, Rob. Do you want to be rid of me? [*There is a pause. ROBERT cannot hold her gaze, and his eyes fall. She takes the blow*] I guess that's answer enough. [*She draws a little back from him and pulls the engagement ring from her finger*] Here's your ring.

ROBERT. Hester! Don't do anything you'll be sorry for afterwards! Don't, please! I can't take it yet!

HESTER [*without any sign of emotion, dropping the ring on a table*]. I shall have an easier time of it, if you keep away from me. I want to save my face ... if I can.

ROBERT. Hester, please!

HESTER. All right, if you won't go, I will.

ROBERT. I'm sorry. Of course I'll go.

HESTER. And take your ring with you.

[*He goes to the table, picks up the ring, pockets it, and has just got to the door when HESTER breaks into furious, hysterical sobbing. Her sobs rack her and seem, at the same time, to strike ROBERT like the blows of a whip*]

ROBERT. For God's sake, Hester. ... [*She drops into a chair and sits, staring straight before her, shaken by her sobs of outraged fury and wretchedness*]. Mother! Christina! Come here! Hester ... [*CHRISTINA appears in the door. MRS. PHELPS follows her. DAVID appears. ROBERT returns to HESTER*]. Can't you pull yourself together?

[*She motions him away*].

CHRISTINA. What's the matter?

ROBERT. It's Hester. Can't you stop her?

MRS. PHELPS. Good heavens, Robin! What's wrong with the child?

ROBERT. She's ... upset ... you see, I was just ... you know ...

MRS. PHELPS. I see! ... She's taking it badly. [*HESTER'S sobs only increase*]

CHRISTINA. Hester, stop it!

HESTER. I'm all right ... I can't. ... I ... Christina ... please ...

CHRISTINA. Open a window, Dave ... Haven't you any smelling salts in the house, Mrs. Phelps?

[*MRS. PHELPS goes for them where she left them at teatime*]

HESTER. Tell Rob to go away! Tell Rob to go away!

CHRISTINA. Never mind Rob! ... Get me some aromatic spirits, one of you! Hurry up!

[*ROBERT goes*].

MRS. PHELPS. Here are my salts

CHRISTINA [*peremptorily*]. Hester! [*She holds the salts for HESTER to smell*] Now, stop it! Stop it, do you hear me?

HESTER. I'm trying to stop. If you'd only send these awful people out! Take me away, Christina! Take me back to New York! I've got to get away from here. I can't face them! I can't! I can't!

CHRISTINA. Now, stop it!

DAVID [*coming forward from a window*]. Here's some snow in my handkerchief. Rub it on her wrists and temples.

CHRISTINA. Thanks, Dave.

[*She applies it. HESTER, by dint of great effort, gradually overcomes her sobs. ROBERT returns with a tumbler partly filled with a milky solution of aromatic spirits*].

MRS. PHELPS [*speaking at the same time, in unfeigned wonderment to DAVID*]. Really, I do wonder at what happens to girls nowadays! When I was Hester's age I danced less and saved a little of my strength for self-control.

ROBERT [*speaking through*]. Here, Dave. Take this.

[*DAVID takes it. ROBERT goes again*].

DAVID gives the tumbler to CHRISTINA]

CHRISTINA. Good! Can you drink this now, Hester?

HESTER. Thank you, Christina. I'm all right now. It was only . . .

CHRISTINA. Never mind what it was. Drink this [HESTER drinks it.] There, now That's better. Just sit still and relax.

DAVID. What on earth brought it on?

MRS. PHELPS [shrugging her shoulders]. Rob and she must have had a falling out.

DAVID. No ordinary one. . . . Rob! He's gone. . . . That's funny.

MRS. PHELPS. He'd naturally be distressed

HESTER. I'm really all right, now, Christina . . and frightfully ashamed . . .

MRS. PHELPS. You'd better see how Rob is, Dave. His nerves are none too stout. Such scenes aren't good for him

HESTER [in a high, strained voice]. No, isn't that so, Mrs Phelps?

MRS. PHELPS. Did you speak to me, Hester?

HESTER. Take the smelling salts to Rob with my love. . . . Oh God, Christina!

CHRISTINA. Now, never mind, Hester. You'll go to pieces again

HESTER. But I've got to mind! And I'm all right! It won't hurt me. . . . I wish you'd go, David.

CHRISTINA. Yes, Dave, do. I'll come up in a jiffy

MRS. PHELPS. When Hester's quieted down [To DAVID] We'd better both go and see how Rob is

[She starts to go]

HESTER. Mrs. Phelps. There's something I want to ask you before we part.

MRS. PHELPS. Tomorrow, my dear girl. . . .

HESTER. There isn't going to be any tomorrow.

MRS. PHELPS. What?

HESTER. Rob has just broken our engagement.

MRS. PHELPS. Not really!

CHRISTINA [staggered]. Hester, what do you mean?

HESTER. I mean what I say. Rob's just broken our engagement.

[CHRISTINA motions to DAVE to go.

He obeys.]

MRS. PHELPS. I'm immensely distressed, of course.

HESTER [shaking her head doggedly]. He talked it all over with you before

dinner. He told me that much, so it won't do you the least bit of good to pretend to be surprised

MRS. PHELPS. Aren't you forgetting yourself, Hester?

HESTER. You made him do it. Why did you make him do it, Mrs. Phelps?

[CHRISTINA, amazed, draws back to observe the pair of them]

MRS. PHELPS [with perfect dignity]. I don't intend to stand here, Hester, and allow any hysterical girl to be rude to me.

HESTER [driving on querulously]. I'm not being rude! All I want to know is why you talked Rob into jilting me. Will you answer me, please?

MRS. PHELPS. Such things may be painful, my dear girl, but they're far less painful before than after.

HESTER. He quoted that much.

CHRISTINA. What's the good of this, Hester?

HESTER. I'm only trying to make her tell me why she did it.

MRS. PHELPS. But, Hester! Really! This is absurd!

HESTER. You've got to! You've got to explain!

MRS. PHELPS. I had nothing to do with Robin's change of heart.

HESTER. You must have had, Mrs Phelps, and I'm demanding an explanation of why you talked Rob into . . .

MRS. PHELPS. Isn't it enough that he found out in time that you weren't the wife for him?

HESTER. That isn't the truth!

CHRISTINA. Hester, darling!

HESTER. Can you tell me what he meant when he said that the happiness of three people was at stake?

MRS. PHELPS. He must have been thinking of your happiness as well as his own and mine.

HESTER. What about your loneliness?

MRS. PHELPS. This is contemptible of you!

CHRISTINA. Really, Hester, this *can't* do any good!

HESTER. I'm going to make her admit that she made Rob . . .

MRS. PHELPS [exploding]. Very well, then, since you insist! I did advise my son to break with you. Do you want to know why?

HESTER. Yes!

MRS. PHELPS. Because of your indifference . . .

HESTER. Oh!

MRS. PHELPS. Because he came to me

to say that you neither love him nor make any pretense of loving him . . .

HESTER Rob said that?

MRS. PHELPS. He even said that you must have misconstrued his friendship and that he never wanted to marry you . . .

HESTER No!

MRS. PHELPS. And I told him to risk anything . . . anything, rather than such an appalling marriage . . .

HESTER. I don't believe a word of it!

MRS. PHELPS. You may believe it or not!

CHRISTINA. Mrs. Phelps, you had really better let me handle this.

MRS. PHELPS. Willingly

HESTER Do you believe I took advantage of Rob, Christina?

CHRISTINA. Of course not!

MRS. PHELPS. So you take her side, Christina!

CHRISTINA. I don't believe *that*, Mrs. Phelps.

MRS. PHELPS [*realizing that she has gone too far*]. No? Well, perhaps . . .

CHRISTINA. Whatever Robert may think, I can't believe that he said . . .

MRS. PHELPS [*frightened*]. Perhaps he didn't say quite that, in so many words . . . but he certainly meant . . .

HESTER. I'm going. I'm going now. Right this minute.

MRS. PHELPS. There's a train at nine in the morning. It gets you to New York at twelve. I shall have the car for you at eight-thirty.

HESTER. May I have the car now, please, Mrs Phelps?

MRS. PHELPS. There's no train tonight.

HESTER. It doesn't matter. I won't stay here. Not another minute. I'll go to the hotel in town.

MRS. PHELPS. You'll do nothing of the sort!

HESTER You see if I don't!

MRS. PHELPS. You've got to think of appearances!

HESTER. Appearances are your concern. Yours and Rob's I'm going to the hotel. I don't care what people say! I don't care about anything. I won't stay here!

MRS. PHELPS. Can't you talk to her, Christina? Surely you see . . . for all our sakes!

HESTER. If you won't let me have the car, I'll call a taxi. . . .

[*She plunges towards the telephone.*]

MRS. PHELPS. I forbid you!

HESTER [*seizing the instrument*]. I

want a taxi . . . a taxi. . . . What is the number? . . . Well, give it to me. . . . Locust 4000? Give me Locust 4000!

[*MRS. PHELPS hesitates an instant, then, with terrible coolness, steps forward and jerks the telephone cord from the wall Except for a startled exclamation, very low, from CHRISTINA, there is not a sound. HESTER hangs up the receiver and sets down the dead instrument*]

MRS. PHELPS [*after an interminable silence*]. You are the only person in the world who has ever forced me to do an undignified thing. I shall not forget it.

[*She goes nobly*]

HESTER [*weakly, turning to CHRISTINA*]. Christina, it isn't true what she said. . . . He did. . . . He did want to marry me! Really, he did! He did!

CHRISTINA. Of course he did, darling!

HESTER. I won't stay! I won't stay under that woman's roof!

CHRISTINA. Hester, darling!

HESTER. I'll walk to town!

CHRISTINA Don't, Hester!

HESTER. That wasn't true, what she said!

CHRISTINA. Of course not!

HESTER. I still love him. . . . Let me go, Christina, I'll walk . . .

CHRISTINA You can't, at this time of night! It wouldn't be safe!

HESTER. I don't care! I won't stay!

CHRISTINA. There! There! You'll come to bed now, won't you!

HESTER. No! No! I can't! I'd rather die! I'll walk to town.

CHRISTINA. You'll force me to come with you, Hester, I can't let you go alone.

HESTER. I won't stay another minute!

CHRISTINA. Do you want to make me walk with you? Think, Hester! Think what I told you before dinner! Do you want to make me walk all that way in the cold?

HESTER [*awed by this*]. Oh, your baby! I didn't mean to forget your baby! Oh, Christina, you mustn't stay, either! This is a dreadful house! You've got to get your baby away from this house, Christina! Awful things happen here!

CHRISTINA. Hester, darling! Won't you please be sensible and come up to bed?

HESTER [*speaking at the same time, as her nerves begin to go again*]. Awful things, Christina. . . . You'll see if you don't come away! You'll see! . . . She'll do the same thing to you that she's done to me. You'll see! You'll see!

SCENE TWO

The curtain rises again, as soon as possible, upon DAVID'S little bedroom untouched since the day when DAVID went away to Harvard and scorned to take his prep school trophies and souvenirs with him. The furniture is rather more than simple. The bed is single. There is a dresser. There are only a couple of chairs. The curtains at the single window have been freshly laundered and put back in their old state by MRS. PHELPS in a spirit of maternal archeology. Insignificant loving cups, won at tennis, stand about the dresser. No pennants, no banners. There might be some tennis racquets, golf sticks, crossed skis, a pair of snowshoes, class photographs and framed diplomas. There must also be a fairly important reproduction of Velasquez' Don Balthazar Carlos on horseback, selected by MRS. PHELPS as DAVID'S favorite Old Master. A final touch is DAVID'S baby pillow.

DAVID stands in his pajamas and socks, about to enter upon the last stages of his preparations to retire for the night. The room has been strewn with clothing during the preliminary stages. Now he is in the ambulatory state of mind. A series of crosses and circumnavigations produces several empty packs of cigarettes from several pockets, corners of the suitcase, etc. This frustration brings on baffled scratchings of the head and legs. Then he gives up the cigarette problem, turns again to the suitcase, spills several dirty shirts and finally, apparently from the very bottom, extracts a dressing-gown, a pair of slippers, a tooth-brush, and some tooth-paste. He sheds the socks, dons the slippers and dressing-gown, and sallies forth with brush and paste to do up his teeth in the bathroom. He goes by the door which gives on the hall at the head of the stairs.

After he has been gone a few seconds, a tiny scratching sound is heard on the other side of the other door to the room and that is opened from without. We see the scratcher at work, conveying the impression that a wee mouse wants to come in. The wee mouse is none other than MRS. PHELPS, all smiles in her best negligee, the most effective garment she wears in the

course of the entire play, carrying a large eiderdown comfort.

The smile fades a little when she discovers that the room is empty. Then its untidiness catches her eye and she shakes her head reprovingly, as who should say: "What creatures these big boys are!" She goes to work at once, true mother that she is, to pick things up. She loves her work and puts her whole heart into it. The trousers are neatly hung over the back of the chair, the coat and waistcoat hung over them. The shirts, socks, and underwear are folded and laid chastely on the seat. One or two of the garments receive devout maternal kisses and hugs. Then she goes to the bed, lifts off the suitcase, pushes it underneath, adjusts the eiderdown, smooths the pillow and kisses that. Last, all smiles again, she sits, carefully disposing her laces and ribbons, to await DAVID'S return. She yearns for it, and she has not long to wait.

DAVID returns. His mother's beaming smile, as he opens the door, arouses his usual distaste for filial sentimentality. It is intensified, now—and very ill-concealed—by the hour, his costume, and recent events. He hesitates in the doorway.

MRS. PHELPS. Why do you look so startled? It's only Mother!

DAVID [laconically]. Hello, Mother!

MRS. PHELPS. I came in to ask if you needed anything and . . .

DAVID. Not a thing, thanks.

MRS. PHELPS. And to warn you against opening the window in this weather. Oh, and I brought you that extra cover. I've been picking up after you, too!

DAVID [looking gloomily about]. You needn't have troubled.

MRS. PHELPS. It took me back to the old days when I used to tuck you up in that same little bed . . .

DAVID [as a strong hint]. Yeah. . . . I'm just turning in, Mother.

MRS. PHELPS [regardless]. . . . And then sit in this very chair and talk over all my problems with you. I feel that I must talk to my big boy tonight. . . . I must get acquainted with my Dave again.

DAVID [as an even stronger hint]. We're not exactly strangers, are we? And besides, it's getting late.

MRS. PHELPS [even more persistent]. It was always in these late hours that we had our talks in the old days when we

were still comrades. Oh, are those days gone forever? Don't you remember how we used to play that we had an imaginary kingdom where we were king and queen?

DAVID [*moribund*]. Did we? I wish Chris 'ud come up.

MRS. PHELPS [*with a frown and speaking quickly*]. Have you noticed, Dave, boy, that your room is just as you left it? I've made a little shrine of it. The same curtains, the same . . .

DAVID [*breaking in*]. I suppose Chris is still trying to get Hester quiet?

MRS. PHELPS. I suppose so. . . And every day I dusted in here myself and every night I prayed in here for . . .

DAVID [*a little too dryly for good manners*]. Thanks.

MRS. PHELPS [*reproachfully*]. Oh, David, you can't get that horrid scene downstairs out of your mind!

DAVID. No.

MRS. PHELPS. Try! I need my big boy so! Because I'm facing the gravest problem of my life, Dave. And you've got to help me.

DAVID. What is it?

MRS. PHELPS. Is it true that I'm of no more use to my two sons?

DAVID. Whatever put such an idea in your head?

MRS. PHELPS. You did

DAVID [*shocked*]. I?

MRS. PHELPS [*nodding*]. You weren't really glad to see me this afternoon

DAVID [*in all sincerity*]. I was. . . I was delighted!

MRS. PHELPS [*bravely stopping him*]. Not glad as I was to see you I noticed, Dave! . . . And that made me wonder whether this scientific age—because it is a scientific age, Dave—isn't making more than one boy forget that the bond between mother and son is the strongest bond on earth. . . .

DAVID [*not quite sure of the superlative*]. Well, it's certainly strong.

MRS. PHELPS. Do you realize how sinful any boy would be to want to loosen it?

DAVID. Sure I realize that!

MRS. PHELPS. I see so many poor mothers, no less deserving of love and loyalty than I, neglected and discarded by their children, set aside for other interests.

DAVID. What interests?

MRS. PHELPS. All kinds of things. . . Wives. . .

DAVID [*shying*]. Nonsense, Mother!

MRS. PHELPS. The Chinese never set any relationship above their filial piety.

They'd be the greatest people on earth if only they'd stop smoking opium.

DAVID. You haven't any kick, have you? I mean: Rob and I haven't let you down?

MRS. PHELPS. Not yet, Dave. But, you know the old saying?

DAVID. What old saying?

MRS. PHELPS. That a boy's mother is his best friend.

DAVID. Oh! Bet I do!

MRS. PHELPS. Do you think of *your* mother as *your* best friend?

DAVID. None better, certainly.

MRS. PHELPS. None better! Hm! You *can* say, though, that you haven't entirely outgrown me?

DAVID. Of course I haven't! Why, I'd hate to have you think that just because I'm a grown man, I . . .

MRS. PHELPS. No son is ever a grown man to his mother! [*There is a knock at the door*] Who can that be at this hour?

DAVID. I hope it's Chris

[*He starts for the door.*]

MRS. PHELPS [*freezing suddenly as she rises*]. Dave!

DAVID [*turning*]. What?

MRS. PHELPS. Wait. . . I mustn't intrude. . . . Good-night . . .

DAVID [*calling out*]. Just a minute! [*To his mother, politely.*] You wouldn't be intruding!

MRS. PHELPS. Not on you, I know. But . . .

DAVID. Not on Chris either!

MRS. PHELPS. I know best. Kiss me good-night.

DAVID. Good-night, Mother.

[*He kisses her cheek*]

MRS. PHELPS [*giving him a quick hug*]. God bless my big boy!

[*She goes as she came. DAVID'S look, as he watches her door close behind her, is baffled. He goes quickly to the other door. ROBERT is standing outside*]

DAVID. For Pete's sake, Rob! I thought it was Chris! . . . Why didn't you walk in?

ROBERT. I thought Mother was in here.

DAVID. She was. She just went to bed.

ROBERT [*entering*]. She must have thought it was Chris, too!

DAVID. How do you mean?

ROBERT. I shouldn't rush things if I were you.

DAVID. Maybe you're right. Women are too deep for me.

ROBERT. I came in for a smoke. I had

to talk to you. I've been sitting in my room wondering what you think of all this

DAVID [*finding and lighting a cigarette*]. I don't think much, and that's the truth!

ROBERT. Good God, Dave, can't you be a little easier on me? Didn't you ever feel any doubts when you were engaged? Were you always so sure of Christina that you . . .

DAVID. The first time I asked Chris to marry me, she made it perfectly clear that, as far as she was concerned, I was to consider myself dripping wet. After that I was too damn scared I wouldn't get her to think whether she loved me or not.

ROBERT [*darkly*]. And I never had one comfortable moment from the time Hester accepted me.

DAVID. Oh, being in love's like everything else. You've got to put some guts in it.

ROBERT [*with bitter anger*]. You think I haven't got any guts. You want to make me look like a callous cad! All right, I'll be a cad. I don't care what people think about me! But I'll tell you one thing! I'm damned if I'm going to let you turn Mother against me!

DAVID. Do *what*?

ROBERT. You heard me!

DAVID. My God, haven't you outgrown that old stuff yet?

ROBERT. I know from experience what to expect when you and Mother get together. I used to listen at that door, night after night, night after night, while you and Mother sat in here and talked me over. Then I'd watch for the change in her next morning at breakfast when I hadn't slept a wink all night. The way you used to own the earth at those breakfasts! Well, if you try any of that old stuff to-night, I'll lose the only prop I've got left.

DAVID. Isn't it about time you let go of Mother's apron-strings?

ROBERT. You would say that! You don't realize that I'm desperate.

DAVID. Desperate, hell! You're crazy! Mother's gone to bed and . . . [*The wee mouse scratches at the door again.*] What's that?

MRS. PHELPS [*entering*]. It's only Mother. Are you two beaux quarreling? Jealous, jealous Robin! What's the matter?

DAVID. Nothing.

MRS. PHELPS. A fine man is a frank man, David! Do you think I didn't hear every word you said? Surely you must

know that Hester wasn't worthy of your brother?

DAVID. Wasn't she? Well, let's not talk any more about it.

MRS. PHELPS. Oh, but we must. For all our sakes, we must clear the air. I have always taken the stand that my boys could do absolutely no wrong, and that is the proper stand for a mother to take. Didn't I always side with you in your school scrapes? Even against the masters? Even when you were clearly in the wrong? Of course, I did! And I shall not permit one word of criticism against your brother now. Loyalty, Dave! Loyalty! Come, now! Tell Mother all about it!

DAVID. But if you overheard every word we said . . . !

MRS. PHELPS. "Overheard," David? Am I given to eavesdropping?

DAVID. I didn't say so.

MRS. PHELPS. I simply want to make sure I didn't miss anything while I was in my bath.

DAVID. I don't misunderstand him. I'm sorry for Hester, that's all.

ROBERT. We're all sorry for Hester.

DAVID. I don't think it's your place to be too sorry.

ROBERT. Let's drop it, Mother.

MRS. PHELPS. No. I've got to know what's on Dave's mind. My whole life may hang on it. What is it, Dave? [*Carefully sounding*] If Robin's not to blame, perhaps I am?

ROBERT [*horrified*]. Mother!

DAVID. What's the use of getting so worked up over nothing?

MRS. PHELPS. Nothing! Can you say "nothing" after what we were talking about a few minutes ago?

DAVID [*cornered*]. I only think . . .

MRS. PHELPS. What?

DAVID. Well, that you've both handed Hester a somewhat dirty deal. And Chris must think so, too!

MRS. PHELPS [*wary*]. Indeed! And how, please?

DAVID. Well, it comes of what Chris calls "mythologizing."

MRS. PHELPS [*frightened*]. Does Christina discuss our family affairs already?

DAVID. No. It's one of her old ideas about people in general. You mythologize Rob into a little tin god. Rob thinks he is a little tin god. Along comes Hester and falls in love with the real Rob. She never heard of your little tin god Rob. She doesn't deliver the incense and tomtoms. That makes you and Rob sore, and the whole works goes to hell. That's my-

thologizing. Believe me, it can make plenty of trouble.

MRS. PHELPS [*relieved that the criticism is so general*]. If that's all I'm to blame for, I don't know that I can object. Expecting the best of everyone is, at least, a worthy fault. Still, if I may venture an older woman's opinion on one of Christina's ideas?

DAVID. I wish to God I hadn't started this.

MRS. PHELPS. So do I. But perhaps you'll tell me what Christina would say to the true reason for Robin's break with Hester?

DAVID. What is the true reason?

MRS. PHELPS. Do you want to tell him, Robin?

ROBERT [*inspired*]. I broke with Hester because of an ideal, the ideal of woman-kind Mother gave us both by being the great woman that she is. I knew I couldn't be happy with any woman who fell short of her.

MRS. PHELPS. What becomes of your "dirty" deal now, David?

DAVID. But I'm not going against that ideal, Mother. That's another thing.

ROBERT. You couldn't have troubled much about it when you married!

MRS. PHELPS. You shouldn't have said that, Robin. I haven't had Christina's advantages. I wasn't given a German education.

DAVID. Now, don't take this out on Chris, Mother.

MRS. PHELPS. I think I know a little of a mother's duty toward her daughter-in-law. Good-night, Robin. I must talk with your brother alone, now. And before you quarrel again, stop to think that you are all I have, you two, and try to consider me. It isn't much to ask and it won't be for long. You both know what the doctors think about my heart! Dr. McClintock tells me I may go at any moment. [*After a pause.*] Good-night, Robin.

ROBERT [*frightened*]. Good-night, Mother.

MRS. PHELPS. You may come into my room later, if you like. I may need you to comfort me after . . . [*She waves her hand. He leaves. She has never taken her eyes off DAVID. When the door closes behind ROBERT, she speaks.*] David, in this moment, when your brother and I most needed your loyalty, you have hurt me more than I have ever been hurt in my life before, even by your father.

DAVID. I never meant to hurt you.

MRS. PHELPS [*working it up*]. You have been wicked, David! Wicked! Wicked!

DAVID. How?

MRS. PHELPS. You have shown me too clearly that what I most dreaded has already come to pass!

DAVID. What, Mother?

MRS. PHELPS. You have loosened the bond between us. You have discarded me.

DAVID [*horried*]. But I haven't done any such thing!

MRS. PHELPS. Don't say any more! Act upon your treachery, if you will, but don't, please, don't say another thing. Remember!

"The brave man does it with a sword,

The coward with a word!"

[*And she sweeps out, slamming her door after her*]

DAVID [*speaking through her door*]. But I didn't mean anything. . . . Won't you let me explain? . . . I didn't know what I was talking about!

[*There is no answer. He rattles the door. It is locked. He comes away, swearing softly under his breath. Then, manfully, he takes refuge in sulks. He kicks off his slippers and throws his dressing-gown aside. He lights a cigarette and flounces into bed, snatching up a book or magazine en route. Just as he is settled, his mother's door opens again very slowly. MRS PHELPS presents a tear-stained face to view and comes in*]

MRS. PHELPS. Smoking in bed, Dave, boy?

DAVID [*starting up*]. Eh?

MRS. PHELPS. It's only Mother. . . . No, don't get up. . . . Let me sit here as I used to in the old days.

DAVID [*sitting up*]. Mother, I didn't mean . . .

MRS. PHELPS. Never mind. I was wrong to be hurt.

DAVID. But you had me all wrong. I mean . . . You and I . . . We're just the same as we always were . . . Believe me, we are . . . Why, if anything came to spoil things between us . . .

MRS. PHELPS [*having conquered the first objective*]. That's what I wanted you to say! Now talk to me about Christina.

DAVID [*taken aback without knowing why*]. Huh?

MRS. PHELPS. Give me your hand in mine and tell me all about her.

DAVID [*obeying rather reluctantly*]. What is there to tell?

MRS. PHELPS. Well, for one thing, tell me you think she's going to like me!

DAVID [*warmly*] She does already!

MRS. PHELPS. Doesn't think I'm an old-fashioned frump?

DAVID. I should say not! How could she?

MRS. PHELPS. She's such a modern young lady. So lovely, but so very up-to-date. You must tell me everything I can do to win her to me. And I'll do it. Though I'm afraid of her, Dave.

DAVID [*amused*]. Afraid of Chris. Why?

MRS. PHELPS. She's so much cleverer than I am. She makes me realize that I'm just a timid old lady of the old school.

DAVID [*with nice indignation*]. You old!

MRS. PHELPS [*archly so brave about it*]. Yes, I am!

DAVID Well, you and Chris are going to be the best friends ever

MRS. PHELPS. You *are* happy, aren't you?

DAVID You bet I am!

MRS. PHELPS Really happy?

DAVID Couldn't be happier!

MRS. PHELPS I'm so glad! And I thank God that when your hour struck it didn't strike falsely as it did for Robin. Because anyone can see the difference between Christina and Hester. Of course, that's a little the difference between you and Rob. You know what I've always said. You are *my* son. Robert takes after his father. But you mustn't be impatient with Christina if she seems, at first, a little slow, a little resentful of our family. We've always been so close, we three. She's bound to feel a little out of it, at first. A little jealous . . .

DAVID Not Chris!

MRS. PHELPS Oh, come now, Dave! I'm sure she's perfect, but you mustn't try to tell me she isn't human. Young wives are sure to be a little bit possessive and exacting and . . . selfish at first.

DAVID We needn't worry about that.

MRS. PHELPS No. . . . At first I thought Christina was going to be hard and cold. I didn't expect her to have our sense of humor, and I don't believe she has much of that. But we've more than we need already. If only she will learn to care for me as I care for her, we can be so happy, all four of us together, can't we?

DAVID. You bet we can!

MRS. PHELPS [*dreamily*]. Building our houses in Phelps Manor. . . . Deciding to put an Italian Villa here and a little bungalow there. . . . [As DAVID grows

restive] But the important thing for you, Dave boy, is a sense of proportion about your marriage. I'm going to lecture you, now, for your own good. If, at first, Christina does seem a little exacting or unreasonable, particularly about us, remember that she has to adjust herself to a whole new world here, a very different world from her friends in Omaha. And you must never be impatient with her. Because, if you are, I shall take her side against you.

DAVID You *are* a great woman, Mother!

MRS. PHELPS. You're the great one! How many boys of your age let their wives undermine all their old associations and loosen all their old ties!

DAVID Chris wouldn't try that!

MRS. PHELPS She might not *want* to. But jealous girls think things that aren't so and say things that aren't true. Morbid things.

DAVID Morbid things? Chris?

MRS. PHELPS Only you won't pay too much attention or take her too seriously. I know that, because you would no more let anyone strike at me than I would let anyone strike at you.

DAVID But Chris wouldn't . . .

MRS. PHELPS As I said to Christina this afternoon "Christina," I said, "I cannot allow you to sacrifice David!"

DAVID Chris sacrifice me! How?

MRS. PHELPS Why, by taking you away from your magnificent opportunity here.

DAVID Oh!

MRS. PHELPS. Be master in your own house. Meet her selfishness with firmness, her jealousy with fairness and her . . . her exaggerations with a grain of salt. . . .

DAVID What exaggerations?

MRS. PHELPS. Well, you know . . . a girl . . . a young wife, like Christina . . . *might* possibly make the mistake of . . . well, of taking sides . . . in what happened downstairs, for instance . . . and without fully understanding. . . . You can see how fatal *that* would be . . . But, if you face the facts always, Dave, boy, and nothing *but* the facts, your marriage will be a happy one. And, when you want advice, come to your mother always.

DAVID. Thanks.

MRS. PHELPS. Now, isn't your mother your best friend?

DAVID. You bet you are, Mummy!

MRS. PHELPS. How long it is since you've called me that! Bless you, my dear, dear boy!

[*She leans over to seal her triumph with*

a kiss. CHRISTINA'S entrance follows so closely upon her knock that the picture is still undisturbed for her to see. She has changed her dress for a very simple negligee. Her mood is dangerous]

CHRISTINA Oh, I beg your pardon!

MRS. PHELPS [*so sweetly, after the very briefest pause*]. Come in, Christina. I was only saying good-night to Dave. Nothing private! You're one of the family now. You must feel free to come and go as you like in the house.

CHRISTINA Thank you.

MRS. PHELPS. We can accustom ourselves to it, can't we, Dave?

DAVID Yeah. . . .

CHRISTINA. Dave and I have got so used to sharing the same room, I came in here quite naturally, and . . .

MRS. PHELPS Here's your dressing-gown, Dave boy. We won't look while you slip it on.

[*Confusedly DAVE gets out of bed and robes himself. CHRISTINA'S eyes meet his mother's. CHRISTINA'S eyes have the least flash of scorn in them; MRS PHELPS', the least quaver of fear. In that glance, the two women agree on undying enmity*]

DAVID. You can . . . you can look now.

CHRISTINA. Are you quite sure I may, Mrs Phelps?

MRS. PHELPS Whatever else you may have taken from me, Christina, you cannot take from me the joy of feeling my son here, once more, in his old room, beside me.

CHRISTINA [*marking up the first score*]. I haven't meant to take anything from you, Mrs. Phelps.

MRS. PHELPS [*so sweetly again*] You know I was only joking. [*She is routed, though*] Good-night. [*The two women kiss*] Don't keep Dave up too late He's very tired [*She pats DAVE, as she passes him on her way to the door*] You must be tired, too, Christina. How is Hester, now?

CHRISTINA Quite all right, thank you.

MRS. PHELPS. Thank you!

[*She blows a kiss to DAVID from the door and goes. CHRISTINA stands motionless. DAVID reaches for a cigarette*]

DAVID You look pretty stern, Chris.

CHRISTINA. Do I?

DAVID. You've been a brick.

CHRISTINA. Thanks.

DAVID. Hester is all right, isn't she?

CHRISTINA. Yes, poor youngster! I shouldn't be surprised if she were really in luck, Dave.

DAVID. You may be right. But it isn't exactly up to me to say so, is it?

[*He lights his cigarette. Her eyes burn him up*]

CHRISTINA Dave. . . .

DAVID. Yes?

CHRISTINA. Whom do you love?

DAVID. You. Why?

CHRISTINA. I wondered, that's all. I want to be kissed.

DAVID. That's easy.

[*He takes her in his arms*]

CHRISTINA Such a tired girl, Dave.

. . . I want to be held on to and made much of. . . . I want to feel all safe and warm. . . . I want you to tell me that you're in love with me and that you enjoy being in love with me. Because just loving isn't enough, and it's being in love that really matters. . . . Will you tell me all that, please, Dave?

DAVID [*hugging her*]. Darling!

CHRISTINA. You haven't kissed me yet.

DAVID [*complying, a trifle absent-mindedly*] There!

CHRISTINA [*as she draws back from him*] That isn't what I call making love in a big way.

DAVID [*repeating the kiss with more energy*] Is that better?

CHRISTINA There's still something lacking . . . What's the matter? There's nobody watching us.

DAVID That's a funny thing to say.

CHRISTINA. You take me right back to my first beau in Germany. He never got very far, either. All the English he knew was "water closet."

DAVID Chris! Shame on you!

CHRISTINA. Shame on you, making me take to low jokes to amuse you . . . I love you

DAVID Darling, darling, Chris!

CHRISTINA I love you! I love you! [*For a moment she clings to him wildly*] I hate being so far from you tonight, Dave. 'Way off there at the other end of the hall!

DAVID. I'm none too pleased myself. It's just one of Mother's fool ideas

[*He lowers his voice whenever he mentions his mother*]

CHRISTINA. She naturally wanted you near her!

DAVID. That's it. [*His eyes fall beneath her steady gaze.*] We mustn't talk so loud.

We'll keep Mother awake. She can hear every sound we make.

CHRISTINA Let her hear! It'll do her good!

DAVID That's no way to talk, Chris!

CHRISTINA. Excuse me I didn't mean to snap. I've been fearfully shaken up tonight.

DAVID. I know you have.

CHRISTINA. And I'm awfully tired.

DAVID. Poor girl!

CHRISTINA Poor Hester! . . . I don't feel like going to bed yet. I want to talk. Do you mind?

DAVID Go to it.

CHRISTINA I've never come up against anything like this before, I've heard of it, but I've never met it. I don't know what to do about it And it scares me.

DAVID. What does?

CHRISTINA I don't know how to tell you. [*With sudden force*] But I've got to tell you, Dave. I've got to tell you. There are no two ways about that

DAVID What are you driving at?

CHRISTINA. Well . . . [*But she changes her mind.*] May I ask you a question? Rather an intimate one?

DAVID If you must!

CHRISTINA Being your wife, I thought I might

DAVID Shoot!

CHRISTINA Do you look on me as apart from all other women? I mean, do you think of all the women in the world and then think of me quite, quite differently? Do you, Dave?

DAVID. I'll bite Do I?

CHRISTINA. Please answer me. It's awfully important to me just now

DAVID Of course I do. . . . Why is it so important just now?

CHRISTINA Because that's how I feel about you and all the other men in the world Because that's what being in love must mean and being properly and happily married. Two people, a man and a woman, together by themselves, miles and miles from everybody, from *everybody* else, glancing around, now and then, at all the rest of mankind, at *all* the rest, Dave, and saying 'Are you still there? And getting along all right? Sure there's nothing we can do to help?'

DAVID. Only we do help, don't we?

CHRISTINA. Only really if we feel that way about one another. Only by feeling that way.

DAVID. That's pretty deep! You do go off on the damndest tacks!

CHRISTINA. Don't you see how that

feeling between a man and a woman is what keeps life going?

DAVID Is it?

CHRISTINA. What else could be strong enough?

DAVID. Perhaps you're right. [*Then, unaccountably, he shies*] But what's the idea in getting so worked up about it?

CHRISTINA. Because it matters so much, Dave . . . just now . . . that you and I feel that way about each other and that we go on feeling that way and exclude everybody, *everybody* else. Tell me you think so, too?

DAVID. Sure, I think so. . . . [*Then, again, he shies from her inner meaning*] You're getting the worst habit of working yourself up over nothing!

CHRISTINA. Do you realize, Dave, that the blackest sinner on earth is the man . . . or woman . . . who breaks in on that feeling? Or tampers with it in any way? Or perverts it?

DAVID If you say so, I'll say he is.

CHRISTINA He!

DAVID Huh?

CHRISTINA Never mind . . . Your brother didn't feel that way about poor Hester, did he?

DAVID Rob always was a funny egg.

CHRISTINA Your mother calls him Robin! "Tweet! Tweet! What does the Birdie say?"

DAVID From all I can gather, Hester didn't feel much of any way about him.

CHRISTINA I know better than that. . . . I've had that child on my hands for the past hour. I've learned an awful lot, Dave About her, and *from* her.

DAVID. Look here, Chris . . . Don't you get mixed up in this business, will you?

CHRISTINA I wonder if I'm not mixed up in it already.

DAVID Well, don't "take sides."

CHRISTINA. I wonder if I can help taking sides

DAVID It's none of our business.

CHRISTINA. I wish I were sure of that. [*Baffled, she again shifts her approach*] Poor little Hester goes tomorrow morning How long are we staying?

DAVID Oh, I dunno

CHRISTINA. A week?

DAVID We can't do less, can we?

CHRISTINA. Can't we?

DAVID. Don't you want to? [*There is another pause before CHRISTINA shakes her head. DAVID frowns*] You see what comes of taking things so hard? I'm just as distressed over what's hap-

pened as you are. Maybe more. But I certainly don't want to run away. It wouldn't be right. Mother'd never understand. I'd feel like a bum going off and leaving her in the lurch after this. Think what Rob's put her through today, and what she'll have to go through with Hester's family and all her friends and everybody else before she's done!

CHRISTINA. She seems to be bearing up.

DAVID. You can't be sure with Mother.

CHRISTINA. Can't you?

DAVID. She's so damned game.

CHRISTINA. Is she?

DAVID. Can't you see that? And, anyway, I've got to look around.

CHRISTINA. What at? The houses in Phelps Manor?

DAVID. I know how you feel, Chris, about Mother's helping hand. But I can't be *throwing* away opportunities, now, can I? With the baby coming?

CHRISTINA [*gravely*]. No, Dave. Of course, you can't. Neither can I.

DAVID. How do you mean?

CHRISTINA. Forgotten all about *my* opportunities, haven't you?

DAVID. What opportunities?

CHRISTINA. My appointment.

DAVID. Didn't Mother say she could scare up something for you here?

CHRISTINA. She thought she might "scare up" a place where I could "putter around" and keep myself "happy and contented" when the "real doctors" weren't working.

DAVID. She didn't mean anything unkind, Chris. Just give Mother a chance and . . . What are you crying for?

CHRISTINA [*hotly untruthful*]. I'm not crying.

DAVID. You are!

CHRISTINA. I can't help it . . .

DAVID. But what's the matter?

CHRISTINA. It doesn't look as if I'm to have much of a show for my eight years of hard work, does it?

DAVID. Mother and I'll dope out something. I couldn't leave her now. You know that. And anyway, I've got to stay till I get my shirts washed. I've only got two left.

CHRISTINA. Then we stay, of course.

DAVID. And I must say, Chris, that I don't think you're quite playing ball to judge my home and my family entirely on what you've seen tonight. Besides, the whole purpose of this visit was to bring you and Mother together and to show Mother that a lady scientist mayn't be as

bad as she sounds. Because you and Mother have just got to hit it off, you know

CHRISTINA. Have we?

DAVID. You're apt to be impatient, Chris, and I'm afraid you're intolerant.

CHRISTINA. Those are bad faults in a scientist.

DAVID. They're bad faults in anybody. . . . Now, you just give me time, and you'll see how things straighten out

CHRISTINA. Aren't you satisfied with the way our meeting has come off?

DAVID. There's no use pretending it was ideal. I believe in facing the facts always. But don't you worry. Mother gets on *my* nerves sometimes. You just have to remember what a hard life she's had.

CHRISTINA. How has it been hard?

DAVID. Oh, lots of ways. My father wasn't much, you know

CHRISTINA. I didn't know. You've never mentioned him

DAVID. He died when I was five.

CHRISTINA. What was the matter with him? Women or drink?

DAVID. Nothing like that. He just didn't amount to much.

CHRISTINA. Made a lot of money, didn't he?

DAVID. Lots

CHRISTINA. And left your mother rich. What other troubles has she had?

DAVID. Well, her health

CHRISTINA. It doesn't seem so bad.

DAVID. It is, though. Heart. And I wish I could tell you half of what she's gone through for Rob and me

CHRISTINA. Go on and tell me. I'd like to hear.

DAVID. I've heard her say she was born without a selfish hair in her head.

CHRISTINA. No!

DAVID. And that's about true. Why, I've seen her nurse Rob through one thing after another when she'd admit to me that she was twice as sick as he was. I've seen her come in here from taking care of him and she'd be half fainting with her bad heart, but there'd be nothing doing when I'd beg her to get him a nurse. She said we were her job, and she just wouldn't give in. And the way she always took interest in everything we did. Why, when she used to come up to school, all the boys went just crazy about her.

CHRISTINA. I'm sure they did. [*But she turns the inquiry into more significant channels*] How did your girl friends get on with her?

DAVID. Oh, they loved her, too! Mother used to give us dances here.

CHRISTINA. Did she invite the girls you were in love with?

DAVID. I never fell in love! Not really. Not till I met you.

CHRISTINA. Darling! [*She smiles rather absently*] What was the name of the one your mother thought could wear my dress?

DAVID. Clara Judd?

CHRISTINA. Weren't you sweet on Clara?

DAVID. I dunno. What made you ask that?

CHRISTINA. Just something in the way your mother spoke of her this evening? It came back to me. Weren't you?

DAVID. Mother thought so.

CHRISTINA. Used to pester you about Clara, didn't she?

DAVID. She was afraid I was going to marry Clara.

CHRISTINA. I see. Anything wrong with her?

DAVID. With Clara? No. Damn nice girl. You'll meet her.

CHRISTINA. Then why didn't your mother want you to marry her?

DAVID. Thought I was too young.

CHRISTINA. When was it?

DAVID. Summer after the war.

CHRISTINA. You weren't so young, were you?

DAVID. You know. Mother.

CHRISTINA. How about your brother? Did he used to fall in love a great deal?

DAVID. I don't know that I'd call it "in love."

CHRISTINA. Why not?

DAVID. It's the family skeleton. She was a chorus girl, my dear. She cost Mother twelve thousand berries.

CHRISTINA. That must have been jolly! Was she the only one or were there others?

DAVID. There were plenty of others. Only they didn't have lawyers.

CHRISTINA. And then Hester?

DAVID. Right.

CHRISTINA. Well, that's all very interesting.

DAVID. What are you trying to prove?

CHRISTINA. An idea this affair of Hester's put into my head. And I must say, it fits in rather extraordinarily.

DAVID. What does?

CHRISTINA. Your being too young to marry after the war and Robert's taking to wild women. . . . And you had to be three thousand miles from home to fall

in love with me! Never mind . . . That's enough of that! Now let me tell you something. Only you must promise not to get mad.

DAVID. I won't get mad.

CHRISTINA. Promise?

DAVID. Promise.

CHRISTINA [*after a deep breath*]. Shirts or no shirts, we've got to get out of here tomorrow.

DAVID [*as though she had stuck him with a pin*]. Now, Chris! Haven't we been over all that?

CHRISTINA. Yes, But not to the bottom of it.

DAVID. What more is there to say?

CHRISTINA [*with sudden violence*]. That a defenseless, trusting, little girl has been cruelly treated! We've got to "take sides" with her, Dave!

DAVID. What's the matter with Hester's own family? This is their business, not ours!

CHRISTINA. We owe it to ourselves to make it our business.

DAVID. I don't see it.

CHRISTINA. Why don't you see it? What have you put over your eyes that keeps you from seeing it? Do you dare answer that?

DAVID. Dare? What do you mean?

CHRISTINA. "Face the facts," Dave! "Face the facts!"

DAVID. Rot! You're making a mountain out of a mole-hill!

CHRISTINA. Cruelty to children isn't a mole-hill!

DAVID. You're exaggerating! Hester's engagement isn't the first that was ever broken.

CHRISTINA. Think how it was broken and by whom!

DAVID. You just said she was in luck to be rid of Rob. I'll grant you that. I haven't any more use for Rob than you have.

CHRISTINA. Who stands behind Rob?

DAVID. I don't know what you mean.

CHRISTINA. Don't you?

DAVID. No.

CHRISTINA. All right, I'll tell you.

DAVID [*quickly*]. You needn't. . . . Are you trying to pick a fight with me?

CHRISTINA. On the contrary. I'm asking you to stand by me.

[*Her eyes corner him*]

DAVID. I won't go away and leave Mother in the lurch.

CHRISTINA. You see? You do know what I mean!

DAVID. I don't! I'm just telling you I won't let Mother down.

CHRISTINA You'd rather stand by your mother than by the right, wouldn't you?

DAVID. Oh, the right!

CHRISTINA. Isn't Hester the right?

DAVID [*cornered again*]. I can't help it if she is. I won't let Mother down.

CHRISTINA. You'll let *me* down.

DAVID. Oh, Chris! It's late. Come on. Let's turn in.

CHRISTINA. You'd rather stand by your mother than by me, wouldn't you?

DAVID. No, I wouldn't. I tell you Hester's none of our business.

CHRISTINA. You'll admit *this* is?

DAVID. What is?

CHRISTINA. This! . . . Who comes first with you? Your mother or me?

DAVID. Now what's the good of putting things that way?

CHRISTINA. That's what things come to! If your mother and I ever quarreled about anything, if it ever came up to you to choose between sticking by me and sticking by her, which would you stick by?

DAVID. I'd . . . I'd try to do the right thing. . . .

CHRISTINA. That isn't an answer. That's another evasion.

DAVID. But why ask such a question?

CHRISTINA. Because I love you. Because I've got to find out if you love me. And I'm afraid . . . I'm afraid. . . .

DAVID. Why?

CHRISTINA. Because you won't see the facts behind all this I'm trying to tell you what they are, and you won't listen. You can't ever hear me.

DAVID. I *can* hear you. And a worse line of hooley I've never listened to in my life.

CHRISTINA [*gravely, but with steadily increasing fervor*]. Have you ever thought what it would be like to be trapped in a submarine in an accident? I've learned tonight what that kind of panic would be like I'm in that kind of a panic now, this minute. I've been through the most awful experience of my life tonight. And I've been through it alone. I'm still going through it alone. It's pretty awful to have to face such things alone. . . . No, don't interrupt me. I've got to get this off my chest. Ever since we've been married I've been coming across queer rifts in your feeling for me, like arid places in your heart. Such vast ones, too! I mean, you'll be my perfect lover one day, and the next, I'll find myself floundering in

sand, and alone, and you nowhere to be seen. We've never been really married, Dave. Only now and then, for a little while at a time, between your retirements into your arid places. . . . I used to wonder what you did there. At first, I thought you did your work there. But you don't. Your work's in my part of your heart, what there is of my part. Then I decided the other was just No-Man's Land. And I thought, little by little, I'll encroach upon it and pour my love upon it, like water on the western desert, and make it flower here and bear fruit there. I thought: then he'll be all alive, all free and all himself; not partly dead and tied and blind, not partly some one else—or nothing. You see, our marriage and your architecture were suffering from the same thing. They only worked a little of the time. I meant them both to work all the time. I meant you to work all the time and to win your way, *all your way*, Dave, to complete manhood. And that's a good deal farther than you've got so far . . . Then we came here, and this happened with Hester and your brother, and you just stepped aside and did nothing about it! You went to bed. You did worse than that. You retired into your private wastes and sat tight. . . . I've shown you what you should do, and you won't see it. I've called to you to come out to me, and you won't come. So now I've discovered what keeps you. Your mother keeps you. It isn't No-Man's Land at all. It's your mother's land. Arid, sterile, and your mother's! You won't let me get in there. Worse than that, you won't let life get in there! Or she won't! . . . That's what I'm afraid of, Dave, your mother's hold on you. And that's what's kept me from getting anywhere with you, all these months. I've seen what she can do with Robert. And what she's done to Hester. I can't help wondering what she may not do with you and to me and to the baby. That's why I'm asking you to take a stand on this business of Hester's, Dave. You'll never find the right any clearer than it is here. It's a kind of test case for me. Don't you see? What you decide about this is what you may, eventually, be expected to decide about . . . about our marriage.

DAVID [*after a pause, with sullen violence*]. No! I'm damned if I see!

CHRISTINA [*breaking*]. Then I can't hope for much, can I? . . . I feel awfully like a lost soul, right now. . . . Oh, my God, what am I going to do! What am I going to do!

DAVID. I hope you're going to behave. You ought to be ashamed. Just as I was bringing Mother around to you and . . .

CHRISTINA [*violently*]. You'd better think a little about bringing me around to your mother!

DAVID Chris!

CHRISTINA. Why should your mother and I get on?

DAVID. Because you should, that's why. Because she's an older woman and my mother. And you know, just as well as I do . . .

CHRISTINA. I know a great deal better than you that your mother dislikes me fully as much as I dislike her. You're wasting your time trying to bring your mother and me together, because we won't be brought. You say you believe in facing the facts. Well, let's see you face that one!

DAVID. I've never heard anything so outrageous. When you know what Mother means to me and what . . .

CHRISTINA [*desperate*]. Your mother! Your mother! Always your mother! She's got you back! Dave, her big boy, who ran off and got married! She's got you back!

DAVID. I won't stand for any more of this. A man's mother is his mother.

CHRISTINA [*crescendo*]. And what's his wife, may I ask? Or doesn't she count?

DAVID. This is morbid rot! She warned me you'd be jealous of her!

CHRISTINA. *Did* she?

DAVID. But I never expected anything like this!

CHRISTINA. What's going to become of me?

DAVID. I won't stand for any more. . . .

CHRISTINA. Hester's escaped, but I'm caught! I can't go back and be the old Christina again. She's done for. And Christina, your wife, doesn't even exist! That's the fact I've got to face! I'm going to have a baby by a man who belongs to another woman!

DAVID. Damn it, Chris! Do you want Mother to hear you?

CHRISTINA. Do I not!

[*MRS. PHELPS stands in her door, white, but steady*]

DAVID [*turning, sees her*]. Oh . . . You did hear!

MRS. PHELPS. How could I help hearing every word that Christina said?

DAVID. Oh, this is awful!

MRS. PHELPS. We know, now, where we stand, all three of us.

DAVID. Chris, can't you tell her you didn't mean it?

MRS. PHELPS [*with heroic sarcasm*].

Christina isn't one to say things she doesn't mean. And I have no intention of defending myself.

DAVID. Mother, please! . . . Chris, you'd better beat it.

MRS. PHELPS. I ask her to stay. She has made me afraid ever to be alone with you again. She must have made you afraid to be alone with me.

DAVID. Nonsense, Mother! She hasn't done anything of the sort. You'd better go, Chris. It's the least you can do after what you've said.

CHRISTINA. The very least. I belong with Hester now. [*She goes quickly.*]

DAVID [*turning wildly to his mother*]. I'll straighten everything out in the morning. I swear I will!

MRS. PHELPS [*in a very different, very noble tone*]. This is an old story, Dave boy, and I'm on Christina's side just as I said I should be.

DAVID. I can't have you talking like that, Mother!

MRS. PHELPS. I accept my fate. You have your own life to live with the woman you have chosen. No boy could have given me back the love I gave you. Go to Christina! Make your life with her! No bond binds you to me any longer.

DAVID. That isn't true!

MRS. PHELPS. I'm not complaining. I'm only sorry for one thing. I'm only sorry to see you throw away your chance here, your great chance!

DAVID. But I haven't thrown it away. I'll stay here and work for you, if you want me to.

MRS. PHELPS. Christina won't let you. You know that!

DAVID. She's my wife, isn't she?

MRS. PHELPS. Think what that means, Dave! Think what that means!

DAVID. And you're my mother. I'm thinking what that means, too!

MRS. PHELPS. Then it *isn't* good-bye? Then I've still got my big boy, after all?

DAVID. You bet you've got him!

MRS. PHELPS [*in triumph*]. Oh, Dave! Dave! Dave!

DAVID. Now, Mummy! [*But a sound downstairs distracts him.*] Hello! What's that? [*She listens, too*]

MRS. PHELPS. Heavens, it isn't a fire, is it?

DAVID. Wait . . . I'll see. . . .

[*He opens the door into the hall and stands listening.*]

CHRISTINA [*below*]. I went into her room, and she wasn't there, and then I

looked for her and I found the dining-room window open.

ROBERT [*below*]. What do you think has happened?

CHRISTINA [*below*]. I don't like to imagine things, but . . .

ROBERT [*below*]. Hester, where are you?

CHRISTINA [*below*]. She's got away! I tell you, she's got away! I shouldn't have left her. . . .

DAVID [*speaking during the above*]. What?

MRS. PHELPS. It's Christina and Robert.

DAVID. Something's happened to Hester.

MRS. PHELPS. No!

DAVID. Chris! What's going on?

ROBERT [*below*]. Hester! Where are you, Hester?

CHRISTINA [*appearing in the hall*]. Hester's got away, Dave. Out by the dining-room window. You'll have to get dressed and find her. She can't get to town tonight in this cold.

DAVID. All right. We'll have a look.

MRS. PHELPS. The little fool! Let her go, Dave!

CHRISTINA. But, Mrs. Phelps, she isn't properly dressed. She didn't even take her coat. . . .

ROBERT [*still calling below*]. Hester! Where are you, Hester? Hester! . . . Oh, my God!

[CHRISTINA has walked to the window to look out. She utters an inarticulate scream.]

DAVID. What is it, Chris?

MRS. PHELPS. Good heavens!

CHRISTINA [*strangled with horror*]. It's the pond! The holes in the pond! Quick, Dave, for heaven's sake!

DAVID. What? . . . Oh! . . .

[He runs out as CHRISTINA opens the window.]

MRS. PHELPS. Dave! . . . [To CHRISTINA.] What is it you say?

ROBERT [*below*]. Dave! For God's sake! Hold on, Hester! Don't struggle!

[DAVID'S shouts join his.]

CHRISTINA [*as she collapses on the bed*]. The pond! . . . I can't look. . . .

MRS. PHELPS. Oh, I've no patience with people who have hysterics!

CHRISTINA. Mrs. Phelps, the girl's drowning!

MRS. PHELPS. Oh, no! . . . Not that! [*She, too, goes to the window, but recoils in horror from what she sees.*] They'll save her, won't they? They must . . .

they must save her. . . . If only . . . [*Then a new fear overwhelms her*] If only those two boys don't catch pneumonia! [*And she leaps to the window to call after her sons as they race, shouting, across the snow.*] Robin, you're not dressed! Dave, get your coat! Are you crazy? Do you want to catch pneumonia?

ACT THREE

The living-room again, and the next morning. MRS. PHELPS is wearing a simple house dress and is busily fixing a great many flowers which she takes from boxes strewn about the stage. After she has been so occupied for a few seconds, ROBERT enters.

ROBERT. The doctor's gone.

MRS. PHELPS [*surprised*]. Without seeing me?

ROBERT. It seems so.

MRS. PHELPS. Doesn't that seem very strange to you, Robin? Of course, I thought it best not to go up to Hester's room with him. In view of the perfectly unreasonable attitude she's taken toward me. But I should have supposed, naturally, that he'd have made his report to me.

ROBERT. He says she may as well go today. He says traveling won't be as bad for her as staying here.

MRS. PHELPS. Did he say that to you?

ROBERT. I couldn't face him. *They* told him the whole story.

MRS. PHELPS. Christina and Hester? [*ROBERT nods*] I might have known they would. . . . And he listened to them and never so much as asked for me?

ROBERT. What of it!

MRS. PHELPS. He'll never enter this house again!

ROBERT. So he said! He also said there's nothing the matter with your heart and never has been anything the matter with it. He said it would take a stick of dynamite to kill you.

MRS. PHELPS. Damned homeopath!

ROBERT. And that isn't the worst.

MRS. PHELPS. What more?

ROBERT. He said that I'd always been a rotter.

MRS. PHELPS. Oh?

ROBERT. And that I couldn't have been anything else—with such a mother.

[*There is venom in this last. MRS. PHELPS'S lips stiffen under it.*]

MRS. PHELPS. I think you might have spared me that, Robin.

ROBERT. I didn't mean to be nasty.

MRS. PHELPS. No. Still, there are things one doesn't repeat to sensitive people. [*But a dark foreboding will not be downed*] Somehow, though, I can't help feeling that . . .

[*She does not say what she sees in the future.*]

ROBERT. Neither can I.

[*She looks at him in quick fear. Then she returns to her flowers with a shrug*]

MRS. PHELPS. Oh, well! There can't have been much wrong with the girl if she's able to go this morning

ROBERT. Thank God for that. [*Then with level-eyed cruelty*] It might have been serious, though, after what you did to the telephone. Because we couldn't have reached a soul, you know. And without Christina in the house . . .

MRS. PHELPS. How was I to know the little fool wanted to drown herself?

ROBERT [*shuddering*]. For heaven's sake, don't put it that way!

MRS. PHELPS. How do you put it?

ROBERT. She tried to get away, that's all. And she got lost in the dark and . . .

MRS. PHELPS. I tell you, she tried to kill herself. I've always suspected there was insanity in her family. She had a brother who was an aviator in the war. Everybody knows that aviators are lunatics. Her own conduct has never been what I should call normal. Everything points to insanity. That's another reason why you shouldn't have married her. Because we've never had any of that in our family. Except your father's Bright's Disease. I shall certainly tell everyone that Hester is insane.

ROBERT. Perhaps that *will* make things simpler.

MRS. PHELPS. As to the telephone, it's the only thing I've ever done to be ashamed of, and I said as much when I did it. She made me angry with her wanton attacks on you.

ROBERT. I didn't hear any wanton attacks

MRS. PHELPS. Where were you?

ROBERT. Out there in the hall.

MRS. PHELPS. You couldn't have heard the things she muttered under her breath.

ROBERT [*with an incredulous sneer*]. No! [*There is a pause, sullen, on his part, troubled on hers*] We're just like Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, aren't we?

MRS. PHELPS. For heaven's sakes, how?

ROBERT. We've got into a mess we

can't ever get out of. We'll have to get in deeper and deeper until *we* go mad and . . .

MRS. PHELPS. Don't be ridiculous.

ROBERT. I'm sorry, Mother, but I can't help regretting.

MRS. PHELPS. Regretting what?

ROBERT [*in a low tone*] Hester.

MRS. PHELPS. Nonsense, Robin! I tell you . . .

ROBERT. What do you know about it? Do you understand me any better than Hester did?

MRS. PHELPS. How *can* you, Robin? I not understand you? Haven't I always told you that however David may take after his father, you are *my* son?

ROBERT. What's that got to do with it?

MRS. PHELPS. Robin!

ROBERT. If I wasn't sure that I *loved* Hester, how on earth can I be sure that I *didn't* love her? I don't know this minute whether I loved her or not. I only know that I'll regret losing her all my life long. [*A movement of exasperation from his mother stops him. Then he concludes.*] Maybe Dave's right about me. Maybe I *am* too weak to love any one.

MRS. PHELPS [*frightened—to herself*]. Dave didn't say *that*!

ROBERT. He said I hadn't any guts.

MRS. PHELPS. Ugh! That horrible word! No, Robin. You must put all such thoughts aside.

ROBERT. I suppose I'll have to take your word for it [*Then with sudden, cold fury*] But I won't next time!

MRS. PHELPS. Robin! You're not holding me responsible?

ROBERT. Who put the idea in my head? Who persuaded me? Who made me promise?

MRS. PHELPS. Are you implying that I came between you?

ROBERT. Well, if you didn't, who did?

MRS. PHELPS. Robin! You ought to be ashamed!

ROBERT. Think so?

MRS. PHELPS. That *you* should turn on me! Some day you'll regret this. It won't be Hester, but *this* that you'll regret. . . . When it's too late.

[*And from force of habit her hand steals to her heart*]

ROBERT. I daresay I've got a life full of regrets ahead of me.

[*He walks sullenly to the window*]

MRS. PHELPS. You frighten me, Robin! I don't know you like this.

ROBERT. Don't you?

[*There is a pause. MRS. PHELPS stares*

at him in growing horror. He looks out of the window.]

MRS. PHELPS. No.

ROBERT [*looking out, his back to her*]. That's too bad. . . . There's Dave putting up danger signs all around the pond! Isn't that like him! After it's too late. [*She turns away from him and dully goes on with her flowers, carrying a bowl of them over to the piano. ROBERT watches her coldly. Then a sudden frown contracts his brow, and he moves toward her*] Mother!

MRS. PHELPS. What?

ROBERT. Don't put those flowers there! They're too low!

MRS. PHELPS. Fix them yourself

ROBERT [*changing them with a jar of something else*] Isn't that better?

MRS. PHELPS. Much. What an eye you have!

ROBERT. Perhaps I'll develop it some day.

MRS. PHELPS. Would you like to?

ROBERT. I've got to do something

MRS. PHELPS [*darkly*] I quite agree. Every young man should have some profession

[*Then, suddenly and involuntarily, the boy reverts and is a child again*]

ROBERT. What are we going to do, Mother?

MRS. PHELPS [*in a low tone*] Do?

ROBERT. What are we going to do, you and I? We're in the same boat, you know.

MRS. PHELPS [*in a lower tone*]. I don't know what you mean

ROBERT. Well, what am I going to do, then? I can't stay here and face people after this!

MRS. PHELPS. What will there be to face?

ROBERT [*crescendo*] You know as well as I do. This story'll be all over this damn town. And Hester's people aren't going to keep quiet in New York. Her brothers go everywhere I go. My friends will begin cutting me in the street.

MRS. PHELPS. If we say she's insane? ROBERT. What difference will that make?

MRS. PHELPS. The *Paris* sails on Saturday

ROBERT [*after a pause, tremulously*]. What of it?

MRS. PHELPS. We might go to Washington to hurry our passports.

ROBERT. Could we get passage, though?

MRS. PHELPS [*slowly*]. I've already wired for it. This morning.

ROBERT. I see . . . Then we're to sneak away like two guilty fugitives!

MRS. PHELPS [*avoiding his eye*]. Sh! Don't say such things!

