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REPRESENTATIVE MODERN PLAYS

ROBERT WARNOCK
UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

AMERICAN

• KEY EDITIONS

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INTRODUCTION

MODERN AMERICAN DRAMA

For over thirty years the drama has been one of the most vigorous and expressive forms of American art. Inspired originally by the dramatic revival in Europe, it has gone on to an individuality and power recognized throughout the world, so that the staging of a new play by Tennessee Williams or Arthur Miller in New York today is followed by productions in leading theaters from Stockholm to Melbourne. On a worthier level than our films it has brought an acquaintance with American life and culture to audiences very far from our shores.

During this period of its maturity, the American theater has produced at least a dozen able playwrights, whose work spans most of the forms of drama. In this volume are gathered examples of the naturalistic tragedy of O'Neill, the expressionistic satire of Kaufman and Connelly, the folk comedy of Sidney Howard, the historical plays in verse of Maxwell Anderson, S. N. Behrman's comedy of manners, Clifford Odets' drama of social protest, and the imaginative studies of American life and character by Williams and Miller. This rich assemblage will serve to suggest that in our time no national drama in the world has been more exciting and productive.

Yet the American theater was the last to respond to the revolution in ideas and art that swept across the stages of the Western world between 1880 and 1920. It lagged twenty years behind the English in accepting the new realism and intellectual

vitality that Ibsen, Strindberg, and Chekhov had brought to Continental drama in the last years of the nineteenth century. More surprisingly, it remained quite innocent of current trends in American fiction through the years before the First World War. The probing realism of Henry James and the bold social criticism of Frank Norris and Theodore Dreiser found only a feeble reflection in the timid problem plays of Bronson Howard and James A. Herne, which barely glanced at such matters as modern marriage and American capitalism. In the early years of our century American drama was embarrassingly backward; and by no stretch of charity could it be called literature.

Yet this backwardness was nothing new. For the century and more of its separate existence the theater in America had offered mostly a belated reflection of developments on the English stage, with some American character types and allusions to the local landscape. The stilted costume plays of Sheridan Knowles and Bulwer-Lytton, which were declaimed to London audiences of the 1820's and 1830's, paralleled the equally heavy romantic dramas of Robert Montgomery Bird and George Henry Boker in the United States. Dion Boucicault brought his sentimental comedies and flashy melodramas from London to New York, where they enjoyed an equal success. After the Civil War these elementary types took on a more American flavor in Yankee comedies and rip-snorting dramas about Texas and the West; and a superficial realism of setting appeared in melodramas with big city locales, New York streets lit by gaslight and enlivened by the roar of elevated trains. But in the nineties, when Pinero and Shaw were following Ibsen into a genuine realism of character, dialogue, and social comment, American playwrights were still largely hack purveyors of mass entertainment. Before 1920 the theater had almost never appealed to even a second-rate literary talent, and there were no dramatists even remotely comparable to Poe, Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman.

REVOLUTION IN THE THEATER

The generation just before the First World War—Belasco, Thomas, Moody, and Fitch—provided a kind of transition to the first really

modern group of American playwrights, and yet the gulf between the two seems today far greater than the bare decade that separated Belasco's ghostly tear jerker, *The Return of Peter Grimm* (1911), from O'Neill's tragedy, *Beyond the Horizon* (1920). The war years (1914-1918) brought the most sudden revolution in taste and social outlook in the history of the United States. An unprecedented involvement in the affairs of Europe freed the theater along with much else in American life and art from its adolescent provincialism, and in its rush to catch up with the Continent the new drama discredited the leaders of only ten years before and made their tepid innovations seem quaint and naive. Even Ibsen's realistic drama of social protest, which had inspired the English revival, was now old-fashioned, so that the American theater largely skipped the period of social criticism that had produced Shaw, Sudermann, and Brieux abroad. The naturalism of Strindberg and Chekhov and the expressionism of Strindberg and the Germans cut deepest in American drama of the twenties.

Yet even as our drama caught up with Europe it largely freed itself from dependence on the mother-world and turned brashly self-confident and American. Its maturing accompanied the arrival of the United States as a world power, prosperous and hopeful beside the weary older lands abroad, which bore the scars and disillusionment of a disastrous war. However contemptuous of Babbitt and Main Street our writers of the Harding-Coolidge era may have been, they inevitably partook of the aggressive assurance, the "rugged individualism," behind the American dream. Our theatrical center was now New York, eventually the very special world of Broadway, with its highly American brand of smartness and urbanity. Here for a decade carefree Americans could afford to ignore the rising tides of economic depression and social conflict that wracked Europe increasingly through the period between the wars, and luxuriate in a national extravagance that marked the height of our material success. George Kaufman and George Kelly might satirize it, Anderson and O'Neill might raise questions about spiritual values behind the national façade of good fortune; but by and large our drama was full of the reckless swagger of the new America and the impudent cleverness of Broadway.

Nowhere was the shift in outlook more conspicuous than in the relaxing of moral standards and Victorian decorum in the war years. Overnight it freed our stage from the moralistic tyranny that had outlawed *Ghosts* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession* only a

decade before. There were battles still to be fought with bluenose censors—for Bourdet's *The Captive* and O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*—but the theater of *Lulu Belle* and *The Shanghai Gesture* generally reflected the light-hearted view of sex and sin that flourished in the Roaring Twenties. The popular discovery of Freud and psychoanalysis crystallized the new outlook and gave it a new vocabulary of "complex" and "libido," which sometimes travestied the originator, it is true, and yet epitomized the new view of man as a product of dark but fascinating forces beyond his control, which conveniently freed him from moral responsibility. Sidney Howard and Eugene O'Neill set enthusiastically about translating the complexes to the stage, though often with a neatness that oversimplified Freud. A general skepticism of moral teaching swept away the last restrictions upon free expression and encouraged a frank treatment of the whole world of man that was already accepted in Paris and Berlin.

THE LITTLE THEATERS

In the war decade, that period of swift transition in American drama, the center of germination was not the professional theater of our big cities. Commercial producers went their conservative way and at first shunned experimentation with an art of limited appeal and daring content. The first truly modern American playwrights had to look to their own resources and to the little theaters that they might establish as humble show places for their work. The examples of Antoine's Théâtre Libre in Paris (1887) and Grein's Independent Theatre in London (1891), which were established to give Ibsen and his contemporaries a hearing, had inspired the first little theater in Chicago as early as 1906 and eventually a host of others that brought the new drama to Boston, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Seattle, Los Angeles, Dallas, and many other cities. But the pre-eminence of New York as the American theater capital gave a unique importance to the little stages just off Broadway, whose experiments were finally to conquer the commercial center itself. Of these, the most important were the Playwrights' Theater (1916) in Greenwich Village, better known as the Provincetown Players (1918) from their original home on Cape Cod,

and the Washington Square Players (1914), who became the Theatre Guild in 1919. The Provincetown group in particular encouraged native playwrights and included O'Neill on its board of directors. The Theatre Guild emphasized artistic production and gave American audiences their first views of many Continental and British dramatists, notably Bernard Shaw. With the disbanding of the Provincetown Players in 1929, O'Neill was taken over by the Guild, which also sponsored Sidney Howard, Maxwell Anderson, Elmer Rice, S. N. Behrman, Philip Barry, John Howard Lawson, and other Americans from time to time.

Coming two or three decades after the so-called free theaters of England and the Continent, the art theaters in the United States performed a different service for the American stage. The issue was no longer a fight for truth in the treatment of social issues, but rather the demand for a new dramatic art in both the writing and the staging of plays. The free range of artistic imagination, long outlawed by the routine production standards of the commercial impresarios, opened up exciting new possibilities in all departments of the theater. Scene designers like Robert Edmond Jones, Lee Simonson, and Jo Mielziner, directors like Philip Moeller and Rouben Mamoulian, and eager actors beyond number collaborated with the playwright in a common artistic project. The plodding realism of the Belasco school of staging fell of its own weight before the simplified, often stylized approach of the new designers. The most startling innovations of all sprang from German expressionism, which deliberately distorted reality to abstract the supposed essence of a dramatic situation or to see it with the bias of a special mood or state of mind. Pure expressionism did not flourish for long in America, but it served to free designers from slavery to literal realism so that they might explore new directions of their own.

In a surprisingly short time the commercial theater of New York and other cities adjusted itself to the revolution in taste that set in around 1920, and as the maturing of the motion picture at about the same time began to rob the stage of a good part of its public, the Broadway theater lost its function of mass entertaining and was forced to appeal to the more discriminating if it was to survive. The change was not completed at once, to be sure. So naïve and sentimental a play as *Abie's Irish Rose* ran for four years through the heart of the twenties, and most of the 270 new productions on Broadway in the banner season of 1927-1928 made

little pretension to art. The Provincetown group continued to function until 1929, although with an increasingly professional outlook. Today the little theaters have returned to their amateur status, and the American drama is once more in the hands of the commercial producers, who have shown more courage in experimenting with untried and unconventional dramatists than one might expect. And they have long since accepted the artistic revolution in staging that the little theaters began.

Acting standards in particular suffer severely from the methods of commercial production in America. The absence of permanent professional companies, such as the state theaters on the Continent, the Old Vic and Stratford-on-Avon companies in England, and the Abbey Theatre and Gate Theatre in Ireland, has denied young actors the opportunity of playing many roles in succession and in close association with more experienced players, all dedicated to a common style and a continuous tradition. The few noble attempts to establish such companies—especially Eve Le Gallienne's Civic Repertory Theatre (1926-1932) and the Group Theatre (1930-1941)—have succumbed to economic distress. On the other hand, drama schools, of which there are now several excellent examples in the United States, fill this gap to some extent by training young aspirants in all the arts of the theater, but their achievements, however fine, are still on the amateur level. Here the most influential figure was George Pierce Baker, who first offered a course in playwriting at Radcliffe in 1905 and at Harvard in 1906, founded his famous "47 Workshop" at Harvard in 1913, and became head of the Yale drama school in 1925. Among the countless personalities of the new theater who studied with him were the playwrights Edward Sheldon, O'Neill, Howard, Barry, and Behrman; the designers Robert Edmond Jones, Lee Simonson, and Donald Oenslager; the directors Kenneth Macgowan and Theresa Helburn; and the critics Robert Benchley, Heywood Broun, Walter Pritchard Eaton, and John Mason Brown. Without much power of artistic creation himself Baker had an amazing talent for inspiring others.

DRAMATIC STYLES IN THE TWENTIES

The three decades of modern American drama form three distinct periods in themselves, each a reflection of contemporary events

in the political and economic spheres. To each belongs a new generation of playwrights, though some of the very earliest figures in the general movement, such as Elmer Rice and Maxwell Anderson, are still active in the theater today. During the twenties the members of the first generation, which included O'Neill, Rice, Howard, Kaufman, Kelly, Barry, Anderson, Paul Green, and Marc Connelly, went their several ways of artistic exploration, blissfully unaware, as was most of America, of the gathering clouds of economic dislocation that were to end this contented and carefree era with the stockmarket crash of 1929. Halfway through the decade they were joined by two of our finest comic dramatists, Robert E. Sherwood and S. N. Behrman.

Perhaps because of the late date of its maturing, modern American drama displayed at first a variety and eclecticism beyond any national stage in Europe. More serious and intense than the suave but generally superficial English school, it could still laugh with a bumptious gayety that seldom illuminated the gloomy, even angry stages of Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Italy. If its comedy was not so witty and polished as that of Paris and Budapest, it had more range. The New York theater played host to every major dramatist in Europe and learned and borrowed for its own new life. The Civic Repertory Theatre offered year after year the best of Ibsen, Chekhov, Heijermans, Martínez Sierra, the Alvarez Quinteros, and Giraudoux. The Theatre Guild pioneered with Ibsen, Shaw, Pirandello, Capek, Toller, Werfel, Kaiser, Wedekind, Molnár, Claudel, and even the Soviet Russian Tretyakov. From this rich past and present abroad the new American playwrights took what they wanted to fashion their individual styles.

Perhaps for this reason there was no American school as such, no single group of writers with common artistic aims. Nearly every school and style found a reflection in our enthusiastic theater. A conventional realism that had its roots as far back as Ibsen appeared in Howard and others, who followed Ibsen's example in giving an objective and unromanticized picture of one segment of life as it is, without melodrama or sentimentality. Naturalism, the more extreme and uncompromising form of realism, sometimes characterized O'Neill and later Sidney Kingsley. In O'Neill it took on the morbidity of Strindberg in probing abnormal states of mind and unpleasant truths about the sexual motivations of men and women. In Kingsley it was to carry the precise documentation of Zola through a study of doctors, detectives, and other groups in

their professional and private activities. The new expressionism of the twenties was imitated in only a few American plays, but they were among the most important of the period. O'Neill went back to Strindberg for *The Emperor Jones* and *The Hairy Ape,* dramas of personal torment in which all the world is seen through the eyes of a distracted hero, and the characters, action, dialogue, and décor become a grisly distortion of reality as he sees it. Rice's *The Adding Machine* and Kaufman and Connelly's *Beggar on Horseback* stem from the German expressionists, with their indignant attacks upon contemporary society, generalizing their characters into prototypes of social classes and their action into a travesty of the evils they condemn.

Romanticism in the traditional terms of Hugo and Rostand inspired no notable dramas in the skeptical twenties, though O'Neill and Howard experimented with it unsuccessfully. The idealized treatment of history, with noble heroes and heroines spouting fancy speeches and swaggering through extravagant action, had been discredited with the fall of the decadent romanticism of the late nineteenth century, but Anderson's historical plays in verse a little later revived a measure of the grand manner. Of romanticism in a more general sense, however, there was still plenty in the routine comedies and melodramas of the period, such as Austin Strong's *Seventh Heaven,* which continued to sentimentalize or sensationalize their pictures of life only a little less obviously than the older drama had done.

The symbolism of Maeterlinck, a dreamy, poetic extension of romanticism full of metaphorical overtones, found no representative in America, except incidentally in a later folk fantasy like Howard Richardson and William Berney's *Dark of the Moon* or in plays with symbolic characters like O'Neill's *Lazarus Laughed* and Barry's *Here Come the Clowns.* The still more bizarre schools of the Left Bank in Paris, especially the surrealism of Cocteau, found an even slighter reflection in the whimsies of Saroyan in the thirties, though we should not forget the success of the one full-scale specimen of American surrealism, Gertrude Stein's *Four Saints in Three Acts.* This perverse conglomeration of incongruous characters and dialogue made no sense whatever, but still managed to be absurdly charming.

In general, realism in various forms and degrees dominated the new theater. The subject matter was almost always contemporary, and in the rare instances when it came from the past it

received a realistic or even cynical treatment, as in Edwin Justin Mayer's superb comedy about Benvenuto Cellini, *The Firebrand,* and O'Neill's satire of an American business man in the person of Marco Polo, *Marco Millions.* The medium of the new theater was almost exclusively prose.

THE NEW COMEDY

Most of the traditional types of drama appeared in the American theater of the twenties. Comedy ranged from the drawing-room repartee of Barry and Behrman to the comic fantasy of *Beggar on Horseback,* from the racy Broadway farces of George Kaufman with their wisecracks and gags to the tart folk comedy of *The Late Christopher Bean* and *The Show-Off.* There were even a few fine examples of historical comedy, such as Sherwood's *The Road to Rome.* American comedy was more often low than high, and even the best of the drawing-room excursions, such as *Biography,* fall short of Wilde and Shaw, or even Maugham and Coward. But the comedy of manners is the best of modern English drama and the product of a national tradition extending back three hundred years. First-rate American comedy goes back only thirty years and is salty with the argot of our big cities and the provincial attitudes of small-town life.

Satire was abundant in the twenties, but it was gay rather than bitter and concentrated on American manners and the idiosyncrasies of special groups rather than the political system and social structure beneath. Kaufman and Connelly gave a nightmarish indictment of the national materialism and vulgarity in *Beggar on Horseback,* reminiscent of H. L. Mencken's monthly diatribes against the naïveté, boorishness, and smug puritanism of Babbitt and his family in *The American Mercury.* It is with the intellectual élite, the musician hero, that the spectators must identify themselves in this play to laugh at the uncultured American horde. Rice's *The Adding Machine* condemned the mechanization of American life, but not the big business that had brought it. The more serious onslaught upon irresponsible government, free enterprise, and the class system did not arrive until the depression-wracked thirties. The playwright was as yet the artist, de-

manding free expression and cultural reform, not the social and political rebel to come. His usual target was the complacent bourgeoisie and its blatant materialism, though special segments of American life, such as Hollywood, tin-pan alley, and yellow-sheet journalism, were lampooned by Kaufman and others. The later social protest was only vaguely seen as yet in such plays as Anderson's *Saturday's Children* and Rice's *Street Scene,* which emphasized the effect of slum squalor upon the lives and dreams of the poor people who were forced to live in it.

THE TYPES OF SERIOUS DRAMA

Serious drama took even more various forms. Tragedy was preeminently in the hands of O'Neill, who saw no peace for men now that Freud had revealed the inescapable conflicts in their souls. The relentless Fate of the Greeks was metamorphosed into bewildering drives within men's personalities, which brought inescapable friction with their environment and with one another. O'Neill's tragedies provided a diapason of uncompromising conscience in the reckless twenties, which led him a little later to dark mysticism and a dour promise of salvation.

The problem play, which evolved from Ibsen and Pinero, was a favorite with the lesser playwrights. Although it took a lighthearted turn in Philip Barry's comments on marriage and divorce, such as *Paris Bound* and *The Animal Kingdom,* it was more often serious, as in Howard's *They Knew What They Wanted,* which presented a realistic view of adultery. Barry carried the type further into the drama of ideas with *Hotel Universe,* in which a group of tormented people worked out their destinies with the aid of a psychiatrist of sorts. Occasionally the problem play grew militant and propagandized for reform, for example, in Anderson and Hickerson's ferocious tract about the Sacco-Vanzetti case, *Gods of the Lightning.* This drama expressed the prevailing view of many liberals that the two Italian immigrants, executed for a pay-roll robbery in Massachusetts, were denied a fair trial because of their radical political opinions.

The drama of social comment, which took a serious view of social change in the United States, or the need for it, ranged from

Paul Green's study of the decay of Southern aristocracy in *The House of Connelly* to Lawson's *Processional,* an expressionistic picture of American society in hopelessly pessimistic colors. The fantasy as a type was closely allied to expressionism in the twenties, but it appeared in a more traditional form in John Balderston's *Berkeley Square,* in which a young American fell under the spell of an old English house and was returned briefly to the world of his eighteenth-century ancestors. Nor should we forget the folk drama, of which great things were expected at the time. It flourished especially away from New York, notably at Frederick H. Koch's little theater at the University of North Carolina. From this fine institution stemmed the two best regional studies of the Negro to reach New York, Paul Green's *In Abraham's Bosom* and the Heywards' *Porgy.*

These were only the major manifestations of American drama in the heady decade. Except possibly for O'Neill, it disclosed no authentic titans to set beside Ibsen, Strindberg, and Shaw, nor did it contribute important new styles to the world theater. But taken together, the new dramatists produced an amazing number of worthy plays with an exciting diversity not to be found in any national school of Europe.

THE DECADE OF THE DEPRESSION

In the thirties the harsh reality of the Great Depression and the ominous shadow of fascism in Europe sobered the best of our playwrights. The theater itself suffered a severe shrinkage as it now lost most of its former public to the new talkies from Hollywood. This was "no time for comedy," nor for mere artistic experiment with symbolism and expressionism, nor for detached Freudian speculation about the individual and his neuroses, nor for querulous attacks on Mr. America and Main Street. O'Neill alone remained aloof, until he retired after 1934. The leading comedians—Barry, Behrman, and Sherwood—turned serious, and the serious playwrights, such as Rice and Anderson, took to preaching, much to the detriment of sound playwriting. The reckless twenties became a dream, remembered at first with bitterness for their irresponsibility, and only recently with an affectionate nostalgia

as the last carefree age that America is likely to know for a long time. The American ideal of material success through free enterprise seemed now discredited, and a new ideal of social responsibility was increasingly discussed on the stage in the New Deal days. The three leading figures in the second generation—Sidney Kingsley, Clifford Odets, and Lillian Hellman—were all fired by a new social conscience and brought to light the poverty of the underprivileged and the growing social unrest in the United States through the era of the depression.

Kingsley and Odets were both discovered by the Group Theatre, an actors' company with liberal political views. But in the mid-thirties a more militant left-wing movement developed on New York stages off Broadway and produced a raucous, prole tarian drama following more or less the Marxist line. The movement had its roots in the New Playwrights' Theatre (1924-1927), a premature radical organization which not even the support of Otto Kahn, the broad-minded patron of so many artists of his day, had been able to make palatable to the jazz age. Now the bread lines and the federal dole were creating the perfect climate for the proletarian drama, which blossomed embarrassingly within the Federal Theatre Project, a wing of the Works Progress Administration created by the Roosevelt program to provide work for distressed artists of the theater. This noble experiment in government support of the arts on a national scale eventually expelled the obstreperous radicals from its stages, but not before they had so discredited the whole project with Congress that it was specifically voted out of further relief measures. The proletarian playwrights found refuge in theaters of their own, such as Labor Stage, the Theatre Union, the Theatre of Action, and the Theatre Collective, which flourished off Broadway between 1933 and 1939.

The American pioneer in the left-wing school, John Howard Lawson, whose *Processional* had been staged by the Theatre Guild as early as 1925, was joined in the thirties by a group of aggressive and noisy youngsters, such as Albert Maltz, George Sklar, Paul Peters, and Michael Blankfort. The proletarian drama took many forms, but most of them were variations on the strike play, in which the class struggle was crystallized in the efforts of an underprivileged or persecuted group—taxi drivers, coal miners, stevedores, merchant seamen, Negroes—to improve its lot. The characters lost their individuality and were simplified into representatives of social classes: the noble workers and their long-suffering

wives and sweethearts, the ruthless capitalists and the rascally stool pigeons, the scalawag politicians and the mean middle class. The conflict usually reached a melodramatic climax in the strike or revolt of the underdogs, with cheers if they succeeded or bitter determination if their efforts failed.

The repetition of type characters and type situations and the violence of the shock technique eventually wearied audiences that were not ideologically wrapped up in the left-wing cause, so that the fourteen-week run of *Stevedore* in 1934 was not repeated by later plays. Toward the end of the thirties the success of the New Deal in relieving economic distress and the growing threat of war in Europe lost to the left-wing stages what public they had formerly enjoyed. Most of their playwrights moved on to innocuous positions in Hollywood. The best known of all their efforts, and their closest approach to a masterpiece, is Odets' *Waiting for Lefty.*

The left-wing playwrights also contributed enthusiastically to the pacifist drama, when the party line adopted the popular notion that vested interests were a direct cause of war, and identified big business with munitions manufacturers and warmongers. The best of these plays, *Peace on Earth,* attracted New York audiences for eighteen weeks in 1934. But pacifism was more universally popular in the thirties than this would suggest. As an aftermath of disillusionment with President Wilson's aims in the First World War and the sorry fate of the League of Nations, American intellectuals were now almost solidly opposed to war under any circumstances. Paul Green and Elmer Rice attacked the problem in their lesser plays, and Sherwood was especially haunted by the specter of violence in such cogent dramas as *The Petrified Forest* and *Idiot's Delight.*

THE WAR DECADE AND AFTER

But when war arrived in 1939, it came with a brutal aggression that outraged the intellectuals most of all. Among the anti-Nazi plays that had given warning of this threat, only Lillian Hellman's *Watch on the Rhine* had really stirred the theater public. Now our leading playwrights reflected the general reversal of American sentiment toward war as they rose to express our national determina-

tion to oppose tyranny in defense of democracy and human rights. None was more outspoken than Sherwood himself, whose *There Shall Be No Night* and *The Rugged Path* were fired with a burning conviction. Anderson and Miss Hellman also wrote eloquently of heroism on the battlefield and at home.

So American drama of the forties was to be dominated at first by the war and the aftermath of war. The problems of fighting men received serious treatment in William Wister Haines' *Command Decision* and Paul Osborn's *A Bell for Adano,* and a wry comic perspective in *South Pacific* and *Mr. Roberts.* The soldier walked into parlor comedy in *Dear Ruth* and *John Loves Mary,* both by Norman Krasna. Arthur Miller began his career in earnest with a grim study of the effect of the war on a middle-class family, *All My Sons.* Yet it must be confessed that the war as a subject inspired no really first-rate dramatic writing. The best plays of the period were those that reaffirmed faith in the democratic ideals for which America was fighting, such as Kingsley's historical study of the Jefferson-Hamilton conflict in *The Patriots.*

The general economic inflation in America during the war years and the sudden prosperity of those who stayed at home were reflected in a short-lived boom in the theater. For a brief period the Broadway box offices were besieged by hosts of free spenders in search of entertainment. But the inflation also raised the costs of production to fantastic heights, so that with the end of the war and the drop in playgoers' buying power, ticket prices could not be brought back into line with their income. As a result, the number of new productions declined steadily each year, and producers would risk fifty or a hundred thousand dollars only on a play that promised to be a smash hit. Untried writers found it hard to gain a showing for their plays, especially because the experimental theaters and nonprofit organizations of the twenties and thirties had almost completely disappeared. The arena of the drama was perilously reduced to a score of show places in New York and a handful of tributary theaters in other cities. In 1951 only ANTA (The American National Theatre and Academy) had risen with a special charter from Congress to reanimate the serious drama on Broadway and bring it once more to the provinces. Until the cost of production can be drastically reduced and theaters reopened in many cities at popular prices, we cannot feel comfortable about the future of our stage.

With the coming of peace in 1945 the established playwrights, in general, beat a retreat to their earlier manners and material and tried with dwindling success to forget the years between and to revive the carefree drama of the twenties. Anderson returned to his historical plays in verse with *Joan of Lorraine* and *Anne of the Thousand Days.* Behrman, Barry, and Kelly returned to light comedy, and Kaufman to his breezy comments on American life. Rice, Odets, and Miss Hellman forgot their concern for the world and the social order and offered more or less serious studies of individual men and women. For Rice it was a playful picture of a *Dream Girl* and her romantic imagination, for Odets an account of the regeneration of an alcoholic actor in *The Country Girl;* and in *The Autumn Garden* Miss Hellman searched into the frustrations of a houseful of middle-aged people in the subtle manner of Chekhov. Even O'Neill emerged from retirement to contribute a double-decker inquiry into a group of soul-sick derelicts, *The Iceman Cometh,* which brought back memories of twenty years before.

But the nostalgia of the older generations deceived no one into believing that all was back to normal in the postwar world. Talk of the atomic bomb provided a disturbing obbligato to the national readjustment, and the outbreak of the Korean war strengthened the growing conviction that the democratic peace for which the Second World War had been fought was once more an illusion.

There is little hope expressed in our theater at present, perhaps because the theater reflects these currents in our national thinking. Even the left-wing dreams of the depression years have largely lost their appeal, especially since the Communist regime of Soviet Russia has taken on the earmarks of a new fascism. The two leaders of the new generation of playwrights, Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller, are both spokesmen of gloom and disillusionment who bluntly discredit the old order and yet express little enthusiasm for a new one. For Miller it is the American dream of rugged individualism that is dying; for Williams the hopes of the pathetic, dislocated relics of genteel and gracious living out of our self-sufficient past. Yet the pathos of *The Glass Menagerie* is relieved by the pale charm of its heroines, and the middle-class hero of *Death of a Salesman* attains a dignity in his suicide because he emerges at last from his shell of salesmanship as a worthy human being. Both

playwrights bring their characters down to earth and confront them with the unfriendly times in which we live.

As new clouds gathered over Europe and Asia, Kingsley was the first of our playwrights to sound the warning of a new threat to human rights, if not to our national security. But *Darkness at Noon* (1951) is only by implication a positive play. Going back ten years to adapt Arthur Koestler's novel about the persecution of a discredited Communist leader in the Soviet Union, it reminds us of the enduring value of personal freedom in our system through the grim example of one who has lost it under another. A decade before, *Watch on the Rhine* had sounded the same warning about fascism in Germany. But Kingsley's play was an isolated instance in its season. Our theater is as tired as the postwar world in general, and audiences at the moment clamor for a comedy of escape—even second-rate comedy rather than too close a scrutiny of the harsh realities of the present.

Yet the American drama perseveres, and each season still produces its quota, however small, of challenging works of art. The demise of dramatic creation in so many European lands, especially Scandinavia, Italy, Spain, and probably Germany, has not yet reached to America, nor certainly to France and England. And American drama retains its variety as well as its vigor. Realism, naturalism, and imaginative experiment still find their places in our serious and comic plays. An unconventional play like *Billy Budd* (1951) can still raise a clamor of critical controversy. Nor should we forget the breezy musical comedies, such as *Guys and Dolls* and *Where's Charley?* and our streamlined operettas, such as *Oklahoma* and *The King and I,* which are perhaps the most original of America's contributions to the modern stage. Of little interest for their scripts as such, these lively concoctions depend upon a neat union of plot, comic dialogue, music, dancing, and décor for their special appeal. Finally, in Williams and Miller, the most exciting of our younger playwrights, we see the promise of more to come in a drama that tempers the truth of realism with the fancy of poetic improvisation. This compromise has always been the special strength of the American theater, which since the earliest plays of O'Neill has remained close to life as it is and yet found a place for the longings of the imagination and the higher values of the spirit. It is this enduring direction in our drama that gives us hope for the future.

reading a play

Reading a play is unlike reading any other type of literature, because a drama script is not conceived by its author as a literary end in itself, like a novel or a poem, but only as one means to the end of an experience in the theater. Though it may be the core of the dramatic performance, the bare dialogue of the writer is vitalized on the stage by a battery of other artists—the actors, the director, the designers of scenery and costumes, to say nothing of the stage managers, stagehands, electricians, musicians, and humbler assistants behind the scenes. Bringing the play to life as the author visualized it is a group project which can never be duplicated in the library.

Any type of narrative literature makes demands upon a reader's imagination, but a play, which assumes at the start the assistance of so many other artists, gives the reader far fewer clues to work with. In the theater a play may become the most direct form of narrative art, because all of the settings and characters and dialogue take on an unmistakable definiteness which allows little leeway to the spectator's imagination. But the bare text of the play is certainly the most indirect, because the author has denied himself almost completely the opportunity to comment on his people and their actions and to tell us what to think about them.

Hence, as has been said so often, to read a play with pleasure one must somehow stage it in the theater of his mind. In realizing the intention of the dramatist, one must himself take the roles of the designer, the actors, and most of all the director, who welds the various forces into a single dramatic experience. Readers differ widely in their ability to do this and hence in their capacity to enjoy the printed text of a play. In part this is a matter of experience with the theater itself. One who has seen many dramas on the stage will readily focus that background on a new script. A producer in deciding whether to take a chance on a new work must have an unusual skill in picturing it in his mind as the audience will finally see and hear it. An experienced playgoer can do the same, for the very legend "Act One" brings

him to 8:45 and a seat in the tenth row center as the audience settle in their seats and the house lights dim. He supplies the conventions of the theater as he moves down the printed page.

In part, reading a play is a matter of the reader's experience with the kind of life and people that the author is presenting. A New Englander who has looked objectively at the small-town folk around him will probably relish the Haggett family in *The Late Christopher Bean* more than a reader in a Midwestern city for whom Vermont is only a state on the map. The point of view of Marion Froude in *Biography* may seem very bizarre or even shocking to a reader who has had no touch with the cosmopolitan and somewhat Bohemian world that she represents. In a superficial way the movies have familiarized us with many kinds of life in America and elsewhere that may be remote from our actual experience. Whether accurate or not, this background will rise in our minds to provide setting and atmosphere for the play. And in reading *Valley Forge* you will find it hard not to picture Washington immediately in the stuffy trappings of Gilbert Stuart.

But ultimately it is not so much the reader's background as his imagination that determines what he can get from a printed play. Some students consider drama the easiest kind of literature to read; just as many consider it the hardest. Your enjoyment here will depend upon your power of visualizing, of cooperating with the playwright to bring to life the picture in his mind. With fewer guides than in the novel, you can have the fun of re-creating these images very much as you choose. This is to some extent a matter of training, and the more plays you read, the easier the process will become.

At the start you may find some preparation for your reading helpful. Begin with the setting. If a photograph of the original set is given in your text, study it carefully. But usually you must build the set yourself. In that case, take a few minutes to draw a ground plan according to the author's instructions, so as to picture where the doors and other entrances are, what relation the chairs and other pieces of furniture have to each other, where the characters are when

they use them. Refer to your plan occasionally as the stage directions indicate the movements of the actors.

Constructing character is a different matter. A good playwright will no more give away all the facts about his people at the start than will a good novelist. But at least you should pay attention to his first description of their physical appearance, because this will be one clue to what we are to find beneath. When Odets introduces Harry Fatt as "a fat man of porcine appearance . . . well fed and confident," you may be pretty sure that Fatt is not a favorite person of the author. And Behrman is even more obliging with his tiny essay on each of his major figures at the start.

Next, you should pause at the end of each act, as the author intended you to, for that ten-minute stretch and discussion of the play with yourself in the lobby of your mind. Consider how much you know of each major character by this time. Remember that in drama characters are revealed exclusively by what they say and do and by what others may say about them. Now that the aside and the soliloquy have been banished almost entirely from our stages, the playwright cannot go far in telling you what they think.

At the end of the play you will consider each of the major characters as a whole. Has each been consistently projected so that the motivation of his decisions and actions has been clear and plausible? Is each sufficiently complex to seem a human being, or do you end with the uncomfortable feeling that you have been following the conflict of two-dimensional heroes and villains, pasteboard figures simplified out of all resemblance to real people? Of course you must be reasonable, because, unlike a novelist, a playwright has only two hours in which to project his characters and tell his story, and he is depending upon the help of actors who may be more skillful than you.

Then there is the action to be thought through, and here the problems of reading a play loom even larger. In the theater the physical activity of the players brings action to life with a vividness found in no other form of narrative; in the library the reverse is true. With only the most perfunctory assistance from the author, you must visualize people eating and dancing and fighting and making love.

But in another sense, action means plot, the story that the drama sets out to tell, and here the two-hour limitation restricts the playwright most severely. Although dramatists have seldom heeded the exact laws for play construction worked out by dogmatic critics, it is true that the peculiar demands of their medium have led them to standardize their approach to plot much more than the novelists. Although Shakespeare might develop four plots all at once in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream,* and a modern drama like Lillian Hellman's *The Autumn Garden* may tell simultaneously the life stories of a good many people, most playwrights find it wise to follow the advice of Aristotle more or less and concentrate on one central plot, which should be enough for two hours. By the end of the first act you ought to have a clear idea of the direction in which the playwright is taking you.

It was the French critic Brunetière who crystallized the idea that the plot usually evolves from a dramatic conflict within one or more of the characters. After you have finished your play, you should consider whether this was true of it and if so, just where the conflict lay. Was it between two individuals, as between the two lady novelists in John van Druten's *Old Acquaintance;* or between an individual and a group, as in Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People;* or between two groups, as in John Howard Lawson's strike play, *Marching Song;* or between an individual and the forces of fate or nature or social change, as in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* and Miller's *Death of a Salesman;* or between an individual and himself, as in O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones?* Not all plots submit readily to such analysis. Comedies, in particular, may take a very light view of plot conflict, though in *Beggar on Horseback* and *Biography* the opposing forces are clearly drawn. And there have been dissenters from Brunetière's neat definition, especially in recent years when plays have grown increasingly free in style and conception.

In the same way the old arrangement of the stages of action has been very liberally interpreted away from the nineteenth-century ideal of "the well-made play." Nevertheless, you will find that most plays illustrate after a fashion the traditional cycle of action: (1) *Exposition* of the back-

ground of the plot and characters, providing what we must know to develop an interest in the proceedings. In a serious play this will probably involve a statement in indirect terms of the basic problem. (2) *Development* of this situation with the addition of complications, often leading to a *minor climax,* or high point of interest, at the end of the first act of a three-act play. (3) *Development,* or involution, continued up to the highest point of suspense, the *major climax,* which often appears at the end of the second act, but sometimes later. In tragedy the hero may reach the zenith of his hopes in this scene, in a comedy the nadir of his difficulties, for in any case the plot has found its turning point. (4) The *resolution,* or untangling of the plot strands, as we see with increasing clarity in the last act the hopelessness of the tragic hero's plight or the way out of the comic hero's troubles. (5) The *solution,* or dénouement, in which the hero's fate is finally settled. If the play has posed a problem of some kind, the author will probably settle it here. Beyond that the final curtain cannot be long delayed, because the dramatic suspense is now at an end.

When you have finished the play, test your understanding of it—and the clarity of the author's presentation—by phrasing a generalized statement of the theme. This will incorporate the original problem and his answer to it in a sentence or two. It may range from so simple a theme as "Crime does not pay" for a melodrama up to a very subtle and complex idea. If the author has tried to persuade you to his way of thinking, as Odets does in *Waiting for Lefty,* evaluate also the cogency of his argument.

If you must be your own director in reading a play, you must also be your own audience. The performance of a play is a group experience in which the audience collaborates with all that happens on the stage. People who have paid good money to be entertained are usually in a mood to be. It is true that a coughing child or a snoring grandfather may disrupt the proceedings, and the slightest noise may blot out an important line. But in general the participation of the audience serves the objective of the playwright extremely well. He has them where he wants them, anchored to their seats and required to listen through the act without the accompaniment of the radio or other distractions. It is this

concentration of a group of people who are of a common mind for the evening that makes the electric quality of the theater experience when the play itself is right. A comic line that would produce a smile in the library inspires a roar of infectious laughter in the theater. And the intense stillness during an emotional scene heightens the excitement of everyone in the auditorium.

There is no real substitute for this, of course, in reading a play. The best you can do is to approximate the concentrated conditions of the theater. Try to read in a quiet room by yourself, without the interference of other people doing other things. Only under such conditions can you lend the playwright the full power of your imagination to do what he originally expected others would do for him—and you. Then you will discover that a play, even in the library, makes an ideal evening's entertainment.

GEORGE S. KAUFMAN (1889-)

MARC CONNELLY (1890-)

The satiric comedy of American life that flourished between the wars is associated especially with the name of George S. Kaufman, who has entertained his countrymen for over thirty years with a wide variety of humorous inventions. Born into a Pittsburgh family of modest means, he was educated in the public schools and tried several odd jobs before migrating to New York and a career in newspaper work, which culminated in a position as drama critic of *The New York Times*. Reviewing plays led Kaufman to attempt writing them, but almost always in collaboration with other writers. Being a very sociable chap, he enjoys working with others, and has achieved a special reputation as both director and "doctor" of the plays of other authors. More than one of his fellow dramatists is indebted to Kaufman for enlivening and sharpening a play with wit, comic business, and sound craftsmanship. And Kaufman, on his side, is indebted to many collaborators for inspiration. In the long parade of his successes only one, *The Butter and Egg Man* (1925), was his work alone.