[*DAVID enters, his cheeks stung crimson by the cold*]

DAVID. Phew, it's cold. The pond'll be frozen again by tomorrow if this keeps up. What's the doc say about Hester?

ROBERT. She's leaving us today.

DAVID. I'm glad she's well enough.

MRS. PHELPS. There never was anything the matter with her.

DAVID. It's easy to see, Mother, that you don't often bathe in that pond in zero weather.

MRS. PHELPS. I hope I have more self-control. Robin, will you see, please, that the car is ready for Hester?

ROBERT. Yes [*He goes*]

DAVID. Anybody seen Chris?

MRS. PHELPS. Not I.

DAVID. No. I suppose not. . . . What's the idea in the floral display?

MRS. PHELPS. I felt I had to have flowers about me.

DAVID. That sounds pretty Green Hattish . . . It has a festive look, too. I don't see what there is to celebrate.

MRS. PHELPS [*noble tragedienne that she is*] Last night, at a single blow, beauty was stricken out of my life. I can't live without beauty, Dave. You must know that. So I went to the florist this morning and bought these. They comfort me . . . a little

DAVID [*with that worried look again*]. I've been thinking, Mother, that maybe, all things considered, after last night, it will be as well for me to take Chris away on Wednesday, say.

MRS. PHELPS. If you like

DAVID. We can come back later. After things have cooled down

MRS. PHELPS. Later, I hope, and often

DAVID. Time does make things easier, doesn't it?

MRS. PHELPS. They say so.

DAVID. When scientists get these wild ideas and fly off the handle, they're just as embarrassed afterwards as any one else would be

MRS. PHELPS. Naturally.

DAVID. And then Hester's running away and the telephone being busted and all. . . .

MRS. PHELPS. I quite understand

DAVID. I knew you would.

MRS. PHELPS [*the boxes and papers all stowed away, she sits down to business*].

What I'm wondering now, though, is what I'm to do with Robin? And I'm afraid you've got to help me with him.

DAVID. I'll do anything I can

MRS PHELPS. If I were well and able to stand the things I used to stand before my heart went back on me—because it has gone back on me—and before my blood pressure got so high . . . I shouldn't trouble you. But as I am, and with Robin on the verge of a complete breakdown . . .

DAVID. But Rob isn't . . .

MRS PHELPS. Oh, yes, he is, Dave! He said things to me before you came in that no son of mine would dream of saying unless he had something the matter with him. I've got to get him away.

DAVID. Send him abroad.

MRS PHELPS. I don't think he ought to go alone. He can't face things alone. He's like his father, in that You're *my* son, you know. That's why I always turn to you.

DAVID. Why not go with him?

MRS PHELPS. Because I'm really not well enough in case anything should happen. . . . And I don't know what to do. Oh, Dave, boy, do you think . . .

DAVID. What?

MRS. PHELPS. That Christina could spare you for a little? Just a few weeks? Just long enough to get Rob and me settled in some restful place? Do you think he would?

DAVID. There's no need of that!

MRS PHELPS. Of course, I'd love to have Christina, too. Only I'm afraid that *would* be asking too much. I mean, making her put off her work when she's so set on it.

DAVID. But Rob isn't going to give you any trouble.

MRS PHELPS. Do you think I'd ask such a sacrifice of you . . . and Christina, if I weren't sure that it's absolutely necessary? Oh, I'm not thinking of myself. It no longer matters. Except that I shouldn't want to die abroad with only Robin there, in his present condition.

DAVID. Don't talk that way, Mother!

MRS PHELPS. Why not? I'm not asking you to be sorry for me. It's Robin I'm hinking of. Because we haven't done all that we should for Robin. And now that I'm old . . . and sick . . . dying . . .

[*She breaks down.*]

DAVID. You're not, Mother!

MRS. PHELPS [*weeping hysterically*]. I can't cope with him. He'll slip back again to drinking and fast women . . .

DAVID. Get hold of yourself, Mother!

MRS PHELPS [*more hysterical*]. And when I think of what I might have done for him and realize that it's too late, that I haven't any more time . . . only a few months . . . or weeks . . . I don't know . . . I . . . [*She really becomes quite faint.*]

DAVID [*snatching her hand in terror*]. Mother, what's the matter? Are you ill?

MRS. PHELPS [*recovering by inches, as she gasps for breath*]. No! It's nothing. . . . I . . . Just give me a minute . . . Don't call any one . . . I'll be all right . . . There! . . . That's better!

DAVID. You scared me to death.

MRS. PHELPS. I scare myself sometimes. You see I do need *somebody's* help.

DAVID. Yes, I see you do.

MRS PHELPS. And so I thought. well, since Dave is going to build my houses in Phelps Manor . . . You're not going to disappoint me there, I hope?

DAVID. Oh, no!

MRS. PHELPS. Well, then you won't want to start in that New York office.

DAVID. Why not?

MRS. PHELPS. When you'll be leaving so soon to begin here? They wouldn't want you.

DAVID. I hadn't thought of that.

MRS. PHELPS. And so I thought: Well, he can't begin here until April anyway, and that leaves him with two idle months on his hands when he might be drawing plans and getting ideas abroad. Think it over, Dave, boy.

DAVID. You certainly are a great planner, Mother.

MRS PHELPS. I make such good plans!

DAVID. When would you be sailing?

MRS. PHELPS. Well, I . . . I *had* thought . . . vaguely . . . of sailing on the *Paris* . . . Saturday . . .

DAVID. Good Lord! Give a man time to think! I want to do the right thing, but I couldn't leave Chris . . . Not with the baby coming, you know.

MRS. PHELPS. But you'll be home in plenty of time for that.

DAVID. That may all be, but, just the same, I wouldn't feel right to leave her.

[*ROBERT returns.*]

MRS. PHELPS. I've just been telling Dave about our wonderful plans, Robin, and he's so enthusiastic! I shouldn't wonder if he came along with us.

[*A sign to DAVID to play up*]

ROBERT. What are the plans?

MRS. PHELPS. Why, your going abroad to study interior decorating, of course.

[*ROBERT looks surprised.*]

DAVID. Oh, is Rob going to do that?

ROBERT. Any objections?

DAVID. I think it's just the job for you. Painting rosebuds on bath tubs.

ROBERT. I can make your houses look like something after you've finished with them.

MRS. PHELPS [*ecstatically*]. My two boys in partnership! Oh, that's always been my dream! Oh, how simply things come straight when people are willing to cooperate and make little sacrifices! If there's one thing I pride myself on, it's my willingness to make little sacrifices. Here we are, we three, a moment ago all at odds with life and with each other; now united and of a single mind . . .

DAVID. This is all very fine. But don't you forget that I've got to talk to Christina . . .

[*But CHRISTINA has opened the door upon his very words. She is dressed as she was when she first came to the house. She wears her hat and her fur coat and carries her bag in her hand.*]

CHRISTINA [*speaking as she enters*]. Well, now's your chance, Dave. What have you got to talk to me about?

DAVID [*staring at her*]. What's the idea, Chris?

CHRISTINA [*setting the bag down by the door*]. I'm going away with Hester. Are you coming, too?

DAVID [*staggered*]. Now?

CHRISTINA. In a few minutes. I came down ahead. No, don't go, Mrs. Phelps. And won't you stay, too, Robert? I think it's best that we should thrash this question out together, here and now, for good and all.

MRS. PHELPS. What question, Christina?

CHRISTINA. The David question, Mrs. Phelps. Whether David is going on from this point as your son or as my husband.

ROBERT. What?

CHRISTINA. Isn't that the issue?

[*She asks the question less of DAVID than of MRS. PHELPS, who turns to her sons in terror*]

MRS. PHELPS. I can't go through this a second time!

DAVID [*quieting her with a gesture*]. No one expects you to. . . . [*To CHRISTINA, pleading almost pathetically.*] You're not going to begin all that again, Chris?

CHRISTINA. I'm afraid I am.

DAVID. But just as I was getting everything all straightened out . . .

CHRISTINA. Were you doing that?

DAVID. If only you'll leave things

be, they'll be all right. You may believe it or not . . .

CHRISTINA. I can't believe it, and I can't leave things be. Oh, I'd walk out without a word, even loving you as I do, if I thought this state of affairs made any one of you happy.

ROBERT. What state of affairs?

CHRISTINA. The state of affairs you've all been living in and suffering from, for so long

MRS. PHELPS. You might let us judge our own happiness.

CHRISTINA. I might, if you had any. But you haven't.

ROBERT. You're quite sure of that?

CHRISTINA. Quite, Robert. You're all of you perfectly miserable! Am I wrong?

MRS. PHELPS. Christina! Please!

ROBERT. Thank you for being sorry for us!

CHRISTINA. You give me such good reason, Robert. Such awfully good reason! Because you're not really bad people, you know. You're just wrong, all wrong, terribly, pitifully, all of you, and you're trapped.

MRS. PHELPS. What we say in anger, we sometimes regret, Christina . . .

CHRISTINA. Oh, I'm not angry. I was, but I've got over it. I rather fancy myself, now, as a sort of scientific Nemesis. I mean to strip this house and to show it up for what it really is. I mean to show you up, Mrs. Phelps. Then Dave can use his own judgment.

MRS. PHELPS [*in blank terror at this attack*]. Oh! Dave, I . . .

DAVID. Now, Mother! Chris! Haven't you any consideration for our feelings? Are they nothing to you?

CHRISTINA. I'm trying to save my love, my home, my husband, and my baby's father. Are they nothing to you?

DAVID. But surely I can be both a good son and a good husband!

CHRISTINA. Not if your mother knows it, you can't!

MRS. PHELPS [*with a last desperate snatch at dignity*]. If you'll excuse me, I'd rather not stay to be insulted again.

[*She is going*]

CHRISTINA. You'll probably lose him if you don't stay, Mrs. Phelps! [*MRS. PHELPS stays. CHRISTINA turns to DAVID*] No, Dave. There's no good in any more pretending. Your mother won't allow you to divide your affections, and I refuse to go on living with you on any basis she will allow.

MRS. PHELPS. I cannot see that this is necessary.

CHRISTINA. It's a question a great many young wives leave unsettled, Mrs. Phelps. I'm not going to make that mistake. [*Back to DAVE again*] You see, Dave, I'm not beating about the bush. I'm not persuading you or wasting any time on tact. Do you want your chance or don't you? Because, if you don't, I'll have to get over being in love with you as best I can and . . .

DAVID I wish you wouldn't talk this way, Chris!

CHRISTINA. Are you coming with me? On the understanding that, for the present, until your affections are definitely settled on your wife and child, you avoid your mother's society entirely. Well? What do you say?

DAVID I don't know what to say.

CHRISTINA You never do, Dave darling.

DAVID I'm too shocked I've never been so shocked in my life.

CHRISTINA [*with a glance at her wrist watch*]. Just take your time, and think before you speak.

DAVID I don't mean that I don't know what to say about taking my chance, as you call it. I can answer that by reminding you of your duty to me. I can answer that by calling all this what I called it last night *morbid rot!* But I *am* shocked at your talking this way about my mother and to her face, too!

CHRISTINA Is that your answer?

DAVID No, it isn't! But a man's mother is his mother.

CHRISTINA. So you said last night. I'm not impressed. An embryological accident is no grounds for honor. Neither is a painful confinement, for I understand, Mrs. Phelps, that you're very proud of the way you bore your children. I know all about the legend of yourself as a great woman that you've built up these thirty years for your sons to worship. It hasn't taken me long to see that you're not fit to be any one's mother.

DAVID. Chris!

ROBERT [*speaking at the same time*]. See here, now!

MRS. PHELPS Let her go on! Let her go on! She will explain that or retract it!

CHRISTINA. I'm only too glad to explain. It's just what I've been leading up to. And I'll begin by saying that if my baby ever feels about me as your sons feel about you, I hope that somebody will

take a little enameled pistol and shoot me, because I'll deserve it.

MRS. PHELPS [*going again*]. I've been insulted once too often.

CHRISTINA I don't mean to insult you. I'm being as scientific and impersonal as possible.

ROBERT Good God!

CHRISTINA [*regardless*]. Speaking of insults, though, what explanation can you offer *me* for your rudeness to me as a guest in your house?

MRS. PHELPS I have not been rude to you.

CHRISTINA. You have been appallingly rude. Second question. Why do you resent the fact that I am going to have a baby?

MRS. PHELPS I don't resent it.

CHRISTINA Then why are you so churlish about it?

MRS. PHELPS Your indelicacy about it would have . . .

CHRISTINA That's another evasion. You're afraid that baby will give me another and stronger hold on David, and you mean to separate David and me if it's humanly possible.

MRS. PHELPS I do not! I do not!

CHRISTINA Did you or did you not bend every effort to separate Hester and Robert?

MRS. PHELPS. I most certainly did not!

CHRISTINA. Then how do you account for the deliberate and brutal lies you told Hester about Robert? Because she did lie to Hester about you, Robert. She told Hester that you never wanted to marry her.

ROBERT [*aghast*]. Mother, you didn't!

MRS. PHELPS Of course, I didn't.

CHRISTINA [*Joan of Arc raising the siege of Orleans*]. I heard her. And I heard her call both of you back, last night, when you ran out to save Hester from drowning. I heard her call you back from saving a drowning girl for fear of your catching cold. I heard her. I heard her.

DAVID [*shaken*]. You shouldn't have called us, Mother!

CHRISTINA Can she deny that her one idea is to keep her sons dependent on her? Can she deny that she opposes any move that either one of you makes toward independence? Can she deny that she is outraged by your natural impulses toward other women?

MRS. PHELPS [*furious*]. I deny all of it!

CHRISTINA. You may deny it until

you're black in the face; every accusation I make is true! You belong to a type that's very common in this country, Mrs. Phelps—a type of self-centered, self-pitying, son-devouring tigress, with unmentionable proclivities suppressed on the side.

DAVID. Chris!

CHRISTINA. I'm not at all sure it wouldn't be a good idea, just as an example to the rest of the tribe, to hang one of your kind every now and then!

ROBERT. Really!

CHRISTINA. Oh, there are normal mothers around; mothers who *want* their children to be men and women and take care of themselves; mothers who are people, too, and don't have to be afraid of loneliness after they've outlived their motherhood; mothers who can look on their children as people and enjoy them as people and not be forever holding on to them and pawing them and fussing about their health and singing them lullabies and tucking them up as though they were everlasting babies. But you're not *one* of the normal ones, Mrs. Phelps! Look at your sons, if you don't believe me. You've destroyed Robert. You've swallowed him up until there's nothing left of him but an effete make-believe. Now he's gone melancholy mad and disgraced himself. And Dave! Poor Dave! The best he can do is dodge the more desperate kinds of unhappiness by pretending! How he survived at all is beyond me. If you're choking a bit on David, now, that's my fault because you'd have swallowed him up, too, if I hadn't come along to save him! Talk about cannibals! You and your kind beat any cannibals I've ever heard of! And what makes you doubly deadly and dangerous is that people admire you and your kind. They actually admire you! You professional mothers! . . . You see, I'm taking this differently from that poor child upstairs. She's luckier than I am, too. She isn't married to one of your sons. Do you remember what she said about children yesterday? "Have 'em. Love 'em. And leave 'em be."

MRS. PHELPS. You are entitled to your opinions, Christina, just as I am to mine and David is to his. I only hope that he sees the kind of woman he's married. I hope he sees the sordidness, the hardness, the nastiness she offers him for his life.

CHRISTINA [*with an involuntary cry of pain*]. I'm not nasty! I'm not!

MRS. PHELPS. What have you to offer David?

CHRISTINA. A hard time. A chance to work on his own. A chance to *be* on his own. Very little money on which to share with me the burden of raising his child. The pleasure of my society. The solace of my love. The enjoyment of my body. To which I have reason to believe he is not indifferent.

MRS. PHELPS [*revolled*]. Ugh!

CHRISTINA. Can you offer so much?

MRS. PHELPS. I offer a mother's love. Or perhaps you scoff at that?

CHRISTINA. Not if it's kept within bounds. I hope my baby loves me. I'm practically certain I'm going to love my baby. But within bounds.

MRS. PHELPS. And what do you mean by within bounds?

CHRISTINA. To love my baby with as much and as deep respect as I hope my baby will feel for me if I deserve its respect. To love my baby unpossessively; above all, unromantically.

MRS. PHELPS. I suppose that's biology! You don't know the difference between good and evil!

CHRISTINA. As a biologist, though, I do know the difference between life and death. And I know sterility when I see it. I doubt if evil is any more than a fancy name for sterility. And sterility, of course, is what you offer Dave. Sterility for his mind as well as for his body. That's your professional mother's stock in trade. Only we've been over that, haven't we? Well, Dave! How about it?

ROBERT. I think this has gone far enough!

MRS. PHELPS. No! This woman has got to answer me one question.

CHRISTINA. Willingly. What is it?

MRS. PHELPS. How old were you when you married?

CHRISTINA. The same age I am now. Twenty-nine.

MRS. PHELPS. I was twenty.

CHRISTINA. Just Hester's age.

MRS. PHELPS [*riding over her*]. I was twenty, and my husband was fifteen years older than I. Oh, thirty-five isn't old, but he was a widower, too, and an invalid. Everyone told me I'd made a great match. And I thought I had. But before we'd been married a week, I saw my illusions shattered. I knew at the end of a week how miserable and empty my marriage was. He was good to me. He made very few demands on me. But he never dreamed of bringing the least atom of happiness into my life. Or of romance. . . . Only a woman who has lived without romance

knows how to value it. . . . That isn't true of my life, either. I didn't live without romance I found it . . . and I'm proud to have found it where you say it doesn't belong . . . in motherhood. I found it in my two babies. In Dave first and in Robin four years later. I found it in doing for them myself all those things which, nowadays, nurses and governesses are hired to do. To spare mothers! I never asked to be spared. . . . Their father died The night he died, Robin had croup, and I had to make the final choice between my duties. I stayed with Robin. You, with your modern ideas and your science, Christina, would you have chosen differently? I knew the difference between life and death that night. And I've known it for every step of the way I battled for Robin's health, every step as I taught Dave his gentleness and his generosity . . . If I made my mistakes, and I'm only human . . . I'm sorry for them But I can point to my two sons and say that my mistakes could not have been serious ones . . . Think! I was a widow, rich and very pretty, at twenty-five Think what that means! But I had found my duty and I never swerved from it. . . . There was one man in particular. A fine man But I resisted. I knew that second marriage was not for me. Not when I had my sons I put them first, always. . . . I shall not stoop to answer any of the foulnesses you have charged me with. They are beneath my dignity as a woman and contempt as a mother. No, there is one I cannot leave unanswered That word "sterility" Sterility is what I offer David, you say I wonder, is sterility David's word for all he has had of me these thirty years? Let him answer that for himself All my life I have saved to launch my two boys on their careers, saved in vision as well as in money I don't offer my sons a love half dedicated to selfish, personal ambition I don't offer them careers limited by the demands of other careers. I offer David a clear field ahead and a complete love to sustain him, a mother's love, until a real marriage, a suitable marriage may be possible for him. And I do not deny that I would cut off my right hand and burn the sight out of my eyes to rid my son of you! . . . That is how I answer your impersonal science, Christina.

CHRISTINA [*before either of the boys can speak*]. I see! . . . Well. . . . It's a very plausible and effective answer. And I'm sure you mean it, and I believe it's sincere. But it is the answer of a woman

whose husband let her down pretty hard and who turned for satisfaction to her sons. . . . I'm almost sorry I can't say more for it, but I can't. . . . [*She turns from MRS PHELPS to the two sons*] It's a pity she didn't marry again. Things would have been so much better for both of you if she had. [*With increasing force, to DAVID*] But the fact remains, Dave, that she did separate you and me last night and that she separated us because she couldn't bear the thought of our sleeping together. [*They flinch at this, but she downs them*] And she couldn't bear that because she refuses to believe that you're a grown man and capable of desiring a woman. And that's because, grown man that you are, down, down in the depths of her, she still wants to suckle you at her breast!

DAVID [*in a cry of horror*]. Chris!

ROBERT [*at the same time*]. Good God!!

MRS PHELPS [*at the same time*]. No!

CHRISTINA. You find that picture revolting, do you? Well, so it is. . . . I can't wait any longer for your answer, Dave.

DAVID I don't think you've any sense of decency left in you. Of all the filthy, vile . . .

CHRISTINA. I'm sorry you feel that way

DAVID. How else can I feel?

CHRISTINA. Is that your answer?

DAVID I want to do the right thing, but . . .

CHRISTINA Remember me, won't you, on Mother's Day! [*She calls out*] Are you ready, Hester?

DAVID. You make things mighty hard, Chris, for a man who knows what fair play is and gratitude and all those other things I naturally feel for my mother.

CHRISTINA Do I?

DAVID. What do you expect me to say?

CHRISTINA. I don't know. I've never known That's been the thrill of it. [*HESTER, dressed for her journey, appears in the door and stands beside CHRISTINA* CHRISTINA'S arm encircles the younger girl's shoulders] It's time, Hester.

HESTER Isn't David coming with us?

CHRISTINA. I'm afraid not.

HESTER Oh, Christina!

CHRISTINA Sssh! Never mind. It can't be helped.

ROBERT [*breaking out*]. Hester! Hester! Couldn't we try again? Couldn't you . . .

HESTER. What?

ROBERT. I mean . . . what are you going to do . . . now?

HESTER. I don't know. [*Then a smile comes through.*] Yes, I do, too, know. I'm going to marry an orphan.

CHRISTINA [*with a long look at DAVID*]. Good-bye, Dave

DAVID [*desperately pleading*]. Chris, you can't! It isn't fair to me!

CHRISTINA [*still looking at him*]. I'm sorry it's come to this. . . . It might easily have been so . . .

[*Her voice chokes with crying. She picks up her bag where she put it down beside the door and goes quickly out.*

HESTER, with a reproachful glance at DAVID, follows her. DAVID stands rigid. MRS. PHELPS watches him.

ROBERT covers his face with his hands. Then the front door slams, and DAVID comes suddenly to life.]

DAVID [*with a frantic cry*]. Chris! [*He turns excitedly to his mother*] I'm sorry, Mother, but I guess I'll have to go.

MRS. PHELPS [*reeling*]. No, Dave! No! No!

DAVID. I guess she's right

MRS. PHELPS. Oh, no!! You mustn't say that! You mustn't say that!

DAVID [*holding her off from him*]. I can't help it. She said we were trapped. We are trapped I'm trapped

MRS. PHELPS [*absolutely beyond herself*]. No! No! She isn't right! She can't be right! I won't believe it!

DAVID [*breaking loose from her*]. I can't help that!

MRS. PHELPS [*speaking at the same time*] For God's sake, Dave, don't go with her! Not with that awful woman, Dave! That wicked woman! For God's sake, don't leave me for her, Dave! [*She turns wildly to ROBERT*] You know it isn't true, Robin! You know it was vile, what she said! Tell him! Tell him! [*But DAVID is gone*] Dave! My boy! My boy! My boy! Oh, my God! Dave! She isn't right! She isn't, Dave! Dave! Dave! [*The front door slams a second time. There is an awful pause.*] He's gone.

ROBERT [*uncovering his face*]. Who? Dave?

MRS. PHELPS. Can you see them from the window?

ROBERT [*looking out*]. Yes. . . . They're talking. . . . Now he's kissed her and taken the suitcase. . . . Now he's helping Hester . . . Hester . . . into the car. . . . Now he's getting in. . . . Now they're starting.

MRS. PHELPS. I loved him too much. I've been too happy. Troubles had to come. I must be brave. I must bear my troubles bravely.

ROBERT [*turning to her*]. Poor Mother!

MRS. PHELPS. I must remember that I still have one of my great sons. I must keep my mind on that.

ROBERT [*with a step or two toward her*]. That's right, Mother.

MRS. PHELPS. And we'll go abroad, my great Robin and I, and stay as long as ever we please.

ROBERT [*as he kneels beside her*]. Yes, Mother.

MRS. PHELPS [*her voice growing stronger as that deeply religious point of view of hers comes to her rescue*]. And you must remember what David, in his blindness, has forgotten that mother love suffereth long and is kind; envieth not, is not puffed up, is not easily provoked; beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things. . . . At least, I think my love does?

ROBERT [*engulfed forever*]. Yes, Mother.

THE END

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THE LITTLE FOXES

(1939)

BY

LILLIAN HELLMAN

*“Take us the foxes, the little foxes
that spoil the vines for our
vines have tender grapes.”*

CHARACTERS

ADDIE

CAL

BIRDIE HUBBARD

OSCAR HUBBARD

LEO HUBBARD

REGINA GIDDENS

WILLIAM MARSHALL

ALEXANDRA GIDDENS

BENJAMIN HUBBARD

HORACE GIDDENS

SCENE

SCENE: *The living room of the Giddens house in a small town of the Deep South*

TIME: *The Spring of 1900*

ACT I — *Evening, after supper*

ACT II. — *Morning, a week later*

ACT III — *Late afternoon, two weeks later*

LILLIAN HELLMAN

It is said that Lillian Hellman becomes infuriated when she is called a woman playwright—and justly so. What male would want to be referred to as a man playwright, or a man lawyer, or a man merchant? Moreover, her plays are no more feminine than masculine; there is neither the feminine softness of Rachel Crothers nor the feminine hardness of Claire Boothe. Although her reputation rests on only five plays (a sixth play was such a failure that it quickly slipped into oblivion), she is regarded as one of the best contemporary American dramatists. She would not let go unchallenged Somerset Maugham's innocuous generalization that the aim of drama is not to instruct but to please: she would demand a definition of "please," and reject the limited meaning of mere thoughtless entertainment. The great plays do not directly instruct, but they illuminate life, and often lead us to examine human conduct in relation to human passions, physical backgrounds, economic and social pressures, etc. Miss Hellman's plays are never didactic or textbookish, but they provoke thought as the destinies of her men and women are determined not only by character and whim but also by man-made environments and ideologies.

Lillian Hellman was born on June 20, 1905, in New Orleans, of somewhat nomadic parents, who migrated to New York in time for their daughter's schooling. She was graduated from Wadleigh High School and New York University but spent her summers in the Deep South with her aunts and grandmother. After college she became a play-reader and theatrical agent, then assistant to Herman Shumlin, who eventually produced all her plays—with a near perfection. After her first success she was in great demand in Hollywood, which was fortunate to secure her services as scenario writer: *Dead End*, *The Dark Angel*, *These Three* (a sterilized version of her play *The Children's Hour* for movie-goers, whose tastes are less rugged than those of playgoers), *The Little Foxes*, and *The North Star* are among her adaptations for the screen. Miss Hellman does not live and write in an insulated ivory tower, but is an earnest, even anxious, student of social and economic conditions and trends, and of world politics. Nervous defenders of the *status quo* deplore her unladylike activities such as jaunts to Russia and to Spain during the Revolution (Hearst papers refused to print her anti-Franco articles) and her joining battle with fascism before it became safe and fashionable to do so.

Lillian Hellman is a conscientious craftsman who, like Ibsen, makes a thorough study of characters and backgrounds before she writes a line of a play. Her mammoth notebooks are filled with detail and seemingly irrelevant data about characters and their activities, accounts of their early years, their homes, their tastes, etc. Only after a thorough acquaintance with her men and women and their possible behavior does she start the actual writing, which usually requires nearly a year. (She seems unable to manufacture a play over a week-end, as Saroyan does.) Her work is never slipshod, and even an unsatisfying play like *The Searching Wind* has the hallmark of her distinguished dialogue, and is free of the banal. It is not to be wondered at that she is one of our most popular dramatists abroad, particularly in Russia. During the feverish years before Pearl Harbor, her violent anti-fascism, her interest in the Spanish Republicans, and her contributions to the liberal journals (she named *P. M.!*) easily persuaded some conservative critics that she was communist in her sympathies. Margaret Harriman, however, in her amusing "profile" of the playwright in *The New Yorker*, declares that "her communist tendency is actually more of a violent anti-fascism and an equally strong instinct to fight for the little people who can't fight for themselves. She is a woman who hates to see anybody pushed around."

One of the deplorable practises of our time is unreasoned name-calling: every conservative is a fascist, every liberal a communist, etc.

Of Miss Hellman's six plays, *Days to Come* (1936), which like Galsworthy's *Strife* and Hauptmann's *The Weavers* deals with industrial discord, was a failure on the stage and a disappointment to the reader. Her first play, *The Children's Hour*, had been a great success in spite of its "unpleasant" theme and harrowing story. The maliciously deceptive title refers to a fiendish girl in a private school who spreads tragic ruin with her lies and gossip; the story was suggested by an actual case in the Scottish courts in the nineteenth century. *The Children's Hour*, one notes with amusement, has been banned in Chicago and Boston. *The Watch on the Rhine* (1941), written and produced before Pearl Harbor, is probably the best of a swarm of American and European anti-nazi plays written after 1933. Although the scene is the quiet living room of a suburban Washington home and there is no exaggerated note of hysteria, the ominous threat of fascism to the decent, humane way of life the world over is clearly suggested, and the one-man fight of Kurt against the evil becomes symbolic of the struggle which men of good will everywhere must engage in to preserve human dignity and self-respect. *The Searching Wind* (1944)—Stark Young says that it is more windy than searching—lacks the singleness of purpose and drive of the author's better plays. Nevertheless, it is full of good things. excellent retrospective glimpses into Rome, Berlin, and Paris in moments of crisis; an excellent picture of a career diplomat who is decent-minded, but irresolute and timid; and at the end a powerful blast of reproach, shame, and scorn which the wounded soldier directs at his parents for their tolerance of totalitarianism and their sympathy with appeasement. But the plot of *The Searching Wind* is lumpy and the love story painfully tedious.

The Little Foxes (1939), the title of which was suggested by the dramatist's friend Dorothy Parker, has more roots in Miss Hellman's own past and experience than has any other of her plays. The scene is in the Deep South that she knows, and the problems of its characters are familiar to her. It is not, however, primarily a social or problem play, but an excellent, if painful, study of a rapacious, hateful family of exploiters and swindlers—always operating within the law if possible. But their wickedness does not generate in a vacuum: social and economic conditions in the South at the end of the last century, cheap labor and a vestigial feudal system, were partly due to the little foxes' unrestrained acquisitiveness; and, in a vicious circle, these wretched conditions contributed to the material prosperity of the Hubbards and their kind. The Old South was the reactionary's paradise: free enterprise for the few, economic regimentation for the many.

Not all the characters are vulpine, however: Regina's husband is not grasping, and their daughter has both integrity and strength of character; and Birdie, a pathetic last representative of a dead aristocracy, has never been touched by the vulgarity and greed of the Hubbards, who stemmed from near white-trash origins. The characterization is more subtle than the plot, which at times becomes melodramatic (and why not?). The popularity of *The Little Foxes* is as surprising as that of *The Children's Hour*. It is a study of villainy, undefeated if not entirely triumphant; it has no audience bait, no theatrical tinsel, no humor, no repartee; its Hedda Gabler-like heroine, an unrepentant murderess, does not destroy herself, as Hedda has the good taste to do. It is one of the few American dramas that have been compared with the plays of such European masters as Ibsen, Becque, and Strindberg. In *Another Part of the Forest* (1946) Miss Hellman turns back a generation to tell us of the Hubbards and Birdie in their younger days.

THE LITTLE FOXES

ACT ONE

SCENE: *The living room of the Giddens house, a small town in the Deep South, the spring of 1900. Upstage is a staircase leading to the second story. U.R. are double doors to the dining room. When these doors are open we see a section of the dining room and the furniture. U.L. is an entrance hall with a coat-rack and umbrella stand. There are large lace-curtained windows on the L. wall. The room is lit by a center gas chandelier and painted china oil lamps on the tables. Against the wall is a large piano. D.R. are a high couch, a large table, several chairs. Against the L. back wall are a table and several chairs. Near the window there are a smaller couch and tables. The room is good-looking, the furniture expensive; but it reflects no particular taste. Everything is of the best, and that is all.*

AT RISE: *ADDIE, a tall, nice-looking Negro woman of about fifty-five, is closing the U.S. windows. From behind the closed dining-room doors there is the sound of voices. After a second CAL, a middle-aged Negro, comes in from the entrance L. hall, carrying a tray with 10 glasses and a bottle of port wine. ADDIE crosses, takes the tray from him, puts it on table, begins to arrange it.*

ADDIE [*pointing to the bottle*]. You gone stark out of your head?

CAL No, smart lady, I ain't. Miss Regina told me to get out that bottle, [*points to bottle*] that very bottle for the mighty honored guest. When Miss Regina changes orders like that you can bet your dime she got her reason.

ADDIE [*points to dining room—not looking*]. Go on. You'll be needed.

[*She arranges glasses and pours wine.*]

CAL [*looking at ADDIE while wiping glasses*]. Miss Zan she had two helpings frozen fruit cream and she tell that honored guest, she tell him that you make the [*steps down to ADDIE*] best frozen fruit cream in all the South.

ADDIE [*smiles, pleased*]. Did she? Well, see that Belle saves a little for her. She like

it right before she go to bed. Save a few little cakes, too, she like——

[*The dining-room doors are opened and quickly closed again by BIRDIE HUBBARD. BIRDIE is a woman of about forty, with a pretty, well-bred, faded face. Her movements are usually nervous and timid, but now, as she comes running into the room, she is gay and excited. CAL turns to BIRDIE*]

BIRDIE. Oh, Cal [*Closes door.*] I want you to get one of the kitchen boys to run home for me. He's to look in my desk drawer and—— [*Crosses D to back of chair R.C. to ADDIE*] My, Addie. What a good supper. Just as good as good can be.

ADDIE. You look pretty this evening, Miss Birdie, and young.

BIRDIE [*laughing*]. Me, young? [*Turns back to CAL*] Maybe you better find Simon and tell him to do it himself. He's to look in my desk, the left drawer, and bring my music album right away. Mr. Marshall is very anxious to see it because of his father and the opera in Chicago. [*To ADDIE.*] Mr. Marshall is such a polite man with his manners, and very educated and cultured, and I've told him all about how my Mama and Papa used to go to Europe for the music—— [*Laughs. To ADDIE.*] Imagine going all the way to Europe just to listen to music. Wouldn't that be nice, Addie? Just to sit there and listen and—— [*Turns and takes step to CAL*] Left drawer, Cal. Tell him that twice because he forgets. And tell him not to let any of the things drop out of the album and to bring it right in here when he comes back.

[*The dining-room doors are opened and quickly closed by OSCAR HUBBARD. He is a man in his late forties.*]

CAL Yes'm. But Simon he won't get it right. [*Crossing to door L*] But I'll tell him.

BIRDIE. Left drawer, Cal, and tell him to bring the blue book and——

OSCAR [*sharply*]. Birdie.

BIRDIE [*turning nervously*]. Oh, Oscar. I was just sending Simon for my music album.

OSCAR [*to CAL who has stopped at door L.*]

to listen]. Never mind about the album. Miss Birdie has changed her mind.

BIRDIE. But, really, Oscar. Really I promised Mr. Marshall. I—

[*CAL looks at them, exits L.*]

OSCAR. Why do you leave the dinner table and go running about like a child?

[*ADDIE crosses around sofa to D S. window, closes windows.*]

BIRDIE [*trying to be gay*]. But Oscar, Mr. Marshall said most specially he *wanted* to see my album. I told him about the time Mama met Wagner and Mrs. Wagner gave her the signed program and the big picture [*OSCAR moves away D.C.*] Mr. Marshall wants to see that. [*BIRDIE moves to him.*] Very, very much. We had such a nice talk and—

OSCAR [*taking step to her*]. You have been chattering to him like a magpie. You haven't let him be for a second. I can't think he came South to be bored with you

[*He turns away, crosses D R.*]

BIRDIE [*quickly, hurt*]. He wasn't bored. I don't believe he was bored. He's a very educated, cultured gentleman [*Her voice rises*] I just don't believe it. [*ADDIE moves up to back of sofa*] You always talk like that when I'm having a nice time.

OSCAR [*turning to her, sharply*]. You have had too much wine. Get yourself in hand now.

BIRDIE [*drawing back, about to cry, shrilly*]. What am I doing? I am not doing anything. [*ADDIE cross U back of sofa.*] What am I doing?

OSCAR [*taking a step to her, tensely*]. I said get yourself in hand. Stop acting like a fool. [*ADDIE crosses to U.S. windows, closes them*]

BIRDIE [*moves up, then turns to him, quietly*]. I don't believe he was bored. I just don't believe it. Some people like music and like to talk about it. [*LEO enters from dining room. REGINA in dining room rings bell.*] That's all I was doing.

[*LEO HUBBARD comes hurrying through the door. He is a young man of twenty, with a weak kind of good looks.*]

LEO. Mama! [*BIRDIE turns sharply to him*] Papa. They are coming in now.

OSCAR [*softly, stepping up to BIRDIE*]. Sit down, Birdie. Sit down now.

[*OSCAR crosses D.R. LEO crosses D.L. to piano. BIRDIE sits down in chair L.C., bows her head as if to hide her face.*]

[*The dining-room doors are opened by CAL. We see people beginning to rise from the table. REGINA GIDDENS comes in with WILLIAM MARSHALL. REGINA is a handsome woman of forty. MARSHALL is forty-five, pleasant looking, self-possessed. Behind them comes ALEXANDRA GIDDENS, a very pretty, rather delicate looking girl of*

seventeen. She is followed by BENJAMIN HUBBARD, fifty-five, with a large jovial face and the light graceful movements that one often finds in large men. REGINA, after a sharp look at BIRDIE and OSCAR, crosses to sofa R. MARSHALL crosses C. to chair R.C. ALEXANDRA crosses D.L. to settee and sits]

REGINA Mr. Marshall, I think you're trying to console me. Chicago may be the noisiest, dirtiest city in the world but I should still prefer it to the sound of our horses and the smell of our azaleas. I should like crowds of people, and theaters, and lovely women — [*REGINA sits on sofa, smiles at MARSHALL and indicates for him to sit next to her.*] Very lovely women, Mr. Marshall? [*BEN crosses to back of settee L.*]

MARSHALL [*crossing to sofa R.*]. In Chicago? Oh, I suppose so. But I can tell you this. I've never dined there with three such lovely ladies.

[*He sits on sofa to R. of REGINA*]

[*ADDIE comes down to table, takes bottle off tray and serves wine.*]

BEN [*crossing to C. nods*]. Our Southern women are well favored.

LEO [*stepping in, laughs*]. But one must go to Mobile for the ladies, sir. Very elegant worldly ladies, too.

[*ADDIE is serving REGINA, who hands a glass to MARSHALL, then takes one for herself*]

BEN [*looks at him very deliberately*]. Worldly, eh? Worldly, did you say?

[*ADDIE serves BEN.*]

OSCAR [*hastily, to LEO*]. Your Uncle Ben means that worldliness is not a mark of beauty in any woman.

LEO [*steps up to above settee L. Quickly*]. Of course, Uncle Ben. I didn't mean—

[*BEN crosses R. to chair R.C., sits.*]

MARSHALL. Your port is excellent, Mrs. Giddens.

[*ADDIE serves BIRDIE, who catches OSCAR'S look at her, and refuses the drink*]

REGINA. Thank you Mr. Marshall. We had been saving that bottle, hoping we could open it just for you.

ALEXANDRA [*as ADDIE comes to her with tray*]. Oh. May I really, Addie?

ADDIE. Better ask Mama.

ALEXANDRA. May I, Mama?

REGINA [*nods, smiles*]. In Mr. Marshall's honor.

ALEXANDRA [*smiles*]. Mr. Marshall, this will be the first taste of port I've ever had.

[*ADDIE serves LEO*]

MARSHALL [*leaning forward*]. No one ever had their first taste of a better port. [*He lifts his glass in a toast, she lifts hers, they*

both drink. Sits back. Looks around the room, smiles. ADDIE crosses to OSCAR U. R., serves him.] Well, I suppose it is all true, Mrs. Giddens. [OSCAR crosses D. R.]

REGINA. What is true?

[ADDIE crosses to table for bottle, takes the tray to table U. C., places it there, then exits L.]

MARSHALL. That you Southerners occupy a unique position in America. You live better than the rest of us, you eat better, you drink better. I wonder you find time, or want to find time, to do business.

BEN [laughs]. A great many Southerners don't.

MARSHALL. Do all of you live here together?

REGINA. Here with me? [Laughs.] Oh, no. My brother Ben lives next door. My brother Oscar and his family live in the next square

BEN [sitting forward]. But we are a very close family. We've always wanted it that way.

MARSHALL. That is very pleasant. Keeping your family together to share each other's lives. My family moves around too much. My children seem never to come home. Away at school in the winter; in the summer, Europe with their mother—

[BEN sits back.]

REGINA [eagerly]. Oh, yes. Even down here we read about Mrs. Marshall in the society pages.

MARSHALL. I dare say. She moves about a great deal. And all of you are part of the same business? Hubbard Sons?

BEN [motions to OSCAR] Oscar and me. [Motions to REGINA.] My sister's good husband is a banker.

MARSHALL [looks at REGINA, surprised] Oh.

REGINA. I am so sorry that my husband isn't here to meet you. He's been very ill. He is at Johns Hopkins. But he will be home soon. We think he is getting better now.

LEO [crosses to above chair L. C.]. I work for Uncle Horace [REGINA looks at him] I mean I work for Uncle Horace at his bank. I keep an eye on things while he's away.

REGINA [smiles] Really, Leo?

BEN [looks at him, then to MARSHALL]. Modesty in the young is as excellent as it is rare.

[Looks at LEO again.]

OSCAR [to LEO]. Your Uncle means that a young man should speak more modestly.

LEO [hastily, taking a step to BEN]. Oh, I didn't mean, sir—

MARSHALL. Oh, Mrs. Hubbard. Where's that Wagner autograph you promised to let me see? My train will be leaving soon and —

[LEO crosses U. to table U. C., pours himself a drink.]

BIRDIE. The autograph? Oh. Well. Really, Mr. Marshall, I didn't mean to chatter so about it. Really I— [Nervously, looking at OSCAR.] You must excuse me. I didn't get it because, well, because I had—I—I had a little headache and—

OSCAR. My wife is a miserable victim of headaches. [Crosses U. R. to above sofa R.]

REGINA [quickly]. Mr. Marshall said at supper that he would like you to play for him, Alexandra.

ALEXANDRA [who has been looking at BIRDIE]. It's not I who play well, sir. It's my aunt. She plays just wonderfully. She's my teacher. [Rises; eagerly.] May we play a duet? May we, Mama?

BIRDIE [taking ALEXANDRA'S hand]. Thank you, dear. But I have my headache now. I—

OSCAR [sharply]. Don't be stubborn, Birdie. Mr. Marshall wants you to play.

MARSHALL. Indeed I do. If your headache isn't—

BIRDIE [hesitates, then gets up, pleased]. But I'd like to, sir. Very much.

[She and ALEXANDRA go to piano. ALEXANDRA brings chair from U. L. corner to piano for herself. BIRDIE moves stool D. S., then takes some music from top of piano. They talk about the music for a second, then study it. OSCAR slowly crosses L. to chair L. C.]

MARSHALL. It's very remarkable how you Southern aristocrats have kept together. Kept together and kept what belonged to you.

BEN. You misunderstand, sir. Southern aristocrats have not kept together and have not kept what belonged to them.

MARSHALL [laughs, indicates room]. You don't call this keeping what belongs to you?

[OSCAR sits chair L. C.]

BEN. But we are not aristocrats. [LEO slowly crosses R. to D. R.—listening. Points to BIRDIE at piano.] Our brother's wife is the only one of us who belongs to the Southern aristocracy.

[BIRDIE selects a book of music. She opens it as ALEXANDRA sits down. She is stopped by "our brother's wife," looks toward BEN. ALEXANDRA looks up at her.]

MARSHALL [smiles]. My information is that you people have been here, and solidly here, for a long time.

[BIRDIE turns back and goes through the pages.]

OSCAR. And so we have. Since our great-grandfather.

BEN [smiles]. Who was not an aristocrat, like Birdie's.

MARSHALL [a little sharply]. You make great distinctions.

[BIRDIE has found the page, and looks up again on "like BIRDIE'S." ALEXANDRA turns head a little to them. BIRDIE turns back to music. LEO is D.R.]

BEN. Oh, they have been made for us. And maybe they are important distinctions. [*Leans forward, intimately*] Now you take Birdie's family. When my great-grandfather came here they were the highest tone plantation owners in this state.

[BIRDIE looks at them. ALEXANDRA looks back to her, takes her hand, pats it]

LEO [steps to MARSHALL. Proudly]. My mother's grandfather was governor of the state before the war.

[BIRDIE turns back to ALEXANDRA]

OSCAR. They owned the plantation, Lionnet. You may have heard of it, sir?

MARSHALL [laughs]. No, I've never heard of anything but brick houses on a lake, and cotton mills.

BEN. Lionnet in its day was the best cotton land in the South. It still brings us in a fair crop. [*Sits back*] Ah, they were great days for those people—even when I can remember. They had the best of everything. [BIRDIE turns to them] Cloth from Paris, trips to Europe, horses you can't raise any more, niggers to lift their fingers—

BIRDIE [suddenly]. We were good to our people. Everybody knew that. We were better to them than—

[MARSHALL looks up at BIRDIE.]

REGINA [a quick look at MARSHALL, then to BIRDIE]. Why, Birdie. You aren't playing

[MARSHALL has been looking curiously at BIRDIE]

BEN. But when the war comes these fine gentlemen ride off and leave the cotton, and the women, to rot.

BIRDIE. My father was killed in the war. He was a fine soldier, Mr. Marshall. A fine man.

REGINA. Oh, certainly, Birdie. A famous soldier.

BEN [to BIRDIE]. But that isn't the tale I am telling Mr. Marshall. [*To MARSHALL*]. Well, sir, the war ends. [BIRDIE goes back to piano, puts down music, sits and is ready to play] Lionnet is almost ruined, and the sons finish ruining it. And there were thousands like them. Why? [*Leans forward*]. Because the Southern aristocrat can adapt himself to nothing. Too high-toned to try.

MARSHALL. Sometimes it is difficult to learn new ways.

[BIRDIE and ALEXANDRA begin to play.

MARSHALL leans forward, listening.]

BEN. Perhaps, perhaps. [*All listen to*

music. He sees that MARSHALL is paying attention to the music. Irritated, he turns to BIRDIE and ALEXANDRA at piano, then back to MARSHALL.] You're right, Mr. Marshall. It is difficult to learn new ways. But maybe that's why it's profitable. Our grandfather and our father learned the new ways and learned how to make them pay. They work. [*Smiles nastily*]. They are in trade. Hubbard Sons, Merchandise. Others, Birdie's family for example, look down on them. [*Settles back in chair*] To make a long story short, Lionnet now belongs to us. [BIRDIE stops playing and turns to them] Twenty years ago we took over their land, their cotton, and their daughter.

[BIRDIE rises and stands stiffly by piano.

MARSHALL, who has been watching her, rises.]

MARSHALL. May I bring you a glass of port, Mrs Hubbard?

BIRDIE [softly]. No thank you, sir. You are most polite

[She turns away and sits. ALEXANDRA tries to soothe her and asks her to play again. She pantomimes that she cannot, and for ALEXANDRA to play alone]

REGINA [sharply, to BEN]. You are boring Mr. Marshall with these ancient family tales

BEN. I hope not. I hope not. I am trying to make an important point— [*bows to MARSHALL*] for our future business partner.

[MARSHALL sits.]

OSCAR [to MARSHALL]. My brother always says that it's folks like us who have struggled and fought to bring to our land some of the prosperity of your land.

BEN. Some people call that patriotism.

REGINA [laughs gaily]. I hope you don't find my brothers too obvious, Mr. Marshall. I'm afraid they mean that this is the time for the ladies to leave the gentlemen to talk business.

MARSHALL [hastily]. Not at all. We settled everything this afternoon [ALEXANDRA starts to play, alone. MARSHALL looks at his watch.] I have only a few minutes before I must leave for the train. [*Smiles at her*] And I insist they be spent with you

REGINA. And with another glass of port.

MARSHALL. Thank you.

[REGINA looks at him, smiles, gets up, takes his glass and crosses to table u.c. MARSHALL rises when she does, then sits.]

BEN [to REGINA as she passes him]. My sister is right. [*To MARSHALL*]. I am a plain man and I am trying to say a plain thing. [*Sitting forward*] A man ain't only in business for what he can get out of it. It's got to give him something here. [*Puts hand to his*

breast. REGINA pours MARSHALL'S drink.] That's every bit as true for the nigger picking cotton for a silver quarter, as it is for you and me. [REGINA hands MARSHALL glass, then sits.] If it don't give him something here, then he don't pick the cotton right. [Sits back. REGINA crosses D. to sofa.] Money isn't all. Not by three shots.

MARSHALL. Really? Well, I always thought it was a great deal. [Drinks.]

REGINA. And so did I, Mr. Marshall.

MARSHALL [leans forward. Pleasantly, but with meaning]. Now you don't have to convince me that you are the right people for the deal. I wouldn't be here if you hadn't convinced me six months ago. You want the mill here, and I want it here. It isn't my business to find out *why* you want it.

BEN. To bring the machine to the cotton, and not the cotton to the machine.

MARSHALL [amused]. You have a turn for neat phrases, Hubbard. Well, however grand your reasons are, mine are simple: [LEO crosses U.C. to table—pours drink] I want to make money and I believe I'll make it on you [As BEN starts to speak, he smiles.] Mind you, I have no objections to more high minded reasons. They are mighty valuable in business. It's fine to have partners who so closely follow the teachings of Christ [Gets up.] And now I must leave for my train.

[Puts his glass on table. All except BIRDIE rise. ALEXANDRA stops playing.]

REGINA. I'm sorry you won't stay over with us, Mr. Marshall, but you'll come again, any time you like.

BEN [motions to LEO, indicating bottle]. Fill them up, boy, fill them up. [LEO moves around, filling glasses as BEN speaks.] Down here, sir, we have a strange custom. We drink the last drink for a toast. That's to prove that the Southerner is always still on his feet for the last drink. [Picks up his glass.] It was Henry Frick, your Mr. Henry Frick, who said, "Railroads are the Rembrandts of investments." Well, I say "Southern cotton mills will be the Rembrandts of investments." So I give you the firm of Hubbard Sons and Marshall, Cotton Mills, and to it a long and prosperous life.

[They all pick up their glasses. MARSHALL looks at them, amused. Then he, too, lifts his glass, smiles.]

OSCAR. The children will drive you to the depot [Crosses to table U.C.—puts down glass.] Leo! Alexandra! You will drive Mr. Marshall down.

LEO [eagerly, looks at BEN who nods]. Yes, sir. [To MARSHALL.] Not often Uncle Ben lets me drive the horses. And a beautiful pair they are. [Starts for hall.] Come on Zan

[Exits.]

ALEXANDRA [crosses to BEN]. May I drive tonight, Uncle Ben, please? I'd like to and—

BEN [shakes his head, laughs]. In your evening clothes? Oh, no, my dear.

ALEXANDRA. But Leo, always—

[Stops, exits quickly.]

REGINA. I don't like to say goodbye to you, Mr. Marshall.

MARSHALL. Then we won't say goodbye. You have promised that you would come and let me show you Chicago. Do I have to make you promise again?

REGINA [looks at him as he presses her hand]. I promise again.

[BEN crosses to hall.]

MARSHALL [touches her hand again, then moves to BIRDIE]. Goodbye, Mrs. Hubbard.

[BIRDIE rises, crosses C.]

BIRDIE [shyly, with sweetness and dignity]. Goodbye, sir.

[He bows, starts toward entrance hall. REGINA crosses to C.]

MARSHALL [as he passes REGINA]. Remember.

REGINA. I will.

OSCAR. We'll see you to the carriage

[MARSHALL exits followed by OSCAR. For a second REGINA and BIRDIE stand looking after them. Then REGINA throws up her arms, laughs happily.]

REGINA. And there, Birdie, goes the man who has opened the door to our future.

BIRDIE [surprised at the unaccustomed friendliness]. What?

REGINA [turning to her]. Our future. Yours and mine, Ben's and Oscar's, the children's— [Looks at BIRDIE'S puzzled face, laughs.] Our future! [After a second crosses D. to BIRDIE.] You were charming at supper, Birdie. Mr. Marshall certainly thought so.

BIRDIE [pleased]. Why, Regina. Do you think he did?

REGINA. Can't you tell when you're being admired?

BIRDIE. Oscar said I bored Mr. Marshall. [Then quietly.] But he admired you. He told me so.

REGINA. What did he say?

BIRDIE. He said to me, "I hope your sister-in-law will come to Chicago. Chicago will be at her feet." He said the ladies would bow to your manners and the gentlemen to your looks.

REGINA [crossing R. to sofa]. Did he? He seems a lonely man. Imagine being lonely with all that money. I don't think he likes his wife.

BIRDIE. Not like his wife? What a thing to say

REGINA [sits sofa R.]. She's away a great deal. He said that several times. And once he

made fun of her being so social and high-toned. But that fits in all right. [*Sits back, arms on back of sofa, stretches*] Her being social, I mean. She can introduce me. It won't take long with an introduction from her.

BIRDIE [*bewildered*]. Introduce you? In Chicago? You mean you really might go? [*Crosses R. to table*] Oh, Regina, you can't leave here. What about Horace?

REGINA. Don't look so scared about everything, Birdie. I'm going to live in Chicago. I've always wanted to. And now there'll be plenty of money to go with.

BIRDIE [*sits chair R.C.*]. But Horace won't be able to move around. You know what the doctor wrote.

REGINA. There'll be millions, Birdie, millions. You know what I've always said when people told me we were rich? I said I think you should either be a nigger or a millionaire. In between, like us, what for? [*Laughs. Looks at BIRDIE.*] But I'm not going away tomorrow, Birdie. [*Takes her arms down.*] There's plenty of time to worry about Horace when he comes home. If he ever decides to come home.

BIRDIE. Will we be going to Chicago? I mean, Oscar and Leo and me?

REGINA. You? I shouldn't think so [*Laughs. Leaning forward*]. Well, we must remember tonight. It's a very important night and we mustn't forget it. We shall plan all the things we'd like to have and then we'll really have them. Make a wish, Birdie, any wish. It's bound to come true now.

[*BEN and OSCAR enter*]

BIRDIE [*laughs*]. Well, Well, I don't know. Maybe. [*REGINA turns to look at BEN.*] Well, I guess I'd know right off what I wanted.

[*BEN crosses to above REGINA. OSCAR stands by the upper window, waves to the departing carriage.*]

REGINA [*looks up at BEN, smiles. He smiles back at her*]. Well, you did it.

[*Grasps his hand.*]

BEN. Looks like it might be we did.

REGINA [*springs up, laughs*]. Looks like it! Don't pretend. [*Rises, crossing U.C.*] You're like a cat who's been licking the cream. [*Crosses to wine bottle on table U.C.*] Now we must all have a drink to celebrate.

[*BEN crosses to table U.C.*]

OSCAR [*from window*]. The children, Alexandra and Leo, make a very handsome couple, Regina. [*REGINA does not look at him. BEN and REGINA drink OSCAR steps in*] Marshall remarked himself what fine young folks they were. How well they looked together.

REGINA [*sharply*]. Yes. You said that before, Oscar.

[*She puts drink down, crosses D. to chair L.C. —sits.*]

BEN. Yes, sir [*Crossing D.R.*] It's beginning to look as if the deal's all set. I may not be a subtle man—but— [*Turns to them. After a second.*] Now somebody ask me how I know the deal is set.

OSCAR. What do you mean, Ben?

BEN. You remember I told him that down here we drink the last drink for a toast?

OSCAR [*thoughtfully*]. Yes. I never heard that before.

BEN. Nobody's ever heard it before [*Turns chair D.R. to face room. Stands in front of it*] God forgives those who invent what they need. [*Holding up his glass*] I already had his signature. But we've all done business with men whose word over a glass is better than a bond. Anyway it don't hurt to have both. [*He sits.*]

OSCAR [*turns to REGINA. Crosses L. to above sofa*]. You understand what Ben means?

REGINA [*smiles*]. Yes, Oscar. I understand I understood immediately.

BEN [*looks at her admiringly*]. Did you, Regina? Well, when he lifted his glass to drink, I closed my eyes and saw the bricks going into place.

REGINA. And I saw a lot more than that.

[*OSCAR sits sofa R., lights cigar, sits back to relax*]

BEN. Slowly, slowly. As yet we have only our hopes.

REGINA. Birdie and I have just been planning what we want. I know what I want. What will you want, Ben?

BEN. Caution. Don't count the chickens. [*Leans back, laughs. REGINA laughs.*] Well, God would allow us a little day dreaming. Good for the soul when you've worked hard enough to deserve it. [*Pauses.*] I think I'll have a stable. For a long time I've had my good eye on Carter's in Savannah. A rich man's pleasure, the sport of kings, why not the sport of Hubbards? Why not?

REGINA [*smiles*]. Why not? What will you have, Oscar?

OSCAR. I don't know. [*Thoughtfully—leaning forward on table.*] The pleasure of seeing the bricks grow will be enough for me.

BEN. Oh, of course. Our greatest pleasure will be to see the bricks grow. But we are all entitled to a little side indulgence.

OSCAR [*looking front*]. Yes, I suppose so. Well, then, I think we might take a few trips here and there, [*to BIRDIE*] eh, Birdie?

BIRDIE [*surprised at being consulted*]. Yes, Oscar. I'd like that.

OSCAR [*looking front*]. We might even make a regular trip to Jekyll Island. I've heard the Cornelly place is for sale. We might think about buying it. Make a nice change.

[To BIRDIE.] Do you good, Birdie, a change of climate. [Front.] Fine shooting, on Jekyll, the best.

BIRDIE. I'd like——

OSCAR [indulgently—front]. What would you like?

BIRDIE. Two things. Two things I'd like most.

REGINA. Two! I should like a thousand. You are modest, Birdie

BIRDIE [warmly, delighted with the unexpected interest]. I should like to have Lionnet back. I know you own it now, but I'd like to see it fixed up again, the way Mama and Papa had it. Every year it used to get a nice coat of paint—Papa was very particular about the paint—and the lawn was so smooth all the way down to the river, with the trims of zinnias and red-feather plush. And the figs and blue little plums and the scuppernongs—— [Smiles. Turns to REGINA] The organ is still there and it wouldn't cost much to fix. We could have parties for Zan, [rises, crosses to REGINA] the way Mama used to have for me.

[Crosses U.C., moving about, dreamily]

BEN. That's a pretty picture, Birdie. Might be a most pleasant way to live. [Dismissing BIRDIE] What do you want, Regina?

BIRDIE [very happily, not noticing that they are no longer listening to her; crosses D.S.] I could have a cutting garden. Just where Mama's used to be. Oh, I do think we could be happier there. Papa used to say that nobody had ever lost their temper at Lionnet, and nobody ever would. Papa would never let anybody be nasty spoken, or mean. No, sir. [Moving about U.C.] He just didn't like it.

BEN. What do you want, Regina?

REGINA. I'm going to Chicago. And when I'm settled there and know the right people and the right things to buy—because I certainly don't now—I shall go to Paris and buy them. [Laughs] I'm going to leave you and Oscar to count the bricks

BIRDIE [turning to OSCAR, crosses to chair R.C.]. Oscar. Please let me have Lionnet back.

OSCAR [to REGINA] You are serious about moving to Chicago?

[BIRDIE crosses U to table U.C., pours drink, drinks it fast.]

BEN. She is going to see the great world and leave us in the little one. Well, we'll come and visit you and meet all the great and be proud to think you are our sister.

REGINA [gaily]. Certainly. And you won't even have to learn to be subtle, Ben. Stay as you are. You will be rich and the rich don't have to be subtle.

OSCAR. But what about Alexandra? She's

seventeen. Old enough to be thinking about marrying

BIRDIE [crosses D. to OSCAR]. And, Oscar, I have one more wish. Just one more wish

OSCAR [turns] What is it, Birdie? What are you saying?

BIRDIE. I want you to stop shooting. I mean, so much I don't like to see animals and birds killed just for the killing. You only throw them away——

BEN [to REGINA]. It'll take a great deal of money to live as you're planning, Regina.

REGINA. Certainly. But there'll be plenty of money. You have estimated the profits very high

BEN. I have——

BIRDIE [does not notice that OSCAR is looking at her furiously]. And you never let anybody else shoot, and the niggers need it so much to keep from starving. It's wicked to shoot food just because you like to shoot, when poor people need it so——

BEN [laughs]. I have estimated the profits very high—for myself.

REGINA. What did you say?

BIRDIE. I've always wanted to speak about it, Oscar.

OSCAR [slowly, carefully] What are you chattering about?

BIRDIE [finally catches his tone, nervously]. I was talking about Lionnet and——and about your shooting——

OSCAR. You are exciting yourself.

REGINA [to BEN] I didn't hear you. There was so much talking

OSCAR [to BIRDIE]. You have been acting very childish, very excited, all evening

BIRDIE. Regina asked me what I'd like

REGINA. What did you say, Ben?

BIRDIE.——now that we'll be so rich. Everybody was saying what they would like, so I said what I would like, too.

BEN. I said——

[He is interrupted by OSCAR.]

OSCAR [to BIRDIE]. Very well. We've all heard you. That's enough now.

BEN. I am waiting! [They stop. Irritated, to OSCAR] I am waiting for you to finish. You and Birdie. Four conversations are three too many. [BIRDIE crosses U.C. slowly, sits chair R. of table. OSCAR nods, BEN waits, sees that everything is quiet. Smiles, to REGINA] I said that I had, and I do, estimate the profits very high—for myself, and Oscar, of course.

REGINA [slowly]. And what does that mean? [BEN shrugs, looks toward OSCAR.]

OSCAR [looks at BEN, clears throat]. Well, Regina, it's like this. For forty-nine per cent Marshall will put up four hundred thousand dollars. For fifty-one per cent—— [smiles]

archly) a controlling interest, mind you, we will put up two hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars besides offering him certain benefits that our [*looks at BEN to include him*] local position allows us to manage. Ben means that two hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars is a lot of money.

REGINA. I know the terms and I know it's a lot of money.

BEN [*nodding*] It is.

OSCAR. Ben means that we are ready with our two-thirds of the money. Your third, Horace's, I mean, doesn't seem to be ready. [*Raises his hand as REGINA starts to speak.*] Ben has written to Horace, I have written, and you have written. He answers. But he never mentions this business. Yet we have explained it to him in great detail, and told him the urgency. Still he never mentions it. Ben has been very patient, Regina [*Sits back*] Naturally, you are our sister and we want you to benefit from anything we do.

[*Looks at BEN.*]

REGINA [*rises. To OSCAR*]. And in addition to your concern for me, you do not want control to go out of the family. [*To BEN.*] That right, Ben?

BEN. That's cynical. [*Smiles*] Cynicism is only an unpleasant way of saying the truth.

OSCAR [*rises. Crosses L. to C.*]. No need to be cynical. We'd have no trouble raising the third share, the share that you want to take.

REGINA. I am sure you could get the third share, the share you were saving for me. But that would give you a strange partner. [*Crosses R. to sofa.*] And strange partners sometimes want a great deal. [*Smiles unpleasantly*] But perhaps it would be wise for you to find him.

OSCAR [*turns, step C.*]. Now, now. Nobody says we want to do that. We would like to have you in and you would like to come in.

REGINA. Yes. I certainly would.

BEN [*laughs, puts up his hand*]. But we haven't heard from Horace.

REGINA. I've given my word that Horace will put up the money. That should be enough.

[*OSCAR crosses to table D L — flicks ash off cigar.*]

BEN. Oh, it was enough. I took your word. But I've got to have more than your word now. The contracts will be signed this week, and Marshall will want to see our money soon after. Regina, Horace has been in Baltimore for five months. I know that you've written him to come home, and that he hasn't come.

OSCAR. It's beginning to look as if he doesn't want to come home.

REGINA. Of course he wants to come home. [*Crossing C.*] You can't move around with heart trouble at any moment you

choose. You know what doctors are like once they get their hands on a case like this——

OSCAR. They can't very well keep him from answering letters, can they? [*REGINA turns to BEN*] They couldn't keep him from arranging for the money if he wanted to——

REGINA [*crossing R*] Has it occurred to you that Horace is also a good business man?

BEN. Certainly. He is a shrewd trader. Always has been. The bank is proof of that.

REGINA. Then, possibly, he may be keeping silent because he doesn't think he is getting enough for his money. [*Looks at OSCAR.*] Seventy-five thousand he has to put up. That's a lot of money, too. [*Sits sofa*]

OSCAR. Nonsense. He knows a good thing when he hears it. [*Crosses R. to table.*] He knows that we can make *twice* the profit on cotton goods manufactured *here* than can be made in the North.

BEN. That isn't what Regina means. [*Smiles*] May I interpret you, Regina? [*To OSCAR*] Regina is saying that Horace wants more than a third of our share.

OSCAR [*amazed, playing along*]. But he's only putting up a third of the money. You put up a third and you get a third. What else could he expect?

REGINA. Well, I don't know. I don't know about these things. It would seem that if you put up a third you should only get a third. But then again, there's no law about it, is there? [*OSCAR turns—crosses to chair L.C.*] I should think that if you knew your money was very badly needed, well, you just might say, I want more, I want a bigger share. [*OSCAR turns—crosses U. back of sofa L.*] You boys have done that. I've heard you say so.

BEN [*after a pause, laughs*]. So you believe he has deliberately held out? [*OSCAR crosses D. to chair L.C.*] For a larger share? [*Leaning forward.*] Well, I don't believe it. But I do believe that's what *you* want. Am I right, Regina?

REGINA. Oh, I shouldn't like to be too definite. [*OSCAR sits chair L.C. To BEN.*] But I could say that I wouldn't like to persuade Horace unless he did get a larger share. I must look after his interests. It seems only natural——

OSCAR. And where would the larger share come from?

REGINA. I don't know. That's not my business. [*Giggles*] But perhaps it could come off your share, Oscar.

[*REGINA and BEN laugh.*]

OSCAR [*rises and wheels furiously on both of them as they laugh*]. What kind of talk is this?

BEN. I haven't said a thing.

OSCAR [*crosses to table R. To REGINA*]. You are talking very big tonight.

REGINA [*stops laughing*]. Am I? Well, you should know me well enough to know that I wouldn't be asking for things I didn't think I could get.

OSCAR. Listen. I don't believe you can even get Horace to come home, much less get money from him or talk quite so big about what you want.

REGINA. Oh, I can get him home.

OSCAR. Then why haven't you?

REGINA. I thought I should fight his battles for him, before he came home. Horace is a very sick man. And even if you don't care how sick he is, I do.

BEN. Stop this foolish squabbling. [OSCAR turns, crosses L.C.] How can you get him home?

REGINA. I will send Alexandra to Baltimore. She will ask him to come home. She will say that she wants him to come home, and that I want him to come home.

BIRDIE [*suddenly*]. Well, of course she wants him here, but he's sick and maybe he's happy where he is.

REGINA [*as if she had not heard BIRDIE, to BEN*]. You agree that he will come home if she asks him to, if she says that I miss him and want him—

BEN [*looks at her, smiles*]. I admire you, Regina. And I agree. That's settled now, and ——— [*Starts to rise*]

REGINA [*quickly stopping him*]. But before she brings him home, I want to know what he's going to get.

BEN. What do you want?

REGINA. Twice what you offered.

BEN. Well, you won't get it.

OSCAR [*to REGINA*]. I think you've gone crazy.

REGINA. I don't want to fight, Ben—

BEN. I don't either. You won't get it. There isn't any chance of that [*roguishly*]. You're holding us up, and that's not pretty, Regina, not pretty. [*Holds up his hand as he sees she is about to speak*] But we need you, and I don't want to fight. Here's what I'll do. I'll give Horace forty per cent, instead of the thirty-three and a third he really should get. I'll do that provided he is home and his money is up within two weeks. How's that?

REGINA. All right.

OSCAR [*crossing c. to BEN*]. I've asked before. Where is this extra share coming from?

BEN [*pleasantly*]. From you. From your share.

OSCAR [*furiously. Crosses R. to table R.*]. From me, is it? That's just fine and dandy. That's my reward. For thirty-five years I've worked my hands to the bone for you. For thirty-five years I've done all the things you didn't want to do. And this is what I—

BEN [*turns slowly to look at OSCAR. OSCAR breaks off*]. My, my. I am being attacked tonight on all sides. First by my sister, then by my brother. And I ain't a man who likes being attacked. I can't believe that God wants the strong to parade their strength, but I don't mind doing it, if it's got to be done. [OSCAR turns, crosses to above chair L.C., facing L. Leans back in his chair.] You ought to take these things better, Oscar. I've made you money in the past. I'm going to make you more money now. You'll be a very rich man. What's the difference to any of us if a little more goes here, a little less goes there—it's all in the family. And it will stay in the family. [ADDIE enters, begins to gather the glasses from table U.C. OSCAR turns to BEN.] So my money will go to Alexandra and Leo. They may even marry some day and—

[ADDIE looks at BEN, then crosses to table R., picks up glasses, then crosses to table U.C., picks up tray and exits L.]

BIRDIE [*rising*]. Marry—Zan and Leo

OSCAR [*carefully—crossing D. to chair L.C.*]. That would make a great difference in my feelings. If they married

[*Sits chair L.C. BIRDIE sits chair U.C.*]

BEN. Yes, that's what I mean. Of course it would make a difference

OSCAR [*carefully*]. Is that what you mean, Regina?

REGINA. Oh, it's too far away. We'll talk about it in a few years.

OSCAR. I want to talk about it now

BEN [*nods*]. Naturally

REGINA. There's a lot of things to consider. They are first cousins, and—

OSCAR. That isn't unusual. Our grandmother and grandfather were first cousins.

REGINA [*giggles*]. And look at us.

[BEN giggles.] OSCAR [*angrily—rises, crosses D.L.*]. You're both being very gay with my money.

[OSCAR pacing front piano.] BEN [*sighs*]. These quarrels. I dislike them so. [*Leans forward to REGINA. OSCAR stops walking at table L. Listens.*] A marriage might be a very wise arrangement, for several reasons. And then, Oscar has given up something for you. You should try to manage something for him.

REGINA. I haven't said I was opposed to it. But Leo is a wild boy. There were those times when he took a little money from the bank and—

OSCAR [*a step in*]. That's all past history

REGINA. Oh, I know. And I know all young men are wild. I'm only mentioning it to show you that there are considerations—

BEN [*irritated that she does not understand he is trying to keep OSCAR quiet*] All right, so there are. But please assure Oscar that you will think about it very seriously.

REGINA [*smiles, nods*]. Very well. I assure Oscar that I will think about it seriously.

OSCAR [*sharply*]. That is not an answer.

REGINA. My, [*Rises.*] you're in a bad humor and you shall put me in one. [*Crossing to c.*] I have said all that I am willing to say now. After all, Horace has to give his consent, too.

OSCAR. Horace will do what you tell him to.

REGINA. Yes, I think he will.

OSCAR [*a step to her*]. And I have your word that you will try to—

REGINA [*patiently. Crosses to him*]. Yes, Oscar. You have my word that I will think about it. Now do leave me alone.

[*There is the sound of ALEXANDRA and LEO opening and closing the front door*]

BIRDIE [*rising*]. I—Alexandra is only seventeen. She—

REGINA [*calling. Crossing in to hall*]. Alexandra? Are you back? [*BIRDIE sits.*]

ALEXANDRA. Yes, Mama.

LEO [*comes into room. Crossing D.L.*]. Mr. Marshall got off safe and sound. Weren't those fine clothes he had? You can always spot clothes made in a good place. Look like maybe they were done in England. [*REGINA and ALEXANDRA enter room*]. Lots of men in the North send all the way to England for their stuff.

BEN [*to LEO*]. Were you careful driving the horses?

LEO [*turns to BEN*]. Oh, yes sir. I was.

[*ALEXANDRA has come in on BEN'S question, hears the answer, looks angrily at LEO.*]

ALEXANDRA [*crosses to BIRDIE*]. It's a lovely night. You should have come, Aunt Birdie.

REGINA. Were you gracious to Mr. Marshall?

ALEXANDRA. I think so, Mama. I liked him. [*LEO crosses to settle L.—sits*]

REGINA. Good. And now I have great news for you. [*ADDIE enters L. with tray with water pitcher and glasses. Crosses to table u.c. ALEXANDRA crosses to REGINA.*] You are going to Baltimore in the morning to bring your father home.

ALEXANDRA [*gasps, then delighted*]. Me? Papa said I should come? That must mean — [*Turns to ADDIE.*] Addie, he must be well. [*Crosses to ADDIE.*] Think of it, he'll be back home again. We'll bring him home.

REGINA. You are going alone, Alexandra. [*Sits sofa R.*]

ADDIE [*ALEXANDRA has turned in surprise*]. Going alone? Going by herself? [*Crosses to above table R.*] A child that age! Mr. Horace ain't going to like Zan traipsing up there by herself.

REGINA [*sharply*]. Go upstairs and lay out Alexandra's things.

ADDIE. He'd expect me to be along—

REGINA. I'll be up in a few minutes to tell you what to pack. [*ADDIE slowly begins to climb steps To ALEXANDRA*] I should think you'd like going alone. At your age it certainly would have delighted me. You're a strange girl, Alexandra. Addie has babied you so much.

ALEXANDRA. I only thought it would be more fun if Addie and I went together.

BIRDIE [*timidly*]. Maybe I could go with her, Regina. I'd really like to.

REGINA. She is going alone. She is getting old enough to take some responsibilities.

OSCAR. She'd better learn now. She's almost old enough to get married. [*Jovially, to LEO, slapping him on shoulder.*] Eh, son?

LEO. Huh?

OSCAR [*annoyed with LEO for not understanding*]. Old enough to get married, you're thinking, eh?

LEO. Oh, yes, sir. [*Feebly*]. Lots of girls get married at Zan's age. Look at Mary Prester and Johanna and—

REGINA. Well, she's not getting married tomorrow. But she is going to Baltimore tomorrow, so let's talk about that. [*OSCAR turns away—crosses U.L. To ALEXANDRA.*] You'll be glad to have Papa home again.

ALEXANDRA. I wanted to go before, Mama. You remember that. [*Crosses R.C.*] But you said you couldn't go, and that I couldn't go alone.

REGINA. I've changed my mind [*Too casually.*] You're to tell Papa how much you missed him, and that he must come home now—for your sake. Tell him that you need him home.

ALEXANDRA [*crosses to above table R.*]. Need him home? I don't understand.

REGINA. There is nothing for you to understand. You are simply to say what I have told you.

BIRDIE [*rises, a step D. to REGINA*]. He may be too sick. She couldn't do that—

ALEXANDRA. Yes. He may be too sick to travel. I couldn't make him think he had to come home for me, if he is too sick to—

REGINA [*looks at her, sharply, challengingly*]. You couldn't do what I tell you to do, Alexandra?

ALEXANDRA [*looks at her, quietly*]. No. I couldn't. If I thought it would hurt him.

REGINA [*after a second's silence, smiles*].

pleasantly). But you are doing this for Papa's own good. [*Takes ALEXANDRA'S hand.*] You must let me be the judge of his condition. It's the best possible cure for him to come home and be taken care of here. He mustn't stay there any longer and listen to those alarmist doctors. You are doing this entirely for his sake. Tell your Papa that I want him to come home, that I miss him very much.

ALEXANDRA [*slowly*]. Yes, Mama.

REGINA [*to the rest. Rises*]. I must go and start getting Alexandra ready now. [*Crosses u.c. to stairs.*] Why don't you all go home?

BEN [*rises*]. I'll attend to the railroad ticket. One of the boys will bring it over. [*Crosses u.r. back of sofa.*] Good night, everybody. Have a nice trip, Alexandra. The food on the train is very good. The celery is so crisp. Have a good time and act like a little lady. [*He exits.*]

REGINA [*on landing*]. Good night, Ben. Good night, Oscar— [*Playfully*] Don't be so glum, Oscar. It makes you look as if you had chronic indigestion

[*He does not answer.*]

BIRDIE Good night, Regina.

REGINA. Good night, Birdie

[*Exit upstairs*]

OSCAR [*starts for hall, to BIRDIE and LEO*]. Come along.

LEO [*as he crosses u.r. to ALEXANDRA*]. Imagine your not wanting to go! What a little fool you are. [*ALEXANDRA crosses d.l.*] Wish it were me. What I could do in a place like Baltimore!

ALEXANDRA [*angrily, looking away from him*] Mind your business. I can guess the kind of things you could do.

LEO [*laughs*]. Oh, no, you couldn't.

[*He exits.*]

REGINA [*calling from top of stairs*] Come on, Alexandra.

BIRDIE [*quickly, crossing d.l. to ALEXANDRA, softly*] Zan

ALEXANDRA [*quietly*]. I don't understand about my going, Aunt Birdie. [*Shrugs*] But anyway, Papa will be home again. [*Pats BIRDIE'S arm*] Don't worry about me. I can take care of myself. Really I can.

BIRDIE [*shakes her head, softly*]. That's not what I'm worried about, Zan—

ALEXANDRA [*comes close to her*]. What's the matter?

BIRDIE. It's about Leo—

ALEXANDRA [*whispering*]. He beat the horses. That's why we were late getting back. We had to wait until they cooled off. He always beats the horses as if—

BIRDIE [*whispering frantically, holding ALEXANDRA'S hands*]. He's my son My own son. But you are more to me—more to

me than my own child. I love you more than anybody else—

ALEXANDRA. Don't worry about the horses I'm sorry I told you

BIRDIE [*her voice rising*]. I am not worrying about the horses. I am worrying about you. You are not going to marry Leo I am not going to let them do that to you—

ALEXANDRA. Marry? To Leo? [*Laughs.*] I wouldn't marry, Aunt Birdie. I've never even thought about it—

BIRDIE. Hush! But they have thought about it [*Wildly*]. Zan, I couldn't stand to think about such a thing. You and—

[*OSCAR has come into doorway on ALEXANDRA'S speech. He is standing quietly, listening*]

ALEXANDRA [*laughs*]. But I'm not going to marry And I'm certainly not going to marry Leo.

[*OSCAR takes one step into the room*]

BIRDIE Don't you understand? They'll make you. They'll make you—

ALEXANDRA [*takes BIRDIE'S hands, quietly, firmly*]. That's foolish, Aunt Birdie. I'm grown now. Nobody can make me do anything.

BIRDIE. I just couldn't stand—

OSCAR [*sharply*]. Birdie. [*BIRDIE looks up, draws quickly away from ALEXANDRA. She stands rigid, fearful. Quietly.*] Birdie, get your hat and coat

ADDIE [*unseen, calls from upstairs hallway*] Come on, baby Your Mama's waiting for you, and she ain't nobody to keep waiting.

ALEXANDRA. All right. [*Then softly, embracing BIRDIE.*] Good night, Aunt Birdie. [*Crosses upstairs. As she passes OSCAR.*] Good night, Uncle Oscar. [*BIRDIE begins to move slowly towards door as ALEXANDRA climbs the stairs. ALEXANDRA is almost out of view when BIRDIE reaches OSCAR in doorway. As BIRDIE quickly attempts to pass him, he slaps her hard, across the face. BIRDIE cries out, puts her hand to her face. On the cry, ALEXANDRA turns, begins to run down the stairs*] Aunt Birdie! What happened? What happened? I—

BIRDIE [*softly, without turning*]. Nothing, darling. Nothing happened. [*Quickly, as if anxious to keep ALEXANDRA from coming close.*] Now go to bed [*OSCAR exits*] Nothing happened. [*Turns to ALEXANDRA, who is holding her hand.*] I only—I only twisted my ankle.

[*She goes out. ALEXANDRA stands on stairs looking after her as if she were puzzled and frightened.*]

ACT TWO

SCENE: *Same as ACT I. A week later, morning.*

AT RISE: *The light comes from the open shutter of the R. window; the other shutters are tightly closed. ADDIE is standing at window, looking out. Near the dining-room doors are brooms, mops, rags, etc. After a second OSCAR comes into entrance hall, looks in the room, shivers, decides not to take his hat and coat off, comes into the room. At the sound of the door, ADDIE turns to see who has come in.*

ADDIE [*without interest*]. Oh, it's you, Mr. Oscar.

[*ADDIE turns back to window, closes windows.*]

OSCAR. What is this? It's not night. [*Crosses to above sofa R.*] What's the matter here? [*Shivers. ADDIE crosses to U.W. windows*] Fine thing at this time of the morning. Blinds all closed. [*ADDIE begins to open shutters. The room lights up.*] Where's Miss Regina? It's cold in here. [*He crosses c.*]

ADDIE. Miss Regina ain't down yet.

OSCAR. She had any word?

ADDIE [*wearily, crossing D. to chair D.R. picks up feather duster*]. No sir.

OSCAR [*crossing to settee L.*]. Wouldn't you think a girl that age could get on a train at one place and have sense enough to get off at another? [*He sits settee*]

ADDIE [*at chair D.R.*]. Something must have happened. [*Crosses to sofa R. for broom.*] If Zan say she was coming last night, she's coming last night. Unless something happened [*Crosses U.L.*] Sure fire disgrace to let a baby like that go all that way alone to bring home a sick man without—

OSCAR. You do a lot of judging around here, Addie, eh? Judging of your white folks, I mean

ADDIE [*looks at him, sighs*]. I'm tired. I been up all night watching for them.

REGINA [*who cannot be seen. Speaking from upstairs hall*]. Who's downstairs, Addie? [*She appears in a dressing gown, peers down from landing. ADDIE picks up carpet sweeper, dustpan and brush, standing R. of dining-room doors, exits L.*] Oh, it's you, Oscar. What are you doing here so early? I haven't been down yet. I'm not finished dressing.

OSCAR [*speaking up to her*]. You had any word from them?

REGINA. No.

OSCAR. Then something certainly has happened. People don't just say they are arriving on Thursday night, and they haven't come by Friday morning.

REGINA. Oh, nothing has happened.

Alexandra just hasn't got sense enough to send a message.

OSCAR [*rises, crosses U.C.*]. If nothing's happened, then why aren't they here?

REGINA. You asked me that ten times last night. My, you do fret so, Oscar. Anything might have happened. They may have missed connections in Atlanta, the train may have been delayed—oh, a hundred things could have kept them.

OSCAR [*crosses R.*]. Where's Ben?

REGINA [*as she disappears up stairs*]. Where should he be? At home, probably. Really, Oscar, I don't tuck him in his bed and I don't take him out of it. Have some coffee and don't worry so much.

OSCAR. Have some coffee? [*Crosses U.C.*] There isn't any coffee. [*Looks at his watch, shakes his head. After a second CAL enters with a large silver tray, coffee urn, 6 small cups, newspaper. He puts tray on table U.C., begins to set out cups*] Oh, there you are. [*Crosses D.C.*] Is everything in this house always late? [*Takes off coat and hat*]

CAL [*looks at him surprised*]. You ain't out shooting this morning, Mr. Oscar?

OSCAR [*places coat and hat on chair U.C.*]. First day I missed since I had a head cold. First day I missed in eight years.

[*Crosses D.L., sits on settee*]

CAL. Yes, sir. I bet you. Simon he say you had a mighty good day yesterday morning. That's what Simon say.

[*Brings OSCAR small coffee and newspaper.*]

OSCAR. Pretty good, pretty good

[*Opens newspaper.*]

CAL [*laughs, slyly, puts coffee cup on table L. of settee, moves table toward OSCAR*]. Bet you got enough bob-white and squirrel to give every nigger in town a Jesus-party. Most of 'em ain't had no meat since the cotton picking was over. Bet they'd give anything for a little piece of that meat—

OSCAR [*turns his head to look at CAL*]. Cal, if I catch a nigger in this town going shooting, you know what's going to happen.

[*LEO enters.*]

CAL [*hastily steps back*]. Yes sir, Mr. Oscar. I didn't say nothing about nothing. It was Simon who told me and—Morning, Mr. Leo. You gentlemen having your breakfast with us here?

LEO [*comes immediately to OSCAR*]. The boys in the bank don't know a thing. They haven't had any message.

[*CAL waits for an answer, gets none, shrugs, moves to door L., looks back at them, exits.*]

OSCAR [*peers at LEO*]. What you doing here, son?

LEO. You told me to find out if the boys at the bank had any message from Uncle Horace or Zan—

OSCAR I told you if they had a message to bring it here. I told you that if they didn't have a message to stay at the bank and do your work.

LEO. Oh, I guess I misunderstood.

OSCAR. You didn't misunderstand. You just were looking for any excuse to take an hour off [*LEO crosses to table u c, pours coffee*] You got to stop that kind of thing. You got to start settling down. You going to be a married man one of these days.

LEO. Yes, sir.

OSCAR You also got to stop with that woman in Mobile. [*As LEO is about to speak, he puts up a hand. LEO turns back for sugar.*] You're young and I haven't got no objections to outside women That is, I haven't got no objections so long as they don't interfere with serious things Outside women are all right in their place, but *now* isn't their place! You got to realize that.

LEO [*nods*] Yes, sir. I'll tell her. She'll act all right about it. [*He drinks his coffee.*]

OSCAR. Also, you got to start working harder at the bank. You got to convince your Uncle Horace you going to make a fit husband for Alexandra.

LEO [*crossing D to back of settee L.*] What do you think has happened to them? Supposed to be here last night— [*Laughs—crosses to c*] Bet you Uncle Ben's mighty worried. Seventy-five thousand dollars worried

OSCAR [*smiles happily*] Ought to be worried. Damn well ought to be First he don't answer the letters, then he don't come home— [*Giggles*]

LEO [*crosses L. to chair L.C.*] What will happen if Uncle Horace don't come home or don't—?

OSCAR. Or don't put up the money? Oh, we'll get it from outside. Easy enough.

LEO [*surprised*]. But you don't want outsiders. [*Sits chair L.C.*]

OSCAR. What do I care who gets my share? I been shaved already. Serve Ben right if he had to give away some of his.

LEO. Damn shame what they did to you. [*Picks up cup to drink.*]

OSCAR [*looking up the stairs*]. Don't talk so loud. [*LEO starts to speak*] Don't you worry. When I die, you'll have as much as the rest. You might have yours and Alexandra's. I'm not so easily licked.

LEO [*smoothly*]. I wasn't thinking of myself, Papa—

OSCAR. Well, you should be, you should be. It's every man's duty to think of himself.

LEO [*turns to OSCAR*]. You think Uncle Horace don't want to go in on this?

OSCAR [*giggles*]. That's my hunch. [*LEO*

drinks] He hasn't showed any signs of *loving* it yet. [*LEO looks at empty cup.*]

LEO [*laughs—turns front*]. But he hasn't listened to Aunt Regina yet, either Oh, he'll go along. It's too good a thing. [*Rises.*] Why wouldn't he want to? [*Crosses u c. to pour another coffee*] He's got plenty and plenty to invest with. He don't even have to sell anything. Eighty-eight thousand worth of Union Pacific bonds sitting right in his safe deposit box. All he's got to do is open the box.

[*Turns front.*]

OSCAR [*after a pause Looks at his watch*]. Mighty late breakfast in this fancy house. [*LEO drinks*] Yes, he's had those bonds for fifteen years. Bought them when they were low and just locked them up.

LEO [*nods—sleeps D.C.*]. Yeah. Just has to open the box and take them out That's all. Easy as easy can be. [*Laughs.*] The things in that box! There's all those bonds, looking mighty fine [*OSCAR slowly puts down his newspaper and turns to LEO*] Then right next to them is a baby shoe of Zan's and a cheap old cameo on a string, and, and—nobody'd believe this—a piece of an old violin. Not even a whole violin Just a piece of an old thing, a piece of a violin.

OSCAR [*very softly, as if he were trying to control his voice—looking at LEO*]. A piece of a violin! What do you think of that!

LEO. Yes, siree [*Crossing R. to table, puts cup down*] A lot of other crazy things, too. [*Turns to OSCAR who is staring at him*] A poem, I guess it is, signed with his mother's name, and two old school books with notes and—

[*LEO catches OSCAR'S look. His voice trails off. He turns his head away*]

OSCAR [*very softly*] How do you know what's in the box, son?

LEO [*stops, draws back, frightened, realizing what he has said. Then after a second, he manages to speak*]. Oh, well, well—er [*Crossing L. to chair L.C.*] Well, one of the boys, sir It was one of the boys at the bank. He took old Mander's keys It was Joe Horns. He just up and took Mander's keys and, and—well, took the box out [*Quickly.*] Then they all asked me if I wanted to see, too. So I looked a little, I guess, but then I made them close up the box quick and I told them never—

OSCAR [*looks at him*]. Joe Horns, you say? He opened it?

LEO. Yes, sir, yes he did. My word of honor. [*Very nervously looking away.*] I suppose that don't excuse me for looking,— [*looking at OSCAR*] but I did make him close it up and put the keys back in Mander's drawer—

OSCAR [*leans forward, very softly*]. Tell me

the truth, Leo. I am not going to be angry with you. Did you open the box yourself?

LEO. *No sir, I didn't.* I told you I didn't. No, I—

OSCAR [*irritated, patient*] I am not going to be angry with you. [*LEO turns—crosses to table R. Watching LEO carefully.*] Sometimes a young fellow deserves credit for looking round him to see what's going on. Sometimes that's a good sign in a fellow your age. [*LEO turns head to listen. OSCAR rises*] Many great men have made their fortune with their eyes. [*Crosses to C.*] Did you open the box?

LEO [*very puzzled*]. No, I—

OSCAR [*taking a step to him*]. Did you open the box? It may have been— [*moving to LEO*] well, it may have been a good thing if you had.

LEO [*after a long pause*]. I opened it.

OSCAR [*quickly*]. Is that the truth? [*LEO nods.*] Does anybody else know that you opened it? Come, Leo, don't be afraid of speaking the truth to me.

LEO. No. Nobody knew. Nobody was in the bank when I did it. But—

OSCAR. Did your Uncle Horace ever know you opened it?

LEO [*shakes his head*]. He only looks in it once every six months when he cuts the coupons, and sometimes Mander even does that for him. Uncle Horace don't even have the keys. Mander keeps them for him. Imagine not looking at all that. You can bet if I had the bonds, I'd watch 'em like—

OSCAR. If you had them. [*Turns front, crossing R. to sofa. LEO watches him*] If you had them. Then you could have the share in the mill, you and me. [*Turns to LEO*] A fine, big share, too. [*Pauses—shrugs*] Well, a man can't be shot for wanting to see his son get on in the world, can he, boy?

[*OSCAR sits on sofa R*]

LEO [*looks up, begins to understand*] No, he can't! Natural enough. [*Laughs.*] But I haven't got the bonds and Uncle Horace has. And now we can just sit back and wait to be a millionaire.

OSCAR [*innocently*]. You think your Uncle Horace likes you well enough to lend you the bonds if he decides not to use them himself?

LEO. Papa, it must be that you haven't had your breakfast! [*Laughs loudly.*] Lend me the bonds! My God—

OSCAR [*disappointed*]. No, I suppose not. Just a fancy of mine. A loan for three months, maybe four, easy enough for us to pay it back then. Anyway, this is only April— [*Slowly counting the months on his fingers.*] and if he doesn't look at them until Fall, he wouldn't even miss them out of the box.

LEO. That's it. He wouldn't even miss them. Ah, well—

OSCAR. No, sir. Wouldn't even miss them. How could he miss them if he never looks at them? [*Sighs as LEO stares at him.*] Well, here we are sitting around waiting for him to come home and invest his money in something he hasn't lifted his hand to get. [*LEO crosses L.C.*] But I can't help thinking he's acting strange. You laugh when I say he could lend you the bonds if he's not going to use them himself. But would it hurt him?

LEO [*slowly looking at OSCAR*] No, No, it wouldn't.

OSCAR. People ought to help other people. But that's not always the way it happens. [*BEN enters, hangs his coat and hat on hall tree. Very carefully*] And so sometimes you got to think of yourself. [*As LEO stares at him, BEN appears in doorway*] Morning, Ben.

BEN [*coming in, carrying his newspaper. Crosses to chair R.C.*] Fine, sunny morning. Any news from the runaways?

[*BEN sits chair R.C.*]

REGINA [*on landing*] There's no news or you would have heard it. [*Coming down stairs*] Quite a convention so early in the morning, aren't you all?

[*Goes to coffee urn*]

OSCAR. You rising mighty late these days. Is that the way they do things in Chicago society?

BEN [*looking at his paper*] Old Carter died up in Senateville. Eighty-one is a good time for us all, eh? What do you think has really happened to Horace, Regina?

REGINA. Nothing.

BEN [*too casually, still reading*] You don't think maybe he never started from Baltimore and never intends to start?

REGINA [*irritated—steps D*]. Of course they've started. Didn't I have a letter from Alexandra? What is so strange about people arriving late? [*Crosses U to table—pours coffee.*] He has that cousin in Savannah he's so fond of. He may have stopped to see him. They'll be along today some time, very flattered that you and Oscar are so worried about them.

[*Steps D*]

BEN. I'm a natural worrier. Especially when I am getting ready to close a business deal and one of my partners remains silent and invisible.

REGINA [*laughs*]. Oh, is that it? I thought you were worried about Horace's health.

OSCAR. Oh, that too. Who could help but worry? I'm worried. This is the first day I haven't shot since my head cold.

REGINA [*starts toward dining room*]. Then you haven't had your breakfast. Come along. [*OSCAR and LEO follow her. BEN remains seated.*]

BEN. Regina. [*She turns at dining-room*

door.] That cousin of Horace's has been dead for years and, in any case, the train does not go through Savannah.

REGINA [laughs. Then continues into dining room, seats herself, motions to LEO and OSCAR] Did he die? You're always remembering about people dying. [BEN rises, leaves newspaper on table, crosses U L. to dining room.] Now I intend to eat my breakfast in peace, and read my newspaper.

[Rings bell]

BEN [goes toward dining room as he talks]. This is second breakfast for me. My first was bad. Celia ain't the cook she used to be. Too old to have taste any more. If she hadn't belonged to Mama, I'd send her off to the country.

[CAL is putting two silver serving dishes on table. OSCAR and LEO start to eat. BEN seats himself.]

LEO Uncle Horace will have some tales to tell, I bet. Baltimore is a lively town.

REGINA [to CAL]. The grits isn't hot enough. Take it back.

CAL Oh, yes'm [Calling into kitchen as he exits off dining room.] Grits didn't hold the heat. Grits didn't hold the heat.

LEO When I was at school three of the boys and myself took a train once and went over to Baltimore. It was so big we thought we were in Europe. I was just a kid then—

REGINA [looks up, helps herself from a dish] I find it very pleasant— [ADDIE enters from L.] to have breakfast alone. I hate chattering before I've had something hot. [CAL has come back, closes dining-room doors.] Do be still, Leo.

[ADDIE comes into the room, begins gathering up cups, carries them to the large tray, then quickly she runs into the hall. Outside there are the sounds of VOICES and PEOPLE moving about. A few seconds later ADDIE appears again in doorway, her arm around the shoulders of HORACE GIDDENS, supporting him. HORACE is a tall man of about forty-five. He has been good-looking, but now his face is tired and ill. He walks stiffly, as if it were an enormous effort, and carefully, as if he were unsure of his balance. ADDIE takes off his overcoat and hangs it on hall tree. She then helps him across to the chair L.C.]

HORACE [as they are crossing]. How are you, Addie? How have you been?

ADDIE. I'm all right, Mr. Horace. I've just been worried about you.

[HORACE sits in chair. ALEXANDRA enters. She is flushed and excited, her hat awry, her face dirty. Her arms are full of packages, but she comes quickly to ADDIE.]

ALEXANDRA. Now don't tell me how

worried you were. We couldn't help it and there was no way to send a message.

ADDIE [to HORACE, begins to take packages from ALEXANDRA]. Yes, sir, I was mighty worried.

ALEXANDRA. We had to stop in Mobile over night. Papa— [Looks at him] Papa didn't feel well. The trip was too much for him, and I made him stop and rest— [As ADDIE takes last package] No, don't take that. That's Father's medicine. [Crosses D. to table R.C. ADDIE puts the packages on the chair L. of table U.C., then crosses to ALEXANDRA] I'll hold it. It mustn't break. Now, about the stuff outside. Papa must have his wheel chair. I'll get that and the valises—

[ALEXANDRA starts to go, but ADDIE stops her]

ADDIE [very happy, holding ALEXANDRA'S arms] Since when you got to carry your own valises? Since when I ain't old enough to hold a bottle of medicine? [HORACE coughs. Turns and steps to HORACE. ALEXANDRA looks at HORACE.] You feel all right, Mr. Horace?

HORACE [nods] Glad to be sitting down.

ALEXANDRA [opening package of medicine on table R.C.] He doesn't feel all right. [ADDIE looks at her, then at HORACE] He just says that. The trip was very hard on him, and now he must go right to bed.

ADDIE [looking at him carefully] Them fancy doctors, they give you help?

HORACE They did their best.

LEO [in dining room]. Papa, can I have your part of the paper?

ALEXANDRA [has become conscious of the voices in dining room]. I bet Mama was worried. I better tell her we're here now.

[She starts for door.]

HORACE. Zan. [She stops, steps D. to above settee L.] Not for a minute, dear.

ALEXANDRA. Oh, Papa, you feel bad again. I knew you did. Do you want your medicine?

HORACE. No, I don't feel that way. I'm just tired, darling. Let me rest a little.

ALEXANDRA. Yes, but Mama will be mad if I don't tell her we're here.

ADDIE. They're all in there eating breakfast.

ALEXANDRA Oh, are they all here? [Crosses to ADDIE.] Why do they always have to be here? I was hoping Papa wouldn't have to see anybody, that it would be nice for him and quiet.

ADDIE [patting ALEXANDRA'S arm]. Then let your Papa rest for a minute.

HORACE. Addie, I bet your coffee's as good as ever. They don't have such good

coffee up North. [*Looks hungrily at urn.*] Is it as good, Addie?

[*ADDIE starts for coffee urn.*]

ALEXANDRA. No. [*Step to ADDIE—stops her.*] Dr. Reeves said not much coffee. Just now and then. [*Proudly to ADDIE.*] I'm the nurse now, Addie.

ADDIE. You'd be a better one if you didn't look so dirty. [*Taking ALEXANDRA to stairs.*] Now go and take a bath, Miss Grownup. Change your linens, get out a fresh dress and give your hair a good brushing—go on—

ALEXANDRA Will you be all right, Papa?

ADDIE [*slapping her backside*]. Go on.

ALEXANDRA [*on stairs, talks as she goes up*]. The pills Papa must take once every four hours. [*ADDIE steps into room*] And the bottle only when—only if he feels very bad. [*On landing*] Now don't move until I come back and don't talk much and remember about his medicine, Addie—

ADDIE Ring for Belle and have her help you and then I'll make you a fresh breakfast.

ALEXANDRA [*as she disappears up stairs*]. How's Aunt Birdie? Is she here?

ADDIE [*crosses D.R. of HORACE*]. It ain't right for you to have coffee? It will hurt you?

HORACE [*slowly*]. Nothing can make much difference now. Get me a cup, Addie. [*She looks at him, crosses to urn, pours a cup.*] Funny. They can't make coffee up North. [*ADDIE brings him a cup*] They don't like red pepper, either. [*He takes cup and gulps it greedily*] God, that's good You remember how I used to drink it? Ten, twelve cups a day. [*Slight laugh as he picks up cup again. He speaks more slowly*] Addie, before I see anybody else, I want to know why Zan came to fetch me home. She's tried to tell me, but she doesn't seem to know herself. [*Drinks.*]

ADDIE [*turns away*]. I don't know. [*Crosses R. to table.*] All I know is big things are going on. [*To HORACE.*] Everybody going to be high-tone rich. Big rich. You too. [*Looks away—at table.*] All because smoke's going to start out of a building that ain't even up yet.

[*She angrily creases the medicine bottle paper on the table*]

HORACE. I've heard about it.

ADDIE. And, er— [*Hesitates—steps to him.*] And—well, Zan, she going to marry Mr. Leo in a little while.

HORACE [*looks at her, then very slowly*]. What are you talking about?

ADDIE [*crossing to R. of HORACE*]. That's right. That's the talk, God help us.

HORACE [*angrily*]. What's the talk?

ADDIE I'm telling you. There's going to be a wedding— [*Angrily clenches paper in*

her hand, turns head away.] Over my dead body there is.

HORACE [*he hands cup to ADDIE, not looking at her. After a second, quietly*]. Go and tell them I'm home.

ADDIE [*hesitates*]. Now you ain't to get excited. You're to be in your bed—

HORACE. Go on, Addie. Go and say I'm back.

[*ADDIE takes cup and paper to tray, looking at him as he is rising, then crosses L. and opens dining-room doors. He rises with difficulty, stands stiff as if he were in pain facing the dining room.*]

ADDIE [*opens doors, then stands in corner U.L.*] Miss Regina. They're home. They got here—

[*EVERYBODY turns to look at her.*]

BEN. They are?

OSCAR. Good.

LEO Just now?

REGINA. Horace.

[*REGINA quickly rises, runs into the room.*]

OTHERS follow her.

REGINA [*warmly*]. Horace! You've finally arrived.

[*As she kisses him, the OTHERS come forward, all talking together.*]

BEN [*in doorway, carrying a napkin*]. Well, sir, you had us all mighty worried

[*He steps forward. They shake hands.*]

ADDIE watches them, then exits L.]

OSCAR. [*crossing to above settee*] You're a sight for sore eyes.

HORACE. Hello Ben.

[*BEN crosses R.C. LEO enters eating biscuit.*]

OSCAR And how you feel? Tip-top, I bet, because that's the way you're looking

HORACE [*coldly, irritated with OSCAR'S lie*] Hello, Oscar. Hello Leo, [*LEO steps D. extends hand*] how are you?

LEO [*shaking hands*]. I'm fine, sir. But a lot better now that you're back.

REGINA [*steps to HORACE*] Now sit down. [*LEO backs away D.L. as HORACE sits*] What did happen to you and where's Alexandra? I am so excited about seeing you that I almost forgot about her.

HORACE. I didn't feel good, a little weak, I guess, and we stopped overnight to rest. Zan's upstairs washing off the train dirt.

REGINA [*crossing above HORACE, to his L.*] Oh, I am so sorry the trip was hard on you. I didn't think that—

HORACE [*sarcastically, looking around at them*]. Well, it's just as if I had never been away. All of you here—

BEN. Waiting to welcome you home.

[*BIRDIE bursts in. She is wearing a flannel kimono and her face is flushed and excited. BEN crosses D.R. to mantel.*]

BIRDIE [*runs to him, kisses him*]. Horace!

HORACE [*warmly pressing her arm*]. I was just wondering where you were, Birdie.

BIRDIE [*excited*]. Oh, I would have been here. I didn't know you were back until Simon said he saw the buggy— [*She draws back to look at him. Her face sobers*]. Oh, you don't look well, Horace. No you don't.

REGINA [*laughs*]. Birdie, what a thing to say—

HORACE [*looking at OSCAR*]. Oscar thinks I look very well.

OSCAR [*annoyed. Turns on LEO*]. Don't stand there holding that biscuit in your hand.

[*Crosses R to above chair r c.*]

LEO Oh. Well I'll just finish my breakfast, Uncle Horace, and then I'll give you all the news about the bank—

[*He exits into dining room, taking newspaper from settee*]

OSCAR [*comes to R of BIRDIE*]. And what is that costume you have on?

BIRDIE [*is looking at HORACE*]. Now that you're home, you'll feel better. Plenty of good rest and we'll take such fine care of you— [*Stops*] But where is Zan? [*HORACE motions to staircase*] I missed her so much

OSCAR. I asked you what is that strange costume you're parading around in?

BIRDIE [*nervously, backing toward stairs*]. Me? [*Looks at costume—drops HORACE'S hand OSCAR crosses U R.*] Oh! It's my wrapper I was so excited about Horace I just rushed out of the house—

OSCAR Did you come across the square dressed that way? My dear Birdie, I—

HORACE [*to REGINA, wearily*]. Yes, it's just like old times.

REGINA [*quickly to OSCAR*]. Now no fights This is a holiday.

BIRDIE [*runs quickly up stairs*]. Zan! Zannie!

OSCAR Birdie! [*She stops.*]

BIRDIE. Tell Zan I'll be back in a little while. [*Exits door R.*]

REGINA [*to OSCAR and BEN*]. Why don't you go finish your breakfast— [*Looks at OSCAR. He looks at BEN, then crosses into dining room. REGINA crosses D C*] and let Horace rest for a minute?

BEN [*crossing to dining room. REGINA crosses D R.*]. Never leave a meal unfinished. There are too many poor people who need the food. Mighty glad to see you home, Horace. Fine to have you back. Fine to have you back

OSCAR [*to LEO as BEN is closing dining-room doors*]. Your mother has gone crazy. Running around the streets like a woman—

[*The moment REGINA and HORACE are alone, they become awkward and self-conscious.*]

REGINA [*laughs awkwardly*]. Well. Here we are. It's been a long time [*HORACE smiles*]. Five months. You know, Horace, I wanted to come and be with you in the hospital, but I didn't know where my duty was. Here, or with you. But you know how much I wanted to come.

HORACE. That's kind of you, Regina. There was no need to come.

REGINA. Oh, but there was. Five months lying there all by yourself, no kin-folk, no friends Don't try to tell me you didn't have a bad time of it.

HORACE. I didn't have a bad time. [*As she shakes her head, he becomes insistent*] No, I didn't, Regina Oh, at first when I—when I heard the news about myself—but after I got used to that, I liked it there.

REGINA. You liked it? [*Coldly*]. Isn't that strange! You liked it so well you didn't want to come home?

HORACE. That's not the way to put it. [*Then, kindly, as he sees her turn her head away*] But there I was and I got kind of used to it, kind of to like lying there and thinking. [*Smiles*]. I never had much time to think before And time's become valuable to me

REGINA. It sounds almost like a holiday.

[*Takes a step R.*]

HORACE [*laughs*]. It was, sort of. The first holiday I've had since I was a little kid.

REGINA. And here I was thinking you were in pain and—

HORACE [*quietly*]. I was in pain.

REGINA. And instead you were having a holiday! [*She sits chair R C.*] A holiday of thinking Couldn't you have done that here?

HORACE. I wanted to do it before I came here. I was thinking about us.

REGINA. About us? About you and me? Thinking about you and me after all these years? [*Unpleasantly. Rises, crosses D R*] You shall tell me everything you thought—some day.

HORACE [*there is silence for a minute*]. Regina [*She turns to him*]. Why did you send Zan to Baltimore?

REGINA. Why? Because I wanted you home. [*Crossing to him*]. You can't make anything suspicious out of that, can you?

HORACE. I didn't mean to make anything suspicious about it. [*Hesitantly, taking her hand*] Zan said you wanted me to come home I was so pleased at that and touched, it made me feel good.

REGINA [*taking away her hand, turns*]. Touched that I should want you home?

HORACE [*sighs*]. I'm saying all the wrong things, as usual. Let's try to get along better. There isn't so much more time. Regina. what's all this crazy talk I've been hearing

about Zan and Leo? [*Slight laugh.*] Zan and Leo marrying?

REGINA [*turning to him, sharply*]. Who gossips so much around here?

HORACE [*shocked*]. Regina!

REGINA [*annoyed, anxious to quiet him, steps to him*]. It's some foolishness that Oscar thought up. I'll explain later. I have no intention of allowing any such arrangement. It was simply a way of keeping Oscar quiet in all this business I've been writing you about—

HORACE [*carefully*]. What has Zan to do with any business of Oscar's? Whatever it is, you had better put it out of Oscar's head immediately. You know what I think of Leo.

REGINA. But there's no need to talk about it now.

HORACE. There is no need to talk about it ever. Not as long as I live. [*REGINA turns crosses R. HORACE stops, slowly, turns to look at her.*] As long as I live. I've been in a hospital for five months. Yet since I've been here you have not once asked me about—about my health. [*Then gently.*] Well, I suppose they've written you. I can't live very long.

REGINA [*coldly*]. I've never understood why people have to talk about this kind of thing. [*Crosses U R*]

HORACE [*there is a silence. Then he looks up at her, his face cold*]. You misunderstand. [*REGINA pacing U R C.*] I don't intend to gossip about my sickness. I thought it was only fair to tell you. I was not asking for your sympathy.

REGINA [*sharply, turns to him*]. What do the doctors think caused your bad heart?

HORACE. What do you mean?

REGINA [*R. of HORACE*]. They didn't think it possible, did they, that your fancy women may have—?

HORACE [*smiles, unpleasantly*]. Caused my heart to be bad? I don't think that's the best scientific theory. You don't catch heart trouble in bed.

REGINA [*angrily*]. I didn't think you did. I only thought you might catch a bad conscience—in bed, as you say. [*Crosses D R*]

HORACE. I didn't tell them about my bad conscience. Or about my fancy women. Nor did I tell them that my wife has not wanted me in bed with her for—[*Sharply.*] How long is it, Regina? [*REGINA turns to him.*] Ten years? Did you bring me home for this, to make me feel guilty again? That means you want something. But you'll not make me feel guilty any more. My "thinking" has made a difference.

REGINA. I see that it has.

BEN [*in dining room*]. Put down that paper, Leo.

REGINA [*she looks toward dining-room door. Then comes to him, her manner warm and friendly*]. It's foolish for us to fight this way. I didn't mean to be unpleasant. I was stupid.

HORACE [*wearily*]. God knows I didn't either. I came home wanting so much not to fight, and then all of a sudden there we were. I got hurt and—

REGINA [*hastily*]. It's all my fault. I didn't ask about—your illness because I didn't want to remind you of it. Anyway I never believe doctors when they talk about—[*brightly*] when they talk like that

HORACE [*not looking at her*]. Well, we'll try our best with each other. [*He rises, starts for stairs. He gets as far as chair R C, when REGINA stops him*]

REGINA [*quickly, crossing with him*]. I'll try. Honestly, I will. Horace, [*he stops, turns to her*] Horace, I know you're tired but, but—couldn't you stay down here a few minutes longer? I want Ben to tell you something

HORACE. Tomorrow.

REGINA. I'd like to now. It's very important to me. It's very important to all of us. [*Gaily, as she moves toward dining room.*] Important to your beloved daughter. She'll be a very great heiress—

HORACE. Will she? That's nice.

REGINA [*opens doors*]. Ben, are you finished breakfast?

HORACE. Is this the mill business I've had so many letters about?

REGINA [*to BEN*]. Horace would like to talk to you now.

HORACE. Horace would not like to talk to you now. I am very tired, Regina—

[*He starts*]

REGINA [*comes to him and stops him*]. Please. You've said we'll try our best with each other. I'll try. Really, I will. But please do this for me now. [*Urging him into chair R C*] You will see what I've done while you've been away. How I watched your interests [*Laughs gaily.*] And I've done very well, too. But things can't be delayed any longer. Everything must be settled this week—[*HORACE crosses—sits chair R C. REGINA crosses to BEN, who is entering. Brings him C. OSCAR has stayed in the dining room, his head turned to watch them. LEO is pretending to read newspaper.*] Now you must tell Horace all about it. Only be quick because he is very tired and must go to bed. [*HORACE is looking up at her as if he finally understood. His face hardens as she speaks.*] But I think your news will be better for him than all the medicine in the world

BEN [*who is looking at HORACE*]. It could wait. Horace may not feel like talking today.

REGINA. What an old faker you are! You know it can't wait. You know it must be finished this week. [*Crosses D R*] You've been just as anxious for Horace to get here as I've been.

BEN [*very jovial*]. I suppose I have been. And why not? Horace has done Hubbard Sons many a good turn. Why shouldn't I be anxious to help him now?

REGINA [*laughs*]. Help him! Help him when you need him, that's what you mean.

[*Sits sofa R.*]

BEN. What a woman you married, Horace! [*Laughs awkwardly when HORACE does not answer*] Well, then I'll make it quick. You know what I've been telling you for years. How I've always said that every one of us little Southern business men had great things— [*Extends his arm, moves his fingers.*]—right beyond our finger-tips. It's been my dream. My dream to make those fingers grow longer. I'm a lucky man, Horace, a lucky man. To dream and to live to get what you've dreamed of. That's my idea of a lucky man. [*Looks at his fingers as his arm drops slowly*] For thirty years I've cried, bring the cotton mills to the cotton! [*HORACE opens medicine bottle, pours dose into spoon*] Well, finally I got up nerve to go to the Marshall Company in Chicago.

HORACE [*has finally taken his eyes from REGINA*] I know all this

[*He takes medicine. REGINA rises, steps to him*]

BEN. Can I get you something?

HORACE. Some water, please.

REGINA [*turns quickly*]. Oh, I'm sorry. Let me [*Crosses to tray on table U C, brings him glass. He drinks as they wait in silence.*] You feel all right now?

HORACE. Yes. You wrote me. I know all that [*OSCAR rises—crosses to dining-room doors*]

REGINA [*triumphantly*]. But you don't know that in the last few days Ben has agreed to give us—you, I mean—a much larger share.

HORACE. Really? That's very generous of him [*OSCAR crosses D to above settee L.*]

BEN [*laughs*]. It wasn't so generous of me; it was smart of Regina.

REGINA [*as if she were signalling HORACE*]. I explained to Ben that perhaps you hadn't answered his letters because you didn't think he was offering you enough, and that the time was getting short and you could guess how much he needed you—

HORACE [*smiles at her—nods*]. And I could guess that he wants to keep control in the family?

REGINA [*to BEN, triumphantly*]. Exactly. [*To HORACE.*] So I did a little bargaining

for you and convinced my brothers they weren't the only Hubbards who had a business sense [*Crosses D. to front sofa.*]

HORACE. Did you have to convince them of that? How little people know about each other! [*OSCAR crosses D.L. slowly. Laughs.*] But you'll know better about Regina next time, eh, Ben? [*BEN, REGINA, HORACE laugh together. OSCAR'S face is angry*] Now let's see. We're getting a bigger share. [*Looking at OSCAR*] Who's getting less?

BEN. Oscar.

HORACE. Well, Oscar, you've grown very unselfish. What's happened to you?

[*LEO rises, crosses to dining-room doors*]

BEN [*quickly, before OSCAR can answer*]. Oscar doesn't mind. [*Crossing U.L.*] Not worth fighting about now, eh, Oscar?

OSCAR [*angrily*]. I'll get mine in the end. You can be sure of that. I've got my son's future to think about.

HORACE [*sharply*]. Leo? Oh, I see. [*Puts his head back, laughs. REGINA looks at him nervously*] I am beginning to see. Everybody will get theirs.

BEN [*crossing R. to L. of HORACE*] I knew you'd see it. Seventy-five thousand, and that seventy-five thousand will make you a million.

REGINA [*steps to table, leaning forward*]. It will, Horace, it will.

HORACE. I believe you. [*REGINA steps back, sits sofa. After a second.*] Now I can understand Oscar's self-sacrifice, but what did you have to promise Marshall Company besides the money you're putting up?

[*LEO crosses D to back of settee L.*]

BEN. They wouldn't take promises. They wanted guarantees.

HORACE. Of what?

BEN [*nods*]. Water power. Free and plenty of it.

HORACE. You got them that, of course?

BEN. Cheap. You'd think the governor of a great State would make his price a little higher [*Crossing to chair L C*] From pride, you know [*HORACE smiles. BEN smiles*] Cheap wages [*Sits chair*] What do you mean by cheap wages, I say to Marshall? Less than Massachusetts, he says to me, and that averages eight a week. [*Leans back.*] Eight a week! By God, I tell him, I'd work for eight a week myself. Why, there ain't a mountain white or a town nigger but wouldn't give his right arm for three silver dollars every week, eh Horace?

HORACE. Sure. And they'll take less than that when you get around to playing them off against each other. You can save a little money that way, Ben. [*Angrily*] And make them hate each other just a little more than they do now.

REGINA. What's all this about?

BEN *[laughs]*. There'll be no trouble from anybody, white or black, Marshall said that to me. "What about strikes? That's all we've had in Massachusetts for the last three years." I say to him, "What's a strike? I never heard of one. Come South, Marshall. We got good folks and we don't stand for any fancy fooling."

HORACE. You're right. *[Slowly]*. Well, it looks like you made a good deal for yourselves, and for Marshall, too. *[CAL has come into dining room and closes doors. To BEN.]* Your father used to say he made the thousands and you boys would make the millions. I think he was right. *[Rises]*

REGINA *[they are all looking at HORACE. She laughs, nervously, leans forward]*. Millions for us, too.

HORACE. Us? You and me? I don't think so. We've got enough money, Regina. We'll just sit by and watch the boys grow rich. *[Steps u.c., holding on to chair. OSCAR sits on piano stool. They watch him tensely, as he begins to move toward staircase. He passes LEO, looks at him for a second. Brightly.]* How's everything at the bank, Leo?

LEO. Fine, sir. Everything is fine.

HORACE. How are all the ladies in Mobile? *[LEO draws back HORACE turns, a step to REGINA, sharply]* Whatever made you think I'd let Zan marry—?

REGINA *[crosses above table R]* Do you mean that you are turning this down? Is it possible that's what you mean?

BEN *[nervously, but speaking with good nature—gesturing REGINA to be quiet]*. No, that's not what he means. Turning down a fortune! Horace is tired. He'd rather talk about it tomorrow—

REGINA. We can't keep putting it off this way. Oscar must be in Chicago by the end of the week with the money and contracts *[Crosses to HORACE.]*

OSCAR *[giggles, pleased]* Yes, sir. Got to be there end of the week. *[HORACE crosses R.]* No sense going without the money.

REGINA *[tensely]* I've waited long enough for your answer. I'm not going to wait any longer.

HORACE *[crossing to stairs, above REGINA, very deliberately]*. I'm very tired now, Regina.

BEN *[hastily]* Now Horace probably has his reasons. Things he'd like explained. Tomorrow will do. I can—

REGINA *[turns to BEN, sharply]*. I want to know his reasons now.

[Turns back to HORACE]

HORACE *[as he climbs the steps]*. I don't know them all myself. Let's leave it at that.

REGINA *[crosses u. to foot of stairs]*. We

shall not leave it at that. We have waited for you here like children. Waited for you to come home.

HORACE. So that you could invest my money. So this is why you wanted me home? Well, I had hoped— *[Quietly.]* If you are disappointed, Regina, I'm sorry. But I must do what I think best. We'll talk about it another day.

REGINA. We'll talk about it now. Just you and me.

HORACE *[stops on landing, looks down at her. His voice is tense]* Please, Regina. It's been a hard trip. I don't feel well. Please leave me alone now.

REGINA *[quietly]*. I want to talk to you, Horace, I'm coming up.

[He looks at her for a moment, then moves on again out of sight. She begins to climb stairs.]

BEN *[softly. REGINA turns to him as he speaks]*. Sometimes it is better to wait for the sun to rise again. *[She does not answer.]* And sometimes, as our mother used to tell you, *[REGINA starts up stairs]* it's unwise for a good-looking woman to frown *[BEN rises, crosses u. to landing.]* Softness and a smile do more to the heart of men—

[She disappears. BEN stands looking up the stairs. A long silence. Then, suddenly, OSCAR giggles]

OSCAR. Let us hope she'll change his mind. Let us hope

[After a second BEN crosses to table R, picks up his newspaper, continues to sofa R., sits—begins to read. OSCAR looks at BEN. The silence makes LEO uncomfortable.]

LEO *[steps R. to C.]*. The paper says twenty-seven cases of Yellow Fever in New Orleans. Guess the flood waters caused it *[Nobody pays attention]* Thought they were building levees high enough. Like the niggers always say a man born of woman can't build nothing high enough for the Mississippi.

[Gels no answer. Gives an embarrassed laugh]

[Upstairs there is the sound of VOICES. The VOICES are not loud, but BEN, OSCAR, LEO become conscious of them. LEO crosses u. to landing, looks up, listens]

REGINA. I can't understand what you mean. I can't believe that you mean to turn this down. This is what you've been waiting for, what all of us have been waiting for. You must be going crazy or you must have reasons that you are not telling us.

HORACE. I don't know my reasons. I just don't want it.

REGINA. You don't want it. But I do want it.

OSCAR [*pointing up*]. Now just suppose she don't change his mind? Just suppose he keeps on refusing?

[*LEO turns back to them, listens*]

BEN [*without conviction*]. He's tired. It was a mistake to talk to him today. He's a sick man but he isn't a crazy one.

OSCAR [*giggles*]. But just suppose he is crazy. What then?

[*LEO crosses slowly to back of sofa L.*]

BEN [*puts down his paper, peers at OSCAR*]. Then we'll go outside for the money. There's plenty who would give it.

OSCAR. And plenty who will want a lot for what they give. The ones who are rich enough to give, will be smart enough to want. That means we'd be working for them, don't it, Ben?

BEN. You don't have to tell me the things I told you six months ago.

OSCAR. Oh, you're right not to worry. She'll change his mind. She always has.

[*There is a silence. Suddenly REGINA'S voice becomes louder and sharper. All of them begin to listen now. Slowly BEN rises, goes to listen by the staircase. OSCAR, watching him, smiles. As they listen REGINA'S voice becomes very loud. HORACE'S voice is no longer heard*]

REGINA. People don't pass up chances like this. I won't let you pass up chances like this. I won't let you pass up this one just because you've gone crazy!

OSCAR. Maybe.

REGINA. And if you change your mind in a week, it will be too late. It's got to be done now.

HORACE. I won't change my mind. I don't want it.

REGINA. You don't want it but I do want it. I'm your wife. I have a right to expect that you will take care of my future. Of your child's future.

OSCAR. But I don't believe it. I never did believe he was going in with us.

BEN [*turning on him—crosses D C.*]. What the hell do you expect me to do?

OSCAR [*mildly*]. Nothing. You done your almighty best. Nobody could blame you if the whole thing just dripped away right through our fingers [*BEN crosses R. to sofa for paper*]. You can't do a thing. But there may be something I could do for us. [*OSCAR rises. BEN starts to pick up paper but is stopped by OSCAR'S words*]. Or, I might better say, [*Crossing to C.*] Leo could do for us. [*BEN stops, turns, looks at OSCAR. LEO is staring at OSCAR. Turns to LEO*] Ain't that true, son. [*LEO crosses D.L.*] Ain't it true you might be able to help your own kin-folks?

LEO [*nervously taking a step to him*]. Papa, I—

BEN [*slowly*]. How would he help us, Oscar?

OSCAR. Leo's got a friend. [*Crosses to BEN*]. Leo's friend owns eighty-eight thousand dollars in Union Pacific Bonds. [*BEN turns to look at LEO*] Leo's friend don't look at the bonds much, not for five or six months at a time.

BEN [*after a pause*]. Union Pacific. Uh, huh. Let me understand. Leo's friend would—would lend him these bonds and he—?

OSCAR [*nods*]. Would be kind enough to lend them to us.

BEN [*crossing to C*]. Leo

LEO [*excited, comes to him*]. Yes, sir?

BEN. When would your friend be wanting the bonds back?

LEO [*very nervous*]. I don't know. I—well, I—

OSCAR [*sharply—step to him*]. You told me he won't look at them until fall—

LEO. Oh. That's right. But I—not till fall. Uncle Horace never—

BEN [*sharply*]. Be still.

OSCAR [*smiles at LEO—crosses to C*]. Your Uncle doesn't wish to know your friend's name.

LEO [*starts to laugh*]. That's a good one. Not know his name—

OSCAR. Shut up, Leo! [*LEO turns away slowly, moves to table L. BEN turns to OSCAR*]. He won't look at them again until September. That gives us five months. Leo will return the bonds in three months. And we'll have no trouble raising the money once the mills are going up. Will Marshall accept bonds?

[*BEN stops to listen to sudden sharp voices from above. The voices are now very angry and very loud*]

REGINA. I have a right to expect that.

HORACE. Please go away and leave me alone.

REGINA. I won't leave you alone. I demand that you put up this money and I demand that you do it immediately.

BEN [*then smiling*]. Why not? Why not? [*Laughs—to OSCAR*] Good. We are lucky. We'll take the loan from Leo's friend—I think he will make a safer partner than our sister. [*Nods toward stairs. Turns to LEO*]. How soon can you get them?

LEO. Today. Right now. [*Steps to BEN*]. They're in the safe deposit box and—

BEN [*sharply*]. I don't want to know where they are.

OSCAR [*laughs*]. We will keep it secret from you. [*Pats BEN'S arm*].