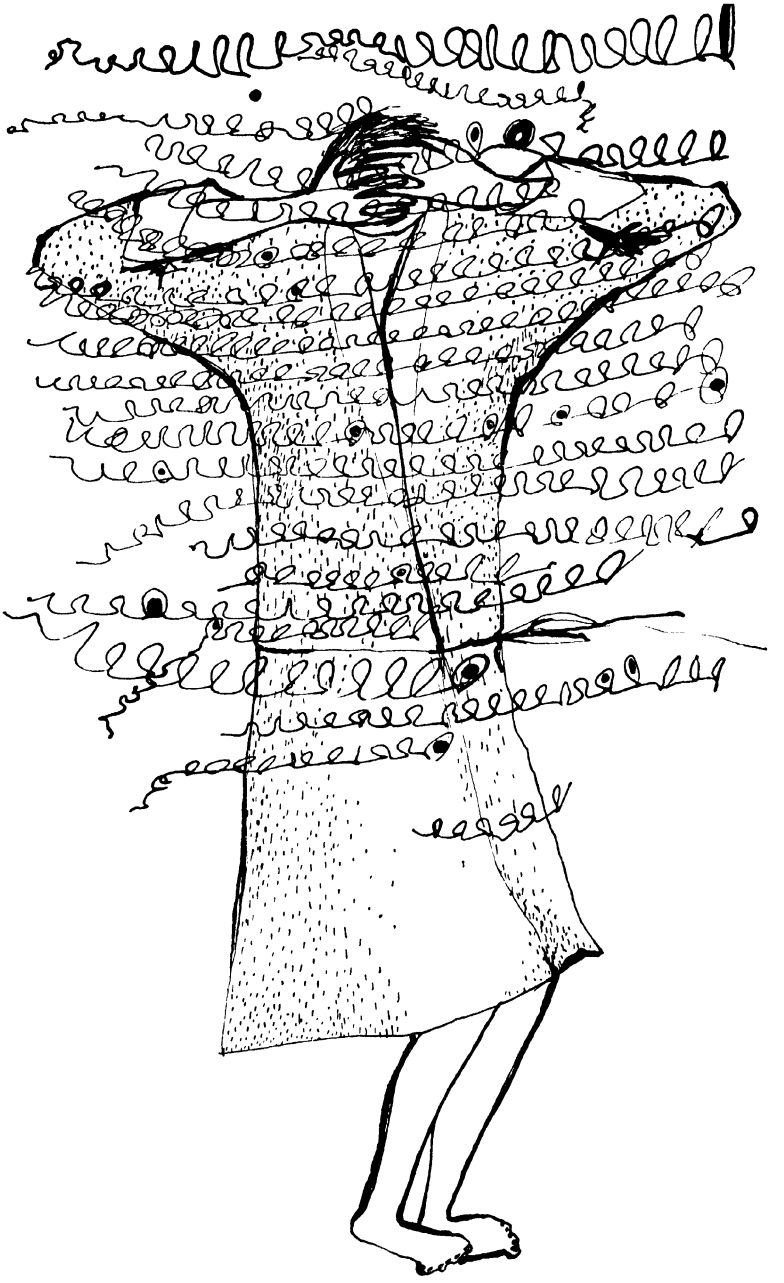
The earliest of his successful collaborations was with Marc Connelly, who is also a Pennsylvanian turned New Yorker. Born in McKeesport, Connelly was educated at Trinity Hall in Washington, Pennsylvania, but gravitated to Broadway and in 1920 began to work with Kaufman on a

comedy about a nitwit American housewife named *Dulcy,* who was to become for a time a character in American folklore. It was Connelly's first produced play and Kaufman's first success, and it brought popular acclaim to a young English actress named Lynn Fontanne, who played the title role. In four crowded years Kaufman and Connelly produced seven plays and musical comedies, but with *Beggar on Horseback* (1924) their collaboration ended. Kaufman went on to a pageant of successes with many other writers, especially Edna Ferber and Moss Hart. Connelly's later output was more modest, but it included the famous folk play, *The Green Pastures.*

In a collaboration it is difficult to evaluate separately the work of the two authors. But in this case their subsequent comedies suggest that Kaufman may have contributed the Broadway brilliance and topical wisecracks, the more absurd characters and laugh-provoking situations to *Beggar on Horseback,* while Connelly may have been responsible for the subtler and more human elements, such as the love story and the charming pantomime (which was originally suggested by the producer, Winthrop Ames). This, however, is mere speculation. As an expressionist play, *Beggar on Horseback* is unique in the careers of both writers, whose work has otherwise been in the style of more or less comic realism.

BEGGAR ON HORSEBACK

Expressionism cut an exciting figure on a few Broadway stages of the twenties and in the more adventurous little theaters of the provinces. For a time it gave promise of revolutionizing dramatic technique toward a more imaginative and searching comment on life than any meticulous realism could provide. But this promise was not fulfilled, and today expressionism is a dead issue in our theater. It was a visitor from European stages, especially German, and ran counter to



the prevailing realism of the American school. The uses of such an eccentric technique proved to be very limited, and once it had said its say in strident tragedy and broad comedy, our playwrights passed it by.

Expressionism reverses the realist's purpose to present life objectively as it is. Instead it sees the world in terms of some heightened or peculiar state of mind, which may be either the author's or that of a central character. All of life is transfigured and distorted by this outlook for the time being in order to reveal by exaggeration some hidden truth about it or the nature of the character's special point of view. From the unified, orderly picture of the world that the realist sees, the expressionist chooses only those ingredients that strike his current state of mind as important, and these he projects with a wry perspective that magnifies them to grotesque proportions. So whereas the realist's purpose may be to let the world record its impression on a passive camera film of his mind, the expressionist actively imposes his mental state on the world outside. His picture is as boldly subjective as the naturalist's is resolutely objective.

The morbid and tempestuous Swede, August Strindberg, is credited with inventing the expressionistic approach to drama, though it had antecedents extending back into the Middle Ages. Strindberg, who was sometimes on the borderline of insanity himself, gives a gruesome interpretation of his own experience through often baffling symbols in *The Dream Play* (1902) and *The Ghost Sonata* (1907). The famous expressionistic film, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari,* made in Germany in 1919 and widely shown in America in 1921, presents a fantastic tale of diabolical hypnosis and murder through grotesque scenery and costumes and almost hysterical acting. Only at the end do we discover the explanation for the unnatural character of the proceedings: the story has been told by an insane character whom we had not previously recognized as such. O'Neill also used expressionism to reveal abnormal mental states. In *The Emperor Jones* it is the mounting terror of an American Negro lost in a West Indian jungle, which uncovers the submerged attitudes of his race within the subconscious layer of his personality.

But in the experimental theaters of Germany just after the First World War expressionism was also used as a satiric instrument against social and political evils, so that instead of narrowing its view of the world to project bizarre mental states, it widened it in terms of abstraction to reveal general truths as the playwright saw them. This technique proved to be a very efficient means of synthesizing and

interpreting group traits, usually so as to condemn them. Georg Kaiser's *From Morn Till Midnight* (1916) attacked the artificiality of German society in his day. Ernst Toller's *Man and the Masses* (1921) studied the relation of the individual to the proletariat. Hans Chlumberg's *Miracle at Verdun* (1930) was a pacifist drama in which French and German soldiers killed in the great battle returned to life only to find that the world had learned nothing from their deaths and was preparing for a new war. In America the use of expressionism for social commentary is best represented by Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine,* a serious attack on the mechanization of modern life through the blighted career of a pathetic bookkeeper, and *Beggar on Horseback,* an uproarious satire on Philistinism in the United States.

Kaufman and Connelly borrowed the idea for their play from a German comedy, *Hans Sonnenstossers Höllenfahrt* (Johnny Sunstormer's Trip to Hell) by Paul Apel, but they never actually read the original. They took from a synopsis of it the central plot—a young composer's problem of whether to marry into a household of wealthy Philistines and his nightmarish dream of what his life with them would be like. But the dramatists worked out their satire entirely in terms of the American bourgeoisie as it was sneeringly visualized by intellectuals of the twenties. The caustic spirit of Sinclair Lewis and H. L. Mencken animates this delightful fantasy, though in a very good-natured form. The big businessman who has made a fortune in widgets has his roots in Main Street. He is an aggressive boor, but kindly enough, who buys a composer for his daughter as he would buy a mink coat for his wife. It is his money that makes his vulgarity so glaring, and in the dénouement, in which the hero spurns material security for spiritual satisfaction, we find the airy scorn of money that the intelligentsia of the period affected.

The Cady family is drawn in a spirit of broad caricature, which emphasizes unhappy truths about one side of American culture. Mrs. Cady with her rocking chair and her knitting is a colossal bore full of fatuous, folksy chatter. Gladys is the silly American girl who lives for nothing but fancy clothes, parties full of people like herself, uninhibited dancing, and something called love. Downright ugly is the son Homer, the snarling dissenter, pampered and grossly impolite, whose approach to everything is aggressively negative. All the values of our civilization are not in these painful people, to be sure, and our writers today are more inclined to overlook our cultural limitations as a nation and concentrate on the substantial virtues within our way of life. But we cannot deny that the Cadys still live among us and still

represent a major aspect of our national philosophy. Nor have we lost the mass production view of the arts, the bureaucratic red tape in business and government, the yellow sheet journalism, the theatrical exploitation of legal trials and congressional hearings. The satire in this play is too concentrated to be entirely fair, but it is unfortunately still true.

The opening and closing scenes are written in a style of comic realism, which points up by contrast the expressionistic manner of the rest. Yet even here the Cadys are exaggerated, for the authors must endow them quickly with badges of character to be exploited in the dream scenes. The genius of Neil is blandly assumed at the start so as to make his soul-fight a matter of consequence. Albert's advice to Neil to marry Gladys is hurried by the pressure of what is to come, and Gladys' final change of heart about the marriage comes too swiftly for even her scatterbrained personality. The world of comedy at its most realistic travesties somewhat the world we know.

But it is reality itself in comparison with the nightmare world of the expressionist. The things in the Cadys that had most dismayed Neil at the tea party are blown up to a mammoth size—Homer's yellow tie, the pleats on Gladys' dress, her samples of dress materials. The costumes are now purely symbolic—Mr. Cady's ubiquitous golf attire, incongruous with his silk hat at the wedding and with his judge's gown and wig at the trial. The activities of the characters are equally symbolic—Mrs. Cady's incessant knitting, Gladys' interminable dancing, the passing out of bank notes and gold pieces on the slightest occasion. The new characters are purely abstract and come in uniform batches, like reflections in a row of mirrors —the four bandsmen at the wedding, the multiple butlers, and the inescapable dancing teachers, all looking exactly alike. They are depersonalized into Miss Hey and Miss You, or simply a businessman, a waiter, a reporter, or even invisible beings altogether. The settings, which are of especial importance in expressionistic drama, are simplified and stylized to embody ideas—the marble columns that symbolize the tasteless grandeur in which the Cadys live, the courtroom that suggests a theater. The dramatically focused lighting concentrates our attention and heightens the emotional impact. Even music emphasizes the conflict in Neil's mind through the alternation of "The Frog's Party" with Cynthia's theme.

With such a battery of background effects to assist it, the plot that is unfolded is purely fantastic and proceeds through a rapid succession of brief scenes. This is no logical evolution of a story

but rather a fantastic multiplication of instances that ends only with Neil's decision not to marry into the Cadys. Even his murder of the family has no touch with reality, for the victims are phantoms that will reappear. The dialogue is equally stylized, especially in brief staccato sentences, sometimes with the rhythm of a chant, occasionally even in rhyme.

Yet all of this is seen through the eyes of a real person, Neil McRae, who retains his individuality in the vortex of ghosts and hobgoblins around him. And his piano and his easy chair are there too as anchors to reality. But all else is unreal, even Cynthia the heroine, whose dove cottage and little red hen are absurdly sentimental. They are in the spirit of Neil's pantomime, with its fairy prince and princess. And when the nightmare is over, the audience shares Neil's sense of relief to be out of it all.

Expressionistic drama was sometimes a trying experience, but in the spoofing form of this comic fantasy it remains very pleasant to take. It always leaned so heavily on setting, costume, and even music that it makes much more severe demands on the reader's imagination than do other brands of drama. But *Beggar on Horseback* revives in vivid and charming terms the spirit of our fabulous decade of carefree prosperity and experimental art.

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GEORGE S. KAUFMAN

MARC CONNELLY

BEGGAR ON HORSEBACK[1]

CHARACTERS

Dr. Albert Rice
Cynthia Mason
Neil McRae
Mr. Cady
Mrs. Cady
Gladys Cady
Homer Cady
A Butler
Jerry
A Business Man
Miss Hey
Miss You
A Waiter
A Reporter
A Juror
A Guide
A Sightseer
A Novelist
A Song-Writer
An Artist
A Poet

[1] **Beggar on Horseback,** *by George S. Kaufman and Marc Connelly, copyright 1951, by George S. Kaufman and Marc Connelly.*

The expression is taken from an international proverb that sometimes takes this form: "Set a beggar on horseback, and he'll outride the devil." In Robert Greene's Orpharion *(1599) it appears as "Set a beggar on horseback and they say he will never (a)light." In Burton's* Anatomy of Melancholy *(1621) it is "Set a beggar on horseback and he will ride a gallop."*

The Play Begins in the Apartment of Neil McRae.

THE PANTOMIME — DURING PART II

A KISS IN XANADU

H. R. H. The Crown Prince of Xanadu
H. R. H. The Crown Princess of Xanadu
First Lady in Waiting
First Lord of the Bedchamber
A Lamplighter
A Policeman

Scene I—The Royal Bedchamber
Scene II—A Public Park
Scene III—The Bedchamber Again

part 1

The scene is NEIL MCRAE'S *apartment in a comfortable, run-down and not very expensive building. It is plainly an artist's room, and furnished with as many good looking things as the occupant could afford—which are not many. The most luxurious piece of furniture in the room is a grand piano, which* NEIL *has probably hung on to with no little difficulty. It stands well down left. Down right is an easy chair—the only chair in the room that even suggests comfort —and against the rear wall is* NEIL'S *desk. In front of the desk is a swivel chair, and two or three other chairs, stiff-*

backed, stand around the room. At the left of the stage, near the piano, is a window, hung with chintz curtains that have seen better days—curtains which come to life here and there in great splotches of red. Some of the same stuff hangs in a center doorway—a doorway that leads to NEIL'S *bedroom and thence to a "kitchenette." The door into the apartment is at the right—somewhere beyond it is the elevator, and one needs only a look at the room to know that it is an elevator that requires four minutes to ascend the three floors.*

The time is about four-thirty of a Spring afternoon. The curtain rises on the room and nothing more; then, after a second, there comes a knock on the door. The knock is repeated, then the knob is cautiously turned and the door slowly opens. DR. ALBERT RICE, *a young man of thirty or so, peers inquiringly into the room through the widening crack, sees no one, and enters.*

ALBERT. Neil! [*There is no answer, he observes the room. Slightly to his surprise, he sees a sewing basket on the piano.*] Are you married? [*He goes up to the bedroom entrance and peers into the semi-darkness.*] Neil!

[CYNTHIA MASON, *who seems to be about twenty-five, appears suddenly in the doorway at right. There is a moment of uncertainty as she and the doctor confront each other.*]

CYNTHIA. Are you looking for Mr. McRae?

ALBERT. Yes. The door was open.

CYNTHIA [*disturbed*]. Really? Was it wide open?

ALBERT. It was closed, but it wasn't locked.

CYNTHIA. Oh! [*There is a pause of uncertainty.*] Was Mr. McRae expecting you?

ALBERT. No—I just got in from Chicago. Neil and I are old friends. My name is Rice.

CYNTHIA. Oh! You're not *Doctor* Rice?

ALBERT. Yes.

CYNTHIA [*laughing*]. I'm so relieved! My name is Cynthia Mason, Dr. Rice. I know a great deal about *you.*

[*They shake hands.*]

ALBERT. Of course Neil never writes letters, so you've been concealed from me. You didn't know him a few months ago, did you, when I left New York?

CYNTHIA. No, only since he moved here. I live across the hall.

ALBERT. Oh, I see.

CYNTHIA [*looking around*]. There's that work basket. [*She takes it from the piano, then faces the doctor again.*] I hope you'll forgive me, when I tell you why I lingered.

ALBERT. You're forgiven.

CYNTHIA. Night before last we had burglars.

ALBERT. Really?

CYNTHIA. Not on this floor—the apartment below. The poor man lost three or four suits of clothes, so——

ALBERT [*with an understanding smile*]. So Neil leaves his door unlocked.

CYNTHIA. Probably since early this morning. Though I'm afraid the burglar who took Neil's clothes wouldn't do very well.

ALBERT [*with a look around the room*]. No, I suppose not.

CYNTHIA [*a pause; she turns, with an air of finality*]. Well, he'll be here soon.

ALBERT. You're not going?

CYNTHIA. I must. Neil has some people coming to tea.

ALBERT [*bent on holding her*]. Well—now, how do you know I'm *not* the burglar?

CYNTHIA. Because I don't believe there are such things as gentlemen burglars. [*She drops a half curtsy; turns again toward the door.*]

ALBERT. Oh, wait! What did Neil tell you about me?

CYNTHIA. Let me see. He said you were extremely brilliant. But too versatile.

ALBERT. Brilliant, yes. But versatile—on the contrary, I'm going to become a specialist.

CYNTHIA. Sometimes I wonder what's happened to all the young men who used to become just doctors.

ALBERT. They all died of starvation.

[*There is a pause;* CYNTHIA *looks at her watch.*]

CYNTHIA. I don't know why Neil isn't here.

ALBERT. You don't expect *him* to be prompt, do you?

CYNTHIA. But he has some people coming. You may know them—their name is Cady.

ALBERT. Cady? Not the Cadys from Livingston?

CYNTHIA. Yes—*do* you know them?

ALBERT. I'm not sure—I think I used to. You know, I lived in Livingston myself, a long time ago.

CYNTHIA. So Neil told me.

ALBERT [*puzzled*]. The Cadys? What are *they* coming for?

CYNTHIA. Miss Cady is Neil's pupil.

ALBERT. You mean he's giving her music lessons?

CYNTHIA. He is.

ALBERT. But he's not a teacher. [*He waits for a denial.*] *Is* he?

CYNTHIA. He *must* do something.

ALBERT [*with a sigh*]. Things aren't any better with him, then?

CYNTHIA. Well, he isn't ready to retire.

ALBERT [*with a shake of the head*]. I suppose he'll always go on this way. He's so—utterly improvident, so——

CYNTHIA [*rallying to his defense*]. Well—he's really improved in that way. He may surprise you.

ALBERT. He certainly would.

CYNTHIA. He's saving money! [*Her tone changes.*] But the trouble is—he's working so hard to get it.

ALBERT. You mean giving music lessons?

CYNTHIA. Worse. You've got to talk to him—he won't listen to me. He's been sitting up night after night——

NEIL [*heard in the hallway*]. Halloo! [*He kicks open the door and enters. He is carrying a pile of books, and on top of the pile a music portfolio. He sees* ALBERT; *dumps the books abruptly into the easy chair.*] Albert! Well, I'll be damned! [*Tosses his hat into the bedroom; seizes* ALBERT'S *hand*]

ALBERT. Mr. McRae, I believe?

NEIL. Where did you come from? Chicago?

ALBERT. This morning. Of course, you never told me you'd moved. How are you?

NEIL. Never felt better! Gosh, I'm glad you're back! You've met Cynthia?

CYNTHIA. Well, we've been talking. I thought I'd caught the burglar.

NEIL. Did you find him in here? [*To* ALBERT] How did you get in?

ALBERT [*elaborately*]. First I turned the knob of the door——

CYNTHIA. And, as you hadn't locked it, he had no difficulty in entering. [*She turns to the books in the easy chair.*] What are these?

NEIL. Why—just some books.

CYNTHIA [*takes one up*]. "Life of Charles I." Neil!

NEIL. Well—I used to be very interested in history, and especially—

CYNTHIA [*severely*]. The truth, Neil!

NEIL. I—I bought them, that's all.

CYNTHIA. Oh, Neil. After your promise!

NEIL. Well— [*To* ALBERT] Just take a look at this binding.

ALBERT [*giving no encouragement*]. Yes. I see it.

CYNTHIA [*determined*]. Neil, where did you get them?

NEIL [*still to* ALBERT]. There was a burglary downstairs, and this fellow lost all his clothes.

CYNTHIA [*resigned*]. And you bought these books from him.

NEIL. Well—ah——

CYNTHIA. You work at these terrible orchestrations to *make* a little money, and then—did you go to bed at all last night?

NEIL. Of course I did.

CYNTHIA. Doctor, you *will* talk to him, won't you? [*She takes up her work basket.*] I'm sure he hasn't been sleeping—he hasn't been doing *anything* he should. [*She is heading for the door.*]

NEIL. You're not going?

CYNTHIA. I am. You have people coming to tea, remember.

NEIL. Good heavens, what time is it?

CYNTHIA. Nearly five. I suppose you have everything ready?

NEIL. Why, yes—I've got—that is, I think— [*He smiles helplessly.*] Be a darling and help me, will you?

CYNTHIA. Are you sure you have everything? [*Knowing well that he hasn't*]

NEIL. I think so.

CYNTHIA. He thinks so. [*This to* ALBERT, *with a smile, as she goes through the bedroom doorway*]

ALBERT. She's charming, Neil.

NEIL. Isn't she? [*He moves the portfolio from the chair to the desk.*] She's a designer in one of the big dressmaking firms. Did she tell you how we met?

ALBERT. No.

NEIL. She lives across the hall. [*He raises his voice for* CYNTHIA's *benefit.*] She thinks she can play the piano.

CYNTHIA [*in the kitchen*]. I can!

NEIL. You cannot! [*To* ALBERT] One night I knocked on her door and asked her to stop. She did. We've been great pals ever since. [*Calling to* CYNTHIA] Can I help you, Cynthia?

CYNTHIA. No, nor anyone else. [*She returns.*] Do you remember when you last had any tea?

NEIL. The other day.

CYNTHIA. You have three leaves left. [*She exhibits them.*]

NEIL [*inspects them*]. Four!

CYNTHIA. And did you know that your toast machine was burnt out?

NEIL. Oh, yes—I forgot. But I'm sure there's some tea—I remember—no, I used the last of it early this morning. I'll run right out——[*He is about to start.*]

CYNTHIA [*holding him*]. Neil!

NEIL. What?

CYNTHIA. Then you *were* up all night?

NEIL. Why—not exactly.

CYNTHIA [*to the doctor*]. He's been sitting up making orchestrations for a cheap little music publisher. Neil, it's like copying bad paintings. Doctor, you must make him stop.

NEIL. Well—I'll go out and get some tea.

CYNTHIA. No! You stay and talk to the Doctor. I'll bring everything over from my place. [*Again she picks up the basket.*]

NEIL. I can't let you do that. Let me help.

CYNTHIA. I will not. [*She goes.*]

NEIL [*more to himself than to* ALBERT]. I could have sworn I had everything.

ALBERT. She'll take care of things. [*He is near the window.*] Come over here and let me see you.

NEIL. Now, you're not going to fuss over me just because I've been doing some work.

ALBERT. No. But I want to look at you.

[*An orchestra, in a restaurant across the street, strikes up a jazz tune. It comes faintly through the window.*]

NEIL. Good Lord, that again!

ALBERT. What?

NEIL. That damned cabaret orchestra across the street. It begins at five every afternoon.

ALBERT. You *are* nervous, aren't you?

NEIL. Huh? No. I just don't like that music.

ALBERT. *Did* you work all night?

NEIL. Some of it.

ALBERT. It's bad business, Neil. [*He feels for his pulse.*] How many Cadys are coming to tea?

NEIL. Oh, did Cynthia tell you? You remember the Cadys.

ALBERT. Vaguely. I don't suppose they'd know me. Do they live here now?

NEIL. They moved East a few months ago. Gladys is my one and only music pupil.

ALBERT [*watch in hand*]. Rich, I suppose?

NEIL. Lord, yes. Millions.

ALBERT. What did he make it in? [*He puts away the watch.*]

NEIL. Funny—I don't even know. Manufactures something.

ALBERT [*trying to remember*]. Just the one daughter, isn't there?

NEIL. Yes. [*Adds, as an afterthought*] There's a brother.

ALBERT [*recalls him, apparently none too pleasantly*]. I remember him.

NEIL. I *had* to ask them. For heaven's sake, stay and help out.

ALBERT [*with a laugh*]. Well, I'll stay a little while. [*Feels for his pipe*]

NEIL. Try to get away. [ALBERT *laughs, lightly.*] Well, what's the verdict on *me?*

ALBERT. You're just a little tired, that's all. Sort of nervous.

NEIL. Nonsense.

ALBERT. Got any tobacco?

NEIL. Right there on the desk.

ALBERT [*fooling with the tobacco jar; unable to open it*]. Have you been writing *anything* of your own?

NEIL. Well, no—only snatches of things. I'm going to get back at it soon, though.

ALBERT. That's good. [*The jar in hand*] How do you open this thing?

NEIL [*takes up a paper knife from the piano—a knife of ivory, scimitar-shaped, and with a long black tassel hanging from it*]. I use this. Give it to me.

[ALBERT *hands it over;* NEIL *opens and returns it, all without a word.*]

ALBERT [*filling his pipe*]. How old is the daughter now?

NEIL. Gladys?

ALBERT. Yes.

NEIL. Twenty-two or three—I don't know. Why? [*He puts the knife back on the piano.*]

ALBERT. How soon will they be here?

NEIL. Any minute, I guess. Why all the questions?

ALBERT. I just wondered. [*Takes a medical case from his pocket and shakes out a pill*] I want you to take one of these before they come, and another one later on.

NEIL. Good heavens, there's nothing the matter with me.

ALBERT. I know there isn't.

NEIL. What'll they do—make me sleep?

ALBERT. They'll quiet you.

NEIL. But I don't dare go to sleep. In the first place the Cadys are coming, and——

[CYNTHIA *re-enters. She is now hatless, and carries a folded tablecloth.*]

CYNTHIA. I hope you scolded him. [*She goes to the desk and begins to spread the cloth.*]

ALBERT. Not enough, I'm afraid. [*Pill in hand*] Do you think you have a glass of water left?

NEIL [*starting*]. Oh, of course!

ALBERT. No, no. I can find it. [*He goes into the bedroom.*]

CYNTHIA [*with a glance at the portfolio*]. You didn't let them give you more to do?

NEIL. Well, hardly any. It's all right.

CYNTHIA. It *isn't* all right. Oh, I wouldn't mind if it were something decent! But it's perfectly sickening to think of your genius being choked to death in this way!

NEIL. I'll work on the symphony soon, honestly.

CYNTHIA. And then make up for it by mere hack-work. I wish someone would subsidize you.

NEIL. That would be nice.

[ALBERT *comes back with the glass of water.*]

ALBERT. Here you are! [*Gives* NEIL *pill and glass*]

NEIL. Oh, all right. But there's nothing the matter with me. [*He takes the pill.*]

ALBERT. How was it?

NEIL. I've tasted better. [*The orchestra across the street is heard in another outburst of jazz.*] Would you believe that people actually enjoy that? Wait! I've got one here that will be next month's national anthem. [*Searches for it in portfolio*] There aren't any words to it yet, but it's going to be called "Sweet Mamma."

CYNTHIA. Don't, Neil. Play Dr. Rice the second movement of your symphony.

NEIL. Want to hear it?

ALBERT. You bet. [*He indicates the pipe.*] Do you mind?

CYNTHIA. Not at all.

NEIL. She calls it the second movement because there isn't any first.

CYNTHIA [*finding it*]. Here! [*She spreads the manuscript on the rack.*]

NEIL. You understand this is just a movement. It's— [*He sees place that needs correction.*] Oh! [*Starts fishing for a pencil*] Of course I never have a pencil. [CYNTHIA *gets one from his left vest pocket and hands it to him.*] Oh, thanks! [*He makes the correction.*] It's just a sketch. Not finished, you know.

CYNTHIA. But it's going to be—and soon.

[NEIL *starts to play, but is not far into it when the phone rings.*]

NEIL [*stops playing*]. I'll bet that's the Cadys. [*Goes to the phone*] Hello! [*To* CYNTHIA] It is. Downstairs. . . . Send them right up, Jerry.

CYNTHIA. Good heavens, I'll have to bring the tea things in.

NEIL. Why not?

CYNTHIA. They don't want to meet me.

NEIL. Don't be foolish.

CYNTHIA. Well—I won't stay. [*She goes.*]

NEIL. I suppose I ought to clear things up a bit.

ALBERT [*with a glance at the books in the easy chair*]. If you expect them to sit down.

[NEIL *carries the books into his bedroom. He returns, counts the chairs, then tests a spindley-legged one that stands center.*]

NEIL. I hope nobody heavy sits in this.

[*Voices are heard in the hall, and* MR. *and* MRS. CADY, HOMER *and* GLADYS *appear at the open door.* MRS. CADY *enters first, then* GLADYS, *then* MR. CADY, *and* HOMER. *Together they make up an average Middle West family. They have no marked external characteristics except that* HOMER *is wearing a violent yellow tie.*]

MRS. CADY. Why, Neil!

NEIL. How are you, Mrs. Cady? Gladys?

MRS. CADY. After all these years!

GLADYS. Hello, Neil!

CADY. Well, well, Neil, my boy!

NEIL. Hello, Mr. Cady!

HOMER. Hello, there!

NEIL. How are you, Homer?

HOMER. Not so good.

NEIL [*feeling keenly his position as host*]. Ah—this is Dr. Rice. Mr. and Mrs. Cady, and—Miss Cady and—Homer. [*His voice trails*

off. There are the indistinct greetings that follow an introduction.]

MRS. CADY. Doctor, did you say?

ALBERT. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. CADY. Homer, here's a doctor.

HOMER. Yes?

MRS. CADY. Homer's had a good deal of trouble from time to time. Sit here, Homer—in this easy chair.

[HOMER *takes the only easy chair.*]

NEIL [*delinquent*]. Oh, yes—sit down, everybody. I'm sorry I—ah——

MRS. CADY. Oh, that's all right. We'll just settle ourselves. [*She sits in the swivel chair at the desk.*]

NEIL [*stirring up conversation*]. Ah—Dr. Rice comes from Livingston, too.

MRS. CADY. Really?

CADY. That so?

ALBERT. Oh, a long time ago. We moved away when I was very young.

MRS. CADY. I wonder if I—[*There is a sneeze from* HOMER.]—Are you all right, Homer?

HOMER. Yes. [*Something in his tone says that he is as all right as possible, considering where he is.*]

MRS. CADY [*blandly finishing*]. I—knew your people?

HOMER. *I* don't remember them. [*You gather that* ALBERT *just couldn't have had any people.*]

CADY [*at the telephone*]. Mind if I use this?

NEIL. Oh, no, of course not.

CADY. Thanks. I left the office a little early. [*Takes the receiver off*]

MRS. CADY [*bent on placing the doctor*]. Let me see. *Old* Mrs. Rice——

CADY. Cortlandt 8262.

MRS. CADY. I guess you're not the same. [*There is a half-query in her voice.*]

ALBERT. Well, as a matter of fact, I moved away just after you came there.

MRS. CADY. Oh, I see.

GLADYS [*producing a box of candy*]. I brought you some candy for your tea, Neil.

NEIL. Oh, thanks. [*To* MRS. CADY, *who is teetering in the desk chair*] There's another chair if——

MRS. CADY. No, I like this. Feels like my rocking chair at home. [*She sways back and forth.*]

GLADYS. Mother's favorite chair is her rocker.

MRS. CADY. There's nothing like an old-fashioned rocking chair.

CADY [*at the phone*]. Let me talk to Burgess.

MRS. CADY. Mr. Cady says I'm chair-bound. Just joking, you know. [*She explains elaborately, to* ALBERT.] Mr. Cady. Says I'm chair-bound.

ALBERT [*just the news he was waiting for*]. Oh, yes.

MRS. CADY. Let me see: there were two families of Rice out there, and I remember that one of them came here, just before we left. [*She finishes in a sibilant whisper, having been shushed by her husband.*]

CADY [*simultaneously*]. Burgess? Any word from 653? . . . Hush, mother. . . . Well, I'll tell you what to do. We ought to send a tracer. . . . That's right. . . . Well, I'll tell you what to do —if you don't hear by six o'clock send a tracer. That's all. [CADY *hangs up: turns to* NEIL.]

CADY. Much obliged. When I get a foot away from a telephone I'm lost. [*He starts for the weak chair;* NEIL *makes a movement.*] What is it?

NEIL. That chair isn't very strong.

CADY. Oh, I'll be careful.

NEIL [*not exactly at ease*]. We're going to have some—tea and things—pretty soon now.

CADY [*has taken out a cigar*]. Match?

NEIL [*starting*]. How's that?

CADY. Match.

NEIL. Oh, yes! Right here. [NEIL *lights his cigar.*]

GLADYS [*taking in the room*]. See, mama, isn't it cute?

MRS. CADY. Yes, indeed.

GLADYS. There's the piano over there.

MRS. CADY. Oh, yes. [*Everybody looks at the piano.*] Neil must play something for us. [*It is Remark No. 80 and purely perfunctory.*]

CADY. It's certainly very nice. We've been hearing quite a bit about you, Neil.

NEIL. Is that so?

CADY. Hear you've become quite a musician since you went away from Livingston.

NEIL. Oh, I don't know.

CADY. Well, Gladys has been telling us so. So we thought we'd come and find out for ourselves. Gave up a golf game to do it, too. Play golf?

NEIL. No, I don't.

CADY. Play golf, Doctor?

ALBERT. I'm sorry.

CADY. Well, everybody ought to. Great exercise. Keeps a man fit for business. I'd make Homer do it, if he wasn't so delicate.

[HOMER *shifts in his seat.*]

MRS. CADY. Comfortable, Homer?

HOMER [*carelessly*]. Um-hum.

[CYNTHIA *comes in with the tea things.*]

NEIL. Oh, here we are! I—I want you to meet Miss Mason. She's brought the things over from her place.

MRS. CADY. Oh, I see.

NEIL [*beginning again the weary round of introductions*]. Mrs. Cady and—of course you know Gladys——

GLADYS. Yes.

CYNTHIA. How are you, Miss Cady?

NEIL. And Mr. Cady and—another Mr. Cady. [HOMER *does not rise. Mumbled greetings are exchanged.*] Miss Mason lives—just across the hall.

MRS. CADY. Yes, so Gladys has told us. Are you a musician, too, Miss Mason?

CYNTHIA. No, I'm not, Mrs. Cady.

MRS. CADY [*turning to her husband*]. Don't she make you think of Elizabeth Merkle, Fred?

CADY. Well—I see what you mean.

HOMER [*ever the dissenter*]. She don't me.

MRS. CADY. Of course Elizabeth's dark, but there's something about the shape of the face. [*To* NEIL] *You* knew the Merkles, Neil. Mr. Merkle had the skating rink.

NEIL. Oh, yes. Elizabeth was a little girl when I knew her.

MRS. CADY. She's twenty-two or three. Twenty-three, isn't she, Fred?

CADY. Yes, I guess so.

HOMER. Lizzie Merkle's crazy. She's going to marry Lou Carmichael.

GLADYS. Oh, did grandma say when it was to be?

MRS. CADY. No, I don't think they know themselves. You knew Lou, didn't you, Neil?

[CYNTHIA *is serving tea.*]

NEIL. Did they live over on Pine Street?

MRS. CADY. I think they did.

HOMER. No, they didn't.

GLADYS. Hush up! They did. They lived next door to Dr. Endicott.

HOMER. They did not. They've always lived on Mead Avenue.

GLADYS. Well, I guess I ought to know. Didn't I go and meet his sister once? Remember that tall girl, mama?

HOMER. You're crazy.

MRS. CADY. Lou used to take Gladys to dances a lot.

GLADYS. He was a wonderful dancer! [*She giggles.*]

MRS. CADY. He was with the telephone company.

HOMER [*scornfully*]. Charlie Ferris nearly beat him up.

MRS. CADY. Remember when he and Charlie Ferris were crazy about Gladys? This girl's had more boys crazy about her, Neil.

[CYNTHIA *gives tea to* CADY.]

GLADYS. Oh, I never cared for either of them.

HOMER. You never let them *think* so.

GLADYS [*smugly*]. Homer!

HOMER [*to* NEIL, *unpleasantly, as he passes tea to him*]. No, thanks. Tea always sits on me.

CADY. Say, I hear your Uncle James is dead, Neil. Leave you anything?

NEIL. No—Uncle James never had anything.

CADY. Too bad. He was a fine man. Everybody was sorry when he moved to Boston.

MRS. CADY. He was nice. [*To* CYNTHIA] We used to sing together in Sunday school when we were children.

NEIL. I remember you sang in the choir.

GLADYS. Mama still sings, when she lets herself go.

HOMER. We call her Galli-Curci.[1]

MRS. CADY [*genially*]. They're always joking about my voice. But I do love old hymns. Your father was a good singer, too, Neil.

NEIL. I guess he was a better lawyer.

CADY. Yes, everybody had a great deal of respect for John McRae.

MRS. CADY. He was a beautiful character.

[1] ***Galli-Curci,*** *Amelita Galli-Curci, an Italian coloratura soprano at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, of extraordinary fame at the time.*

CADY. He'd give his money away to everybody. Afraid he never made very much, though. Lawyers don't, as a rule. Neil, did you know that when I was a young man I studied law—right in the same office with your father?

NEIL. No? Did you?

CADY. Yes, sir. Had it all figured out to be a judge—Judge Cady —till I found out what was the most a judge could make. [*Puts his tea down, almost untasted*]

CYNTHIA. Too strong?

CADY. No. I'm not much of a tea drinker.

MRS. CADY. I guess Gladys and I are the tea drinkers in our family. We have it every afternoon.

[NEIL *is opening the candy box.*]

GLADYS. Neil's going to come up and have some with us next week. Tuesday.

NEIL. Candy?

[MRS. CADY *takes a piece; so does* MR. CADY.]

MRS. CADY. That's nice. We'll have some people in. I want you to see the new house. My, I don't know what the folks would say back in Livingston if they could see it. Remember our house in Livingston, Neil?

NEIL. Yes, indeed. [*He passes the candy box to* HOMER, *who waves it disdainfully aside.*]

MRS. CADY [*trying to be bantering*]. You ought to. You were there enough. Every afternoon, pretty near. Neil and Gladys would play together and I'd go out in the kitchen and make candy for them. [*She rocks.*]

GLADYS. Oh, yes! Wasn't it fun, Neil?

MRS. CADY. We always saved some pieces for Mr. Cady. All the Cadys are fond of candy. Aren't they, Fred? [*She taps his knee.*]

CADY [*munching*]. Guess that's right, mother.

HOMER. I'm not.

MRS. CADY. Except Homer. [*She resumes, largely to herself.*] All the Cadys eat candy.