BEN [*smiles*]. Good. Draw a check for our part. You can take the night train for Chicago. [*To OSCAR*]. Well, Oscar, [*Holds out his hand—OSCAR takes it, they shake hands*]. good luck to us. [*Crosses R. to table*].

OSCAR [*turns to BEN*]. Leo will be taken care of?

LEO. I'm entitled to Uncle Horace's share. I'd enjoy being a partner—

BEN [*turns to stare at him*]. You would? You can go to hell, you little—

[*Starts toward LEO*]
OSCAR [*nervously, stopping BEN*]. Now, now. He didn't mean that. I only want to be sure he'll get something out of all this

BEN. Of course. We'll take care of him. We won't have any trouble about that. I'll see you at the store.

OSCAR [*nods*]. That's settled then. Come on, son. [*Starts for door.*]

LEO [*puts out his hand—crosses to BEN*]. I didn't mean just that. I was only going to say what a great day this was for me and—

[*BEN ignores his hand*]

BEN. Go on.

[*Crosses R. to front of table*]
[*LEO looks at him, turns, follows OSCAR out. BEN stands where he is, thinking. Again the VOICES UPSTAIRS can be heard. REGINA'S is high and furious. BEN looks up, smiles, winces at the noise*]

REGINA. Nobody would turn this down. You must have your reasons. You must have reasons you won't talk about.

[*The noise of fists pounding against a door is heard, and ALEXANDRA'S voice*]

ALEXANDRA. Mama — Mama — don't —

[*The noise of running footsteps is heard, and ALEXANDRA comes running down the steps, speaking as she comes, together with the voices upstairs*]

REGINA. What are they? What possible reasons could there be? I demand to know. All my life I've had to force you to make something out of yourself.

HORACE. Let me alone.

REGINA. I won't let you alone. If I'd let you alone you'd still be working for somebody else.

HORACE. So that's why you wanted me home?

REGINA. Yes, that's the reason.

HORACE. Then it's a bad one. Because it won't work.

REGINA. Did you think I wanted you home for yourself? Is that what you thought?

ALEXANDRA [*almost crying. On landing*]. Uncle Ben! [*Coming down stairs*] Uncle Ben! [*BEN crosses u.c.*] Please go up. Please make Mama stop. Uncle Ben, he's sick, he's so sick. How can Mama talk to him like that—please, make her stop. She'll—

BEN. Alexandra, you have a tender heart.

ALEXANDRA. Go on up, Uncle Ben, please—

[*Suddenly the noise from above stops, and a second later there is the sound of a door opening and then being slammed*]

BEN. Now you see. Everything is over. Don't worry. [*He starts for door. ALEXANDRA crosses d. to above chair l.c.*] Alexandra, I want you to tell your mother how sorry I am that I had to leave. [*Crosses to hall*] And don't worry so, my dear. Married folk frequently raise their voices, unfortunately.

[*He starts to put on his hat and coat as REGINA appears on stairs. When she speaks to BEN, her voice is cold and calm*]

ALEXANDRA [*furiously—turns, crosses u to landing*]. How can you treat Papa like this! He's sick. He's very sick. Don't you know that! I won't let you.

REGINA. Mind your business, Alexandra. [*ALEXANDRA turns down to above settee l., facing r. To BEN on landing*] How much longer can you wait for the money?

BEN [*putting on his coat—steps in*]. He has refused? My, that's too bad.

REGINA. He will change his mind. I'll find a way to make him. What's the longest you can wait now?

BEN. I could wait until next week [*Steps in*] But I can't wait until next week [*He giggles, pleased at the joke*] I could but I can't. Could and can't. Well, I must go now. I'm very late—

[*He starts*]
REGINA [*coming downstairs toward him*]. You're not going. I want to talk to you.

[*She crosses into room*]

BEN [*looks at her, crosses d. to her*]. Oh, I was about to give Alexandra a message for you. I wanted to tell you that Oscar is going to Chicago tonight, so we can't be here for our usual Friday supper.

REGINA. [*tensely*]. Oscar is going to Chi— [*Softly*]. What do you mean?

BEN. Just that. Everything is settled. He's going on to deliver to Marshall—

REGINA [*taking a step to him*]. I demand to know what—you are lying. You are trying to scare me. *You haven't got the money*. How could you have it? You can't have—

[*BEN laughs*] you will wait until I—

[*HORACE comes into view on landing.*]

BEN. You are getting out of hand. Since when do I take orders from you? [*He turns*]

REGINA. Wait, you— [*BEN stops. REGINA steps to him.*] How can he go to Chicago? Did a ghost arrive with the money? [*BEN starts for hall*] I don't believe you. Come back here. [*REGINA starts after him*]
Come back here, you—

[*The door slams. She stops in the doorway, staring, her fists clenched. After a pause she turns slowly and steps into the room*]

HORACE [*standing on landing of the stairs, very quietly*]. It's a great day when you and

Ben cross swords. I've been waiting for it for years.

ALEXANDRA. Papa, Papa, [*crosses u. to below landing*] please go back! You will—

HORACE. And so they don't need you, and so you will not have your millions, after all?

REGINA [*turns slowly*]. You hate to see anybody live now, don't you? You hate to think that I'm going to be alive and have what I want.

[*Comes toward stairs, looking up at him*]

HORACE. I should have known you'd think that was the reason.

REGINA. Because you're going to die and you know you're going to die

ALEXANDRA [*shrilly*]. Mama! Don't—Don't listen, Papa. Just don't listen Go away—

HORACE. Not to keep you from getting what you want. Not even partly that. [*Steps down one step, holding on to rail, leaning over to look down at her.*] I'm sick of you, sick of this house, sick of my life here I'm sick of your brothers and their dirty tricks to make a dime [ALEXANDRA *turns away, crosses D. to back of settee*] There must be better ways of getting rich than cheating niggers on a pound of bacon. Why should I give you the money? [*Very angrily*] To pound the bones of this town to make dividends for you to spend? You wreck the town, you and your brothers, you wreck the town and live on it Not me Maybe it's easy for the dying to be honest But it's not my fault I'm dying [ADDIE *enters L., stands at door quietly*] I'll die no more harm now. I've done enough. I'll die my own way. And I'll do it without making the world any worse. I leave that to you.

REGINA [*looks up at him slowly, clamly*] I hope you die. I hope you die soon. [*Smiles*] I'll be waiting for you to die.

ALEXANDRA [*shrieking*]. Papa! Don't—don't listen—don't—

ADDIE. Come here, Zan Come out of this room

[ALEXANDRA *runs quickly to ADDIE, who holds her in her arms*]

[HORACE *turns slowly and starts upstairs.*]

MEDIUM CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE: Same as ACT I. Two weeks later. It is late afternoon and it is raining.

AT RISE: HORACE is sitting near the window in a wheel chair. On the table next to him is a safe deposit box, and one small bottle of medicine and spoon. BIRDIE and

ALEXANDRA are playing the piano. On the chair R. of table U.C. is a large sewing-basket.

A phrase of the song is played before the curtain rises. As the curtain is going up the song is reaching its conclusion.]

BIRDIE [*counting for ALEXANDRA*]. One and two and three and four One and two and three and four. [*They finish song and laugh ALEXANDRA repeats a phrase Nods—turns to HORACE*] We used to play together, Horace Remember?

HORACE [*has been looking out of window*]. What, Birdie?

BIRDIE. We played together. You and me.

ALEXANDRA [*stops playing, looks to HORACE, then BIRDIE*]. Papa used to play?

BIRDIE. Indeed he did [ADDIE *appears at door L. in a large kitchen apron. She is wiping her hands on a towel.*] He played the fiddle and very well, too

[*Turns to piano and starts playing*] ALEXANDRA [*turns to smile at HORACE*] I never knew—

ADDIE Where's your Mama?

ALEXANDRA Gone to Miss Safronia's to fit her dresses.

[ADDIE *nods, starts to exit*]

HORACE. Addie.

ADDIE [*crossing to c.*] Yes, Mr. Horace.

HORACE [*speaks as if he had made a sudden decision*]. Tell Cal to get on his things. I want him to go on an errand.

[ADDIE *nods, exits L. HORACE moves nervously in his chair, looks out of window*]

ALEXANDRA [*who has been watching him*] It's too bad it's been raining all day, Papa But you can go out in the yard tomorrow Don't be restless.

HORACE. I'm not restless, darling.

[ALEXANDRA *turns to piano and joins BIRDIE in playing; after playing one measure together BIRDIE stops and turns to HORACE. ALEXANDRA continues playing alone.*]

BIRDIE. I remember so well the time we played together, [*to ALEXANDRA*] your Papa and me. [*To HORACE.*] It was the first time Oscar brought me here to supper. I had never seen all the Hubbards together before, [*to ALEXANDRA*] and you know what a ninny I am and how shy. [*Turns to look at HORACE.*] You said you could play the fiddle. [*Rises, crosses to table u.c.*] and you'd be much obliged if I'd play with you. [*Pouring glass of water.*] I was obliged to you, all right, all right. [*Laughs when he does not*

answer her.] Horace, [steps to him, holding glass] you haven't heard a word I've said.

HORACE. Birdie, when did Oscar get back from Chicago?

BIRDIE. Yesterday. Hasn't he been here yet?

ALEXANDRA [stops playing]. No. Neither has Uncle Ben since—since that day.

BIRDIE. Oh, [to ALEXANDRA] I didn't know it was that bad. [Turns to HORACE.] Oscar never tells me anything—

HORACE [smiles, nods]. The Hubbards have had their great quarrel. I knew it would come some day. [Laughs.] It came.

ALEXANDRA. It came. It certainly came all right.

BIRDIE [amazed]. But Oscar was in such a good humor when he got home, [ADDIE enters.] I didn't—

HORACE. Yes, I can understand that.

[ADDIE is carrying a large tray with three water glasses, a carafe of elderberry wine and a plate of cookies, which she puts on the table D.L. BIRDIE hurries to ADDIE, leaving water glass on table U.C.]

ALEXANDRA. Addie! A party! What for?

ADDIE [pouring wine into the three glasses]. Nothing for, I had the fresh butter so I made the cakes, and a little elderberry does the stomach good in the rain.

[ADDIE looks at HORACE, then crosses to c., moves chair R C. upstage, then crosses to him, moves him to c. L. of table R.]

BIRDIE [takes her glass and puts ALEXANDRA'S on piano]. Isn't this nice! A party just for us. Let's play party music, Zan.

[ALEXANDRA begins to play a gay piece.]

ADDIE [to HORACE, wheeling his chair to c.]. Come over here, Mr. Horace, and don't be thinking so much. [She crosses to table L. for HORACE'S glass, brings it to him. ALEXANDRA stops playing, turns and watches him.] A glass of elderberry will do more good.

[ALEXANDRA reaches for another cake, BIRDIE pours herself another glass of wine.]

ALEXANDRA [her mouth full]. Good cakes, Addie. It's nice here. Just us. Be nice if it could always be this way.

BIRDIE [nods, happily]. Quiet and restful.

[Drinks, then crosses to piano stool, sits.]

ADDIE [crossing to table U.C., lights lamp]. Well, it won't be that way long. Little while now, even sitting here, you'll hear the red bricks going into place. The next day the smoke'll be pushing out the chimneys [ALEXANDRA crosses to chair at piano, sits] and by church time that Sunday every human born of woman will be living on chicken. [Crossing R. to mantel.] That's how Mr. Ben's been telling the story.

HORACE [looks at her]. They believe it that way?

ADDIE. Believe it? [Placing footstool so that she can reach upstage lamp on mantel. BIRDIE crosses to table, pours another drink.] They use to believing what Mr. Ben orders. There ain't been so much talk around here since Sherman's army didn't come near.

[Lights upper mantel lamp.]

HORACE [softly]. They are fools.

ADDIE [nods]. You ain't born in the South unless you're a fool.

[ADDIE moves footstool to downstage end of mantel, and lights lower mantel lamp.]

BIRDIE [has drunk another glass. She has been listening to the others] But we didn't play together after that night. [Crosses to front settee L.] Oscar said he didn't like me to play on the piano. [Turns to ALEXANDRA.] You know what he said that night?

[ADDIE crosses to chair U C., gets sewing-basket, crosses to chair D.R., turns it to face them, sits.]

ALEXANDRA. Who?

BIRDIE. Oscar. He said that music made him nervous. He said he just sat and waited for the next note. [ALEXANDRA laughs.] He wasn't poking fun. He meant it Ah, well— [She finishes her glass, shakes her head. HORACE looks at her, smiles. Crossing to HORACE.] Your Papa don't like to admit it, but he's been mighty kind to me all these years [Running the back of her hand along his sleeve.] Often he'd step in when somebody said something and once— [She stops, turns away, her face still.] Once he stopped Oscar from— [She stops, turns steps U S. Quickly.] I'm sorry I said that. [Crossing L. back of settee.] Why, here I am so happy and yet I think about bad things. [Laughs nervously.] That's not right, now is it?

[Crosses to table L., pours drink, crosses to upper end piano.]

[CAL appears in the door L. He has on an old coat and is carrying a torn umbrella.]

ALEXANDRA. Have a cake, Cal.

CAL [comes in, takes a cake]. Yes'm. You want me, Mr. Horace?

[Crosses c. to L. of HORACE.]

HORACE. What time is it, Cal?

[Puts glass on table.]

CAL. Bout ten minutes before it's five.

HORACE. All right. Now you walk yourself down to the bank.

[ALEXANDRA starts to play softly.]

CAL. It'll be closed. Nobody'll be there but Mr. Mander, Mr. Joe Horns, Mr. Leo

HORACE. Go in the back way. They'll be at the table, going over the day's business. [Points to deposit box.] See that box?

CAL [nods]. Yes, sir.

HORACE. You tell Mander that Mr. Horace says he's much obliged to him for bringing the box, it arrived all right.

CAL [bewildered]. He know you got the box. He bring it hisself Wednesday. I opened the door to him and he say, "Hello, Cal, coming on to summer weather."—

HORACE. You say just what I tell you. Understand?

[BIRDIE crosses to table L. pours drink, stands at table.]

CAL. No, sir. I ain't going to say I understand. I'm going down and tell a man he give you something he already know he give you, and you say "understand."

HORACE. Now, Cal—

CAL. Yes, sir. I just going to say you obliged for the box coming all right. I ain't going to understand it, but I'm going to say it—

HORACE. And tell him I want him to come over here after supper, and to bring Mr. Sol Fowler with him.

[ALEXANDRA playing]

CAL [nods]. He's to come after supper and bring Mr. Sol Fowler, your attorney-at-law, with him

HORACE [smiles]. That's right. Just walk right in the back room and say your piece. [Slowly.] In front of everybody.

CAL [takes step to HORACE, then turns away L.]. Yes, sir.

[Mumbles to himself as he exits L.]

ALEXANDRA [who has been watching HORACE]. Is anything the matter, Papa?

HORACE. Oh, no. Nothing

ADDIE [watching BIRDIE take another glass of wine]. Miss Birdie, that elderberry going to give you a headache spell.

BIRDIE [beginning to be drunk. Gaily]. Oh, I don't think so. I don't think it will [Drinks.]

ALEXANDRA [as HORACE puts his hand to his throat. Rises, crosses to his L.]. Do you want your medicine, Papa?

HORACE. No, no I'm all right, darling.

BIRDIE [at L. of table L.]. Mama used to give me elderberry wine when I was a little girl. For hiccoughs. [Laughs] You know, I don't think people get hiccoughs anymore. Isn't that funny? [BIRDIE laughs HORACE and ALEXANDRA laugh, too.] I used to get hiccoughs just when I shouldn't have.

[Crosses to piano, sits, starts playing, drinks.]

ADDIE [nods]. And nobody get growing pains no more. That is funny. Just as if there was some style in what you get. One year an ailment's stylish [BIRDIE stops playing] and the next year, it ain't.

BIRDIE [turns to them]. I remember. It was my first big party, at Lionnet I mean, and I was so excited, [rises, crosses to table L.] and there I was with hiccoughs and Mama

laughing. [Softly. Looking at carafe] Mama always laughed. [Picks up carafe.] A big party, a lovely dress from Mr. Worth in Paris, France, and hiccoughs. [Pours drink.] My brother pounding me on the back and Mama with the elderberry bottle, laughing at me. Everybody was on their way to come, and I was such a ninny, hiccoughing away. [Drinks. Pauses.] You know, that was the first day I ever saw Oscar Hubbard. [Crosses to c.] The Ballongs were selling their hosses and he was going there to buy. He passed and lifted his hat—we could see him from the window—and my brother, to tease Mama, said maybe we should have invited the Hubbards to the party. He said Mama didn't like them because they kept a store, and he said that was old-fashioned of her. [Her face lights up—looking out] And then, and then, I saw Mama angry for the first time in my life. She said that wasn't the reason. She said she was old-fashioned, but not that way. She said she was old-fashioned enough not to like people who killed animals they couldn't use, and who made their money charging awful interest to poor, ignorant niggers and cheating them on what they bought. She was very angry, Mama was. I had never seen her face like that. And then suddenly she laughed and said, "Look, I've frightened Birdie out of the hiccoughs." [Her head drops, then softly.] And so she had. They were all gone.

[Moves up to sofa L., sits.]

[ALEXANDRA crosses L. to chair L.C.]

ADDIE [to her sewing]. Yeah, they got mighty well off cheating niggers. [To them.] Well, there are people who eat the earth and eat all the people on it like in the Bible with the locusts. Then, there are people who stand around and watch them eat it. [Softly.] Sometimes I think it ain't right to stand and watch them do it.

BIRDIE [thoughtfully]. Like I say, if we could only go back to Lionnet. Everybody'd be better there. They'd be good and kind. I like people to be kind. [Pours drink.] Don't you, Horace, don't you like people to be kind?

HORACE. Yes, Birdie.

BIRDIE [very drunk now]. Yes, that was the first day I ever saw Oscar. Who would have thought—? [Drink. Quickly—crossing the glass] You all want to know something? Well, I don't like Leo. My very own son, and I don't like him. [Laughs, gaily.] My, I guess, I even like Oscar more [Drinks.]

ALEXANDRA [a step to BIRDIE]. Why did you marry Uncle Oscar?

ADDIE [sharply]. That's no question for you to be asking.

HORACE [sharply]. Why not? She's heard enough around here to ask anything.

ALEXANDRA. Aunt Birdie, why did you marry Uncle Oscar?

BIRDIE [*places glass on table. Pleasantly.*] I don't know. I thought I liked him. He was so kind to me and I thought it was because he liked me, too. But that wasn't the reason— [*Wheels on ALEXANDRA*] Ask why he married me! I can tell you that; he's told it to me often enough.

ADDIE [*leaning forward*]. Miss Birdie, don't—

BIRDIE [*speaking very rapidly, tensely.*] My family was good and the cotton on Lionnet's fields was better. Ben Hubbard wanted the cotton and [*rises*] Oscar Hubbard married it for him. [*ALEXANDRA crosses to HORACE.*] He was kind to me, then. He used to smile at me. He hasn't smiled at me since. Everybody knew that's what he married me for. [*ADDIE rises*] Everybody but me. [*Turns away, crosses D L.*] Stupid, stupid me.

[*ADDIE puts sewing basket on chair, takes step to HORACE*]

ALEXANDRA [*to HORACE, holding his hand, softly.*] I see [*Hesitates*] Papa, I mean—when you feel better couldn't we go away? I mean, by ourselves. Couldn't we find a way to go—

HORACE [*placing his hand over hers*]. Yes, I know what you mean. We'll try to find a way. I promise you, darling.

ADDIE [*looks at them for a second, then goes L. to BIRDIE*] Rest a bit, Miss Birdie. You get talking like this you'll get a headache and—

BIRDIE [*sharply turning to her*]. I've never had a headache in my life [*Crosses U L. Begins to cry, hysterically.*] You know it as well as I do. [*Turns to ALEXANDRA. Crossing to her back of settee. ADDIE crosses U L.*] I never had a headache, Zan. That's a lie they tell for me. I drink. All by myself, in my own room, by myself, I drink. Then, when they want to hide it, they say "Birdie's got a headache again"—

ALEXANDRA [*comes to her, quickly*] Aunt Birdie.

[*ADDIE turns to look at them*]

BIRDIE [*turning away*] Even you won't like me now. You won't like me, any more.

ALEXANDRA. I love you. I'll always love you.

BIRDIE [*furiously*]. Well, don't. [*Turns to ALEXANDRA*] Don't love me. Because in twenty years you'll just be like me. They'll do all the same things to you. [*Begins to laugh, hysterically.*] You know what? In twenty-two years I haven't had a whole day of happiness. Oh, a little, like today with you all. But never a single, whole day. I say to myself, if only I had one more whole day, then— [*The laugh stops.*] And that's the

way you'll be. And you'll trail after them, just like me, hoping they won't be so mean that day or say something to make you feel so bad—only you'll be worse off because you haven't got my Mama to remember—

[*Turns away, her head drops. She stands quietly, swaying a little, holding onto sofa. ALEXANDRA leans down, puts her cheek on BIRDIE'S arm.*]

ALEXANDRA [*to BIRDIE*]. I guess we were all trying to make a happy day. You know, we sit around and try to pretend nothing's happened. We try to pretend we are not here. We make believe we are just by ourselves, some place else, and it doesn't seem to work. [*Kisses BIRDIE'S hand, which she has been holding*] Come now, Aunt Birdie, I'll walk you home. You and me.

[*She takes BIRDIE'S arm, they move slowly out. In the hallway ALEXANDRA places a raincoat over BIRDIE'S shoulders. They exit. ADDIE and HORACE are silent.*]

ADDIE. Well. [*Sighs.*] First time I ever heard Miss Birdie say a word [*Crossing R. to table R. HORACE looks at her*] Maybe it's good for her [*Picks up glass from table R.*] I'm just sorry Zan had to hear it [*Takes glass to table U C. HORACE moves his head as if he were uncomfortable*] You feel bad, don't you? [*He shrugs.*]

HORACE. So you didn't want Zan to hear? It would be nice to let her stay innocent, like Birdie at her age. Let her listen now. Let her see everything. How else is she going to know that she's got to get away? I'm trying to show her that I'm trying, but I've only got a little time left. She can even hate me when I'm dead, if she'll only learn to hate and fear this.

ADDIE. Mr. Horace—

HORACE. Pretty soon there'll be nobody to help her but you.

ADDIE [*crossing to him*]. What can I do?

HORACE. Take her away.

ADDIE. How can I do that? Do you think they'd let me just go away with her—?

HORACE. I'll fix it so they can't stop you when you're ready to go. You'll go, Addie?

ADDIE [*after a second, softly*]. Yes sir, I promise.

[*He touches her arm, nods*]

HORACE [*after a second, quietly*]. I'm going to have Sol Fowler make me a new will. They'll make trouble, but you make Zan stand firm and Fowler'll do the rest. [*She looks at him, nods, crosses R., front table*] Addie, [*she turns to HORACE*] I'd like to leave you something for yourself. I always wanted to.

ADDIE [*laughs*]. Don't you do that, Mr. Horace. A nigger woman in a white man's will! I'd never get it now.

HORACE. I know. But upstairs in the armoire drawer there's seventeen hundred-dollar bills. It's money left from my trip. It's in an envelope with your name. It's for you.

ADDIE. Seventeen hundred-dollar bills! My God, Mr. Horace, I won't know how to count up that high [*Shyly.*] It's mighty kind and good of you. I don't know what to say for thanks—

CAL [*appears in doorway*]. I'm back. [*Stands umbrella in U. L. corner. No answer. Crossing to c.*] I'm back.

ADDIE [*crossing R. to chair D.R., picks up basket, sits*] So we see.

HORACE. Well?

CAL. Nothing. I just went down and spoke my piece. Just like you told me, I say Mr. Horace he thank you mightily for the safe box arriving in good shape and he say you come right after supper to his house and bring Mr. Attorney-at-law Sol Fowler with you. Then I wipe my hands on my coat. Every time I ever told a lie in my whole life, I wipe my hands right after. Can't help doing it. Well, while I'm wiping my hands, Mr. Leo jump up and say to me "What box! What you talking about?"

HORACE [*smiles*]. Did he?

CAL. And Mr. Leo say he got to leave a little early 'cause he got something to do. And then Mr. Mander say Mr. Leo should sit right down and finish up his work and stop acting like somebody made him Mr. President. So he sit down. Now, just like I told you, Mr. Mander was mighty surprised with the message because he knows right well he brought the box— [*Pointing to box. Sighs.*] But he took it all right. Some men take everything easy and some do not.

HORACE [*puts his head back, laughs*]. Mr. Leo was telling the truth: he has got something to do. I hope Mander don't keep him too long. [*Outside there is the sound of voices. CAL exits R. ADDIE crosses quickly to HORACE. puts basket on table R., begins to wheel his chair toward the stairs. Sharply.*] No. Leave me where I am.

ADDIE [*step D. to his L.*]. But that's Miss Regina coming back.

HORACE [*nods, looking at door*]. Go away, Addie.

ADDIE [*hesitates*]. Mr. Horace. Don't talk no more today. You don't feel well and it won't do you no good—

HORACE [*as he hears footsteps in the hall*]. Go on.

[*She looks at him for a second, then picks up her sewing from table R. and exits L. as REGINA comes in from hall. HORACE'S chair is now so placed that he is in front of table with the medicine. REGINA stands in the hall, shakes umbrella, stands*

it in U.R. corner, takes off her cloak and throws it over bannister. She stares at HORACE.]

REGINA [*as she takes off her gloves, crossing to c.*]. We had agreed that you were to stay in your part of this house and I in mine. This room is my part of the house. Please don't come down here again.

HORACE. I won't

REGINA [*crosses D.R. toward bell-cord below mantel*]. I'll get Cal to take you upstairs.

HORACE [*smiles*]. Before you do I want to tell you that after all, we have invested our money in Hubbard, Sons and Marshall, Cotton Manufacturers.

REGINA [*stops, turns, stares at him*]. What are you talking about? You haven't seen Ben—When did you change your mind?

HORACE. I didn't change my mind. I didn't invest the money. [*Smiles at the expression on her face.*] It was invested for me.

REGINA [*angrily*]. What—?

HORACE. I had eighty-eight thousand dollars' worth of Union Pacific bonds in that safe deposit box. They are not there now. Go and look [*As she stares at him. Points to box.*] Go and look, Regina. [*She crosses quickly to box, opens it. He speaks when she is at table.*] Those bonds are as negotiable as money.

[*She closes box.*]

REGINA [*turns back to him*]. What kind of joke are you playing now? Is this for my benefit?

HORACE. I don't look in that box very often, but three days ago, on Wednesday it was, because I had made a decision—

REGINA. I want to know what you are talking about.

HORACE [*sharply*]. Don't interrupt me again. [*REGINA stiffens.*] Because I had made a decision, I sent for the box. The bonds were gone. Eighty-eight thousand dollars gone [*He smiles at her.*]

REGINA [*after a moment's silence, quietly crossing U.C.*]. Do you think I'm crazy enough to believe what you're saying?

HORACE [*shrugs*]. Believe anything you like.

REGINA [*stares at him, slowly*]. Where did they go to?

HORACE. They are in Chicago. With Mr. Marshall, I should guess.

REGINA [*crossing D. to chair L.C.*]. What did they do? Walk to Chicago? Have you really gone crazy?

HORACE. Leo took the bonds.

REGINA [*turns sharply then speaks softly, without conviction*]. I don't believe it.

HORACE [*leans forward*]. I wasn't there but I can guess what happened. [*REGINA sits chair L.C.*] This fine gentleman, to whom you were willing to marry your daughter, took the

keys and opened the box. You remember that the day of the fight, Oscar went to Chicago? Well, he went with my bonds that his son Leo had stolen for him. [*Pleasantly.*] And for Ben, of course, too.

REGINA [*slowly, nods*]. When did you find out the bonds were gone?

HORACE. Wednesday night.

REGINA. I thought that's what you said. Why have you waited three days to do anything? [*Suddenly laughs.*] This will make a fine story.

HORACE [*nods*]. Couldn't it?

REGINA [*still laughing. Rises, crosses U.L.—takes off hat*]. A fine story to hold over their heads. How could they be such fools?

[*Turns to him back of settee.*]

HORACE. But I'm not going to hold it over their heads.

REGINA [*the laugh stops*]. What?

HORACE [*turns his chair to face L.*]. I'm going to let them keep the bonds—as a loan from you. An eighty-eight thousand dollar loan; they should be grateful to you. They will be, I think.

REGINA [*slowly, smiles*]. I see. You are punishing me. But I won't let you punish me. If you won't do anything, I will. Now.

[*She starts for door*]

HORACE. You won't do anything. Because you can't. [*REGINA stops above chair R.C.*] It won't do you any good to make trouble because I shall simply say that I lent them the bonds.

REGINA [*slowly*]. You would do that?

HORACE. Yes. [*REGINA crosses D. to chair L.C.*] For once in your life I am tying your hands. There is nothing for you to do.

[*There is silence. Then she sits down*]

REGINA. I see. You are going to lend them the bonds and let them keep all the profit they make on them, and there is nothing I can do about it. Is that right?

HORACE. Yes.

REGINA [*softly*]. Why did you say that I was making this gift?

HORACE. I was coming to that. I am going to make a new will, Regina, leaving you eighty-eight thousand dollars in Union Pacific bonds. The rest will go to Zan. It's true that your brothers have borrowed your share for a little while. After my death I advise you to talk to Ben and Oscar. They won't admit anything and Ben, I think, will be smart enough to see that he's safe. Because I knew about the theft and said nothing. Nor will I say anything as long as I live. Is that clear to you?

REGINA [*nods, softly, without looking at him*]. You will not say anything as long as you live.

HORACE. That's right. And by that time

they will probably have replaced your bonds, and then they'll belong to you and nobody but us will ever know what happened. [*Stops, smiles*] They'll be around any minute to see what I am going to do. I took good care to see that word reached Leo. They'll be mighty relieved to know I'm going to do nothing and Ben will think it all a capital joke on you. And that will be the end of that. There's nothing you can do to them, nothing you can do to me.

REGINA. You hate me very much.

HORACE. No.

REGINA. Oh, I think you do. [*Puts her head back, sighs*] Well, we haven't been very good together. Anyway, I don't hate you either. I have only contempt for you. I've always had.

HORACE. From the very first?

REGINA. I think so.

HORACE. I was in love with you. But why did you marry me?

REGINA. I was lonely when I was young.

HORACE. You were lonely?

REGINA. Not the way people usually mean. Lonely for all the things I wasn't going to get. Everybody in this house was so busy and there was so little place for what I wanted. I wanted the world. Then, and then— [*Smiles*] Papa died and left the money to Ben and Oscar.

HORACE. And you married me?

REGINA. Yes, I thought—but I was wrong. You were a small-town clerk then. You haven't changed.

HORACE [*nods, smiles*]. And that wasn't what you wanted.

REGINA. No. No, it wasn't what I wanted [*Pauses, leans back, pleasantly*] It took me a little while to find out I had made a mistake. As for you—I don't know. It was almost as if I couldn't stand the kind of man you were— [*Smiles, softly*]. I used to lie there at night, praying you wouldn't come near—

HORACE. Really? It was as bad as that?

REGINA [*nods*]. Remember when I went to Doctor Sloan and I told you he said there was something the matter with me and that you shouldn't touch me any more?

HORACE. I remember.

REGINA. But you believed it? I couldn't understand that I couldn't understand that anybody could be such a soft fool. That was when I began to despise you.

HORACE [*puts his hand to his throat, glances around at bottle of medicine on table, then to her*]. Why didn't you leave me?

REGINA. I told you I married you for something. It turned out it was only for this. [*Carefully*]. This wasn't what I wanted, but it was something. I never thought about it

much, but if I had, [HORACE puts his hand to his throat] I'd have known that you would die before I would. But I couldn't have known that you would get heart trouble so early and so bad. I'm lucky, Horace. I've always been lucky. [HORACE turns slowly to medicine] I'll be lucky again.

[HORACE looks at her. Then he puts his hand to his throat. Because he cannot reach the bottle he moves the chair closer. He reaches for medicine, takes out cork, picks up spoon, tries to pour some in the spoon, the bottle slips out of his shaking fingers and crashes on the table. He draws in his breath, gasps.]

HORACE. Please. Tell Addie—the other bottle is upstairs [She has not moved. She does not move now. He stares at her. Then, suddenly as if he understood, he raises his voice. It is a panic-stricken whisper, too small to be heard outside the room.] Addie! Addie! Come—

[Stops as he hears the softness of his voice. He makes a sudden, furious spring from the chair to the stairs, taking the first few steps as if he were a desperate runner. On the fourth step he slips, gasps, grasps the rail, makes a great effort to reach the landing. When he reaches the landing, he is on his knees. His knees give way, he falls on the landing, out of view. REGINA has not turned during his climb up the stairs. Now she waits a second. Then she goes below the landing, speaks up.]

REGINA Horace [When there is no answer, she turns, crosses to door L., opens door, calls] Addie! Cal! Come in here. [Crosses R. Starts up the steps. When she is on first step, ADDIE appears, followed by CAL. Both run toward stairs.] He's had an attack. Come up here.

[They run up steps quickly, passing REGINA.]

CAL My God! Mr Horace—

REGINA [they cannot be seen now. Her voice comes from the head of the stairs]. Be still, Cal. Bring him in here.

[Before the footsteps and voices have completely died away, ALEXANDRA appears in hall door, in her raincloak and hood. She comes into the room, begins to unfasten the cloak, suddenly looks around, sees the empty wheel-chair, stares, begins to move swiftly as if to look in the dining room. At the same moment, ADDIE runs down the stairs. She turns and stares up at ADDIE.]

ALEXANDRA. Addie! What?

ADDIE [takes ALEXANDRA by the shoulders]. I'm going for the doctor. Go upstairs.

[ALEXANDRA looks at her, then quickly breaks away and runs up the steps. ADDIE exits L. The stage is empty for a

minute. Then the front door bell begins to ring. When there is no answer it rings again. A second later LEO appears in the hall, talking as he comes in.]

LEO [very nervous]. Hello. [Irritably] Never saw any use ringing a bell when a door was open. If you are going to ring a bell, then somebody should answer it. [Gets in the room, looks around, puzzled, listens, hears no sound.] Aunt Regina. [Puts hat on sofa R. No answer. He moves around restlessly, crossing L.] Addie. [Waits, turns crossing C.] Where the hell—? [Crosses D.R. to bell cord, rings it impatiently, twice, waits and gets no answer; calls.] Cal! [Rings again, then calls.] Cal— [After a second CAL appears on stair landing.]

CAL [his voice is soft, shaken]. Mr. Leo. Miss Regina says you stop that screaming noise.

LEO [angrily crosses to table R.] Where is everybody?

CAL. Mr. Horace he got an attack. He's bad. Miss Regina says you stop that noise.

LEO. Uncle Horace—What— [Crosses U.C.]—What happened? [CAL starts down stairs. CAL shakes his head, begins to move swiftly L. off. LEO looks around wildly.] But when—You seen Mr. Oscar or Mr. Ben? [CAL shakes his head. Moves on. LEO grab him by the arm.] Answer me, will you?

CAL. No ain't seen 'em. I ain't got time to answer you. [CAL breaks LEO'S hold, crosses L.] I got to get things. [CAL exits.]

LEO But what's the matter with him? When did this happen—? [Crossing to door L., calling after CAL.] You'd think Papa'd be some place where you could find him. I been chasing him all afternoon.

[OSCAR and BEN come swiftly into the room, talking excitedly.]

OSCAR I hope it's not a bad attack.

BEN. It's the first one he's had since he come home.

[LEO crosses to OSCAR, excitedly.]

LEO Papa, I've been looking all over town for you and Uncle Ben—

BEN Where is he?

OSCAR Addie said it was sudden.

BEN [to LEO]. Where is he? When did it happen?

LEO. Upstairs. Will you listen to me, please? I been looking for you for—

OSCAR [to BEN]. You think we should go up?

[BEN, looking up the steps, shakes his head.]

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

OSCAR [shakes his head]. But he was all right—

LEO [almost yelling—turns, crosses D. to front chair L.C.]. Will you listen to me?

OSCAR [*sharply—crossing D. to LEO*]. What is the matter with you?

LEO [*coming to him*]. I been trying to tell you. I been trying to find you for an hour—

OSCAR. Tell me what?

LEO. Uncle Horace knows about the bonds. He knows about them. He's had the box since Wednesday—

BEN [*sharply*]. Stop shouting! [*Crosses D.C. to him*]. What the hell are you talking about?

LEO [*furiously. Crossing to BEN*]. I'm telling you he knows about the bonds. Ain't that clear enough—?

OSCAR [*grabbing LEO'S arm*]. You God damn fool! Stop screaming!

BEN. Now what happened? Talk quietly.

LEO [*closes his eyes, angrily, attempted patience*]. You heard me. Uncle Horace knows about the bonds. He's known since Wednesday.

BEN [*after a second. OSCAR draws close to them*]. How do you know that?

LEO. Because Cal comes down to Mander and says the box came O. K. and—

OSCAR [*trembling, crosses to BEN, pushing LEO away L.*]. That might not mean a thing—

LEO [*angrily steps D. to L. of OSCAR*]. No? It might not, huh? [*Takes OSCAR'S arm. OSCAR turns to him*]. Then he says Mander should come here tonight and bring Sol Fowler with him. [*BEN crosses R. to R. of table*]. I guess that don't mean a thing either.

[*LEO turns—crosses D.L.*]

OSCAR [*panicky, to BEN*]. Ben—What—Do you think he's seen the—

BEN [*motions to box*]. There's the box. [*Both OSCAR and LEO turn sharply. LEO makes a leap to the box, crossing R. back of OSCAR, picks up box*]. You ass. Put it down. What are you going to do with it, eat it?

LEO. I'm going to— [*Starts*].

BEN [*furiously*]. Put it down. Don't touch it again. Now sit down and shut up for a minute.

[*LEO puts box down on table*].

OSCAR [*crossing to LEO*]. Since Wednesday. [*To LEO*]. You said he had it since Wednesday. Why didn't he say something— [*To BEN*]. I don't understand—

LEO [*taking a step R.*]. I can put it back. I can put it back before anybody knows.

BEN [*who is standing at the table R., softly*]. He's had it since Wednesday. Yet he hasn't said a word to us.

OSCAR. Why? Why?

LEO. What's the difference why? He was getting ready to say plenty. He was going to say it to Fowler tonight—

OSCAR [*angrily*]. Be still.

[*Turns to BEN, looks at him, waits*].

BEN [*after a moment*]. I don't believe that.

LEO [*wildly, leaning toward BEN over table*]. You don't believe it? What do I care what you believe? I do the dirty work and then—

BEN [*turning his head sharply to LEO*]. I'm remembering that. I'm remembering that, Leo.

OSCAR [*a step D.*]. What do you mean?

LEO. You—

BEN [*to OSCAR*]. If you don't shut that little fool up, I'll show you what I mean. [*OSCAR makes a gesture at LEO. LEO crosses U.C.*] For some reason he knows, but he don't say a word.

OSCAR [*crossing to BEN*]. Maybe he didn't know that we—

BEN [*quickly*]. That Leo—? [*Crosses C.*] He's no fool. [*Crossing up to LEO*]. Does Mander know the bonds are missing?

LEO. How could I tell? I was half crazy. I don't think so. Because Mander seemed kind of puzzled and—

OSCAR. But we got to find out—

[*He breaks off as CAL comes into the room carrying a kettle of hot water and clean cloths, leaving door open. They turn to CAL. LEO, startled, crosses U.L. to back settee*].

BEN [*crosses to above chair L.*]. How is he, Cal?

CAL. I don't know, Mr. Ben. He was bad. [*Going toward stairs*].

OSCAR [*crosses L. to chair L.*]. But when did it happen?

CAL [*shrugs*]. He wasn't feeling so bad early. [*ADDIE comes in quickly from hall*]. Then there he is next thing on the landing, fallen over, his eyes tight—

[*He hurries toward stairs*].

ADDIE [*to CAL*]. Dr. Sloan's over at the Ballongs Hitch the buggy and go get him. [*She takes kettle and cloths from him, pushes him, runs up stairs*]. Go on.

[*She disappears*].

[*CAL exits L., picking up his umbrella as he goes. OSCAR crosses D.R.*]

BEN [*takes off coat and hat, places them on chair U.C.*]. Never seen Sloan anywhere when you need him.

OSCAR [*softly*]. Sounds bad.

LEO [*taking a step to BEN*]. He would have told her about it. Aunt Regina. He would have told his own wife—

BEN [*turning to LEO*]. Yes, he might have told her. [*Crossing, to front wheel-chair*]. But they weren't on such pretty terms and maybe he didn't. Maybe he didn't. [*Goes quickly to LEO*]. Now, listen to me. If she doesn't know, it may work out all right. [*Holding LEO'S lapel*]. If she does know, you're to say he lent you the bonds.

LEO. Lent them to me! Who's going to believe that?

BEN. Nobody.

OSCAR [to LEO, crossing to BEN] Don't you understand? It can't do no harm to say it— [BEN releases grip on LEO'S lapel.]

LEO Why should I say he lent them to me? Why not to you? [Carefully.] Why not to Uncle Ben?

BEN [smiles]. Just because he didn't lend them to me. Remember that.

LEO. But all he has to do is say he didn't lend them to me—

BEN [furiously]. But for some reason, he doesn't seem to be talking, does he?

[There are footsteps above. They ALL stand looking at the stairs. REGINA begins to come slowly down.]

BEN [crosses U R., to REGINA]. What happened?

REGINA. He's had a bad attack.

[Crosses D.C.]

OSCAR. Too bad. I'm so sorry we weren't here when—when Horace needed us.

BEN [crosses D C.] When you needed us.

REGINA [at chair L C. Looks at him]. Yes.

BEN How is he? Can we—can we go up?

REGINA [shakes her head]. He's not conscious

OSCAR [pacing around]. It's that—it's that bad? [Turns, crosses D.R.] Wouldn't you think Sloan could be found quickly, just once, just once?

REGINA. I don't think there is much for him to do.

BEN [crossing to REGINA]. Oh, don't talk like that. He's come through attacks before. He will now.

[REGINA sits down, chair L.C. After a second she speaks softly. LEO crosses R. to above table R.]

REGINA. Well We haven't seen each other since the day of our fight.

BEN [tenderly] That was nothing. Why, you and Oscar and I used to fight when we were kids.

OSCAR [hurriedly taking a step L.]. Don't you think we should go up? Is there anything we can do for Horace—

BEN. You don't feel well. Ah—

REGINA [without looking at them]. No, I don't. [Slight pause.] Horace told me about the bonds this afternoon.

[There is an immediate shocked silence.]

LEO [taking several short steps to L. of table R.]. The bonds. What do you mean? What bonds? What—?

OSCAR [looks at him furiously. Then to REGINA]. The Union Pacific bonds? Horace's Union Pacific Bonds?

REGINA. Yes.

OSCAR [step to her, very nervously]. Well.

Well what—what about them? What—what could he say?

REGINA. He said that Leo had stolen the bonds and given them to you.

OSCAR [aghast, very loudly]. That's ridiculous, Regina, absolutely—

LEO. I don't know what you're talking about. What would I—why—

REGINA [wearily to BEN]. Isn't it enough that he stole them from me? Do I have to listen to this in the bargain?

OSCAR. You are talking—

LEO. I didn't steal anything. I don't know why—

REGINA [to BEN]. Would you ask them to stop that, please?

[There is silence for a minute. BEN glowers at OSCAR and LEO, LEO looks at OSCAR.]

BEN. Aren't we starting at the wrong end, Regina? What did Horace tell you?

REGINA [smiles at him]. He told me that Leo had stolen the bonds.

LEO [to BEN]. I didn't steal—

REGINA. Please. Let me finish. [LEO crosses R slowly] Then he told me that he was going to pretend that he had lent them to you [LEO turns sharply to REGINA, then looks at OSCAR, then looks back at REGINA] as a present from me to my brothers. He said there was nothing I could do about it. He said the rest of his money would go to Alexandra. That is all.

[There is a silence. OSCAR coughs, LEO smiles slyly.]

LEO [taking a step to her]. I told you he had lent them—I could have told you—

REGINA [ignores him, smiles sadly at BEN]. So I'm very badly off, you see. [Carefully] But Horace said there was nothing I could do about it as long as he was alive to say he had lent you the bonds.

BEN. You shouldn't feel that way. It can all be explained, all be adjusted. It isn't as bad—

REGINA. So you, at least, are willing to admit that the bonds were stolen?

BEN [OSCAR laughs nervously]. I admit no such thing. It's possible that Horace made up that part of the story to tease you— [Looks at her.] Or perhaps to punish you. Punish you.

REGINA [sadly]. It's not a pleasant story. I feel bad, Ben, naturally. I hadn't thought

BEN. Now you shall have the bonds safely back. That was the understanding, wasn't it, Oscar?

OSCAR [crossing to C.]. Yes.

REGINA. I'm glad to know that. [Smiles.] Ah, I had greater hopes—

BEN. Don't talk that way. That's foolish.

[*Looks at his watch.*] I think we ought to drive out for Sloan ourselves. [*Looks at OSCAR.*] If we can't find him we'll go over to Senateville for Doctor Morris. [*Looks at her. OSCAR crosses u. to chair R.C. for hat, LEO crosses u. back of sofa to hall, picking up hat*] And don't think I'm dismissing this other business. I'm not. We'll have it all out on a more appropriate day.

[*BEN crosses u. to chair U.C. for coat and hat.*]

REGINA [*waits until they are near the door. Looks up, quietly.*] I don't think you had better go yet. I think you had better stay and sit down. [*OSCAR crosses to hall.*]

BEN [*picking up coat and hat*]. We'll be back with Sloan.

REGINA. Cal has gone for him. I don't want you to go.

[*OSCAR turns, looks at them*]

BEN [*crossing u.c.*]. Now don't worry and—

REGINA. You will come back in this room and sit down. I have something more to say.

[*LEO steps back into view*]

BEN [*turns, comes toward her to c.*]. Since when do I take orders from you?

REGINA [*smiles*]. You don't—yet. [*OSCAR takes a step in. Sharply.*] Come back, Oscar. You too, Leo.

OSCAR [*takes another step in. Sure of himself, laughs.*] My dear Regina—

BEN [*crosses to her. Softly, pats her hand*]. Horace has already clipped your wings and very wittily. Do I have to clip them, too? [*Smiles at her.*] You'd get farther with a smile, Regina. I'm a soft man for a woman's smile.

REGINA. I'm smiling, Ben. I'm smiling because you are quite safe while Horace lives. But I don't think Horace will live [*LEO looks at OSCAR. To BEN.*] And if he doesn't live I shall want seventy-five per cent in exchange for the bonds.

BEN [*steps back. Whistles, laughs.*] Greedy! What a greedy girl you are! You want so much of everything.

REGINA. Yes. And if I don't get what I want I am going to put all three of you in jail.

OSCAR [*crosses L. to R. of REGINA, furiously*]. You're mighty crazy. Having just admitted—

[*LEO steps D.*]

BEN. And on what evidence would you put Oscar and Leo in jail?

REGINA [*laughs, gaily.*] Oscar, listen to him. He's getting ready to swear that it was you and Leo! What do you say to that? [*As OSCAR turns furiously toward BEN.*] Oh, don't be angry, Oscar. I'm going to see that he goes in with you.

[*OSCAR turns, steps u.c.*]

BEN. Try anything you like, Regina. [*Steps to REGINA. OSCAR crosses u.R.*

Sharply.] And now we can stop all this and say goodbye to you. [*ALEXANDRA comes into view on landing, moving slowly down steps.*] It's his money and he's obviously willing to let us borrow it. [*More pleasantly. LEO slowly crosses u. to hall*] Learn to make threats when you can carry them through: for how many years have I told you a good-looking woman gets more by being soft and appealing? Mama used to tell you that. [*Looks at his watch*] Where the hell is Sloan? [*To OSCAR*] Take the buggy and—

[*As BEN turns to OSCAR, he sees ALEXANDRA and stops. OSCAR turns to her. ALEXANDRA has come slowly down the steps. She walks stiffly. She comes down as if she did not see any of them. She goes slowly to lower window, her head bent. They all turn to look at her.*]

OSCAR [*after a second, moving toward her above sofa*]. What? Alexandra—

[*She does not answer. After a second ADDIE comes slowly down the stairs, moving as if she were very tired. At foot of steps, she looks at ALEXANDRA, then turns and slowly crosses to door L. and exits. REGINA rises. She sees ADDIE. BEN looks nervously at ALEXANDRA, at REGINA*]

OSCAR [*as ADDIE passes him, irritably to ALEXANDRA*] Well, what is— [*turns into room—sees ADDIE at foot of steps*] what's?—[*BEN puts up a hand, shakes his head. His movements become nervous and fidgety, as if he were anxious to get out. OSCAR clears his throat, looks at REGINA, tries to fill the silence. LEO steps D*] My God, I didn't know—who could have known—I didn't know he was that sick. Well, well—I—

[*REGINA stands quietly, her back to them.*]

BEN [*softly, sincerely*]. Seems like yesterday when he first came here

[*Places coat and hat on chair above wheel-chair.*]

OSCAR [*sincerely, nervously*]. Yes, that's true. [*Turns to BEN*] The whole town loved him and respected him.

ALEXANDRA [*turns and crosses to below sofa R.*]. Did you love him, Uncle Oscar?

OSCAR [*turns to ALEXANDRA*]. Certainly, I—What a strange thing to ask? I—

ALEXANDRA [*turns to look at BEN*]. Did you love him, Uncle Ben?

BEN [*simply*]. He had—

ALEXANDRA [*suddenly starts to laugh very loudly*]. And you, Mama, did you love him, too?

REGINA. I know what you feel, Alexandra, but please try to control yourself.

ALEXANDRA [*still laughing*]. I'm trying, Mama. I'm trying very hard.

BEN. Grief makes some people laugh and

some people cry. It's better to cry, Alexandra

ALEXANDRA [*the laugh has stopped. Tensely Moves toward REGINA, crossing to front sofa*]. What was Papa doing on the staircase?

REGINA [*crossing r. to ALEXANDRA. BEN turns to look at ALEXANDRA with interest*]. Please go and lie down, my dear. We all need time to get over shocks like this. [*ALEXANDRA does not move. REGINA'S voice becomes softer, more insistent.*] Please go, Alexandra.

ALEXANDRA. No, Mama. I'll wait. I've got to talk to you.

REGINA. Later. Go and rest now.

ALEXANDRA [*quietly*]. I'll wait, Mama. I've plenty of time. [*Sits down on sofa.*] All my life.

REGINA [*hesitates, stares, makes a half shrug, turns back to BEN, crossing l. to c.*]. As I was saying. Tomorrow morning I am going up to Judge Simmes. I shall tell him about Leo.

BEN [*motioning toward ALEXANDRA, steps D to chair L.C.*]. Not in front of the child, Regina. I—

REGINA [*turns to him. Sharply*]. I didn't ask her to stay [*Turns away, crossing l.*] Tomorrow morning I go to Judge Simmes—

OSCAR. And what proof? What proof of all this—

REGINA [*turns, crosses to c between BEN and OSCAR. To OSCAR sharply*]. None. I won't need any. The bonds are missing and they are with Marshall. That will be enough. If it isn't, I'll add what's necessary.

BEN. I'm sure of that.

REGINA [*turns to BEN*]. You can be quite sure.

OSCAR. We'll deny—

REGINA. Deny your heads off. You couldn't find a jury that wouldn't weep for a woman whose brothers steal from her. And you couldn't find twelve men in this State you haven't cheated and hate you for it.

OSCAR. What kind of talk is this? You couldn't do anything like that! We're your own brothers. How can you talk that way when upstairs not five minutes ago—

[*Points up stairs.*]

REGINA [*slowly*]. There are people who can never go back, who must finish what they start. I am one of those people, Oscar [*After a slight pause, turns back to BEN, almost teasingly.*] Where was I? [*Smiles at BEN.*] Well, they'll convict you. But I won't care much if they don't. [*Leans forward, pleasantly.*] Because by that time you'll be ruined. [*Crosses D.L.*] I shall also tell my story to Mr.

Marshall, who likes me, I think, and who will not want to be involved in your scandal. A respectable firm like Marshall & Company! The deal would be off in an hour [*Turns to them angrily*]. And you know it. Now I don't want to hear any more from any of you. You'll do no more bargaining in this house. I'll take my seventy-five per cent and we'll forget the story forever. That's one way of doing it, and the way I prefer [*Crosses to settee L.*] You know me well enough to know that I don't mind taking the other way.

[*Sits down on settee*.]

BEN [*after a second, slowly, at chair L.C.*]. None of us have ever known you well enough, Regina.

REGINA. You're getting old, Ben. Your tricks aren't as smart as they used to be. [*There is no answer. She waits, then smiles.*] All right. I take it that's settled and I get what I asked for.

OSCAR [*furiously to BEN*]. Are you going to let her do this—?

BEN [*turns to look at him, slowly*]. You have a suggestion?

REGINA [*puts her arms above her head, stretches, laughs*]. No, he hasn't. All right. Now, Leo, I have forgotten that you ever saw the bonds [*Archly, to BEN and OSCAR*]. And as long as you boys both behave yourselves, I've forgotten that we ever talked about them. You can draw up the necessary papers tomorrow.

[*BEN laughs. LEO stares at him, starts for door. Exits. OSCAR moves toward door, angrily. REGINA looks at BEN, nods, laughs with him. For a second, OSCAR stands in the door, looking back at them. Then he exits*.]

REGINA. You're a good loser, Ben. I like that.

BEN [*he picks up his coat, then turns to her*]. Well, I say to myself, what's the good? You and I aren't like Oscar. We're not sour people. I think that comes from a good digestion. [*Putting on coat.*] Then, too, one loses today and wins tomorrow. I say to myself, years of planning and I get what I want. Then I don't get it. But I'm not discouraged. The century's turning, the world is open. Open for people like you and me. Ready for us, waiting for us. After all, this is just the beginning. [*Crosses r. to above chair L.C.*] There are hundreds of Hubbards sitting in rooms like this throughout the country. All their names aren't Hubbard, but they are all Hubbards and they will own this country some day. We'll get along.

REGINA [*smiles*]. I think so.

BEN [*crosses to chair, picks up hat*]. Then, too, I say to myself, things may change. [*Looks at ALEXANDRA.*] I agree with Alex-

andra. [*Looks up at landing*] What is a man in a wheel chair doing on a staircase? I ask myself that.

REGINA [*looks up at him*]. And what do you answer?

BEN. I have no answer. [*Crosses L. to back of settee.*] But maybe some day I will. Maybe never, but maybe some day. [*Smiles. Patting her arm.*] When I do, I'll let you know.

[*Crosses to C., toward hall.*]

REGINA [*as he turns for door*]. When you do, write me. I will be in Chicago. [*Gaily.*] Ah, Ben, if Papa had only left me his money.

BEN. I'll see you tomorrow.

[*Crosses R. to above wheel chair.*]

REGINA. Oh, yes. Certainly. You'll be sort of working for me now.

BEN [*turns, crosses to above sofa R., looks at ALEXANDRA, smiles at her*]. Alexandra, you're turning out to be a right interesting girl. [*Looks at REGINA.*] Well, goodnight, all. [*He exits.*]

REGINA [*sits quietly for a second, stretches, turns to look at ALEXANDRA*]. What do you want to talk to me about, Alexandra?

ALEXANDRA [*slowly*]. I've changed my mind. I don't want to talk. There's nothing to talk about now.

REGINA. You're acting very strange. Not like yourself. You've had a bad shock today. I know that. And you loved Papa, but you must have expected this to come someday. You knew how sick he was.

ALEXANDRA. I knew. We all knew.

REGINA. It will be good for you to get away from here. Good for me, too. Time heals most wounds, Alexandra. You're young, you shall have all the things I wanted. I'll make the world for you the way I wanted it to be for me. [*Uncomfortably*] Don't sit there staring. You've been around Birdie so much you're getting just like her.

ALEXANDRA [*nods*]. Funny. That's what Aunt Birdie said today.

REGINA [*nods*]. Be good for you to get away from all this. [*ADDIE enters.*]

ADDIE. Cal is back, Miss Regina. He says Dr. Sloan will be coming in a few minutes.

REGINA. We'll go in a few weeks. A few weeks! That means two or three Saturdays, two or three Sundays. [*Sighs.*] Well, I'm very tired. I shall go to bed. I don't want any supper. Put the lights out and lock up. [*ADDIE moves to the piano lamp, turns it out.*] You go to your room, Alexandra. Addie will bring you something hot. You look very tired. [*Rises, crosses v c. To ADDIE.*] Call me when Dr. Sloan gets here. I don't want to see anybody else. I don't want any condolence calls tonight. The whole town will be over.

ALEXANDRA. Mama, I'm not coming with you. I'm not going to Chicago.

REGINA [*turns, to her*]. You're very upset, Alexandra.

ALEXANDRA [*quietly*]. I mean what I say. With all my heart.

REGINA [*quietly*]. We'll talk about it tomorrow. The morning will make a difference.

ALEXANDRA. It won't make any difference. And there isn't anything to talk about. I am going away from you. Because I want to. Because I know Papa would want me to.

REGINA [*puzzled, careful, polite*]. You know your Papa wanted you to go away from me?

ALEXANDRA. Yes.

REGINA [*softly*]. And if I say no?

ALEXANDRA [*looks at her, firmly*]. Say it, Mama, say it. And see what happens.

REGINA [*softly, after a pause*]. And if I make you stay?

ALEXANDRA. That would be foolish. It wouldn't work in the end.

REGINA. You're very serious about it, aren't you? [*Crosses to steps—up two steps*] Well, you'll change your mind in a few days.

ALEXANDRA. You only change your mind when you want to. And I won't want to.

REGINA [*going up steps*]. Alexandra, I've come to the end of my rope [*On 5th step*] Somewhere there has to be what I want, too. Life goes too fast. Do what you want; think what you want; go where you want. I'd like to keep you with me, but I won't make you stay. Too many people used to make me do too many things. No. [*Going up to landing.*] I won't make you stay.

ALEXANDRA. You couldn't, Mama, because I want to leave here. As I've never wanted anything in my life before. Because I understand what Papa was trying to tell me. [*Pause*] All in one day. Addie said there were people who ate the earth and other people who stood around and watched them do it. And just now Uncle Ben said the same thing. Really, he said the same thing. [*Tense-ly.*] Well, tell him for me, Mama, I'm not going to stand around and watch you do it. Tell him I'll be fighting as hard as he'll be fighting [*rises, steps v. to table*] someplace where people don't just stand around and watch.

REGINA. Well, you have spirit, after all I used to think you were all sugar water. We don't have to be bad friends. I don't want us to be bad friends, Alexandra. [*Starts off, stops, turns to ALEXANDRA.*] Would you like to come and talk to me, Alexandra? Would you—would you like to sleep in my room tonight?

ALEXANDRA [*takes a step toward her*]. Are you afraid, Mama?

[REGINA does not answer, but moves slowly out of sight. ADDIE then comes to ALEX-ANDRA, squeezes her arm with affection and pride, then starts for the other lamp, as

THE CURTAIN FALLS

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Reading list·

- Volpone*, Ben Jonson
Hedda Gabler, Henrik Ibsen
Craig's Wife, George Kelly
The Thunderbolt, A W Pinero
The Vultures, Henri Becque
Yegor Bulitchev, Maxim Gorki

WINTERSET

(1935)

BY

MAXWELL ANDERSON

CHARACTERS

TROCK
SHADOW
MIRIAMNE
GARTH
ESDRAS
THE HOBO
1ST GIRL
2ND GIRL
JUDGE GAUNT
MIO
CARR
HERMAN
LUCIA
PINY
A SAILOR
STREET URCHIN
POLICEMAN
RADICAL
SERGEANT
 Non-speaking
 URCHINS
 TWO MEN IN BLUE SERGE

MAXWELL ANDERSON

WHEN Somerset Maugham announced in 1933 that he would write no more plays, he ventured the prophecy that realistic prose drama had reached its point of highest development, that it would be superseded by a different art-form, and that possibly verse would return to the stage. Naturally not enough time has elapsed to test Maugham's powers of prophecy, but there is very little evidence so far that such a change is imminent: aside from T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, a few somewhat precious verse satires by W. H. Auden and Humbert Wolfe, and the more full-blooded verse plays by Maxwell Anderson, the prose drama has no competition. It is not at all likely that verse will regain the ascendancy it once had, for prose is the instrument of our century. Our essays and novels are no longer written in poetry, which more and more is restricted to lyric verse forms. With Maxwell Anderson's assertion that "prose is the language of information and poetry the language of emotion" few will agree. One thinks of the closing passage of Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, of the death of Catherine in *The Farewell to Arms*, of moving, poignant scenes in many plays—*Lilom*, *Saint Joan*, *The Tragedy of Nan*, *The Plough and the Stars*, *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals*, in all of which prose is used successfully as the language of emotion. There is room for both poetry and prose in the theatre; one need not supplant the other. But poetry will be a successful medium only when used by a poet with *dramatic* skill or genius. Many drama-lovers believe that the popularity of the poetic dramas of Maxwell Anderson signals a revival of interest in verse drama. Since 1923 eighteen of Anderson's plays have been produced, and over half of them have been in verse. He is the only poet-dramatist of our time to meet with notable success.

Anderson was born in Atlantic, Pennsylvania, in 1888, the son of a Baptist preacher. After elementary and high school training in various states, he attended the University of North Dakota, from which he graduated in 1911. In 1914 he received an M.A. from Leland Stanford. After ten years in college teaching and in journalism he wrote in 1923 his first play, *White Desert*. Friendship with a fellow newspaper worker, Laurence Stallings, resulted in three collaborations, only one of which, *What Price Glory?* was successful. Since 1925 he has devoted his talents almost entirely to the theatre. He is as shy as O'Neill, but no legend has grown up about him. He is never interviewed and is adamant in his determination that only by his works shall we know him.

White Desert is the tragic story of the failure of two young Pennsylvania homesteaders to understand each other. *What Price Glory?* (1924) is the best American war comedy, racy and richly comic. Although not an indictment, it removes so completely the romance and glamor of war that professional patrioteers were nettled by its realism. *Saturday's Children* (1927) is an uncomfortable and unromantic comedy of early married life which skillfully avoids both sentimentalism and bitterness. *Gods of the Lightning* (1928) reveals another side to Anderson, for it is a play of frank social protest, a direct result of the dramatist's passionate interest in the Sacco-Vanzetti case and what he believed to be a shocking miscarriage of justice. It is a lively piece of propaganda but no work of art. The production of *Elizabeth the Queen* (1930) marks the beginning of Anderson's successful association with the Theatre Guild, an association that has proved mutually advantageous. Essex's abortive

rebellion serves as the dramatic background for the tragic love of the Earl and Elizabeth—a situation more dramatically effective than historically true. Anderson uses his characteristic verse patterns in this play, a loose, elastic free verse, sometimes merely a heightened, burnished prose, sometimes conventional blank verse. *Night over Taos* (1932), a poetic tragedy of Old Mexico, deserves far more recognition than it has received. Its first production suffered because of immature playing; American actors, who seldom receive the severe classical training that British actors are subject to, usually have difficulty with verse plays. Although the author considers *Both Your Houses* (1933) his worst play, it received the Pulitzer Prize. It is a political satire, a pessimistic study of intrigue and corruption in congressional committees. It has neither the white flame of righteous anger of *The Enemy of the People* or the impudent wit of *First Lady*. Like *Gods of the Lightning* it is closer to polemics than to drama. *Mary of Scotland* (1933) was generally hailed as the greatest historical drama ever written by an American dramatist. Its poetry is firmer, its characterizations more luminous than in *Elizabeth the Queen*; *Mary of Scotland*, although rich and embroidered in language and imagery and warm in its protest against injustice, is so sharp and direct in outline and movement, so taut in construction, that Schiller's *Maria Stuart* seems turgid and rhetorical in comparison. *Valley Forge* (1934) is an uneven play concerned with a situation rather than with progressive action. Fine, ringing lines are given to the ragged soldiers, but the author fails to reduce Washington the common denominator of man, and he remains the somewhat pompous and stuffy figure of legend and myth. In *The Winged Victory* there is a disturbing conflict of artistic methods the background is realistically New England, peopled with narrow, bigoted, self-righteous New England folk of a century ago; but the heroine, the Malay wife of a sea captain, talks and performs like a tragic queen out of Racine or Dryden. *High Tor* (1937) is a delightful fantasy with echoes of Rip Van Winkle and Thoreau, and also of the nervous, bustling world of today. Broad humor, cutting satire, rich poetry, and beauty are mingled with considerable success in this highly original play. *The Masque of Kings* (1937) is far less original. It is a straightforward verse play retelling the oft-told story of the death of the Austrian Crown Prince Rudolph at Mayerling. *The Star-Wagon* (1937) is a somewhat flaccid comedy using the hackneyed device of the time-machine to project the characters into their past. Two one-act verse plays, *The Feast of the Ortolans* (1937), which pictures a group of French aristocrats at play on the eve of the Revolution, and *Second Overture* (1938), which deals with a group of Russians awaiting death in a Bolshevik prison, were written expressly for radio presentation.

In none of his half-dozen plays written between 1937 and 1946 has Anderson succeeded in reaching the high level of *Winterset* and *High Tor*. *Storm Operation* and *A Journey to Jerusalem* are downright dull; *Candle in the Wind* is excellent melodrama in spots, but cheapened by banal speech-making and a strident note of violence; *Key Largo* and *Truckline Café* have large and praiseworthy themes, which, however, are not developed and integrated into the narrative with enough skill and conviction for the theatre. *The Eve of St. Mark* (1942), which succeeded in expressing the emotional attitudes of our first war-year, is an unvarnished story of an average young American taken from his job and sweetheart into the army, trained, sent into battle, and killed. *The Eve of St. Mark*, *A Bell for Adano*, by Paul Osborn, and *The Hasty Heart*, by Captain John Patrick, are the only American war plays of distinction written during the war itself. *Joan of Lorraine* (1946), much superior to Anderson's half-dozen plays of the preceding nine years, is poignant and absorbing in story, elevated in theme, and excellent in its prose dialogue. It is original in form (it concerns the rehearsal of a play about Joan), and in no way invites comparison with Bernard Shaw's masterpiece, *Saint Joan*.

In *Winterset* (1935), which is Anderson's finest achievement in poetic drama, the dramatist

is both poet and crusader for justice; again he is moved by the Sacco-Vanzetti case, but whereas in *Gods of the Lightning* he is a fervid propagandist, in *Winterset* he is primarily interested in his characters. The note of social protest is here, but it is tempered by eight years of brooding; it is anger recollected in tranquillity. In *Winterset* verse for the first time is used in a play dealing with contemporary life rather than with a historical subject. Some critics ridiculed the use of verse by slum-dwellers and gangsters, but Anderson is as justified as was Shakespeare, who put poetry into the mouths of servants, hired murderers (gangsters!), money-lenders, clowns. Verse dialogue is a convention and naturally cannot be defended from the point of view of realism. It is a heightened language, often beautiful in itself, sometimes a more sensitive transmitter of emotion to the audience than is prose. At any rate the use of poetry in the theatre needs no defense: most of the great plays are in verse—the immortal Greek tragedies, the great Elizabethan plays of England, the dramas of Racine, Corneille, Lope de Vega, Goethe, Schiller. The use of realistic prose is a recent innovation which has by no means completely ousted poetry from the theatre. *Winterset* immediately lends itself to comparison with *Hamlet* in the characters and obsessions of their heroes, in their brooding melancholy, in their victory in defeat, in the lofty poetry, often of a haunting beauty. There is an echo of *Romeo and Juliet* in the brief and pathetic love of the boy and the girl, and the second act (one of the greatest scenes in American drama) tense with excitement and terror in the dank basement room with a violent storm raging without, is not unworthy of comparison with the great storm scene in *King Lear*.

Few modern plays have ever been attacked more viciously or defended more warmly than *Winterset*. "Banality," "flatness," "florid," "anachronistic," "melodramatic," "pretentious," "sordid" are some of the disparaging terms used by hostile critics: far more often, however, one finds the enthusiastic "bold," "heady," "exalted," "uplifting." Anderson was awarded the Dramatic Critics' Circle Prize for *Winterset*. The official announcement of the award is as follows: "The Circle's decision is based upon the conviction that in *Winterset* the author accomplished the notably difficult task of interpreting a valid and challenging contemporary theme dealing with the pursuit of human justice in terms of unusual poetic force, realizing a drama of rich meaning and combining a high literary distinction with compelling theatrical force."

WINTERSET

ACT ONE

SCENE I

SCENE: *The scene is the bank of a river under a bridgehead. A gigantic span starts from the rear of the stage and appears to lift over the heads of the audience and out to the left. At the right rear is a wall of solid supporting masonry. To the left an apartment building abuts against the bridge and forms the left wall of the stage with a dark basement window and a door in the brick wall. To the right, and in the foreground, an outcropping of original rock makes a barricade behind which one may enter through a cleft. To the rear, against the masonry, two sheds have been built by waifs and strays for shelter. The river bank, in the foreground, is black rock worn smooth by years of trampling. There is room for exit and entrance to the left around the apartment house, also around the rock to the right. A single street lamp is seen at the left—and a glimmer of apartment lights in the background beyond It is an early, dark December morning.*

TWO YOUNG MEN IN SERGE *lean against the masonry, matching bills*
TROCK ESTRELLA and SHADOW *come in from the left.*

TROCK. Go back and watch the car
[*The TWO YOUNG MEN go out.*
TROCK walks to the corner and looks toward the city]

You roost of punks and gulls! Sleep, sleep it off, whatever you had last night, get down in warm, one big ham-fat against another—sleep, cling, sleep and rot! Rot out your pasty guts with diddling, you had no brain to begin. If you had there'd be no need for us to sleep on iron who had too much brains for you.

SHADOW. Now look, Trock, look,

what would the warden say to talk like that?

TROCK. May they die as I die!

By God, what life they've left me they shall keep me well! I'll have that out of them—

these pismires that walk like men!

SHADOW. Because, look, chief, it's all against science and penology for you to get out and begin to cuss that way before your prison vittles are out of you Hell,

you're supposed to leave the pen full of high thought, kind of noble-like, loving toward all mankind, ready to kiss their feet—or whatever parts

they stick out toward you. Look at me!

TROCK. I see you

And even you may not live as long as you think.

You think too many things are funny.

Well, laugh.

But it's not so funny.

SHADOW. Come on, Trock, you know me. Anything you say goes, but give me leave to kid a little

TROCK. Then laugh at somebody else!

It's a lot safer! They've soaked me once too often in that vat of poisoned hell they keep up-state

to soak men in, and I'm rotten inside, I'm all

one liquid puke inside where I had lungs once, like yourself! And now they want to get me

and stir me in again—and that'd kill me—

and that's fine for them. But before that happens to me

a lot of these healthy boys'll know what it's like

when you try to breathe and have no place to put air—

they'll learn it from me!

SHADOW. They've got nothing on you, chief.

TROCK. I don't know yet. That's what I'm here to find out.

If they've got what they might have it's not a year this time—
no, nor ten. It's screwed down under a lid—

I can die quick enough, without help.

SHADOW. You're the skinny kind that lives forever.

TROCK He gave me a half a year, the doc at the gate.

SHADOW Jesus

TROCK Six months I get, and the rest's dirt, six feet.

[*LUCIA, the street-piano man, comes in right from behind the rock and goes to the shed where he keeps his piano. PINY, the apple-woman, follows and stands in the entrance. LUCIA speaks to ESTRELLA, who still stands facing SHADOW*]

LUCIA Morning

[*TROCK and SHADOW go out round the apartment house without speaking*]

PINY Now what would you call them?

LUCIA Maybe someting da river washed up

PINY Nothing ever washed him—that black one

LUCIA Maybe not, maybe so More like his pa and ma raise-a heem in da cellar
[*He wheels out the piano.*]

PINY. He certainly gave me a turn

[*She lays a hand on the rock*]

LUCIA You don' live-a right, ol' gal. Take heem easy Look on da bright-a side Never say-a die Me, every day in every way I getta be da regular heller.
[*He starts out*]

CURTAIN

SCENE II

SCENE: *A cellar apartment under the apartment building, floored with cement and roofed with huge boa constrictor pipes that run slantwise from left to right, dwarfing the room An outside door opens to the left and a door at the right rear leads to the interior of the place. A low squat window to the left. A table at the rear and a few chairs and books make up the furniture. GARTH, son of ESDRAS sits alone, holding a violin upside down to inspect a crack at its base. He lays the bow on the floor and runs his fingers over the joint. MIRIAMNE enters*

from the rear, a girl of fifteen. GARTH looks up, then down again.

MIRIAMNE Garth—

GARTH. The glue lets go. It's the steam, I guess

It splits the hair on your head.

MIRIAMNE. It can't be mended?

GARTH I can't mend it

No doubt there are fellows somewhere who'd mend it for a dollar—and glad to do it.

That is if I had a dollar.—Got a dollar? No. I thought not.

MIRIAMNE Garth, you've sat at home here

three days now. You haven't gone out at all.

Something frightens you.

GARTH Yes?

MIRIAMNE And father's frightened.

He reads without knowing where. When a shadow falls

across the page he waits for a blow to follow

after the shadow. Then in a little while he puts his book down softly and goes out

to see who passed

GARTH A bill collector, maybe.

We haven't paid the rent.

MIRIAMNE No

GARTH You're a bright girl, sis—

You see too much You run along and cook

Why don't you go to school?

MIRIAMNE I don't like school!

They whisper behind my back.

GARTH. Yes? About what?

MIRIAMNE What did the lawyer mean that wrote to you?

GARTH [*rising*] What lawyer?

MIRIAMNE. I found a letter.

on the floor of your room. He said, "Don't get me wrong,

but stay in out of the rain the next few days,

just for instance."

GARTH I thought I burned that letter.

MIRIAMNE. Afterward you did And then what was printed

about the Estrella gang—you hid it from me,

you and father. What is it—about this murder—?

GARTH Will you shut up, you fool!

MIRIAMNE. But if you know why don't you tell them, Garth?

If it's true—what they say—

you knew all the time Romagna wasn't guilty,

and could have said so—
 GARTH. Everybody knew
 Romagna wasn't guilty! But they weren't
 listening
 to evidence in his favor. They didn't
 want it.
 They don't want it now.
 MIRIAMNE. But was that why
 they never called on you?—
 GARTH. So far as I know
 they never'd heard of me—and I can
 assure you
 I knew nothing about it—
 MIRIAMNE. But something's wrong—
 and it worries father—
 GARTH. What could be wrong?
 MIRIAMNE. I don't know. [A pause.]
 GARTH. And I don't know. You're a good
 kid, Miriamne,
 but you see too many movies. I wasn't
 mired up
 in any murder, and I don't mean to be.
 If I had a dollar to get my fiddle fixed
 and another to hire a hall, by God I'd
 fiddle
 some of the prodigies back into Sunday
 School
 where they belong, but I won't get either,
 and so
 I sit here and bite my nails—but if you
 hoped
 I had some criminal romantic past
 you'll have to look again!
 MIRIAMNE. Oh, Garth, forgive me—
 But I want you to be so far above such
 things
 nothing could frighten you. When you
 seem to shrink
 and be afraid, and you're the brother I
 love,
 I want to run there and cry, if there's
 any question
 they care to ask, you'll be quick and glad
 to answer,
 for there's nothing to conceal!
 GARTH. And that's all true—
 MIRIAMNE. But then I remember—
 how you dim the lights—
 and we go early to bed—and speak in
 whispers—
 and I could think there's a death some-
 where behind us—
 an evil death—
 GARTH [hearing a step]. Now for God's
 sake, be quiet!
 [ESDRAS, an old rabbi with a kindly
 face, enters from the outside. He is
 hurried and troubled.]
 ESDRAS. I wish to speak alone with
 someone here
 if I may have this room Miriamne—

MIRIAMNE [turning to go]. Yes, father.
 [The outer door is suddenly thrown
 open. TROCK appears.]
 TROCK [after a pause]. You'll excuse me
 for not knocking.
 [SHADOW follows TROCK in.]
 Sometimes it's best to come in quiet.
 Sometimes
 it's a good way to go out Garth's home,
 I see.
 He might not have been here if I made
 a point
 of knocking at doors.
 GARTH. How are you, Trock?
 TROCK. I guess
 you can see how I am
 [To MIRIAMNE]
 Stay here. Stay where you are.
 We'd like to make your acquaintance.
 If you want the facts
 I'm no better than usual, thanks. Not
 enough sun,
 my physician tells me. Too much close
 confinement.
 A lack of exercise and an overplus
 of beans in the diet You've done well,
 no doubt?
 GARTH. I don't know what makes you
 think so
 TROCK. Who's the family?
 GARTH. My father and my sister.
 TROCK. Happy to meet you
 Step inside a minute The boy and I
 have something to talk about
 ESDRAS. No, no—he's said nothing—
 nothing, sir, nothing!
 TROCK. When I say go out, you go—
 ESDRAS [pointing to the door]. Miri-
 amne—
 GARTH. Go on out, both of you!
 ESDRAS. Oh, sir—I'm old—
 old and unhappy—
 GARTH. Go on!
 [MIRIAMNE AND ESDRAS go in-
 side.]
 TROCK. And if you listen
 I'll riddle that door!
 [SHADOW shuts the door behind them
 and stands against it.]
 I just got out, you see,
 and I pay my first call on you.
 GARTH. Maybe you think
 I'm not in the same jam you are.
 TROCK. That's what I do think.
 Who started looking this up?
 GARTH. I wish I knew,
 and I wish he was in hell! Some damned
 professor
 with nothing else to do. If you saw his
 stuff
 you know as much as I do.

TROCK It wasn't you
turning state's evidence?
GARTH Hell, Trock, use your brain!
The case was closed. They burned Ro-
magna for it
and that finished it. Why should I look
for trouble
and maybe get burned myself?
TROCK. Boy, I don't know,
but I just thought I'd find out.
GARTH. I'm going straight, Trock
I can play this thing, and I'm trying to
make a living.
I haven't talked and nobody's talked to
me.
Christ—it's the last thing I'd want!
TROCK Your old man knows
GARTH That's where I got the money
that last time
when you needed it. He had a little
saved up,
but I had to tell him to get it. He's as
safe
as Shadow there.
TROCK [*looking at SHADOW*]. There
could be people safer
than that son-of-a-bitch.
SHADOW Who?
TROCK You'd be safer dead
along with some other gorillas.
SHADOW. It's beginning to look
as if you'd feel safer with everybody
dead,
the whole god-damn world
TROCK I would These Jesus-bitten
professors! Looking up their half-ass
cases!
We've got enough without that.
GARTH There's no evidence
to reopen the thing
TROCK And suppose they called on you
and asked you to testify?
GARTH Why then I'd tell 'em
that all I know is what I read in the
papers
And I'd stick to that.
TROCK How much does your sister know?
GARTH. I'm honest with you, Trock. She
read my name
in the professor's pamphlet, and she was
scared
the way anybody would be. She got
nothing
from me, and anyway she'd go to the
chair
herself before she'd send me there.
TROCK Like hell.
GARTH. Besides, who wants to go to trial
again
except the radicals?—You and I won't
spill

and unless we did there's nothing to
take to court
as far as I know Let the radicals go on
howling
about getting a dirty deal. They always
howl
and nobody gives a damn. This pro-
fessor's red—
everybody knows it
TROCK. You're forgetting the judge.
Where's the damn judge?
GARTH. What judge?
TROCK. Read the morning papers
It says Judge Gaunt's gone off his nut.
He's got
that damn trial on his mind, and been
going round
proving to everybody he was right all the
time
and the radicals were guilty—stopping
people
in the street to prove it—and now he's
nuts entirely
and nobody knows where he is
GARTH Why don't they know?
TROCK Because he's on the loose some-
where! They've got
the police of three cities looking for him.
GARTH. Judge Gaunt?
TROCK Yes Judge Gaunt.
SHADOW Why should that worry you?
He's crazy, ain't he? And even if he
wasn't
he's arguing on your side. You're jittery,
chief
God, all the judges are looney. You've
got the jitters,
and you'll damn well give yourself away
some time
[TROCK half turns toward SHADOW
in anger]
Don't jump the gun now,
I've got pockets in my clothes, too.
[His hand is in his coat pocket.]
TROCK. All right. Take it easy.
[He takes his hand from his pocket,
and SHADOW does the same]
[To GARTH]
Maybe you're lying to me and maybe
you're not.
Stay at home a few days.
GARTH. Sure thing. Why not?
TROCK And when I say stay home I
mean stay home.
If I have to go looking for you you'll
stay a long time
wherever I find you.
[To SHADOW.]
Come on. We'll get out of here.
[To GARTH.]
Be seeing you.

[*SHADOW and TROCK go out. After a pause GARTH walks over to his chair and picks up the violin. Then he puts it down and goes to the inside door, which he opens.*]

GARTH He's gone.

[*MIRIAMNE enters, ESDRAS behind her.*]

MIRIAMNE [*going up to GARTH*]. Let's not stay here.

[*She puts her hands on his arms.*]

I thought he'd come for something—horrible

Is he coming back?

GARTH. I don't know

MIRIAMNE Who is he, Garth?

GARTH. He'd kill me if I told you who he is,

that is, if he knew

MIRIAMNE. Then don't say it—

GARTH. Yes, and I'll say it! I was with a gang one time

that robbed a pay roll. I saw a murder done,

and Trock Estrella did it. If that got out I'd go to the chair and so would he—

that's why

he was here today—

MIRIAMNE. But that's not true—

ESDRAS He says it

to frighten you, child

GARTH Oh, no I don't! I say it because I've held it in too long! I'm damned

if I sit here forever, and look at the door,

waiting for Trock with his sub-machine gun, waiting

for police with a warrant!—I say I'm damned, and I am,

no matter what I do! These piddling scales

on a violin—first position, third, fifth, arpeggios in E—and what I'm thinking

is Romagna dead for the murder—dead while I sat here

dying inside—dead for the thing Trock did

while I looked on—and I could have saved him, yes—

but I sat here and let him die instead of me

because I wanted to live! Well, it's no life,

and it doesn't matter who I tell, because I mean to get it over!

MIRIAMNE. Garth, it's not true!

GARTH. I'd take some scum down with me if I died—

that'd be one good deed—

ESDRAS. Son, son, you're mad—

someone will hear—

GARTH. Then let them hear! I've lived with ghosts too long, and lied too long.

God damn you

if you keep me from the truth!—

[*He turns away.*]

Oh, God damn the world!

I don't want to die!

[*He throws himself down.*]

ESDRAS. I should have known.

I thought you hard and sullen,

Garth, my son. And you were a child, and hurt

with a wound that might be healed.

—All men have crimes, and most of them are hidden, and many

are heavy

as yours must be to you.

[*GARTH sobs*]

They walk the streets

to buy and sell, but a spreading crimson stain

tinges the inner vestments, touches flesh, and burns the quick. You're not alone.

GARTH. I'm alone

in this

ESDRAS. Yes, if you hold with the world that only

those who die suddenly should be revenged

But those whose hearts are cancered, drop by drop

in small ways, little by little, till they've borne

all they can bear, and die—these deaths will go

unpunished now as always. When we're young

we have faith in what is seen, but when we're old

we know that what is seen is traced in air and built on water. There's no guilt

under heaven,

just as there's no heaven, till men believe it—

no earth, till men have seen it, and have a word

to say this is the earth.

GARTH Well, I say there's an earth,

and I say I'm guilty on it, guilty as hell.

ESDRAS. Yet till it's known you bear no guilt at all—

unless you wish. The days go by like film,

like a long written scroll, a figured veil unrolling out of darkness into fire

and utterly consumed. And on this veil, running in sounds and symbols of men's

minds

reflected back, life flickers and is shadow

going toward flame. Only what men can see exists in that shadow. Why must you rise and cry out:

That was I, there in the ravelled tapestry, there, in that pistol flash, when the man was killed.

I was there, and was one, and am blood-stained!

Let the wind and fire take that hour to ashes out of time

and out of mind! This thing that men call justice,

this blind snake that strikes men down in the dark, mindless with fury, keep your hand back from it,

pass by in silence—let it be forgotten, forgotten!—

Oh, my son, my son—have pity!

MIRIAMNE. But if it was true and someone died—then it was more than shadow—

and it doesn't blow away—

GARTH. Well, it was true.

ESDRAS. Say it if you must. If you have heart to die,

say it, and let them take what's left—there was little

to keep, even before—

GARTH. Oh, I'm a coward—

I always was. I'll be quiet and live. I'll live

even if I have to crawl. I know.

[*He gets up and goes into the inner room*]

MIRIAMNE. Is it better to tell a lie and live?

ESDRAS. Yes, child. It's better.

MIRIAMNE. But if I had to do it— I think I'd die

ESDRAS. Yes, child. Because you're young.

MIRIAMNE. Is that the only reason?

ESDRAS. The only reason.

CURTAIN

SCENE III

SCENE: *Under the bridge, evening of the same day. When the curtain rises MIRIAMNE is sitting alone on the ledge at the rear of the apartment house. A spray of light falls on her from a street lamp above. She shivers a little in her thin coat, but sits still as if heedless of the weather. Through the rocks on the other side a TRAMP comes down to the river bank, hunting a place to sleep. He goes softly to the apple-woman's hut and looks in, then*

turns away, evidently not daring to preempt it. He looks at MIRIAMNE doubtfully. The door of the street-piano man is shut. The vagabond passes it and picks carefully among some rags and shavings to the right. MIRIAMNE looks up and sees him but makes no sign. She looks down again, and the man curls himself up in a makeshift bed in the corner, pulling a piece of sacking over his shoulders. TWO GIRLS come in from round the apartment house.

1ST GIRL. Honest, I never heard of anything so romantic. Because you never liked him.

2ND GIRL. I certainly never did.

1ST GIRL. You've got to tell me how it happened. You've got to.

2ND GIRL. I couldn't. As long as I live I couldn't. Honest, it was terrible. It was terrible

1ST GIRL. What was so terrible?

2ND GIRL. The way it happened.

1ST GIRL. Oh, please—not to a soul, never.

2ND GIRL. Well, you know how I hated him because he had such a big mouth. So he reached over and grabbed me, and I began all falling to pieces inside, the way you do—and I said, "Oh no you don't mister," and started screaming and kicked a hole through the windshield and lost a shoe, and he let go and was cursing and growling because he borrowed the car and didn't have money to pay for the windshield, and he started to cry, and I got so sorry for him I let him, and now he wants to marry me.

1ST GIRL. Honest, I never heard of anything so romantic! [*She sees the sleeping TRAMP*] My God, what you won't see!

[*They give the TRAMP a wide berth, and go out right. The TRAMP sits up looking about him. JUDGE GAUNT, an elderly, quiet man, well dressed but in clothes that have seen some weather, comes in uncertainly from the left. He holds a small clipping in his hand and goes up to the HOBBO*]

GAUNT [*tentatively*]. Your pardon, sir. Your pardon, but perhaps you can tell me the name of this street.

HOBBO. Huh?

GAUNT. The name of this street?

HOBBO. This ain't no street.

GAUNT. There, where the street lamps are.

HOBBO. That's the alley.

GAUNT. Thank you. It has a name, no doubt?

HOB0 That's the alley.

GAUNT. I see. I won't trouble you. You wonder why I ask, I daresay.—I'm a stranger.—Why do you look at me? [*He steps back.*] I—I'm not the man you think. You've mistaken me, sir.

HOB0 Huh?

JUDGE. Perhaps misled by a resemblance. But you're mistaken—I had an errand in this city. It's only by accident that I'm here—

HOB0 [*muttering*]. You go to hell

JUDGE [*going nearer to him, bending over him*]. Yet why should I deceive you? Before God, I held the proofs in my hands. I hold them still. I tell you the defense was cunning beyond belief, and unscrupulous in its use of propaganda—they gagged at nothing—not even—[*He rises*] No, no—I'm sorry—this will hardly interest you. I'm sorry. I have an errand.

[*He looks toward the street. ESDRAS enters from the basement and goes to MIRIAMNE. The JUDGE steps back into the shadows.*]

ESDRAS. Come in, my daughter. You'll be cold here.

MIRIAMNE. After a while.

ESDRAS. You'll be cold. There's a storm coming.

MIRIAMNE. I didn't want him to see me crying. That was all.

ESDRAS. I know.

MIRIAMNE. I'll come soon.

[*ESDRAS turns reluctantly and goes out the way he came. MIRIAMNE rises to go in, pausing to dry her eyes. MIO and CARR, road boys of seventeen or so, come round the apartment house. The JUDGE has disappeared.*]

CARR. Thought you said you were never coming east again.

MIO. Yeah, but—I heard something changed my mind.

CARR. Same old business?

MIO. Yes. Just as soon not talk about it.

CARR. Where did you go from Portland?

MIO. Fishing—I went fishing. God's truth.

CARR. Right after I left?

MIO. Fell in with a fisherman's family on the coast and went after the beautiful mackerel fish that swim in the beautiful sea. Family of Greeks—Aristides Marinós was his lovely name. He sang while he fished. Made the pea-green Pacific ring with his bastard Greek chanties.

Then I went to Hollywood High School for a while.

CARR. I'll bet that's a seat of learning. MIO. It's the hind end of all wisdom. They kicked me out after a time.

CARR. For cause?

MIO. Because I had no permanent address, you see. That means nobody's paying school taxes for you, so out you go [*To MIRIAMNE*] What's the matter, kid?

MIRIAMNE. Nothing. [*She looks up at him, and they pause for a moment*] Nothing

MIO. I'm sorry

MIRIAMNE. It's all right

[*She withdraws her eyes from his and goes out past him. He turns and looks after her*]

CARR. Control your chivalry.

MIO. A pretty kid.

CARR. A baby.

MIO. Wait for me

CARR. Be a long wait? [*MIO steps swiftly out after MIRIAMNE, then returns*] Yeah?

MIO. She's gone.

CARR. Think of that

MIO. No, but I mean—vanished. Presto—into nothing—prodigioso

CARR. Damn good thing, if you ask me. The homely ones are bad enough, but the lookers are fatal

MIO. You exaggerate, Carr

CARR. I doubt it

MIO. Well, let her go. This river bank's loaded with typhus rats, too. Might as well die one death as another.

CARR. They say chronic alcoholism is nice but expensive. You can always starve to death

MIO. Not always. I tried it. After the second day I walked thirty miles to Niagara Falls and made a tour of the plant to get the sample of shredded wheat biscuit on the way out

CARR. Last time I saw you you couldn't think of anything you wanted to do except curse God and pass out. Still feeling low?

MIO. Not much different. [*He turns away, then comes back*] Talk about the lost generation, I'm the only one fits that title. When the State executes your father, and your mother dies of grief, and you know damn well he was innocent, and the authorities of your home town politely inform you they'd consider it a favor if you lived somewhere else—that cuts you off from the world—with a meat-axe.

CARR. They asked you to move?
MIO. It came to that.

CARR. God, that was white of them.

MIO. It probably gave them a headache just to see me after all that agitation. They knew as well as I did my father never staged a holdup. Anyway, I've got a new interest in life now.

CARR. Yes—I saw her.

MIO. I don't mean the skirt—No, I got wind of something, out west, some college professor investigating the trial and turning up new evidence. Couldn't find anything he'd written out there, so I beat it east and arrived on this blessed island just in time to find the bums holing up in the public library for the winter. I know now what the unemployed have been doing since the depression started. They've been catching up on their reading in the main reference room. Man, what a stench! Maybe I stank, too, but a hobo has the stench of ten because his shoes are poor.

CARR. Tennyson.

MIO. Right Jeez, I'm glad we met up again! Never knew anybody else that could track me through the driven snow of Victorian literature.

CARR. Now you're cribbing from some half-forgotten criticism of Ben Jonson's Roman plagiarisms.

MIO. Where did you get your education, sap?

CARR. Not in the public library, sap. My father kept a news-stand.

MIO. Well, you're right again. [*There is a faint rumble of thunder*] What's that? Winter thunder?

CARR. Or Mister God, beating on His little tocsin. Maybe announcing the advent of a new social order.

MIO. Or maybe it's going to rain coffee and doughnuts.

CARR. Or maybe it's going to rain.

MIO. Seems more likely [*Lowering his voice*] Anyhow, I found Professor Hobhouse's discussion of the Romagna case. I think he has something. It occurred to me I might follow it up by doing a little sleuthing on my own account.

CARR. Yes?

MIO. I have done a little. And it leads me to somewhere in that tenement house that backs up against the bridge. That's how I happen to be here.

CARR. They'll never let you get anywhere with it, Mio. I told you that before.

MIO. I know you did.

CARR. The State can't afford to admit

it was wrong, you see. Not when there's been that much of a row kicked up over it. So for all practical purposes the State was right and your father robbed the pay roll.

MIO. There's still such a thing as evidence.

CARR. It's something you can buy. In fact, at the moment I don't think of anything you can't buy, including life, honor, virtue, glory, public office, conjugal affection and all kinds of justice, from the traffic court to the immortal nine. Go out and make yourself a pot of money and you can buy all the justice you want. Convictions obtained, convictions averted. Lowest rates in years.

MIO. I know all that.

CARR. Sure.

MIO. This thing didn't happen to you.

They've left you your name

and whatever place you can take. For my heritage

they've left me one thing only, and that's to be

my father's voice crying up out of the earth

and quicklime where they stuck him.

Electrocution

doesn't kill, you know. They eviscerate them

with a turn of the knife in the dissecting room

The blood spurts out. The man was alive. Then into

the lime pit, leave no trace. Make it short shrift

and chemical dissolution. That's what they thought

of the man that was my father. Then my mother—

I tell you these county burials are swift and cheap and run for profit! Out of the house

and into the ground, you wife of a dead dog. Wait,

here's some Romagna spawn left.

Something crawls here—

something they called a son. Why couldn't he die

along with his mother? Well, ease him out of town,

ease him out, boys, and see you're not too gentle.

He might come back. And, by their own living Jesus,

I will go back, and hang the carrion around their necks that made it!

Maybe I can sleep then.

Or even live.

CARR. You have to try it?

MIO. Yes.

Yes. It won't let me alone. I've tried to live and forget it—but I was birthmarked with hot iron into the entrails. I've got to find out who did it and make them see it till it scalds their eyes and make them admit it till their tongues are blistered with saying how black they lied!

[HERMAN, a gawky shoe salesman, enters from the left]

HERMAN. Hello Did you see a couple of girls go this way?

CARR. Couple of girls? Did we see a couple of girls?

MIO. No.

CARR. No. No girls.

[HERMAN hesitates, then goes out right. LUCIA comes in from the left, trundling his piano. PINY follows him, weeping]

PINY. They've got no right to do it—

LUCIA. All right, hell what, no matter, I got to put him away, I got to put him away, that's what the hell!

[Two STREET URCHINS follow him in]

PINY. They want everybody on the relief rolls and nobody making a living?

LUCIA. The cops, they do what the big boss says. The big boss, that's the mayor, he says he heard it once too often, the sextette—

PINY. They want graft, that's all. It's a new way to get graft—

LUCIA. Oh, no, no, no! He's a good man, the mayor. He's just don't care for music, that's all.

PINY. Why shouldn't you make a living on the street? The National Biscuit Company ropes off Eighth Avenue—and does the mayor do anything? No, the police hit you over the head if you try to go through!

LUCIA. You got the big dough, you get the pull, fine. No big dough, no pull, what the hell, get off the city property! Tomorrow I start cooking chestnuts . . .

[He strokes the piano fondly. The TWO GIRLS and HERMAN come back from the right.] She's a good little machine, this baby. Cost plenty—and two new records I only played twice. See, this one. [He starts turning the crank, talking while he plays.] Two weeks since they play this one in a picture house. [A SAILOR wanders in from the left. One of the STREET URCHINS begins

suddenly to dance a wild rumba, the others watch] Good boy—see, it's a lulu—it itches in the feet!

[HERMAN, standing with his girl, tosses the boy a penny. He bows and goes on dancing; the other URCHIN joins him. The SAILOR tosses a coin]

SAILOR. Go it, Cuba! Go it!

[LUCIA turns the crank, beaming]

2ND GIRL. Oh, Herman!

[She throws her arms around HERMAN and they dance]

1ST URCHIN. Hey, pipe the professionals!

1ST GIRL. Do your glide, Shirley! Do your glide!

LUCIA. Maybe we can't play in front, maybe we can play behind! [The HOBBO gets up from his nest and comes over to watch A YOUNG RADICAL wanders in] Maybe you don't know, folks! Tonight we play good-bye to the piano! Good-bye forever! No more piano on the streets! No more music! No more money for the music-man! Last time, folks! Good-bye to the piano—good-bye forever! [MIRIAMNE comes out the rear door of the apartment and stands watching The SAILOR goes over to the 1ST GIRL and they dance together.] Maybe you don't know, folks! Tomorrow will be sad as hell, tonight we dance! Tomorrow no more Verdi, no more rumba, no more good time! Tonight we play good-bye to the piano, good-bye forever! [The RADICAL edges up to MIRIAMNE, and asks her to dance. She shakes her head and he goes to PINY, who dances with him The HOBBO begins to do a few lonely curvets on the side above] Hoy! Hoy! Pick 'em up and take 'em around! Use the head, use the feet! Last time forever!

[He begins to sing to the air]

MIO. Wait for me, will you?

CARR. Now's your chance

[MIO goes over to MIRIAMNE and holds out a hand, smiling She stands for a moment uncertain, then dances with him ESDRAS comes out to watch. JUDGE GAUNT comes in from the left There is a rumble of thunder]

LUCIA. Hoy! Hoy! Maybe it rains tonight, maybe it snows tomorrow! Tonight we dance good-bye.

[He sings the air lustily A POLICE MAN comes in from the left and looks on. TWO or THREE PEDESTRIANS follow him.]

POLICEMAN. Hey, you! [*LUCIA goes on singing*] Hey, you!

LUCIA [*still playing*] What you want?

POLICEMAN. Sign off!

LUCIA. What you mean? I get off the street!

POLICEMAN. Sign off!

LUCIA [*still playing*] What you mean?

[*The POLICEMAN walks over to him.*

LUCIA stops playing and the DANCERS pause]

POLICEMAN. Cut it.

LUCIA. Is this a street?

POLICEMAN. I say cut it out.

[*The HOBO goes back to his nest and sits in it, watching*]

LUCIA. It's the last time. We dance good-bye to the piano

POLICEMAN. You'll dance good-bye to something else if I catch you cranking that thing again.

LUCIA. All right

PINY. I'll bet you don't say that to the National Biscuit Company!

POLICEMAN. Lady, you've been selling apples on my beat for some time now, and I said nothing about it —

PINY. Selling apples is allowed —

POLICEMAN. You watch yourself—[*He takes a short walk around the place and comes upon the HOBO*] What are you doing here? [*The HOBO opens his mouth, points to it, and shakes his head*] Oh, you are, are you? [*He comes back to LUCIA*] So you trundle your so-called musical instrument to wherever you keep it, and don't let me hear it again.

[*The RADICAL leaps on the base of the rock at right. The 1ST GIRL turns away from the SAILOR toward the 2ND GIRL and HERMAN*]

SAILOR. Hey, captain, what's the matter with the music?

POLICEMAN. Not a thing, admiral

SAILOR. Well, we had a little party going here —

POLICEMAN. I'll say you did.

2ND GIRL. Please, officer, we want to dance

POLICEMAN. Go ahead. Dance.

2ND GIRL. But we want music!

POLICEMAN [*turning to go*]. Sorry. Can't help you

RADICAL. And there you see it, the perfect example of capitalistic oppression! In a land where music should be free as air and the arts should be encouraged, a uniformed minion of the rich, a guardian myrmidon of the Park Ave-

nue pleasure hunters, steps in and puts a limit on the innocent enjoyments of the poor! We don't go to theatres! Why not? We can't afford it! We don't go to night clubs, where women dance naked and the music drips from saxophones and leaks out of Rudy Vallee—we can't afford that either!—But we might at least dance on the river bank to the strains of a barrel organ —!

[*GARTH comes out of the apartment and listens*]

POLICEMAN. It's against the law!

RADICAL. What law? I challenge you to tell me what law of God or man—what ordinance—is violated by this spontaneous diversion? None! I say none! An official whim of the masters who should be our servants! —

POLICEMAN. Get down! Get down and shut up!

RADICAL. By what law, by what ordinance do you order me to be quiet?

POLICEMAN. Speaking without a flag. You know it

RADICAL [*pulling out a small American flag*]. There's my flag! There's the flag of this United States which used to guarantee the rights of man—the rights of man now violated by every third statute of the commonweal —

POLICEMAN. Don't try to pull tricks on me! I've seen you before! You're not making any speech, and you're climbing down —

JUDGE GAUNT [*who has come quietly forward*]. One moment, officer. There is some difference of opinion even on the bench as to the elasticity of police power when applied in minor emergencies to preserve civil order. But the weight of authority would certainly favor the defendant in any equable court, and he would be upheld in his demand to be heard

POLICEMAN. Who are you?

JUDGE GAUNT. Sir, I am not accustomed to answer that question.

POLICEMAN. I don't know you

GAUNT. I am a judge of some standing, not in your city but in another with similar statutes. You are aware, of course, that the bill of rights is not to be set aside lightly by the officers of any municipality —

POLICEMAN [*looking over GAUNT'S somewhat bedraggled costume*]. Maybe they understand you better in the town you come from, but I don't get your

drift.—[*To the RADICAL.*] I don't want any trouble, but if you ask for it you'll get plenty. Get down!

RADICAL. I'm not asking for trouble, but I'm staying right here.

[*The POLICEMAN moves toward him*]

GAUNT [*taking the policeman's arm, but shaken off roughly*]. I ask this for yourself, truly, not for the dignity of the law nor the maintenance of precedent. Be gentle with them when their threats are childish—be tolerant while you can—for your least harsh word will return on you in the night—return in a storm of cries!—[*He takes the POLICEMAN'S arm again*]. Whatever they may have said or done, let them disperse in peace! It is better that they go softly, lest when they are dead you see their eyes pleading, and their outstretched hands touch you, fingering cold on your heart!—I have been harsher than you. I have sent men down that long corridor into blinding light and blind darkness! [*He suddenly draws himself erect and speaks defiantly*]. And it was well that I did so! I have been an upright judge! They are all liars! Liars!

POLICEMAN [*shaking GAUNT off so that he falls*]. Why, you fool, you're crazy!

GAUNT Yes, and there are liars on the force! They came to me with their shifty lies!

[*He catches at the POLICEMAN, who pushes him away with his foot*]

POLICEMAN You think I've got nothing better to do than listen to a crazy fool?

1ST GIRL Shame, shame!

POLICEMAN. What have I got to be ashamed of? And what's going on here, anyway? Where in hell did you all come from?

RADICAL. Tread on him. That's right! Tread down the poor and the innocent! [*There is a protesting murmur in the crowd*]

SAILOR [*moving in a little*]. Say, big boy, you don't have to step on the guy.

POLICEMAN [*facing them, stepping back*]. What's the matter with you? I haven't stepped on anybody!

MIO [*at the right, across from the POLICEMAN*]. Listen now, fellows, give the badge a chance.

He's doing his job, what he gets paid to do, the same as any of you. They're all picked men, these metropolitan police, hand picked

for loyalty and a fine up-standing pair of shoulders on their legs—it's not so easy

to represent the law. Think of what he does

for all of us, stamping out crime!

Do you want to be robbed and murdered in your beds?

SAILOR What's eating you?

RADICAL He must be a capitalist.

MIO. They pluck them fresh from Ireland, and a paucity of head-piece

is a prime prerequisite. You from Ireland, buddy?

POLICEMAN [*surlily*]. Where are you from?

MIO. Buddy, I tell you flat

I wish I was from Ireland, and could boast

some Tammany connections. There's only one drawback

about working on the force. It infects the brain,

it eats the cerebrum. There've been cases known,

fine specimens of manhood, too, where autopsies,

conducted in approved scientific fashion, revealed conditions quite incredible

in policemen's upper layers. In some, a trace,

in others, when they've swung a stick too long,

there was nothing there!—but nothing!

Oh, my friends,

this fine athletic figure of a man

that stands so grim before us, what will they find

when they saw his skull for the last inspection?

I fear me a little puffball dust will blow away

rejoining earth, our mother—and this same dust,

this smoke, this ash on the wind, will represent

all he had left to think with!

THE HOB0 Hooray!

[*The POLICEMAN turns on his heel and looks hard at the HOB0, who slinks away*]

POLICEMAN. Oh, yeah?

MIO. My theme

gives ears to the deaf and voice to the dumb! But now

forgive me if I say you were most unkind

in troubling the officer. He's a simple man

of simple tastes, and easily confused when faced with complex issues. He may reflect

on returning home, that is, so far as he is capable of reflection, and conclude that he was kidded out of his uniform pants,

And in his fury when this dawns on him may smack his wife down!

POLICEMAN. That'll be about enough from you, too, professor!

MIO. May I say that I think you have managed this whole situation rather badly, from the beginning?—

POLICEMAN. You may not!

[*TROCK slips in from the background. The TWO YOUNG MEN IN SERGE come with him*]

MIO. Oh, but your pardon, sir! It's apparent to the least competent among us that you should have gone about your task more subtly—the glove of velvet, the hand of iron, and all that sort of thing—

POLICEMAN. Shut that hole in your face!

MIO. Sir, for that remark I shall be satisfied with nothing less than an unconditional apology! I have an old score to settle with policemen, brother, because they're fools and fat-heads, and you're one of the most fatuous fat-heads that ever walked his feet flat collecting graft! Tell that to your sergeant back in the booby-hatch.

POLICEMAN. Oh, you want an apology, do you? You'll get an apology out of the other side of your mouth! [*He steps toward MIO. CARR suddenly stands in his path*] Get out of my way! [*He passes and looks round him; the crowd looks less and less friendly. He lays a hand on his gun and backs to a position where there is nobody behind him*] Get out of here, all of you! Get out! What are you trying to do—start a riot?

MIO. There now, that's better! That's in the best police tradition. Incite a riot yourself and then accuse the crowd.

POLICEMAN. It won't be pleasant if I decide to let somebody have it! Get out!

[*The onlookers begin to melt away. The SAILOR goes out left with the GIRLS and HERMAN. CARR and MIO go out right, CARR whistling "The Star Spangled Banner" The HOBO follows them. The RADICAL walks past with his head in the air. PINY and LUCIA leave the piano where it stands and slip away to*

the left. At the end the POLICEMAN is left standing in the center, the JUDGE near him. ESDRAS stands in the doorway. MIRIAMNE is left sitting half in shadow and unseen by ESDRAS]

JUDGE GAUNT [*to the POLICEMAN*].

Yes, but should a man die, should it be necessary that one man die for the good of many, make not yourself the instrument of death, lest you sleep to wake sobbing! Nay, it avails nothing that you are the law—this delicate ganglion that is the brain, it will not bear these things—!

[*The POLICEMAN gives the JUDGE the once-over, shrugs, decides to leave him there and starts out left. GARTH goes to his father—a fine sleet begins to fall through the street lights TROCK is still visible.*]

GARTH. Get him in here, quick.

ESDRAS. Who, son?

GARTH. The Judge, damn him!

ESDRAS. Is it Judge Gaunt?

GARTH. Who did you think it was? He's crazy as a bedbug and telling the world. Get him inside! [*He looks round*]

ESDRAS [*going up to GAUNT*]. Will you come in, sir?

GAUNT. You will understand, sir. We old men know how softly we must proceed with these things.

ESDRAS. Yes, surely, sir.

GAUNT. It was always my practice—always. They will tell you that of me where I am known. Yet even I am not free of regret—even I. Would you believe it?

ESDRAS. I believe we are none of us free of regret.

GAUNT. None of us? I would it were true. I would I thought it were true.

ESDRAS. Shall we go in, sir? This is sleet that's falling.

GAUNT. Yes. Let us go in.

[*ESDRAS, GAUNT and GARTH enter the basement and shut the door. TROCK goes out with his men. After a pause MIO comes back from the right, alone. He stands at a little distance from MIRIAMNE*]

MIO. Looks like rain [*She is silent.*]

You live around here?

[*She nods gravely.*]

I guess

you thought I meant it—about waiting here to meet me. [*She nods again*]

I'd forgotten about it till I got that winter

across the face. You'd better go inside

I'm not your kind. ~~I'm nobody's kind—~~
but my own.

I'm waiting for this to blow over.

[*She rises*]

I lied. I meant it—

I meant it when I said it—but there's
too much black

whirling inside me—for any girl to know.
So go on in. You're somebody's angel
child

and they're waiting for you.

MIRIAMNE. Yes, I'll go. [*She turns.*]

MIO. And tell them

when you get inside where it's warm,
and you love each other,
and mother comes to kiss her darling,
tell them

to hang on to it while they can, believe
while they can

it's a warm safe world, and Jesus finds
his lambs

and carries them in his bosom—I've seen
some lambs

that Jesus missed. If they ever want the
truth

tell them that nothing's guaranteed in
this climate

except it gets cold in winter, nor on this
earth

except you die sometime.

[*He turns away.*]

MIRIAMNE I have no mother

And my people are Jews.

MIO. Then you know something about it.

MIRIAMNE. Yes.

MIO. Do you have enough to eat?

MIRIAMNE. Not always

MIO. What do you believe in?

MIRIAMNE. Nothing.

MIO. Why?

MIRIAMNE. How can one?

MIO. It's easy if you're a fool. You see
the words

in books Honor, it says there, chivalry,
freedom,

heroism, enduring love—and these

are words on paper. It's something to
have them there.

You'll get them nowhere else.

MIRIAMNE. What hurts you?

MIO. Just that.

You'll get them nowhere else.

MIRIAMNE. Why should you want them?

MIO. I'm alone, that's why. You see those
lights,

along the river, cutting across the rain—?
those are the hearths of Brooklyn, and
up this way

the love-nests of Manhattan—they turn
their points

like knives against me—outcast of the
world,

snake in the streets.—I don't want a
hand-out.

I sleep and eat.

MIRIAMNE. Do you want me to go
with you?

MIO. Where?

MIRIAMNE. Where you go.

[*A pause. He goes nearer to her*]

MIO. Why, you god-damned little fool—
what made you say that?

MIRIAMNE. I don't know.

MIO. If you have a home
stay in it. I ask for nothing. I've
schooled myself

to ask for nothing, and take what I can
get,

and get along If I fell for you, that's
my look-out,

and I'll starve it down.

MIRIAMNE. Wherever you go, I'd go

MIO. What do you know about loving?
How could you know?

Have you ever had a man?

MIRIAMNE [*after a slight pause*]. No.
but I know.

Tell me your name.

MIO. Mio What's yours?

MIRIAMNE. Miriamne

MIO There's no such name.

MIRIAMNE. But there's no such name as
Mio!

MIO It's no name.

MIO. It's for Bartolomeo

MIRIAMNE My mother's name was
Miriam,

so they called me Miriamne.

MIO. Meaning little Miriam?

MIRIAMNE Yes

MIO So now little Miriamne will go in
and take up quietly where she dropped
them all

her small housewifely cares.—When I
first saw you,

not a half-hour ago, I heard myself
saying,

this is the face that launches ships for
me—

and if I owned a dream—yes, half a
dream—

we'd share it But I have no dream.

This earth

came tumbling down from chaos, fire
and rock,

and bred up worms, blind worms that
sting each other

here in the dark. These blind worms of
the earth

took out my father—and killed him, and
set a sign

on me—the heir of the serpent—and he
 was a man
 such as men might be if the gods were
 men—
 but they killed him—
 as they'll kill all others like him
 till the sun cools down to the stabler
 molecules,
 yes, till men spin their tent-worm webs
 to the stars
 and what they think is done, even in
 the thinking,
 and they are the gods, and immortal, and
 constellations
 turn for them all like mill wheels—still
 as they are
 they will me, worms and blind Endur-
 ing love,
 oh gods and worms, what mockery!—
 And yet
 I have blood enough in my veins. It
 goes like music,
 singing, because you're here. My body
 turns
 as if you were the sun, and warm. This
 men called love
 in happier times, before the Freudians
 taught us
 to blame it on the glands Only go in
 before you breathe too much of my at-
 mosphere
 and catch death from me.

MIRIAMNE I will take my hands
 and weave them to a little house, and
 there

you shall keep a dream—

MIO God knows I could use a dream
 and even a house

MIRIAMNE You're laughing at me, Mio!

MIO The worms are laughing.

I tell you there's death about me
 and you're a child! And I'm alone and
 half mad

with hate and longing. I shall let you
 love me
 and love you in return, and then, why
 then

God knows what happens!

MIRIAMNE Something most unpleasant?

MIO. Love in a box car—love among the
 children.

I've seen too much of it. Are we to live
 in this same house you make with your
 two hands

mystically, out of air?

MIRIAMNE. No roof, no mortgage!

Well, I shall marry a baker out in Flat-
 bush,

it gives hot bread in the morning! Oh
 Mio, Mio,

in all the unwanted places and waste
 lands

that roll up into the darkness out of sun
 and into sun out of dark, there should
 be one empty

for you and me.

MIO No.

MIRIAMNE. Then go now and leave me.

I'm only a girl you saw in the tene-
 ments,

and there's been nothing said.

MIO Miriamne.

[*She takes a step toward him.*]

MIRIAMNE. Yes

[*He kisses her lips lightly*]

MIO Why, girl, the transfiguration on the
 mount

was nothing to your face. It lights from
 within—

a white chalice holding fire, a flower in
 flame,

this is your face

MIRIAMNE. And you shall drink the
 flame

and never lessen it And round your head
 the aureole shall burn that burns there

now,

forever This I can give you. And so
 forever

the Freudians are wrong.

MIO They're well-forgotten

at any rate

MIRIAMNE Why did you speak to me
 when you first saw me?

MIO I knew then.

MIRIAMNE. And I came back

because I must see you again And we
 danced together

and my heart hurt me. Never, never,
 never,

though they should bind me down and
 tear out my eyes,

would I ever hurt you now. Take me
 with you, Mio,

let them look for us, whoever there is
 to look,

but we'll be away.

[*MIO turns away toward the tenement*]

MIO. When I was four years old

we climbed through an iron gate, my
 mother and I,

to see my father in prison. He stood in
 the death-cell

and put his hand through the bars and
 said, My Mio,

I have only this to leave you, that I
 love you,

and will love you after I die. Love me
 then, Mio,

when this hard thing comes on you, that
 you must live

a man despised for your father. That
 night the guards,
 walking in flood-lights brighter than high
 noon,
 led him between them with his trousers
 slit
 and a shaven head for the cathodes. This
 sleet and rain
 that I feel cold here on my face and
 hands
 will find him under thirteen years of
 clay
 in prison ground. Lie still and rest, my
 father,
 for I have not forgotten. When I forget
 may I lie blind as you. No other love,
 time passing, nor the spaced light-years
 of suns
 shall blur your voice, or tempt me from
 the path
 that clears your name—
 till I have these rats in my grip
 or sleep deep where you sleep.

[To MIRIAMNE]

I have no house,
 nor home, nor love of life, nor fear of
 death,
 nor care for what I eat, or who I sleep
 with,
 or what color of calcimine the Govern-
 ment
 will wash itself this year or next to lure
 the sheep and feed the wolves. Love
 somewhere else,
 and get your children in some other
 image
 more acceptable to the State! This face
 of mine
 is stamped for sewage!

[She steps back, surmising]

MIRIAMNE Mio—

MIO. My road is cut
 in rock, and leads to one end. If I hurt
 you, I'm sorry
 One gets over hurts.

MIRIAMNE. What was his name—
 your father's name?

MIO. Bartolomeo Romagna.

I'm not ashamed of it

MIRIAMNE. Why are you here?

MIO. For the reason

I've never had a home. Because I'm a
 cry
 out of a shallow grave, and all roads
 are mine
 that might revenge him!

MIRIAMNE. But Mio—why here—why
 here?

MIO. I can't tell you that.

MIRIAMNE. No—but—there's someone

lives here—lives not far—and you mean
 to see him—

you mean to ask him—

[She pauses.]

MIO. Who told you that?

MIRIAMNE. His name
 is Garth—Garth Esdras—

MIO [after a pause, coming nearer]. Who
 are you, then? You seem
 to know a good deal about me.—Were
 you sent
 to say this?

MIRIAMNE. You said there was death
 about you! Yes,
 but nearer than you think! Let it be
 as it is—

let it all be as it is, never see this place
 nor think of it—forget the streets you
 came

when you're away and safe! Go before
 you're seen
 or spoken to!

MIO. Will you tell me why?

MIRIAMNE. As I love you
 I can't tell you—and I can never see
 you—

MIO. I walk where I please—

MIRIAMNE. Do you think it's easy for
 me
 to send you away?

[She steps back as if to go]

MIO. Where will I find you then
 if I should want to see you?

MIRIAMNE. Never—I tell you
 I'd bring you death! Even now. Listen!

[SHADOW and TROCK enter between

the bridge and the tenement house.

MIRIAMNE pulls MIO back into
 the shadow of the rock to avoid
 being seen.]

TROCK. Why, fine.

SHADOW. You watch it now—just for the
 record, Trock—

you're going to thank me for staying
 away from it

and keeping you out. I've seen men get
 that way,

thinking they had to plug a couple of
 guys

and then a few more to cover it up, and
 then

maybe a dozen more. You can't own all
 and territory adjacent, and you can't
 slough all the witnesses, because every
 man

you put away has friends—

TROCK. I said all right.

I said fine

SHADOW. They're going to find this judge,
 and if they find him dead it's just too
 bad,

and I don't want to know anything about it—

and you don't either

TROCK. You all through?

SHADOW. Why sure.

TROCK. All right

We're through, too, you know.

SHADOW. Yeah? [*He becomes wary*]

TROCK. Yeah, we're through

SHADOW I've heard that said before, and afterwards somebody died.

[*TROCK is silent*]

Is that what you mean?

TROCK. You can go

I don't want to see you.

SHADOW. Sure, I'll go.

Maybe you won't mind if I just find out what you've got on you. Before I turn my back

I'd like to know

[*Silently and expertly he touches*

TROCK'S pockets, extracting a gun]

Not that I'd distrust you,

but you know how it is

[*He pockets the gun*]

So long, Trock

TROCK. So long

SHADOW I won't talk.

You can be sure of that.

TROCK I know you won't.

[*SHADOW turns and goes out right, past the rock and along the bank.*

As he goes the TWO YOUNG MEN

IN BLUE SERGE enter from the

left and walk slowly after SHADOW.

They look toward TROCK as they

enter and he motions with his thumb

in the direction taken by SHADOW

They follow SHADOW out without

haste. TROCK watches them disap-

pear, then slips out the way he

came MIO comes a step forward,

looking after the two men Two or

three shots are heard, then silence.

MIO starts to run after SHADOW.]

MIRIAMNE Mio!

MIO. What do you know about this!

MIRIAMNE The other way,

Mio—quick!

[*CARR slips in from the right, in haste.*]

CARR Look, somebody's just been shot.

He fell in the river The guys that did the shooting ran up the bank.

MIO Come on

[*MIO and CARR run out right. MIRIAMNE watches uncertainly, then slowly turns and walks to the rear door of the tenement. She stands there a moment, looking after MIO,*

then goes in, closing the door. CARR and MIO return]

CARR. There's a rip tide past the point.

You'd never find him.

MIO. No.

CARR You know a man really ought to carry insurance living around here.—God, it's easy, putting a fellow away. I never saw it done before.

MIO [*looking at the place where MIRIAMNE stood*]. They have it all worked out

CARR What are you doing now?

MIO. I have a little business to transact in this neighborhood.

CARR You'd better forget it.

MIO No

CARR Need any help?

MIO Well, if I did I'd ask you first. But

I don't see how it would do any good

So you keep out of it and take care of yourself

CARR So long, then

MIO So long, Carr.

CARR [*looking down-stream*]. He was drifting face up Must be halfway to the island the way the tide runs. [*He shivers*]

God, it's cold here Well—

[*He goes out to the left MIO sits on the edge of the rock. LUCIA comes stealthily back from between the bridge and the tenement, goes to the street-piano and wheels it away. PINY comes in They take a look at MIO, but say nothing. LUCIA goes into his shelter and PINY into hers MIO rises, looks up at the tenement, and goes out to the left.*]

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE *The basement as in Scene 2 of Act One The same evening ESDRAS sits at the table reading, MIRIAMNE is seated at the left, listening and intent. The door of the inner room is half open and GARTH'S violin is heard. He is playing the theme from the third movement of Beethoven's Archduke Trio ESDRAS looks up*

ESDRAS. I remember when I came to the end of all the Talmud said, and the commentators, then I was fifty years old—and it was time

to ask what I had learned. I asked this question
 and gave myself the answer. In all the Talmud
 there was nothing to find but the names of things,
 set down that we might call them by those names
 and walk without fear among things known. Since then
 I have had twenty years to read on and on
 and end with Ecclesiastes. Names of names,
 evanid days, evanid nights and days and words that shift their meaning.
 Space is time,
 that which was is now—the men of tomorrow
 live, and this is their yesterday All things
 that were and are and will be, have their being
 then and now and to come If this means little
 when you are young, remember it. It will return
 to mean more when you are old.
 MIRIAMNE I'm sorry—I was listening for something.
 ESDRAS It doesn't matter.
It's a useless wisdom It's all I have, but useless. It may be there is no time, but we grow old. Do you know his name?
 MIRIAMNE Whose name?
 ESDRAS. Why, when we're young and listen for a step
 the step should have a name——
[MIRIAMNE, not hearing, rises and goes to the window GARTH enters from within, carrying his violin and carefully closing the door]
 GARTH *[as ESDRAS looks at him]*. Asleep
 ESDRAS. He may sleep on through the whole night—then in the morning
 we can let them know.
 GARTH. We'd be wiser to say nothing—let him find his own way back.
 ESDRAS. How did he come here?
 GARTH. He's not too crazy for that. If he wakes again we'll keep him quiet and shift him off tomorrow. Somebody'd pick him up.
 ESDRAS. How have I come to this sunken end of a street, at a life's end——?
 GARTH. It was cheaper here—not to be transcendental—

So—we say nothing—?
 ESDRAS. Nothing.
 MIRIAMNE Garth, there's no place in this whole city—not one—where you wouldn't be safer than here—tonight—or tomorrow.
 GARTH *[bitterly]*. Well, that may be. What of it?
 MIRIAMNE. If you slipped away and took
 a place somewhere where Trock couldn't find you——
 GARTH. Yes—
 using what for money? and why do you think
 I've sat here so far—because I love my home
 so much? No, but if I stepped round the corner
 it'd be my last corner and my last step
 MIRIAMNE And yet—
 if you're here—they'll find you here—Trock will come again—
 and there's worse to follow——
 GARTH. Do you want to get me killed?
 MIRIAMNE No
 GARTH. There's no way out of it. We'll wait
 and take what they send us
 ESDRAS. Hush! You'll wake him.
 GARTH I've done it
 I hear him stirring now
[They wait quietly. JUDGE GAUNT opens the door and enters]
 GAUNT *[in the doorway]*. I beg your pardon—
 no, no, be seated—keep your place—I've made
 your evening difficult enough, I fear; and I must thank you doubly for your kindness,
 for I've been ill—I know it.
 ESDRAS. You're better, sir?
 GAUNT. Quite recovered, thank you. Able, I hope,
 to manage nicely now. You'll be rewarded
 for your hospitality—though at this moment *[He smiles]*
 I'm low in funds.
[He inspects his billfold]
 Sir, my embarrassment
 is great indeed—and more than monetary,
 for I must own my recollection's vague of how I came here—how we came together—
 and what we may have said. My name is Gaunt,

Judge Gaunt, a name long known in
the criminal courts,
and not unhonored there.

ESDRAS My name is Esdras—
and this is Garth, my son And Miriamne,
the daughter of my old age.

GAUNT. I'm glad to meet you.

Esdras. Garth Esdras

[*He passes a hand over his eyes.*]

It's not a usual name.

Of late it's been connected with a
case—

a case I knew. But this is hardly the
man.

Though it's not a usual name

[*They are silent.*]

Sir, how I came here,
as I have said, I don't well know. Such
things

are sometimes not quite accident.

ESDRAS We found you
outside our door and brought you in.