CYNTHIA. And now—if you'll excuse me. [*Rises*]

NEIL. Oh, you're not going?

[HOMER *doesn't rise with the other men.*]

CYNTHIA. I'm afraid I must.

CADY. That's too bad.

MRS. CADY. Well, I hope we meet again.

CYNTHIA. I just ran in for a moment to be temporary hostess.

GLADYS. Goodbye, Miss Mason.

CYNTHIA [*to* ALBERT]. I hope I'll see you again. [*Shakes his hand*]

ALBERT. Oh, I'll be back in a few weeks.

[*There are further goodbyes.* CYNTHIA *goes.*]

MRS. CADY [*looking after her*]. She *is* like Elizabeth.

CADY [*noisily*]. Well—how are things generally, Neil? Making a lot of money out of your music?

NEIL. No—with music you don't make a great deal of money.

CADY. I don't know about that. It's just like any other business. Maybe you're not giving them what they want.

MRS. CADY. I guess Neil's doing his best, aren't you, Neil?

CADY. We've all got to please the public. Eh, Doctor?

ALBERT. Oh, yes.

CADY. I've got to in my business. Of course I don't claim to know anything about music, but I think I represent about the average viewpoint. Now, what I like is a good lively tune—something with a little snap to it. As I understand it, though, you sort of go in for—highbrow music.

NEIL. It isn't exactly that.

CADY. Well, there's no money in it. You know what happened to your father.

MRS. CADY. Had to scrape all his life. [*Turns to* ALBERT] Neil's father. Had to scrape all his life.

CADY. A young fellow's got to look out for his future, I claim —got to save up a little money.

NEIL [*puzzled*]. Yes, sir.

MRS. CADY [*helping along what is clearly a prearranged conversation*]. In some *business,* Mr. Cady means.

CADY. Yes. Now you take—well, my business, for example. We've always got an opening for—a bright young fellow.

NEIL. You mean—*me*—in your business?

CADY. Well, I just mentioned that for example.

NEIL. I—I'm afraid I wouldn't be much good in business, Mr. Cady.

MRS. CADY. Of course you'd be good.

NEIL. I did work once in an office, and I guess I wasn't—very——

CADY. That's all right. You'd learn. The idea is you'd be making

money. Some day you'd maybe have a nice interest in the firm. 'Taint as though you couldn't write a little music now and then in your spare time, and we'd be sort of all together.

[*The jazz orchestra is heard again—this time louder.*]

MRS. CADY. Just like one big family.

GLADYS [*singing and swaying to the tune*[1]]. Oh, they're playing "The Frog's Party." [*To* NEIL] Come on and dance!

NEIL. I'm sorry, but I don't dance.

GLADYS. Oh, so you don't—but I'm going to make you learn. I know a wonderful teacher. [*Turns to* ALBERT] Dance, Doctor?

ALBERT. A little.

[GLADYS *and* ALBERT *take a few turns about the room.* MRS. CADY *hums the tune, not knowing the words.*]

CADY. Great song! A man I played golf with yesterday tells me that for the first six months of the fiscal year that song'll make a hundred thousand dollars. Write something like that and you're fixed. That's music.

HOMER. We got it on the radio[2] last night.

ALBERT [*politely*]. You don't say?

GLADYS [*near the piano*]. Oh, Neil!

[*The three remaining* CADYS *are grouped with* ALBERT.]

[*Simultaneously*]

GLADYS [*holds up a piece of music, as* NEIL *crosses to her*]. What's this?

NEIL. Just something I'm working on.

GLADYS [*sotto voce*]. I want to talk to you.

NEIL. Oh!

GLADYS. Don't you want to talk to me?

NEIL. Oh, yes.

GLADYS. Neil. [*Points to a small photograph on piano*]

NEIL. Yes?

GLADYS [*takes up the picture*]. Can I have one of these?

CADY. Couple of hundred miles away, wasn't it?

HOMER. Three hundred.

CADY. Think of that!

ALBERT. It's wonderful.

MRS. CADY. I was going to ask you, Doctor, if you're related to those other Rices. There were two daughters, I think.

ALBERT. No, I haven't any relatives left, there.

CADY. Live in New York now, I suppose?

ALBERT. No, Chicago. I'm just here for a flying visit.

CADY. Chicago? Don't say?

[1] ***singing . . . tune.*** *It is the Charleston era of the American dance.*

[2] ***on the radio,*** *a feat in this period of the infancy of the radio.*

NEIL. I'm afraid I haven't got another.

GLADYS. This was in the Musical Courier, wasn't it?

NEIL. Why, yes.

GLADYS. I saw it. You're pretty well known, Neil. I'm proud of you. I wish I could have this one. Only I wish it were of you alone, instead of you and this other girl, whoever she is. [*Puts picture back*]

NEIL. It's just a girl I met one summer.

[*A pause*]

GLADYS. Neil?

NEIL. Well?

GLADYS. Do you like me better than you do Miss Mason?

NEIL. Well, I think she's awfully nice.

GLADYS. Don't you think I'm nice, too?

NEIL. Yes, of course.

GLADYS. Because, I think *you* are. You know that, don't you, Neil?

NEIL [*nearly choking*]. I'm—glad.

GLADYS. So, of course, I want *you* to think *I* am.

NEIL. I—do.

GLADYS [*suddenly*]. Oh! That reminds me. [*Fishes in her handbag*]

NEIL. What is it?

GLADYS [*bringing out four or five small samples of colored cloths*]. I knew I wanted to ask you something. Which do you like best?

Well, that's a good town.

HOMER. Chicago a good town? Huh!

MRS. CADY. It would be nice if you could come up and see us, too, Doctor.

ALBERT. Thank you, but I'm going back soon.

MRS. CADY. Well, do come if you can. Any day after Thursday. Both our butlers are leaving, and I can't get any new ones to come until after the holiday. But we always like to have people from Livingston drop in. I always say if you don't keep in touch with your old home town, why your old home town won't keep in touch with you.

HOMER. I never want to go back there.

CADY. Well, I don't know as I do either.

MRS. CADY. Listen to that man. And to think he was president of the Board of Trade there for five mortal years.

CADY [*thoughtfully, to* ALBERT]. You know, I think I've got you placed now. Was your father E. J. Rice in the lumber business?

ALBERT. No, he was an architect.

MRS. CADY. An architect—you don't say? Put up buildings, did he?

ALBERT. Yes, a few.

MRS. CADY. Put up any buildings in Livingston?

ALBERT. Why, yes.

NEIL. Why, they're all very nice.

GLADYS. But don't you like one best?

NEIL. I don't know. They're all sort of—ah—why——

GLADYS. Because I'd like to get the one you'd like. [NEIL *is puzzled. She spreads the samples on his arm.*] They're samples, silly! I'm going from here to the dressmaker's to pick one out.

NEIL. Oh, I see. [*He removes the samples.*]

GLADYS [*pouting*]. Of course if you don't care what I wear, why, all right.

NEIL [*not enthusiastic*]. I do care.

GLADYS [*eager again*]. Well, which one would you rather see me in? The blue?

NEIL. Yes, that would be nice.

GLADYS. I like the pink one myself.

CADY. Not the First National?

ALBERT. No, he designed the Mechanics' Building, right next door.

CADY. You don't say?

MRS. CADY. Well, that's a nice building, too.

HOMER. I remember it.

MRS. CADY. Mr. Cady had his offices in the First National Building.

ALBERT. Is that so?

CADY. I guess there's been quite a building boom since you were there. That whole block is pretty solid now.

ALBERT. Really?

MRS. CADY. My, yes. You wouldn't know the place.

CADY. Yes, sir! I guess there's been a good many million dollars invested there in the last five years.

ALBERT. You don't say?

MRS. CADY. Mr. Cady put up a building himself.

ALBERT. That so?

CADY. Just a warehouse. Of course we still have a plant there——

HOMER [*heard by himself*]. It's half past, pop. [*Rises*]

MRS. CADY. Ready, Gladys? [*Rises*]

GLADYS. Yes, mama. [*Starts, then turns back to* NEIL]

[*Simultaneously*]

GLADYS. [*suddenly, to* NEIL]. Oh, Neil!

NEIL. Yes?

GLADYS. I won't go home for dinner—if you don't want me to.

NEIL. Well, I did sort of think I'd do some work——

MRS. CADY. Well, now, don't forget, Doctor! Come and see us, if you can.

ALBERT. Thank you.

CADY. Or have a round of golf with me some time. Play golf?

ALBERT. I'm sorry, I don't.

GLADYS. I'll go with *you* to a new restaurant I just heard about! I'll tell you what! I'll only be at the dressmaker's a few minutes. Then you can meet me.

NEIL. Well, I don't know exactly how I'll be fixed.

GLADYS. I'll telephone you the minute I'm finished.

NEIL. But, Gladys, I'm going to be tied up, I'm afraid, and——

GLADYS. Well, anyway, I'll phone.

CADY. I remember — I asked you before.

HOMER [*impatient*]. Oh, come on!

MRS. CADY. Just a second, Homer. Gladys is talking.

HOMER. She's always talking.

MRS. CADY [*to* ALBERT, *with a laugh*]. Just like a brother, isn't he?

CADY. Well, goodbye, Doctor.

ALBERT. Goodbye, Mr. Cady.

CADY. Come on, Gladys.

GLADYS. All right. [*To* NEIL] I'll telephone you from the dressmaker's when I'm through.

MRS. CADY. And, Neil—you're coming Tuesday, remember.

NEIL. Oh, thanks. I'm sorry I couldn't have had a nicer party for you.

MRS. CADY. It was elegant. Only next time we come, you must play something for us.

NEIL. I'll ring for the elevator.

MRS. CADY. Oh, that's nice. Come on, Homer.

[NEIL, MR. CADY *and* MRS. CADY *pass into the hall.*]

GLADYS. Goodbye, Doctor.

ALBERT. Goodbye, Miss Cady.

[GLADYS *follows them out;* HOMER *lingers with the Doctor.*]

HOMER. What about him? Do you know him well? [*He takes out a box of powders.*]

ALBERT. Who? Neil?

HOMER. Yeh. Is he all right?

ALBERT. Why?

HOMER. Well, I just like to know things about a possible brother-in-law.

ALBERT. I see.

HOMER. Gladys is nutty about him. Thinks he's artistic, my God! And did you hear the old man? Just because his father was John McRae! [*Puts the powder on his tongue—takes a glass of water*]

MRS. CADY [*in the hall*]. Hurry, Homer!

HOMER [*calling*]. All right! [*He swallows the words, drink-*

ing at the same time.] So long. Well, I hope it don't happen. [*He strolls out.*]

ALBERT. So long.

[*The voices of the departing guests are heard in the hall.* NEIL *returns; looks back into the hall.*]

NEIL. What was all that about?

ALBERT. Oh, nothing in particular.

NEIL. How did you like the Cadys?

ALBERT. They seem to be all right. They must be richer than mud. Did you hear Mrs. Cady on her "butlers"?

NEIL. No.

ALBERT. I never heard of anybody having more than one butler before, but the Cadys seem to have 'em in pairs.

NEIL [*laughing*]. I haven't been to their house yet. I'm going next week, though. [*His glance going to the door*] Say! Homer's a dirty dog, isn't he?

ALBERT [*thoughtfully*]. Neil, I want to talk to you.

NEIL. Good Lord, again?

ALBERT. In the first place, I want you to go to bed.

NEIL. At half past five o'clock?

ALBERT. You haven't slept for days.

NEIL. But I can't go to bed now. I've got work to do. [*A second's pause*] You don't mean I'm sick?

ALBERT. No, but you need rest. I want you to put on your dressing gown and lie down for a while. And then take another one of these. [*Produces the pills*]

NEIL. But I can't afford to go to sleep. I told you that. I've got work to do.

ALBERT. You can't work tonight.

NEIL. I must.

ALBERT. On those orchestrations?

NEIL. Yes. [*A pause*]

ALBERT. Neil.

NEIL. What?

ALBERT. I want to talk to you about something else.

NEIL. Good heavens!

ALBERT. All right, but—somebody has to. [NEIL *looks up, sensing something important.*] What are you going to do about your work?

NEIL. Huh?

ALBERT. Your real work, I mean. How much have you done since I went away?

NEIL. Well, what you heard. And Miss Mason and I are working out a little pantomime together. It's going to be a lot of fun——

ALBERT. How much of it is written?

NEIL. A lot. About half, I guess.

ALBERT. About half a movement of a symphony and about half a pantomime.

NEIL. I still have to eat.

ALBERT. But Neil, don't you see—you're wasting your genius!

NEIL. Genius, my hat!

ALBERT. You're wasting the best years you'll ever have doing odd jobs just to keep alive. You've got to be free to write.

NEIL. Well, maybe some day I'll write a popular song and make a million.

ALBERT. If you ever did you'd either burn it or sell it for ten dollars. You'll never make any money, Neil. You know that as well as I do.

NEIL. Then what's the answer? Are you going to subsidize me?

ALBERT. I wish to God I could! But there's no reason why you shouldn't subsidize yourself.

NEIL. What do you mean?

ALBERT. I mean the Cadys.

NEIL. What are you talking— Oh, don't be foolish!

ALBERT. Why is it foolish?

NEIL. Gladys would never—why, you're crazy!

ALBERT. Am I? Think back. How did she behave this afternoon? And Papa Cady? "Nice little share in the business"? And—well, I know what I'm talking about.

NEIL. You mean you're seriously advising me to ask Gladys Cady to marry me?

ALBERT. That's exactly what I'm doing. She's a nice girl, and pretty. You'd have comfort and money and time——

NEIL [*interrupting, with growing excitement*]. Well, what about *me?* Do you think money and music and time would make up for everything else? No, sir! I'd rather keep on living right here —just as I am now—all my life long.

ALBERT. Now, now! Don't get temperamental! If you'll just——

[CYNTHIA *opens the door.*]

CYNTHIA. May a poor girl call for her dishes?

NEIL. I'm sorry—I should have brought them over.

CYNTHIA [*detecting a note in his voice*]. Neil, there's nothing the matter?

ALBERT. I've been trying to persuade him to rest. [*To* NEIL] Won't you go in and—get ready?

NEIL. I—I can't now.

CYNTHIA. Neil, please.

[*A pause*]

NEIL. All right. But don't go away. I want to talk to you. [*He goes into the bedroom.*]

CYNTHA. He *is* difficult.

ALBERT. Yes, he is.

CYNTHIA. I'm glad you've taken charge of him. [*She is collecting the tea dishes.*]

ALBERT. He'll be all right. Just needs sleep, that's all. I'm not worrying about him physically so much as—well, spiritually.

CYNTHIA. I know. I've been worrying about it for weeks.

ALBERT. You do see his genius, don't you?

CYNTHIA. Oh, yes! He has it, if anyone ever had.

ALBERT. And this hack-work—it must be killing his spirit.

CYNTHIA. When I think of his keeping on, year after year. And he's such a babe-in-arms about practical things. He *does* so need—[*She hesitates.*] We must do something, mustn't we?

ALBERT. Yes, we must. [*A pause*] There *is* a possible way out, you know.

[*A pause*]

CYNTHIA [*slowly*]. Yes, I know.

[*A longer pause*]

ALBERT. It's the only way, I'm afraid.

CYNTHIA. Oh, I've been thinking about it ever since she began coming here! You really *do* think it's the right thing for him? The wisest?

ALBERT. I'm sure of it.

CYNTHIA. But could he be happy?

ALBERT. That's the only way he *can* be happy, permanently—if he's free to write his music. That's the most important thing in the end.

CYNTHIA. It seems—and yet I'm afraid you're right.

ALBERT. We only hurt people by being sentimental about them. That's one of the first things a doctor learns. Let's put this through. Will you?

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CYNTHIA. Oh, I couldn't!

ALBERT. You can do more than I can. You'll be here, and I've got to go away. And anyway, a woman can always do more than a man about this sort of thing. [*Holds out his hand to her*] For Neil's sake. [*He takes a step away from her as he hears* NEIL *returning.* NEIL *comes back, wearing a dressing gown.*] That's right! Now!

NEIL. Of all the rot! Putting a grown man to bed at half past five!

ALBERT. Who ever accused you of being a grown man? Here! [*Produces a pill*] Be brave. One swallow and it's over.

NEIL. Oh, all right—give it to me.

ALBERT. Here! [NEIL *takes it.*] And another before you go to bed. I'll put them here. [*He takes up his hat.*]

NEIL. You're going?

ALBERT. Got to—dining uptown.[1] [*Taps* NEIL *lightly with his gloves as he passes*] I'll look in in the morning. You'll be all right then. Good night, Miss Mason.

CYNTHIA. Goodbye, Doctor.

[ALBERT *goes.*]

NEIL [*to* CYNTHIA, *who is gathering the last of her dishes*]. He's been talking to you about me, hasn't he?

CYNTHIA. Why—you and other things. [*Not looking up*]

NEIL. What did he say?

CYNTHIA. Don't you wish you knew—curiosity!

NEIL. I *do* know. I know exactly. He said the same thing to me. He said I was a failure—practically. That I'd have to depend on other people all my life.

CYNTHIA. Neil, you're just exciting yourself. You're tired, and you know he wants you to——

NEIL. No, wait! We've got to talk about this, you and I. He said more than that. He said that I ought to ask Gladys Cady to marry me. [*A pause*] Well! You don't seem—surprised.

CYNTHIA. No, I'm not.

NEIL. Don't you even think it's—funny, a little bit?

CYNTHIA. No.

NEIL. Cynthia! [*Looks at her for a moment and then with a cry*] Oh, Cynthia—dear! [*Takes her hand*]

[1] ***uptown.*** *Neil and Cynthia would of course live downtown in Greenwich Village, traditionally the home of artists and students.*

CYNTHIA. Don't, Neil!—*Please* don't!

NEIL. But Cynthia, don't you know—without my telling you—that I love only you and no one else?

CYNTHIA. Oh, Neil, please! [*Then, with an attempt at lightness*] This is so sudden!

NEIL [*hurt*]. Oh, Cynthia, please don't!

CYNTHIA. Oh, please don't *you!*

NEIL. You know I love you, Cynthia! Of course you know; you couldn't help knowing! I thought maybe you—don't you, at all, Cynthia?

CYNTHIA [*regaining control of herself*]. Neil, let me tell you something. I *have* seen that you were growing to care for me, and I've—I've tried to think what I ought to do about it.

NEIL. Do about it! What can you do about it if——

CYNTHIA. You can do lots of things—if you're practical and sensible.

NEIL. Oh, my dear!

CYNTHIA. I said to myself, I think he's beginning to care about me more than he ought to, considering how we're both situated, and that nothing could come of it. And if I stay here I mightn't be sensible either. So, I'm going away.

NEIL. What!

CYNTHIA. I'm going to move uptown and live with Helen Noland. I'm going tomorrow.

NEIL. Cynthia—do you mean that you don't care about me at all?

CYNTHIA. Oh, yes, I do, Neil. I care about you very much. I think you're a great artist.

NEIL. Artist! [*He turns away from her.*]

CYNTHIA. And I think it would be the greatest possible misfortune for your music for you to go on this way, living from hand to mouth. So—when Dr. Rice suggested that you marry Miss Cady, it seemed to me a very sensible thing to do.

NEIL [*facing her again*]. Cynthia—do you know what you're talking about?

CYNTHIA. Perfectly.

NEIL. You can't mean that music or no music I ought to marry Gladys.

CYNTHIA. I think you ought to do just that for the sake of your music.

NEIL [*hurt*]. Oh! You're like Albert! You think my music is the only thing about me that's worth while! [*He again turns away.*]

CYNTHIA. Oh, Neil!

NEIL [*continuing*]. It never *was* me that you cared about—only the music.

CYNTHIA. I want you to be happy, Neil.

NEIL [*laughs mirthlessly*]. I certainly got it all wrong, didn't I? [*A pause*] Well, goodbye, Cynthia.

CYNTHIA. Oh, Neil! Don't say goodbye like that.

NEIL. What other way is there? You're all being so sensible and practical. I might as well be practical and sensible too. [CYNTHIA *starts to speak, chokes up, goes out—stifling her tears. After a moment* NEIL *turns and sees that she is gone.*] My music! [*Then, less viciously*] My music! [*The phone bell rings.* NEIL *looks towards it—plainly,* GLADYS *has finished at the dressmaker's. For a second he hesitates, then he makes up his mind and strides to the phone. There is grim determination in his voice, from the opening greeting.*] Hello, Gladys!

GLADYS [*over the phone*]. Hello, Neil!

NEIL. Well, is the fitting over? [*He stifles a yawn; the pills are beginning to work.*]

GLADYS. Yes, but it wasn't a fitting.

NEIL. Well, whatever it was.

GLADYS. I took the pink one.

NEIL. The pink one. That's fine.

GLADYS. Oh, you don't care which at all!

NEIL. Of course I care which.

GLADYS. Can you meet me?

NEIL. Well, I don't think I can do that.

GLADYS. What?

NEIL. I say I can't go out. The doctor says I must stay in for a while.

GLADYS. Oh, my goodness! Are you sick?

NEIL. Oh, no. Just tired. Really, that's all. I have to—sleep for about an hour. [*He is growing momentarily more listless.*]

GLADYS. Oh, dear!

NEIL. Well, why don't you come up here instead?

GLADYS. Shall I?

NEIL. Of course.

GLADYS. Why?

NEIL. Well, there's something I want to say to you, to ask you—something we all want to—I mean something I want to ask you——

GLADYS. I wish I knew!

NEIL. Maybe you do know. We thought—that is, I thought—how would you like to marry a great composer? [*The receiver nearly falls from his grip.*]

GLADYS. Oh, darling! Do you mean it?

NEIL. Sure I mean it.

GLADYS. Of course I'll marry you!

NEIL. Would you, honestly?

GLADYS. Yes, indeed!

NEIL. Well, that's fine. We'll show them, won't we?

GLADYS. Who?

NEIL. Oh, everybody.

GLADYS. Can I tell them?

NEIL. Yes, tell them all. Homer and——

GLADYS. Oh, darling, I'm so happy!

NEIL [*his tone dull*]. Well, I'm happy, too.

GLADYS. Let me hear you say "Sweetheart."

NEIL. Do I have to say it?

GLADYS. Of course.

NEIL [*barely audible*]. Sweetheart.

GLADYS. Go ahead.

NEIL. Didn't you hear it?

GLADYS. No.

NEIL [*viciously*]. Sweetheart!

GLADYS. Do you love me?

NEIL. Of course I do.

GLADYS. Well, I'll come over in about an hour.

NEIL [*a sleepy pause*]. In about an hour. You come, and—I'll sleep for an hour. I'll—sleep. [*He tries to replace the receiver, but is too sleepy. It dangles from its cord.* NEIL *rouses himself from the chair with difficulty.*] And that's that! [*Across the street the jazz orchestra begins again to play "The Frog's Party." It seems louder than before—already* NEIL'S *imagination is causing it to swell. He wheels toward the window.*] Now go ahead and play! [*He staggers to the easy chair and drops into it.*] Play the wedding march, damn you! Play the wedding march!

[*The tune resolves itself into a jazzy version of Lohengrin's Wedding March. At the same time* NEIL *finally collapses into*

the chair, and the lights of the room begin to go down. As it grows dark the music swells. Then, after a moment, it begins to grow light again—but it is no longer NEIL'S *room. It is a railway station, with the arch of Track 37 prominently visible, and other arches flanking it at the side. A muddled train schedule is printed on the station walls, with strange towns that never existed.* NEIL'S *piano, however, has remained where it was, and so has his easy chair. Then, down the aisles of the lighted theatre, there comes suddenly a double wedding procession. One section is headed by* MR. CADY *and* GLADYS—MR. CADY *in golf knickers and socks, knitted vest, and frock coat, with a silk hat prominently on his arm.* GLADYS *is the gorgeously attired bride, bearing proudly a bouquet that consists entirely of banknotes. Behind them stream four ushers—spats, frock coats, and high hats, to say nothing of huge bridal veils, draped over their heads. If you could peer beneath their veils, however, you would find that all four of them look just alike. The procession that comes down the other aisle is headed by* MRS. CADY *and* HOMER. MRS. CADY *wears a grotesque exaggeration of the dress that* NEIL *has seen her in, and* HOMER'S *yellow tie has assumed tremendous proportions. Behind* MRS. CADY *and* HOMER *are four bandsmen. Like the ushers, they all look alike, all wearing bridal veils, through which they play their instruments. At the foot of the stage the processions halt; the music stops.* ALBERT *appears from nowhere in particular; he has turned into a minister.*]

GLADYS. Oh, Neil!

NEIL [*in his sleep*]. Huh?

[ALBERT *gently rouses him.*]

ALBERT. Neil! Did you forget that you were being married today?

NEIL. Oh! Why—I'm afraid I did. [*He looks wonderingly at the railway station, then turns and sees* GLADYS.] Oh, hello, Gladys! I'm sorry.

[*The two processions stream up onto the stage. The ushers and the bandsmen line up behind the* CADY *family.*]

GLADYS. Neil, I want you to meet my ushers. They're all boys I used to know pretty well. [*As* GLADYS *begins the introductions the entire thing turns into a rhythmic chant, to an orchestral accompaniment.*] This is Alf and this is Georgie.

NEIL. Glad to meet you!

ALF. Glad to meet you!
GLADYS. This is Steve.
NEIL. I'm glad to meet you!
GLADYS. This is Fatty.
NEIL. How d'you do?
GLADYS. This is Lou.
LOU. I'm glad to meet you!
NEIL. Glad to meet you!
LOU. Glad to meet you!
GLADYS. And this last is Cousin Harry.
HARRY. Glad to meet you!
NEIL. How d'you do?
CADY. Hurry up, now! Let's get at it!
ALBERT. Take this man to be your husband?
[*A trainman, in uniform, enters through the gates of the railway station.*]
TRAINMAN. Wolverine, for Monte Carlo!
ALBERT. Have and hold him . . .
GLADYS. Yes, I do!
[*They all begin to rise and fall on their toes, to the beat of the music.*]
ALBERT. All your wordly goods and chattels. . . .
[*A trainboy, carrying the usual magazines, chocolates, etc., comes through the gates.*]
TRAINBOY. Latest magazines and papers!
MRS. CADY. Going off to leave her mama!
HOMER. Say, it's cold here. Ah, kerchoo!
[*The ushers begin to march around* GLADYS *and* NEIL, *faster and faster.*]
CADY. Train pulls out in just a minute!
ALBERT. Both for richer and for richer. . . .
TRAINMAN. Pasadena, Paris, London!
ALBERT. Better, worser . . .
GLADYS. Sure I will!
CADY. Special car Appolinaris!
[GLADYS *is kissing the ushers as they march.*]
TRAINBOY. Nothing sold after the train leaves!
MRS. CADY. Don't know *what* I'll do without her!
TRAINMAN. Show your tickets!
HOMER. Ma, keep still!
CADY. Get aboard! I'll tip the preacher!

TRAINMAN. Right this way, please! Right this way, please!

TRAINBOY. Huyler's chocolates and bon-bons!

MRS. CADY. Oh, my baby!

HOMER. Oh, good Lord!

TRAINMAN. Lenox,[1] Palm Beach, Narragansett![2]

ALBERT. I pronounce you—got the ring, Neil?

ALL THE USHERS. Bet he's lost it! Bet he's lost it!

GLADYS. Here's another!

TRAINMAN. All aboard!

[*The procession starts through the gates*—ALBERT *and* CADY *first, then the rest of the* CADYS, *then the ushers and the bandsmen. As they all file through the ushers continue the chant, calling out in unison:*]

Well, goodbye! Congratulations!
Goodbye, Gladys! Goodbye, Gladys!
Send us back a picture postal!
Hope you're happy!
Well, goodbye!

[GLADYS *tosses her bouquet back to them; the ushers scramble for the banknotes. As the last of the procession disappears through the doors the lights die down. A moment later they come up again, revealing a row of white marble columns, with crimson curtains hung between them.* NEIL'S *piano, however, is still incongruously in the left corner, and his easy chair stands at the right. Immediately* NEIL *and* GLADYS *enter through side curtains.* NEIL *is still wearing his bathrobe—a somewhat sad spectacle amid all this grandeur.* GLADYS *is no longer in bridal costume, but wears a pleated dress—an exaggeration of the dress that she has worn in real life, with great pleats several inches thick.*]

GLADYS. We're married, Neil!

NEIL. Yes.

GLADYS. I'm your little bride.

NEIL. My little bride.

GLADYS [*giggles*]. Isn't it all just too wonderful? [*Runs into his arms*] This is our beautiful home—see! [*The curtains behind the front columns part, revealing a magnificent interior consisting entirely of more marble columns and velvet curtains.*] You're go-

[1] ***Lenox,*** *an exclusive summer resort in the Berkshire Hills of Massachusetts.*
[2] ***Narragansett,*** *Narragansett Pier, Rhode Island, a famous summer resort.*

ing to have everything you've always needed! Mama and papa both say so!

NEIL. Oh! Do they?

GLADYS. Yes, indeed! You just wait—they'll be here any minute!

NEIL. They're coming here?

GLADYS. Of course they are! There're a lot of people coming—all coming to see our beautiful new home! Wait a minute—I'll show you! [*Calls*] Butlers! [*Two butlers appear. They are exactly alike.*] Announce somebody!

THE TWO BUTLERS. Mrs. Cady and her chair and knitting!

[MRS. CADY *enters with a rocking chair attached to her. She begins knitting immediately. The two butlers depart.*]

MRS. CADY. Two little lovebirds! Gladys and Neil! Gladys and Neil! Are they happy? Oh, my dear, you never *saw* anyone so happy! I was saying to Mr. Cady, "Well, Mr. Cady, what do you think of your little daughter now? [*She sits.*] How's this for a happy family?" And Mr. Cady says to me, "Well, I never would have believed it." And I says to Mr. Cady, and Mr. Cady says to me, and I says to Mr. Cady, and Mr. Cady says to me, and I says——

NEIL. Stop! [MRS. CADY *stops.*] So—so you're my wife's mother?

GLADYS. Why, of course she is! I think she's a pretty nice mother-in-law, don't you? Most people don't like their mothers-in-law, but I think *she's* pretty nice.

NEIL. But is she going to be—always——

GLADYS. Yes, indeed! Won't it be lovely? And that isn't all. [*Calls*] Butlers!

[*Four butlers enter.*]

THE FOUR BUTLERS. Mr. Cady, her father!

[MR. CADY *enters. He is in complete golf attire, and there is a telephone attached to his chest. As he enters the butlers depart.*]

CADY [*into the telephone*]. Yep! Yep! Hullo! Well, I'll tell you what to do! Sell eighteen holes and buy all the water hazards. Yep! Yep! Hullo! Well, I'll tell you what to do! I expect caddies will go up any time now. How's the eighth hole this morning? Uh-huh. Well, sell it in three. Yes, sir. That's fine. Yep! Yep! Hullo! Well, I'll tell you what to do! Buy——

NEIL. No, no! [CADY *stops; looks at* NEIL.] You must stop—both of you! Do you know me?

CADY. My son! My new son! Well, Neil, how's the nice music and everything? Making a lot of money?

NEIL. Are we all going to live together?

GLADYS. Yes, indeed, darling.

CADY. Yes, indeed.

MRS. CADY. Yes, indeed.

GLADYS. And that isn't all. [*Six butlers enter. Of course they are all alike.*] I've *another* surprise for you!

THE SIX BUTLERS. Her brother, Homer. He makes me sick.

FIRST BUTLER. I don't think *he's* sick at all.

[*The butlers go.* HOMER *enters—the yellow tie is bigger than ever.*]

HOMER. Oh, there you are, you dirty dog! I'm on to you! You married her just because Dad's got a lot of money, and you think you're going to have a cinch. But if you think you're going to get all of Dad's money, you're mistaken, because I'm going to get my share and don't you forget it. [*He makes straight for the easy chair, sits in it, and sneezes.*]

MRS. CADY. Now, Homer! Homer's sick.

CADY. Yes, he's sick.

GLADYS. It's all right, dearest.

NEIL. It isn't all right. I don't want the money. All I want to do is write my music. That's what I want to do—work. Do you think I'll be able to?

GLADYS. Why, of course you will, dear. We've just had this whole room done over for you to work in.

MRS. CADY. It's awfully pretty, Neil.

CADY. Cost a lot of money, too. [*His phone rings.*] Hello! . . . No—wrong number! [*He hangs up.*]

GLADYS. Don't you just love it, Neil, keeping house together? Say "sweetheart"!

NEIL [*automatically*]. Sweetheart.

GLADYS. And next week we're going to have everything done over in some *other* color. Here are the samples—the samples. [*She produces another set of samples, larger than those used in real life.*] Now which color would you like? It's going to be whichever color you like.

NEIL. Why, any one. [*He removes the samples from his arm.*]

HOMER. Make him pick one! Make him pick it!

GLADYS. Here, I'll tell you! You stop in and get them matched! Get some of this one, and some of that one, and maybe some of the other one—on your way home from business tomorrow. It'll give you something to do.

NEIL. Am I going to business tomorrow?

CADY. Yes, sir! Start right in at the bottom and work up. Learn all the ins and outs. Lots of people think the ins and outs don't amount to anything; but you can't get anywhere in business without them.

NEIL. But if I have to go to business tomorrow I'd like to work on my symphony now—if you'll only go.

HOMER. Huh! The symphony!

GLADYS. That old thing!

CADY. That's no good!

MRS. CADY. I wouldn't have it in the house!

NEIL. But it is good—and I've got to finish it.

CADY. Highbrow music—that's what it is.

NEIL. Well, then, I'll work on the pantomime—that's not so highbrow. [*He goes to the piano.*]

MRS. CADY. For my part I like hymns. There's nothing like the old familiar hymns. [*She sings—"Oh, Blessed Be the Tie That Binds."*]

GLADYS. Anyhow, you can't work now. It's tea time!

MRS. CADY [*to the tune of the hymn*]. Yes, tea time! It's tea time! It's tea time!

CADY. So it is. [*Into his phone*] Hello! . . . Don't disturb me now—I'm busy. . . . Tea!

GLADYS. Quite a crowd coming this afternoon.

MRS. CADY. Yes, coming to meet Neil! Yes, Gladys and Neil! Gladys and Neil!

GLADYS. Now, Neil, you be nice to everybody. I want you to make a nice impression.

[*Eight butlers enter.*]

THE EIGHT BUTLERS. A friend of her family's. [*The butlers go. No one enters, but apparently the* CADYS *see someone. They greet the invisible guest.*]

GLADYS. How do you do?

CADY. How do you do?

[*They bring her down to* MRS. CADY.]

MRS. CADY. How do you do? Oh, what a nice new ear trumpet!

GLADYS. I'm so glad you were able to come!

[NEIL *peers, trying his best to see what it is all about.*]

MRS. CADY. Well, it's wonderful to see you again!

GLADYS. Doesn't she look well, mama?

MRS. CADY. You're the picture of health! No one would ever say *you* had an operation. I say—no one would ever say you had an operation. Yes, it always does it if you were heavy before. Oh, was it a year ago? Well, tempus does fugit, as Homer says. You remember Homer?

HOMER. I said hello.

MRS. CADY. Homer's sick.

GLADYS. Oh, Neil! I want you to meet an old friend of mama's. She's deaf. You'll have to talk loud.

[*Ten butlers enter.*]

THE TEN BUTLERS. Another friend of the family's! [*The butlers go.*]

GLADYS [*greeting the newcomer*]. How do you do?

CADY. How do you do?

GLADYS. So glad to see you again. And little Hattie! Oh, look, mama! [CADY *and* GLADYS *bend over, as though greeting a child.*]

MRS. CADY. Why, if it isn't little Hattie! Look, Gladys! Isn't she cunning?

GLADYS. Isn't she? Those cute little curls! Do you want to meet your great big cousin Neilie? Neil, darling, this is your little cousin Hattie. Isn't she a big girl? Say something cute to her. [GLADYS *turns away from* NEIL *and he passes his foot over the spot where the child is supposed to be.*]

[*Twelve butlers enter.*]

THE TWELVE BUTLERS. A great many other friends of the family.

FIRST BUTLER. And all pretty terrible, if you ask me. [*They go.*]

CADY. Hello, Alf! You remember Mrs. Cady?

HOMER. Hello, Fatty.

MRS. CADY. How do you do?

CADY. Say, I called you up a couple of times but couldn't get any answer.

GLADYS. Why, how do you do, Alf? I'm awfully glad you were able to come. Oh, Neil! I want you to meet an old friend of papa's. He's known me ever since I was—how high? Yes, but you couldn't lift me now.

[*The invisible guest tries to lift her and fails. She giggles. Butlers enter with imaginary trays.*]

MRS. CADY. And now we'll have some nice tea to drink.

HOMER [*probably to* FATTY]. He married Gladys for her money.

MRS. CADY. And then Neil will play for us.

GLADYS. Oh, hello! Haven't seen you in a long time! No, I guess I wasn't engaged then.

[*It is a Babel. The* CADYS *are all speaking together, moving around and greeting guests.* NEIL *moves through it all, walking through guests, passing his hands through the butlers' trays—bewildered.*]

CADY. Oh, hello, Ralph. I want you to meet my new son-in-law. Neil, this is Mr. Umn.

GLADYS. Oh, have you been out to California? Did it rain much?

CADY. Yes, he's going to be very valuable to me in business, too.

HOMER. I'll bet he's rotten.

CADY. But after all there's nothing like business. It'll all be his when I retire—his and Homer's, his and Homer's. [*Slaps* NEIL *on back*]

[*The following four speeches are spoken simultaneously.*]

MRS. CADY. Well, Miss Mmm, you know Mmm, don't you? He's a cousin of John's who knew Francis very well. She's Ted's aunt. Yes. It's such a long time since you've been to see us. Gladys is always saying: "Mama, why is it Mrs. Mmm doesn't come and visit us, or why don't we go out and see her?" and all like that. You know Mrs. Mmm, don't you? You've become very plump, or you've become very thin. You don't mind my not getting up, do you? Mr. Cady always says I'm chair bound. But that's his way of making a joke. He's always making a joke. You know Neil, of course. Would you like to have Neil play for us? Would you like to have Neil play for us? Neil, play for us.

HOMER. Look at him, the dirty dog! He married her for her money all right, but if he thinks he's going to get it he's got another think coming. Pop's going to put him in the business! Huh! He thinks he's going to get the business, too. Well, I'll show him—the dirty dog! He isn't going to get the business away from me—not while I'm alive and kicking. All because he's a musician. Yes, he thinks he plays the piano. Well—let him play it and see if I care. I dare him to play it. Go on and play for us.

MR. CADY. Well, well, well! You know Judge Mmm of course. Old man, I want you to meet the Judge. Yes, they've got a very beautiful home here. Would you like a cocktail, eh? Yes, sir! Well, Judge, how's everything been going? Say, you know Mr. Mmm, don't you? How are you? How have you been all these years? Have a cocktail—that's the boy. Yes, she's a big girl now. Grown up—married. That's her husband there. That's the one I

bought for her. Very talented. I'll get him to play. Neil, we'd like to hear you play. Come on, Neil, play something on the piano.

GLADYS. Oh, how do you do, Aunt Gertrude? You know Willie, of course. Willie, you remember Aunt Gertrude. Aunt Gertrude, you remember Willie. Yes, this is our beautiful home. My husband's very talented. No, you didn't interrupt him a bit. He's awfully glad you came. He wasn't going to do anything this afternoon. Anyway, we always have tea. And if it isn't tea, it's something else. We're always having such a good time, Neil and I. Yes, that's my husband there. He plays the piano beautifully. Shall I get him to play? I think he would if I ask him. Oh, Neil, darling, play something. Please, Neil! Neil, for my sake, you'll play, won't you?

[MR. *and* MRS. CADY, GLADYS *and* HOMER *reach the "Come on and play" lines simultaneously.*]

THE CADYS. Play something for us! Play something for us! Play something for us!

NEIL [*in quiet desperation*]. All right. [*Crosses to piano, seats himself and turns on them*] I'll play, but I'll play what I want to—and I don't think you'll like it. [*He plays—music that is soft and flowing, and reminiscent of* CYNTHIA. *The lights fade on the* CADYS *and their reception; the curtains fall. Through the window by the piano comes* CYNTHIA.]

NEIL [*as he continues playing*]. Cynthia! I thought that would bring you—I hoped so.

CYNTHIA. Of course, Neil, dear.

NEIL. Cynthia, it was a mistake! I'm terribly unhappy!

CYNTHIA. I'm so sorry, Neil. Because I want you to be happy, always.

NEIL. But I can't be happy with these people. I should have married you, Cynthia. I wanted you, you remember? But you wouldn't. And now it's too late.

CYNTHIA. Yes, it's too late. And I'm sorry, too.

NEIL. I don't want you to be sorry, Cynthia. I don't want you to regret anything. It was all my own fault.

[NEIL'S *music turns to jazz as he plays.*]

CYNTHIA. Oh, Neil, don't let your music do that! [*She begins to draw back into the window.*]

NEIL [*desperately, as the music becomes more and more jazzy*]. I can't help it! It's these people. I'm trying—but I can't help it. [CYNTHIA'S *image begins to fade.*] No—no! Don't leave me, Cynthia!

I need you! Don't leave me with these people! They don't understand! They never can understand! [*But* CYNTHIA *is gone now.* NEIL *ends the jazz music with a treble crash, and buries his head on the keyboard. Immediately* MR. CADY *enters—his hat on and a morning newspaper in his hand.*]

CADY [*as he passes*]. Hurry up, Neil! Mustn't be late for business. [*An elevator man, the same who was the trainman during the wedding scene, enters from the other side and meets* MR. CADY *at center.*] Good morning, Jerry.

ELEVATOR MAN. Good morning, Mr. Cady. Express elevator going up! Watch your step!

[NEIL *looks up. There is no elevator but this time even* NEIL *is persuaded, and he believes that he sees it. Four business men, all with hats and newspapers, and all looking just alike, enter one at a time and step into the imaginary elevator.*]

CADY [*to the first of them*]. Good morning! Made it in twenty-eight minutes this morning!

FIRST BUSINESS MAN. Good morning! I got the eight-six this morning!

SECOND BUSINESS MAN. Good morning! I missed the seven-forty-three.

THIRD BUSINESS MAN. Good morning! I always take the nine-two.

FOURTH BUSINESS MAN. Good morning! I thought you were on the eight-sixteen.

[NEIL *gets into the car; the men huddle together.*]

STARTER [*clicking his signal*]. All right! Twentieth floor first stop!

CADY. No, sir, I wouldn't sell under a million five! No, sir, a million five! Oh, good morning, Neil!

NEIL. Well, I'm starting.

CADY. Good boy, Neil! I want you to meet some of my associates. This is my son-in-law, gentlemen. Just bought him for my daughter. Mr. Canoo, statistical department.

FIRST BUSINESS MAN. Four out! [*As* MR. CADY *thus introduces him the* FIRST BUSINESS MAN *walks out of the elevator, and goes off, paying no attention to* NEIL, *who nods at his retreating back.*]

CADY. Mr. Deloo, traffic department.

SECOND BUSINESS MAN. Five out! [*He goes.*]

CADY. Mr. Meloo, tax department!

THIRD BUSINESS MAN. Six out! [*He goes.*]

CADY. Mr. Beloo, general department.

FOURTH BUSINESS MAN. Eight out. [*He goes.*]

CADY. Well, well, Neil, starting in to work? You'll like it. You'll learn the ins and outs in no time. Hey! Wait a minute. I said nine out! [*He goes.*]

NEIL. Excuse me, Jerry! Can you tell me where I can learn the Ins and Outs?

STARTER. Ins and Outs Department! Room three hundred and thirty-three and one-third. Try and find it. [*He goes.*]

NEIL. Thank you.

[*The curtains between the marble columns at right part. A small office is disclosed.* MISS HEY, *a stenographer, is typing at a small desk behind a railing.*]

NEIL. I beg your pardon?

MISS HEY. Well?

NEIL. I want a pencil.

MISS HEY [*still typing*]. What is it?

NEIL. I want a pencil.

MISS HEY. Who sent you?

NEIL. I don't know. But I have to have a pencil. I worked in a place like this once before. I had a great deal of difficulty getting a pencil then, I remember.

MISS HEY. It's just as hard to get one here.

NEIL. I thought it would be. I suppose there's a lot of red tape to go through.

MISS HEY [*turning toward him*]. Yes. Now as I understand it, you want a pencil.

NEIL. That's right.

MISS HEY. Of course you've filled out a requisition.

NEIL. No, I haven't. A piece of paper, isn't it? [*She hands him a tremendous sheet of paper. It is about twenty by thirty inches. He studies it.*] What I want is a pencil. There's a place for that to be put in, I suppose?

MISS HEY [*wearily*]. Yes—where it says: "The undersigned wishes a pencil to do some work with." How old are you?

NEIL. Thirty-two.

MISS HEY [*taking the paper away*]. That's the wrong form. [*She gives him another—a blue one this time.*] Parents living?

NEIL. No.

MISS HEY. What did you do with your last pencil?

NEIL. I didn't have any.

MISS HEY. Did you have any before that?

NEIL. I don't think I ever had any. [*He indicates the form.*] Is that all right?

MISS HEY. It isn't as regular as we like, but I guess it'll do.

NEIL. What do I do now? Go to someone else, don't I?

MISS HEY. Oh, yes. Sometimes you travel for days.

NEIL. Are we all crazy?

MISS HEY. Yes. [*She resumes typing.*] You might try Room E—right down the corridor.

[*The curtains close over her, and the curtains at the left simultaneously open, revealing another office, just like the first. Another stenographer,* MISS YOU, *is at work on a typewriter.* NEIL *approaches her, requisition in hand.*]

NEIL. Is this Room E?

MISS YOU [*mechanically*]. Did you have an appointment?

NEIL. No—you don't understand. I'm trying to get a pencil.

MISS YOU. Well, what do you want to see him about?

NEIL [*handing over the requisition*]. It's this. Somebody has to sign it.

MISS YOU [*takes requisition*]. Oh! [*Looks at it*] Mr. Bippy! The man is here to see about getting a pencil or something.

NEIL. It *is* a pencil.

MISS YOU. Did you see Mr. Schlink?

NEIL. Yes.

MISS YOU. Mr. Woodge?

NEIL. Yes.

MISS YOU. Mr. Meglup?

NEIL. Yes.

MISS YOU. What did *they* say?

NEIL. Why, they seemed to think it would be all right.

MISS YOU [*calls again*]. Oh, Mr. Bippy! [*To* NEIL] Belong to the Employes' Mutual?

NEIL. Oh, yes.

MISS YOU. Cady Golf and Building Fund?

NEIL. Yes.

MISS YOU. Well—all right. [*She stamps the requisition with an elaborate machine, which rings a bell as it works. She hands the paper back to* NEIL.]

NEIL. Oh, thanks. Do I get a pencil now?

MISS YOU. Oh, no! It has to be O.K.'d by the President. All requisitions have to be O.K.'d by the President.

NEIL. Is he around here some place?

MISS YOU. Oh, no! He's in a big office. Just keep going until you find a great big office.

NEIL. Where?

MISS YOU. Oh, somewhere in the new building. Mr. Bippy!

[NEIL *turns away. The curtains close.*]

NEIL. The new building. A big office.

[*The center curtains open, revealing a larger office.* MR. CADY, *seated at a long table, is dictating, in alternate sentences, to* MISS YOU, MISS HEY, *and to a dictaphone which stands before him.*]

[NEIL *tries to attract* MISS HEY'S *attention.*]

[*Simultaneously*]

NEIL [*to* MISS YOU]. I beg your pardon. . . . [*To* MISS HEY.] I beg your pardon . . . would you mind if I—is this the President's office? Excuse me. . . . Excuse me.

MISS HEY [*to* NEIL]. Well, what is it?

NEIL. I want to see the President.

MISS HEY. What do you want to see him about?

CADY [*dictating*]. And so beg to state—yours of the 19th instant—hoping to receive your valued order—yours received and would say—our Mr. Mmmm will call on you—in re our No. 2160—yours sincerely—annual sales convention—beg to state—beg to state—beg to state—pursuant to your instructions of the 13th ultimo—F.O.B. our factory—beg to state—beg to state—beg to state—as per your terms and specifications — would say — would say——[*By this time, hearing* NEIL'S *voice,* CADY *turns.*]

CADY. Why, Neil!

NEIL. Here I am—at work!

CADY. Yes, sir! Business! Big business!

NEIL. Yes. Big business. What business are we in?

CADY. Widgets. We're in the widget business.

NEIL. The widget business?

CADY. Yes, sir! I suppose I'm the biggest manufacturer in the world of overhead and underground A-erial widgets. Miss You!

MISS YOU. Yes, sir.

CADY. Let's hear what our business was during the first six months of the fiscal year. [*To* NEIL] The annual report.

MISS YOU [*reading*]. "The turnover in the widget industry last year was greater than ever. If placed alongside the Woolworth

Building it would stretch to the moon. The operating expenses alone would furnish every man, woman and child in the United States, China and similar places with enough to last for eighteen and one-half years, if laid end to end."

CADY. How's that?

NEIL. It's wonderful!

CADY. And wait for September 17th!

NEIL. Why?

CADY. That's to be National Widget Week! The whole country!

NEIL. That's fine, but what I came up about——

CADY. Never mind that now—we've got more important things. Conferences, mostly. [*To* MISS HEY *and* MISS YOU] Any good conferences on for today?

MISS HEY AND MISS YOU [*together*]. One at 3:19 this afternoon. [*They go.*]

CADY. That's fine! Ever been to a conference, Neil?

NEIL. No, but I've heard a lot about them.

CADY. They're great! You make speeches and decide things, and nobody can get in while they're going on.

[MISS YOU *and* MISS HEY *re-enter excitedly.*]

MISS YOU AND MISS HEY. All ready! They're going to start the conference, the conference, the conference! [*They rush out.*]

CADY. Fine! Come right in, gentlemen! [*Half a dozen business men enter. They wear clothes that suggest fatness and prosperity. They walk in stiffly, in a line, repeating the phrases "Overhead," "Turnover," "Annual Report," "Overhead," "Turnover," "Annual Report." They sit, in stiff poses.*] We are going to have a conference! [*Calls off*] Bolt the doors, out there! Gentlemen—this is our annual quarterly meeting. [*He drops a gold piece in front of each man.*] I want to introduce a young man who has been showing great promise in our factory. I don't know what he will have to say to you——

NEIL. I know what to say! [*Rises*] I remember now—I know exactly what to say!

CADY. Gentlemen, Mr. Neil McRae!

[*As* NEIL *rises to speak the men all fall into mechanical positions, reminiscent of the board of directors pictures in the advertisements.* NEIL *pounds the table occasionally during his speech, but there is no sound.*]

NEIL. I know you must be surprised to see so young a man stand

up before you, but I have *trained* myself to occupy the position I am now in. I have learned my facts. That is how I happen to own my own home. It simply took up my spare time in the evenings. Then, one day, the head of the factory came through the room where I happened to be working on a very difficult piece of machinery. "Who is that?" he asked the foreman. "He seems to be brighter than the others." "Not at all," answered the foreman. "He has simply applied himself and I think we must raise his pay, if we want to hold him." A few weeks later I was able to solve in five minutes a problem that had puzzled the best brains in our organization. I am now the head of my department, and my old foreman is working under me.

[NEIL *sits; there is applause; the men lean over and shake his hand, congratulating him.*]

BUSINESS MEN. Wonderful! Wonderful!

CADY. I knew he could do it! Gentlemen, he has saved us millions!

FIRST BUSINESS MAN. Why, he is going to be the biggest man in the organization.

OTHERS. Yes! The very biggest!

FIRST BUSINESS MAN. What do you say to signing up with us for ten years at half a million dollars a year?

SECOND BUSINESS MAN. And becoming sales manager?

CADY. How about a bonus?

FIRST BUSINESS MAN. Yes, a bonus!

SECOND BUSINESS MAN. Here's my check for one hundred thousand dollars!

CADY. And here's mine! Two hundred thousand dollars.

FIRST BUSINESS MAN. And mine for one hundred thousand!

OTHER BUSINESS MEN. And mine—one hundred and fifty thousand dollars!

NEIL. Oh, thank you, thank you! [*He looks at the checks; they are of various-colored paper—pink, blue, yellow.*] It's an awful lot of money, isn't it?

CADY. A million dollars!

NEIL. A million dollars!

CADY. Well, gentlemen, that was a dandy conference!

FIRST BUSINESS MAN. And mine for best!

CADY. Let's have another!

SECOND BUSINESS MAN. Yes, another.

[CADY *hands out gold pieces again as the curtains close in.* NEIL, *however, has stepped out of the scene and stands facing the audience. Curtains fall behind him.*]

NEIL. Just think, a million dollars. [*He looks at the checks in his hand, but they have turned into samples of colored cloth.*] Blue and pink and yellow. Blue and yellow and pink. I was to match them. *I* know! I was to match them for——

GLADYS [*heard in the distance*]. Oh, Neil!

NEIL. For Gladys. [*Then, mechanically*] Sweetheart!

[GLADYS, *resplendent in evening dress and wrap, joins him.*]

GLADYS. Did you have a hard day at the office, Neil?

NEIL. Here they are. It's a million dollars—I think.

GLADYS. Oh, good. I always knew you'd be a big success, Neil.

NEIL [*dully*]. But I'm not doing what I want to do. My music —I want to write my music.

GLADYS. Oh, not now! It's time to go somewhere! We're going to dance!

NEIL. No, no! I've got to write my music. I want to go home now!

GLADYS. Oh, nobody ever goes home. We're going to go and dance!

NEIL. But we've got to eat dinner first!

GLADYS. Of course! We're going to eat right here!

NEIL. In this restaurant again? But we were here last night, and the night before. You don't want to come here every night, do you?

GLADYS. Why, of course I do! Suppose it *is* expensive, you can afford it now! And nobody comes here but the best people! We'll come here every night from now on! They have the nicest little lamps on the tables!

[*A check-room boy enters from one side and a headwaiter from the other. A second glance reveals the fact that the headwaiter is* ALBERT. *The check boy takes* GLADYS' *wrap and* NEIL'S *bathrobe.*]

ALBERT. Bon soir. [*Holds up two fingers*] How many, please?

NEIL. Two.

ALBERT. Two?

NEIL [*counts them*]. Two.

ALBERT. Two?

NEIL. Why, hello, Albert!

ALBERT. Hello, Neil!

NEIL. Oh, yes! You were a waiter at college, weren't you? You know Gladys?

GLADYS. Of course.

[ALBERT *and* GLADYS *shake hands. Then* ALBERT *immediately becomes again the formal waiter.*]

ALBERT. How many, please?

NEIL. Two.

ALBERT. Two?

NEIL [*looks around to see if a third has mysteriously appeared*]. Yes—two.

ALBERT. I will see if I can find you a table. [*He consults his chart.*] All our reserved tables are reserved. [*The center curtains part, revealing a gaudy cabaret interior. In the center, at the rear, is a window, set in a frame of wrought iron. There is a single table, set with much fancy glassware and two table lamps of the sort so dear to* GLADYS' *heart. As this scene is revealed an unseen orchestra strikes up the jazz tune, "The Frog's Party."*] Ah! Right this way, please! Here is a nice one—right by the window! [*He seats them with an elaborate flourish, simultaneously uttering the meaningless ritual of headwaiters everywhere.*] Yes, Madame! Yes, sir!

[*A cigarette girl, Spanish in attire, enters and circles around the table.*]

GIRL. Cigars and cigarettes! Cigars and cigarettes!

[ALBERT *presents the menu, a huge affair, to* NEIL.]

GLADYS. See, Neil? Isn't it wonderful? [*She sways to the music.*] Order! He's waiting! Hurry up—you've got to order!

NEIL [*scanning the card*]. I—I can't decide right away.

GLADYS. Oh, that music! I can't stand it any longer! [*She rises and seizes* ALBERT.] Dance? [*She whirls around the table with him, to the accompaniment of the jazz tune and the cigarette girl's chorus of "cigars, cigarettes."*]

ALBERT [*when the dance is over*]. Perhaps Madame would care for some Bordelaise à la Bordelaise, or some Bordelaise à la Bordelaise, or some Bordelaise à la Bordelaise.

GLADYS. Why, yes—I'd like that!

ALBERT. And what will Monsieur have?

NEIL [*studying card*]. What *is* Bordelaise à la Bordelaise?

ALBERT. Very nice, sir.

NEIL. Yes, I know, but what is it?

ALBERT. It's served in a little round dish—very nice.

NEIL. Can't I find out what it is?

ALBERT. I'll see if anybody knows, sir. [*He turns his back.*]

GLADYS. Neil!

NEIL. Well?

GLADYS. People don't do that—making a scene in a restaurant!

NEIL. I only want to know what it is.

GLADYS. But you must pretend that you *do* know! *That's* the thing!

[ALBERT *turns back to* NEIL.]

ALBERT. I'm sorry, sir—nobody knows.

NEIL. It doesn't matter. I'll take it.

ALBERT. Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

[*Four waiters enter, with dishes.*]

GLADYS. Oh, here's dinner!

[*The waiters circle the table, clanking the lids of their dishes as they exhibit the food. They go slowly at first, then faster and faster, in time to the constantly accelerating music.*]

NEIL [*springing up*]. Stop! I can't stand it! [*The waiters halt in their tracks; the music stops.*] Is it going to be like this always?

GLADYS. What?

NEIL. Our life!

[ALBERT *dismisses the waiters.*]

GLADYS. Why, I think it's wonderful! You're going ahead being a big success in papa's office, and every night we'll go out and dance! You'll have to learn!

NEIL. I won't dance! I don't want to dance! I wouldn't ever have had to dance if I hadn't married you! [*It gives him a thought.*] If I hadn't married you——

GLADYS. Well, I don't care whether you dance or not. *I'm* going to! Albert— [*She rises and seizes* ALBERT; *they dance off.*] If you hadn't married me you'd have starved to death—starved to death—starved to death——

[*Her voice dies down in the distance as she and* ALBERT *dance off to the accompaniment of the jazz tune. As* NEIL *starts the next speech the jazz tune slowly changes into the* CYNTHIAN *theme, and at the same time the gaudy cabaret changes into a sunny cottage.*]

NEIL. I don't think so. I might have been poor, but we'd both have work to do. It's a small house, I know, but the sun finds it the first thing every morning. And flowers live longer in our windows than anywhere else, because she cares for them so.

[*The wrought-iron window has turned into a simple thing of chintzes; chintz curtains appear in the doorways, and a box of jonquils takes its place at the foot of the window. The table no longer contains restaurant silver and electric lamps, but is simply furnished with a few breakfast things, with a vase of jonquils to keep them company. The place is flooded with sunlight.*]

NEIL [*calling*]. Cynthia!

CYNTHIA. I'm coming!

NFIL. *Are* you coming, or must I use force?

CYNTHIA. It's the toast machine. You sit down and begin.

NEIL. As though I ever begin without you! Besides, I have something beautiful for you. [CYNTHIA *enters, bringing a tray laden with breakfast.*] See what I've done!

CYNTHIA. What?

NEIL. Nothing at all! Merely created an utterly beautiful morning!

CYNTHIA. *You* did? I started it an hour ago.

NEIL. Perhaps; but see those little powder-puff clouds? *They* weren't there ten minutes ago.

CYNTHIA. They *are* nice, darling. I didn't think you were so clever.

NEIL. And wait till you see the sunset I'm planning.

CYNTHIA. You can't beat last night's. What a scarlet!

NEIL. It blushed because we flattered it so.

[*A pause*]

CYNTHIA. Darling.

NEIL. What?

CYNTHIA. A letter.

[*They stare at the envelope corner.*]

NEIL. Didn't you dare open it?

CYNTHIA. No. But let's be brave. [*They hold hands and take a long breath.*] Now—one, two, three! [*They tear the letter open; read it in silence.*] Do you believe it? [*The voice is ecstatic.*]

NEIL. No! Do you?

CYNTHIA. Darling!

NEIL. Darling!

CYNTHIA. But it *must* be real—it's typewritten.

CYNTHIA AND NEIL [*reading in unison*]. "Your symphony will be played by our orchestra on December the tenth."

NEIL. Darling!

CYNTHIA. Darling! They'll applaud and applaud! You'll have to come out and bow!

NEIL. I won't!

CYNTHIA. You'll have to have a new dress suit!

NEIL. And you'll have to have a new evening dress—yellow chiffon, too. I can do their damned orchestrations now. I can do a hundred of them between now and October.

CYNTHIA. No, you won't!

NLIL. But, my youngest child, we must continue to eat.

CYNTHIA. But, my dear, we're extremely wealthy. Have you seen my new housekeeping book?

NEIL. No.

CYNTHIA. Look! I ruled every one of those columns myself.

NEIL [*rises*]. Oh! Sit down!

CYNTHIA. That's why my middle finger is all red. [NEIL *kisses her finger.*] This is serious. This is finance. Listen! [*Reading from book*] "To Mrs. Neil McRae—debtor. Ninety-seven dozen eggs from the little red hen at seventy-nine a dozen—ninety-seven, seventy-nine. Four hundred and forty-six quarts of milk from the little dun cow at sixty-four—four hundred and sixty-four. Thirty-six pots of jonquils sold Mr. Frost, the florist, at thirty-six sixty-six—six sixty-six, sixty-six." And there's the total!

NEIL. But, Cynthia, that can't be right; it's impossible!

CYNTHIA. Add it up for yourself.

NEIL. Sixty-three and eight are forty-two——

CYNTHIA. Neil, you may be one of the minor gods, but you can't add. [*Takes pencil*] There! Look!

NEIL. But that means——

CYNTHIA. It means we're billionaires, that's all.

NEIL. We have a hundred and seventy-seven dollars and—seventy-seven cents?

CYNTHIA [*nods*]. And we can keep on just as we have been doing.

NEIL. Cynthia, do you suppose *any* two people *ever?* [*He kisses her.*]

CYNTHIA. No, I don't believe *any* two people *ever.*

[*The voice of* GLADYS *comes out of the distance, faintly.*]

GLADYS. Oh, Ne-il!

CYNTHIA. What is it, dear?

NEIL. I thought I heard someone calling.

CYNTHIA. You did that last night at tea time. I'm frightened.

NEIL. You mustn't be—there are no fears in this house.

GLADYS [*louder this time—the same old call*]. Oh, Ne-il!

NEIL. Cynthia, it's calling me!

CYNTHIA. What?

NEIL. I don't know. I must go to it. [*He steps out of the cottage.*]

CYNTHIA. I'll go along!

[*The voice grows weaker as* GLADYS' *gets stronger.*]

NEIL. You can't, my dear! It's too absurd.

[*The curtains close on the cottage; the jazz begins again.*]

GLADYS. Oh, Ne-il!

CYNTHIA [*faintly*]. O-o-o-h!

NEIL. Yes, what is it?

GLADYS. Oh, Neil! [GLADYS *enters—so do the check boy, the cigarette girl,* ALBERT, *and the four waiters. They stand in a line with outstretched palms.*]

NEIL. Yes, what is it?

[GLADYS, *as she speaks, dances with each waiter in turn.*]

GLADYS. Come on, sweetheart! We're going home now! Tip the waiters! Tip the waiters!

NEIL. For heaven's sake, stop that dancing!

GLADYS. I should say not! Tip the waiters! Tip them big! Tip them big! [*She dances off with the last of the waiters.* NEIL *hands out large bundles of money to the waiters, then as he proceeds along the line, he comes suddenly to* ALBERT.]

NEIL. Albert! [*The music stops.*] You got me into this! You've got to tell me how I'm going to get out of it!

ALBERT. What's the matter?

NEIL. I can't stand it! I can't live with Gladys any longer. What am I going to do about her?

ALBERT. Why, that's easy.

NEIL. What do you mean?

ALBERT. Just kill her—that's all.

NEIL. Kill her?

ALBERT. Of course. It's simple and practical.

NEIL. Do you know I never thought of that? I'm not very practical, am I?

ALBERT. No, you're not.

NEIL. Of course, I wouldn't like to do it unless it were absolutely necessary.

ALBERT. Still, it's worth thinking about. [*He leaves him with this thought.*]

NEIL. Yes, it is.

[*The music starts;* GLADYS *and the waiter dance on again.*]

GLADYS. We're going home now! Tip the waiters! Did you tip them all? We're going home! Mama and papa will be there, and Homer!

[*The waiters are now gone, and the curtains reopen on the Cady home of pillars.* HOMER *is working on a radio set;* MR. CADY *is playing golf with an imaginary ball;* MRS. CADY *rocks, knits and sings. All in pandemonium.*]

CADY. Fore! Everybody, fore!

HOMER. I've got the radio fixed! Listen!

RADIO. Stock market reports! Stock market reports! [*Ad Infinitum*]

GLADYS. Oh, Neil! Isn't it nice to be in our own home again? [*She leaps into his lap.*]

MRS. CADY [*singing*]. "Bringing in the sheaves! Bringing in the sheaves!"

CADY. Give me the niblick! Give me the niblick!

NEIL. I wish you'd all keep still.

GLADYS. What, darling? Wait! Wait! [*Everybody subsides.*] I hear them! The dancing teachers! The dancing teachers! *Now* you'll learn to dance.

NEIL. I won't, I tell you!

GLADYS. Oh, yes, you will! Here they are! The dancing teachers! Come in, dancing teachers! Now you'll learn to dance!

[*Six dancing teachers enter—exquisite gentlemen, one like another.*]

NEIL. Gladys, I won't!

GLADYS. You've got to! Look! Aren't they wonderful? Here he is—my husband! You're to teach him to dance!

LEADER OF THE DANCING TEACHERS. Ah! [*He circles around* NEIL, *about to pounce.*]

NEIL. Gladys, I warn you! If you go ahead with this, you'll be sorry!

GLADYS. Teach him to dance! Teach him to dance!

LEADER [*advancing upon* NEIL]. You've got to dance! We teach the world to dance! We make it dance. [*He seizes him.*] We've got him.

GLADYS. *Now,* you'll learn to dance!

LEADER. Now watch me! One foot out and one foot in! One foot out and one foot in!

GLADYS. He's learning to dance! He's learning to dance!

ALL THE DANCING TEACHERS [*forcing* NEIL'S *arms, shoulders and feet*]. One foot out and one foot in! One foot out and one foot in! Now your shoulder, now your elbow! Now your shoulder, now your elbow! One foot out and one foot in! One foot out and one foot in. Now your shoulder——

NEIL [*tears himself loose*]. No! No! I tell you! Get out! All of you! [*They fall back.*] Get out, every one of you! I won't learn to dance! [*They have disappeared.*]

GLADYS. Neil!

NEIL [*the* CADYS *meantime unconcernedly continue their customary occupations, but in subdued tones*]. Thank God! Now I'm going to write!

GLADYS. Neil, do you realize how you're behaving?

NEIL. I do! I won't go on with this any longer! If this is to be our life together then I can't stand it! I won't! That's all—I won't!

GLADYS. Neil! After all I've done for you! After all papa's done for you!

NEIL. Done for me? You've ruined me, that's all! You've given me a lot of money that I didn't want, and you won't let me do the one thing I want to do! Well, now I'm going to write my music! I'm going to finish my symphony!

GLADYS. Oh, no, you're not! [*Crosses quickly to the piano and tears up the manuscript*] There's your old symphony! Now, what have you to say?

NEIL. You tore it up! It was the only reason I married you, and you tore it up! All right—there's only one thing to do! [*He takes up the paper knife from the piano—it is about twice the size that it was when the audience last saw it.*]

GLADYS. Neil, Neil! What are you going to do?

NEIL. I'm going to kill you!

[*She stands looking at him, transfixed. He stabs her, and she falls dead.*]

MRS. CADY [*quietly*]. Now you've done it!

NEIL. It was her fault! She killed my work!

MRS. CADY. She was a sweet girl. The police will get you. [*She sings "Bringing in the Sheaves."*]

NEIL. Stop that singing!

MRS. CADY. I won't!

NEIL. And stop that damned knitting!

MRS. CADY. I won't! "Rock of Ages, cleft for me."

[NEIL *stabs her. She dies, falling over backward, chair and all.*]

CADY [*blandly continuing his golf game*]. This is outrageous! The idea of killing a man's daughter and wife! I'm ashamed of you!

NEIL. You're to blame, too! Just as much as the others! Look!

CADY. What is it?

NEIL. *You're* dead, too.

CADY. Oh! [MR. CADY *dies.*]

NEIL. Thank God, they're out of the way! Peace! I can work at last!

THE RADIO. Stock market reports! Stock market reports!

HOMER [*coming from behind the radio machine*]. Is that so? I guess you forgot all about *me,* didn't you?

NEIL. Forget you? Indeed I didn't! Homer, my boy. [*He stabs him;* HOMER *crumples up on the floor.*] I guess that ends that! Free! Free!

HOMER [*sitting up*]. Free nothing! We'll sue you for this, you dirty dog! [*He falls dead again.*]

NEIL. It won't do you any good! Not when they know why I did it! Not when I show them what you killed! Not when I play them my music!

[*Half a dozen newspaper reporters enter. They are dressed alike and look alike; each has a pencil expectantly poised over a piece of paper.*]

THE REPORTERS [*speaking one at a time, as they surround* NEIL]. The Times! The World! The Post! The Globe! The Sun! The News! The Times! The World! The Post! The Globe! The Sun! The News!

NEIL [*indulging in a gesture with the paper knife*]. Gentlemen, this is purely a family affair. I don't think I should say anything at this time, but do come to my trial.

THE REPORTERS [*again speaking one at a time*]. A statement! A statement! A statement! A statement! A statement! A statement!

NEIL. Well, gentlemen, it's a long story.

[*Instantly a dozen newsboys rush down the aisles of the theatre, crying, "Extra! Extra! All about the murders!" The din is terrific. Simultaneously the theatre lights up; the audi-*

ence turns for a second to look at the newsboys, and in that second the curtain falls. The newsboys pass out copies of The Morning-Evening, containing a full account of the quadruple murder.]

END OF PART I

part 2

The scene is now a courtroom. Against curtains of black stand three major objects of red—the same red that appeared fitfully in NEIL'S *chintz curtains, and again as draperies for the pillars in the Cady home. Squarely in the center is a block of twelve seats mounted on a platform. They are designed, obviously, for the jury, but instead of being the customary jurors' chairs they are of the kind found in theatres.* NEIL'S *piano and easy chair, of course, remain in their accustomed places. At the right, also vividly red, is the judge's bench, and against it leans a frame of photographs, of the sort that you see in theatre lobbies. The pictures show* MR. CADY *in various costumes and poses. The witness's box is at the left, and beside it a ticket taker's box, presided over by the ubiquitous* JERRY. *Near him is a hat-check boy recognizable as the same youth who took* NEIL'S *robe in the restaurant, and who also sold chocolates during the wedding ceremony. A couple of ushers, girls, stand chatting beside the jury box.* NEIL, *of course, is also present, walking up and down somewhat nervously, and consulting his watch. The jurors are beginning to arrive as the curtain ascends—three or four are streaming in. To* NEIL'S *surprise they all turn out to be dancing teachers.*]

TICKET TAKER [*as the curtain ascends*]. Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! [*He takes the tickets of the jurors, returns the stubs, and drops the remainder into his box.*]

CHECK BOY. Check your coat! Check your coat!

1ST JUROR. I guess we're early.

NEIL. Excuse me, but are you some of the jurors?

2ND JUROR. We certainly are.

NEIL. But—but you're dancing teachers, aren't you?

1ST JUROR. Best in the world.

NEIL. Are you going to try me? My music?

1ST JUROR. That's what.

NEIL. But it doesn't seem fair. I'm afraid you'll be prejudiced against something really good.

[*The* SECOND *and* THIRD JURORS *meet and automatically shake hands.*]

2ND JUROR. Hello, Ed!

3RD JUROR. Hello, Ed!

2ND JUROR. Well, you old son-of-a-gun!

3RD JUROR. Well, you old son-of-a-gun!

2ND JUROR. Glad to see you!

3RD JUROR. Glad to see you!

[*They put their hands in their pockets simultaneously.*]

2ND JUROR. Fine! How's every little thing?

3RD JUROR. Fine! How's every little thing?

2ND JUROR. Well, glad I saw you!

3RD JUROR. Well, glad I saw you!

2ND JUROR. Goodbye, Ed!

3RD JUROR. Goodbye, Ed!

1ST JUROR [*at the frame of photographs*]. Say, who's this?

NEIL. That's the judge. It's the opening night of my trial, you know. That's the way he appeared in several famous cases.

2ND JUROR [*joining them and pointing to a picture*]. Oh, yes! That's the way he looked in the Watkins trial. He was terrible good. Did you see it?

[*A* FOURTH JUROR *is shown to a first row seat by an usher.*]

1ST JUROR. No, I was out of town. [*Points to another picture*] There he is in the Ferguson case! Gosh, he was good in that.

NEIL. Yes, I heard he was.

2ND JUROR. Was he funny?

1ST JUROR. Funny? He had that courtroom roaring half the time.

2ND JUROR. I don't know another judge in the country who can deliver a charge to a jury like he can. Pathos, comedy, everything.

1ST JUROR. They say this will be the best trial he's ever done. I hear they were sold out last Monday.

[*More jurors are entering.*]

TICKET TAKER. Tickets, please!

HAT-CHECK BOY. Coats checked! Check your coat!

[*The* THIRD JUROR *presents his ticket stub to an usher.*]

USHER. Other aisle, please! [*He crosses to the other side of the jury box and presents the stub to the other usher.*]

USHER. Other aisle, please!

[*He returns to the* FIRST USHER.]

USHER. Right this way! [*She indicates a seat in the middle of the box.*]

3RD JUROR. Ain't this an aisle seat?

1ST USHER. No, sir. Fourth seat in.

3RD JUROR. After paying all that money to a speculator! [*He takes his seat in the middle of the back row.*]

4TH JUROR. There ought to be a law against them.

[*Other jurors are being seated.*]

NEIL [*at the footlights, catches the attention of the orchestra leader*]. Now, the overture to the trial, please.

[*The orchestra plays the overture—a few bars of cheap musical comedy strains, the modulation from one tune to another being most elaborate. As the orchestra plays, more jurors are seated, leaving empty only the seat next the judge's bench for the foreman, and another in the middle of the first row. The jurors look at their programs, talk, adjust opera glasses, etc. As the overture ends,* ALBERT *enters, a camera slung over his shoulder.*]

NEIL. Why, hello, Albert!

ALBERT. Hello, Neil!

NEIL. What are you doing here?

ALBERT. I'm covering the trial.

NEIL. "Covering" it? For a newspaper?

ALBERT [*nods*]. I'm a reporter on the Illustrated.

NEIL. Oh, yes! You used to write, didn't you?

ALBERT. I understand they're going to try some of your music?

NEIL. Yes. You'll give it a fair criticism, won't you—in the paper?

ALBERT. In what paper?

NEIL. Why, your paper.

ALBERT. The Illustrated? We don't use any writing. It's an *illustrated* paper. Didn't you ever see it—in the subway?

NEIL. Of course! I remember—just pictures. But how do people know what they are?

ALBERT. Oh, we always have a few simple words, saying what the picture is about. A good many of our subscribers can read, and they tell the others.

[*A* CANDY SELLER *appears. He has the usual tray of chocolates and peppermints seen in the theatres.*]

CANDY SELLER. Chocolates and bon-bons! Fresh chocolates and bon-bons! Assorted chocolates!

1ST JUROR [*leaning out of the jury box*]. Here you are. [*Buys a box of candy*]

[*The* CANDY SELLER *goes out again. There is a sudden burst of activity in the jury box.*]

NEIL. What's all that?

ALBERT. They are getting ready to elect a foreman for the jury.

[*There is something like a cheer from the jury box. At one end a sign appears reading:* JONES FOR FOREMAN. *At the other side:* SMITH FOR FOREMAN. *The* FIRST JUROR *rises to speak. He receives hearty applause.*]

1ST JUROR. Mr. Chairman and ladies and gentlemen of the Fifth Jury District: I don't think anybody here has to be told at this late date that Harry J. Smith, retired, is the logical man for foreman of this grand jury. I guess everybody here knows Mr. Smith's record. You have all known him since childhood. He is an old Eighth Ward boy and will give a jury a business administration.

OTHER JURORS. Hooray!

[*The* FIRST JUROR *sits. The* SECOND JUROR *immediately demands attention.*]

2ND JUROR. Mr. Chairman and ladies and gentlemen of the Fifth Jury District: I don't think anybody here has to be told at this late date that Thomas A. Jones, retired, is the logical man for foreman of this grand jury. I guess everybody here knows Mr. Jones's record. You have all known him since childhood. He is an old Eighth Ward boy and will give the jury a business administration.

VOICE. What about Ireland?

[*There are cries of "Throw him out!"*]

[NEIL *holds up a hand for silence.*]

NEIL. Wait! [*He goes into the witness box.*] Ladies and gentlemen of the Fifth Jury District: I know it is late to be putting forward a new candidate for foreman of this grand jury, but this is my trial, and it is my music that you're going to hear. Both of the candidates now up before you are good dancers, but it is only fair that there should be someone on the jury who knows good music.

JURORS. Hooray!

NEIL. Therefore, when the light on the Times Building swings

on tonight, I want it to be a steady red light, which will show that we have elected the Hon. Albert Rice, of Chicago, a man of the people, for the people, and by the people, and the stars and stripes forever in the good old U. S. A.!

JURORS. Hooray!