GAUNT The brain
can be overworked, and weary, even
when the man
would swear to his good health Sir, on
my word

I don't know why I came here, nor how,
nor when,
nor what would explain it. Shall we say
the machine

begins to wear? I felt no twinge of it.
You will imagine how much more than
galling

I feel it, to ask my way home—and
where I am—

but I do ask you that

ESDRAS This is New York City—
or part of it.

GAUNT. Not the best part, I presume?
[*He smiles grimly.*]

No, not the best.

ESDRAS. Not typical, no.

GAUNT And you— [To GARTH]
you are Garth Esdras?

GARTH That's my name.

GAUNT. Well, sir, [To ESDRAS]

I shall lie under the deepest obligation
if you will set an old man on his path,
for I lack the homing instinct, if the
truth

were known North, east and south mean
nothing to me here in this room.

ESDRAS. I can put you in your way.

GARTH Only you'd be wiser to wait a
while—

if I'm any judge.—

GAUNT. It happens. I'm the judge—

[*With stiff humor.*]

in more ways than one. You'll forgive
me if I say

I find this place and my predicament
somewhat distasteful.

[*He looks around him.*]

GARTH. I don't doubt you do;
but you're better off here.

GAUNT. Nor will you find it wise
to cross my word as lightly as you seem
inclined to do. You've seen me ill
and shaken—and you presume on that.

GARTH. Have it your way.

GAUNT. Doubtless what information is
required

we'll find nearby.

ESDRAS. Yes, sir—the terminal—

if you could walk so far

GAUNT I've done some walking—
to look at my shoes.

[*He looks down, then puts out a
hand to steady himself.*]

That—that was why I came—
never mind—it was there—and it's gone.

[To GARTH.]

Professor Hobhouse—

that's the name—he wrote some trash
about you

and printed it in a broadside.

—Since I'm here I can tell you

it's a pure fabrication—lacking facts
and legal import. Senseless and impu-
dent,

written with bias—with malicious intent
to undermine the public confidence.

in justice and the courts. I knew it
then—

all he brings out about this testimony
you might have given. It's true I could

have called you,
but the case was clear—Romagna was

known guilty,
and there was nothing to add. If I've en-
dured

some hours of torture over their attacks
upon my probity—and in this torture

have wandered from my place, wandered
perhaps

in mind and body—and found my way
to face you—

why, yes, it is so—I know it—I beg of you
say nothing. It's not easy to give up

a fair name after a full half century
of service to a state. It may well rock

the surest reason. Therefore I ask of you
say nothing of this visit.

GARTH. I'll say nothing.

ESDRAS. Nor any of us.

GAUNT. Why, no—for you'd lose, too.

You'd have nothing to gain.

ESDRAS. Indeed we know it.

GAUNT. I'll remember you kindly. When

I've returned,

there may be some mystery made of
where I was—

we'll leave it a mystery?

GARTH. Anything you say.

GAUNT. Why, now I go with much more
peace of mind—

if I can call you friends.

ESDRAS. We shall be grateful
for silence on your part Your Honor.

GAUNT. Sir—

if there were any just end to be served
by speaking out, I'd speak! There is
none. No—

bear that in mind!

ESDRAS. We will, Your Honor.

GAUNT. Then—

I'm in some haste. If you can be my
guide,

We'll set out now.

ESDRAS. Yes, surely.

[*There is a knock at the door The
four look at each other with some
apprehension. MIRIAMNE rises*]

I'll answer it

MIRIAMNE. Yes.

[*She goes into the inner room and
closes the door ESDRAS goes to the
outer door The knock is repeated.
He opens the door. MIO is there*]

ESDRAS. Yes, sir.

MIO. May I come in?

ESDRAS. Will you state your business, sir?
It's late—and I'm not at liberty—

MIO. Why, I might say

that I was trying to earn my tuition fees
by peddling magazines I could say that,
or collecting old newspapers—paying
cash—

highest rates—no questions asked—

[*He looks round sharply.*]

GARTH. We've nothing to sell.

What do you want?

MIO. Your pardon, gentlemen.

My business is not of an ordinary kind,
and I felt the need of this slight introduc-
tion

while I might get my bearings. Your
name is Esdras,

or they told me so outside.

GARTH. What do you want?

MIO. Is that the name?

GARTH. Yes.

MIO. I'll be quick and brief.

I'm the son of a man who died many
years ago

for a pay roll robbery in New England.
You should be Garth Esdras, by what
I've heard. You have

some knowledge of the crime, if one can
believe

what he reads in the public prints, and
it might be

that your testimony, if given, would clear
my father

of any share in the murder. You may not
care

whether he was guilty or not. You may
not know

But I do care—and care deeply, and I've
come

to ask you face to face.

GARTH. To ask me what?

MIO. What do you know of it?

ESDRAS. This man Romagna,
did he have a son?

MIO. Yes, sir, this man Romagna,
as you choose to call him, had a son,
and I

am that son, and proud.

ESDRAS. Forgive me.

MIO. Had you known him,
and heard him speak, you'd know why
I'm proud, and why

he was no malefactor

ESDRAS. I quite believe you

If my son can help he will But at this
moment,

as I told you—could you, I wonder, come
tomorrow,

at your own hour?

MIO. Yes

ESDRAS. By coincidence

we too of late have had this thing in
mind—

there have been comments printed, and
much discussion
which we could hardly avoid.

MIO. Could you tell me then
in a word?—What you know—
is it for him or against him?—
that's all I need

ESDRAS. My son knows nothing.

GARTH. No.

The picture-papers lash themselves to a
fury

over any rumor—make them up when
they're short
of bedroom slops—This is what hap-
pened. I

had known a few members of a gang
one time

up there—and after the murder they
picked me up

because I looked like someone that was
seen

in what they called the murder car. They
held me

a little while, but they couldn't identify
me

for the most excellent reason I wasn't
there

when the thing occurred. A dozen years later now a professor comes across this, and sees red and asks why I wasn't called on as a witness and yips so loud they syndicate his picture in all the rotos. That's all I know about it.

I wish I could tell you more.

ESDRAS. Let me say too that I have read some words your father said, and you were a son fortunate in your father, whatever the verdict of the world.

MIO. There are few who think so, but it's true, and I thank you. Then—that's the whole story?

GARTH All I know of it.

MIO They cover their tracks well, the inner ring that distributes murder. I came three thousand miles to this dead end

ESDRAS If he was innocent and you know him so, believe it, and let the others believe as they like.

MIO. Will you tell me how a man's to live, and face his life, if he can't believe that truth's like a fire, and will burn through and be seen though it takes all the years there are? While I stand up and have breath in my lungs

I shall be one flame of that fire; it's all the life I have.

ESDRAS. Then you must live so.

One must live as he can.

MIO. It's the only way of life my father left me.

ESDRAS Yes? Yet it's true the ground we walk on is impacted down and hard with blood and bones of those who died unjustly. There's not one title to land or life, even your own, but was built on rape and murder, back a few years. It would take a fire indeed to burn out all this error.

MIO. Then let it burn down, all of it!

ESDRAS. We ask a great deal of the world at first—then less—and then less. We ask for truth

and justice. But this truth's a thing unknown

in the lightest, smallest matter—and as for justice, who has once seen it done? You loved your father, and I could have loved him, for every word he spoke in his trial was sweet and tolerant, but the weight

of what men are and have, rests heavy on the graves of those who lost. They'll not rise again, and their causes lie there with them.

GAUNT. If you mean to say that Bartolomeo Romagna was innocent, you are wrong. He was guilty.

There may have been injustice from time to time, by regrettable chance, in our courts,

but not in that case, I assure you.

MIO. Oh, you assure me!

You lie in your scrag teeth, whoever you are!

My father was murdered!

GAUNT. Romagna was found guilty by all due process of law, and given his chance to prove his innocence.

MIO What chance? When a court panders to mob hysterics, and the jury comes in loaded to soak an anarchist and a foreigner, it may be due process of law

but it's also murder!

GAUNT He should have thought of that before he spilled blood.

MIO. He?

GAUNT Sir, I know too well that he was guilty.

MIO. Who are you? How do you know?

I've searched the records through, the trial and what came after, and in all that million words I found not one unbiased argument to fix the crime on him

GAUNT And you yourself, were you unprejudiced?

MIO Who are you?

ESDRAS Sir,

this gentleman is here, as you are here, to ask my son, as you have asked, what ground there might be for this talk of new evidence

in your father's case. We gave him the same answer

we've given you

MIO. I'm sorry I'd supposed his cause forgotten except by myself.

There's still

a defense committee then?

GAUNT. There may be I
am not connected with it.

ESDRAS He is my guest,
and asks to remain unknown.

MIO [*after a pause, looking at GAUNT*].

The judge at the trial
was younger, but he had your face. Can
it be

that you're the man?—Yes—Yes.—The
jury charge—

I sat there as a child and heard your
voice,

and watched that Brahminical mouth. I
knew even then

you meant no good to him. And now
you're here

to winnow out truth and justice—the
fountain-head

of the lies that slew him! Are you Judge
Gaunt?

GAUNT. I am

MIO. Then tell me what damnation to
what inferno

would fit the toad that sat in robes and
lied

when he gave the charge, and knew he
lied! Judge that,

and then go to your place in that hell!

GAUNT. I know and have known
what bitterness can rise against a court
when it must say, putting aside all weak-
ness,

that a man's to die. I can forgive you
that,

for you are your father's son, and you
think of him

as a son thinks of his father. Certain laws
seem cruel in their operation; it's neces-
sary

that we be cruel to uphold them. This
cruelty

is kindness to those I serve.

MIO. I don't doubt that

I know who it is you serve.

GAUNT. Would I have chosen

to rack myself with other men's despairs,
stop my ears, harden my heart, and lis-
ten only

to the voice of law and light, if I had
hoped

some private gain for serving? In all my
years

on the bench of a long-established com-
monwealth

not once has my decision been in ques-
tion

save in this case. Not once before or
since.

For hope of heaven or place on earth, or
power

or gold, no man has had my voice, nor
will.

while I still keep the trust that's laid on
me

to sentence and define

MIO. Then why are you here?

GAUNT. My record's clean. I've kept it so.
But suppose

with the best intent, among the myriad
tongues

that come to testify, I had missed my
way

and followed a perjured tale to a lethal
end

till a man was forsworn to death? Could
I rest or sleep

while there was doubt of this,
even while there was question in a lay-
man's mind?

For always, night and day,
there lies on my brain like a weight, the
admonition

see truly, let nothing sway you; among
all functions

there's but one godlike, to judge. Then
see to it

you judge as a god would judge, with
clarity,

with truth, with what mercy is found
consonant

with order and law. Without law men
are beasts,

and it's a judge's task to lift and hold
them

above themselves. Let a judge be once
mistaken

or step aside for a friend, and a gap is
made

in the dykes that hold back anarchy and
chaos,

and leave men bond but free.

MIO. Then the gap's been made,
and you made it

GAUNT. I feared that too. May you be a
judge

sometime, and know in what fear,
through what nights long

in fear, I scanned and verified and com-
pared

the transcripts of the trial.

MIO. Without prejudice,
no doubt. It was never in your mind to
prove

that you'd been right.

GAUNT. And conscious of that, too—
that that might be my purpose—watch-
ful of that,

and jealous as his own lawyer of the
rights

that should hedge the defendant!
 And still I found no error,
 shook not one staple of the bolts that
 linked
 the doer to the deed! Still following on
 from step to step, I watched all modern
 comment,
 and saw it centered finally on one
 fact—
 Garth Esdras was not called This is
 Garth Esdras,
 and you have heard him. Would his depo-
 sition
 have justified a new trial?
 MIO No. It would not
 GAUNT And there I come, myself. If the
 man were still
 in his cell, and waiting, I'd have no faint
 excuse
 for another hearing
 MIO I've told you that I read
 the trial from beginning to end. Every
 word you spoke
 was balanced carefully to keep the letter
 of the law and still convict—convict, by
 Christ,
 if it tore the seven veils! You stand here
 now
 running cascades of casuistry, to prove
 to yourself and me that no judge of rank
 and breeding
 could burn a man out of hate! But that's
 what you did
 under all your varnish!
 GAUNT I've sought for evidence,
 and you have sought. Have you found
 it? Can you cite
 one fresh word in defence?
 MIO The trial itself
 was shot full of legerdemain, prearranged
 to lead
 the jury astray —
 GAUNT Could you prove that?
 MIO Yes!
 GAUNT And if
 the jury were led astray, remember it's
 the jury, by our Anglo-Saxon custom,
 that finds for guilt or innocence. The
 judge
 is powerless in that matter
 MIO Not you! Your charge
 misled the jury more than the evidence,
 accepted every biased meaning, distilled
 the poison for them!
 GAUNT But if that were so
 I'd be the first, I swear it, to step down
 among all men, and hold out both my
 hands
 for manacles—yes, publish it in the
 streets,
 that all I've held most sacred was defiled

by my own act A judge's brain becomes
 a delicate instrument to weigh men's lives
 for good and ill—too delicate to bear
 much tampering If he should push aside
 the weights and throw the beam, and say,
 this once
 the man is guilty, and I will have it so
 though his mouth cry out from the
 ground,
 and all the world
 revoke my word, he'd have a short way
 to go
 to madness I think you'd find him in
 the squares,
 stopping the passers-by with argu-
 ments—
 see, I was right, the man was guilty
 there—
 this was brought in against him, this—
 and this—
 and I was left no choice! It's no light
 thing
 when a long life's been dedicate to one
 end
 to wrench the mind awry!
 MIO By your own thesis
 you should be mad, and no doubt you
 are
 GAUNT But my madness
 is only this—that I would fain look back
 on a life well spent—without one stain—
 one breath
 of stain to flaw the glass—not in men's
 minds
 nor in my own I take my God as wit-
 ness
 I meant to earn that clearness, and believe
 that I have earned it. Yet my name is
 clouded
 with the blackest, fiercest scandal of our
 age
 that's touched a judge. What I can do to
 wipe
 that smutch from my fame I will. I
 think you know
 how deeply I've been hated, for no cause
 that I can find there Can it not be—and
 I ask this
 quite honestly—that the great injustice
 lies
 on your side and not mine? Time and
 time again
 men have come before me perfect in their
 lives,
 loved by all who knew them, loved at
 home,
 gentle, not vicious, yet caught so ripe
 red-handed
 in some dark violence there was no deny-
 ing
 where the onus lay.

MIO. That was not so with my father!

GAUNT. And yet it seemed so to me. To other men who sat in judgment on him. Can you be sure—

I ask this in humility—that you, who were touched closest by the tragedy, may not have lost perspective—may have brooded

day and night on one theme—till your eyes are tranced

and show you one side only?

MIO. I see well enough.

GAUNT. And would that not be part of the malady—

to look quite steadily at the drift of things

but see there what you wish—not what is there—

not what another man to whom the story

was fresh would say is there?

MIO. You think I'm crazy.

Is that what you meant to say?

GAUNT. I've seen it happen with the best and wisest men. I but ask the question.

I can't speak for you. Is it not true wherever

you walk, through the little town where you knew him well,

or flying from it, inland or by the sea, still walking at your side, and sleeping only

when you too sleep, a shadow not your own

follows, pleading and holding out its hands

to be delivered from shame?

MIO. How you know that

by God I don't know

GAUNT. Because one spectre haunted you and me—

and haunts you still, but for me it's laid to rest

now that my mind is satisfied. He died justly and not by error.

[A pause]

MIO [stepping forward] Do you care to know

you've come so near to death it's miracle that pulse still beats in your splotchy throat?

Do you know

there's murder in me?

GAUNT. There was murder in your sire, and it's to be expected! I say he died justly, and he deserved it!

MIO. Yes, you'd like too well

to have me kill you! That would prove your case

and clear your name, and dip my father's name

in stench forever! You'll not get that from me!

Go home and die in bed, get it under cover,

your lux-et-lex putrefaction of the right thing,

you man that walks like a god!

GAUNT. Have I made you angry by coming too near the truth?

MIO. This sets him up, this venomous slug, this sets him up in a gown,

deciding who's to walk above the earth and who's to lie beneath! And giving reasons!

The cobra giving reasons; I'm a god, by Buddha, holy and worshipful my fang,

And can I sink it in!

[He pauses, turns as if to go, then sits.]

This is no good.

This won't help much.

[The JUDGE and ESDRAS look at each other]

GAUNT. We should be going

ESDRAS Yes

[They prepare to go.]

I'll lend you my coat

GAUNT [looking at it with distaste]. No, keep it. A little rain

shouldn't matter to me.

ESDRAS. It freezes as it falls,

and you've a long way to go

GAUNT. I'll manage, thank you

[GAUNT and ESDRAS go out, ESDRAS obsequious, closing the door]

GARTH [looking at MIO'S back] Well?

MIO [not moving]. Let me sit here a moment.

[GARTH shrugs his shoulders and goes toward the inner door. MIRIAMNE opens it and comes out]

GARTH looks at her, then at MIO, then lays his fingers on his lips.

She nods GARTH goes out. MIRIAMNE sits and watches MIO

After a little he turns and sees her]

MIO. How did you come here?

MIRIAMNE. I live here.

MIO Here?

MIRIAMNE My name is Esdras. Garth is my brother. The walls are thin.

I heard what was said

MIO [stirring wearily]. I'm going. This is no place for me.

MIRIAMNE. What place

would be better?

MIO. None. Only it's better to go.

Just to go.

[*She comes over to him, puts her arm round him and kisses his forehead.*]

MIRIAMNE. Mio.

MIO. What do you want?

Your kisses burn me—and your arms.

Don't offer

what I'm never to have! I can have nothing. They say

they'll cross the void sometime to the other planets

and men will breathe in that air.

Well, I could breathe there,

but not here now. Not on this ball of mud.

I don't want it.

MIRIAMNE. They can take away so little with all their words. For you're a king among them.

I heard you, and loved your voice.

MIO. I thought I'd fallen

so low there was no further, and now a pit

opens beneath. It was bad enough that he should have died innocent, but if he were guilty—

then what's my life—what have I left to do—?

The son of a felon—and what they spat on me

was earned—and I'm drenched with the stuff.

Here on my hands

and cheeks, their spittle hanging! I liked my hands

because they were like his. I tell you I've lived

by his innocence, lived to see it flash and blind them all——

MIRIAMNE. Never believe them, Mio, never.

[*She looks toward the inner door.*]

MIO. But it was truth I wanted, truth—not the lies you'd tell yourself, or tell a woman,

or a woman tells you! The judge with his cobra mouth

may have spat truth—and I may be mad! For me—

your hands are too clean to touch me. I'm to have

the scraps from hotel kitchens—and instead of love

those mottled bodies that hitch themselves through alleys

to sell for dimes or nickels. Go, keep yourself chaste

for the baker bridegroom—baker and son of a baker,

let him get his baker's dozen on you!

MIRIAMNE. No—

say once you love me—say it once; I'll never

ask to hear it twice, nor for any kindness, and you shall take all I have!

[*GARTH opens the inner door and comes out*]

GARTH. I interrupt

a love scene, I believe. We can do without

your adolescent mawkishness.

[*To MIRIAMNE.*]

You're a child.

You'll both remember that

MIRIAMNE. I've said nothing to harm you—

and will say nothing.

GARTH. You're my sister, though, and I take a certain interest in you.

Where

have you two met?

MIRIAMNE. We danced together.

GARTH. Then

the dance is over, I think.

MIRIAMNE. I've always loved you

and tried to help you, Garth. And you've been kind.

Don't spoil it now.

GARTH. Spoil it how?

MIRIAMNE. Because I love him.

I didn't know it would happen. We danced together.

And the world's all changed. I see you through a mist,

and our father, too. If you brought this to nothing

I'd want to die.

GARTH [*to MIO*]. You'd better go.

MIO. Yes, I know.

[*He rises. There is a trembling knock at the door. MIRIAMNE goes to it.*

The HOBO is there shivering]

HOBO. Miss, could I sleep under the pipes tonight, miss?

Could I, please?

MIRIAMNE. I think—not tonight.

HOBO. There won't be any more nights—if I don't get warm, miss.

MIRIAMNE. Come in.

[*The HOBO comes in, looks round deprecatingly, then goes to a corner beneath a huge heating pipe, which he crawls under as if he'd been there before.*]

HOBO. Yes, miss, thank you.

GARTH. Must we put up with that?

MIRIAMNE. Father let him sleep there—last winter.

GARTH. Yes, God, yes.

MIO. Well, good night.

MIRIAMNE. Where will you go?

MIO. Yes, where? As if it mattered.

GARTH. Oh, sleep here, too.

We'll have a row of you under the pipes.

MIO. No, thanks.

MIRIAMNE. Mio, I've saved a little money. It's only some pennies, but you must take it.

[*She shakes some coins out of a box into her hand*]

MIO. No, thanks.

MIRIAMNE. And I love you.

You've never said you love me.

MIO. Why wouldn't I love you when you're clean and sweet, and I've seen nothing sweet or clean this last ten years? I love you. I leave you that for what good it may do you. It's none to me.

MIRIAMNE. Then kiss me.

MIO [*looking at GARTH*]. With that scowling over us? No.

When it rains, some spring on the planet Mercury, where the spring comes often, I'll meet you there, let's say. We'll wait for that.

It may be some time till then.

[*The outside door opens and ESDRAS enters with JUDGE GAUNT, then, after a slight interval, TROCK follows. TROCK surveys the interior and its occupants one by one, carefully*]

TROCK. I wouldn't want to cause you inconvenience, any of you, and especially the Judge. I think you know that. You've all got things to do—

trains to catch, and so on. But trains can wait.

Hell, nearly anything can wait, you'll find, only I can't. I'm the only one that can't because I've got no time. Who's all this here?

Who's that?

[*He points to the HOBO.*]

ESDRAS. He's a poor half-wit, sir, that sometimes sleeps there

TROCK. Come out. I say come out, whoever you are

[*The HOBO stirs and looks up.*]

Yes, I mean you. Come out.

[*The HOBO emerges.*]

What's your name?

HOBO. They mostly call me Oke.

TROCK. What do you know?

HOBO. No, sir.

TROCK. Where are you from?

HOBO. I got a piece of bread.

[*He brings it out, trembling.*]

TROCK. Get back in there!

[*The HOBO crawls back into his corner.*]

Maybe you want to know why I'm doing this.

Well, I've been robbed, that's why—

robbed five or six times;

the police can't find a thing—so I'm out for myself—

if you want to know.

[*To MIO*]

Who are you?

MIO. Oh, I'm a half-wit,

came in here by mistake. The difference is

I've got no piece of bread.

TROCK. What's your name?

MIO. My name?

Theophrastus Such. That's respectable.

You'll find it all the way from here to the coast

on the best police blotters

Only the truth is we're a little touched in the head,

Oke and me. You'd better ask somebody else

TROCK. Who is he?

ESDRAS. His name's Romagna. He's the son.

TROCK. Then what's he doing here? You said you were on the level.

GARTH. He just walked in. On account of the stuff in the papers. We didn't ask him.

TROCK. God, we are a gathering. Now if we had Shadow we'd be all here, huh?

Only I guess we won't see Shadow. No, that's too much to ask.

MIO. Who's Shadow?

TROCK. Now you're putting questions. Shadow was just nobody, you see. He blew away. It might happen to anyone.

[*He looks at GARTH*] Yes, anyone at all

MIO. Why do you keep your hand in your pocket, friend?

TROCK. Because I'm cold, punk. Because I've been outside and it's cold as the tomb of Christ. [*To GARTH*] Listen, there's a car waiting up at the street to take the Judge home. We'll take him to the car.

GARTH. That's not necessary.

ESDRAS. No.

TROCK. I say it is, see? You wouldn't want to let the Judge walk, would you?

The Judge is going to ride where he's go'ing, with a couple of chauffeurs, and everything done in style. Don't you worry about the Judge. He'll be taken care of. For good.

GARTH. I want no hand in it.

TROCK. Anything happens to me happens to you too, musician.

GARTH. I know that.

TROCK. Keep your mouth out of it then.

And you'd better keep the punk here to-night, just for luck. [*He turns toward the door. There is a brilliant lightning flash through the windows, followed slowly by dying thunder. TROCK opens the door. The rain begins to pour in sheets*] Jesus, somebody tipped it over again! [*A cough racks him*] Wait till it's over. It takes ten days off me every time I step into it. [*He closes the door.*] Sit down and wait.

[*Lightning flashes again. The thunder is fainter. ESDRAS, GARTH and the JUDGE sit down*]

GAUNT. We were born too early. Even you who are young are not of the elect. In a hundred years man will put his finger on life itself, and then he will live as long as he likes For you and me we shall die soon—one day, one year more or less, when or where, it's no matter. It's what we call an indeterminate sentence I'm hungry.

[*GARTH looks at MIRIAMNE*]

MIRIAMNE. There was nothing left tonight.

HOBO. I've got a piece of bread.

[*He breaks his bread in two and hands half to the Judge*]

GAUNT I thank you, sir. [*He eats.*]
This is not good bread. [*He rises*]

Sir, I am used to other company Not better, perhaps, but their clothes were different. These are what it's the fashion to call the underprivileged.

TROCK. Oh, hell!

[*He turns toward the door.*]

MIO [*to TROCK*]. It would seem that you and the Judge know each other.

[*TROCK faces him.*]

TROCK. I've been around

MIO Maybe you've met before.

TROCK Maybe we have.

MIO Will you tell me where?

TROCK How long do you want to live?

MIO How long? Oh, I've got big ideas about that.

TROCK I thought so. Well, so far I've got nothing against you but your name, see? You keep it that way.

[*He opens the door The rain still*

falls in torrents. He closes the door. As he turns from it, it opens again, and SHADOW, white, bloodstained and dripping, stands in the doorway. GARTH rises. TROCK turns.]

GAUNT [*to the HOBO*]. Yet if one were careful of his health, ate sparingly, drank not at all, used himself wisely, it might be that even an old man could live to touch immortality. They may come on the secret sooner than we dare hope. You see? It does no harm to try.

TROCK [*backing away from SHADOW*].

By God, he's out of his grave!

SHADOW [*leaning against the doorway, holding a gun in his hands*]. Keep your hands where they belong, Trock.

You know me.

TROCK. Don't! Don't! I had nothing to do with it!

[*He backs to the opposite wall*]

SHADOW. You said the doctor gave you six months to live—

well, I don't give you that much. That's what you had,

six months, and so you start bumping off your friends

to make sure of your damn six months. I got it from you.

I know where I got it.

Because I wouldn't give it to the Judge. So he wouldn't talk

TROCK. Honest to God —

SHADOW. What God?

The one that let you put three holes in me

when I was your friend? Well, He let me get up again

and walk till I could find you. That's as far as I get,

but I got there, by God! And I can hear you

even if I can't see!

[*He takes a staggering step forward.*]

A man needs blood

to keep going—I got this far.—And now I can't see!

It runs out too fast—too fast—

when you've got three slugs

clean through you.

Show me where he is, you fools! He's here!

I got here!

[*He drops the gun*]

Help me! Help me! Oh, God! Oh, God! I'm going to die! Where does a man lie down?

I want to lie down!

[*MIRIAMNE starts toward SHADOW.*

GARTH and ESDRAS help him into the next room, MIRIAMNE following. TROCK squats in his corner,

breathing hard, looking at the door.
 MIO stands, watching TROCK.
 GARTH returns, wiping his hand
 with a handkerchief. MIO picks up
 and pockets the gun. MIRIAMNE
 comes back and leans against the
 door jamb]

GAUNT. You will hear it said that an old man makes a good judge, being calm, clear-eyed, without passion. But this is not true. Only the young love truth and justice. The old are savage, wary, violent, swayed by maniac desires, cynical of friendship or love, open to bribery and the temptations of lust, corrupt and dastardly to the heart. I know these old men. What have they left to believe, what have they left to lose? Whorers of daughters, licksters of girls' shoes, contrivers of nastiness in the night, purveyors of perversion, worshippers of possession! Death is the only radical. He comes late, but he comes at last to put away the old men and give the young their places. It was time. [*He leans*] Here's one I heard yesterday.

Marmaduke behind the barn
 got his sister in a fix;
 he says damn instead of darn;
 ain't he cute? He's only six!

THE HOBO. He, he, he!

GAUNT.

And the hoot-owl hoots all night,
 and the cuckoo cooks all day,
 and what with a minimum grace of God
 we pass the time away.

THE HOBO. He, he, he—I got ya!

[*He makes a sign with his thumb*]

GAUNT [*sings*].

And he led her all around
 and he laid her on the ground
 and he ruffled up the feathers of her
 cuckoo's nest!

HOB. Ho, ho, ho!

GAUNT. I am not taken with the way you laugh. You should cultivate restraint

[*ESDRAS reenters*]

TROCK. Shut the door.

ESDRAS He won't come back again.

TROCK. I want the door shut! He was dead, I tell you! [*ESDRAS closes the door*] And Romagna was dead, too, once! Can't they keep a man under ground?

MIO. No. No more! They don't stay under ground any more, and they don't stay under water! Why did you have him killed?

TROCK. Stay away from me! I know you!

MIO. Who am I, then?

TROCK. I know you, damn you! Your name's Romagna!

MIO. Yes! And Romagna was dead, too, and Shadow was dead, but the time's come when you can't keep them down, these dead men! They won't stay down! They come in with their heads shot off and their entrails dragging! Hundreds of them! One by one—all you ever had killed! Watch the door! See!—It moves!

TROCK [*looking, fascinated, at the door*].
 Let me out of here! [*He tries to rise*]

MIO [*the gun in his hand*]. Oh, no! You'll sit there and wait for them! One by one they'll come through that door, pulling their heads out of the gunny-sacks where you tied them—glauing over you with their rotten hands! They'll see without eyes and crawl over you—Shadow and the paymaster and all the rest of them—putrescent bones without eyes! Now! Look! Look! For I'm first among them!

TROCK. I've done for better men than you! And I'll do for you!

GAUNT [*rapping on the table*]. Order, gentlemen, order! The witness will remember that a certain decorum is essential in the court-room!

MIO. By God, he'll answer me!

GAUNT [*thundering*]. Silence! Silence! Let me remind you of courtesy toward the witness! What case is this you try?

MIO. The case of the state against Bartolomeo Romagna for the murder of the paymaster!

GAUNT. Sir, that was disposed of long ago!

MIO. Never disposed of, never, not while I live!

GAUNT. Then we'll have done with it now! I deny the appeal! I have denied the appeal before and I do so again!

HOB. He, he!—He thinks he's in the moving pictures! [*A flash of lightning*]

GAUNT. Who set that flash! Bailiff, clear the court! This is not Flemington, gentlemen! We are not conducting this case to make a journalistic holiday! [*The thunder rumbles faintly. GARTH opens the outside door and faces a solid wall of rain*] Stop that man! He's one of the defendants! [*GARTH closes the door.*]

MIO. Then put him on the stand!

GARTH. What do you think you're doing?

MIO. Have you any objection?

GAUNT. The objection is not sustained. We will hear the new evidence. Call your witness.

MIO. Garth Esdras!

GAUNT. He will take the stand!

GARTH. If you want me to say what I said before I'll say it!

MIO. Call Trock Estrella then!

GAUNT. Trock Estrella to the stand!

TROCK No, by God!

MIO. Call Shadow, then! He'll talk! You thought he was dead, but he'll get up again and talk!

TROCK [*screaming*]. What do you want of me?

MIO. You killed the paymaster! You!

TROCK You lie! It was Shadow killed him!

MIO And now I know! Now I know!

GAUNT Again I remind you of courtesy toward the witness!

MIO I know them now!

Let me remind you of courtesy toward the dead!

He says that Shadow killed him! If Shadow were here

he'd say it was Trock! There were three men involved

in the new version of the crime for which my father died! Shadow and Trock

Estrella as principals in the murder—Garth as witness!—

Why are they here together?—and you—the Judge—

why are you here? Why, because you were all afraid

and you drew together out of that fear to arrange

a story you could tell! And Trock killed Shadow

and meant to kill the Judge out of that same fear—

to keep them quiet! This is the thing I've hunted

over the earth to find out, and I'd be blind

indeed if I missed it now! [*To GAUNT.*]

You heard what he said

It was Shadow killed him! Now let the night conspire

with the sperm of hell! It's plain beyond denial

even to this fox of justice—and all his words

are curses on the wind! You lied! You lied!

You knew this too!

GAUNT [*low*]. Let me go. Let me go!

MIO. Then why

did you let my father die?

GAUNT Suppose it known,

but there are things a judge must not believe

though they should head and fester underneath

and press in on his brain. Justice once rendered

in a clear burst of anger, righteously, upon a very common laborer,

confessed an anarchist, the verdict found and the precise machinery of law

invoked to know him guilty—think what furor

would rock the state if the court then flatly said

all this was lies—must be reversed? It's better,

as any judge can tell you, in such cases, holding the common good to be worth more

than small injustice, to let the record stand,

let one man die. For justice, in the main, is governed by opinion. Communities

will have what they will have, and it's quite as well,

after all, to be rid of anarchists. Our rights

as citizens can be maintained as rights only while we are held to be the peers

of those who live about us. A vendor of fish

is not protected as a man might be who kept a market. I own I've sometimes

wished this was not so, but it is The man you defend

was unfortunate—and his misfortune bore almost as heavily on me—I'm broken—

broken across You're much too young to know

how bitter it is when a worn connection chars

and you can't remember—can't remember

You [*He steps forward*]

will not repeat this? It will go no further?

MIO. No

No further than the moon takes the tides—no further

than the news went when he died—when you found him guilty

and they flashed that round the earth. Wherever men

still breathe and think, and know what's done to them

by the powers above, they'll know. That's all I ask.

That'll be enough.

[*TROCK has risen and looks darkly at MIO*]

GAUNT. Thank you. For I've said some things

a judge should never say

TROCK. Go right on talking.

Both of you. It won't get far, I guess.
MIO. Oh, you'll see to that?

TROCK. I'll see to it. Me and some others.
Maybe I lost my grip there just for a minute.

That's all right.

MIO Then see to it! Let it rain!

What can you do to me now when the night's on fire with this thing I know? Now I could almost wish

there was a god somewhere—I could almost think

there was a god—and he somehow brought me here

and set you down before me here in the rain

where I could wring this out of you!

For it's said, and I've heard it, and I'm free! He was as I thought him,

true and noble and upright, even when he went

to a death contrived because he was as he was

and not your kind! Let it rain! Let the night speak fire

and the city go out with the tide, for he was a man

and I know you now, and I have my day!

[*There is a heavy knock at the outside door. MIRIAMNE opens it, at a glance from GARTH. The POLICEMAN is there in oilskins*]

POLICEMAN. Evening

[*He steps in, followed by a SERGEANT, similarly dressed*]

We're looking for someone might be here Seen an old man around acting a little off? [To ESDRAS.]

You know the one

I mean. You saw him out there. Jeez!

You've got

a funny crowd here!

[*He looks round. The HOBBO shrinks into his corner.*]

That's the one I saw.

What do you think?

SERGEANT. That's him. You mean to say you didn't know him by his pictures?

[*He goes to GAUNT.*]

Come on, old man.

You're going home.

GAUNT. Yes, sir. I've lost my way.

I think I've lost my way

SERGEANT. I'll say you have.

About three hundred miles. Now don't you worry.

We'll get you back.

GAUNT. I'm a person of some rank in my own city.

SERGEANT. We know that. One look at you

and we'd know that.

GAUNT. Yes, sir.

POLICEMAN. If it isn't Trock!

Trock Estrella. How are you, Trock?

TROCK. Pretty good, thanks.

POLICEMAN. Got out yesterday again, I hear?

TROCK. That's right.

SERGEANT. Hi'ye, Trock?

TROCK O.K.

SERGEANT. You know we got orders to watch you pretty close. Be good now, baby,

or back you go Don't try to pull anything,

not in my district.

TROCK No, sir.

SERGEANT No bumping off.

If you want my advice quit carrying a gun.

Try earning your living for once.

TROCK Yeah

SERGEANT. That's an idea.

Because if we find any stiffs on the river bank

we'll know who to look for.

MIO. Then look in the other room!

I accuse that man of murder! Trock Estrella!

He's a murderer!

POLICEMAN Hello. I remember you.

SERGEANT. Well, what murder?

MIO It was Trock Estrella

that robbed the payroll thirteen years ago

and did the killing my father died for! You know

the Romagna case! Romagna was innocent,

and Trock Estrella guilty!

SERGEANT [*disgusted*]. Oh, what the hell!

That's 'old stuff—the Romagna case.

POLICEMAN. Hey, Sarge!

[*The SERGEANT and POLICEMAN come closer together*]

The boy's a professional kidder. He took me over

about half an hour ago. He kids the police

and then ducks out!

SERGEANT. Oh, yeah?

MIO. I'm not kidding now.

You'll find a dead man there in the next room

and Estrella killed him!

SERGEANT. Thirteen years ago?
 And nobody smelled him yet?
 MIO [*pointing*] I accuse this man
 of two murders! He killed the paymaster
 long ago
 and had Shadow killed tonight. Look,
 look for yourself!
 He's there all right!
 POLICEMAN. Look, boy. You stood out
 there
 and put the booby sign on the dumb
 police
 because they're fresh out of Ireland. Don't
 try it twice.
 SERGEANT [*to GARTH*]. Any corpses
 here?
 GARTH. Not that I know of.
 SERGEANT I thought so. [*MIO looks at
 MIRIAMNE*] [*To MIO*] Think up
 a better one
 MIO Have I got to drag him
 out here where you can see him?
 [*He goes toward the inner door.*]
 Can't you scent a murder
 when it's under your nose? Look in!
 MIRIAMNE. No, no—there's no one—
 there's no one there!
 SERGEANT [*looking at MIRIAMNE*].
 Take a look inside.
 POLICEMAN. Yes, sir.
 [*He goes into the inside room. The
 SERGEANT goes up to the door.
 The POLICEMAN returns*]
 He's kidding, Sarge If there's a cadaver
 in here I don't see it
 MIO. You're blind then!
 [*He goes into the room, the SER-
 GEANT following him*]
 SERGEANT. What do you mean?
 [*He comes out, MIO following him*]
 When you make a charge of murder it's
 better to have
 the corpus delicti, son. You're the kind
 puts in
 fire alarms to see the engine!
 MIO. By God, he was there!
 He went in there to die.
 SERGEANT. I'll bet he did.
 And I'm Haile Selassie's aunt! What's
 your name?
 MIO Romagna. [*To GARTH.*]
 What have you done with him?
 GARTH I don't know what you mean.
 SERGEANT [*to GARTH*]. What's he
 talking about?
 GARTH. I wish I could tell you.
 I don't know.
 SERGEANT. He must have seen some-
 thing
 POLICEMAN. He's got

the Romagna case on the brain. You
 watch yourself,
 chump, or you'll get run in
 MIO. Then they're in it together!
 All of them! [*To MIRIAMNE.*]
 Yes, and you!
 GARTH. He's nuts, I say.
 MIRIAMNE [*gently*] You have dreamed
 something—isn't it true?
 You've dreamed—
 But truly, there was no one—
 [*MIO looks at her comprehendingly.*]
 MIO. You want me to say it. [*He pauses.*]
 Yes, by God, I was dreaming
 SERGEANT [*to POLICEMAN*]. I guess
 you're right
 We'd better be going. Haven't you got
 a coat?
 GAUNT. No, sir
 SERGEANT I guess I'll have to lend you
 mine.
 [*He puts his oilskins on GAUNT*]
 Come on, now It's getting late.
 [*GAUNT, the POLICEMAN and the
 SERGEANT go out*]
 TROCK. They're welcome to him
 His fuse is damp. Where is that walking
 fool
 with the three slugs in him?
 ESDRAS. He fell in the hall beyond
 and we left him there.
 TROCK That's lucky for some of us. Is
 he out this time
 or is he still butting around?
 ESDRAS He's dead
 TROCK. That's perfect. [*To MIO*]
 don't try using your firearms, amigo
 baby,
 the Sarge is outside. [*He turns to go*]
 Better ship that carrion
 back in the river! The one that walks
 when he's dead;
 maybe he'll walk the distance for you.
 GARTH. Coming back?
 TROCK. Well, if I come back,
 you'll see me If I don't, you won't. Let
 the punk
 go far as he likes. Turn him loose and
 let him go.
 And may you all rot in hell.
 [*He pulls his coat around him and
 goes to the left. MIRIAMNE climbs
 up to look out a window.*]
 MIRIAMNE. He's climbing up to the
 street,
 along the bridgehead. [*She turns.*]
 Quick, Mio! It's safe now! Quick!
 GARTH. Let him do as he likes
 MIRIAMNE. What do you mean? Garth!
 He means to kill him!

You know that!

GARTH. I've no doubt Master Romagna can run his own campaign.

MIRIAMNE. But he'll be killed!

MIO. Why did you lie about Shadow?

[*There is a pause. GARTH shrugs, walks across the room, and sits.*]

You were one of the gang!

GARTH. I can take a death if I have to!

Go tell your story,
only watch your step, for I warn you,
Trock's out gunning

and you may not walk very far. Oh, I
could defend it

but it's hardly worth while.

If they get Trock they get me too.

Go tell them. You owe me nothing.

ESDRAS. This Trock you saw,
no one defends him. He's earned his
death so often

there's nobody to regret it. But his crime,
his same crime that has dogged you,
dogged us down

from what little we had, to live here
among the drains,
where the waterbugs break out like a
scrofula

on what we eat—and if there's lower
to go

we'll go there when you've told your
story. And more

that I haven't heart to speak —

MIO [*to GARTH*]. My father died
in your place. And you could have saved
him!

You were one of the gang!

GARTH. Why, there you are

You certainly owe me nothing.

MIRIAMNE [*moaning*]. I want to die.

I want to go away

MIO. Yes, and you hed!

And trapped me into it!

MIRIAMNE. But Mio, he's my brother.

I couldn't give them my brother.

MIO. No. You couldn't.

You were quite right. The gods were
damned ironic

tonight, and they've worked it out.

ESDRAS. What will be changed
if it comes to trial again? More blood
poured out
to a mythical justice, but your father
lying still
where he lies now.

MIO. The bright, ironical gods!

What fun they have in heaven! When
a man prays hard
for any gift, they give it, and then one
more

to boot that makes it useless.

[*To MIRIAMNE*]

You might have picked

some other stranger to dance with!

MIRIAMNE. I know.

MIO. Or chosen

some other evening to sit outside in the
rain.

But no, it had to be this. All my life
long

I've wanted only one thing, to say to the
world

and prove it: the man you killed was
clean and true

and full of love as the twelve-year-old
that stood

and taught in the temple. I can say that
now

and give my proofs—and now you stick
a girl's face

between me and the rites I've sworn the
dead

shall have of me! You ask too much!

Your brother

can take his chance! He was ready
enough to let

an innocent man take certainty for him
to pay for the years he's had. That parts

us, then,

but we're parted anyway, by the same
dark wind

that blew us together I shall say what
I have to say. [*He steps back*]

And I'm not welcome here

MIRIAMNE. But don't go now! You've
stayed

too long! He'll be waiting!

MIO. Well, is this any safer?

Let the winds blow, the four winds of
the world,

and take us to the four winds.

[*The three are silent before him. He
turns and goes out.*]

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE: *The river bank outside the tene-
ment, a little before the close of the
previous act. The rain still falls
through the street lamps. The TWO
NATTY YOUNG MEN IN SERGE
AND GRAY are leaning against the
masonry in a ray of light, concen-
trating on a game of chance. Each
holds in his hand a packet of ten or
fifteen crisp bills. They compare the
numbers on the top notes and immedi-
ately a bill changes hands. This goes
on with varying fortune until the tide
begins to run toward the 1ST GUN-
MAN, who has accumulated nearly the*

whole supply. They play on in complete silence, evidently not wishing to make any noise. Occasionally they raise their heads slightly to look carefully about. Luck begins to favor the 2ND GUNMAN, and the notes come his way. Neither evinces the slightest interest in how the game goes. They merely play on, bored, half-absorbed. There is a slight noise at the tenement door. They put the bills away and watch. TROCK comes out, pulls the door shut and comes over to them. He says a few words too low to be heard, and without changing expression the YOUNG MEN saunter toward the right. TROCK goes out to the left, and the 2ND PLAYER, catching that out of the corner of his eye, lingers in a glimmer of light to go on with the game. The 1ST, with an eye on the tenement door, begins to play without ado, and the bills again shift back and forth, then concentrate in the hands of the 1ST GUNMAN. The 2ND shrugs his shoulders, searches his pockets, finds one bill, and playing with it begins to win heavily. They hear the door opening, and putting the notes away, slip out in front of the rock MIO emerges, closes the door, looks round him and walks to the left. Near the corner of the tenement he pauses, reaches out his hand to try the rain, looks up toward the street, and stands uncertainly a moment. He returns and leans against the tenement wall. MIRIAMNE comes out. MIO continues to look off into space as if unaware of her. She looks away.

MIO. This rather takes one off his high horse—What I mean, tough weather for a hegira. You see, this is my sleeping suit, and if I get it wet—basta!

MIRIAMNE. If you could only hide here. MIO Hide?

MIRIAMNE. Lucia would take you in. The street-piano man.

MIO. At the moment I'm afflicted with claustrophobia. I prefer to die in the open, seeking air.

MIRIAMNE. But you could stay there till daylight.

MIO. You're concerned about me.

MIRIAMNE. Shall I ask him?

MIO. No. On the other hand there's a certain reason in your concern. I looked up the street and our old friend Trock hunches patiently under the warehouse eaves.

MIRIAMNE. I was sure of that.

MIO. And here I am, a young man on a cold night, waiting the end of the rain. Being read my lesson by a boy, a blind boy—you know the one I mean. Kneedeep in the salt-marsh, Miriamne, bitten from within, fought.

MIRIAMNE. Wouldn't it be better if you came back in the house?

MIO. You forget my claustrophobia.

MIRIAMNE. Let me walk with you, then. Please. If I stay beside you he wouldn't dare.

MIO. And then again he might.—We don't speak the same language, Miriamne.

MIRIAMNE. I betrayed you. Forgive me.

MIO. I wish I knew this region. There's probably a path along the bank.

MIRIAMNE. Yes. Shadow went that way.

MIO. That's true, too. So here I am, a young man on a wet night, and blind in my weather eye. Stay and talk to me.

MIRIAMNE. If it happens—it's my fault.

MIO. Not at all, sweet. You warned me to keep away. But I would have it. Now I have to find a way out. It's like a chess game. If you think long enough there's always a way out—For one or the other—I wonder why white always wins and black always loses in the problems. White to move and mate in three moves. But what if white were to lose—ah, what then? Why, in that case, obviously black would be white and white would be black—As it often is—As we often are.—Might makes white. Losers turn black. Do you think I'd have time to draw a gun?

MIRIAMNE. No.

MIO. I'm a fair shot. Also I'm fair game.

[The door of the tenement opens and GARTH comes out to look about quickly. Seeing only MIO and MIRIAMNE he goes in and comes out again almost immediately carrying one end of a door on which a body lies covered with a cloth. The HOBBO carries the other end. They go out to the right with their burden.]

This is the burial of Shadow, then; feet first he dips, and leaves the haunts of men.

Let us make mourn for Shadow, wetly lying,

in elegiac stanzas and sweet crying.

Be gentle with him, little cold waves and fishes;

nibble him nct, respect his skin and tissues—

MIRIAMNE. Must you say such things?

MIO. My dear, some requiem is fitting over the dead, even for Shadow. But the last rhyme was bad. Whittle him not, respect his dying wishes.

That's better. And then to conclude: His aromatic virtues, slowly rising will circumnamb the isle, beyond disguising.

He clung to life beyond the wont of men. Time and his silence drink us all. Amen.

How I hate these identicals. The French allow them, but the French have no principles anyway. You know, Miriamne, there's really nothing mysterious about human life. It's purely mechanical, like an electric appliance. Stop the engine that runs the generator and the current's broken. When we think the brain gives off a small electric discharge—quite measurable, and constant within limits. But that's not what makes your hair stand up when frightened.

MIRIAMNE. I think it's a mystery.

MIO. Human life? We'll have to wear veils if we're to keep it a mystery much longer. Now if Shadow and I were made up into sausages we'd probably make very good sausages.

MIRIAMNE. Don't —

MIO. I'm sorry. I speak from a high place, far off, long ago, looking down. The cortège returns. [*GARTH and the HOBO return, carrying the door, the cloth lying loosely over it.*] I hope you placed an obol in his mouth to pay the ferryman? Even among the Greeks a little money was prerequisite to Elysium. [*GARTH and the HOBO go inside, silent*] No? It's grim to think of Shadow lingering among lesser shades on the hither side. For lack of a small gratuity.

[*ESDRAS comes out the open door and closes it behind him.*]

ESDRAS. You must wait here, Mio, or go inside. I know you don't trust me, and I haven't earned your trust.

You're young enough to seek truth—and there is no truth; and I know that—but I shall call the police and see that you get safely off.

MIO. It's a little late for that.

ESDRAS. I shall try.

MIO. And your terms? For I daresay you make terms?

ESDRAS. No.

MIO. Then let me remind you what will happen.

The police will ask some questions.

When they're answered they'll ask more, and before they're done with it

your son will be implicated.

ESDRAS. Must he be?

MIO. I shall not keep quiet. [*A pause.*]

ESDRAS. Still, I'll go.

MIO. I don't ask help, remember. I make no truce

He's not on my conscience, and I'm not on yours.

ESDRAS. But you

could make it easier, so easily.

He's my only son. Let him live.

MIO. His chance of survival's

better than mine, I'd say.

ESDRAS. I'll go.

MIO. I don't urge it.

ESDRAS. No. I put my son's life in your hands.

When you're gone, that may come to your mind.

MIO. Don't count on it.

ESDRAS. Oh,

I count on nothing.

[*He turns to go. MIRIAMNE runs over to him and silently kisses his hands.*]

Not mine, not mine, my daughter!

They're guilty hands.

[*He goes out left GARTH'S violin is heard within*]

MIO. There was a war in heaven

once, all the angels on one side, and all the devils on the other, and since that time

disputes have raged among the learned, concerning

whether the demons won, or the angels

Maybe

the angels won, after all.

MIRIAMNE. And again, perhaps

there are no demons or angels.

MIO. Oh, there are none

But I could love your father.

MIRIAMNE. I love him. You see, he's afraid because he's old. The less one has

to lose the more he's afraid.

MIO. Suppose one had

only a short stub end of life, or held a flashlight with the batteries run down till the bulb was dim, and knew that he could live

while the glow lasted. Or suppose one knew

that while he stood in a little shelter of time

under a bridgehead, say, he could live, and then,

from then on, nothing. Then to lie and turn
with the earth and sun, and regard them
not in the least
when the bulb was extinguished or he
stepped beyond
his circle into the cold? How would he
live
that last dim quarter-hour, before he
went,
minus all recollection, to grow in grass
between cobblestones?

MIRIAMNE. Let me put my arms round
you, Mio.

Then if anything comes, it's for me, too.

[*She puts both arms round him*]

MIO. Only suppose
this circle's charmed! To be safe until
he steps
from this lighted space into dark! Time
pauses here
and high eternity grows in one quarter-
hour
in which to live.

MIRIAMNE. Let me see if anyone's
there—
there in the shadows.

[*She looks toward the right*]

MIO. It might blast our eternity—
blow it to bits No, don't go This is
forever,
here where we stand. And I ask you,
Miriamne,

how does one spend a forever?

MIRIAMNE. You're frightened?

MIO. Yes.

So much that time stands still.

MIRIAMNE. Why didn't I speak—
tell them—when the officers were here?

I failed you

in that one moment!

MIO. His life for mine? Oh, no.

I wouldn't want it, and you couldn't
give it.

And if I should go on living we're cut
apart

by that brother of yours.

MIRIAMNE. Are we?

MIO. Well, think about it

A body lies between us, buried in quick-
lime.

Your allegiance is on the other side of
that grave

and not to me.

MIRIAMNE. No, Mio! Mio, I love you!

MIO. I love you, too, but in case my life
went on

beyond that barrier of dark—then Garth
would run his risk of dying.

MIRIAMNE. He's punished, Mio.

His life's been torment to him. Let
him go,

for my sake, Mio

MIO. I wish I could. I wish

I'd never seen him—or you. I've steeped
too long

in this thing. It's in my teeth and bones
I can't

let go or forget. And I'll not add my lie
to the lies that cumber his ground. We

live our days

in a storm of lies that drifts the truth
too deep

for path or shovel; but I've set my foot
on a truth

for once, and I'll trail it down!

[*A silence MIRIAMNE looks out to
the right*]

MIRIAMNE. There's someone there—

I heard —

[*CARR comes in from the right.*]

MIO. It's Carr.

CARR. That's right No doubt about it.

Excuse me.

MIO. Glad to see you This is Miriamne.

Carr's a friend of mine.

CARR. You're better employed

than when I saw you last

MIO. Bow to the gentleman,

Miriamne That's meant for you.

MIRIAMNE. Thank you, I'm sure.

Should I leave you, Mio? You want
to talk?

MIO. Oh, no,

we've done our talking

MIRIAMNE. But —

CARR. I'm the one's out of place—

I wandered back because I got worried
about you,

that's the truth—Oh—those two fellows
with the hats

down this way, you know, the ones
that ran

after we heard the shooting—they're back
again,

lingering or malingering down the bank,
revisiting the crime, I guess. They may

mean well

MIO. I'll try to avoid them.

CARR. I didn't care

for the way they looked at me.—No
luck, I suppose,

with that case history? The investigation
you had on land?

MIO. I can't say By the way,

the stiff that fell in the water and we
saw swirling

down the eddy, he came trudging up,
later on,

long enough to tell his name. His name
was Shadow,

but he's back in the water now. It's all in an evening.
 These things happen here.
 CARR. Good God!
 MIO. I know.
 I wouldn't believe it if you told it.
 CARR. But—
 the man was alive?
 MIO. Oh, not for long! He's dunked for good this time. That's all that's happened.
 CARR. Well,
 if you don't need me —
 MIRIAMNE. You had a message to send— have you forgotten —?
 MIO. I?—Yes, I had a message— but I won't send it—not now.
 MIRIAMNE. Then I will —!
 MIO. No.
 Let it go the way it is! It's all arranged another way. You've been a good scout, Carr,
 the best I ever knew on the road.
 CARR. That sounds like making your will.
 MIO. Not yet, but when I do
 I've thought of something to leave you.
 It's the view
 of Mt. Rainier from the Seattle jail,
 snow over cloud. And the rusty chain in my pocket
 from a pair of handcuffs my father wore.
 That's all
 the worldly goods I'm seized of.
 CARR. Look, Mio—hell—
 if you're in trouble —
 MIO. I'm not. Not at all. I have a genius that attends me where I go, and guards me now. I'm fine.
 CARR. Well, that's good news.
 He'll have his work cut out.
 MIO. Oh, he's a genius.
 CARR. I'll see you then.
 I'll be at the Grand Street place. I'm lucky tonight,
 and I can pay. I could even pay for two.
 MIO. Thanks, I may take you up.
 CARR. Good night.
 MIO. Right, Carr
 CARR [*to MIRIAMNE*]. Good night.
 MIRIAMNE [*after a pause*]. Good night.
 [*CARR goes out to the left.*]
 Why did you do that? He's your genius, Mio,
 and you let him go.
 MIO. I couldn't help it.
 MIRIAMNE. Call him.
 Run after him and call him!
 MIO. I tried to say it
 and it strangled in my throat. I might have known

you'd win in the end.
 MIRIAMNE. Is it for me?
 MIO. For you?
 It stuck in my throat, that's all I know.
 MIRIAMNE. Oh, Mio,
 I never asked for that! I only hoped
 Garth could go clear.
 MIO. Well, now he will.
 MIRIAMNE. But you—
 It was your chance!
 MIO. I've lost
my taste for revenge if it falls on you.
 Oh, God,
 deliver me from the body of this death
 I've dragged behind me all these years!
 Miriamne!
 Miriamne!
 MIRIAMNE. Yes!
 MIO. Miriamne, if you love me
 teach me a treason to what I am, and have been,
 till I learn to live like a man! I think
 I'm waking
 from a long trauma of hate and fear and death
 that's hemmed me from my birth—and glimpse a life
 to be lived in hope—but it's young in me yet, I can't
 get free, or forgive! But teach me how to live
 and forget to hate!
 MIRIAMNE. He would have forgiven.
 MIO. He?
 MIRIAMNE. Your father. [*A pause.*]
 MIO. Yes [*Another pause*]
 You'll think it strange, but I've never remembered that.
 MIRIAMNE. How can I help you?
 MIO. You have
 MIRIAMNE. If I were a little older—if I knew
 the things to say! I can only put out my hands
 and give you back the faith you bring to me
 by being what you are. Because to me you are all hope and beauty and brightness drawn
 across what's black and mean!
 MIO. He'd have forgiven—
 Then there's no more to say—I've groped long enough
 through this everglades of old revenges— here
 the road ends.—Miriamne, Miriamne, the iron I wore so long—it's eaten through
 and fallen from me. Let me have your arms.

They'll say we're children—Well—the world's made up of children.

MIRIAMNE. Yes

MIO. But it's too late for me.

MIRIAMNE. No.

[She goes into his arms, and they kiss for the first time.]

Then we'll meet again?

MIO. Yes.

MIRIAMNE. Where?

MIO. I'll write—

or send Carr to you.

MIRIAMNE. You won't forget?

MIO. Forget?

Whatever streets I walk, you'll walk them, too,

from now on, and whatever roof or stars I have to house me, you shall share my roof

and stars and morning. I shall not forget.

MIRIAMNE. God keep you!

MIO. And keep you And this to remember! if I should die, Miriamne, this half-hour is our eternity. I came here seeking light in darkness, running from the dawn, and stumbled on a morning

[One of the YOUNG MEN IN SERGE strolls in casually from the right, looks up and down without expression, then, seemingly having forgotten something, retraces his steps and goes out. ESDRAS comes in slowly from the left. He has lost his hat, and his face is bleeding from a slight cut on the temple. He stands abjectly near the tenement.]

MIRIAMNE. Father—what is it?

[She goes towards ESDRAS.]

ESDRAS. Let me alone.

[He goes nearer to MIO.]

He wouldn't let me pass.

The street's so icy up along the bridge

I had to crawl on my knees—he kicked me back

three times—and then he held me there—

I swear

what I could do I did! I swear to you I'd save you if I could

MIO. What makes you think

that I need saving?

ESDRAS. Child, save yourself if you can!

He's waiting for you.

MIO. Well, we knew that before.

ESDRAS. He won't wait much longer.

He'll come here—

he told me so. Those damned six months of his—

he wants them all—and you're to die—you'd spread

his guilt—I had to listen to it —

MIO. Wait—

[He walks forward and looks casually to the right, then returns.]

There must be some way up through the house and out across the roof —

ESDRAS. He's watching that. But come in—

and let me look —

MIO. I'll stay here, thanks. Once in and I'm a rat in a deadfall—I'll stay here—

look for me if you don't mind.

ESDRAS. Then watch for me—

I'll be on the roof —

[He goes in hurriedly.]

MIO *[looking up]*. Now all you silent powers

that make the sleet and dark, and never yet

have spoken, give us a sign, let the throw be ours *please call the*

this once, on this longest night, when the winter sets

his foot on the threshold leading up to spring

and enters with remembered cold—let fall

some mercy with the rain. We are two lovers

here in your night, and we wish to live.

MIRIAMNE. Oh, Mio—

if you pray that way, nothing good will come!

You're bitter, Mio.

MIO. How many floors has this building?

MIRIAMNE. Five or six. It's not as high as the bridge.

MIO. No, I thought not. How many pomegranate seeds did you eat, Persephone?

MIRIAMNE. Oh, darling, darling, if you die, don't die alone.

MIO. I'm afraid I'm damned

to hell, and you're not damned at all. Good God,

how long he takes to climb!

MIRIAMNE. The stairs are steep.

[A slight pause.]

MIO. I'll follow him.

MIRIAMNE. He's there—at the window—now

He waves you to go back, not to go in. Mio, see, that path between the rocks—

they're not watching that—they're out at the river—

I can see them there—they can't watch both—

it leads to a street above.

MIO. I'll try it, then.

Kiss me. You'll hear. But if you never hear—

then I'm the king of hell, Persephone, and I'll expect you.

MIRIAMNE Oh, lover, keep safe.

MIO. Good-bye.

[He slips out quickly between the rocks. There is a quick machine gun rat-tat. The violin stops. MIRIAMNE runs toward the path. MIO comes back slowly, a hand pressed under his heart.]

It seems you were mistaken

MIRIAMNE. Oh, God, forgive me!

[She puts an arm around him. He sinks to his knees.]

Where is it, Mio? Let me help you in! Quick, quick,

let me help you!

MIO. I hadn't thought to choose—this—ground—

but it will do. *[He slips down.]*

MIRIAMNE. Oh, God, forgive me!

MIO. Yes?

The king of hell was not forgiven then, Dis is his name, and Hades is his home—and he goes alone—

MIRIAMNE. Why does he bleed so? Mio, if you go

I shall go with you.

MIO. It's better to stay alive.

I wanted to stay alive—because of you—I leave you that—and what he said to me dying:

I love you, and will love you after I die. Tomorrow, I shall still love you, as I've loved

the stars I'll never see, and all the mornings

that might have been yours and mine.

Oh, Miriamne, you taught me this.

MIRIAMNE. If only I'd never seen you then you could live—

MIO. That's blasphemy—Oh, God, there might have been some easier way of it.

You didn't want me to die, did you, Miriamne—?

You didn't send me away—?

MIRIAMNE. Oh, never, never—

MIO. Forgive me—kiss me—I've got blood on your lips—

I'm sorry—it doesn't matter—I'm sorry—

[ESDRAS and GARTH come out.]

MIRIAMNE. Mio—

I'd have gone to die myself—you must hear this, Mio,

I'd have died to help you—you must listen, sweet,

you must hear it—

[She rises.]

I can die, too, see! You! There!

You in the shadows!—You killed him to silence him!

[She walks toward the path.]

But I'm not silenced! All that he knew

I know,

and I'll tell it tonight! Tonight—

tell it and scream it

through all the streets—that Trock's a murderer

and he hired you for this murder!

Your work's not done—

and you won't live long! Do you hear?

You're murderers, and I know who you are!

[The machine guns speak again. She sinks to her knees. GARTH runs to her.]