[*Almost immediately a red light shines across the group, and the orchestra strikes up Sousa's march, "Stars and Stripes." The jurors, cheering, march around the jury box, carrying American flags, banners, noise-makers, etc. There are cries of "Rice Wins! Hoorah for Rice!"* ALBERT, *still mindful of the fact that he has been sent to get the news, makes ready his camera and calls on the crowd to halt.*]

ALBERT. Hold it, please!

[*They stop—there is a scurrying to get into the photograph.* ALBERT *snaps them.*]

NEIL. Hold it! [*He takes the camera and* ALBERT *automatically prepares to have his own picture taken. One of the ushers tries to slip into the picture, but* NEIL *waves her aside. He snaps* ALBERT.] Will they be out soon?

ALBERT. Soon? They are out! [*He pulls a copy of the Illustrated from his pocket—a newspaper covered with a front page crowded with photographs, but entirely blank elsewhere.*] I brought one with me.

NEIL. They're on the front page.

ALBERT. Sure! We put everything on the front page. [*He points.*] There's a picture of the judge delivering his charge.

NEIL. But he hasn't delivered it yet.

ALBERT. Well, we have to get things quick. Our readers expect it. [ALBERT *takes his place in the jury box. The other jurors lean over and shake his hand.*]

NEIL. The Hon. Albert Rice assumes office as thousands cheer. [*He waits for the cheer—it does not come. He motions to the jury. They clap their hands perfunctorily.*]

ALBERT. Thank you, gentlemen.

TICKET TAKER [*announcing*]. His Honor, the Judge!

[*Everyone rises. The orchestra begins the Soldiers' Chorus from "Faust." The judge enters. He is* MR. CADY, *his golf suit handsomely covered by an enormous red robe. He also wears an enormous judge's wig. He throws away all dignity, however, by lifting the skirts of his gown and skipping into view. The music ends on a long note in the brasses, such as*

attends the finish of an acrobat's trick. CADY *curtsies toward the jury box in response to unanimous applause, and blows a kiss. He goes up to his chair and holds the picture of a satisfied actor as he waits for another burst of applause to subside.*]

CADY [*at last—to* NEIL]. Got a match?

NEIL. What?

CADY. Got a match?

NEIL. Oh, yes! [*He strikes a match. Although several feet away from the cigar, the cigar lights.* MR. CADY *and jury are about to sit when* NEIL *hisses.*] Look out!

CADY. What is it?

NEIL. That chair. It isn't very strong, you know.

CADY. Oh, I'll be careful. [*He sits. The jurors sit.*]

TICKET TAKER. Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!

[*The final juror enters and presents his ticket.*]

CADY. Ladies and gentlemen, I——

NEIL [*noticing the tardy juror*]. Just a minute! He's late. [*To the juror*] Can't you people ever be on time?

[*The tardy juror gives his seat check to an usher, who starts to lead him to his place, in the middle of the second row, but finds somebody already in it.*]

CADY [*blandly*]. Ladies and gentlemen, I declare the court——

[*The confusion makes him break off again.*]

USHER [*leaning far over*]. May I see your check, please?

CADY. I declare the court——

USHER. May I see your check?

JUROR [*searching his pockets*]. I had it here some place. Ah! [*Gives stub to the* USHER]

[*The* USHER *examines the ticket stub.*]

USHER. Oh, you belong in the row ahead. This gentleman has a ticket for this seat.

[*People in both rows have to stand up while the exchange is made. It is a good deal of trouble, to put it mildly.*]

NEIL [*to* CADY]. All right now. I'm sorry.

CADY. I declare the court to be in session. [*There is a round of applause.* CADY *bows.*] The business of the day is the trial of Neil Wadsworth McRae for murder. [*There is more applause.* NEIL *is finally compelled to bow.* CADY *again addresses* NEIL *confidentially.*] Am I right?

NEIL. Yes. And don't forget, I'm going to play my symphony. That was the reason I did it, you know.

CADY. Yes, I remember. [*He is quite conversational.*] Now, the first thing to be done, I should say, is to have the prosecuting attorney make a sort of general charge. [*To* NEIL] What do you think?

NEIL. I guess that's right. How about it, Albert?

ALBERT [*looking up from his program*]. Yes, that's right.

[NEIL *nods to the* TICKET TAKER.]

TICKET TAKER [*announcing*]. The prosecuting attorney!

[HOMER *enters to the tune of "Tammany." He wears a long black robe. He receives a hearty round of applause, with a few hisses.*]

NEIL. Oh, it's you!

HOMER [*quietly*]. I'll get you now, you dirty dog!

NEIL. I think not.

CADY. Come, come, we can't be all day at this. I've got to get back to the office. Now, just what were these murders all about?

[HOMER *reads from document. As* HOMER *begins to read* USHER *and* CHECK BOY *begin a whispered conversation that soon dominates the scene.*]

[*Simultaneously*]

HOMER. "On such and such a blank date, the defendant, Neil Wadsworth McRae, did brutally murder, maim, assault, destroy, stab, injure, kill and cause the death of Gladys Virginia Cady, his wife; Mr. Cady, her father; Mrs. Cady, her mother, and Homer Cady, her brother, destroying one and all of the aforesaid Gladys Virginia Cady, his wife; Mr. Cady, her father; Mrs. Cady, her mother, and Homer Cady, her brother—by the use of a large paper knife, of bone manufacture and curious design, a picture of which appeared in the newspapers at the time." [*Hands the newspaper containing the picture to* CADY.]

USHER. Did you sell much candy?

CHECK BOY. Sure—enough to buy a couple seats for the movies.

USHER. Oh, let's see the one up the street!

CHECK BOY. Oh, that's punk! You always want to see the sad ones.

USHER. I hate comedies.

CHECK BOY. Well, I hate sad ones.

NEIL. Quiet, please: some of us would like to hear the show!

[*They grudgingly leave the room.*]

CADY. Yes, I saw it. A great, big, long one. Exhibit A. [*He hands it to the foreman.*]

ALBERT. Exhibit A! [*Passes it to the other jurors*]

[*The other jurors repeat "Exhibit A," passing the newspaper from one to another.*]

HOMER. Having caused the death of the aforesaid and aforementioned people, I therefore call upon the court to punish said Neil Wadsworth McRae in one or two ways prescribed by law—death or hard labor for life, whichever they do in this state.

CADY [*realizing that maybe it's serious after all*]. Oh, no! Is that so?

NEIL [*lightly*]. Just wait!

CADY [*to* HOMER]. Yes. Just wait, please.

1ST JUROR [*leans toward his neighbor, with open program, and reads from it, as though confiding a bit of real news*]. Say, this courtroom, with every seat occupied, can be emptied in less than three minutes.

CADY. Silence in the court!

[*A pause*]

HOMER. The state rests.

[*He sits in the easy chair and is immediately seized with a fit of coughing.* MRS. CADY *instantly appears behind* HOMER; *she has her knitting, but no chair.*]

MRS. CADY. Are you all right, Homer?

HOMER. I guess so.

MRS. CADY [*to the jury*]. Homer's sick. He was always delicate. But he was a good boy though. When Homer wanted to be he was as good a boy as you'd find in a month of Sundays. There was no reason on earth why Neil shouldn't have allowed him to live, just like a lot of other people are allowed to live.

[*The jurors applaud her.*]

CADY. You are his mother?

MRS. CADY. Yes, sir.

[CADY *shakes her hand, sympathetically.*]

CADY. You were also a victim, I believe?

MRS. CADY. That's right. [CADY *shakes her hand again.*] You heard how he did it? With a paper knife.

CADY. Oh, yes! You see, we're trying him today.

MRS. CADY. For the murders?

CADY. Yes.

MRS. CADY. Oh, I beg your pardon! [*Begins to back away in confusion*] I wouldn't have intruded, if I'd known.

NEIL. Wait a minute! I'd like to have Mrs. Cady take the stand, please.

MRS. CADY [*flustered*]. Who? Me?

NEIL. If you don't mind.

HOMER. What! Going to make her take the stand? A mother?

[*There are hisses from the jury.*]

NEIL. Over here, please! [*Leads her to the witness box*] Do you swear to tell the truth—the truth—and—the truth?

MRS. CADY. Yes.

NEIL. You can't tell the truth unless you raise your hand, you know.

MRS. CADY. No?

NEIL. No. [*She puts up her hand.*] You're Mrs. Cady, aren't you?

MRS. CADY. Yes. [*To* MR. CADY] Is that right, Fred?

CADY. Yes—that's all right.

NEIL [*suddenly wheeling on* MRS. CADY]. Now then. [MRS. CADY *jumps.*] Where were you on Friday, June third?

MRS. CADY. Knitting. [*She suits the action to the word.*]

NEIL. But you used to sing in the choir, didn't you?

MRS. CADY. Oh, yes. [*Sings*] "Just as I am, without one plea."

[*The jurors stand and join in.* CADY *stops smoking for a moment and also sings a bar or two.*]

CADY [*suddenly rapping for order*]. Silence in the court!

NEIL [*waves a warning finger at* MRS. CADY, *as though to intimate that another question is about to come*]. Prove an alibi!

HOMER. I object, Your Honor!

CADY. Objection sustained and overruled! [*To* MRS. CADY] Answer the question!

[NEIL *smiles mockingly at* HOMER.]

MRS. CADY. What was it?

NEIL. Prove an alibi!

MRS. CADY. What kind?

NEIL [*to* CADY]. I didn't know there were different kinds.

CADY. Oh, yes—there are several kinds of alibis.

NEIL. Then prove any kind.

HOMER. Your Honor, I object!

CADY. You object?

HOMER. Yes! [*He goes to* NEIL *and looks sinisterly at him.*] I object to his looks!

NEIL. Why, what's the matter with them?

CADY [*it is apparently a point of great import*]. An objection has been raised to the prisoner's looks. [*Looks at* NEIL *carefully*] Hm! Have you anything to say?

NEIL. Sir?

CADY [*quite casual*]. Have you anything to say about your looks?

NEIL. Why—I think they're all right.

[*There is a weighty pause.*]

CADY. This is a serious question. [*He removes his wig. The jury breaks out in chatter;* CADY *raps.*] Order, please! Now, the prisoner thinks that his looks are all right.

HOMER. But he can't prove it.

CADY [*to* NEIL]. Can you prove it?

NEIL. Why——[*Here's an awful situation.*]

CADY. You see, this is a court of law. Everything has to be proved.

NEIL. Well, well—can't the jury tell by looking?

[NEIL *looks toward the jury, which peers at him closely, but is puzzled. The jurors shake their heads, uncertain.*]

CADY. You see, it's illegal for a jury to know anything until it's been instructed. Now, as I understand it, the point is that you think your looks are all right?

NEIL. Yes.

CADY. But you can't prove it?

NEIL [*if he can only have a moment's peace in which to think it over!*]. Oh, Lord! [*One of the jurors is noisily unwrapping a candy box.*] Quiet! Good heavens—how can I think if they're going to— Your Honor, they *must* be quiet!

CADY. Quiet!

THE JUROR. But it's candy! [*It is a big box full and it is passed up to the judge.*]

CADY. Oh, really!

[GLADYS *enters in a brilliant dinner gown and an ornate cloak.*]

GLADYS. Oh, candy! [*She crosses to the judge's stand and begins rifling the box.*] Hello, Neil! I didn't mean to interrupt! I just ran in to get the boys! We're going dancing! [*Some of the*

jurors rise; one or two even begin climbing over the railing to join her.] There's a big new place opening tonight and they're going to take me there! Got some money, papa?

CADY. Ten thousand enough? [*He gives her a handful of bills.*]

GLADYS. Oh, thanks. Come on, boys!

[*The jurors make further gestures toward going.*]

NEIL. No, wait! [*All movement is suspended.*] You mean you want to take—*them*—away with you.

GLADYS. Of course!

NEIL. But—but I'm being tried for the murders. And if you take the jury away——

GLADYS. I'm sorry, Neil, but I couldn't miss the opening, could I? Are you ready?

[*The jurors step toward her.*]

NEIL. No, no! [*Again the jurors halt.* NEIL *appeals to* CADY.] She can't do that, can she?

CADY [*who has been eating so much candy he has had little time for the trial's new aspect*]. What?

NEIL. Take the jury away, right in the middle of things?

CADY [*licking his fingers*]. She can if it's habeas corpus.

NEIL [*not at all sure*]. Well—is it?

CADY [*he licks his fingers*]. It's beginning to look that way.

NEIL. But it isn't fair! They've got to hear my music. I know what I'll do! [*He faces* CADY.] I'll take it to a higher court!

CADY [*just a bit hurt*]. Oh, don't you like this court?

NEIL. It isn't that. It's a good court, I guess, and the people are lovely, but——

CADY. About how high a one would you want?

NEIL. I'd want the highest I could get.

CADY. All right. [JUDGE CADY *slowly goes up in the air, as his stand grows two or three feet higher.*] Is this high enough for you?

NEIL. I guess so. Is this the superior court?

CADY. Oh, yes. Much superior. And more up-to-date. We send out all our verdicts by radio.

NEIL. She can't take them away with her now, can she—in this court?

CADY. Oh, no! You see, in a higher court the lower court is reversed.

NEIL. Good!

[*The jurors resume their old positions.*]

GLADYS. Oh, the devil! Well, then, I'll take Albert. He's only the foreman. [*She grabs* ALBERT *by the hand and leads him out of the courtroom.*]

CADY [*sucks a sticky thumb*]. Well, are the rest of you ready to bring in a verdict? All in favor will say——

NEIL. No, wait! I'm not through—you haven't heard the music yet.

CADY. Oh, that's right! You're going to play for us.

NEIL. Of course. That's why I killed them, you know, on account of the music. I want to prove that I was justified. Listen! [*He goes to the piano.*] You won't blame me when you've heard the music. [*He strikes a chord.*] This is a symphony in C Minor. [*He starts to play. The result is disconnected, meaningless. There is a budding hissing from the jurors.* NEIL, *with a cry, jumps to his feet, holding up the torn sheet of music. He finds it almost impossible to speak.*] She destroyed it! She tore it up, and now I can't play it! Cynthia! Cynthia!

[CYNTHIA *appears at the piano. She is calm and sympathetic, as always.*]

CYNTHIA. Yes, dear?

NEIL. Cynthia, she tore up the symphony! I can't remember it, and they're waiting for me to play!

CYNTHIA. You still have the pantomime, haven't you?

NEIL. Yes.

CYNTHIA. Then play that for them instead. [*She finds the pantomime music.*] They'll think it's better, anyhow. [*Puts the music before him*]

NEIL. But it isn't finished.

CYNTHIA. Well, now you *can* finish it.

NEIL. Can I?

CYNTHIA. Of course. It'll be all right, dear—you'll see.

NEIL. You—you think we ought to do it?

CYNTHIA. Of course.

NEIL. All right. [*He faces his inquisitors.*] Ladies and gentlemen, instead of the symphony, we're going to play a little pantomime, called "A Kiss in Xanadu"—written by Cynthia Mason and Neil McRae. We'll need quite a lot of room, so if you don't mind clearing the court— [*The judge's dais and the witness box disappear. The jury box, too, moves into blackness.*] The scene is the royal palace in Xanadu. It's a night in June—one of those spring

nights that you find only in Xanadu. Now, if you're all ready—music! [*The music of the pantomime begins.*] Cynthia, we ought to have a window to show what kind of night it is.

[*In the distance a great open window appears. Beyond a moonlit balustrade are flowers and trees and stars.*]

CYNTHIA. It's coming!

NEIL. Thanks! The scene is the bedchamber of the Prince and Princess. On the right is the bed of the Princess and on the left is the bed of the Prince. [*Two fairy-tale beds appear from the darkness. They are canopied in pink. Above them are flower-draped testers that rise to golden points.* NEIL *and* CYNTHIA *seat themselves at the piano and the pantomime begins.*]

A LORD OF THE BEDCHAMBER *and a* LADY OF THE BEDCHAMBER *enter and bow to each other ostentatiously. They are followed into the room by two small black pages, carrying tiny bed tables. The one for the Princess' bed bears a small lamp with a dainty shade. The Prince's has a candle and shade, and a small phonograph. As the* LORD *and* LADY *examine the room the pages go out and return with a pillow, which is placed at the foot of the Princess' bed, and a costumer, which is for the convenience of the Prince. The attendants convince themselves there are no intruders under the beds and depart. A clock strikes nine.*

The PRINCESS *enters. She is very beautiful, but very bored. The lovely night lures her to the window. She goes out on the little balcony and sighs. She is a married Princess. She returns to the bedchamber and snappishly commands the* LADY *to undress her. Nothing to do but go to bed! The* LADY *draws the curtains and leaves.*

The PRINCE *enters with his* LORD. *He would like to be a Gay Dog Prince and he twirls his mustache bravely. He, too, would like to find romance again, but here he is—a married Prince! A page puts his royal dressing gown and crown on the costumer. The* LORD *attaches curlers to the royal mustache and leaves the* PRINCE. *The* PRINCE *turns on the phonograph and tries to do his Nightly Dozen. But the night outside distracts him. He goes to the window. It is too much for him. A second attempt to exercise is abandoned. He will go out to Adventure. If he turns the royal dressing gown inside out it should make a rather good disguise. He does so. The*

lining of the crown makes a serviceable cap. He tiptoes to the other bed. The PRINCESS *is asleep. He draws the canopy across his own bed and steals out the window.*

CYNTHIA. But the Princess wants to go adventuring, too. I know! Let's have the moon wake her!

NEIL. Yes! Come on, moon! [*The moon obligingly sends its beams across the bed of the* PRINCESS.] Thank you!

The pantomime proceeds. The PRINCESS' *head pops through the draperies. It is such a beautiful night! She observes the closed canopy of her lord's bed. He is asleep—the dull, conventional husband. She goes to the window. What a night! Romance lies out there. She hesitates. She decides. Frightened, but determined, she takes a cover from her bed. An excellent shawl it makes! But something is wrong. She stands undecided, her hands touching her lovely hair. The music stops.*

NEIL. We skipped a place here. We've got to disguise the Princess. She mustn't be recognized, either, you know.

CYNTHIA. Of course not. I have it! Let her put on her lampshade for a bonnet.

NEIL. And she can use the Prince's candle-shade for a mask!

The music starts again and the PRINCESS *dons the lamp-shade and puts two finger holes through the candle-shade. She is very happy and goes out to the trees and stars. There is darkness—and here we are in a public park in Xanadu. There are a good many flowery bushes to be seen, but they are not noticed by the* PRINCE, *who sits, depressed, on a park bench, under a street lamp. A* POLICEMAN, *a* LAMPLIGHTER *and two small attendants enter on patrol, and sedately go about their business. The* PRINCESS *comes into the park. A man, a romantic-looking man, even if he is masked by that upturned coat collar! A girl, a charming girl, even if she is holding a small mask before her eyes! She skips away, but returns. She drops her handkerchief. She quietly and politely sneezes. He springs to her aid with her handkerchief. She sits beside him on the bench. He plucks a rose from the bush behind them and offers it timidly. She tosses it away. The light in the lamp is much too bright. A mighty puff from*

the PRINCE *and it goes out. But the* WATCH *returns. The lamp is relighted. The* PRINCE *and the* PRINCESS *sit a little closer. He offers another rose. This time she accepts it. But that lamp! He has a permanent solution. He breaks the lamp in two. Masks are not needed in the darkness, but the moon comes up. He waves it away. She kisses him. A clock strikes five. The sun rises. The adventure is over. She runs away. He calls, but she does not answer. He picks up the rose she spurned. His grief is covered by considerate darkness.*

Once more it is the Royal bedchamber. The PRINCESS *creeps into the room and into bed. The* PRINCE *steals in a moment later. He goes to the* PRINCESS' *bed. Still asleep! He goes to his bed. The clock strikes eight. The* LORD *and* LADY *arrive. The pages fetch a breakfast table. The royal pair are awakened. They sit down to eat. She starts to pour her husband's coffee. Oh, yes, she had forgotten! She rises and offers a cheek to be kissed. He mechanically obliges. They sit down again. But they cannot eat. The music of the night is still with them. They steal wistful looks at the window. The* PRINCESS *looks at the rose He gave her. The* PRINCE *looks at the one She first refused. The flowers are stealthily put away. The* PRINCE *and the* PRINCESS *unfold their napkins. It is the humdrum life once more.*

[*The curtain falls, slowly. Then slowly, the footlights go down, plunging the auditorium into complete darkness. Immediately we hear the verdict from the vastly Superior Court —sent out, as* JUDGE CADY *had said, by radio. It comes through magnifiers, from the rear of the auditorium, and takes the form of loud and derisive laughter, punctuated by cries of "Rotten!" "No good!" "Highbrow!" "Terrible!" In the darkness, the curtain again rises. Seated cross-legged on* NEIL'S *piano, still in the red wig and with a red light playing on him, is* JUDGE CADY. *As always, he is smoking a cigar.* NEIL *sits facing him on the piano stool.*]

CADY [*to the invisible voices*]. Silence! [*The voices stop.*] Now, was that what you wanted to show us?

NEIL. Yes, sir.

CADY. Well, of course we don't want to hurt your feelings, Neil, but I'm afraid it's a little bit highbrow. Don't you think so?

NEIL. No, sir. Not very.

CADY. Well, I don't think it's what they want. [*To the unseen jurors*] How about it?

[*A single voice comes over the radio. It says "Rotten!"*]

CADY. Are you ready to bring in a verdict?

FIRST JUROR'S VOICE. Yes, I move we bring in a verdict!

SECOND JUROR'S VOICE. I second the motion!

FIRST JUROR'S VOICE. It is moved and seconded that we bring in a verdict. Remarks? [*A pause*] All those in favor say "Aye."

CHORUS OF VOICES. Aye!

FIRST JUROR'S VOICE. Opposed—"No?" [*Pause*] The motion is carried.

CADY. Well, what sort of a verdict do you want to bring in? There are several kinds of verdicts.

FIRST JUROR'S VOICE. I move we bring in a verdict of guilty!

SECOND JUROR'S VOICE. I second that motion!

FIRST JUROR'S VOICE. It is moved and seconded that we bring in a verdict of guilty. Remarks? All those in favor say "Aye."

CHORUS OF VOICES. Aye!

FIRST JUROR'S VOICE. Opposed—"No?" [*Pause*] Well, I guess that motion's carried.

CADY. See, Neil? I told you so.

NEIL. Well—well, what are you going to do with me?

CADY. This thing of using the imagination has got to stop. We're going to make you work in the right way. You see, your talents belong to us now, and we're going to use every bit of them. We're going to make you the most wonderful song writer that ever lived.

NEIL. But I can't write that kind of music! You know I can't!

CADY. You can do it by our system. You are sentenced to be at the Cady Consolidated Art Factory at eight o'clock tomorrow morning!

NEIL. Art factory?

CADY. At eight o'clock tomorrow morning!

[*The lights slowly dim and fade out, and instantly there is a burst of noise. Pianos are playing discordantly; there is the sound of machinery in the distance, a voice is singing a jazz tune, and other voices are heard in loud declamation. The lights go up again on a tier of four cells. In the first a man is dictating to a stenographer; in the second* NEIL *is working away at a piano, while a youth in a belted coat and a straw hat, atilt on his head, sings to the accompaniment of* NEIL'S

music; in the third cell an artist works before an easel, and in the fourth a young man is loudly reciting poetry, apparently moved to do so by the posturings of two other youths who are in the cell with him. After a moment of this pandemonium a GUIDE *enters, followed by three visitors. All four are dancing teachers, so far as outward appearances go, but they are marked apart by the fact that the* GUIDE *wears an official-looking cap, and the visitors carry umbrellas and open Baedekers. The* GUIDE *raises his voice for silence; a gong sounds somewhere, and all activity ceases. The figures in the cages come down to the bars and stand waiting.*]

GUIDE. Now this, gentlemen, is the manufacturing department. In this studio—[*he indicates the first*]—we have Walter Carp Smith, the world's greatest novelist——

NOVELIST [*more or less routine*]. How are you?

GUIDE [*passing to the second cage*]. In this studio, Neil McRae, the world's greatest composer!

NEIL [*listlessly*]. How are you?

GUIDE [*at the third cage*]. In this one, Finley Jamison, the world's greatest magazine artist!

ARTIST. How are you?

GUIDE [*at the fourth cage*]. And in this, James Lee Wrex, the world's greatest poet!

POET. How are you?

GUIDE [*indicating the unseen cages beyond*]. The studios beyond are devoted to science and religion. Mr. Cady was the first person in the world to put religion up in ten-cent packages, selling direct to the consumer.

FIRST VISITOR. You don't say so!

GUIDE. He also prides himself on having the largest output of literature and music in the world. He's going to open two more plants the first of the month. Now, would you like to see how these men work?

FIRST VISITOR. Yes, indeed! [*Goes toward the first cage*] Did you say this was the novelist?

GUIDE. The world's greatest. Author of more than two thousand published works.

FIRST VISITOR. What an imagination!

GUIDE. Yes, sir, none at all. Now if you're ready, I'll show you how he works. Go!

NOVELIST [*begins at once to dictate from a book in his hand*].

"Something closely resembling a tear fell from the old patrician's cheek. 'Margaret,' he cried, 'the people of the West have learned to love you, too.' 'Jackie boy,' she whispered. 'They have made you governor after all.' Far off on the—the——" [*He hesitates; the* STENOGRAPHER *takes up the story.*]

STENOGRAPHER. "—desert, the caravan faded away. Night took them in its arms and a great hush fell on the forest. The two lovers——"

GUIDE. Stop! [*He turns to the visitors.*] There you are!

FIRST VISITOR. Was *she* writing it?

GUIDE. Oh, no! Sometimes she gets a little ahead of him, that's all.

FIRST VISITOR. Isn't he wonderful!

GUIDE. Forty-five minutes after he finishes a novel we have it printed and assembled and on its way to the movie men.

FIRST VISITOR. May we talk to him?

GUIDE. Certainly.

FIRST VISITOR [*to the* NOVELIST]. I've enjoyed your novels very much.

NOVELIST. Thank you.

FIRST VISITOR. I see you're writing a new one.

NOVELIST. Of course I'm under contract.

FIRST VISITOR. What's that? [*Indicating the book in the* NOVELIST'S *hand.*]

NOVELIST. It's my last one.

FIRST VISITOR. But weren't you just dictating from it, for your new one?

NOVELIST. Yes. They like it that way.

GUIDE. Under the old system they wrote it all new each time. Here—let the gentleman have it as a souvenir.

FIRST VISITOR [*reading the title*]. "Eternal Love." What's your new one called?

NOVELIST. "Love Eternal."

GUIDE. Don't forget—you're lecturing at three o'clock at Wanamaker's.[1]

SECOND VISITOR. Say, will you show us how the artist works?

GUIDE. Certainly. What will you have—a cover or an advertisement?

SECOND VISITOR. What's the difference?

[1] *Wanamaker's, a department store in New York and Philadelphia.*

GUIDE. There isn't any.

SECOND VISITOR. Well, then, I'll take an advertisement.

GUIDE. All right. Go! [*The* ARTIST *draws without looking at the canvas. He hands it to the* GUIDE, *who hands it to the visitor. The canvas is blank.*] There you are!

SECOND VISITOR. What beautiful eyes!

THIRD VISITOR. Wonderful!

GUIDE. Do you want to talk to him?

SECOND VISITOR. Oh, thanks. I suppose it'll be used on a magazine?

ARTIST. Oh, yes—thousands.

SECOND VISITOR. Must be worth five or six hundred dollars.

ARTIST [*bored to death*]. Thirty-five hundred.

FIRST VISITOR. You don't say so!

GUIDE. And here, gentlemen, is our poet. His "Jolly Jingles"[1] are printed in three million newspapers a day.

FIRST VISITOR [*pointing to the men in back*]. Who are those men?

GUIDE. Those are his models. He is the only poet in the world who works from living models. That's why all his poetry is so true, so human. He'll show you. Go!

POET. I will now write a friendship poem. [*Motions to his models*] Friendliness No. 3, please. "Friendship." [*The models strike a pose, hands clasped. The* POET *recites*]

"Goodbye, old pal; hello, old pal; the greatest pal I ever knew.
A dog's your finest friend, my lad, when all the world is blue."

SECOND VISITOR. Ain't it human?

GUIDE. And here, gentlemen, is Mr. Neil McRae, America's foremost composer.

FIRST VISITOR. Who's that in back?

GUIDE. That's his lyric writer. You will now see how they work. What kind of a song will it be, McRae?

NEIL. A pathetic. [*Sits at the piano*]

GUIDE. A pathetic. Go!

[NEIL *plays.*]

SINGER [*in a horrible voice*].

"You've broken my heart like you broke my heart,
So why should you break it again?"

[NEIL *comes to the bars again.*]

[1] ***Jolly Jingles,*** *a good-natured dig at Edgar Guest, Walt Mason, and other columnist poets of the period.*

GUIDE. That will sell one and one-half million.

SECOND VISITOR. I suppose you write other kinds of songs, too?

NEIL. Oh, yes—mammies, sweeties and fruit songs. The ideas are brought from the inspiration department every hour on the hour. After I turn them into the music they are taken to the purifying department, and then to the testing and finishing rooms. They are then packed for shipment.

FIRST VISITOR. A wonderful system!

THIRD VISITOR. I should say so!

SECOND VISITOR. Do you work all the time?

NEIL. No, the night shift comes on at eight.

FIRST VISITOR. How long have you been here?

NEIL. For years and years.

SECOND VISITOR. Say, will you write another song for us—just as a souvenir?

NEIL [*desperately*]. Oh, why don't you all go away?

GUIDE. What's that? What was that? You get busy there and write another song!

NEIL. No! I've been writing forever—I'm tired of it.

GUIDE. Do you want me to call Mr. Cady?

NEIL. I don't care! I don't care what you do!

GUIDL. I'll give you one more chance.

NEIL. No! I won't!

GUIDE. All right, then! Mr. Cady! Mr. Cady!

[*The* GUIDE *rushes out. The visitors slink away. A gong sounds. Those in the cages huddle in fear.* MR. CADY *appears behind the cages. He carries a large snake whip.*]

CADY. What's the matter here?

GUIDE. McRae says he won't go on!

CADY. He won't, eh? Well, we'll see about that!

NEIL. I can't go on! I'm tired!

CADY. What's that got to do with it? You've got to go on!

NEIL. I *can't,* I tell you. I *can't* keep on at this sort of thing.

CADY. You know your sentence, don't you? You've got to work our way until you die.

NEIL [*dully*]. Yes, I know.

CADY. We own you now. The family. The family owns you. [*He falls into rhythmic measure.*]

You take our money and you live our life,
We own you, we own you.
You take our money and you live our life,

We own you, we own you.
You take our money and you live our way,
We pay the piper and we tell him what to play.
You sold your soul and you can't get away,
We own you, we own you.

[*The* CADY *family and others enter at back, and weave back and forth joining in the chant, reaching through the bars at* NEIL.]

NEIL. Until I die! I can be free from you if I die! I *can* die! You can't keep me from it! That's how I can get away from you! Open the door! Open the door! [*He shakes the door on the audience's side of the cage. It opens.*] It was never locked! [*He steps out and closes the door.* CYNTHIA *enters.*] Cynthia, Cynthia, I'm free! I can die! [*Those in the background disappear.*] Cynthia, how are we going to do it?

CYNTHIA. We'll go to an executioner. I know a good one. You mustn't be afraid. It won't hurt. [*An* EXECUTIONER *appears masked, with a black robe and a huge paper knife.*] See—it's Jerry!

JERRY. Hello, Mr. McRae. [*Takes off his mask and cap*]

NEIL. Oh, hello, Jerry! You're going to do it, are you?

JERRY. Sure. [*Feels the edge of his knife*]

NEIL. Oh, that's good.

CYNTHIA. Do we have to wait long?

JERRY. No—you're next.

NEIL. Oughtn't we to have a block?

CYNTHIA [*moving the armchair*]. We'll use this. It'll be more comfortable.

NEIL. Oh! And you'll stay with me?

CYNTHIA. Always. [*She stands beside him.*] But it won't hurt. [ALBERT *enters, wearing a short medical apron and jacket.*] Albert will give you a pill.

NEIL. Oh, yes! Hello, Albert!

ALBERT. Hello, Neil! Got a glass of water?

CYNTHIA [*glass of water in hand*]. We're ready, Doctor.

[ALBERT *goes to the chair; tests its strength.*]

ALBERT [*to the* EXECUTIONER]. Is the light all right?

[*The cabaret orchestra is heard in the distance.*]

JERRY. I think so.

NEIL. There's that music again.

ALBERT. You're nervous, that's all. Here!

[NEIL *swallows a pill.*]

CYNTHIA. Now it can't possibly hurt you.

ALBERT [*motions* NEIL *to the chair*]. Here we are! [NEIL *sits.*] That's it—way back. [*To* JERRY] Right?

NEIL. Shall I take off my collar?

ALBERT. Oh, no. There's room, I think.

NEIL. Just a once-through, please.

ALBERT. Of course. It'll be all over in a minute.

NEIL. Cynthia!

CYNTHIA. Yes.

NEIL. I was afraid you'd gone.

CYNTHIA. No, dear. [JERRY *taps his knife on floor.*] Are you ready, Neil?

NEIL. Yes, except for that music. Charles the First didn't have any music.[1]

[*The lights begin to fade.*]

CYNTHIA. He's ready, Doctor.

NEIL. Don't go away, Cynthia!

ALBERT. All ready.

[JERRY *taps the knife again on the floor.*]

NEIL. Goodbye! I'll see you soon.

CYNTHIA. Are you comfortable?

NEIL. Yes. You'll be with me always, won't you, Cynthia?

[*There is darkness, save for a cloudy moving light on* NEIL.]

CYNTHIA. Always.

ALBERT. All right.

NEIL. Cynthia, are you there?

CYNTHIA. Yes, darling.

[*There is a hum of voices. Presently one can discern several chanting, "You take our money and you lead our life."* MRS. CADY *is heard saying, "Homer's sick."* MR. CADY *is apparently telephoning somewhere. He is shouting, "Well, I'll tell you what to do!"* HOMER'S *voice repeats, "You dirty dog!"* GLADYS *shrilly calls out, "He's learning to dance!" The voices become a chant, finally unintelligible. The lights slowly go up again. We are back in* NEIL'S *apartment. He is asleep in his chair. It is sunset. There is a knock, a real knock, on the door.*]

NEIL [*half asleep*]. Yes?

[CYNTHIA *enters.*]

[1] ***Charles . . . music,*** *at his execution by the Puritans in 1649.*

CYNTHIA. Is anything the matter, Neil? I thought I heard you talking.

NEIL. It didn't hurt. Was it a success?

CYNTHIA. Neil, are you all right?

NEIL [*takes her hand*]. I need you, Cynthia!

CYNTHIA. Oh, Neil, do you? Are you sure you do? I—I couldn't stay away, Neil. I tried to, but I couldn't. Because I need you, too. I just couldn't give you up to anyone else on earth.

NEIL. Cynthia, dear.

CYNTHIA. It wouldn't have worked, Neil—with those people. Don't you know it wouldn't?

NEIL. I think I do.

CYNTHIA. I've been sitting out on a bench in the square, trying to think out what it would mean—what it would do to you.

NEIL. I know. Widgets.

CYNTHIA. That would be worse for you than any amount of poverty.

NEIL. Poverty in our cottage.

CYNTHIA. Did you think of a cottage, too?

NEIL. Of course—I lived there.

CYNTHIA. We could manage. I know quite a lot about raising chickens.

NEIL [*reminiscently*]. A little red hen and a little dun cow.

CYNTHIA. Yes, we might have a cow. Have you been thinking about it, too? [*Rises*]

NEIL. Well—let's say dreaming. [*He rises and goes to the desk.*] It was terrible, Cynthia—do you know, I dreamed I was married to *her?*

CYNTHIA. To Gladys?

NEIL. When I thought you didn't care, I was hurt and angry. And I dreamed she telephoned— [*Sees the receiver off the hook*] My God! Did she telephone! Oh, Cynthia, it's real! I *did* do it! I did!

CYNTHIA. Did what?

NEIL. I did ask her to marry me!

CYNTHIA. Neil! You didn't! And she—accepted you?

NEIL. Yes.

CYNTHIA. Oh, Neil.

[*A knock at the door.* JERRY *puts his head in. He wears a uniform somewhat like the one that accompanied him through the dream.*]

JERRY. It's me, Jerry. I've been ringing your phone for the last five minutes. Yeh, I thought so—you left it off the hook again. [NEIL *replaces the receiver.*] The young lady that came before was waiting, so I brought her right up.

GLADYS [*in the doorway*]. It's me, Neil—may I come in? [*Enters*] Oh, hello again, Miss Mason!

CYNTHIA. I—I forgot my tea things. [*Half choking; she takes up her tray of tea things.*]

GLADYS. Well, here we are. Isn't it exciting! We're engaged.

NEIL. Yes.

GLADYS. Did you have a good nap?

NEIL. Yes, thank you.

GLADYS [*obviously something on her mind*]. Do you love me a lot, Neil? Enough to do me a great big favor?

NEIL. What?

GLADYS. It's a big one, and maybe you won't want to do it.

NEIL. What is it?

GLADYS. Well, it's this way. Coming back from the dressmaker's I met Walter Craig. I told you about him, didn't I? He's a boy that sort of used to like me.

NEIL. Oh, yes.

GLADYS. Now, mind you, Neil, you can say "No" to this if you want to, but—he said, "What are you doing tonight?" Now, you won't be angry, Neil?

NEIL. No, no.

GLADYS. Well, then he said he didn't know any other girl in New York, and would I sort of play around with him this week. So all I wondered was—well—you know how a fellow is—if he thinks a girl's engaged, why, he won't come near her at all. Now mind, you don't have to do it—and I won't be a bit hurt if you don't, but what I thought was—if we could start being engaged, say, a week from today—you wouldn't mind, would you, Neil? Of course, next week, after we *are* engaged, we'll just go everywhere together.

NEIL. I see.

GLADYS. I know a dozen people, pretty near, that'll give big parties for us. It's an awful lot of fun, being engaged.

NEIL. Is it? I'm afraid I wouldn't fit in with that sort of thing.

GLADYS. Why, half the fun of being engaged is—well——

NEIL. Gladys, just what is your idea of being engaged?

GLADYS. Why—I've just been telling you. [NEIL *smiles.*] What's the matter?

NEIL. Well, it's just that your idea of an engagement is different from mine.

GLADYS. What is yours?

NEIL. I think I'd want to be somewhere alone, just the two of us, where we could talk.

GLADYS. Talk about what?

NEIL [*with a meaning look*]. I don't know.

GLADYS. You don't mean you'd *always* be like that, do you? I mean, when you're married?

NEIL. I might.

GLADYS. Well, where would I come in? Do you mean you'd expect *me* to sit around *every* evening and—just talk? I did think you'd be willing to—play around the way other people do.

NEIL. I see.

GLADYS. But, of course, if you wouldn't—well—why—there doesn't seem to be much sense in our being engaged, does there?

NEIL. It's to be just as you say, Gladys.

GLADYS. Well, I don't think we're exactly suited to each other—if you think it over. Honestly, I don't. Do you?

NEIL. No, Gladys.

GLADYS. I noticed the difference the minute I saw Walter again! I can kind of let myself go with Walter. You're sure you don't think I'm a quitter.

NEIL. I think you're all right.

GLADYS. And we'll still be friends, won't we? I've always thought you were nice, Neil. [*She gives a sigh.*] It's a sort of a relief, isn't it?

NEIL. Yes, it is—rather.

GLADYS. Well, goodbye. I've got to go because I left Walter downstairs. [*She departs.*]

NEIL. Oh! [*Laughs. Starts to call out*] Cyn—— [*Looks across the hall, crosses to the piano and begins to play the music of the pantomime*]

[*After a moment* CYNTHIA *comes slowly into the room.*]

CYNTHIA [*hesitatingly*]. Want me, Neil?

NEIL. Do I want you? [*He continues playing as he hears her approaching.*]

CURTAIN

SIDNEY HOWARD (1891-1939)

In the midst of the artistic innovations that brought excitement to the experimental drama of the twenties, Sidney Howard stood as a spokesman for the well-made realistic play which challenged its audiences with the truth of its characters and the force of its ideas rather than with novel staging or sensational themes. The conventional and hence inconspicuous style of his work has tended to obscure his solid contributions to the new drama, but no one represents better the realistic tradition, which bulked largest in the American school.

The life and character of Howard reveal the same quiet integrity and intense sincerity that appear in his plays. Of a pioneer California family that had grown well-to do in the shipping business, he was reared in an atmosphere of culture and early developed an interest in writing. After graduation from the University of California in 1915, he spent a year in George Pierce Baker's famous "47 Workshop" in the drama at Harvard before serving as an ambulance driver and aviator in the First World War. Back in America he became a liberal journalist, reporting on labor spies, but the ambition to write plays continued strong in him. His first one, *Swords* (1921), was a poetic romance of the Italian Renaissance, which ran counter to the dominant tendencies of the new drama. Not until 1924 did he achieve his first real success with *They Knew What They Wanted,* a realistic study of the consequences of adultery. Its truthful and unconventional approach to a subject that had usually been treated sanctimoniously shocked conservative audiences, but he went on in *The Silver Cord* to an

equally untraditional study of the mother-son relationship which presented one mother as a selfishly, indeed savagely possessive, matriarch. These plays gave him a reputation for fearlessly unmasking our hypocrisy about the most sacred human ties.

In the next decade or so Howard wrote eight first-rate realistic plays, both serious and comic. Of his total output of twenty-four, ten were adaptations of French, German, Hungarian, and Spanish dramas, and four more were derived from novels and other sources. Howard was sometimes criticized for wasting his talents in reworking the ideas of other men, but the best of his adaptations are in effect new works, conceived in terms of the theater and the American point of view.

During the last five years of his life his production declined sharply, as he displayed the characteristic difficulty of the first generation of our modern playwrights in adapting themselves to the staggering conditions of the depression era. But his last play produced in his lifetime, *The Ghost of Yankee Doodle* (1937), showed that he retained his political liberalism to the end and refused to accept an ivory-tower escape from the grisly realities of his day. His accidental death on his New England farm in 1939 was universally accounted a great loss to the American theater.

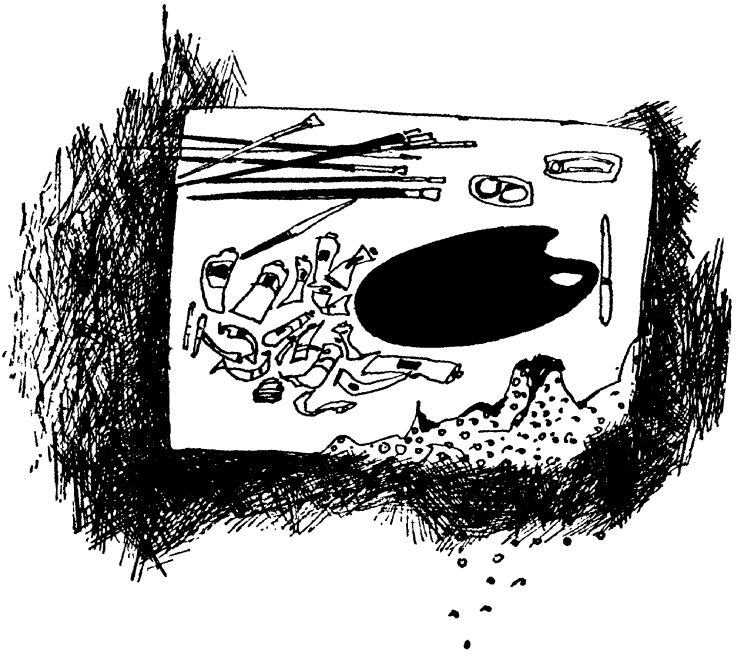
THE LATE CHRISTOPHER BEAN

Only one of Howard's successful plays was a comedy, but *The Late Christopher Bean* (1932) is none the less characteristic of his approach to the drama. Each of his plays is built about a challenging theme which emerges gradually out of an intensely human situation. He avoids the formal statement and solution of a problem, which was popular in older problem plays, and depends instead upon extremely sharp character-drawing and character-conflicts to project it.

Since *The Late Christopher Bean* is an American folk comedy with a Yankee twang in its speech and characters, it is important to see that it is also a good deal more. It was based on a French play, *Prenez Garde à la Peinture* by René Fauchois, which had delighted Paris with its sardonic entertainment at the expense of provincial Frenchmen of the South. And it was to enjoy equal success on the London stage in a version by Emlyn Williams, also called *The Late Christopher Bean,* which translated its hilarious and ironic humor into the locale of the provincial midlands. Hence, though much of its amusement for Americans derives from its pointed satire of Yankee shrewdness and cupidity, it is in no sense a regional study, of interest primarily for its local color. *The Late Christopher Bean* is a classic of modern comedy because it transcends mere fun to an acid and searching criticism of human nature.

On the one hand, its account of the corroding effect of greed upon character may well have been a wry comment of the depression years on the wild scramble for material success in the money-mad twenties; but the occasional allusions to hard times are the only touches that date this comedy. It reveals, in the lofty tradition of Molière, a timeless and unflattering truth about the human soul, and brings to light the vulnerability of the best of us to avarice, and the irrational behavior to which it may reduce us when the conditions are right. It was a stroke of dramatic insight in Fauchois and his followers to project this universal observation of character in the specific terms of the provincial middle class and of the tight-fisted French, rural English, and New Englanders, all with ready-made reputations for shrewdness and parsimony.

The title of the French original carried with it a playful pun. "Prenez garde à la peinture" can mean either "Be careful of the paint" or "Be careful of the painting," and paint is a comic leitmotiv running through the play. It even pops up in Abby's homely simile, "You're fresh as paint." Warren is a house painter who aspires to be an artist in paint, and the cyclone generated by the discovery of Chris Bean's paintings takes place near a room that Warren has just painted, with the legend "Paint" written large on the front door. Mrs. Haggett's chief objection to Warren as a son-in-law is that he plans to abandon the solid security of house-painting to become a "starving dead-beat of an artist." All of her narrow and Philistine character is in the absurdly revealing line, "Couldn't you use the portrait paint on the fence?"





Warren's ambitions, however, are merely a dramatic preparation for the bombshell discovery of Chris Bean, whose departed figure looms like a smiling phantom in the lives of them all. From beyond the grave he comes to reveal the basest traits within the respectable Haggetts and to attract the vultures from the big city. But he also smoothes the way for the young lovers and sees justice done to Abby, who had never wavered in her devotion to him. He must laugh at the amazement of the Haggetts to find such buried gold in mere paintings, for their taste in art he had dismissed as of "the lower animals."

The major theme is of course greed, the submerged greed in human nature, which is expressed throughout the play in the speeches of Doctor Haggett himself. "No man has ever called me greedy for money," he says proudly in the first act, and we believe it to be true. Abby confirms it near the end: "I knew your wife and Ada was both greedy! But I never knew you was!" The doctor piously condemns others for greed in scene after scene until at last with ironic desperation he reproaches Abby herself, who indignantly denies the charge. At last Tallant turns the word upon him.

Though Howard delineates every one of the nine characters clearly, his play is built around Abby and Doctor Haggett. All of the rest are quickly established upon their first appearances and remain unchanged to the end. Abby, the pillar of integrity in the swirl of cynical fortune hunting around her, also remains unchanged, though we come to knew her real stature gradually. Indeed, it has remained beyond the narrow horizon of the Haggetts, who have known her for years. The quiet warmth of this simple soul, ignorant but tender, puts to shame the savage cupidity of the others. Her firm devotion to Chris, her naïve pride in what he taught her, her broad-mindedness about his bad habits, are everywhere, but especially in the long scene with Tallant early in the second act, which really establishes her character. We naturally accept her view of the various members of the family: "Susie, I don't mind fetching for your Pa and you;" and her skepticism of the first two visitors, who munificently pay the debts of the departed Chris: "If I was you, Doctor Haggett, I'd watch him careful." She too has the Yankee shrewdness of the household, and during the long scene with Tallant we feel confident that in the end her rustic honesty will win out over his suave city stratagems. She inspires the only pathos in the play, especially in her indifference to selling at a fancy price the portrait that Chris Bean

had painted of her. As she explains: "It's all how things used to be in the old days."

Of the nine characters four are consistently contemptible: the mean, selfish mother and her elder daughter and the rascally art dealers; and four are worthy throughout: Abby, Davenport, and the young lovers. Davenport, the art critic, is the one artificial figure, perhaps because he must serve as the tribunal of authority in the treacherous sphere of art values.

The ninth character, Doctor Haggett, is the chief character, because in his trial of soul and degradation lies the point of the play. He is the only one who undergoes any considerable change. When Tallant asks him in the first act how much Chris owed him, he says quite sincerely, "I don't remember." But he has the Yankee impulse to give Tallant a receipt for the payment. Later events bring forth sordid motives that he is himself shocked to find in his soul. He sums up the play in his own confession: "This morning I was a peaceful country doctor filled with gentle thoughts of a medical description and I coveted nothing, not even my collections. Look at me now. . . . Once you get *started* on a thing like this, though—Once you let it get a *hold* on you!" His greed brings with it a host of unpleasant sequels: his ill-temper, which amazes Abby and Susan, his recriminations against his wife, his savage suspicion that Warren has stolen the pictures, his meanness about the coffee that Abby served Chris years before, and finally his rank dishonesty with Abby, of which he is at last ashamed. In this breakdown of a decent man we see a sardonic analysis of human nature in the satiric spirit of Molière.

There is abundant irony in such treatment of character, as in much else in the play. Conventional dramatic irony appears in the doctor's naïve dismissal of Bean's pictures at the start as "terrible" and in his summoning his family to behold in the scalawag Tallant "an honest man." The irony cuts deeper when, clutching at the ghost of his former decency but more desperately at dishonest gain, the doctor says, "I ain't going to do nothing that ain't fair and square," as he prepares to steal from Abby a picture that he knows to be worth ten thousand dollars.

The Late Christopher Bean reveals throughout the skill of Howard as a craftsman. The interlocking of themes and characters, the careful use of foreshadowing in the early scenes, the slow building up of Abby's stature that parallels the gradual decline of the doctor's bespeak Howard's superb command of his material. And

the whirlwind triumph of Abby in the last few minutes involves a hilarious joker that comes as a bolt of inspiration. In this near travesty of poetic justice we are delighted to see simple honesty win out so handsomely over the grasping vultures, in contrast with the gratuitous cynicism of the original play by Fauchois, in which the doctor kept the pictures as ill-gotten gain. But the ending may also poke fun at the audience, for we cannot avoid feeling a touch of frustration from the experience of the poor doctor. It is hard to resist wishing that he had been allowed to keep at least a measure of his windfall. Still, the victory of the underdog is immensely satisfying, especially because Abby did not ask for it and hardly understood it. Ironically, she gains it quite unintentionally through her indignant response to a slight upon her virtue. Was ever virtue more bountifully rewarded!

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SIDNEY HOWARD

THE LATE CHRISTOPHER BEAN

Founded upon Prenez Garde à la Peinture *by René Fauchois*

CHARACTERS

Dr. Haggett
Susan Haggett
Abby
Mrs. Haggett
Ada Haggett
Warren Creamer
Tallant
Rosen
Davenport

The dining room of the Haggetts' house, not far from Boston

Act One
Morning
Act Two
Noon
Act Three
Afternoon

the setting

The dining room of an old house in a New England village. Two windows on the actors' left give on the elm-shaded village street. A wide door in the rear wall, to the actors' left of center, gives on the entry, from which the stair ascends to the bedroom floor. The newel post of the stair and the front door are seen. The rear wall of the living room beyond the entry door is largely occupied by the fireplace, its paneled mantel and cupboards intact above, and all in the natural old pine. The wall on the actors' right contains the door to the "L," where the kitchen is located.

The room is worthy of more tasteful furnishing than the Haggett family has given it. Mingled with the few old pieces is much of less merit and more recent date. Added to this again, and producing an atmosphere of some confusion both in the entry and in the room itself, are the desk and other furnishings of the doctor's office from which they have been moved in honor of painting and papering, evidences of which (in the form of a ladder, buckets, brushes and a sign which reads "PAINT!") clutter the entry. There are pictures on the walls, notable among them a small oil "Flower piece." The doctor's desk is balanced on the opposite side of the room by the dining room table.

act 1

The light out of doors is of early morning in October. The stage is empty. The door leading to the kitchen is only partly open. The double doors to the entry are both open. After a moment of silence, the front door opens to admit DR. HAGGETT, *an undistinguished rural medical man of fifty. He closes the door, removes his hat and overcoat in the entry, and comes in to deposit his doctor's satchel on his desk.*

DR. HAGGETT. Hannah!

MRS. HAGGETT [*from off-stage above*]. That you, Milton?

DR. HAGGETT. Yes, it is.

MRS. HAGGETT [*as before*]. Back already, are you?

DR. HAGGETT. Yes, I am.

MRS. HAGGETT [*as before*]. Had your breakfast?

DR. HAGGETT. No, I haven't.

MRS. HAGGETT [*as before, calling loudly*]. Abby! [*Something on* DR. HAGGETT'S *hands annoys him. Smelling them, he realizes that he has touched the paint on the front door, gets a bit of gauze from a glass jar on the desk and goes to the cabinet.*] Abby! ! [*He takes out a bottle and proceeds to clean his hands with the contents, drying them on the gauze.*] Abby! ! ! Get Doctor Haggett his breakfast! He ain't had none! [SUSAN HAGGETT, *a pretty girl of nineteen, comes down the stairs.*] Better help Abby get your Pa's breakfast for him, Susie!

SUSAN. I will.

DR. HAGGETT. What ails Abby that she wants help to get my breakfast?

SUSAN. Oh, Abby's terrible upset!

DR. HAGGETT. What about?

SUSAN. Why, Pa! About leaving us!

DR. HAGGETT. That's right! Today *is* Thursday! I clean forgot! There's been enough talk about it, too! So Abby's leaving us after all these years! [*He is looking toward kitchen door as* ABBY *enters, carrying a tin tray with coffee pot, cup and saucer, cream and sugar, napkins. She is the "help" of the Haggett family, a Yankee villager, aged vaguely between youth and maturity, of a wistful prettiness, simple and serious.*]

ABBY [*speaking as she enters*]. I got strong coffee hot and ready for you, Doctor Haggett. Think of you going all this time on an empty stomach! Did everything come out all right?

DR. HAGGETT. Yes. Boy, eight pounds, three ounces, come out.

ABBY [*setting out the coffee on the dining room table*]. Well, that's just lovely! I expect the Jordans must be real pleased it's a boy! I expect most parents'd sooner have boys than girls, and I don't know as I blame 'em. You just sit there, Doctor Haggett, and Susie, you fix your Pa his coffee while I get the rest of his breakfast. [*She starts towards the kitchen door, pointing to the newspaper and telegram on the table.*] There's his Boston paper handy for him. And there's a

telegram with it that just come. [*She has vanished again, carrying the empty tray, on the last word.* SUSAN *pours a cup of coffee.*]

DR. HAGGETT. She appears to be making quite an effort for the last day. [*He sits down to the telegram and the prospect of breakfast.*]

SUSAN. Well, Abby would! It's going to seem like losing one of the family, ain't it? [*The contents of the telegram bring forth a low exclamation from the doctor.*] Pa, what is it?

DR. HAGGETT. It's from New York.

SUSAN. No!

DR. HAGGETT. Yes, it is. [*He reads.*] "An admirer of the late Christopher Bean will do himself the honor of calling on you at noon on Thursday." Signed, Maxwell Davenport.

SUSAN. Chris Bean!

DR. HAGGETT. I haven't thought of Chris Bean for years!

SUSAN. Chris Bean who painted all them pictures!

DR. HAGGETT. Guess he thought they was pictures when he wasn't too drunk to think! But who's Maxwell Davenport? Guess I ain't supposed to know him, but . . . [*He puts the telegram in his left coat pocket and accepts the coffee which* SUSAN *has poured for him.* MRS. HAGGETT *comes down the stair. Like her husband, she is Yankee, and they are about of an age. Unlike him, however, she has assumed certain cityfied airs in dress and bearing which, so she feels, lift her above the standards of her native village.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. Why ain't that painter, paper-hanger come round like he said he would to fetch his stuff away? He was all finished up when he went home last night, and he gave me his word he'd be here first thing this morning. Deliver me from any more painters in the house! Your sister Ada's lying up in her bed this minute with the sick headache this paint smell's given her. When I think of the work's got to be done in this house today, moving your Pa's things back into his office and all!

[ABBY *returns from the kitchen bringing the balance of the doctor's breakfast. He eats during the ensuing scene.*]

ABBY. Here you are, Doctor Haggett.

MRS. HAGGETT [*still plaintive*]. And Abby leaving us this afternoon.

ABBY. I'd as soon you didn't speak about me leaving, if you got no objection, Mrs. Haggett.

MRS. HAGGETT. Well, you are leaving, ain't you?

ABBY. Yes, I am. But you know I don't want to, and I wouldn't

neither only it's the will of God. And the only way I can get through with it is if nobody speaks to me about it. But if you keep reminding me, I . . . I . . . [MRS. HAGGETT *looks up.* SUSAN *lays a warning hand on her mother's arm.* ABBY *just manages to control herself. She smiles bravely.*] What I want is to hear about Mrs. Jordan's baby. She didn't get married none too soon, did she? I should think when a baby comes that quick after a wedding you'd pretty near have to brush the rice off it. Was she in labor long? [*She returns to the table with the plate of butter and the syrup jug which she puts before the doctor.*]

DR. HAGGETT. Not so long.

ABBY. Did she have just a terrible time? You look kind of washed out yourself, Doctor Haggett. Well, it couldn't have been more than four o'clock when they called you out. Seems like babies is always getting you up or keeping you up, don't it?

[ADA HAGGETT, *a girl of twenty-six, who fancies her baby prettiness and babylike manner comes down the stair.*]

SUSAN. If you feel so bad about leaving us, Abby, why don't you stay?

ABBY. You're all so good to me! I don't want to go. It's the will of God.

DR. HAGGETT. The first time I ever heard of the will of God sending a woman off to live in Chicago!

ABBY. It couldn't have been nothing less to make my poor brother's wife take sick and die and leave him with four little children and no woman in the house! You know it wouldn't be my way to will a thing like that!

DR. HAGGETT. Well, don't let's be going over it again. You're leaving us. We're sorry to have you go. We'll save our tears till the time comes for you to take your train. What time is it?

ABBY. The five o'clock to Boston.

SUSAN. We're going to miss you, Abby!

ABBY. And me? What about me leaving this place where I been so long? Fifteen years I been here! Fifteen years in my room back there! And all my things that I had so long . . .

DR. HAGGETT. Don't keep on going over it!

ABBY. No, I don't want to go over it, either. I just can't stand . . . [*She is gone again into the kitchen.*]

SUSAN. Poor Abby! We'll never get another like her. [*She follows* ABBY *into the kitchen.*]

DR. HAGGETT. Well, that wouldn't be such a bad idea!

MRS. HAGGETT. Want us to do without no help, I suppose!

DR. HAGGETT. Don't see why not! Three women in the house. I'll undertake to make *my* bed mornings.

ADA. But, Pa! Have you thought what folks'd say?

DR. HAGGETT. What would they say?

MRS. HAGGETT. That Doctor Haggett's practice has fallen off so bad he can't afford to keep help.

DR. HAGGETT. You keep house, Hannah, and I'll keep my practice.

MRS. HAGGETT. You'd set back and let everything go to the dogs if it wasn't for me! How long was I after you to have that office and entry painted and papered?

DR. HAGGETT [*peace at any price*]. Yes, I know, Hannah.

MRS. HAGGETT. Who was it, you or me, found we could sell that old wall paper for more than enough to give you a nice clean office sick folks could enjoy?

DR. HAGGETT. Oh, I know! I know!

MRS. HAGGETT. Now you want to spoil the whole impression by making your wife and daughters do their own work!

DR. HAGGETT. I know, Hannah, I know. And if you could find some way to make my patients pay the bills they owe me. . . .

MRS. HAGGETT. If folks won't pay you, don't take care of 'em!

DR. HAGGETT. And what would happen to my practice then?

MRS. HAGGETT. God Almighty! There just ain't no reasoning with him!

DR. HAGGETT. Doctors have to care for the sick even if they can't pay. It's the ones who can and don't, these days. . . .

MRS. HAGGETT. Ada, you better go upstairs. I see I got to talk private with your Pa.

[ADA *obeys, starting to climb the stairs, then thinks better of it and pauses listening.* DR. HAGGETT, *his breakfast ruined, goes morosely to his desk for his pipe.*]

DR. HAGGETT. If you could find new help for the same as we pay Abby. . . .

MRS. HAGGETT. The new one I found won't cost us much more.

DR. HAGGETT. You haven't gone and got a new one already!

MRS. HAGGETT. Oh, yes, I have. Last week when I went to Boston. . . .

DR. HAGGETT. Have you got help in Boston?!

MRS. HAGGETT. Can't you understand, Milton, that it's in bad times like these you got to keep up appearances most of all? [*A glance toward the kitchen, then*] I ain't sorry to see Abby leaving. She's been here long enough. Mebbe fine for her to feel she's one of the

family and call the girls by their first names and all. But you know she hasn't got a mite of style or dash about her! The new one ain't like that. She's a real city maid that can answer the doorbell proper!

DR. HAGGETT. How much more does she cost?

MRS. HAGGETT. If you'll stop to think of all the girls and me are saving, making every stitch of our clothes for Florida!

DR. HAGGETT. So you're still talking Florida this winter!

MRS. HAGGETT. Why wouldn't I be?

DR. HAGGETT. Well, the girls and you ain't going to Florida, nor any other place, till times get better![1]

[ADA *returns to their midst.*]

ADA. Did I hear Pa say we can't go to Florida?

DR. HAGGETT. Yes, you did, Ada. And it ain't the first time neither. Maybe I do sit by and let your Ma paint and paper up my office and maybe your Ma is going to have a maid from Boston. Maybe. But as long as I can't collect the bills my patients owe me, there ain't no use of no more Florida talk! I take my stand on that!

MRS. HAGGETT. Well, I take my stand too, Milton Haggett, and I wouldn't be no mother if I give it up!

DR. HAGGETT. What's Florida got to do with being a mother?

MRS. HAGGETT. You may not care if your daughters get married or not, but I do!

ADA. And so do they!

DR. HAGGETT. You don't have to go to Florida to get married!

ADA. Maybe not, but the opportunities down there are exceptional!

DR. HAGGETT. Stuff and nonsense!

MRS. HAGGETT. No, it ain't, Milton! Them Miami beaches is just alive with boys who don't give a thought to nothing but romance and getting married!

DR. HAGGETT. Most boys get them ideas most any place!

MRS. HAGGETT. Not in New England in the winter time.

DR. HAGGETT. The girls can wait for Spring then.

ADA. Pa wants for me to grow up an old maid!

DR. HAGGETT. I don't want no such thing!

ADA. I'm pretty near an old maid already!

DR. HAGGETT. You're no more than a baby!

ADA. I'm twenty-four!

DR. HAGGETT. No, you're not. You're twenty-six!

ADA. That makes it all the worse!

[1] ***till times get better.*** *The allusion is to the great economic depression during the early thirties.*

DR. HAGGETT. Well, if you're in such a hurry to get married, go down to the post office and put up a notice!

ADA. Pa!

MRS. HAGGETT. After all the advantages we gave our girls, would you want to see 'em married to village boys?

DR. HAGGETT. What's wrong with village boys? You married one.

MRS. HAGGETT. Well, I hadn't been to Miami when I did it.

DR. HAGGETT. I thank you, Hannah. I thank you. But if Ada can do half as well as you've done . . .

ADA. There ain't no boys to speak of in this place. And what there is don't like me!

DR. HAGGETT. What is it makes Florida boys like you better? Is it because they seen you in your swimming suit? All right, give the boys here a chance. Invite 'em in, put on your swimming suit, and set by the fire!

[SUSAN *enters from the kitchen.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. Well, your Pa's got the best of us again. There ain't no hope of Florida this winter. I'll have to make 'em take back my flowered foulard.

SUSAN. Well, that's too bad. But I don't see as it matters.

ADA. It does matter! It does! Pa says I'm only a baby! But what he really wants is for me to grow up an old maid!

DR. HAGGETT. I don't want no . . .

ADA. If we stay here Susie'll get married before me because the boys here like her better than they like me, and if she gets married before me I'll just die! I'll die! I know I'll die!

MRS. HAGGETT. It's this forever having just enough and not one mite over for. . . .

DR. HAGGETT. Greed, Hannah! Greed!

MRS. HAGGETT. Maybe I am greedy! It's only fools and wastrels who don't try to get all they can out of life!

[ABBY *enters from the kitchen, her eye cocked malevolently.*]

DR. HAGGETT. No man has never called me greedy for money, Hannah. And I hope no man ever does. I'll go upstairs now and shave.

ABBY. I declare, if folks ain't peculiar, though! There I was crying and carrying on over going away and now you're doing the very same as me because you got to stay. [*She goes about gathering up the doctor's breakfast dishes.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. I'll thank you, Abby, not to make observations and remarks.

ABBY. Oh, Mrs. Haggett, don't mind me! I'm only help, without a

mite of style about me, and I call the girls by their first names like one of the family! And now you got a real city maid coming from Boston! And she knows how to answer the doorbell proper!

MRS. HAGGETT. You're a common, impudent girl, and I discharge you for listening at keyholes!

ABBY. You can't discharge me because I discharged myself already! I won't go till I'm good and ready!

MRS. HAGGETT. I'll take no more back talk from you, young lady! You'll go now!

ABBY. I'll go this afternoon.

[WARREN CRAMER, *the village painter and paper-hanger, has come into the entry from behind. He is a personable, self-satisfied youth in his early twenties.*]

WARREN. Morning, Mrs. Haggett.

MRS. HAGGETT. Oh! It's the paper hanger!

WARREN. Morning, Ada. Morning, Susie.

MRS. HAGGETT [*as the girls return his greetings*]. I was just saying it was about time you showed up!

ABBY. Warren ain't so late you need fret about it!

WARREN. Weather's getting sharp. Guess winter must be coming. Had trouble starting the old truck this morning.

MRS. HAGGETT. Well, get your stuff on out of here. I'm sick of the smell of paint.

ABBY. There's plenty of things in this house smells worse than paint does. [*She returns to the kitchen.*]

WARREN. I come to get my stuff out, Mrs. Haggett. And I brought you each a little present too.

ADA. Did you, Warren? What?

WARREN. Well, I brought each of you girls one of my pictures. [*He produces two small framed oil paintings of still life from under his arm.*]

SUSAN. Oh!

ADA. A picture of you, Warren?

WARREN. No, not of me. They're pictures I painted.

MRS. HAGGETT. It's a dead fish!

SUSAN. Looks like salmon you caught last Sunday.

WARREN. That's what it is.

MRS. HAGGETT [*to* SUSAN]. What's yours? A dead duck! Better swap round with your sister, Susie. Fish always makes Ada break out terrible.

ADA. Oh, not in pictures, Ma! [*She turns to* WARREN *with a too-ingratiating smile.*] And they're your own work, Warren?

WARREN. Yeah.

ADA. The frames too?

WARREN [*nodding*]. They're first-rate painting. I thought maybe you'd like to hang 'em up over the sideboard. I thought they'd look kind of suitable.

MRS. HAGGETT. I wouldn't have no appetite if I had to look up at a dead fish and a dead duck!

ADA. No! Warren's right, Ma. They'd look just lovely! [*She turns her fatal flattery on* WARREN.] To think I never knowed you was a picture painter!

WARREN. Seems like all kinds of painting comes natural to me.

ADA. I can see that! My! I hadn't no idea you was so clever! I didn't know the boys here were like you, Warren!

WARREN. They ain't!

ADA. Why, you could paint real well, if you was to study! I'm only a baby, but I used to take painting lessons myself. Did you know that, Warren?

WARREN. No.

[ABBY *returns from the kitchen to put the final "between meals" touches on the table.*]

ADA. That flower piece there on the wall is my work. [WARREN *is not impressed.*] It took a prize, it looked so natural. I guess I could give you some pointers, if you'd like.

ABBY. What are you giving him pointers about, Ada? Is it about pictures? [*She sees the two paintings on the table.*] Did you paint these, Warren? Let's see, Susie.

WARREN. They're what's called still life.

ABBY. Still life. That's a painting term, still life.

MRS. HAGGETT. What do you know about painting terms?

ABBY. Oh, I know. See this, Susie? [*She points.*] Know how he did that? He didn't use his brush. No, he just stuck his own thumb in the paint and went like this— [*she indicates*] —and like this.

WARREN. That's right.

ABBY. Oh, I know. I know.

MRS. HAGGETT. You know about painting?

ADA. Don't notice her, Ma. Let her go out in the kitchen and wash Pa's dishes and let Susie go out and help her. And you go up to Pa and leave Warren and me to hang the pictures together.

[*But* DR. HAGGETT *comes down the stair in his shirt-sleeves.*]

DR. HAGGETT. I was trying to shave, but there's no hot water. Morning, Warren.

MRS. HAGGETT. Susie, you get the kettle for your Pa.

ABBY. Don't you trouble, Susie. I don't mind fetching for your Pa and you.

MRS. HAGGETT. No, but if it was me I suppose you'd tell me to shave in cold water.

ABBY. Or go to blazes where you could get it good and hot. [*She sweeps into the kitchen.*]

SUSAN. 'Tain't nothing, Pa. Just Ma and Abby having one of their regular spats. Look at what Warren's painted for the dining room.

[DR. HAGGETT *examines first one picture then the other without much pleasure.*]

DR. HAGGETT. Well! . . . Well! . . .

WARREN. If you don't like this pair, I got plenty more I painted down at the shop. I guess I must have close on a hundred.

DR. HAGGETT. You must have taken a good bit of time off your regular painting to get that many pictures painted!

WARREN [*loftily*]. I don't mind how much time I take for painting pictures. I'm too good to stay with paper-hanging.

MRS. HAGGETT. You ain't fixing to be an artist, I hope?

WARREN. You bet I am, and I'll be a good one, too!

MRS. HAGGETT [*with wise decision*]. No, Ada. No. I guess I'll set right here. [*She does.*] I'd rather have a real painter in the family than a picture-painter.

WARREN. I was thinking of painting the dooryard fence for you, Mrs. Haggett.

MRS. HAGGETT. Free?

WARREN. Yeah. But I got a better idea now. I'll paint you a portrait of the girls instead.

SUSAN. Oh, Warren, will you?

ADA. Does Susie have to be in it?

WARREN. Yeah. The both of you.

DR. HAGGETT. Warren, what's made you get so generous all of a sudden?

WARREN. I got to thinking over what good care you took of my Ma the time she died and how you ain't never been paid for that.

MRS. HAGGETT. If you're that grateful, mebbe you'd let us have the job you just done in the office free.

WARREN. Well, I ain't that grateful.

MRS. HAGGETT. Could you paint the girls *and* the dooryard fence?

WARREN. If you'd buy the paint for the fence I could.

MRS. HAGGETT. Couldn't you use the portrait paint on the fence?

WARREN. 'Tain't the same kind.

MRS. HAGGETT. Then I guess we'll let the fence wait for Spring.

ADA. How about the portrait?

MRS. HAGGETT. I got no use for it, but I got nothing against it.

SUSAN. How will you paint us, Warren?

DR. HAGGETT. Now that's a question.

WARREN. Well, I don't know . . . I'd have to think. Ada, you go over to that chair and sit by Susie.

[ADA *obeys.*]

DR. HAGGETT. If Ada was listening to a sea shell and Susie looking on . . .

WARREN. No.

MRS. HAGGETT. Or both of them looking off into the future like.

DR. HAGGETT. You ought to paint Mrs. Haggett with them. She don't take up much room.

WARREN [*decision*]. I'll paint them just like they are!

ADA. Not in this dress! I got a lovely new one!

WARREN. I like that dress. I like the color. [*He has become thoroughly professional.*] Yours and Susie's and that old chair together. I like that fine. Just give me a scrap of paper. Any old scrap and a pencil. . . . [*He looks about him, finds a pad on the desk, extracts a drawing pencil from his pocket and gets down to business.*]

ADA. You sit down and I'll stand behind. I'm such a baby, Warren wouldn't want you towering over me, would you, Warren?

[*The girls exchange places,* ADA *arranging herself.*]

WARREN. Either way. There, that's all right. Now, Mrs. Haggett, just to give you an idea of what I can do! [*To the girls*] Don't move, now!

MRS. HAGGETT. Won't you even let Ada hold a bunch of flowers?

ADA. It's Warren's picture, Ma. If he likes me the way I am . . .

DR. HAGGETT. Look, Hannah! You got to admit the boy's quick with his pencil. You can see which girl is which already!

MRS. HAGGETT. Which *is* which?

ADA. Does it look like me, Ma?

DR. HAGGETT. Give the boy time. You don't get likenesses as quick as that.

DR. HAGGETT. Guess I know that much. Look at that, Hannah! You're quite an artist, Warren. You'll be painting patriotic pictures before you're through. Ever seen the pictures in the Boston State House? They got fine patriotic pictures there! Figures life size! Frames thirty feet long! Pictures that make you proud you're an American! Bunker Hill and The Spirit of '76! I could give you ideas for pictures if you wanted, Warren. The first Thanksgiving! Now, that would be a good picture for a dining room. Look at that, will you, Hannah? Where ever did you learn such tricks, Warren?

WARREN. Used to be a painter here named Chris Bean.

DR. HAGGETT. Chris Bean! Patient of mine! I had a telegram about him this morning. [*He fumbles for his coat pocket and finds that he is coatless.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. About Chris Bean?

DR. HAGGETT. From a man who calls himself an admirer of his.

MRS. HAGGETT. Wonder what he finds to admire him for?

[ABBY *has entered with the kettle just in time to hear this. She stands by the door rigid.*]

WARREN. Chris started me off on painting when I was a kid. He'd let me follow him wherever he went and sit beside him and draw the same things he did. He gave me lessons, all I ever had. I try to remember what he taught me and practise it.

[ABBY *fairly yearns toward the boy.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. Hope he didn't teach you to drink like he did!

[ABBY *stiffens.*]

ABBY. Well, I guess anything you learned from . . . [MRS. HAGGETT *looks up sharply.*] Here's your hot water, Doctor Haggett.

DR. HAGGETT. What do I want with . . . ? That's so! I *was* shaving! Well, I better get back to it and get round to making my calls. [*He takes the kettle.*] Thank you, Abby. [*He goes up the stair.* ABBY *and* MRS. HAGGETT *exchange a venomous glance as* ABBY *turns back toward the kitchen door.*]

ABBY. Oh, Mrs. Haggett, I forgot to tell you. The real city maid from Boston's out in the kitchen. I found her in back when I went to fetch the kettle. I don't hardly think she'll stay after what I told her about the place. [*She goes.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. If Abby's gone and poisoned that new maid's mind! [*She is on her way to the kitchen.*]

ADA. You'll have to excuse me, Warren. This is important. Oh, Ma! Do you think . . . [*She follows her mother out.*]

SUSAN. Will you let me see?

WARREN. Sure, if you want to. [*She looks.*] It's just rough.

SUSAN. Looks to me like it isn't quite fair to Ada.

WARREN. Well, as long as it's fair to you . . .

SUSAN. Oh, no, Warren! Be fair to Ada or you'll get Ma down on you!

WARREN. I paint pictures to suit myself, not your Ma. I don't care shucks for your Ma nor Ada neither. I guess you know why I'm painting this picture.

SUSAN [*drawing back*]. You said you wanted to give Ma a present!

WARREN. All I want's an excuse to see you every day.

SUSAN. You've known me a long time to talk that way, Warren!

WARREN. Guess you've known me long enough to know what I think about you!

SUSAN. Guess you'd better not say any more.

WARREN. You say you'll marry me and I won't.

SUSAN. Warren!

WARREN. What?

SUSAN. I wouldn't be any wife for you! Not if you're going to be an artist I wouldn't!

WARREN. Why not? I'm a hard worker and I'm going to be a good artist.

SUSAN. But I don't even know if I like art much!

WARREN. I'll teach you to like it.

SUSAN. You haven't even said you loved me.

WARREN. Do I have to *say* that?

SUSAN. Well, I think you ought to!

WARREN. Can't you take my word for it?

[*Pause for maidenly consideration. Then*]

SUSAN. All right, Warren. Only there's one thing. We'd have to wait till Ada gets married first. We wouldn't have any peace if we didn't do that.

WARREN. Guess I'd better kiss you.

SUSAN. Why?

WARREN. Well, I'm marrying you, not Ada, and I'm awful busy and I got no time to waste! And I guess being kissed'll make you stop your nonsense!

SUSAN. Well, mebbe it will.

WARREN. You ain't afraid?

SUSAN. No.

WARREN. All right. I'll do it then. [*He goes to her, takes her in his arms rather stiffly and kisses her with little passion. The kitchen door opens and* ADA *appears.*]

ADA. Well, Warren, here I am back . . . [*A gasp. Then*] Pa! [*Back to the kitchen*] Ma! Come here this minute!

[SUSAN *breaks away confused.*]

DR. HAGGETT [*off-stage*]. What is it?

WARREN. It's Ada messing in other people's business.

ADA. Don't you dast speak to me!

[MRS. HAGGETT *appears in the kitchen door.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. Ada, don't you know I'm busy?

ADA [*beside herself*]. I don't care if you are! There's things going on in here want 'tending to!

[DR. HAGGETT *still in his shirt-sleeves comes down the stair and enters.*]

DR. HAGGETT. What's come over this house of mine this morning?