GARTH. You little fool!

[He tries to lift her.]

MIRIAMNE. Don't touch me!

[She crawls toward MIO.]

Look, Mio! They killed me, too. Oh, you can believe me

now, Mio. You can believe I wouldn't hurt you,

because I'm dying! Why doesn't he answer me?

Oh, now he'll never know!

[She sinks down, her hand over her mouth, choking. GARTH kneels beside her, then rises, shuddering. The HOBOS come out. LUCIA and PINY look out.]

ESDRAS. It lacked only this.

GARTH. Yes.

[ESDRAS bends over MIRIAMNE, then rises slowly.]

Why was the bastard born? Why did he come here?

ESDRAS. Miriamne—Miriamne—yes, and Mio,

one breath shall call you now—forgive us both—

forgive the ancient evil of the earth that brought you here—

GARTH. Why must she be a fool?

ESDRAS. Well, they were wiser than you and I. To die

when you are young and untouched, that's beggary

to a miser of years, but the devils locked in synod

shake and are daunted when men set their lives

at hazard for the heart's love, and lose.

And these,

who were yet children, will weigh more than all

a city's elders when the experiment

is reckoned up in the end. Oh, Miriamne,
 and Mio—Mio, my son—know this where
 you lie,
 this is the glory of earth-born men and
 women,
 not to cringe, never to yield, but stand-
 ing,
 take defeat implacable and defiant,
 die unsubmitting. I wish that I'd died so,
 long ago; before you're old you'll wish
 that you had died as they have On this
 star,
 in this hard star-adventure, knowing not
 what the fires mean to right and left,
 nor whether
 a meaning was intended or presumed,
 man can stand up, and look out blind,
 and say.
 in all these turning lights I find no clue,
 only a masterless night, and in my blood
 no certain answer, yet is my mind my
 own,
 yet is my heart a cry toward something
 dim
 in distance, which is higher than I am
 and makes me emperor of the endless
 dark
 even in seeking! What odds and ends of
 life
 men may live otherwise, let them live,
 and then

go out, as I shall go, and you Our part
 is only to bury them Come, take her up.
 They must not lie here.

[*LUCIA and PINY come near to help.*
ESDRAS and GARTH stoop to carry
MIRIAMNE]

CURTAIN

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THE LATE GEORGE APLEY

(1944)

BY

JOHN P. MARQUAND

AND

GEORGE S. KAUFMAN

CHARACTERS

MARGARET
GEORGE APLEY
CATHERINE APLEY
JOHN APLEY
ELEANOR APLEY
WILSON
AMELIA NEWCOMBE
ROGER NEWCOMBE

HORATIO WILLING
JANE WILLING
AGNES WILLING
HOWARD BOULDER
LYDIA LEYTON
EMILY SOUTHWORTH
JULIAN H. DOLE
HENRY

SCENES

ACT I. George Apley's House in Beacon Street, Boston. Thanksgiving Day, 1912

Scene I.—Before dinner

Scene II.—After dinner

ACT II. A Week Later

ACT III. The Following Morning

EPILOGUE. A Corner of the Berkeley Club, 1924

JOHN P. MARQUAND AND GEORGE S. KAUFMAN

AFTER WRITING about a hundred popular, somewhat extravagant short stories and romantic serials for the "slick-paper" magazines, John P. Marquand in 1937 astonished his readers with an adult, satirical novel, "The Late George Apley," which won him the Pulitzer Prize. Written in the near-essay-like form of a pious biography or memoir of a Boston Brahmin, the novel, surprisingly, was a best-seller, and consequently was eyed with interest by Broadway and Hollywood. But at first no one could see a play in this restrained portrait of a Beacon Hill aristocrat and his gentle family, who are victims of an obsolete etiquette and a stultifying routine of trivial interests. When the inspired suggestion was made that George Kaufman collaborate with the novelist in wringing a play from the frail narrative, Marquand is reported to have said, "I know nothing about playwriting, and I understand Mr. Kaufman knows nothing about Boston. We should get along famously." They obviously did, for the finished play is lively with Kaufman's wisecracking (properly subdued for Beacon Street) and canny sense of the theatrical, while preserving the novel's high good humor, the pleasantly ironical comedy of Back Bay manners, and the full-length portrait (not a caricature) of Apley, who has dignity, sincerity, and kindness as well as ludicrous snobbishness and parochial points of view. The collaborators wisely chose not to dramatize the novel, which is almost plotless, but rather the Boston Tradition as exemplified in Apley's thin-blooded interests and narrow attitudes. The revolt of the children is a happy invention to provide the dramatic framework missing in the novel.

John Phillips Marquand is well qualified to write of Boston, which he likes, although he is amused by the vigorous survival there of puritanical conventions that result in comic stuffiness rather than any notable civic integrity. He is a member of an old New England family with Margaret Fuller and Edward Everett Hale on his ancestral tree, and forebears who were close friends of Whittier, Thoreau, Holmes, and Emerson. He has married into the Sedgwick and the fringe of the Rockefeller families. Although born in Delaware (in 1893), he was educated in Massachusetts and was graduated from Harvard. In the First World War he served as an officer in the Field Artillery, and later traveled widely in Europe and the Far East. During the Second World War he was sent on government missions to Africa and India. His best novels are *The Late George Apley*, *Wickford Point*, *H. M. Pulham, Esq.*, and *So Little Time*.

George Kaufman was born in Pittsburgh in 1889. Soon after leaving high school he became a journalist, finally rising to the enviable position of dramatic critic on the *New York Times*. Since the early 1920's he has been associated with the theatre as playwright, collaborator (he is called the "Play-doctor of Broadway"), and producer—a history of his activities is a history of the brisk, racy, native American comedy of the past quarter of a century. (The more elegant comedies of S. N. Behrman and Philip Barry seem less indigenous.)

Perhaps the glory of American drama will be its comedy, which in some ways fulfills the peculiar genius of America more adequately than does serious drama. Although it may be blasphemous to mention it, there are critics who declare *The Show-Off*, *The Front Page*, *Ah Wilderness!*, *Of Thee I Sing*, and *Animal Kingdom* to be more important than *Mourning Becomes Electra*, *Mary of Scotland*, *Waiting for Lefty*, *Hotel Universe*, and *The Great God Brown*. The comedies mentioned are indisputably American in flavor, satiric method, and tempo; they seek out whatever is ludicrous or fatuous in the American scene and exhibit it with almost ferocious hilarity. From the beginning the American has had a fondness for buffoonery and

exaggeration. One manifestation of the Romantic movement which swept the Western World at the end of the eighteenth century was optimism, but only in America did optimism survive nineteenth-century industrialism and materialism to become a national religion, only in America are skepticism and pessimism considered vaguely immoral. As a result, tragedy, except in its romantic aspects, has never enjoyed a popularity comparable to that of comedy. Nevertheless, there has existed from the day of our first comedy, Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* (1787), an appetite for satire, which since the First World War has increased appreciably. In recent years the vigorous plays of George Kaufman, Moss Hart, Howard Lindsay, Russel Crouse, and Garson Kanin have set the pace for American comedy.

Between 1921 and 1924 Kaufman and Marc Connelly collaborated on seven plays, three of them first-rate comedies which retain their freshness: *Dulcy* (1921), a comedy built around a stupid, well-intentioned mistress of platitude and blunder, is the first sophisticated American comedy; *To the Ladies* (1922), is an American counterpart of Barrie's *What Every Woman Knows* and contains a pleasantly satiric picture of a successful, childlike business man; and *Beggar on Horseback* (1924), probably the best expressionistic comedy ever written, lampoons the Philistine. *The Royal Family* (1927), with Edna Ferber, popularly believed to deal with the Barrymores, is an interesting addition to the long list of plays about theatre folk—*The Critic*, *David Garrick*, *Trelawney of the "Wells,"* *The Great Lover*, *The Play's the Thing*. *June Moon* (1929) with Ring Lardner, is sharp with the vitriolic humor of this excellent story-teller. *Once in a Lifetime* (1930), with Moss Hart, is a rowdy satire directed at the more screaming imbecilities in the florid and chaotic life in Hollywood. *Dinner at Eight* (1932), with Edna Ferber, is a trick tragedy of theatrical brilliance. *Merrily We Roll Along* (1934), with Moss Hart, is an ingenious version of the ironic success story; critics were probably unfair to this serious play, dismissing its novel technique as a stunt (the story is told backwards), but this reverse method succeeds in deepening the irony. *First Lady* (1935), a polished comedy of political intrigue, is sparkling but superficial. *Stage Door* (1936), with Edna Ferber, is an entertaining piece of hokum. In the same year he and Moss Hart wrote the mad comedy *You Can't Take It With You*, which like many another modern play deals with a family of individualists, and which has enjoyed great success in spite of the un-Americanism of its central philosophic idea. *The American Way* (1939), also with Moss Hart, is a spectacular patriotic pageant of recent American history, less successful than Noel Coward's *Cavalcade*. With Moss Hart he also collaborated on *The Man Who Came to Dinner* (1940), a violent mixture of flit-gun humor, satire, caricature, and sentiment—our most celebrated and hilarious comedy of bad manners. *The Land Is Bright* (1941), with Edna Ferber, is a three-generation play full of sound and fury, dealing with the Gilded Age and its robber barons. Perhaps this list should not omit one of Kaufman's infrequent failures—*The Fabulous Invalid* (1938), with Moss Hart, a sentimental biography of a New York playhouse; it is a piece of shameless propaganda which is offensive to no one who loves the living theatre. Kaufman, too, has had his hand in a number of musical comedies—*Animal Crackers*, *Strike up the Band*, *Of Thee I Sing*, *I'd Rather Be Right*, and many others. He has helped rescue the musical comedy from the stickiness of the moonlight-and-roses type, as well as from the vulgar inanities of Ziegfeld, and has helped re-establish the healthier tradition of Gilbert and Sullivan.

In *The Late George Apley* Kaufman is at his best. The satirical portrait of Apley never broadens into mere caricature, the humor is rich and hearty, and there is a minimum of flippant wise-cracking and gags. Moreover, possibly through Marquand's influence, there is no touch of the incongruous sentimentalism which dulls the edge of satire in *You Can't Take It With You* and other comedies. Once, years ago, when reproached for mixing somewhat banal romantic elements with his comedy and asked why he did not write a genuine and consistent satire, Kaufman replied, "Satire is what closes on Saturday night." Well, *The Late George Apley* did not close on Saturday night, and its satire is consistent to its ironic conclusion. It is a notable addition to adult American drama.

THE LATE GEORGE APLEY

ACT ONE

SCENE I. MR. GEORGE APLEY'S living room on Beacon Street Thanksgiving Day, 1912. The curtain rises on a large room which, like many rooms in Boston, is half sumptuously and half carelessly furnished, without any unity of decoration, and yet this very lack of unity gives a comfortable sense of continuity, showing that the place has been occupied for many years by a family in comfortable circumstances.

MARGARET, the Apleys' maid, a grim, austere woman of about seventy, in a meticulously starched uniform, is seen in the bay window engaged in a curious horticultural pursuit. She is holding a dustpan on which is heaped some smoldering tobacco leaves, allowing the smoke from this to curl upward over an English ivy plant which is trained in festoons before the window. She stands conscientiously and grimly, now and then moving the dustpan. She does not turn her head when the front door in the outer hall slams.

MR. GEORGE APLEY is seen through the open door in the hallway standing before a coat rack. He places his silk hat upon the hall table, hangs up his black overcoat, and then bends to unbuckle his galoshes, which he places very neatly beneath the coat. Then he enters the living room briskly. MR. APLEY is in his cutaway. He is a well-built man in his middle fifties, with iron-gray hair a little too long and carelessly brushed. As he stands in the doorway, he surveys the room quickly. He sees MARGARET, squares his shoulders to meet a new emergency.

APLEY [he speaks in the calm, suppressed tone of a man who wishes to face the worst, and can stand it] What is it now, Margaret?

MARGARET. It's the green bugs on the ivy, Mr. Apley. The leaves are crawling with them. You can see for yourself.

APLEY [moves to the window with calm resolution; puts on a pair of glasses and peers]. I don't see why it is that something like this invariably happens on Thanksgiving. Last year there was a blizzard, and the year before

that the mince pies fermented. . . . Let me see, Mrs. Apley bought this ivy in 1890—or was it in 1892? At any rate, it's down in the plant book.

MARGARET. We had some trouble with it about the time of the Spanish war, but never anything like this.

APLEY. Well, we can't do anything about it now, Margaret, just before Thanksgiving dinner. It's just another of those little things, Margaret—little things that interfere with our lives [He thinks]. Emerson has something capital to say about that. [MARGARET, thus warned, takes her dustpan and is trying to escape. APLEY, meanwhile, is searching the bookshelves.] Margaret.

MARGARET. Yes?

APLEY [with the air of a Supreme Court justice handing down a decision]. Where—is Emerson?

MARGARET. The brown book, isn't it?

APLEY. Emerson's Essays, Margaret. You know it very well. It ought to be right here beside Thoreau. . . . Oh, here it is, next to Hawthorne. [Severely.] You've put it next to "The Scarlet Letter," by Hawthorne.

MARGARET. Well, it belongs there with the other brown books, don't it?

APLEY. It certainly does not belong there. [He is paging through it.] Here we are. Listen to this, Margaret. [He reads.] "God reappears with all His parts in every moss and every cobweb. If the good is there, so is the evil, if the affinity, so the repulsion." There you have it. I couldn't have said it better myself.

MARGARET. No, Mr. Apley.

[MARGARET escapes.]

[APLEY affectionately pats his volume of Emerson, and is replacing it in the bookcase as MRS. APLEY enters. CATHERINE APLEY is in her middle years, and still quite lovely.]

CATHERINE. I've just spent a whole hour in the conservatory, with the snapdragons. And I've put some on the dining-room table—a great mound of them, between the pumpkins.

APLEY. Snapdragons and pumpkins? You've never done that before.

CATHERINE. Yes, I know. It just came over me.

APLEY. Sounds rather radical. . . . Where's John? Isn't he here yet?

CATHERINE. He'll be here. You know how slow the trolleys are, from Cambridge.

APLEY. He ought to be here now, with Agnes coming for dinner.

CATHERINE. That reminds me, George. Don't forget Agnes is having her coming-out party a week from tonight

APLEY. Agnes coming out already! John will be a married man before we know it.

CATHERINE. Not too soon, I hope.

APLEY. Oh, not right away, of course. But every one seems to think—

CATHERINE. Nothing's ever been said.

APLEY. Little Agnes! I suppose it's seeing her grow up, right next door. . . . What about Eleanor? Where is she?

CATHERINE. Upstairs changing her dress.

APLEY. Does it seem to you, Catherine, that Eleanor has not been quite her old self, these last few weeks?

CATHERINE. I have noticed something. But a young girl, George—it's to be expected. [*The sound of the outer door slamming.*] There's John now.

[*JOHN, the son of the house, appears in the doorway. A good-looking lad of twenty.*]

JOHN. Hello, everybody!

APLEY. Are you ready for dinner?

JOHN [*as he disappears up the stairs*]. Just going up to wash!

APLEY [*calling after him*]. Can't you wash at Harvard?

CATHERINE. Hurry up, dear. And see what Eleanor is doing. . . . George, get me the Phillips Brooks calendar. Agnes' coming-out party is going to give us a very complicated week. . . . Thank you. . . . Now, tomorrow there's the Symphony. We must go to that—we're sitting in the new seats.

APLEY. Oh, yes. . . . I don't know why we ever changed.

CATHERINE. But you've been waiting for years, dear, till Mrs. Warren died, so we could move forward.

APLEY. I never knew it would put us next to the Hopkines. They're moving too.

CATHERINE. The Bradley Hopkines?

APLEY. Yes. You don't think, Catherine, that if we're sitting next to them, people may think that our tastes verge on the radical?

CATHERINE. Why, George?

APLEY. You know what Bradley Hopkins said about that unfortunate Debussy selection, "Afternoon of a Fawn." [*He lowers his voice*] He said he enjoyed it very much, and

a great many people heard him say it. And if we're sitting next to them—

CATHERINE. I'm sure it'll be all right. [*Returning to the calendar*] Now, Saturday night is dinner at Major Higginsons', and Sunday we'll have to be at King's Chapel. I think, George, we ought to take the automobile. We never seem to use it.

APLEY. I wouldn't do that, Catherine. You know Patrick doesn't drive it well. He's much more used to the horses.

CATHERINE. I really don't see any use having an automobile—

APLEY. Catherine, Patrick has driven the family for forty years. He drove for father. I won't have anything done to hurt his feelings. We'll take the carriage.

CATHERINE. Of course, George.

APLEY [*back to the calendar*]. On Monday afternoon there is a trustees' meeting of the Sailors' Home, and Monday night is the Monday Night Club. Tuesday—oh, yes! The Save Boston Society. It's about allowing an electric sign on the edge of the Common.

CATHERINE. Must you go to that too, George?

APLEY. My dear, it's going to say—Grapenuts

CATHERINE. I suppose we must stop that.

APLEY. Dear me! Tuesday—I completely forgot. The Blue Hill Bird Watchers' Society is meeting.

CATHERINE. Is that more important, George?

APLEY. This particular meeting—I think it is, my dear. There has to be another President of the Bird Watchers—you remember old Dr. Beech died last week. And I have every reason to believe—

[*He lets her guess his secret*]

CATHERINE [*doubtfully*]. Why, George, that's splendid

APLEY. Mind you, I don't say I'm worthy of it. But—I've never missed a Sunday bird walk.

CATHERINE. I know, George.

[*And how well she does know.*]

APLEY. What really tipped the scales in my favor, I think, was last Sunday, when I saw the yellow-throated linnet. I told you about that, didn't I?

CATHERINE. I—think so.

APLEY. A yellow-throated linnet, in November. I think I'm the only living Bostonian who has seen one in November. I wish I could get you to take more interest in birds, Catherine.

CATHERINE. I'll try, George, if you're the president.

APLEY. It would look better from the general point of view.

CATHERINE [*her attention back on the calendar*] Tuesday night is the Tuesday Night Club [*She looks up.*] George?

APLEY What is it, my dear?

CATHERINE. We seem to be doing so many *little* things always—

APLEY. Little things? You don't mean the Tuesday Club?

CATHERINE. Not exactly. It's just everything.

APLEY [*a look at the calendar*] Wednesday is the Boston Waifs' Society. I must go to that—I'm a trustee.

CATHERINE. Ye-es.

APLEY. Then what could I give up, Catherine?

CATHERINE [*hesitantly*]. I don't know. But if you were active in the management of the mills . . . if we were more like other people . . .

APLEY. My dear, that would not excuse us from our obligations. *Some* one has to be a trustee of the Boston Waifs; someone has to look after the Sailors' Home. My grandfather . . . my father . . . These are things that have come down to me, Catherine. Last week alone, Catherine, I attended twelve meetings of different organizations—charitable, civic. Father was on most of them.

CATHERINE [*a hand on his arm*]. I forget how much time you give to others—how little you think of yourself.

APLEY. I like to think that I am paying back something for what I have. I suppose I have been poured into a mold, Catherine, but it is not such a bad mold after all. [*ELEANOR comes down the stairs. A nice-looking girl, unblemished by cosmetics. Shirt waist, low heels.*] Well, here is my little girl. Is she going to give her father a kiss?

ELEANOR [*as she kisses him*]. Of course, Father.

APLEY. But what are you wearing, my dear? You look as though you were going for a walk.

ELEANOR. I am going for a walk.

CATHERINE. A walk, dear?

APLEY. You can't very well go for a walk before dinner, Elly. They're all coming at any minute.

ELEANOR [*sweetly, reasonably*]. I'm not going before dinner, Father. Afterwards, when dinner is over.

APLEY. Then don't you think you might run upstairs and change, dear? They may think you're being a little rude and careless.

ELEANOR. Oh, Father! Do you really mind so much?

CATHERINE. Are you going for a walk *with* someone, dear?

ELEANOR. Yes, I am.

CATHERINE. A young man, perhaps?

ELEANOR. Yes.

CATHERINE. Well, if it's a young man, George—

APLEY. Yes, of course. Er—who is he, Elly?

ELEANOR [*bracing herself*]. His name is—Howard Boulder.

APLEY. Who?

ELEANOR. Howard Boulder. You'll like him, Father.

APLEY [*a mute questioning look at MRS. APLEY, who answers with a blank shake of the head*]. Boulder . . . It certainly isn't Boston. [*In a strained voice*] Where does he come from, dear? [*ELEANOR is silent*]

CATHERINE. You *know* where he comes from, don't you?

ELEANOR. Yes.

APLEY. Well, where?

ELEANOR [*a deep breath*]. New York.

APLEY. New York?

ELEANOR. Now come, Father. Don't be prejudiced.

APLEY [*he puts a brave face on the situation*]. Well, I know some people from New York. Several—people New York is— [*He is floundering.*] it's not Boston, but—er—

CATHERINE. Where did you meet him, dear?

ELEANOR. At the Brattle Hall dance last Saturday. An usher introduced us. I was sitting in the dump.

APLEY. The dump? What under the sun is the dump?

ELEANOR [*with some impatience*]. You know, the place where the girls sit after a dance. And then the ushers bring people up, Father.

APLEY. What is this young man doing in Boston, dear?

ELEANOR. He's giving lectures at Harvard in Emerson Hall. He's very brilliant, Father.

CATHERINE. Lectures? Why didn't you tell us sooner, dear? How nice!

APLEY. What sort of lectures does he give? [*The door bell rings.*]

CATHERINE. Here they come, George.

APLEY [*ignoring the interruption*]. What sort of lectures, Elly?

ELEANOR. American literature. It's one of those fellowships that are paid for out of somebody's will. And he's done so well he's coming back in February.

APLEY. Why, that would be the Jonathyn Smythe Fellowship! That changes everything! Well, well! Catherine, Buzzy Leyton is the chairman of the Jonathyn Smythe Fellowship! Well! No wonder he got to Brattle Hall! [*As Amelia's voice is heard in the hall.*] It's Amelia!

[As AMELIA NEWCOMBE sweeps in aggressively. Her husband, ROGER NEWCOMBE, follows nonchalantly and bored almost to the point of stifling a yawn.]

CATHERINE. Well, Amelia! How good of you to come!

AMELIA. Where else should we go on Thanksgiving, Catherine? My own brother!

APLEY. Amelia, how are you? Roger.

AMELIA. You need a haircut, George.

APLEY. Really, Amelia!

AMELIA [suddenly surveying ELEANOR]. What's that you've got on, Eleanor? It looks terrible!

APLEY [proudly]. Eleanor has a young man calling for her. They're going to take a walk.

AMELIA. What young man? When I was a young girl no one ever called on me on Thanksgiving.

ROGER [ever so gently]. Too late now.

APLEY. He's quite an intelligent young man who gives lectures. The Jonathyn Smythe Fellowship at Harvard, Roger. Buzzy Leyton is the trustee for it.

ROGER. Oh, yes. . . . You know, I've worked out a way of remembering everything that Buzzy Leyton is the trustee for.

APLEY. Is that so? How do you do it?

ROGER. Whatever it is, if you're not the trustee for it, he is.

[As WILSON appears, an elderly butler, bearing sherry and biscuits]

ROGER [continued]. Ah, here's the old Saint Bernard!

AMELIA. Good afternoon, Wilson. Are you having a happy Thanksgiving?

WILSON. Yes, thank you, Mrs. Newcombe.

ROGER. Of course he is. Doesn't he look happy?

AMELIA. Where's John? I don't see John.

APLEY. He'll be down in a moment.

AMELIA. And our talkative Cousin Jane?

APLEY. They're all coming! Horatio, Jane, and Agnes.

ROGER [taking a glass as the tray reaches him]. Thank you, Wilson.

AMELIA. Roger! You promised me—

ROGER. Thanksgiving, my dear.

AMELIA. Thanksgiving or not, Roger—

ROGER. Look at your ancestors on the wall! They have a port complexion.

AMELIA. Our ancestors had high color because they lived— [She breaks off.] George!

APLEY. Yes, Amelia?

AMELIA. The Gilbert Stuart portrait of Great-grandfather has a new crack in it. Right there—across the nose.

APLEY. That crack? Why, that's always been there, Amelia.

AMELIA. It's a new crack, and it ruins the Apley nose.

APLEY. But I remember that crack in the old dining room when I was ten years old.

AMELIA. If Father had left me those portraits, and I think he always intended to—

APLEY. You got the silver tankards with the whistles, Amelia. I got the portraits.

AMELIA. I can only say that if they were hanging in my parlor—

[This is interrupted by the entrance of HORATIO WILLING, a stuffy little man of middle years, with pince-nez attached to his vest by a broad black ribbon.]

WILLING [all exuberance]. Well, well! There is wine in the air! What a glorious brisk day for Thanksgiving! What was it Harriet Prescott Spofford said "Dear the people coming home, all the glad and happy play! Dear the thanks, too, that we give, for all of this Thanksgiving Day!"

ROGER. Once more, please! [JANE, WILLING'S wife, enters. JANE is a subdued woman, and you gather that it may have been WILLING who subdued her.] And how's our Cousin Jane?

JANE. Good afternoon, George. Catherine Amelia, Roger Eleanor.

AMELIA. Sloppy Jane! That's what they used to call her at Miss Hendricks' school. You've forgotten to take your galoshes off again!

[JANE lifts her skirts a few inches. Sure enough there are the galoshes.]

JANE [embarrassed]. Oh, I'm sorry.

[She hurries out.]

CATHERINE. Where's Agnes? Didn't you bring Agnes?

WILLING [calling]. Agnes, dear! Your Cousin Catherine is asking for you.

AGNES. I'm coming, Papa.

[There is a moment's pause, and then AGNES enters. She is a rather pallid girl with a large bow in her hair, and she clutches a small package done up in tissue paper. Her mother, having removed the offending galoshes, follows her into the room.]

AGNES [stiffly making the rounds]. Hello, Cousin Catherine. Hello, Cousin George.

Hello, Cousin Amelia. Hello, Cousin Roger.

CATHERINE. How do you do, Agnes?

APLEY. How are you, my dear?

AMELIA. What are you so pale for? Nothing to be scared about—just the family.

AGNES. I'm—not scared, Cousin Amelia.

AMELIA. Where's John? Agnes is here and not John.

[AGNES blushes a little at this.]

APLEY [calling]. John!

JOHN [*on the staircase*]. Coming, Father. [*He comes into the room.*] I'm sorry. Hello, everybody. Aunt Amelia!

APLEY. A bit late, aren't you, John?

JOHN. I'm sorry, Father.

CATHERINE. Here's your Cousin Agnes, dear. Aren't you going to speak to her?

[*It is obvious, from the polite ripple of expectancy, that everyone has been waiting for this encounter.*]

WILLING [*beaming*]. Well, Agnes?

AGNES. Yes, Papa?

WILLING. Aren't you going to give John his present?

AGNES [*clutching the package*]. Oh, Papa! Not right now.

WILLING. But why not now as well as any time?

JANE. Horatio, if she doesn't want to give it to him now—

WILLING. Of course she wants to give it to him now. Why shouldn't she?

AGNES [*embarrassed*]. It— isn't anything. Just—just something I made for you.

CATHERINE. Something you made? How sweet!

AGNES. It's—a necktie.

WILLING. A knitted necktie. She's been knitting it for two weeks. Give it to him, Agnes.

AGNES. It isn't as good as it ought to be.

AMELIA. Well, give it to him anyhow.

[*AGNES thrusts the package at him.*]

JOHN. Well, thanks, Agnes. Thanks very much.

[*He starts to put the package into his pocket*]

CATHERINE. John, aren't you going to open it? Everybody wants to see.

APLEY. Yes, John. Open it. When a pretty girl gives you a present—

ELEANOR. He's blushing.

JOHN [*with a savage look at ELEANOR slowly opens the package. The necktie within is obviously homemade—an atrocity with broad stripes*]. Well, thanks. It was nice of you to make it, Agnes. Thanks.

CATHERINE. John, isn't it beautiful? Why don't you put it on right now?

WILLING. Oh, he doesn't have to do that, Catherine.

AGNES [*hoping he won't*]. No. I'm going to make another one, with a lot more stripes.

[*There is an awkward pause. Then JOHN silently stuffs the package into his pocket and backs slowly away from AGNES.*]

WILLING [*changing the subject*]. Oh, I knew I had something to tell you. This afternoon, on Park Street, just outside the Union Club, I ran into Walter Noble. He told me about the Bird Watchers, George.

is going to be the next President of the Bird Watchers.

[*There is a little chorus of congratulations.*]

APLEY. No, no, no! It's not definite at all yet.

WILLING. He implied it very strongly.

APLEY. It isn't decided yet—you really mustn't say anything about it. It's rather interesting, though, how it came about.

ROGER. Do tell us.

APLEY. At least, it helped a great deal. It was in the Lawrence's pasture, last Sunday—just where the path forks toward the brook. Not the big brook, the little brook.

ROGER [*recalling this sacred spot*]. The little brook.

WILLING [*reprovingly*]. I'd like to hear about it, George.

APLEY. Anyhow, I don't know what first caught my attention. There was no sound. It was merely a flash of color in the junipers—a bright flash of yellow, but I had time to raise my glasses, and there on the lower limb of that big shag-bark hickory by the stone wall—

CATHERINE [*she has received word of dinner from WILSON, and now tries gently to interrupt*]. George.

APLEY. Sitting there quietly, just as though it were mid-summer—

CATHERINE [*a little louder*]. George.

APLEY. Not making a sound, mind you—what, my dear?

CATHERINE. Dinner is ready.

APLEY. Oh! . . . Well—we'll go in . . . Amelia.

ROGER [*a man desperate*]. But WHAT was sitting there? You can't leave us dangling?

APLEY. A yellow-throated linnet!

WILLING. No!

APLEY. Yes!

ROGER [*he simply can't believe it*]. No!

APLEY. Yes!

AMELIA [*as she goes into the dining room*]. I don't understand all this nonsense about birds. A bird is all right in its place, but why pry into its private life? [*She is gone.*]

APLEY [*furiously calling after her*]. Did you ever read Emerson on birds? [*Polite again.*] Jane . . . Eleanor . . . My dear . . . and John, suppose you give Agnes your arm. [*JOHN somewhat awkwardly prepares to escort AGNES, under the admiring eyes of the several relatives. As the procession starts*] It was right there on the lower limb, and as I looked, it burst into song. Like this.

[*He is rendering the Apley version of a yellow-throated linnet as—*]

SCENE 2.—*The return of the family after dinner. The women come in first. Slowly, heavily, all giving evidence of that unwelcome repletion which so often follows a Thanksgiving dinner. AMELIA, JANE, and then CATHERINE. They head for three chairs at one side of the room and drop into them. CATHERINE produces three fans and passes them around. For a moment they fan themselves.*

CATHERINE. The men will be coming in to smoke. I wish they didn't smoke those cigars. [*She addresses JANE.*] Horatio never smokes, does he?

JANE [*shakes her head*]. Horatio never does anything. [*The men now enter, HORATIO, ROGER with a brandy, APLEY.*] Isn't that your second brandy, Roger?

ROGER. Third.

[*ROGER sits, opens two buttons of his waistcoat. Runs a hand over his stomach, then opens the remaining buttons, much to WILLING'S disapproval. APLEY, meanwhile, is passing the inevitable cigars.*]

APLEY. Roger?

ROGER [*taking it*]. It's bigger than the dinner.

[*The men light up, puff their cigars.*]

ROGER. Remember the first time you and I ever tried a cigar, George? We couldn't have been more than seven—we stole them out of your father's desk.

APLEY [*nods*]. Father saw us take them and made us smoke them to the end.

ROGER. I don't think we smoked again until we finished rowing on the Harvard crew.

APLEY. Yes, at New London after the race. We've had some great times together, Roger.

AMELIA. Roger was always a bad influence on you, George.

ROGER. I wish I still were.

[*JOHN and AGNES now enter. APLEY motions them to a small divan*]

APLEY. Why don't you children sit there? . . . Don't be so shy, John [*JOHN moves half an inch toward AGNES.*] John is going to get a gold watch if he doesn't smoke before he's twenty-one. We have a little agreement.

WILLING. What a beautiful relationship you and John have always had. I can't imagine anything ever coming between you.

[*ELEANOR comes in. APLEY motions her to the proper seat beside himself*]

APLEY, Elly, dear.

[*He takes her hand. There is a moment of complete silence.*]

JANE [*as though to herself*]. We've sat in these same seats for eighteen Thanksgivings.

WILLING. Why, what a peculiar thing to say, Jane! Why shouldn't we?

APLEY. What would Thanksgiving be without a family?

WILLING. It's very good of you, George, to include Jane and me. After all, Jane is only your third cousin.

APLEY. It is possible to be very fond of a cousin.

[*WILLING beams. Then he turns to his wife*]

WILLING [*with a meaning look*]. Jane, dear.

JANE. Thank you, Cousin George.

APLEY. And your little Agnes is almost like our own daughter.

AGNES [*needing no prodding*]. Thank you, Cousin George.

CATHERINE. Are you ready for your coming-out party, Agnes?

AGNES. I—hope so, Cousin Catherine.

APLEY. First Eleanor and now Agnes. Two big grown-up girls. Everyone is flying from the nest—eh, Horatio?

WILLING [*ever in agreement*]. Flying from the nest.

CATHERINE. Is Agnes' dress finished yet, Jane? [*JANE is apparently absorbed*]

Jane

JANE [*coming to*]. What was that? Excuse me, Catherine.

CATHERINE. Is Agnes' dress finished? For the party?

JANE. Oh, yes. Almost.

AMELIA. That little woman cuts dresses very low, Jane. You must be sure it isn't too low.

JANE. Yes, I will.

CATHERINE. It can always be filled in with tulle.

ROGER [*into his brandy*]. H'm? What can be filled in?

AMELIA. Never mind, Roger.

ELEANOR. Thank goodness my party's over. I don't know anything more scaley than coming out.

CATHERINE. Scaley? Where did you hear that word, dear?

ELEANOR. I don't know. I just—heard it.

CATHERINE. Did you ever hear the word scaley, George?

APLEY. No, I never did.

ELEANOR. I just happened to hear it. [*Quickly, changing the subject.*] Are you excited about coming out, Agnes?

AGNES. Oh, yes. I think coming out must be wonderful, except I'm a little bit afraid I'll be afraid.

ELEANOR. There's nothing to be afraid of. You just see the same old faces. No Yale boys, no Princeton boys. Just Harvard boys.

APLEY. And what is the matter with Harvard boys?

ELEANOR. Nothing, Father, they just go to Harvard. And they've all got to dance with you whether they want to or not, because it's your party.

AGNES. Oh, dear.

CATHERINE. Eleanor, you mustn't frighten your cousin.

ELEANOR. It's just that I think coming-out parties are an outmoded folk custom. It's the old idea of introducing the virgin to the tribes.

CATHERINE. Really, Eleanor!

APLEY. Now, Elly, dear, there are some things that we simply don't mention.

ELEANOR. Why shouldn't we mention them?

APLEY. Well, dear! Savage tribes!

ELEANOR. Really, Father, if things exist I don't see why we shouldn't face them.

APLEY. Because we do not face virginity in the drawing room after a Thanksgiving dinner.

ELEANOR [*hotly*]. Well, I think—

APLEY [*sharply*]. Eleanor!

ELEANOR [*getting control of herself*]. I'm sorry, Father— Would you mind excusing me? I think I'll get my coat.

[*She runs up the stairs. There is an embarrassed pause*]

APLEY. John, why don't you take Agnes out to the conservatory and show her the rubber tree?

JOHN. She saw it last week.

APLEY [*firmly*]. It's grown since then.

JOHN [*reluctantly*]. Well— [*turning to AGNES*].—do you want to see the rubber tree?

AGNES. I'd love to, John.

JOHN [*none too graciously*]. Come on, then.

[*And out they go. The elders are now alone.*]

AMELIA [*bluntly*]. How old is Eleanor?

CATHERINE. She's nineteen.

ROGER. That's about the right time.

[*They all turn and look at him.*]

AMELIA. That will be about enough from you this afternoon, Roger.

WILLING. I must say she's getting some peculiar ideas.

APLEY. The girl is just young. We were all young [*There is a snort from AMELIA*]. Except Amelia . . . But now that the children are gone, there is a little family matter that I might take up. It's about Cousin Hattie.

WILLING. Cousin Hattie?

AMELIA. Cousin Hattie is dead. She's been dead for a month.

APLEY. That's just the point. As long as she was alive, she gave us very little trouble.

A check now and then, and I made it my business to call on her once a year, although it meant driving almost out to Dorchester.

AMELIA. What else have you got to do besides drive out to Dorchester?

APLEY. I did not mind the drive, Amelia. But the Henry Apleys are a very distant branch of the family—they are barely Apleys at all.

CATHERINE. Do you really think you should go into this, George? I'm not sure you did the right thing.

APLEY. I am convinced that I did, Catherine.

AMELIA. What's all this about?

APLEY. It's about Cousin Hattie's burial.

ROGER. Good God! Haven't they buried her yet?

APLEY. They buried her at Mt. Auburn's, and to that I have no general objection. The family plot at Mt. Auburn's is completely democratic—any Apley connection, no matter how remote, is welcome to rest there if he chooses. Even you, Horatio.

WILLING [*delighted*]. By Jove! Thank you, George.

[*APLEY bows an acknowledgment*]

ROGER. You're all fixed now, Horatio!

APLEY. The question, however, is one of Cousin Hattie's location on the lot. I always try to be present at every family interment, but in the case of Cousin Hattie I was unavoidably absent.

ROGER. Well, so long as Cousin Hattie was there—

APLEY. Please, Roger . . . Last week, when Catherine and I were motoring to Concord, we stopped for a moment at Mt. Auburn. I was particularly anxious to see how the arborvitae border was doing back of Father's stone. To my astonishment, suddenly I saw a new headstone of pink granite with a recumbent figure upon it. Right in *our* part of the lot, there was Cousin Hattie, large as life.

AMELIA. There's nothing you can do about it now. She's *there*.

APLEY. On the contrary, I have written Henry Apley a letter explaining that he must move his mother somewhere else—say, down to the bottom of the slope.

WILLING. I think that George is right. It was very pushing of the Henry Apleys, putting their mother right there where George might want to go.

APLEY. That is hardly the point, Horatio.

WILLING. The only thing is, people will take sides. It will create unwelcome talk.

ROGER. It won't create any talk at all. Who gives a damn where the Apleys are buried?

APLEY [*bristling*]. Don't think that I en-

joy this. I find it very unpleasant and painful, but—

[*JOHN suddenly reappears, and a few steps behind him is AGNES. They both seem to be under a strain. All eyes go to them as they enter.*]

CATHERINE. Why, children! Back so soon?

AGNES. We—saw all the flowers.

APLEY. Obviously you haven't been very entertaining, John.

JOHN. We just thought we'd come back.

CATHERINE [*easing the situation*]. Why don't you play something for us on the piano, my dear? Have you learned any new pieces?

AGNES. Oh, no! I'd rather not.

WILLING. Of course, Agnes . . . She has learned a new piece.

AGNES. But not now, Papa.

APLEY. We would all like to hear it very much, Agnes.

AGNES [*looks around at each person*]. Well . . .

CATHERINE. Open the piano for Agnes, John . . . What kind of piece is it, my dear?

AGNES. It's—it's a waltz

APLEY [*as the girl settles herself*]. I am very fond of waltzes. And so is John. Aren't you, John?

JOHN. Yes.

AGNES. It's a new one. It's from "The Quaker Girl" and it's called "Come to the Ball."

[*Hesitantly at the beginning, and with increasing confidence, she plays and sings a verse and chorus of "Come to the Ball." There is a little gurgle of appreciation as she finishes the chorus, and AGNES launches into a second chorus. This is perhaps taken up by a struggling voice or two—APLEY, followed by HORATIO.*]

[*The second chorus has barely got under way, however, when the door bell rings. ELEANOR goes quickly flying down the stairs, her hat and coat on. We hear faint voices at the door, and then ELEANOR appears somewhat hesitantly in the doorway. The song dies down.*]

ELEANOR. It's—Mr Boulder.

APLEY. Well, ask him to come in, Eleanor.

CATHERINE. Of course, Eleanor.

[*ELEANOR beckons to the unseen guest. He comes in, a rather carelessly dressed young man, in coat and trousers that don't match. He is not in the least embarrassed.*]

APLEY. Well, well, how do you do, Mr. Boulder? Eleanor's been telling us about you. This is Mrs. Apley, and this is Mr. Boulder, everyone. [*A chorus of greetings.*] Won't you stay for a minute?

BOULDER. Thank you, Mr. Apley.

APLEY. Just a family party. Will you have a cigar?

BOULDER. No, thanks, but if you have a cigarette . . .

APLEY. I'm sorry. I've never gone so far as cigarettes

BOULDER [*bringing out his own*]. That's all right—if you don't mind?

APLEY. Not at all. [*BOULDER lights up. Every eye, of course, is on him, but he is seemingly quite unaware of it.*] Mr Boulder is giving the Jonathyn Smythe lectures at Emerson Hall. That's quite an achievement at your age, Mr Boulder.

BOULDER. I'm probably a year or two older than I look. Besides I'm pretty used to it.

ELEANOR. He's been lecturing ever since he got his Ph D.

APLEY. Indeed? And where was that, Mr. Boulder?

BOULDER. At Yale.

APLEY [*with approval*]. Yale? . . . What do you lecture on, Mr. Boulder?

BOULDER. It's a course on American literature. Particularly the Concord group.

APLEY [*with approval*]. The Concord group? [*To the room.*] That would be all the great figures Emerson, Thoreau, Alcott

BOULDER [*a smile*]. You should hear me read "Little Women."

APLEY [*won over*]. You must come to dinner some time, Mr. Boulder, so we can have a long talk about them. As a young man my father once met Thoreau. Emerson once came to breakfast with Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes.

AMELIA [*clarifying the whole thing for Boulder*]. That was in our grandfather's house on Louisburg Square.

BOULDER. I see.

APLEY. You make me anxious to hear your lecture, Mr. Boulder. What is it called?

BOULDER. The Concord Myth.

APLEY [*slowly*]. The Concord Myth?

[*ROGER clears his throat, loudly, as though to say, "Well, here we go."*]

APLEY [*slowly*]. I can't very well picture Emerson as being a myth

BOULDER. Oh, Emerson's all right as far as he goes, sir. But there was a good deal of scaley writing up there in Concord.

[*The APLEYS exchange looks—they have recognized the word. ELEANOR, of course, also realizes what has happened.*]

ELEANOR. Perhaps we'd better be starting. If we're going to walk all the way to Cambridge . . .

AMELIA. Walk to Cambridge? What on earth for?

ELEANOR. Just for the walk. We're going to have tea at a friend of Howard's—Mr. Boulder's.

APLEY. You didn't tell us about that, dear. What friend?

ELEANOR. It's a Mr. Frankfurter. Mr. Felix Frankfurter.

APLEY. Frankfurter?

ELEANOR. He teaches at the Harvard Law School.

APLEY [*reluctantly*]. Oh! Well, if he's on the law school faculty . . .

CATHERINE [*smoothing it over*]. Of course, George.

APLEY. Of course . . . Frankfurter . . . I must say, though, Mr. Boulder, that I don't quite understand your attitude on Emerson. I can't recall that he ever wrote anything "scaley," as you put it

BOULDER. Well, take some of his poetry. "Busy, dozing, humble bee." Or "The mountain and the squirrel had a quarrel" [*He burlesques it a little as he reads it.*] If Emerson hadn't written that, you know what you'd say. That's the point I make in my lecture.

APLEY [*chilly*]. I can't imagine that the hall is very crowded

ELEANOR. Oh, but it is, Father. They're asking him to come back in February. Nobody else has ever been asked twice.

APLEY. I see. And what are you going to lecture on in February, Mr. Boulder?

BOULDER. "The Dead Hand of Emerson on American Creative Thought" . . . Well, it's been awfully nice to meet Eleanor's family, sir, and don't forget about dinner. Better make it some time when I come back in February. Good-bye. Good-bye, Mrs. Apley.

[*He bows to the rest of the company.*]

[*With another "Good-bye" from ELEANOR they are gone. The sound of the door closing.*]

ROGER. That was quite a breezy boy.

APLEY. I don't understand it. What can be the matter with the Harvard Corporation to allow anyone, in Emerson Hall—mind you, in Emerson Hall—

[*He stops, appealing to the group in silence.*]

WILLING. It's shocking.

ROGER. What do you care? You're not a Harvard professor.

APLEY. I am a Harvard man. Emerson and I were both Harvard men. [*Thoughtfully*] I wonder if Buzzy Leyton ever heard of these lectures.

WILLING. I'm sure he never did. He couldn't have.

APLEY. He would not tolerate such nonsense for a minute.

CATHERINE [*after a pause*]. Agnes, do go back and play some more. [*To APLEY.*] Wouldn't you like Agnes to play some more?

APLEY. What? Oh, yes . . . Yes, of course.

JOHN [*unable to stand it any longer*]. I'm afraid I've got to go.

APLEY. What?

JOHN. I'm sorry, but—I've some studying to catch up on, and—

CATHERINE. But surely, John, there's no reason to be in such a hurry. You can wait and hear Agnes play.

JOHN. I did hear her play. I mean—I wish I could—I'd love to really, but—I'm pretty late already.

APLEY. Late for what?

JOHN. Well, there's a great deal of reading, and—a French examination.

CATHERINE. You're being very thoughtless, dear, to Agnes, to everyone.

ROGER. Oh, let the boy go.

JOHN. I'm sorry, Mother, please excuse me. Aunt Amelia . . . Cousin Jane . . . Agnes. You'll excuse me, won't you?

[*He goes up the stairs.*]

APLEY. I don't understand the children today.

CATHERINE [*weakly*]. I know that he has studies to do. [*There is a pause.*]

WILLING [*stiffly*]. Well, as long as her cousins can't stay to entertain her, I think we may as well go too, don't you, Agnes?

AGNES [*who sits stricken at the piano*]. Yes.

APLEY. Oh, come now, really, Horatio.

WILLING. Come, Agnes. Come, Jane. . . . After Agnes knitted that necktie, too.

[*They go out into the hall, followed by the protesting APLEY.*]

APLEY. It isn't like John. He never could have intended to be rude. I can't understand it.

AMELIA [*GEORGE is now gone*]. George can't even manage his own children. I should have been the boy. Father always said so.

ROGER. Oh, come now, Amelia. Don't always pick on George.

AMELIA. I'm not blaming you, Catherine. I feel very sorry for you.

CATHERINE [*flaring up*]. I don't feel sorry for myself, Amelia. I'm perfectly satisfied. [*GEORGE returns to the room.*]

AMELIA. We'll be going too, George.

APLEY. You're not leaving so early, Amelia?

AMELIA. What's there to stay for if everybody's gone? I did think we might have at least one Thanksgiving without a family quarrel. Good-bye, Catherine. Are you coming, Roger?

ROGER [*a hand on APLEY'S arm*]. The Pilgrims had the Indians, George. We have Amelia. [*He goes.*]

CATHERINE [*looking after them*]. Amelia's manners are getting worse all the time.

APLEY. You know Amelia, Catherine.

CATHERINE. Indeed I do.

APLEY [*sighs*]. I was looking forward to a happy family party . . . John! [*As he sees John attempting to sneak by the doorway.*] Come in here! [*JOHN does so*] John, I can't believe, I won't believe, that you intended what you did just now. I have always been so proud of you, John. I don't think you understand how much you have hurt everyone's feelings. It isn't like you, John. Now come, tell your mother and me—what's the matter?

CATHERINE. Aren't you feeling well, dear?

APLEY. Have you got yourself in some sort of scrape at college?

JOHN [*he has pulled an envelope from his pocket and is twisting it*]. No. Of course not.

APLEY. Then what is it?

JOHN [*in his agitation tossing the crumpled envelope onto a table*]. I don't see why I should stand here and be questioned! If Eleanor can go out, why can't I? Why can't I lead my own life, like everybody else!

[*He bolts out the door.*]

APLEY [*calling*]. John!

[*But there is only the door slam*]

CATHERINE. Don't be too hard on him, George. When children are growing up—when we were his age—

APLEY. When we were his age we knew how to behave.

CATHERINE. I'm not so sure, George.

APLEY [*sniffing at the air*]. Catherine, are you using a violet perfume?

CATHERINE. Certainly not. What a question!

APLEY. I smell violet perfume. Cheap violet perfume. [*CATHERINE also sniffs, then looks at APLEY. She, too, has smell it. APLEY, sniffing again, goes slowly to the envelope that JOHN has crumpled and thrown away.*] It's this thing. It reeks of violets.

CATHERINE. What is it?

APLEY. It's an envelope. [*He smooths it out a little.*] Addressed to John. Addressed to John in a woman's handwriting. And it smells of violets

CATHERINE. A woman's handwriting?

APLEY. This explains his whole behavior. [*Giving the envelope a closer look.*] Oh, my God!

CATHERINE. George, what is it?

APLEY. It's postmarked—Worcester.

CATHERINE. Worcester?

APLEY [*as the envelope slips from his hand*]. The girl—is a foreigner, Catherine.

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE.—*It is about four-thirty in the afternoon, a week after the Thanksgiving dinner.*

CATHERINE APLEY is entertaining one of those little groups of her contemporaries who meet in Boston at regular intervals. Her guests are AMELIA, JANE, and two others, LYDIA LEYTON and EMILY SOUTHWORTH. Voluminous petit point and knitting bags show that the afternoon has been spent in a useful pursuit. But now, sewing forgotten, the ladies are gathered cozily about a little tea table where CATHERINE presides before a heavy silver tea service.

AMELIA. So there we were, living in the South End in a beautiful bow-front house. Tim had just come up with the victoria to take George and me to Miss Hendricks' primary school.

JANE. Oh, I remember. We used to sing "Fly Little Bird, Fly Round the Ring"

AMELIA. Well, George and I were on the front stoop, and just then Father came down. He happened to look at the brownstone steps across the square, and he gave an exclamation. It surprised me, because Father was usually very careful with his language.

LYDIA. What did he say?

AMELIA. He said, "Thunderation!" And then he said, "There is a man in his shirt-sleeves on those steps." And the very next day he sold the house and we moved to Beacon Street.

CATHERINE. Those South End houses had the most beautiful woodwork. You can see the dark walnut doors if you go there now.

LYDIA. It must have been lovely there before the Irish moved in.

CATHERINE. Lydia! The servants.

LYDIA. I'm so sorry.

EMILY. I wish I'd lived here in those days. Of course by the time I came to Boston it was all so different.

LYDIA. I keep forgetting you're not really a Bostonian, Emily. I always think of you as one of us.

EMILY. I suppose it's because I love Boston so.

CATHERINE. What's that queer little Western place you came from, Emily?

EMILY. Detroit.

CATHERINE. Oh, yes. Our automobile came from there.

LYDIA. Oswald and I were thinking of going to Yellowstone Park last summer, but we found it easier to go to Europe. In London we stayed at Garland's Hotel, of course, and the very first day we must have run into at least six Boston people that were staying there. We had a wonderful time—it was just as though we hadn't left Boston at all.

CATHERINE. It's a comfort to know the

right place to stop [*MARGARET comes in with fresh tea*] Oh, thank you, Margaret.

AMELIA How are your teeth, Margaret?

MARGARET. They're better, thank you, Mrs Newcombe.

CATHERINE George had her go to his dentist. It doesn't drop any more, does it, Margaret?

MARGARET [*pushing her plate up with an almost imperceptible movement*]. No, ma'am. [*She goes.*]

EMILY. Who is George's dentist?

CATHERINE. George's father's dentist on Bay State Road

AMELIA I gave him up years ago. He's so old he can't see cavities.

CATHERINE. But he's very good if you find your own cavities and point them out to him . . . Don't you want some fresh tea?

EMILY. Thank you, Catherine.

LYDIA. I really ought to be flying. It's late.

CATHERINE. Oh, don't go yet, Lydia.

JANE What number meeting is this?

CATHERINE What number, dear?

JANE. I mean how many times have we all met at this embroidery group?

AMELIA What else would you be doing if we weren't here?

JANE Why, I don't know.

EMILY I should think you'd be awfully busy today, with Agnes coming out tonight. Has she a nice party dress?

JANE Oh, yes I think so

AMELIA [*flatly*] It's going to be too low in the bosom

JANE I have some tulle

CATHERINE. Why don't you send her over before dinner, Jane, when she has her dress on? George and I might have some ideas.

JANE. Very well, Catherine.

LYDIA. I suppose John has asked Agnes for the supper dance tonight

JANE. John? Yes, he has.

CATHERINE Do you remember how George used to fill out your dance program, Jane?

JANE. Yes, that was how I met Horatio. George wrote him in

CATHERINE. With this man cutting in, I don't see how you can ever decide whom you like best. George and I danced and danced

EMILY. And then were you engaged right away?

CATHERINE. Oh, no. It was—quite a while after that.

AMELIA. George was sent abroad for a year first. To forget.

JANE. To forget what?

AMELIA Never mind, Jane.

JANE. I remember he went abroad, but I didn't know it was anything like that.

AMELIA. It wasn't. It doesn't matter now.

CATHERINE. It's all right, Amelia. I don't know two people in Boston who are happier than George and I.

EMILY. When did you get engaged? When he came back?

CATHERINE [*tight-lipped*]. Yes.

EMILY. Right away?

CATHERINE. Yes.

AMELIA. They were sitting in the parlor one night and her father came in. He said, "When is the wedding going to be?"

CATHERINE [*warningly*] I can remember about you and Roger, too, Amelia

AMELIA With Roger things went so far I told him he *had* to speak to Father

JANE [*taking in the circle*] Did any of your husbands—ever do anything—romantic?

EMILY. Romantic?

LYDIA Husbands don't do romantic things. They're not supposed to.

CATHERINE. George has always been thoughtful and kind. And a wonderful companion.

JANE. But wasn't he ever—you know what I mean. Even on your honeymoon?

CATHERINE. We had a perfect honeymoon. We went to Rye Beach—the Farragut House. We rode every day, and in the evening we read Emerson.

LYDIA I think Boston men make the best husbands, don't you? I mean, when you consider everything.

AMELIA Boston men are emotionally dependable—they're trained that way. But once in a while something very strange does happen.

EMILY. How do you mean?

AMELIA. Do you remember Sonny Walker?

LYDIA. Oh, yes.

EMILY. What about him?

AMELIA. He used to lead every cotillion, but now his name is never mentioned.

EMILY. But why?

CATHERINE. He shot a squirrel.

EMILY. What?

CATHERINE. A tame squirrel. It used to come to his window for crumbs, and one day something just happened to him and he shot it.

LYDIA. He had to resign from the Bird Watchers

CATHERINE. And the Berkeley Club, too. It was never straightened out. He just left Boston and was never heard of again.

EMILY. My!

CATHERINE [*slowly*]. It's funny, isn't it?

LYDIA What?

CATHERINE. Boston. I mean when you

come to think about it. [*She still speaks slowly, a little surprised at her own heresy.*] Growing up in it, the way we did, we just didn't think about it at all. I know I didn't.

LYDIA. What are you talking about?

AMELIA. I never heard you say a thing like that before in your life, Catherine. What's there to think about?

CATHERINE. I don't know. [*She is honestly puzzled at her own attitude.*] Just what we've been talking about, I suppose—Sonny Walker.

JANE. I know what Catherine means.

LYDIA. Well, I don't.

AMELIA. I do, and it's nonsense. There are certain facts in Boston, but there's nothing to think about.

CATHERINE [*thoughtfully*]. I'm probably wrong. It's the children, I suppose. Realizing that they're growing up, and that they're at a point where . . . [*She stops*]

AMELIA. Children don't know what they're doing, and they have to be told. It's very simple—you just tell them.

CATHERINE. You haven't any children, Amelia.

JANE [*as the outer door is heard*]. Here's George.

EMILY. Already? What time is it?

CATHERINE [*pulling herself together*]. Is that you, dear?

[*GEORGE APLEY appears in the doorway*]

APLEY. Oh! Good afternoon, everybody!

[*There are greetings from the various ladies.*]

CATHERINE. A cup of tea, dear?

APLEY. No, thank you. It's a little late for tea.

AMELIA. George always puts his guests at ease.

LYDIA. George is right. We really must be flying.

APLEY. No, no. I didn't mean that.

EMILY. Remember, everybody! My house next week.

CATHERINE. I wish you wouldn't all go right away.

LYDIA. Oh, but we must. Good-bye, George.

APLEY. Good-bye, Lydia, Emily.

[*LYDIA and EMILY have gone out, followed by CATHERINE, leaving only APLEY and AMELIA.*]

APLEY. Aren't you going, Amelia?

AMELIA. George, do you know that at ten o'clock last night Eleanor and that young Boulder were seen standing on Commonwealth Avenue, laughing at William Lloyd Garrison's statue?

APLEY. Oh, never mind about Eleanor and Boulder, Amelia!

AMELIA [*rising with decision*]. I'm going up to the attic.

APLEY. What for?

AMELIA [*belligerently*]. I want Mother's old cuckoo clock.

[*And she marches herself up the stairs.*]

APLEY [*calling after*]. That's not fair, Amelia. You've already taken all the brass fingerbowls! [*To CATHERINE, who has returned to the room.*] I ought to go with her.

CATHERINE. We're never going to use it, George.

APLEY. That's not the point. Amelia's whole attitude— [*He breaks off*] Oh, the committee hasn't been here?

CATHERINE. Committee?

APLEY. The committee from the Bird Watchers. They're voting this afternoon. The formal notification.

CATHERINE. They haven't come yet, George

APLEY [*his watch*]. It's after five . . . Oh, good evening, Wilson.

[*As the latter enters to clear away the tea things.*]

WILSON. Good evening, sir.

APLEY [*his attention on a letter that he has picked up from the desk*]. I'll wear the pearl studs this evening, Wilson, not the moonstones

CATHERINE. The moonstones look better, George.

APLEY. Not where young girls are gathered. The pearl studs, Wilson

WILSON. Yes, sir.

[*He goes away with the tea things.*]

APLEY. How long have we had Wilson, Catherine?

CATHERINE. Eighteen years, George.

APLEY. Eighteen years. He is due for a raise. [*Letter in hand*] Here is a letter from Henry Apley, Catherine. Cousin Hattie has been moved.

CATHERINE. I hope you didn't hurt his feelings.

APLEY. He has taken her out of Mt. Auburn entirely. He need hardly have done that "In view of your astonishing attitude"—I don't think my attitude was astonishing—"it is my present plan to have my mother buried at sea. I trust you have no prior rights in the ocean." That seems an unnecessary remark.

CATHERINE [*takes the letter from his hand and puts it down before she speaks*]. George, I wish you'd think about the children. Somehow I wish you hadn't gone quite so far as to send Horatio to Worcester. Do you think he was quite the person?

APLEY. Please, my dear. He's simply making some casual inquiries. He has a classmate in the Worcester Antiquarian Society.

CATHERINE. But, so far as we know,

John and this girl may not even be—really serious

APLEY. My dear, I think I know the signs of infatuation when I see them. I've been out to Harvard and asked some questions. [*He leans forward.*] I find he has overdrawn his account at the Cambridge Trust Company, and now he is beginning to sell his clothes.

CATHERINE. His clothes? Oh, George!

APLEY. To a second hand dealer named Max Keezer I saw this myself John's new blue serge is hanging in Mr. Keezer's window.

CATHERINE. His best suit?

APLEY. Mr. Keezer purchased it for a dollar ninety-seven cents.

CATHERINE. Why, what does John need a dollar ninety-seven cents for?

APLEY. To buy flowers, Catherine. I stopped in at the florist and inquired.

CATHERINE. I didn't know it had gone so far.

APLEY. Not so far that it can't be managed, my dear . . . Has Eleanor come in yet?

CATHERINE. Not yet. Now please don't be upset, George. I told her she could go to tea with Mr. Boulder.

APLEY. Why under the sun should that upset me dear? Mr. Boulder is leaving for New York tomorrow.

CATHERINE [*watching him*]. But he's coming back in February.

APLEY. Oh, yes, yes.

CATHERINE. George, I think we may as well face it I think that he and Eleanor are interested in each other.

APLEY [*unruffled*]. These things will all adjust themselves, given time, Catherine. You remember what Emerson said—[*The voice of ELEANOR in the hall pitched a little high.* "Hello, is anyone at home?"] There she is.

CATHERINE. Here we are, Eleanor.

[*There is a giggle from the hallway, followed by a male voice not quite intelligible.*]

APLEY. He's with her. [*ELEANOR'S voice in the hall.* "Come in, Howard. They won't bite you."] That doesn't sound like Eleanor.

[*ELEANOR appears in the doorway. It is true that she is not quite herself. BOULDER enters behind her.*]

ELEANOR. Hello, you two sweet old things.

APLEY. Why, Eleanor!

ELEANOR [*waving a playful finger at them*]. I know what you've been doing, you two sweet old things. You've been talking about me! And if you weren't talking about me you were talking about John, weren't you?

APLEY [*ignoring her*]. How do you do, Mr. Boulder.

BOULDER. Good afternoon, sir. Mrs. Apley.

ELEANOR. Where do you think we've been? I'll give you three guesses.

APLEY. I'm sure I don't know.

ELEANOR. To the Copley-Plaza.

APLEY [*all dignity*]. Really? I've never been there myself

ELEANOR. And what do you think we did?

APLEY. I'm sure I don't know what anyone does at the Copley-Plaza.

ELEANOR. We went to a tea dansant and didn't have any tea.

CATHERINE. What did you have, dear? Little cakes?

ELEANOR. We had cocktails. I had two, and so did Howard.

BOULDER. That really sounds much worse than it was, sir.

ELEANOR. And what do you think he said each time? He said: "When duty whispers 'Lo, thou must,' the youth replies 'I can.' " Howard says it's one of Emerson's most nauseating lines.

APLEY [*scily*]. I don't think we should keep Mr. Boulder, Eleanor. I'm sure he has another engagement.

ELEANOR. No, he hasn't . . . Have you, Howard?

BOULDER. I really must pack. [*To the Apleys.*] I'm leaving for New York tomorrow.

APLEY. Oh, yes.

BOULDER. Then—good-bye, sir.

ELEANOR. Good-bye, Howard.

BOULDER. Mrs. Apley. [*Turning to ELEANOR*] I'll see you in February.

ELEANOR. Good-bye.

[*ELEANOR follows him out into the hallway. We hear vague noises from the door.*]

APLEY [*uncomfortably*]. What are they doing?

[*ELEANOR returns; stands surveying them, somewhat impertinently.*]

CATHERINE. I think you'd better go upstairs and lie down for a few minutes, dear.

ELEANOR. Can't I ever see anyone without being criticized?

CATHERINE. Eleanor, please.

ELEANOR. I know what you'd like. You'd like to throw me at one of my cousins, like John. Well, I don't believe in inbreeding. I believe in natural selection.

APLEY. My own little girl. I know it wasn't your fault, Eleanor. . . .

ELEANOR [*giggling*]. I wish you could see yourselves. You act as though I'd sinned.

CATHERINE. Eleanor!

APLEY. Eleanor, it seemed to me that

when you saw him to the door, there was a scuffling sound in the hall.

ELEANOR. You must have been listening.

APLEY. Eleanor, did that man—

ELEANOR. He tried to.

APLEY. Tried to what? Did he try to kiss you?

ELEANOR. Yes. He tried to, and I let him.

CATHERINE. Oh, Eleanor!

ELEANOR. And we aren't even engaged!

APLEY. I think we've heard enough for now.

ELEANOR. Didn't you ever kiss Mother before you were engaged?

APLEY. Will you please take her upstairs to her room?

CATHERINE. Come, dear

ELEANOR. You don't understand what I'm talking about because you haven't read Freud!

APLEY. Who?

ELEANOR. Dr. Sigmund Freud. If you had, you'd know that emotion is healthy, Father.

APLEY. Catherine, take her out of here and give her some black coffee

CATHERINE. Come, Eleanor.

ELEANOR. Oh, Father! Can't you see! *[She begins to cry.]*

APLEY *[in a voice of thunder]*. Catherine!

CATHERINE. You'll be better in a few minutes, dear.

ELEANOR. Just because he's a Yale man, just because he's not in the Social Register, because he isn't exactly like everybody else . . . he didn't go to Harvard . . .

[APLEY stands statueque and grim and the two mount the stairs to the tune of ELEANOR'S hysterical sobbing. He clenches his hands and unclenches them. Then, collecting himself a bit, he goes over to the bookcase and takes down Emerson. As he does so, the doorbell rings. He pulls himself together somewhat, remembering that this may be important. As WILSON passes him in the hallway he stops him.]

APLEY. Oh, Wilson. If some gentlemen are calling, bring them right in. I'm expecting them.

[WILSON bows and goes to the door. But it is HORATIO'S voice we hear. "Mr. Apley home, Wilson?" "Yes, sir. He is." HORATIO enters. He bears himself importantly.]

WILLING. Well, I'm back, George.

APLEY. Ah! Sit down, Horatio, and tell me everything. Everything.

WILLING *[sensing something in APLEY'S manner]*. Is something the matter?

APLEY *[shaking his head]*. Nothing . . . Please.

WILLING *[settling himself, and starting in]*. Their name is Dole.

APLEY. Dole?

WILLING. Julian H. Dole.

APLEY. And the girl?

WILLING. Myrtle

APLEY *[in a voice of doom]*. Myrtle Dole!

WILLING. Mr. Dole is the president of the Dole Tool and Die Company.

APLEY. What is a tool and die company?

WILLING. I don't know.

APLEY. Does he belong to any clubs?

WILLING. I hadn't thought of their being any clubs in Worcester.

APLEY. Did you see the house?

WILLING *[nods]*. It's a yellowish brown house, with a lot of gingerbread on it—scrolls and twists and things *[He outlines these strange curves with his fingers]*. There was an iron deer on the lawn *[APLEY shuts his eyes—the pain is too great]*. And two iron dogs and a fountain. Of course the fountain wasn't working at this time of year.

APLEY *[with finality]*. John cannot have seen their house.

WILLING. He's been there, George.

APLEY. How do you know?

WILLING. The maid told me. I was—inside—the house.

APLEY. How in the world did you get there? . . . Wait a minute.

[MARGARET comes scurrying along the hallway and up the stairs. She carries a tray with a pot of coffee on it.]

WILLING. What is it?

APLEY *[dismissing the question with a wave of the hand]*. You didn't just ring the bell?

WILLING. Not until I had a plan. I strolled in front of the house for quite a while. When anyone went by I hid myself behind a tree. Finally a limousine drove up to the front steps and stopped. A chauffeur got out and stood there waiting. It was the Doles' limousine.

APLEY. Nouveau riche!

WILLING. Well, the door opened and out on the veranda came two women, one middle-aged, one young. Obviously it was Mrs. Dole and her daughter. They got into the car. I waited till they were out of sight, and then I rang the doorbell.

APLEY. What on earth did you say?

WILLING. I thought at first I would say I was the man to read the gas meter, but I decided I was hardly the type. I simply said I was a friend of John's, that I was passing through Worcester, and he had asked me to stop and inquire if he had left his umbrella.

[He leans back, vastly pleased with himself.]

APLEY. By Jove, I wouldn't have thought of that.

WILLING [*generously*]. Of course you would, if you'd put your mind on it. . . The maid said that he *hadn't* left his umbrella.

APLEY. But then you had to leave.

WILLING. No! I happened to look down at her feet and saw she was wearing one shoe and one slipper. And it started me thinking. I asked her if she had a bunton.

APLEY. By Jove! And did she have?

WILLING. No. But she'd turned her ankle. I got her to tell me about it, and from that we fell into easy and pleasant conversation. As you know, I have a way with women.

APLEY [*impatiently*]. Yes, Horatio. What did you find out?

WILLING [*lowering his voice*]. John has been there a number of times. She said John was a nice young man, and it was cute to see him so sweet on Miss Myrtle when Miss Myrtle was so sweet on him. Those are her words, not mine.

APLEY. Obviously.

WILLING. Also he telephones her every night from Harvard. The conversations on the telephone are very lengthy. In addition, there are two letters daily. And flowers, all the time.

APLEY [*paces up and down the room*]. The whole thing, of course, is nothing but sex [*HORATIO nods, in full agreement*]. Personally, Horatio, it has always seemed to me that sex is largely bosh.

WILLING. I know what you mean. I never heard it put quite that way.

APLEY. I want to be broad-minded about this. These people, these Julian H. Doles, are probably very nice people in their way. I don't want to be narrow. And from their point of view—[*He stops as he sees CATHERINE coming down the stairs*]. Ah! Here is Horatio, my dear.

WILLING. Good evening, Catherine.

CATHERINE. You've been to Worcester? What happened?

APLEY. It's about what we expected, Catherine—I'll tell you later. How is Eleanor?

CATHERINE. She's better. Margaret is with her.

WILLING. Is Eleanor ill?

APLEY. No, no. She's quite all right.

WILLING. I felt sure something was the matter.

APLEY [*annoyed*]. There's nothing the matter at all. She had tea with that young Boulder at the Copley-Plaza.

WILLING. Boulder? Well, if that's all—

APLEY [*ill at ease and anxious to stop WILLING'S revelation*]. It's nothing, Horatio. He kissed her and she's resting.

WILLING. What?

CATHERINE. It's quite all right, Horatio.

APLEY. Yes—thank you Horatio. You've been a true friend, a friend in need. Good-bye.

WILLING. Anything further I can do—

APLEY. No, no. Thank you.

WILLING. I'm sure there's a way of handling this, George, and that you'll find it. Look how you handled the Boulder matter. *He* won't be coming back again. . . . See you at dinner. [*He goes*]

APLEY [*uneasily*]. Yes, yes. . . .

CATHERINE [*puzzled*]. Did he say Mr. Boulder won't be coming back again?

APLEY [*facing it*]. No, he won't, Catherine. I felt it wise to write a letter about him to Buzzie Leyton. I simply asked him if he knew what Boulder was saying about the late Ralph Waldo Emerson. He didn't, and he was deeply shocked.

CATHERINE. I hope it was the right thing to do, George.

[*And at this moment an irate AMELIA comes storming down the stairs. The precious cuckoo clock is in her arms.*]

AMELIA. What is the matter with Eleanor?

APLEY [*quickly*]. Nothing at all, Amelia.

AMELIA. Don't tell me nothing at all! I know better!

CATHERINE. She isn't feeling well.

AMELIA. She is intoxicated!

APLEY. Amelia!

AMELIA. I don't know how else to account for it. She came out into the hall with her hair flying, looked right at me, and said, "Freud would certainly like to get at you!" What does she mean by that?

[*And out she flounces*]

[*AGNES appears suddenly in the doorway. She is extremely self-conscious, and with some reason. She is dressed in a rather dowdy white ball gown, clearly constructed by a local seamstress. She carries long white gloves and a handful of tulle, and has obviously come at her mother's orders*].

AGNES. I came in the back way. I wanted to show Margaret. . . but she wasn't. . . .

CATHERINE. You look charming, my dear. Perhaps just an inch of tulle. Is your mother coming over?

AGNES. No, she's busy about the dinner.

CATHERINE. Well, Hannah can sew it upstairs.

APLEY. Somehow it doesn't look much like a ball gown, does it?

CATHERINE. Of course it does, George.

When she has her gloves on . . . put on your gloves, darling.

AGNES [*trying to struggle into the gloves*] They take quite a while.

APLEY. Do you like those frills?

CATHERINE. Everyone has them, George.

AGNES. Don't you like it at all, Cousin George?

APLEY. Who said I didn't like it, dear? I've no doubt we'll all like it, when we get accustomed to it.

AGNES. Accustomed to it?

CATHERINE [*low-voiced*]. Really, George?

APLEY. And now I have something for you. [*He takes a jewel box from the desk drawer and draws forth a lustrous string of pearls.*] My grandmother's pearls!

CATHERINE [*trying to cheer AGNES*]. George! You didn't tell me!

APLEY. I want you to wear them tonight, my dear. Because we all hope that some day . . . [*AGNES shyly looks away.*] There: [*APLEY drapes them around her neck.*] They're just what you needed.

AGNES [*low-voiced*]. Yes, Cousin George.

CATHERINE. They look lovely on you, my dear.

[*Thus encouraged, AGNES takes a tentative step or two—almost parades. Looks at herself in a mirror, and brightens. She is beginning to feel a little better, but APLEY promptly sees to that.*]

APLEY. Splendid! . . . Now no one will notice the dress at all.

[*The sound of the door slamming, and JOHN bursts into the room.*]

JOHN. Father, I've got to speak to you!

CATHERINE. Why, John dear, what's happened?

JOHN [*not hearing her*]. I want to see you alone, Father!

APLEY. Don't you see your mother? Don't you see Agnes?

JOHN [*his voice rising*]. I want to see you! [*A second's pause. GEORGE and CATHERINE exchange looks. APLEY nods.*]

CATHERINE. Suppose we go up to the sewing room, Agnes.

AGNES [*looking bewildered at JOHN as she passes him*]. Yes . . . Cousin Catherine.

[*The two men have stood motionless until the women have gone up the steps and out of sight.*]

JOHN. Father, Myrtle just called me up in Cambridge! I've been spied upon, and I won't stand it!

APLEY. This is not a bar-room, John. It is not necessary to shout. You'll be twenty-one your next birthday.

JOHN. Then why don't you treat me as

though I'd grown up! Instead of sending Cousin Horatio sneaking up to Worcester!

APLEY. I had reasons for acting as I did, John.

JOHN. Reasons! You always have reasons!

APLEY. I know a great deal more than you think, John. I know why you are so upset. You are in love, John.

JOHN. Yes! I'm in love and I'm proud of it!

APLEY. Of course you are. Of course . . . And so was I at your age. More in love than you, I guess.

JOHN. How do you mean, more than I?

APLEY. Does that surprise you, John? I think I was, a little more. Quite drunk, quite mad with love. It was the most beautiful, the most impossible illusion that I've ever known.

JOHN. It isn't an illusion for me. It's the only thing that's real—the only time I've ever lived!

APLEY. Strange how life repeats itself. Strange, and a little sad. I said those very words to my father, thirty years ago "It isn't an illusion—it's the only thing that's real."

JOHN. But it isn't the same! He listened to you! You and mother got married.

APLEY. Yes. Your mother and I got married. Later. [*JOHN looks at him*] I was in love with quite a different girl, John.

JOHN. You were? . . . You?

APLEY. Yes, I was.

JOHN. Who was it?

APLEY. It doesn't matter now. Her father was quite high up on the police force.

JOHN. Why didn't you marry her?

APLEY. Because it was impossible. She never could have lived on Beacon Street, and I couldn't have lived in the South End.

JOHN. The South End? Was she Irish?

APLEY. That shocks you, doesn't it, John? That shows we're really a great deal alike. You can call it snobbish, if you want to use a snobbish term. We didn't have the same tastes, the same inclinations. It never would have worked, John.

JOHN. It's not like that with Myrtle and me. It'll last forever!

APLEY. No, John. You and I can't do this sort of thing. We can't escape what we are. Other people may be able to. But we can't.

JOHN. Why can't we?

APLEY [*patiently*]. You may as well face it, John. You were born in Boston.

~~JOHN. What's that got to do with it?~~

APLEY. Boston is not just a city—it's an environment. And you and I are what we are because of what our environment makes us. We have a certain position, John, and you will inherit it, just as I did. There is such a

thing as duty, and you'll never be happy by running away from it.

JOHN. If you call marrying Myrtle running away from it, I'll be happy.

APLEY. Happiness is a very rare commodity, John, especially in New England.

JOHN. All I know is I'm in love with Myrtle, and that's all that matters!

APLEY. No, John. Love is not all that matters. The little likes and dislikes that two people share in common—the small duties and activities that make up a day—these in the end are love. It is the little things that make for a satisfactory life. [*He considers for a moment*] Now for example. When I came back from abroad, that was when I started my collection of Chinese bronzes. They made a new man out of me. It might be a good idea if you started some sort of collection, John. Oriental daggers or shaving mugs—it doesn't really matter.

JOHN [*turning away*] Father!

APLEY. Frankly, I don't know why anyone likes Chinese bronzes, but I have one of the finest collections in our country. And I have to leave *something* to the Art Museum.

JOHN. Father, if you only knew what I'm going through—

APLEY. But I do, John. Don't you see I do? I've been franker with you than I have ever been with anyone else in my life. And now I am going to leave you for a minute, and I want you to do something for me.

JOHN. What?

APLEY. You have been very unkind to your Cousin Agnes lately. I want you to stay in this room for just a minute and say something agreeable to her. She is upstairs.

JOHN. What for? If you think—

APLEY. No, no. I have no such idea, John. But tonight is her coming-out party, and it is the least you can do. We have to go on living, John. I'll send her down.

[*He goes up the steps.*]

[*JOHN stalks angrily across the room, then his mood gives way to moroseness. He drops disconsolately into a chair, his back to the stairs.*]

[*AGNES comes hesitantly down the steps. Finding that JOHN does not see her, she decides on her plan of campaign. She tiptoes gently to the piano, and begins softly to play and sing the chorus of "Come to the Ball" . . . "Come with me, come to the ball" .*]

JOHN [*turning*]. Oh . . . Hello, Agnes.

AGNES. You didn't mind my coming in, did you?

JOHN. No, I don't mind.

AGNES. Or playing the piano?

JOHN. No.

AGNES. I'm glad, John. [*She rises, exhibiting herself.*] Do you notice anything?

JOHN. No. What?

AGNES. Well, look!

JOHN. You're dressed for the party. It looks—all right.

AGNES. That's not what I mean, silly. What else?

JOHN. You've got your hair done in a new way, haven't you?

AGNES. But what else? What else?

JOHN [*snapping a trifle*]. I don't know.

AGNES. You're mad at me.

JOHN. No, I'm not, Agnes. I'm sorry . . . What is it?

AGNES. It's the pearls, John. Don't you see them?

JOHN. Oh, yes. They look—beautiful.

AGNES. Cousin George is letting me wear them, just for tonight. You don't mind, do you?

JOHN. Why, no, of course not.

AGNES. Oh, John, I'm awfully glad. From the way you've acted lately I was afraid you would mind. I'm awfully glad.

JOHN [*realizing the implication*]. Agnes. I've got something I want to tell you. Let's sit over here for a minute.

[*He takes her hand and leads her to a sofa.*]

AGNES. Yes, John.

[*Her knight has come riding.*]

JOHN. If I've been rude to you lately, or thoughtless, I'm awfully sorry.

AGNES. Oh, John. You haven't been.

JOHN. We've known each other for a long while. Ever since we were children.

AGNES. Yes, John. I think I know you better than anyone in the world.

JOHN. We've always played together in the summer, and in the winter we've gone to dancing school together—for years and years. We've seen so much of each other that sometimes I've almost thought . . .

AGNES [*leaning a little closer toward him*]. Thought what, John? Go ahead.

JOHN. Sometimes I've wondered if we don't know each other too well.

AGNES. Why—why—I don't see how two people—that is, a boy and a girl—*can* know each other too well, if—[*She stops in confusion and looks at her folded hands*]—if—you ought to say it, John.

JOHN. Agnes . . . you don't understand. I don't love you. I'm in love with someone else.

AGNES [*taking a moment, but weathering it bravely*]. Who is it?

JOHN. No one you know, Agnes, but I'm in love with her. I just couldn't help it. The minute I saw her.

AGNES [*still calmly*]. All right, John.

JOHN. You're not—you don't mind, Agnes?

AGNES [*her voice strange*]. Of course I mind. I'm not going to pretend I don't, John. Of course I do. But you can't help it.

JOHN. You're wonderful, Agnes.

AGNES. We can't help falling in love. Nobody can.

[*She is on her feet now, heading for the door.*]

JOHN. I know you'll like her when you meet her. I hope we can all be friends.

AGNES [*not even hearing him*]. Everybody thinks I'm going to have a rotten time at the party tonight. [*Her voice rises a little*] But I'm not. I'm going to have a wonderful time. A wonderful time. [*She is out the door.*]

[*JOHN stands looking after her, a little taken aback by the suddenness of her departure.*]

[*CATHERINE comes down the stairs.*]

JOHN watches her as she slowly descends.]

JOHN. I suppose Father told you.

CATHERINE. Yes.

JOHN. I don't expect you to understand. You and Father.

CATHERINE. Are you sure that you love her, John?

JOHN. Yes, and nothing you can say will change me.

CATHERINE. I'm not going to try to change you, John. If it will make you happy, marry her.

JOHN. What?

CATHERINE. Marry her if she loves you. Have you asked her?

JOHN. No! I was afraid that everyone— [*He looks at his mother anew*] You mean it? What will Father say?

CATHERINE. I don't know . . . but I'll speak to him.

JOHN [*trying to get hold of himself*]. I'm going to ask her tonight! I'm going right up there! [*He looks at his mother, as though expecting some disapproval. But it doesn't come.*]

Mother, I love you! [*He kisses her impulsively, then dashes out of the house.*]

[*We hear his voice at the front door, gaily: "Hello, Cousin Roger!" Then ROGER'S voice: "Good evening, John" ROGER comes into the room.*]

ROGER. John was in a hurry. Hello, Catherine.

CATHERINE. Roger.

ROGER. Just thought I'd drop in for a minute. Is George in?

CATHERINE. Yes, he is. [*To MARGARET, who is descending the stairs.*] Oh, Margaret, will you ask Mr. Apley to come down? Mr. Newcombe is here.

[*MARGARET goes back up the steps.*]

ROGER. Do you mind if I ring for Wilson?

CATHERINE. It's right here. [*Pulling a*

bellcord.] If you don't mind, I'll leave you to Wilson, Roger.

ROGER. Yes, of course.

[*CATHERINE goes into the conservatory.*]

[*ROGER looks around the room, picks out a comfortable chair and moves it a few inches.*]

Then puts a small table beside it.]

[*WILSON comes in, bringing a tray of drinks Scotch and soda.*]

ROGER. Ah, Wilson. How did you know? WILSON. I saw you come in, sir.

ROGER. I'll pour them.

WILSON. Mr. Apley never takes anything stronger than a glass of sherry before dinner, sir.

ROGER. He will this time.

WILSON [*respectfully*]. Yes, sir. [*He goes*

[*ROGER elaborately puts one of the drinks on the little table beside the easy chair, just as APLEY comes down into the room.*]

APLEY. Well, Roger.

ROGER. George . . . I asked Wilson to bring in a drink for us. Hope you don't mind.

APLEY. What would you say, Roger, if I were to tell you that I haven't touched a Scotch and soda since you and I used to spend our afternoons at the club?

ROGER. I'd say you'd better touch one now. [*APLEY looks at him*] I don't know how to say this, George. Let me start this way. I was just coming out of the club when I ran into that old Mr. Jenks—you know the one who always wears a muffler in the house. He'd been to a meeting of that nature club of yours—the Bird Watchers.

APLEY [*all ears*]. Yes?

ROGER. They didn't elect you, George. They asked the committee for another name.

APLEY. Another name? Why? Why Roger?

ROGER [*some reluctance*]. Because, George, they think you've been making a damned fool of yourself.

APLEY [*controlling himself with an effort*]. No one has called me a damn fool since Father died . . . What happened, Roger? Why did they do it?

ROGER. Well, that cemetery business, for one. Cousin Hattie. Henry Apley showed your letter around.

APLEY [*forced calmness*]. What else?

ROGER. And it seems you've made an ass of yourself about that friend of Eleanor's—young Boulder. They say you pushed him out of his job because he was seeing too much of Elly. Did you?

APLEY. That is a barefaced lie, Roger.

ROGER. George, I wonder if you see your self the way other people see you. This Bird Watcher business—Boulder, Cousin Hattie—That's not important by itself, but it's—it's symptomatic of everything else you're doing

APLEY. Don't you think it's too late, Roger, to reconstruct my habits?

ROGER. Not in so far as they affect other people. . . . George, I've seen Horatio and that's really why I'm here. He told me he'd been to Worcester.

APLEY. Horatio always talks too much. What did he tell you?

ROGER. It wasn't so much what he told me as what I read between the lines. You're doing the same thing with John that you did with Cousin Hattie and Boulder. Raising objections about things that don't matter. Because you live in a narrow world, George.

APLEY. My world narrow?

ROGER. Yes! The man has an iron dog on his front lawn, so John can't marry his daughter. Is that being *broad-minded*, George?

APLEY. Have you realized what John will throw away if he marries this girl? Everything that Boston has to offer is his for the asking. You can't say that is nothing, Roger.

ROGER. I've watched John grow up, George. It seems to me he has the makings of a man.

APLEY. He can't help it, Roger, with his ancestry.

ROGER. Well, George, he's in love now, isn't he?

APLEY. Who isn't when he is twenty?

ROGER. Yes. . . . You were in love yourself when you were twenty, George. Do you remember?

APLEY. It is not kind of you to bring that up, Roger.

ROGER. Have you forgotten how you felt, George? The day your father found out about it, the last time you ever saw *her*, the night you walked up the gangplank?

APLEY. I am not so forgetful as all that, Roger.

ROGER. And then you came back, and you married Catherine. And then John was born. Do you remember what you said to me that day? You said, "I pray to God that he'll be happy."

APLEY. Yes. I remember, Roger. And then we went together, and entered him for Groton.

ROGER. He isn't happy now, George. Think of how he must be feeling. Think of that, instead of worrying about iron dogs, and the Bird Watchers, and what people will say if you miss a meeting of the Tuesday Club. Be kind, George. You always have been, to everyone in trouble. You've been generous. You've been understanding.

APLEY. Have I, Roger? I've always tried to understand.

ROGER. Then try—just once, George—to understand your children. Don't you want

them to get just a little more out of life than you've had—somehow—somewhere?

APLEY. I'm not sure how much one has a right to expect of life, Roger. It has a strange way of escaping you. Before you know it, it has slipped out of your hands.

ROGER. Perhaps you've never stood up to it enough, George. God knows I haven't either. All that you and I can do is to hope that other people, those we love, do better. I guess that's all I'm trying to say.

APLEY. I have never meant to be unkind, Roger. I have never meant to be intolerant.

ROGER. I know you haven't, George. [A hand on his arm.] Why don't we leave it this way? We've had our chance, you and I. Let John and Eleanor have theirs.

[He goes, leaving a silent, heavily thinking APLEY behind him. For a moment he just stands there; then he turns slowly, sees the Scotch and soda. But his mind rejects it. Instead he pours himself a sherry glass full of pure Scotch. Then he has a new thought. What is his invariable source of strength in these emergencies? Why, Emerson, of course. He goes over to the bookcase and takes down his precious volume. He takes up his drink again. He is thus doubly armed—Emerson in one hand, Scotch in the other—when CATHERINE returns to the room.]

CATHERINE. Is Roger gone?

APLEY. Yes. He just left.

CATHERINE. What were you talking about?

APLEY. Oh, about when we were younger. . . . About Eleanor. . . . and John.

CATHERINE. I've something I must tell you, George. I've done something that I must tell you.

APLEY [abstracted]. What, my dear?

CATHERINE. George. . . . John has gone to Worcester. He's gone to ask that girl to marry him [APLEY'S head turns slowly toward her.] I told him to do it, George. I said that I would speak to you.

APLEY [in a strange voice]. We want him to be happy, Catherine. After all, he is in love.

CATHERINE [seeing for the first time the tumbler of Scotch]. Have you been drinking, George?

APLEY. Catherine.

CATHERINE. Yes, George?

APLEY. I've been thinking. . . . Worcester isn't Boston, but it is in Massachusetts.

[He raises the drink to his lips. At the same time his eyes go to Emerson—he is devoutly consuming The Word and the drink simultaneously as—

ACT THREE

SCENE.—*The next morning about nine o'clock. Everything is on a sprightly, cheerful note.*

Fresh flowers on the tables; the brilliant sun of early winter streaming through the windows; if there were a canary by the window, and indeed there might be, he would be singing loudly out of sheer joy at the beauty of the day

APLEY is seen, busy at his desk, brisk and spruce, each fibre of him tingling with a new sort of resolution which we have not observed in him hitherto. He has been busy writing letters; he has completed one, which is in its envelope, and now he is in the midst of a second. It is obviously an important document—he is judiciously weighing and balancing each word. Finally he blots the page, picks it up and holds it at arm's length, with the satisfaction of an artist who has achieved a masterpiece.

APLEY [*calling into the next room, a resolute cheerfulness in his voice*]. Oh, Catherine! Have you finished breakfast?

CATHERINE [*from the dining room*]. Yes, all finished, George.

APLEY. Then would you mind coming in for a minute? There is something I would like to read you. [*Hastily*.] Not out of a book, dear—something I have just written.

[*CATHERINE comes in, bringing a white carnation.*]

CATHERINE. Here's a flower for your buttonhole. Hold still! There! . . . What is it, dear?

APLEY. It's a letter to Henry Apley, about Cousin Hattie.

CATHERINE. A nice letter?

APLEY. I hope you'll think so, dear. I don't want to let myself go too far, because my position was basically just, but—well, this is just a rough beginning. [*Reading*.] "Dear Henry. It occurred to me, in thinking things over last evening, that we can all die only once. As it happens, I still have a little time to consider where I wish to be placed in the family plot, and Cousin Hattie hasn't. That is why I suggest that we both, this morning, adopt the motto 'Forgive and forget,' and join our efforts in endeavoring to activate another little motto, which is peculiarly our own: 'Bring Cousin Hattie back'" . . . I think that's rather neatly put, don't you, dear?

CATHERINE. Well . . . I see what you mean, George.

APLEY. And then I go on. [*He reads again*.] "I know that you are in delicate health, dear Henry, and that you will want

to lie near her." . . . It's a hard letter to write.

CATHERINE. Yes . . . I think the idea is perfect, George, but there might be some other way of phrasing it. There'll be more time later. The children will be down any minute now.

APLEY. Well, perhaps you're right.

CATHERINE [*impulsively*]. George, the children are so happy. Doesn't it make you feel how worthwhile it's been—what you said to them—your whole new attitude?

APLEY. My attitude is not new, Catherine. I'm just the same as I always was.

CATHERINE [*kissing him*]. I know you are.

APLEY [*mollified*]. Well, then . . .

[*ELEANOR comes running down the stairs. She is humming gaily, and is indeed quite a different girl*]

ELEANOR. Oh, Father!

[*She impulsively gives APLEY a great big kiss*]

APLEY. Why, what's that for, dear?

ELEANOR. Nothing. Just a reflex.

APLEY. Oh, so that's what a reflex is.

ELEANOR. Of course it is! When you're being such a sweet darling to John and me! And Howard just telephoned, too! He's coming over right away, and we're going to spend the day. It rhymes, doesn't it?

APLEY. What on earth are you going to do with a young man at nine o'clock in the morning?

CATHERINE. They could sit in the conservatory.

ELEANOR. I've thought out every minute of it. First we're going skating on the river. We'll skate and skate. And then we're going down to Faneuil Hall Market. We're going to have lunch in that place where all the butchers go.

APLEY. Alone?

CATHERINE. George, no one will see them there.

APLEY. I don't agree with you, Catherine. Father's old butcher is still at Faneuil Hall. It will get around to every back door on Beacon Street.

ELEANOR. Well, we can hide if we see him.

CATHERINE. What about dinner, dear? Why don't you invite him here to dinner?

APLEY. Capital! And we'll each have a Martini cocktail to celebrate. *One!*

ELEANOR. Father, you're being so darling!

APLEY. There are a lot of things about me that you don't know, dear. I'm quite famous for my Martini cocktails. You didn't know that, did you? The whole trick is chilling the glass first, resting it for five minutes in a

bowl of finely pulverized ice. Then you lift the glass out very carefully, so as not to break it. [*He lifts an imaginary glass.*]

ELEANOR [*duliffully*]. You mustn't break it.

CATHERINE You'd better have your breakfast, dear. You mustn't skate on an empty stomach.

ELEANOR. Oh, Mummy, I'd forgotten all about breakfast.

[*A hug and a kiss, and she skips into the dining room.*]

CATHERINE [*fondly looking after ELEANOR*]. Isn't it wonderful? Seeing her so happy!

APLEY. What's she so happy about? I didn't know she was so fond of skating.

CATHERINE. George, last night after Eleanor was asleep, I kept thinking about that book that she mentioned, by that man with the queer name—it begins with F.

APLEY Oh, you mean Freud.

CATHERINE Yes, that's the name. I thought it was only right, if Eleanor was interested in the book, that I should know something about it. But I couldn't find it in her room—she seems to have hidden it.

APLEY. Yes. As a matter of fact, I had something of the same idea. After what she said about the book, I thought perhaps I should glance at it myself—just to check up, of course I think I dropped it back here.

[*He reaches into the back of the bookcase, behind the other books.*]

CATHERINE Is that why you didn't come to bed until two in the morning, George?

APLEY Well, frankly, yes. It's really—quite interesting. If you face it tolerantly. It advances a theory that frankly never occurred to me.

CATHERINE What's it about?

APLEY. Why—it's about the mind, really. The mind and the way human relationships affect the mind.

CATHERINE. What sort of relationship?

APLEY. Well—I don't know exactly how to put it, Catherine.

CATHERINE. Please say what you mean, George. If Eleanor's been reading it—

APLEY. Then I shall have to resort to a word that I have never used in your presence. It seems to be largely a book about—sex.

CATHERINE. Oh! . . . But how can he write a whole book about—that?

APLEY. Dr. Freud does pad it a little, here and there. For instance, he tells the story of a certain Mr. X. It seems that this Mr. X, when he was four years old, had an experience with his nurse that seemed to color his entire life. Now I remember my own nurse very well. She was Hannah's sister, and

I know that neither of us forgot ourselves for a moment.

CATHERINE. But what happened between Mr. X and his nurse?

APLEY. That's what is so confusing. Nothing at all definite did seem to happen, but after that he always dreamed of locomotives.

CATHERINE. George, the other night I had the strangest dream.

APLEY. Perhaps you'd better not tell me about it until you've looked this over, Catherine. It seems to be Dr. Freud's idea that sex very largely governs the lives of people—in other parts of the country. Of course he comes from Vienna.

CATHERINE. I see [*GEORGE is putting the book away again.*] There's no reason to hide the book, George.

APLEY [*not too sure*]. No, I'll put it right here, on the shelf below Emerson. Come to think of it, Catherine, they have more than a little in common. Freud is trying to do the same thing with sex that Emerson did without it.

[*JOHN comes clattering down the stairs, whistling. He disappears into the hall.*]

APLEY [*calling*]. John! John, come in here a moment!

JOHN [*from the hall*]. I've got to call up Myrtle!

APLEY. You've called her twice this morning! John! [*JOHN reluctantly reappears*] You've told us nothing about last night—all we know is that you're going to get married. There are certain details that your mother and I ought to know.

CATHERINE. Yes, John. When are you going to bring Myrtle to see us?

JOHN. Mother, you'll be perfectly crazy about her. I wish you could have seen her when I—when I asked her. I think she looks prettiest when she's surprised . . . I've got to telephone her! [*He runs.*]

APLEY. Find out when you can see her father! You must tell him your intentions today! You can't keep putting it off!

JOHN [*out of sight now*]. Plenty of time! She's coming to town for dinner!

APLEY. Send a message that you want to see Mr. Dole!

[*The doorbell has rung a moment before, and WILSON now admits AMELIA. She sails into the room just in time to hear this final remark of APLEY'S.*]

AMELIA. It must be true, what I hear, then! John is marrying the daughter of a mechanic from Dorchester?

CATHERINE. Who told you that, Amelia?

AMELIA. My dear, it's all over Boston! Her father collects old iron in his front yard!

ELEANOR [*comes running across the room, bound for the door and dropping her napkin in her haste*]. It's Howard! He's coming up the steps! Oh, hello, Aunt Amelia!

AMELIA [*frigid*]. Who is coming up the steps?

APLEY. Mr. Boulder, Amelia. You know, the young man who lectures at Harvard.

AMELIA. Is he the one who has been plying Eleanor with liquor?

APLEY. I find Mr. Boulder both brilliant and charming.

CATHERINE [*somewhat defiantly*]. They're going to have lunch together at Faneuil Hall Market.

[*Meanwhile there have been voices in the hall. "Good morning!" "Hello, there!" "Come on in."* BOULDER and ELEANOR *come into sight*]

BOULDER. Good morning, sir! Mrs. Apley! It's a fine clear morning, isn't it?

CATHERINE. Good morning, Mr. Boulder.

APLEY. Good morning. You remember Mr. Boulder, Amelia.

AMELIA [*looking at MR BOULDER, who is dressed, pour le sport, in a flashy tweed coat and corduroy pants*]. Are you going to wear those clothes to lunch?

APLEY. They're quite all right for Faneuil Hall Market, Amelia.

AMELIA [*taking a moment to look BOULDER over*]. Well, we might be able to explain Worcester, but *this* is the most terrible thing that has happened to the family since Uncle William married his trained nurse!

[*And she stalks out*]

[*There is a rather uncomfortable pause*]

CATHERINE. Wouldn't you like a cup of coffee, Mr. Boulder?

BOULDER. Why, thanks, if it isn't too much trouble.

ELEANOR. I'll get it, Mummy.

[*She dashes off.*]

CATHERINE. And don't mind us. If you care to smoke one of your cigarettes—

APLEY [*stiffly*]. Yes, do. By all means.

BOULDER [*opening his cigarette case*]. Will you have one, sir.

APLEY [*after a flash from CATHERINE*]. Thank you.

[*BOULDER brings forth a light. APLEY takes a self-conscious puff at the cigarette. He is ill at ease, but determined to be courteous.*]

CATHERINE. So you're leaving for New York tonight, Mr. Boulder?

BOULDER [*nods*]. On the midnight.

APLEY. It has always seemed to me quite a journey, Boston to New York.

BOULDER. Oh, it isn't so far.

APLEY. Sometimes most peculiar things happen on the journey.

BOULDER. Why, what sort of things, sir?

CATHERINE. Once Mr. Apley met a man in the smoking compartment who was drinking out of a bottle.

APLEY. He was a New Yorker, of course. . . . Tell me, Mr. Boulder, where do you live in New York?

BOULDER. Greenwich Village.

APLEY. Greenwich Village? Well, that sounds at least as though you were getting some fresh air . . . Have your parents always lived in New York?

BOULDER. No, sir. They came from Staten Island.

APLEY. Where?

CATHERINE. It's in the harbor, George, behind the Statue of Liberty.

APLEY. Behind it? How peculiar! . . . I suppose your father is in business?

BOULDER [*a little nod*]. Canned goods.

APLEY. Not retail?

BOULDER. Wholesale.

[*APLEY gives a sigh of relief ELEANOR, at the same time, is returning with the coffee.*]

ELEANOR. Here's your coffee, Howard.

CATHERINE. Get him a little table, dear.

APLEY. And an ash tray! Quickly, Eleanor! . . . No, it's too late. He moved.

BOULDER. I'm dreadfully sorry.

CATHERINE. Oh, it's nothing at all.

APLEY. Margaret can sweep it up.

BOULDER. I'll put it out.

APLEY. No, no! [*But BOULDER has already done so.*] Well!

[*With some relief he puts out his own cigarette*]

CATHERINE. George, wasn't there something else you were going to tell Mr. Boulder?

APLEY. What, my dear?

CATHERINE. About a letter?

APLEY. Oh yes [*He is moving to his desk*] [*HORATIO WILLING enters.*]

WILLING. Good morning! . . . Am I interrupting?

APLEY. On the contrary, I'm very glad you came, Horatio. I want you to hear this, because what happened was entirely your fault.

WILLING. My fault? What?

APLEY. I suggest you better take this to State Street right now, to Mr. Leyton. I know his attitude will be quite different after he has read it.

BOULDER. Thank you ever so much, sir. I'll take it right over.

ELEANOR [*kissing him*]. Father! . . . Will you come back, Howard, just as soon as you can?

BOULDER. Just as soon as I can. Thank you ever so much, sir.

[BOULDER and ELEANOR have moved toward the hallway.]

CATHERINE [following]. You can stay to dinner tonight—can't you, Mr. Boulder?

BOULDER. Why, thank you. I'd be delighted.

[ELEANOR and CATHERINE reappear in the hall.]

CATHERINE. You'll have to put on something warmer, darling, if you're going skating. I'll go up with you. . . If you'll excuse me, Horatio.

[The two women go up the stairs. APLEY and a somewhat confused HORATIO are left in the room.]

APLEY. Well, Horatio! I suppose you are surprised.

WILLING. I don't understand. After what he said about Emerson—

APLEY. There are other writers beside Emerson, Horatio. It is time you learned that [He goes to the dining-room entrance; calls.] Wilson!

WILSON [entering]. Yes, sir?

APLEY. Mr. Willing would like a Scotch and soda, Wilson. And bring me one, too.

WILSON [puzzled]. Yes, sir . . . Now, sir?

APLEY. Now! [WILSON goes.]

WILLING. Are you ill, George? Your peculiar attitude at Agnes' dinner last night

APLEY [abruptly]. Did you ever hear of a man named Freud?

WILLING. Why—no.

APLEY [taking down the book]. It has just occurred to me, Horatio, that it is probably you he is writing this whole book about!

WILLING [dazed, but flattered]. Me!

APLEY. You have always exerted a very bad influence on me—I may say an unhealthy influence.

WILLING. Unhealthy! Why, George, I've followed you as Boswell once did Johnson.

APLEY. Who was it got me into the Bird Watchers? You did!

WILLING [weakly]. I never went as far as you with birds.

APLEY. Let's not argue over this trivia! What really matters, Horatio, is that you've interfered between me and my son!

WILLING. You and John? I don't think I understand, George.

APLEY. You nearly ruined his life, Horatio!

WILLING [desperately]. But how, George? What did I do?

APLEY [yelling]. You went snooping up to Worcester, that's what you did! Bringing back all kinds of stories!

WILLING. But you asked me to go to Worcester, George. Don't you remember? [Now completely stunned.] You said it was very smart of me.

APLEY. Let us not split hairs, Horatio. Thank God your intrigues were not successful. John is going to marry Myrtle Dole.

WILLING. John? Myrtle Dole? But—what about Agnes?

APLEY. Agnes is a nice girl, Horatio. She has inherited a certain charm, from her mother. But John is not in love with Agnes.

WILLING. But, George, I've heard you say often that propinquity would lead to love.

APLEY. Propinquity! I'm speaking of real love, Horatio, something which I do not believe you have ever known in your sterile pedestrian life!

WILLING [now convinced that APLEY has gone crazy and bent only on escape]. Yes . . . yes . . . I'd better go and talk to Agnes . . . [He is gone.]

[WILSON, at the same moment, is entering with the tray of drinks.]

WILSON [seeing that WILLING is no longer there]. Oh! I'm sorry, sir. Shall I leave this?

APLEY. No. Never mind, Wilson.

[WILSON starts out with the tray, but at that instant ROGER NEWCOMBE presents himself in the doorway.]

ROGER [cheerily]. Good morning!

[WILSON, without a word, reverses this course and puts the drinks down. Then he goes.]

APLEY. Well, well! How are you, Roger? It's nice you dropped in.

ROGER. What was the matter with Horatio? He was running down the steps. Left the front door open wide.

APLEY. Horatio is very narrow-minded. [He indicates the drinks.] Won't you join me, Roger?

ROGER. At half past nine in the morning? I never thought I'd live to see the day.

APLEY [pouring the whiskey]. I have never done such a thing before, but this is in the nature of a celebration. John is engaged this morning, Roger. The girl from Worcester.

ROGER. George! [He shakes hands with him.] I knew you'd do it.

APLEY. Wait till you see John, Roger. Just one look at him drives away any doubt or reservation I might possibly have had.

ROGER. This has taken real courage on your part, George. Don't think I don't realize it. . . Here's to John.

[His glass raised.] APLEY. Here's to John. [They sip their drinks for a moment.]

ROGER. George, now that you've gone

as far as this, why don't you try to get a little pleasure out of life?

APLEY. Why, Roger, I have a great many small pleasures.

ROGER. Why don't you come up to the poker game at the club this afternoon, George? Friday—a lot of the old crowd are playing.

APLEY. This afternoon? There's a meeting of the Boston Waifs.

ROGER. Well?

APLEY [*tempted*]. They'd wonder where I was.

ROGER. Let them wonder.

APLEY [*thinks it over*]. Waifs. . . It's a silly name, isn't it? What do they mean—Waifs?

ROGER. You know where we play—upstairs in the club.

APLEY [*still not quite committed*]. Oh, yes.

ROGER. By the way, did you hear old Justice Lawton dropped dead last night, right in the club?

APLEY. He did? [*But he does not seem to show the proper grief*] Well, well!

ROGER. A stranger got in the member's room by mistake, and the old man had a stroke.

APLEY. By jove! [*they laugh together*.]

[*We hear a male voice, not quite distinguishable, at the door. Then WILSON comes in.*]

WILSON. It's a Mr. Julian Dole, sir. Are you home?

APLEY [*a heavy whisper*]. Dole! Wait a minute, Wilson! Roger! The girl's father!

[*He motions to him to clear the tell-tale drinks.*]

ROGER. It's all right. I'll go out this way. *He is heading for the dining room.* See you, at the poker game. [*He is gone.*]

[*APLEY gives a quick-go-ahead signal to WILSON, and at the same time puts a straightening hand to his necktie.*]

WILSON [*to the as yet unseen guest*]. Will you come in, sir? . . . Mr. Dole.

[*MR. JULIAN H. DOLE appears in the doorway. He is a man of about APLEY'S age, but his whole air affords a sharp contrast to APLEY. MR DOLE might be described as a high-powered business executive in the better sense. He is obviously used to dealing with people and used to being listened to.*]

APLEY [*all affability*]. This is a very great pleasure, Mr. Dole. Wilson, will you take Mr. Dole's hat and coat?

DOLE [*very friendly*]. Hope you don't mind my coming in like this, Mr. Apley, this hour of the morning.

APLEY. Not at all, Mr. Dole, I'm delighted. Sit down. . . Wilson, suppose you

go down in the cellar and bring up a bottle of that old Madeira—[*He lowers his voice to a whisper.*] not the Civil War, the Mexican War.

DOLE. Now, don't do that for me.

APLEY. Yes, yes. We shall want to drink a toast, I'm sure. [*WILSON goes.*] This is very kind of you, Mr. Dole. I must tell my wife you're here.

DOLE [*quickly*]. I'd like to meet Mrs. Apley. But sometimes if the men have a little talk first—

APLEY. Of course. Perhaps you're right, for a beginning. Will you have a cigar? [*He hurries to get them.*] It's Father's own selection. My father's cigar maker still makes them. In a little alley near Young's Hotel.

[*He strikes a match—lights MR. DOLE'S cigar and one for himself.*]

DOLE [*looking curiously around the room*]. That's a nice pair of old paintings, Mr. Apley.

APLEY. Oh, yes. My great-great-grandfather and grandmother.

DOLE. Gilbert Stuarts, aren't they?

APLEY. So you can tell a Stuart? Do you own any, Mr. Dole?

DOLE. No. Frankly, I don't like Stuart very much.

[*He says this courteously, diffidently.*]

APLEY. Oh! You don't?

DOLE. I think I prefer Copley. He didn't pretend; he painted what he saw.

APLEY. Personally, I never cared much for his realism. My sister has the Copleys.

DOLE [*recalling*]. Yes, I remember—saw them in a loan exhibit. The Apley Copleys. Old woman with a hooked nose.

APLEY. Yes, the Apley nose.

DOLE [*genuinely apologetic*]. I didn't mean—

APLEY. She was painted when she was ninety-five. That's why it looked so hooked.

DOLE [*looks at him for a second*]. Then you're the Apleys who own the Apley Mills.

[*There is the merest question in his voice.*]

APLEY. Yes, my grandfather started them.

DOLE. But you're not connected with them yourself, are you?

APLEY. Not actively. Though we control the stock.

DOLE. That's what I meant—I thought I knew all the crowd up there. I sell you your machinery.

APLEY [*affably*]. Well, now, that's very interesting. . . Machinery? I thought you owned a dye company.

DOLE. My kind of die has to do with machinery.

APLEY. Oh! . . . You know, I never heard that word until yesterday.

DOLE. Looking me up, were you?

[JOHN comes somewhat diffidently in from the dining room]

JOHN. Excuse me, father. Wilson told me that Mr. Dole was . . . Good morning, sir.

DOLE. Good morning, my boy.

APLEY. This is my son, Mr. Dole.

DOLE [very friendly]. So I gather. I've seen John.

JOHN. I suppose Myrtle told you . . . that is, I probably should have spoken to you first, but—it happened so suddenly.

DOLE. That's all right, my boy. . . . I wonder if the young man could go into the other room and close the door for a moment. [Back to JOHN again.] Do you mind? I'm talking to your father now.

JOHN [taken aback]. Of course.

APLEY. We'll see you later, John. Mr. Dole and I are having a little talk.

[The bewildered JOHN is pushed into the dining room; APLEY closes the double doors]

DOLE. I've noticed John hanging around the house. But then there were a lot of other boys.

APLEY. To tell you the truth, I had no idea of it myself, till last week. And while I haven't met your charming daughter yet, I feel I know her already. And I want to tell you that we're delighted, perfectly delighted.

DOLE. Why, thank you, Mr. Apley.

APLEY. Of course I don't know what your ideas may be—yours and Mrs. Dole's—and I hope you won't mind my suggesting this—but I thought it might be better if the announcement of the engagement is made in Boston, rather than in Worcester.

DOLE. Well, isn't it customary—er—

APLEY. Of course The final decision rests entirely with the bride's parents. I was just thinking of the simplest way to explain matters here from our point of view. I thought if you and Mrs. Dole could go so far as to take an apartment in Boston, and if the announcement were to come from there, I honestly see no reason why Worcester should be brought into it at all.

DOLE. I see.

APLEY. Tell me, Mr. Dole—er—[hopefully]—you weren't born in Worcester?

DOLE. No, I wasn't. Moved there ten years ago, when I bought the die works.

APLEY [seeing a ray of hope]. Ah! Where did you come from?

DOLE [flally]. Chicago.

APLEY [swallowing heavily]. Oh!

DOLE [beginning to enjoy himself]. I take it you've never been to Chicago?

APLEY [not wishing even to discuss it]. No . . . As I was saying, the advantages of

your living temporarily in Boston would be—well, several.

DOLE. Such as what?

APLEY. Well, for one thing, before any definite announcement was made, it would help for us to be seen together here and there. In the nature of a preparation. For instance, I don't think it would be too difficult to get you a six months' membership at one of my clubs—we could lunch there several times a week in the main dining room, where everyone would be sure to see us.

DOLE. The main dining room. I see.

APLEY. And then I'm not sure, but it might be possible for Mrs. Dole to be invited for several weeks to my wife's sewing circle. And naturally there are the receptions and teas and the series of small dinners. We must be careful to allow everyone to become used to the idea before it is actually published. I think it can be done. It's unusual, but it's possible.

DOLE. It certainly sounds interesting.

APLEY [something in DOLE'S tone has now penetrated]. How's that?

DOLE [first putting his cigar out]. This is going to surprise you, Mr. Apley. I assure you I don't mean to offend you. But I don't think this would work out for my daughter.

APLEY [thunderstruck]. What is that, sir?

DOLE. The Apleys and the Doles just don't belong together.

APLEY. And that is exactly why I have suggested—

DOLE. Come now, Apley—you know it as well as I do. It's a mistake, Mr. Apley—a big mistake to mix up different people.

APLEY. Are you serious about this, Mr. Dole?

DOLE. I'm dead serious, Mr. Apley. I came here thinking this would be all right, but I've learned better.

APLEY. I have never heard anything like this happening to anyone before.

DOLE. We're not the same stripe, Apley. We've got nothing in common, and John and Myrtle wouldn't have, either. I felt it the minute I came in here. The butler. The house. You. And then the way you talked. You and I can't help it. It's the way we were born. [He stops, but APLEY does not speak; merely looks at him.] Come on, now. There's no use quarreling about something we can't help. You know I'm right . . . Don't you?

[There is a long pause; APLEY is slowly pulling himself together and becoming the APLEY that we have known. He speaks, finally, in a tone that does not quite seem to be his own voice.]

APLEY [in a daze]. You have done me—a great favor, Mr. Dole. You have reminded

me of something that I never should have forgotten.

DOLE. Then we're agreed?

APLEY. I am very grateful to you. I—I was not thinking on a straight line, Mr. Dole, but you have set me back upon the right track. Thank you.

DOLE. Good for you. I've enjoyed meeting you, and I mean it. Good-bye, Mr. Apley.

[*He puts out his hand.*]

APLEY. There is just one point. [*An apprehensive glance toward the closed dining room doors.*] John is unlikely to agree with us. He and your daughter might try to do something—foolish.

DOLE. I'll take care of that. Myrtle will be on a train for California before the day's over.

APLEY. Splendid.

DOLE. She has an aunt out there. She'll stay a year if necessary. Two years.

APLEY [*barely hearing him*]. Yes . . . yes. And John shall go abroad, at once.

DOLE. Well! Good day, Mr. Apley! I'm sorry things didn't work out differently.

APLEY. Good day, Mr. Dole. [*He accompanies DOLE into the hall—we hear the outer door close. Then a hard-hit APLEY comes slowly back into the room. For a moment he stands in silence. Then ELEANOR comes down the stairs—in skating attire now, and a happy girl if ever there were one.*] Eleanor! will you come here, please?

ELEANOR. Yes, of course . . . Why, what's the matter, Father?

[*APLEY does not reply. He goes to the closed dining-room doors, throws them open.*]

APLEY. John!

[*JOHN enters, full of expectancy.*]

JOHN. Where's Mr. Dole?

APLEY. Children, I have just been taught a lesson. It was my fault that I had to learn it from a man who was not a gentleman.

JOHN. You don't mean Mr. Dole, father?

APLEY. Mr. Dole disapproves of your marrying his daughter, John. He told me that in this very room.

JOHN. Disapproves? Well, that won't stop me! And it won't stop Myrtle, either.

APLEY. It makes you angry, doesn't it, John? It did me, at first. But Mr. Dole is right, John.

JOHN. Right?

APLEY. Yes, right! He said that we were not his kind, John. And we're not. He said you and Myrtle would have nothing in common, and it's true.

JOHN. I think Myrtle and I are the best judges of that!

APLEY. It is a mistake to mix up different kinds of people—that's what he said. I have been trying to believe that that is not so,

but it is. We don't think the same thoughts, we don't share the same tastes, we don't live by the same loyalties.

ELEANOR. But aren't the thoughts and loyalties of all good people just about the same?

APLEY. Eleanor, I have tried my best to do what I thought would make you and John happy. It is not your fault or mine that it can't be. This may sound harsh to you, but I want you to promise me that you will put Howard Boulder entirely out of your mind.

ELEANOR. But what is wrong with Howard Boulder, Father?

APLEY. There is nothing wrong with him. I even like him. But it would not work, Eleanor. You would not be happy.

ELEANOR [*passionately*]. Father, have you been happy? Has the way you lived been so successful? Have you got so much out of life, that you can tell us what we ought to do?

APLEY [*heatedly*]. It is no business of yours, Eleanor . . .

[*WILSON comes innocently into the room, bringing the Mexican War Madeira*]

WILSON. Excuse me, sir. You asked for the Madeira.

APLEY. Thank you, Wilson. Not now. [*WILSON goes, as APLEY waits. He has calmed himself in the interval*] Perhaps you are right, my dear. But it's too late. Too late for all of us

ELEANOR [*bursting into tears*]. It's not fair! It's not fair! [*She rushes up the steps.*]

JOHN. Father, are you asking me not to see Myrtle again? Because I might as well tell you that I'm going to!

APLEY. I can't go on with this, John. I'm sorry. [*He drops into a chair.*] I did my best for you. I know what you are going through. The best way for you to get over it is for you to go abroad. At once.

JOHN. You can send me away for ten years and it won't work, or make any difference.

APLEY. There is nothing like a sea voyage at a time like this. Rome in the winter, Florence in the spring, the season in London. I might even go with you. There is nothing that makes you appreciate Boston more than getting away from it.

[*CATHERINE, coming down the stairs, stops as she realizes that tension is in the air.*]

JOHN. I want to know what Myrtle thinks about all this!

APLEY. All right, John. Go and see her. Do the best you can.

JOHN [*starts to rush out, then stops*]. Thank you, Father. You do know how I feel.

[*He goes.*]

[CATHERINE comes on into the room as JOHN departs.]

CATHERINE. Poor boy.

APLEY. Yes. Poor boy.

CATHERINE. As soon as she's calmer, George, I wish you'd go up and say something kind to Eleanor. She feels so alone.

APLEY. Of course, my dear. Anything I can do.

CATHERINE. There's so little that we can do, isn't there?

APLEY. Time takes care of most of it.

CATHERINE. George, you feel that you've done right, don't you? Suppose you could look ahead, ten years from now—

APLEY. My dear, we can only hope. [His gaze has rested on the ivy at the window.] You know, I think those green aphids have pretty well disappeared from the ivy. [He examines it at closer range.] Yes, they have

CATHERINE. I had Margaret blow smoke on them from one of your cigars.

APLEY. You mean Margaret has been smoking my cigars?

CATHERINE. No, she just burned one in a dustpan.

APLEY [this crisis has passed] Oh! [He drifts toward the Phillips-Brooks calendar on the desk] Let me see—what was I going to do this afternoon. [Picks up calendar.] Oh, yes—the Boston Waifs . . . Waifs.

[He savors the word—it sounds all right to him now]

CATHERINE [taking up her sewing]. What, George?

APLEY Nothing, my dear. [He looks at the calendar] My! What with one thing and another we have a busy week . . . The Symphony . . . Meeting of the Pew Holders of King's Chapel . . . Annual Dinner of the Louisa May Alcott Admirers . . . Association for the Propagation of Wild Flowers in Franklin Park . . .

THE CURTAIN IS DOWN

EPILOGUE

SCENE—A corner of the Berkeley Club in Boston. The furnishings are heavy, and reminiscent of those found in gentlemen's clubs or fashionable hotels at the turn of the century. The woodwork is dark oak.

On one wall is a bulletin board marked "Recently Deceased Members." On the other is one of those mottoes in Gothic script that used to be popular in the dens and smoking rooms of our fathers. This motto, in quaint early English, reads: "Bee at Yere Ease in This Thine Inne."

In spite of this cordial invitation the place does not look particularly easy. There are two armchairs done in red leather upholstery, with lots of buttons. Beside one of the armchairs is a cuspidor in multi-glazed Canton china, obviously a relic of an older time. There is one of those racks with newspapers on it—newspapers fastened stiffly to great wooden holders, so that reading them becomes something of a gymnastic feat.

Sitting in one of the chairs is a somewhat older Roger Newcombe, for a dozen years have passed since we last beheld him. He is struggling with one of the club newspapers, and at the same time draining the last of a Scotch and soda. He raps sharply with his glass on the table—a familiar signal, apparently, since instantly a new Scotch and soda is borne in by an elderly retainer. "Elderly" is something of an understatement—he is at least eighty.

ROGER [emerging from behind his Transcript]. Ah! Thank you, Henry. [The drink is placed before him.] Tell me, Henry—how long have you been in the club?

HENRY. Fifty-six years, sir.

ROGER. Fifty-six years! Ever wanted to murder anyone?

HENRY. Oh, no, sir. Only one or two of the members.

ROGER. That's right, Henry—confine it to the members.

[JOHN comes in. A JOHN now in his early thirties—a new JOHN, one who gives the impression of settled middle age, of assurance of inherited position. He wears a broad mourning band on his sleeve.]

JOHN. Oh, hello, Uncle Roger . . . Henry.

ROGER [as the attendant disappears]. Well, well! Sit down, John. Seems to me you're coming in here quite regularly now. How about a drink? . . . Henry!

JOHN. I think I will. I'm quite tired.

ROGER. You don't have to explain it.

JOHN [reaching into his pocket for his keys]. Henry, will you open Father's locker, please, and make me a Martini cocktail? The way Father taught you, Henry.

HENRY. Yes sir. [He turns to go, then suddenly summons up a forgotten message.] Oh! Mrs. Apley telephoned, sir.

JOHN. Yes, Henry?

HENRY. The car cannot call for you today, sir. It is bringing the children home from their nature walk.

JOHN. Thank you, Henry.

HENRY. Oh! . . . And Mrs. Apley also says will you stop at the pet shop, because the canary bird is ready now, sir.

JOHN. Very well, Henry.

HENRY. Thank you, sir.

[HENRY totters out.]

ROGER. What was the matter with the canary bird?

JOHN. Its toenails needed cutting.

ROGER. Couldn't Agnes cut them?

JOHN. Agnes has been quite busy. She's been checking over Father's Chinese bronzes, before they go to the Art Museum.

ROGER. Oh!

JOHN [leaning back in his chair]. It's been a long day. I've been at a meeting of the Boston Waifs.

ROGER. Funny how new Waifs keep coming along.

JOHN. And three hours in the vaults of the State Street Trust Company. Father's estate. We're trying to change over those Municipal one and a halves to something that will pay around two per cent.

ROGER. You know what your father would say to that, John. Aren't you verging a little on the radical?

JOHN. Well, times are changing. Every generation can't be exactly like the last one, can it?

ROGER. No, but it can make a damn good try. . . . Hello, Agnes has knitted you another tie, hasn't she?

JOHN. Yes, she has. [He looks down at it.] Sometimes I wish she'd stop. . . . By the way, I hope you and Aunt Amelia aren't doing anything next Wednesday. We'd like you to come for dinner. It's our tenth anniversary.

ROGER. Tenth anniversary! Well, well!

JOHN. Naturally we're keeping it very quiet. We don't want anyone to think, when we're all in mourning, that we're making an excuse to have a lot of fun.

ROGER. Just ask the family—then you won't have any fun. . . . You know how I keep track of my wedding anniversaries, John? An extra drink each year. Took one drink of my first anniversary, two drinks on my second—I'll be married forty years in June. That's one way of getting out of Boston.

JOHN. I invited Eleanor, of course, but she and Howard always make some excuse not to leave New York. I had a rather characteristic letter from her this morning. You know the way Eleanor goes on [drawing a letter from his pocket]. "Dear John: It seems impossible that you and Agnes have been married only ten years. Doesn't it seem like more?" I don't see why she always jokes about Agnes and me.

ROGER [drily]. I can't imagine.

JOHN. And then she says: "When Howard and I came back to Boston for the funeral, I could not help thinking a good deal about the old days. I think I understand

things better now—Father, Mother, you and Agnes. As Father used to say, 'There is nothing that makes you appreciate Boston more than getting away from it.'"

ROGER. Peculiar girl, isn't she?

JOHN. The funny thing is, she and Howard really seem to be so happy. I wonder if it's just a façade. Do you think they really can be happy, coming from such different backgrounds?

ROGER. No-o. They just think they're happy.

JOHN. It couldn't help but be a shock to Father, when she and Howard eloped. But he never gave the slightest sign.

ROGER. You know, I think I understand George a little better than you did. And I've got an idea that, deep down at the bottom, he was rather pleased by Eleanor's courage.

JOHN [surprised]. Do you really think he was?

ROGER. That's what I do. . . . You know, I miss George—miss him terribly. School, and games, and girls, and Beacon Street—We went through it all together. I always went to him when anything was wrong, and I always came away feeling better. I could find him, any afternoon, sitting right there where you're sitting.

JOHN. I wish Father and I had never quarreled. I wonder what would have happened if I had married . . .

ROGER. Myrtle? You wouldn't have liked it, John—you wouldn't have liked it [HENRY returns with the cocktail] Well! That took quite a while, Henry.

HENRY. I'm sorry sir. I was trying to chill the glass the way Mr. Apley liked them, and I broke it.

JOHN. There will never be anyone like Father, will there, Henry? He was the best friend we ever had.

HENRY. Yes, sir. Indeed he was, sir.

JOHN. Here's to Father. [He turns to HENRY.] Oh, I wish you had something so you could drink, too, Henry.

HENRY. Oh, no. No, sir. Thank you, sir.

ROGER [raising his glass]. Here's to George . . . John, when your father took you to Paris, do you remember that painting by Titian in the Louvre? "The Gentleman with a Glove."

JOHN. H'm?

ROGER. Sargent should have painted your father that way.

JOHN. Yes. I wish he had.

ROGER. But there's one thing George never would have stood for. Not with one glove, John—not with one glove.

[They are drinking together as—

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