ADA. There I was in the kitchen, Pa, with the new maid and Ma, and I come back and I caught him and Susie . . .

WARREN [*stepping undismayed to* SUSAN'S *side*]. Don't tell 'em what I was doing, Ada. I'd sooner show 'em. [*He takes the terrified* SUSAN *in his arms again and again kisses her, this time with real passion. A gasp from* MRS. HAGGETT.]

DR. HAGGETT. God bless my soul!

MRS. HAGGETT. You pack your stuff up and clear out of here!

WARREN. All right. I don't mind. Coming with me, Susie? Susie and me are going to get married.

ADA. Ma, if you let Susie get married ahead of me!

MRS. HAGGETT. Susie ain't going to marry no Warren Creamer! My daughter's too good to waste on any starving dead-beat of an artist!

WARREN. You ain't talking about *me,* Mrs. Haggett? I'm the best bet for marriage in this whole county. I'm going far and Susie's coming with me. I guess she's old enough to know her own mind.

SUSAN. Go along now, Warren! This won't help things any!

WARREN. I won't go unless you come with me.

MRS. HAGGETT. Milton, if he ain't out of this house before I count ten, I'll call on you to throw him out!

SUSAN. There won't be no need for throwing Warren out, Pa! Please go, Warren. I'll see you later.

WARREN. When?

SUSAN. I'll get word to you.

DR. HAGGETT. Better go, Warren, and let things simmer down.

WARREN. All right. Give me my drawing, and . . .

[MRS. HAGGETT *snatches the drawing from the table, crumples it, and throws it upon the hearth. A general gasp. Then*]

MRS. HAGGETT. There'll be no more painting portraits in this house!

WARREN. All right. I'll go to keep the peace for Susie's sake. [*He goes into the entry for his pails and ladder.*] But she'd ought to come with me. Because we *are* going to get married. And as for you, Mrs. Haggett, you're what they call a Philistine! Yes, a Philistine! [*He goes out through the front door, slamming it after him.* SUSAN *bursts into tears.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. Well, I may be a Philistine, but I guess I nipped that romance in the bud!

DR. HAGGETT. Clear out, you two, and leave Susie and me alone!

MRS. HAGGETT. I said this was going to be a terrible upsetting morning, but I hadn't no idea how terrible . . . [ADA *and* MRS. HAGGETT *go together into the kitchen.*]

DR. HAGGETT. Don't take on, Susie.

SUSAN. He loves me, Pa, and I love him!

DR. HAGGETT. That's too bad. If he wasn't so hell-bent to be an artist. . . .

SUSAN. What's wrong with artists?

DR. HAGGETT. Not a thing but the cost of food and lodging.

SUSAN. Not if he's a good one! And he will be a good one!

DR. HAGGETT. He's got conceit enough. But the best of 'em is poor providers, from all I hear, and these days . . .

SUSAN. These days! That's all you ever say! These days! If it wasn't for these days you and Ma wouldn't have nothing against Warren, and Ma and Ada could go to Florida. . . .

DR. HAGGETT. And I could get a little peace. [*The doorbell rings.*] Here we are talking, and I ought to be making my calls! [*They start for the stair, she preceding him.*] Come upstairs and wash your face, and I'll get my coat on. I'll have a talk with Warren and see what's what. [ABBY *comes from the kitchen.*] If that's a patient, Abby, show him in here in the dining room and keep the others out. I'll be right down. [*He disappears with* SUSAN *up the stair.* ABBY *opens the front door to admit* TALLANT, *a horn-rimmed youngish, shabbily dressed New Yorker of the disarming, art loving variety.*]

ABBY. Will you step in here? The doctor'll be right down.

TALLANT. Thank you.

[*Closing the front door,* ABBY *follows him into the room.*]

ABBY. You can have a chair. The waiting-room magazines got lost

in the moving on account of the office being painted, but he won't keep you long. [*She is going. He catches her eye. He smiles.*]

TALLANT. You must be Abby.

[ABBY *is astonished.*]

ABBY. I've never seen you before that I remember.

TALLANT. No, this is the first time we've ever met.

ABBY. How do you walk right in and call me by my name?

TALLANT. Ever hear of mind readers?

ABBY. You're not one of them, are you?

TALLANT. Only in a small way.

ABBY. Whatever you are, you're fresh as paint!

TALLANT. Well, paint's my line.

[ABBY *goes back to her kitchen, eyeing the stranger uneasily over her shoulder.* DR. HAGGETT *comes down the stair struggling into his coat.*]

DR. HAGGETT. Good morning, sir.

TALLANT. Is this Doctor Haggett?

DR. HAGGETT. Yes, it is.

TALLANT. I'm very glad to meet you, Doctor Haggett.

DR. HAGGETT. Sit down. I'm sorry my office is out of commission. [*He has taken his place professionally at his desk.*]

TALLANT. Don't apologize, Doctor. I've come to see you because I feel . . .

DR. HAGGETT. A little bilious? You look it. [*He indicates the patients' chair.*] Can't fool me on a sluggish liver!

TALLANT. I daresay you're right, Doctor, but . . .

DR. HAGGETT. Sit down and put out your tongue. Headache? Nausea? Bowels all right?

TALLANT. You don't understand, Doctor. I'm not sick.

DR. HAGGETT. Well, if you're not sick what do you want with me?

TALLANT. I was just coming to that, Doctor. [*Having rejected the patients' chair, he settles himself in the best one.*]

DR. HAGGETT. Might as well tell you I don't want no insurance!

TALLANT. I'm not here to sell insurance. I'm not here to sell anything. I'm here solely for the pleasure of making your acquaintance.

DR. HAGGETT. You don't tell me!

TALLANT. Oh, yes, I do! I happened to be motoring through your lovely state, enjoying the glory of its autumn foliage. [DR. HAGGETT *shows signs of impatience.*] And as I came to this village I realized that I'd stumbled upon an opportunity to perform a duty I've postponed too long.

DR. HAGGETT. What's that?

TALLANT. The payment of a sacred debt I owe you, Doctor.

DR. HAGGETT. What debt do you owe me?

TALLANT. A matter of ten years ago you had as a patient a man whom I called and still call my dearest friend.

DR. HAGGETT. Did I now!

TALLANT. A man known by a good Yankee name. An excellent Yankee name. Christopher Bean.

DR. HAGGETT. Oh, it's you, is it?

TALLANT [*startled*]. I beg your pardon!

DR. HAGGETT. Funny, me taking you for a patient! But I wasn't expecting you for some hours yet.

TALLANT [*very much on his guard*]. You *were* expecting me?

DR. HAGGETT. Well, I got your telegram, Mr. . . . [*He is fumbling in his pocket for the wire.*] Let's see, what was the name?

TALLANT. Is that the telegram? May I see it? They so often mix telegrams up.

DR. HAGGETT. That there seems clear enough.

TALLANT. [*as he reads it quickly*]. Oh, yes. Quite. I forgot that I'd said "noon"! [*He returns the telegram to* HAGGETT.] It took me less time to get here than I thought. I hurried. [*He smiles, his affability restored.*] I was afraid that you might go out on your rounds of visiting the sick and that I might miss you. And I was so eager, you see, so very eager!

DR. HAGGETT. You say here you're an admirer of Chris Bean's.

TALLANT. That's putting it pretty mildly, Doctor Haggett.

DR. HAGGETT. I was just wondering if your Chris Bean's the same one I knew.

TALLANT. Oh, I'm certain!

DR. HAGGETT. Well, I don't know now. As my wife said when this telegram came: "Can't see what he finds to admire about Chris Bean!" Not that Chris wasn't a likeable lad. I was fond of him.

TALLANT. Of course you were!

DR. HAGGETT. I just wanted to make sure, though. Did the fellow you're thinking of think he was a painter?

TALLANT. You might put it that way.

DR. HAGGETT. It's the same, then.

TALLANT. Poor chap!

DR. HAGGETT. Oh, I always humored him about his pictures. You've got to humor folks when they're sick as he was.

TALLANT. I know you did everything you could for him.

DR. HAGGETT. Well, I hope I done my duty by him. Of course, a case like his . . . This ain't no climate for tuberculosis. If he'd had the money to get himself out West he might have had some chance, if he'd quit drinking. But as it was, there wasn't much I could do.

TALLANT. We're all mortal, Doctor.

DR. HAGGETT. There's no denying that.

TALLANT. It delights me that you remember him with affection.

DR. HAGGETT. Oh, we ain't none of us forgot him! Why, we was speaking of him just a few minutes past. My wife, she took a real fancy to him. He kind of appealed to her, I guess, seeing as we ain't got no sons of our own, only two daughters. And him coming to live here, sick like he was and an orphan without no family. She took him right to her heart and gave him the old barn for his studio. He painted most everything round the place. They was terrible bad, though, them pictures of his. [*He laughs reminiscently.*] Mebbe if he'd had some training . . .

TALLANT. Oh, very like. [*Then, more seriously*] Recently, though, Doctor, only the other day in fact, as I was going through an old desk of mine, I came across some letters Chris wrote to me while he was living here. And in the last of them—it's disgraceful I should have neglected it all these years—he spoke of your kindness to him and his gratitude and asked if I couldn't help him pay what he owed you.

DR. HAGGETT. Well, that's like Chris! Never a penny to his name and forever borrowing! He didn't even own a hat!

TALLANT. Let me see . . . the sum came to . . .

DR. HAGGETT. I don't remember.

TALLANT. Exactly a hundred dollars.

DR. HAGGETT. Mebbe so. Likely he asked me how much he owed me, and likely I told him if ever he had a hundred he could spare . . .

TALLANT. Allow *me,* Doctor. [*He rises and hands the doctor two fifty dollar bills.*] A little late, but paid in full.

DR. HAGGETT. Well, God Almighty!

TALLANT. And all my apologies for keeping you waiting.

DR. HAGGETT. My dear sir . . . !

TALLANT. The debt's paid at last. I shall go home to New York a happier man.

DR. HAGGETT. I'll give you a receipt. [*Completely flabbergasted, he turns to his desk.*]

TALLANT. Oh, Doctor, please!

DR. HAGGETT. Would you allow me to shake you by the hand?

TALLANT. I should be honored.

[*They shake hands.*]

DR. HAGGETT. Just a minute . . . [*He calls.*] Hannah! Ada! Come back in here a minute! [*Back to* TALLANT] I want you to meet my family, Mr. . . . Mr. . . . Davenport!

[MRS. HAGGETT *and* ADA *come in.*]

TALLANT. I'm sorry I left my cards at the hotel.

DR. HAGGETT. I don't need no visiting card of yours! [*Touching his heart*] Your name's engraved here, Mr. Davenport. My wife. My daughter, Ada. My younger daughter, Susan . . . she's not so well this morning. [*To the two women as* TALLANT *bows*] I called you in, though, to show you an honest man.

TALLANT. Don't be alarmed, please, ladies!

DR. HAGGETT. Mr. Davenport here, who sent me that telegram from New York, is a friend of our old friend Chris Bean that we was speaking of just this morning. And now, ten years after poor Chris's death, this loyal friend, this more than honest man, has paid me the little debt poor Chris owed me! A hundred dollars! Here! You see! You take it, Ada! You take it down and put it in the bank! Such things don't happen every day! [*He has suited action to the word.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. Well, I should say they don't!

DR. HAGGETT. Let this be an example and inspiration to both of you!

ADA. Yes, Pa.

MRS. HAGGETT. Oh, it will be. Indeed, it will be, Milton! [*To* TALLANT, *indicating the best chair*] Won't you rest yourself? [TALLANT *sits as before.* MRS. HAGGETT *and* ADA *dispose themselves.*]

DR. HAGGETT. And don't neither of you never forget the name of . . . the name of . . .

TALLANT. Davenport.

DR. HAGGETT. That's right. Davenport.

TALLANT. You cover me with confusion, Doctor. I see nothing extraordinary in what I've done.

DR. HAGGETT. You ain't tried collecting doctors' bills these days!

TALLANT. But I told you how much my friend meant to me! [*General solemnity. Then he proceeds to the merest afterthought.*] I'm just wondering if he didn't leave you some of his pictures to remember him by. Of course you've told me what you thought of them. And Chris wrote how even the village boys laughed at him when they watched him painting.

DR. HAGGETT. It seems mean to say so now, but I'm afraid they did.

MRS. HAGGETT. We never let him see *us* laugh.

TALLANT. They'd have a special sentimental value for me. You can understand.

DR. HAGGETT. There ain't nothing to be ashamed of in that!

TALLANT. Then if you have any, do you think I might take them away with me? [*More specific*] His letters mention six or seven he left here.

DR. HAGGETT. Oh, there was all of six or seven!

MRS. HAGGETT. Milton, I believe there's one out in the chicken house, still!

TALLANT [*barely suppressed horror*]. In the chicken house!

DR. HAGGETT. Hannah, you're right! There is! [*Apologetically to* TALLANT] But I hate to think what condition it must be in.

TALLANT. I'd like to have it, Doctor. No matter what shape it's in I'd like to have it. It *is* a souvenir, you know.

MRS. HAGGETT. You come with me, Ada. We'll see if we can't get it for Mr. Davenport. [ADA *and* MRS. HAGGETT *go.*]

DR. HAGGETT. I remember now. There was a leak in the chicken house tar paper roof. I was looking round for something watertight, and I found that picture. Fine, thick oil paint, you know, and there wasn't no reason to set much store by it.

TALLANT. No.

DR. HAGGETT. Wait! [*He calls.*] Abby! [*He turns back to* TALLANT.] I just thought of something else. [ABBY *enters from the kitchen.*] Run up in the attic and look in that corner behind the north dormer. Seems to me like a few years ago we put one of them pictures of Chris Bean's in there to stop up that leak, too.

[ABBY *starts guiltily and gulps.*]

ABBY. What do you want with it, Doctor Haggett?

DR. HAGGETT. Mr. Davenport here wants it to take along home with him.

ABBY. Mr. Davenport does?

DR. HAGGETT. Mr. Davenport was Chris Bean's closest friend.

ABBY. Mr. Davenport was?

DR. HAGGETT. See if you can get that picture off without tearing it. Then bring it down here.

ABBY. For Mr. Davenport?

DR. HAGGETT. That's what I said.

ABBY. Yes, Doctor Haggett. [ABBY *goes up the stair.*]

TALLANT. I'm sorry to cause your household so much trouble.

DR. HAGGETT. A man like you ain't no trouble to us. I only hope we can find what you're after.

[MRS. HAGGETT *and* ADA *return bearing the poultry-scarred loot of the chicken house.*]

ADA. Well, we got it.

MRS. HAGGETT. It's kind of dirty. But you know chicken houses!

DR. HAGGETT [*vigorous pantomime*]. Just let Abby get at it with some soap and a scrubbing brush. . . .

TALLANT. No! That won't be necessary!

MRS. HAGGETT. 'Twon't be no trouble!

TALLANT. Oh, no, please! I'd be afraid . . . [*He takes the canvas from* MRS. HAGGETT.] I mean I'd rather clean it up myself.

DR. HAGGETT. But you can't carry it off all nasty like that!

TALLANT. Don't you see, Doctor, what it will mean to me to bring the picture back to life? It will seem almost as though Chris himself . . . [*There is another pause in honor of his emotion.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. Did you think of Ada's picture there?

DR. HAGGETT. But Mr. Davenport don't want Ada's pictures!

ADA. Of course he don't want any pictures painted by little me! But Ma means I turned one of Chris Bean's pictures over to paint my flower piece on the back.

[TALLANT *takes interest.*]

DR. HAGGETT. I didn't know that. Now that's a pity, Mr. Davenport! There's another we might have given you if Ada hadn't gone splotching. . . . Oh, I'm not blaming you, Ada!

[*But* TALLANT *has followed the doctor towards* ADA'S *picture.*]

TALLANT. Did you paint this, Miss Haggett?

ADA. If you can call it painting, I did.

TALLANT. This lovely, living thing!

[DR. HAGGETT *has taken the picture from the wall and is considering it.*]

ADA. Oh, Mr. Davenport! I did take a few lessons once, but . . .

TALLANT. You did this little masterpiece on a few lessons? [*He takes the picture from the doctor.*]

ADA. It isn't no masterpiece, Mr. Davenport! At least *I* wouldn't think it was.

TALLANT. My dear Miss Haggett, don't under-rate your gifts. The exquisite texture of those buttercups is not to be under-rated!

ADA. Ma, do you hear what Mr. Davenport's saying?

TALLANT. Of course I don't mean that you won't do better things in the future, or that you won't go farther, higher! But here, already, I, the connoisseur, sense the spark of genius!

DR. HAGGETT. Of genius!

TALLANT. I do indeed!

MRS. HAGGETT. Now don't you go making our Ada into an artist!

TALLANT. Of course I know you won't want to part with it, but if you'd let me buy it. . . .

MRS. HAGGETT. What's it worth?

TALLANT. That's hard to say. Her name's not known, of course, but I should think the better dealers of New York would sell a thing like this for . . . fifty dollars? Not that it isn't worth much more!

ADA. Fifty dollars!

TALLANT. Well, say, forty.

ADA. But I could do one like it every day!

TALLANT. Don't hesitate then, Miss Haggett. Your future's made.

DR. HAGGETT [*oddly dubious*]. It strikes me kind of funny, you coming in here and paying Chris Bean's bill and then offering my daughter forty dollars. . . .

MRS. HAGGETT. Fifty dollars.

DR. HAGGETT. He said forty.

MRS. HAGGETT. He said fifty first, and fifty's Ada's price.

TALLANT. I will of course pay fifty dollars if you'll sell it. [*To* ADA *as he peels bills from his roll*] And you may be sure that orders for more will follow.

DR. HAGGETT. I don't know as she ought to take it, Hannah.

ADA. A young girl like me can spend fifty dollars, Pa, even if we don't go South. [*She takes the money from him.*] Thank you.

TALLANT. Thank *you* for the pleasure, the very great pleasure, of discovering a new artist, Miss Haggett.

DR. HAGGETT. She gets it all from me. I always did have a kind of weakness for art, even though I am a doctor.

ADA. And you got Chris Bean's picture on the other side of mine.

TALLANT. By Jove, so I have! Do you know— [*he turns the picture over*] —in my enthusiasm for your work I'd quite forgotten. . . . [*He blows the dust off the picture on the back. We see that he is struck by its beauty.*]

DR. HAGGETT [*looking over his shoulder*]. What do you think he was getting at that time?

ADA. Isn't that meant to be the old covered bridge up the back river?

MRS. HAGGETT. Why don't you try looking at it right side up, Milton?

DR. HAGGETT. Looks the same to me either way. [*Then remembering*] I beg your pardon, Mr. Davenport, I shouldn't have said that

about a dead man. [*Again solemnity*] Not with you feeling for him the way you do.

[*But* ABBY *relieves the tension by returning.*]

ABBY. I couldn't find a thing in the attic. There's no pictures up there of any kind.

DR. HAGGETT. But I know darn well!

MRS. HAGGETT. Mebbe the mice have et it.

DR. HAGGETT. It was on the left of the north dormer!

ABBY. There's nothing there now but some tin cracker boxes Mrs. Haggett's saving.

DR. HAGGETT. But I tell you I'm positive!

ABBY. I've been over every inch of that attic, Doctor. I didn't find a thing but the old trundle bed used to be in the front room before you got the brass bed, and the trunk with your Ma's pewter in it and the other trunk. . . .

DR. HAGGETT. I could have sworn! Well, it's too bad. That's all, Abby. [*He turns to* TALLANT.] I'm sorry, sir. I'd have liked to show you how much I appreciate what you've done, but there you are. No man can do better than his best.

[ABBY *draws back, her gaze fixed on* TALLANT.]

TALLANT. I'm more than satisfied with what I've got, Doctor Haggett. And I repeat I'm sorry to have caused so much trouble. [*The ladies brush his apologies aside with low exclamations. He bows.*] Mrs. Haggett. Miss Haggett.

DR. HAGGETT. Mr. Davenport, your call this morning is going to stand out as one of the happiest memories of my medical career!

[*The two men are in the entry.*]

TALLANT. Doctor, you and I are going to be much better acquainted. And it occurs to me that we might go into business together. Business which might be highly profitable to both.

DR. HAGGETT. I ain't got no capital!

TALLANT. It will require nothing more of you than what I might call friendly co-operation.

DR. HAGGETT. I got a plenty of that! [*Laughter.*]

TALLANT. Then we're rich men, Doctor Haggett! We're rich men!

[*They shake hands with more laughter and* TALLANT *goes.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. Well! [DR. HAGGETT *returns to the room.*] At this rate we'll mebbe get to Florida after all!

DR. HAGGETT. Well, after this morning, I'm not so sure you won't. Wish I knew what business he's got in mind.

ADA. I don't care what it is if it makes us rich!

DR. HAGGETT. Ada, that's no kind of talk for a daughter of mine! If there's one thing I can't abide it's greed for money!

ADA. Let's get on to our marketing, Ma, before Pa gets started!

MRS. HAGGETT. Yes, Ada, come upstairs and get your hat on. If anything ever did happen to make us rich I wouldn't worry much what it was.

[*They disappear laughing.* DR. HAGGETT *listens, standing beside his desk. He smiles dreamily. Suddenly he rouses himself, looks at his watch, is properly shocked by the lateness of the hour and begins preparing his satchel for his calls.*]

DR. HAGGETT. You seen my call book, Abby?

ABBY. Here it is, Doctor Haggett.

DR. HAGGETT [*a glance at the open page*]. I'll go out to the Jordans' farm again first. After that the rest of 'em's all in town. [*He drops it into his coat pocket.*]

ABBY [*the pad on the desk*]. I got 'em all written down, Doctor Haggett.

DR. HAGGETT. Then you know where to reach me if I'm wanted. [*He snaps the satchel shut and slips again into his day-dream. Again he recalls himself, laughing apologetically.*] There I go day-dreaming again! That man Davenport's got me all off doctoring.

ABBY. If I was you, Doctor Haggett, I'd watch him careful.

DR. HAGGETT. What makes you say that?

ABBY. Strikes me it's always a good idea to watch folks careful when they know as much as he does.

DR. HAGGETT. I declare, Abby, I think Mrs. Haggett's pretty near right about the way you meddle! Didn't he send me a telegram about Chris Bean?

[ABBY *starts but says nothing. He goes out into the entry, picks up hat and coat and leaves the house.* ABBY *watches the windows and then goes for the yellow telegram on the desk. Before she can read it, however,* MRS. HAGGETT *and* ADA *come chattering down the stair, dressed now for the street.* ABBY *drops the telegram and stands as before.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. I don't believe I'll take back that flowered foulard just yet, Ada.

ADA. Oh, I wouldn't, Ma. You heard Pa say we might get to Florida after all. We might even get as far as California now! It's always been my dream . . .

[*They go by the front door. Again* ABBY *watches the window and again picks up the telegram. This time she reads it through,*

pronouncing each word inaudibly to herself in an unaccountably warm glow of happiness. A clock strikes ten. SUSAN *comes sobbing down the stair. This time* ABBY *does not drop the telegram but holds it against her heart.* SUSAN, *however, is too miserable to notice. She goes snivelling to the fireplace, picks up Warren's drawing, carries it to the dining table and lovingly smooths it out.*]

ABBY. Susie!

SUSAN. Oh, Abby, I never knowed I could be so miserable!

ABBY. Oh, folks can be awful miserable sometimes!

SUSAN. But look at poor Warren's drawing, all mussed up!

ABBY. He'll make another. Artists always do.

SUSAN. Abby, you ain't got nothing against artists, have you?

ABBY. Me? No! No! Not me. . . . [*She smiles to herself on her way back to her kitchen as the curtain falls.*]

act 2

It is only a little later. ABBY *stands in the entry with* TALLANT, *eyeing him suspiciously, her hand on the knob of the open front door.*

ABBY. Doctor's still out making calls and Mrs. Haggett and Ada's out to market.

TALLANT. It was you I came back to see, Abby.

ABBY. Me?

TALLANT. I'd like to talk to you if you can spare a moment. [*He comes into the room. She closes the front door and follows him in.*]

ABBY. Whatever have you got to say to me?

TALLANT. Thank you.

ABBY. What are you thanking me for?

TALLANT. For being kind once to a friend of mine. For giving him things other women denied him.

ABBY. I don't know what you're talking about!

TALLANT. You gave Chris Bean all the good things that have no name. All the warm, tender things he so sorely needed.

ABBY [*really frightened*]. What do you know about me?

TALLANT. Only what he told me. Except for you, I was the best friend he ever had.

ABBY. I never heard him name no Davenport! He used to talk lots about his friend Bert Davis! But I never heard of you!

TALLANT. I'm Davis.

[ABBY *gasps.*]

ABBY. If you're Bert Davis, what are you calling yourself Davenport for?

TALLANT. Davenport's my professional name. I needed a name people would remember, and Maxwell Davenport . . .

ABBY. If you was Bert Davis that wouldn't be why you changed!

TALLANT. If you know a better reason I'd like to hear it.

ABBY. Well, I do know Bert Davis got in trouble. Chris told me that he owed a lot more money than he could pay. So he skipped out of the place he was living in. Anyways, that's how Chris said it was.

TALLANT. You remember all that, do you?

ABBY. I haven't forgotten nothing Chris ever told me. You don't look like I expected Bert Davis to look, neither!

TALLANT. You look exactly as I expected you to, Abby, only younger and prettier. And I knew your name, too. Don't forget that.

ABBY. Yes, that's so.

TALLANT. I don't deny I used to skip my rent. I've done it often and got in plenty of trouble. Wouldn't you expect that of a friend of Chris's? [*She laughs.*] I wouldn't have put it beyond Chris himself!

ABBY. Guess mebbe I was wrong to be so wary of you! [*She forgets her suspicions in her pleasure.*] Did Chris really mention my name to you? I wouldn't have expected him to mention my name! That was nice of Chris!

TALLANT. Chris was fond of you.

ABBY. Did he say that, too?

TALLANT. Over and over. Weren't you fond of him?

ABBY. He was the only man that ever took me serious and talked to me. He didn't talk so much. But what he said was awful pithy. And to think of you being Bert Davis! It certainly is a pleasure to make your acquaintance! I never expected to meet up with you. Don't you think we better shake hands on it? [*They do.*] Set down, Mr. Davis, and I'll set down with you. Mrs. Haggett don't favor the help setting in the setting room, but she's cityfied that way. And she ain't home anyhow and what she don't know won't hurt her. [*Her eyes shine as they take him in.*] Bert Davis! My, don't that name bring things back, though!

TALLANT. What kind of things?

ABBY. Oh, this and that!

TALLANT. Chris wrote me that you were the only one who ever liked his painting, or got what he was after.

ABBY [*nodding with delight*]. Oh, yes, I liked it! Oh, I had to learn to like it. But he taught me. Oh, he taught me lots! And there wasn't nothing about him I didn't like!

TALLANT. If you liked his pictures, why didn't you take better care of them? Why did you let so many of them get lost?

ABBY. Now, I'd rather not go into that if you got no objection.

TALLANT [*quickly covering himself*]. He taught you things, you said?

ABBY. Oh, yes, he taught me! Not that he set up to be a teacher. But you couldn't be with him and not pick up a mite here and a mite there.

TALLANT. What did he teach you? I'd be interested to hear, if you remember.

ABBY [*only too eager to tell*]. Oh, I remember! It was mostly things to see, I guess. Like the rust color the marshes get this time of year when the sky gets the color of that old blue platter. [*She points to the platter on the cabinet shelf, adding proudly*] That's cobalt blue! That's a painting term, cobalt blue! [*She continues.*] And he showed me the old red barn and the covered bridge that he was forever painting and I was used to all my life and never noticed. And he taught me that old chairs may be more than just old chairs to be thrown away. That some of 'em may be real beautiful. He used to say them very words about the old doors in the brick houses up along the common! That was when they began taking the old doors out and putting in new ones ordered from Sears Roebuck. And did you know that old brick houses ain't red but mostly green and brown and that moonlight and snow ain't white at all but all kinds of colors and that elm trees is most decorative when their leaves comes off? That's another painting term, decorative. He taught me! [*Her reminiscence becomes more personal.*] He taught me that a man can get drunk and not be no different only just more so and that everybody's got more good qualities than bad. Oh, he taught me lots! And I ain't never forgot none of it. I lived over and over that time he spent here. Over and over it ever since he died.

TALLANT [*cautiously leading up to the point again*]. Did he leave you much to remember him by?

ABBY. I just now told you!

TALLANT. But I was thinking of more substantial things.

ABBY. Substantial in what way?

TALLANT [*as though accepting a correction*]. You're right there, Abby. Our memories are the most substantial things we have. They're the only things no one can take from us. Still, there are other kinds . . . souvenirs . . .

ABBY [*almost to herself*]. I wonder if you're right about memories, though. I know nobody can't take 'em away from us. But what happens to 'em when we take 'em away from the place they belong in? Don't they kind of get left behind? [*She pulls her chair nearer his.*] I been kind of worried about that question lately.

TALLANT. Why have you?

ABBY. Because I'm going away from here, Mr. Davis. I'm going to Chicago, this afternoon. My brother's wife died and left him with four small children, and I got to go. It's the will of God. But I don't want to go one bit. [*She laughs.*] The Haggetts, they think that's on their account!

TALLANT. I shouldn't worry. You'll carry your memories with you wherever you go.

ABBY. But I won't see the red barn no more, nor the brick houses, nor the covered bridge, nor the hill pasture, nor any of 'em no more.

TALLANT. The places he liked to paint!

ABBY. I used to take him hot coffee while he was painting.

TALLANT. And you knitted a sweater for him!

ABBY. Did he write you about that sweater?

TALLANT. You must know he'd have written me everything!

[*Pause.*]

ABBY. Everything about me?

TALLANT. I was his closest friend.

[*A longer pause, then*]

ABBY. I was kind of pretty once.

TALLANT. You don't need to explain.

ABBY. I'm not ashamed. Only I'd sooner you wouldn't tell Doctor or Mrs. Haggett or the girls. You know how folks thought about him here—him being only an artist and all. And they never understood him. And they wouldn't have understood him no better for liking me! And I wanted to keep their good opinion and my place here with the Haggetts. But I'm not ashamed.

TALLANT. I wouldn't tell, Abby. I'd respect your memories. But you must have things of his, too. Little sketches, for instance.

ABBY. I could show you something a lot better than sketches!

TALLANT. Oh? What would that be?

ABBY. He painted a picture of me once. Life size.

[TALLANT'S *heart begins missing.*]

TALLANT. I should certainly like to see that, Abby!

ABBY. It's hung over my bed all these years!

TALLANT. Abby, show me the portrait! Show it to me now!

ABBY. It's that makes me feel worst about leaving here. I just can't help wondering how my portrait's going to feel getting all smoked up out in Chicago. [*She starts toward the kitchen.*] You've got to come out to my room to see it. Out this way. [*He rises and follows her.*] I forgot!

TALLANT. Is somebody out there?

ABBY. That city maid who's come to take my place! I wouldn't want her see me take a man into my room where I lived fifteen years!

TALLANT. What harm would that do?

ABBY. She'd tell Mrs. Haggett!

TALLANT. Oh! Well, I'd rather the Haggetts didn't know about our talk. When can I see you again?

ABBY. Where are you living?

TALLANT. At the hotel. Can you come there to see me?

ABBY. I'll get around after dinner.

TALLANT. And bring the portrait with you.

ABBY. What? That big portrait?

TALLANT. Abby, if ever you need money . . . I'm no rich man! You know that! But these last few years I've been doing a little better, and as I say, if ever you *are* in need, I'd buy anything of Chris's you had to sell.

ABBY. Oh, I wouldn't sell nothing, Mr. Davis!

TALLANT. Not to a stranger, Abby! I know you wouldn't! But to his friend, in memory of him and the old days!

ABBY. Why, I couldn't take money for the things he left!

TALLANT. Think it over, Abby. I'm trying to get all his works together in one place, where they'll keep each other company.

ABBY. Is that what you're doing? Oh, I think that's just lovely of you! I couldn't sell you nothing, but I might give you . . .

TALLANT. What? The portrait?

ABBY. Oh, I didn't mean that! I'd have to think a lot to part with that!

TALLANT. Of course you would! But to his best friend!

ABBY. If it was anyone on earth but you . . . [*She turns.*] Here comes one of 'em through the kitchen now.

TALLANT. Abby, I'm counting on you!

ABBY. Better get along if you don't want 'em to see you. [*She shows him to the front door, adding as he goes out*] And Mr. Davis! Don't tell nobody what you know about Chris and me.

[*He pats her arm and goes.* SUSAN *comes down the stair.*]

SUSAN. That wasn't Ma, was it?

ABBY. No. It wasn't nobody worth mentioning. [WARREN CREAMER *enters from the kitchen.*] Now, I haven't got no time for . . .

SUSAN. Watch the front, Abby! [*She goes quickly to* WARREN. *They kiss.*]

ABBY. You're taking awful chances! You can't mix me up in this, my last day! What's he doing here?

SUSAN. I seen him standing out by the red barn.

WARREN. I seen you wave. What was it you wanted?

ABBY. What do you want hanging round our barn? There'll be just a terrible row!

WARREN. I had something to tell her.

SUSAN. What was it, Warren?

WARREN. I just come to an important decision in my life.

ABBY. You come to an important decision, Warren?

SUSAN. Watch the door, Abby!

ABBY. How can I watch the door when Warren gets me so interested!

WARREN. 'Tain't no affair of yours.

ABBY. I wouldn't be so interested if it was. If you don't want me to hear, though, I'll . . .

SUSAN. We ain't got no secrets from you, Abby! What is it, Warren?

WARREN. Harold Sherman's been after me to sell my stock and business so as he can have all the contracting round here. He only wants to pay me five hundred dollars.

SUSAN. Oh?

WARREN. It ain't enough, but I made up my mind to take it.

SUSAN. Now, what do you want to go and do that for, Warren?

WARREN. So as I can get to New York and study art.

SUSAN. Oh, Warren! That's an awful rash step to take. And that means you'll be going away from here.

WARREN. I wouldn't do it only on one condition.

SUSAN. What is the condition?

WARREN. You've got to come with me.

SUSAN. Warren, you know Ma'd never let me go! Didn't you hear the way she took on this morning?

WARREN. I wasn't figuring to let your Ma know nothing about it.

ABBY. Warren Creamer! You ain't proposing to elope!

WARREN. If Susie likes me much as she says she does, she won't take no chances on letting me go off without her.

[SUSAN *admits as much by taking his hand.*]

ABBY. As if there hadn't been enough happening in this house this morning without you bringing in this eloping talk and getting Susie all upset again!

WARREN. This ain't no talk! Her Ma got me good and mad this morning and I'm a-going to show her! And there ain't no use of me wasting no time about it.

SUSAN. Oh, Warren, I think you're wonderful! Don't you think so, Abby?

ABBY. He wants taking down, but I kind of admire him for it.

WARREN. Now, you give your clothes to Abby to take with her when she goes on the train to Boston tonight. Then I'll bring the truck here to fetch Abby's trunk. And you come along with me like you was seeing her off. Then I drive you out to the junction and put you on the train there. And then I meet the both of you in Boston and we get married. Guess there ain't much wrong with that scheme!

ABBY. Susie, if you listen to one more word of this, I'll tell your Ma!

SUSAN. You wouldn't do that, Abby!

ABBY. Why wouldn't I? It's my bounden duty!

SUSAN. You said you hadn't nothing against artists!

ABBY. Mebbe I haven't, but all the folks here has!

SUSAN. Ain't you never cared for no man, Abby?

ABBY. Do you think I'd be watching this front door now if I hadn't?

WARREN. Say you'll help her, Abby!

ABBY. If I do it wouldn't be on your account, young man! When a girl gets in the state you got Susie in, she needs someone to look after her and see to it that she does get married and not just fly off the handle regardless! I've been in love! I know! [*The doorbell rings. They freeze all three.*] Better get along now, Warren Creamer, before you get caught!

WARREN. I'll have the truck at the door at four-thirty.

SUSAN. That early, Warren?

WARREN. That ain't too soon if Abby's taking the five-o'clock to Boston.

[*They kiss again.*]

ABBY. Stop doing that. [*To* SUSAN] You get upstairs and fix yourself.

WARREN. Four-thirty. [*He disappears as he came.* SUSAN *runs excitedly up the stair.*]

ABBY [*she follows* SUSAN *out into the entry to call after her*]. If you let your Ma and Pa see you in this state! [*Then she turns to the front door.*] I'd like to know what's come over this house this morning! [*She opens the door to admit* ROSEN, *an oily and too affable Jewish gentleman of middle age.*]

ROSEN. This is where Doctor Haggett lives, I believe.

ABBY. It's where he's been living for thirty years.

ROSEN. I wonder if I may see him for a few minutes?

ABBY. You could if he was here, but he ain't here.

ROSEN. Will he be long?

ABBY. I wouldn't think so very. The Haggett family's awful prompt to meals.

ROSEN. I'll come in and wait, then, if you'll allow me.

ABBY. Watch out for the paint!

ROSEN. I'm used to paint. [*She has followed him into the room.*] You must be Abby.

[*This really does stop her.*]

ABBY. You don't know me!

ROSEN. No, but I've heard an awful lot about you.

ABBY. What did you hear and where did you hear it?

ROSEN. I've heard that you have an unusually kind nature and that you appreciate modern painting.

ABBY. I'll see if I can't get the doctor on the telephone! He ought never to have left this house today!

ROSEN. Don't hurry him, Abby. Let me enjoy myself. Well, I've seen The Old Brick Fronts on the Common and The Red Barn behind this house and now I've seen you. Only I expected you to be wearing a gingham dress.

ABBY. A gingham dress?

ROSEN. Red and white checked gingham, the same as you used to wear.

ABBY. What do you know about what I used to wear? [DR. HAGGETT, MRS. HAGGETT *and* ADA *enter by the front door.* ADA *and* MRS. HAGGETT *go on upstairs.*] Well, I'm not sorry to see you come home, Doctor. There's too much going on around here that I can't grasp. I guess I'll get back to my kitchen and stay there! [*She goes as* DR. HAGGETT *comes in.*]

ROSEN. So this is Doctor Haggett?

DR. HAGGETT. What can I do for you?

ROSEN. My card.

DR. HAGGETT. Have a chair, Mr. Rosen. [*Indicating the patients' chair.*] A patient?

ROSEN. No.

DR. HAGGETT. Oh! [*He indicates the desk chair.*]

ROSEN. Thank you. [*They sit.*] Doctor Haggett, in the course of your professional career, you once had as a patient a young friend of mine. A painter—[DR. HAGGETT *pricks up his ears*]—with whom I confess I had personal difficulties. Ten years ago his death left me with that regret we all feel in such cases. Recently I have come across some letters. [DR. HAGGETT *shifts his chair forward, staring at* ROSEN *in amazement.*] Letters he wrote to me while he was living here under your care. They showed me how in a small way I might ease my conscience regarding him. Doctor Haggett, my friend Christopher Bean died owing you one hundred dollars. I have computed the interest on the unpaid bill at six percent, and the total for ten years comes to exactly one hundred and sixty dollars. Allow me to offer you my check for the sum. [*He presents the check.*]

DR. HAGGETT [*more dead than alive*]. I thank you, sir.

ROSEN. Don't mention it. In paying this I fulfill a sacred duty to a poor devil whom I might have helped before he passed beyond all human aid. Of course I know that we're all mortal, but I shall go back to New York feeling . . .

DR. HAGGETT. A happier man?

ROSEN. You take the words out of my mouth, Doctor Haggett.

DR. HAGGETT. Mr. Rosen, I'm delighted to make your acquaintance and I see that artists make better paying patients than what I thought. [*He pockets the check.*] But there's a question occurs to me that I'd like to ask you.

ROSEN. Don't hesitate, Doctor Haggett! Anything!

DR. HAGGETT. Are you, by any chance, on the point of inquiring if I haven't got something in the way of pictures poor Chris Bean left behind him that you can take away as souvenirs?

ROSEN. I don't do things that way. I don't come begging.

DR. HAGGETT. I never said you did. I only asked you.

ROSEN. Well, if you'll allow me to be businesslike, I was on the point of making you an offer for any such pictures you may still have in your possession. [DR. HAGGETT *sits up.*] I assume, of course, that they are your property. The boy had no family and any pictures he

left here, even those which he did not give you personally, may be considered security for that unpaid bill and therefore forfeit to you. Doctor Haggett, I'll give you a thousand dollars for the lot!

DR. HAGGETT. A thousand dollars!

ROSEN. For the lot, understand.

DR. HAGGETT. A thousand . . . ! For Chris Bean's pictures?

ROSEN. I can't go any higher. I hope you don't exaggerate their value.

DR. HAGGETT [*practically voiceless*]. A thou . . . !

ROSEN. That is my offer. Take it or leave it. I consider it very generous.

DR. HAGGETT. I'm not saying a word against your offer, Mr. Rosen. The only trouble is you ain't the first. There was a man here not two hours ago. . . .

ROSEN. With the same proposition?

DR. HAGGETT. No, not quite the same.

ROSEN. You didn't sell him your Christopher Bean pictures!

DR. HAGGETT. I gave 'em to him. [ROSEN *chokes.*] There was one Chris painted of the old covered bridge and there was another . . .

ROSEN. You gave away The Covered Bridge! Doctor Haggett, you've been swindled!

DR. HAGGETT. You don't have to tell me that!

ROSEN. But what in God's name possessed you?

DR. HAGGETT. He sent me a telegram he was coming from New York.

ROSEN. What was his name?

DR. HAGGETT. I ain't much good at remembering names. . . . [*He fumbles through his pockets.*] I ought to have his telegram some place, though. [*He finds the telegram on his desk.*] Here it is now. [*He reads.*] Maxwell Davenport. That was his name. Maxwell Davenport.

ROSEN [*staggered*]. Maxwell Davenport?

DR. HAGGETT. That's right. Yes.

ROSEN. You mean to say Maxwell Davenport let you give him . . .

DR. HAGGETT. I thought they wasn't no good. He said they wasn't.

ROSEN [*unable to believe his hearing*]. Davenport said that?

DR. HAGGETT [*holding out the telegram*]. Yes! Davenport! Here— [ROSEN *takes the telegram*] —if you don't believe me! Do you know him?

ROSEN. Do I know Davenport? Yes! Of course I know him! But I

never would have believed such a thing of him. [*He sniffs the smell of powder.*] Have you got witnesses?

DR. HAGGETT. I got my wife and daughter.

ROSEN [*grinning and confidential*]. Then I tell you, Doctor, this may not be so serious. I think I see how we can fix Davenport. He's the art critic on the New York Tribune, the best we've got down in the big city and everybody's looking up to him. Now, he would hardly care to have it known what a dirty trick he played on you to get those pictures free when they're worth—[*he remembers discretion*]—a thousand dollars. So this is what we do. [*He extracts papers from his pocket and explains,* DR. HAGGETT *listening attentively.*] I've got here with me a bill of sale for what he took all made out in advance by my lawyer. [*The doorbell rings.*] You sign it and I give you my check for a thousand dollars. Then we get you and your wife and daughter and go down to the court house and swear out an affidavit about every word that great art critic said. Especially that the pictures were no good. You leave the rest to me. I think we can fix Mr. Davenport!

[ABBY *has passed through the entry to admit* MAXWELL DAVENPORT, *an elderly and distinguished gentleman.*]

DAVENPORT. Is Doctor Haggett in? He's expecting me.

ABBY. He's got a gentleman with him. You can have a chair though.

[ROSEN *looks up, sees* DAVENPORT, *gasps and turns away, silencing the bewildered doctor with a triumphant gesture.*]

DAVENPORT. Oh, thank you. That's very kind of you. Tell me, are you by any chance the famous Abby?

[*Pause, then*]

ABBY [*practically annihilated*]. Does everybody from New York know me?

DAVENPORT. Then you are! What luck that you're still here! The Covered Bridge, The Brick Houses on the Common, The Old Red Barn, and now, Abby, herself!

ABBY. Doctor Haggett, I can't stand no more folks who never saw me in my life streaming in here and calling me by name!

DAVENPORT. Don't be alarmed, please, Abby. [*But she has gone.*] Is this Doctor Haggett?

DR. HAGGETT. Yes, it is.

DAVENPORT. I'm Davenport.

DR. HAGGETT. Who? ! !

DAVENPORT. Maxwell Davenport. I sent you a night letter yesterday from New York. Don't let me disturb you though. I'll wait outside.

DR. HAGGETT. No! No! Don't go! [*To* ROSEN] Is this Davenport?

ROSEN. Yes. It's Davenport.

DR. HAGGETT. But it ain't the same! ! !

ROSEN. What? ! ! !

DR. HAGGETT. It ain't the same, I tell you! And if this is Davenport who was the other?

ROSEN. Don't say any more, Doctor Haggett! Don't say another word! Wait till we find out where we stand. [*He pockets his papers hastily and turns smirking.*]

DAVENPORT. Rosen! [*Disgust*] May I ask what the devil you're doing here?

ROSEN. Do you think you ought to swear at me, Mr. Davenport? You've got no cause to swear at me in public. Print what you like about me, but don't insult me to my face!

DAVENPORT. I might have known the scavengers would be gathering. I beg your pardon, Doctor, but this man, who exploits artists and treats their work like so much merchandise . . .

ROSEN. It's not the artists I exploit. It's the customers! And it's men like me who justify the existence of you art critics! Where would you be, writing about your tactile values, your limpid shadows, your something or other highlights, if you didn't have us to create interest in art by building up prices?

DAVENPORT. You befoul the whole business of dealing in art with your tricks and forgeries, and . . .

DR. HAGGETT. Just a minute, please! This is my house and I got a right to know what's going on! You say you're Mr. Davenport. And he says you are! All right, you must be! But will you please tell me what this is all about?

DAVENPORT. It's about one of the world's greatest injustices, Doctor Haggett, which I am doing my small part to set right. You once had for your patient a poor boy, a painter . . .

DR. HAGGETT. Yes, I know. Chris Bean.

DAVENPORT. I'm glad, Doctor, that you remember him. Now, this boy . . .

DR. HAGGETT. Died owing me a hundred dollars, and you come to pay it!

DAVENPORT. No, Doctor! No! Don't say that Bean owed any man anything! It is we, all of us, who stand in everlasting debt to him! As the world always stands in debt to its men of genius!

DR. HAGGETT. Genius? Chris Bean a genius?

DAVENPORT. If ever a genius lived and painted pictures! [*Then,*

more quietly] The object of my visit today is to gather any details that I may find concerning his life with you for a critical biography of him that I am writing.

DR. HAGGETT. You're writing a book about Chris Bean!

DAVENPORT. That is my occupation at the moment, yes.

DR. HAGGETT. Whatever gave you that idea?

DAVENPORT. Haven't you read of the sensation his pictures have been making in New York. [DR. HAGGETT *shakes his head dizzily.*] Haven't you seen the last Atlantic Monthly?

ROSEN. That only came out yesterday, Mr. Davenport.

DAVENPORT. Quite. Well, Doctor Haggett, art is long, and the world is often slow to recognize it. Only now, ten years after his death, has Christopher Bean had his first exhibition in New York. Only now do we realize that he was not merely the greatest American painter, but one of the great masters of all time.

DR. HAGGETT. Our Chris Bean was?

DAVENPORT. Your Chris Bean, who painted and drank and coughed his short life away here in this village. From which he wrote to his friend, Davis, alas, also dead, the exquisite group of letters published yesterday in the Atlantic.

DR. HAGGETT. Our Chris Bean! [*A pause. Then light dawns and he turns to* ROSEN.] So them's the letters you folks has been finding going through your desks!

[MRS. HAGGETT *comes downstairs.*]

ROSEN. You guessed it, Doctor.

DR. HAGGETT. Hannah, come in here! [MRS. HAGGETT *enters.*] This is my wife, Mr. Davenport.

MRS. HAGGETT. Mr. Davenport?

DR. HAGGETT. Don't say a word. I'll explain later. And Mr. Rosen. [*He turns to* DAVENPORT *with fine, simple dignity.*] Mr. Davenport, we live a long way from New York. I'm nothing but just a simple country doctor. I'll have to admit that much as I liked Chris Bean, I never would have expected him to get nowheres.

[ADA *comes down and enters, her ears pricked as usual.*]

DAVENPORT. I'm not exaggerating, Doctor, when I say that no painter of our times has got so far as he.

MRS. HAGGETT. Does this mean folks is paying money for Chris Bean's pictures?

DAVENPORT. If only the dealers could find more to sell! There are so few they bring large prices even in these days.

ADA. As much as fifty dollars?

DAVENPORT. Not less than five, as much as ten thousand.

ADA. Dollars!

MRS. HAGGETT. Each!

DR. HAGGETT [*to* ROSEN]. And you offered me a measly thousand for the lot!

ROSEN. Remember, I wasn't the first and say no more.

DAVENPORT. A very generous offer, for Mr. Rosen. I hope I arrived in time to stop his game.

[DR. HAGGETT *turns away, dazed.*]

MRS. HAGGETT [*a sudden scream of anguish*]. God Almighty, *I* just remembered. . . .

DR. HAGGETT. What?

MRS. HAGGETT. No, I won't say no more, neither. I don't feel well. [*She sits staring in horror before her. In the meantime* ABBY *has entered from the back.*]

ABBY. Here's another telegram, just come for you, Doctor Haggett.

DR. HAGGETT. Another telegram? [*He opens the telegram.* ABBY *goes still glancing in suspicious terror over her shoulder.*]

DAVENPORT. Now, really, Rosen, I think you might have gone higher than a thousand.

ROSEN. I'm not a rich man, Mr. Davenport, and my business is a small one.

DAVENPORT. Stick to your forgeries. They're more respectable than swindling honest men who aren't equipped to defend themselves. [*He turns to* DR. HAGGETT.] Now, Doctor, I don't usually mix in buying and selling. But, to protect you, I will gladly put proper values on any Christopher Beans you may have.

DR. HAGGETT [*haggard as he looks from the telegram in his hand*]. Would you mind explaining this telegram to me?

DAVENPORT. Let's see it. [*He takes it.*] Why, it's clear enough. The Metropolitan Museum—that's in New York—offers you seven thousand five hundred dollars for the choice of your Christopher Bean canvases. [*He returns the telegram to the doctor. A pause, then*]

DR. HAGGETT. Mr. Davenport, you see in me a desperate man.

DAVENPORT. Desperate, Doctor? The owner of pictures worth a fortune!

DR. HAGGETT. How do you know I got any such pictures?

DAVENPORT. From the Atlantic Monthly. Bean, in his letters, enu-

merates—[*counting on his fingers*]—seven of the pictures he painted and left behind him here. The Hill Pasture, The Covered Bridge, The Red Barn, The Brick Houses on the Common, The . . .

DR. HAGGETT. I guess I didn't take 'em as serious as I should have.

DAVENPORT. Don't reproach yourself, Doctor. You weren't the only one. [*But* DR. HAGGETT *draws his breath in agony.*] Doctor, for God's sake! You haven't let anything happen to them!

[MRS. HAGGETT *feels even worse.*]

DR. HAGGETT. I must have 'em somewheres. There's two I can't account for just at the moment. But if he left seven I must have the rest. Did you ever hear of folks throwing away oil paintings? Valuable oil paintings? I'll have a look for 'em! I'll have a look and I'll find 'em! And when I do I'll pay 'em the honor they deserve! I'll hang 'em all here in my dining room! And I don't know as I'm interested in selling 'em. Not now that I know what they're worth, I don't! At least . . . [*With a glare toward* ROSEN] At least, not for no small sums like I been offered! [*He drops into his chair.*] But now I'd like for you all to go away. And leave me to eat my dinner in peace, and talk matters over with my family. This is all kind of sudden. I've got to think.

DAVENPORT. But you'll let me come in again this afternoon?

DR. HAGGETT. What for?

DAVENPORT. Why, to get your recollections of Bean's life here.

DR. HAGGETT. After I've had my dinner. [*He sinks back into despair.* DAVENPORT *gives up and goes for his coat.* MRS. HAGGETT *is too absorbed in her private grief to know that she is sitting on it. When he finally succeeds in rescuing it, he finds a copy of the Atlantic Monthly in the pocket. He turns back to* DR. HAGGETT.]

DAVENPORT. Let me leave this number of the Atlantic with you. You'll find Bean's letters in it. I brought it along for the list of pictures he mentions, but you'll enjoy reading what he says about you.

DR. HAGGETT. Thanks.

DAVENPORT. Well, good-bye. [*He goes.*]

ROSEN. Now about that man who was here before me. If you don't know his real name, what did he look like?

DR. HAGGETT. You get out too!

ROSEN. All right, Doctor! All right! But I'll be back. And don't do anything final till you see me. [*He goes.*]

DR. HAGGETT. The one chance I ever had to make any money, and it's slipped through my fingers!

ADA. I can't look at that spot on the wall where my picture was without just boiling!

MRS. HAGGETT. I'm going upstairs to my room to lay down. [*She starts for the stair wearily.* ABBY *enters.*]

ABBY. Now that all them city folks is gone, I guess I better set the table for dinner.

MRS. HAGGETT [*weakly*]. I don't want no dinner.

DR. HAGGETT. *You* don't! *You* don't! Who's to blame for this?

[ABBY *looks up, astonished.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. You can't blame me!

DR. HAGGETT. Which one of us was it took him in and gave him the old barn to paint in!

MRS. HAGGETT. You didn't have no more use for his pictures than I did!

ABBY. I can't have you quarreling this way on my last day!

DR. HAGGETT [*shouting*]. Mrs. Haggett and I'll quarrel if we want to without any help from you, young lady!

ABBY. Doctor Haggett, you ain't never spoke to me like that before!

DR. HAGGETT [*practically screaming*]. Get back in your kitchen! I can't stand no more talk!

[ABBY *runs for her life.*]

ADA. The important thing is for us not to lose our heads. There's only two things that matter. The first man wasn't Mr. Davenport. And since he wasn't, who was he?

MRS. HAGGETT. What's that matter? Your Pa gave the pictures to him!

ADA. It matters a lot. He got 'em out of Pa under false pretences!

DR. HAGGETT. That's right! He did!

MRS. HAGGETT. Then we can get 'em back!

DR. HAGGETT. If it wasn't for that fifty dollars he gave Ada!

ADA. That fifty dollars wasn't for the back side.

MRS. HAGGETT. You got to find him, Milton!

DR. HAGGETT. How? I don't even know what his real name is. All I know is he's gone back to New York a happier man! [*Through his teeth*] I'll find him somehow, though! And when I find him I'll give him a thrashing he'll remember! [*He strides to and fro as he forms his plan.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. He's younger than you are. He'll give you the thrashing.

DR. HAGGETT. All right, then. I'll get a lawyer. I'll get a lawyer

and bring suit against him! [*He pauses.*] Lawsuits cost money if you ain't sure of winning. 'Tain't as though we minded parting with what he took.

MRS. HAGGETT. We didn't know what it was worth!

DR. HAGGETT [*a sudden scream of anguish*]. And I called the both of you in to have a good look at an honest man!

ADA. The wicked, sneaking, thieving, greedy scoundrel! It just makes me sick, that's what it does!

DR. HAGGETT [*snatching at the straw of comfort*]. That's it, Ada! Our baby's said it, Hannah! It's the greed of it that turns my stomach! The greed! If Davenport ain't lying, I let that greedy crook snatch between ten and twenty thousand dollars out of my hands!

MRS. HAGGETT. Milton, he said he was going into business with you. Couldn't you tell him you won't have no dealings with him unless he brings back the pictures?

ADA. Wasn't all that business talk jest to pull the wool over Pa's eyes?

MRS. HAGGETT. Oh, the wicked, scheming, greedy. . . .

ADA. How many pictures did Chris Bean leave here?

[MRS. HAGGETT'S *strange alarm revives.*]

DR. HAGGETT. Davenport said seven.

ADA. And you said folks don't throw away oil paintings. Well, what's become of the other five?

DR. HAGGETT. That's right, Ada! [*To his wife*] Our baby's got more head than either of us! [*He calls.*] Abby! Abby! Come in here! [ABBY *enters from the kitchen.*] Are you sure you made a thorough search of that attic?

ABBY. Of the attic, Doctor Haggett?

DR. HAGGETT. Yes. When that first fellow was here this morning.

ABBY. Yes, Doctor Haggett.

DR. HAGGETT. And you didn't see no sign of no pictures up there?

ABBY. I didn't see no sign, Doctor Haggett.

DR. HAGGETT. Get out! [ABBY *goes as before.*] Ada, you go look. [ADA *runs up the stair.*] Susie! Come down here, Susie!

MRS. HAGGETT. Now, what do you want with Susie?

DR. HAGGETT. We ain't asked Susie yet! She may know something!

[SUSAN *comes down the stair in evident alarm.*]

SUSAN. What is it, Pa? What do you want?

DR. HAGGETT. Have you seen any old pictures of Chris Bean's laying around?

SUSAN. Oh, is that all!

DR. HAGGETT. Is that all! Is that all! Don't talk like a fool!

SUSAN. Pa, what's come over you hollering this way?

DR. HAGGETT. Answer my question!

SUSAN. Yes, of course I have!

MRS. HAGGETT. What? !

DR. HAGGETT. Where! ?

SUSAN. Last time I seen 'em they was in the barn.

[MRS. HAGGETT *seems on the point of fainting.*]

DR. HAGGETT. In the barn!

SUSAN. Yes, Pa.

DR. HAGGETT. How many?

SUSAN. I don't know rightly. Eight or ten, I guess.

DR. HAGGETT. Eight or ten!

SUSAN. Yes, they was in the old box stall.

DR. HAGGETT. I'm in and out of that barn all day long. Taking the Ford out and putting it up again. I ain't seen no pictures! When did you see 'em last?

SUSAN. It couldn't have been so long ago. [*Then guiltily*] I remember showing 'em to Warren Creamer.

DR. HAGGETT. Aha! Then that's what's become of 'em! Warren Creamer's stole 'em!

SUSAN. He never! He wouldn't!

DR. HAGGETT. They was in the barn! You showed 'em to Warren! They ain't there now and I'd have seen 'em! Warren must have stole 'em!

SUSAN. No!

DR. HAGGETT. You get your Warren right over here! No! I'll get him!

SUSAN. Pa!

[*He snatches up the telephone.*]

MRS. HAGGETT [*suffocating*]. It ain't no use, Milton.

DR. HAGGETT. Why ain't it?

MRS. HAGGETT. Warren didn't steal 'em.

DR. HAGGETT. How do you know he didn't?

MRS. HAGGETT. Because I burnt 'em.

DR. HAGGETT. You what!

MRS. HAGGETT. I put 'em on the bonfire and burnt 'em.

DR. HAGGETT. All eight or ten?

MRS. HAGGETT. I'd have thought there was more.

DR. HAGGETT [*no longer able to control himself*]. You'd have

thought there was more! At ten thousand and over for every one, you'd have thought there was more!

MRS. HAGGETT. You thought they were terrible pictures too, Milton.

DR. HAGGETT [*screaming*]. Don't keep on saying that! You ought to get down on your knees, Hannah, and beg forgiveness of both your children!

[ADA *returns.*]

ADA. Abby was right. There isn't a single picture in the attic.

MRS. HAGGETT. Your Pa knows that. There ain't none anywheres. They took up so much room I burnt the lot.

ADA. You never! [*A pause*] Then we'll have to get to work and get back that pair we gave away this morning! [DR. HAGGETT's *eye falls upon the open page of the Atlantic Monthly where it is lying on his desk. Now he holds up his hand for attention.*] Pa! . . .

DR. HAGGETT [*reading aloud*]. "Doctor H. takes conscientious care of me. He knows nothing of medicine but looks like a gargoyle and that amuses me."

SUSAN [*frightened*]. What's he saying, Ma?

DR. HAGGETT. Doctor H. is me! That's what Chris Bean wrote about me in his letters. [*He continues reading.*] "I beg him to let me do a portrait of him, but all my pleading avails me nothing. His notions of art belong to the lower animals."

MRS. HAGGETT. Mebbe if you'd let him paint your portrait you'd be better off now! You wouldn't have used no portrait of yourself to patch the chicken-house roof.

DR. HAGGETT [*loftily extending the magazine to* SUSAN]. You can read the rest, Susie. Mebbe he says something kind about your Ma.

SUSAN [*reading*]. "This angel of devotion is both sister and nurse to me, and more than both. I know that her care is adding months to my life, all the more because she, and only she, sees merit in what I paint. She is the single comfort I have found in my life here and in her own way she is beautiful."

[MRS. HAGGETT's *smile broadens.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. Well, I liked the boy and I encouraged him!

ADA [*reading over her sister's shoulder*]. But, Ma! That ain't you. It's Abby! [MRS. HAGGETT's *smile fades.* ADA *reads on.*] "When I go into the fields these chill autumn mornings, she brings me out hot coffee to drink."

MRS. HAGGETT. Our coffee!

DR. HAGGETT. It don't matter now.

MRS. HAGGETT. It matters to me that a man I took kindly to carried on behind my back with the help!

SUSAN. But Ma, it don't say that!

MRS. HAGGETT. It says she was beautiful. She never was!

DR. HAGGETT [*fortissimo*]. Good God Almighty!

ADA. Pa!
SUSAN. What is it?
MRS. HAGGETT. You hadn't ought to screech that way, Milton!
} *Together*

DR. HAGGETT. Chris Bean did paint one portrait while he was here! I remember he did!

ADA. Who did he paint it of?

DR. HAGGETT. Of Abby!

[*Sensation*]

MRS. HAGGETT. That's so, he did!

ADA. It's a great big portrait!

DR. HAGGETT. What's become of it?

MRS. HAGGETT. She's had it hanging in her room ever since he died!

DR. HAGGETT. Ada, go in and see if it's still there!

SUSAN. But, Pa, if it is, it must belong to Abby. Ada, wait!

DR. HAGGETT. Here we are at the worst crisis of the depression with a fortune in the house and you try to tell me it belongs to Abby!

MRS. HAGGETT. I'm surprised at you, Susie, after your Pa's just been swindled himself this morning!

ADA. I think it's about time Pa stood up for his rights!

SUSAN. But that picture's Abby's rights!

DR. HAGGETT. I ain't going to do nothing that ain't fair and square! And don't talk so loud! Do you want Abby to hear?

SUSAN. Well, I won't stand by and see you take advantage of Abby! [*She flashes out into entry and up the stair.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. Never mind her, Milton! We got one thing, and one thing only, to do now! And that is find out if Abby's planning to take that portrait to Chicago with her.

DR. HAGGETT. Call her in and ask her.

ADA. She'd get on to you!

DR. HAGGETT. That's right. Not that we got anything shameful to conceal, but she would get on to us!

MRS. HAGGETT. If it was me I wouldn't hesitate. I'd walk right into Abby's room and take that picture like it wasn't no account!

DR. HAGGETT. There's a point of conscience here. I got to think. [*He sits.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. Shut your eyes, Milton. You know you always think best with your eyes shut. [*He has obeyed.*] That's right. Now what?

DR. HAGGETT. Well, one way of looking at it the portrait's our property, as much as the ones you burnt. Abby's no artist's model. She's our help. We was paying her thirty dollars a month and keep. . . .

MRS. HAGGETT. We only paid her fifteen in those days.

DR. HAGGETT. The principle's the same. And the question is: did she have any right to let him paint her portrait on the time we paid for?

MRS. HAGGETT. Your conscience is clear, Milton. There ain't no doubt but that portrait belongs to us. Ada, go into Abby's room and get it.

ADA. But what will Abby say?

MRS. HAGGETT. Wreck the room! Tear down the window curtains! Turn the bed over! Then your Pa can tell her a burglar must have got it!

DR. HAGGETT. I'm only a simple country doctor. I don't care for money. It's only for my loved ones I got to have it.

MRS. HAGGETT. We've got to get a move on! Go along, Ada. Take it out the back way and upstairs. [*Then to* DR. HAGGETT *as* ADA *goes into the kitchen.*] Once we get it we'll hide it under your bed.

DR. HAGGETT. If Abby feels bad I can give her a little something.

[ADA *returns.*]

ADA. Abby's out there!

MRS. HAGGETT. How about the picture?

ADA. That's there too!

DR. HAGGETT. What's it like?

ADA. You know. Terrible!

DR. HAGGETT. Well, it's some comfort to know it's still all right.

MRS. HAGGETT. What's Abby doing?

ADA. Packing her trunk.

MRS. HAGGETT. Tell her she ought to be getting dinner ready.

ADA. But if she stays out there in the kitchen!

MRS. HAGGETT. Tell her to come in and set the table.

ADA. You call her!

MRS. HAGGETT [*in her sweetest tones*]. Abby! Abby! [*To her husband*] You got to talk to her.

[*All three watch the kitchen door.* ABBY *enters, still in a state of terror.*]

DR. HAGGETT [*a heroic effort at play-acting*]. I'm sorry I spoke so rough to you just now, Abby.

ABBY [*eyeing him askance*]. Oh, that's all right.

MRS. HAGGETT [*also play-acting*]. No, Abby. Doctor Haggett couldn't rest till he'd apologized. [*She gets the tablecloth from a drawer.*]

ABBY [*eyeing her*]. It's all right.

MRS. HAGGETT [*she drops a folded cloth on the table*]. You can go ahead now and set the table for dinner.

ABBY. Yeah. [*She turns to the dining room table. She proceeds to spread the cloth.* MRS. HAGGETT *nods to* ADA *who slips into the kitchen.* MRS. HAGGETT *moves over to the kitchen door and blocks it.*]

DR. HAGGETT [*as before*]. It's nice of you to wait on us your last day, Abby.

ABBY. Oh, it's nothing.

MRS. HAGGETT [*as before*]. Yes, it is, Abby. And we appreciate it, Doctor Haggett and me, with the new maid here and all.

ABBY [*busy about the table*]. It's nothing.

DR. HAGGETT. It wouldn't have seemed natural to have the new maid waiting on table with you still in the house, Abby.

ABBY. No, I guess not.

[ADA *returns.*]

ADA [*a whisper*]. Ma! The new maid's there!

MRS. HAGGETT. Tell her to go out and take a walk around the village. [ADA *retires.*] And Ada . . . [ADA *re-appears.*] Never mind the burglar. It'll make too much noise.

[ADA *goes again.*]

ABBY. What about a burglar?

MRS. HAGGETT [*laughs lightly*]. Just a little joke between Ada and me, Abby. You'll hear about it later. [DR. HAGGETT *laughs. But* ABBY *starts for the kitchen.*] Where're you going, Abby?

ABBY. Just out to the kitchen to get the mustard pickles.

MRS. HAGGETT. Oh, I don't think we need mustard pickles for dinner. Do you think we do, Milton?

DR. HAGGETT. I'll be frank with you, Abby. Them mustard pickles don't seem to set good with me. [ABBY *again starts for the kitchen.*] Abby! [*She turns back again.*] Didn't you hear us, Abby? We said we didn't care for mustard pickles!

ABBY. I was going to get some watermelon preserves. You always liked my watermelon preserves.

MRS. HAGGETT [*stumped*]. That's so, Milton! You always have liked them particular!

DR. HAGGETT [*likewise stumped*]. I know I have. And I can't think of a thing against 'em now!

MRS. HAGGETT [*still blocking the way to the kitchen*]. I thought you wanted to talk to Abby, Milton?

DR. HAGGETT. That's right, Hannah, I did!

ABBY. What was it you wanted to talk to me about?

DR. HAGGETT [*at a total loss*]. Well, about several things. Let me see, now. To begin with, I. . . .

[ADA *returns.*]

ADA [*a whisper*]. Ma!

MRS. HAGGETT. What is it?

ADA. She says she don't want to take a walk.

MRS. HAGGETT. Tell her either she takes a walk or goes back to Boston!

[ADA *goes.*]

ABBY. Who goes back to Boston?

DR. HAGGETT [*quickly*]. I know what it was I wanted to talk about, Abby! It was about that new maid! What do you think of her?

ABBY. Oh, she's a nice girl.

DR. HAGGETT. Of course she's a nice girl. A very nice girl. Mrs. Haggett wouldn't have chosen anything else. [*He becomes confidential.*] But, Abby . . . think now . . . think carefully. Will she give the same satisfaction you've given us?

ABBY [*really touched*]. Now, that's real kind of you to say that, Doctor Haggett. Of course, in fairness, you got to remember I had fifteen years to study your manners and ways. And I'm not saying she'll be on to how you like your chowder nor things like that without being told. But she's a nice girl, and if she finds she likes the place enough . . .

MRS. HAGGETT. Don't you think she will, Abby?

ABBY. Well, mebbe she will and mebbe she won't. I'll get dinner on the table first and talk afterwards. [*Once more she starts for the kitchen door.* DR. HAGGETT *takes a step after her, helplessly.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. But, Abby, you ain't even got the table set!

ABBY [*brushing her aside*]. I know, but I can't stand here talking

with my biscuits burning! [*And she is gone into the kitchen. Sensation*]

MRS. HAGGETT. Why didn't you stop her?

DR. HAGGETT. How could I? Why didn't you?

[SUSAN *comes down the stair.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. You seen me try, didn't you? Now you'll just have to face it! It was a cowardly way to get round her, at that!

DR. HAGGETT. It was your idea. I never would have done it!

MRS. HAGGETT. Keep quiet! Listen!

DR. HAGGETT. Can you hear anything?

[*She is listening at the kitchen door.* SUSAN *regards both her parents distastefully.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. Not a sound!

DR. HAGGETT. Ada must be in Abby's room now! She'll come out with the picture in her hands and Abby . . . Hannah, go out there and do something!

MRS. HAGGETT. I can't! You go yourself!

[*The telephone rings.* DR. HAGGETT *starts toward it.*]

DR. HAGGETT. I got to answer.

MRS. HAGGETT. No, you don't! Susie, you answer that!

[DR. HAGGETT *stops.*]

DR. HAGGETT [*to* MRS. HAGGETT]. Call her back in here. I'll talk to her some more.

MRS. HAGGETT. What have you got to talk to her about?

SUSAN [*into the telephone*]. Hello?

DR. HAGGETT. Let me think. Don't hurry me. I'll think of something.

SUSAN [*into the telephone*]. Yes?

MRS. HAGGETT. You can't take all day!

SUSAN [*into the telephone*]. What?

MRS. HAGGETT. Once she catches Ada . . .

DR. HAGGETT. I'll ask her not to leave!

SUSAN [*into the telephone*]. This is Doctor Haggett's.

DR. HAGGETT. That's what I'll do! I'll plead with her!

MRS. HAGGETT. No! Then she might not leave! And if she doesn't it'll be twice as hard!

DR. HAGGETT. Call her! I'll think of something!

[MRS. HAGGETT *is about to call again.* ADA *returns, tottering.*]

SUSAN [*into the telephone*]. Just a minute. I'll call him.

MRS. HAGGETT [*to* ADA]. Did you get it!

ADA [*gasping, her hand on her heart*]. No!

DR. HAGGETT. She didn't catch you?

SUSAN. Pa!

ADA. If the biscuits hadn't been burning she would have caught me! I was just lifting it off the hook when I looked over my shoulder and there she stood with her head in the oven!

SUSAN. Pa!

MRS. HAGGETT. We'll just have to try again. We'll eat dinner quiet as if nothing happened. Then I'll send her out on an errand. Come on, Ada. We'll finish setting the table. [*She turns to the sideboard.*]

SUSAN. When you're done plotting and whispering over there, New York's calling Pa.

MRS. HAGGETT. New York again!

SUSAN. I can't get the name. It sounds to me like Knoedler and Company.[1]

DR. HAGGETT [*very agitated*]. I won't speak to 'em! I won't speak to no more from New York! Tell 'em I'm out! Tell 'em I've gone away! Tell 'em . . .

SUSAN. You can tell your own lies, Pa!

DR. HAGGETT. All right. I will. A lot of help I get from you, young lady! [*He crosses to the desk, takes the telephone, and sits.* MRS. HAGGETT *and* ADA *continue setting the table mechanically, straining to hear every word.*] Hello . . . Yes. This is Doctor Haggett . . . Who? . . . Go ahead . . . Can't hear you . . . What . . . ? The Covered Bridge? . . . What do you . . . ? [*A long pause*] How much? [*Another pause*] *How* much? [*A third pause*] HOW much? [*Then, dully*] I'll think it over. Call me again tomorrow. [*He rings off, dazed.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. What . . . what is it, Milton?

DR. HAGGETT [*weakly*]. He wants to pay me twelve thousand dollars for Chris Bean's picture of the covered bridge if it's in good condition. [*A desperate echo*] In good condition! [*Then hysterically*] Can you beat that? In good condition!

MRS. HAGGETT [*also hysterical*]. Twelve thousand! Twelve thou . . . !

ADA [*also hysterical*]. That's the one I painted my picture on the back of and sold for fifty dollars!

DR. HAGGETT. I know it is!!!

[ABBY *enters from the kitchen, carrying a soup tureen.*]

ABBY. Well, I got dinner ready, folks. You can set down now! [*She places the tureen at* MRS. HAGGETT'S *place. She then moves away from the table.*] You can all set down. Dinner's ready. . . .

[1] ***Knoedler and Company, a well-known art dealing firm in New York.***

[*She wonders at their failure to move. A long pause. Finally* DR. HAGGETT *rises. He and* SUSAN *move slowly towards their places at table.* MRS. HAGGETT *moves next to her place, but mechanically as an automaton not in good repair.* ADA *moves last.* MRS. HAGGETT *serves the first plate of soup, handing it to* ABBY, *who in turn starts to place it before* SUSAN, *who refuses it.* ABBY *then sets it before the* DOCTOR, *who is watching her with an increasingly hideous concentration. The next plate goes to* ADA, *who is unaware of anything until* ABBY *touches her, when she starts guiltily.* MRS. HAGGETT *does not serve herself but instead drops her head despairingly on her hands. Neither the* DOCTOR *nor* ADA *touch their soup.* ABBY *looks at them, marvelling at such behavior, then goes to the sideboard for a plate of crackers. She places the crackers on the table, then, more than ever puzzled, looks from* ADA *to* SUSAN *and bends over to see* MRS. HAGGETT'S *face. Only then does she catch the* DOCTOR'S *eye. He has never ceased to watch her. Now he lowers his gaze quickly, unrolls his napkin, tucks it in his coat and bows his head.*

DR. HAGGETT. For what we are about to receive, Oh Lord, make us truly thankful.

[*The curtain falls.*]

act 3

The afternoon of the same day is well advanced. DAVENPORT *stands by the fireplace, his back to audience, waiting for* DR. HAGGETT'S *return.* SUSAN *comes down the stair and enters the room.*

SUSAN. How do you do?

DAVENPORT. Oh, how do you do?

SUSAN. We haven't met, Mr. Davenport. I'm the other daughter, Susan. Ma said for me to apologize for keeping you waiting so long. Pa went out after dinner. We don't know where he is nor what's become of him.

DAVENPORT. I don't mind waiting and if your father's errand is what I hope it is, I pray it may prove successful.

SUSAN. Yes . . . Well, seeing as you're not doing much at the moment, I've got a kind of a funny favor to ask you.

DAVENPORT. Please!

SUSAN. You wouldn't tell Ma or Pa I asked it, would you?

DAVENPORT. I can keep a secret.

SUSAN. I was thinking of eloping this afternoon.

DAVENPORT. My dear child!

SUSAN. Yeah. And it's just providential you turning up today because all I need's an art critic.

DAVENPORT. If you're counting on me to break the news to your parents . . .

SUSAN. Oh, nothing like that!

DAVENPORT. Suppose you explain more fully, then. There's always some reason for an elopement. Either that the man's married or that the girl's father and mother don't approve of him, or . . .

SUSAN. That's my reason.

DAVENPORT. Why don't they?

SUSAN. Because he's an artist and they got no use for artists.

DAVENPORT. Is he a good artist?

SUSAN. He thinks he is, but I'm not fit to judge. So I thought you'd mebbe run around and look at his pictures and tell me what you think.

DAVENPORT [*sadly*]. You're a Yankee, too!

SUSAN. What do you mean by that?

DAVENPORT. Well, I naturally conclude that if his pictures don't measure up, you'll think twice before you marry him.

SUSAN. Oh, I'd have him anyways! I'd have him if he was the most terrible painter in the world! I just want to know the worst for my own information!

DAVENPORT. I see you belong to the higher type of Yankee!

SUSAN. I don't understand.

DAVENPORT. Fearless of both risk and reality!

SUSAN. No, I only want to know whether he ought to paint pictures or houses.

DAVENPORT. Let it pass. I warn you, though, that if I don't like his pictures . . .

SUSAN. Don't tell him!

DAVENPORT. Are you wise to want to know the truth yourself?

SUSAN. I'll show you I'm not afraid! [*She goes for the two pictures* WARREN *brought in the first act.*] I've got two of Warren's pictures here. They're only little ones, so they don't do him justice. But you can tell me what you think right to my face! [*She extends them for his inspection.*] This one's my dead duck and this one's my sister's salmon.

DAVENPORT. Let's see. [*He extracts his glasses to examine first one and then the other.*] Curious! . . . Very curious! . . . I'd certainly say a pupil of Christopher Bean's.

SUSAN. Yes, he was. When he was a little boy, thirteen years old. But he's been painting on his own ever since.

DAVENPORT. Oh, they've got their own individuality, too!

SUSAN. Does that mean they're bad?

DAVENPORT. No. No! it means they make me want to see more of his work. And to meet him.

SUSAN. That's easy! [*She replaces pictures.*] I'll show you where! I'll take you! Will you come now? You see, there isn't much time!

DAVENPORT. At what time is the elopement?

SUSAN. At four-thirty. So as I can catch the Boston train with Abby.

DAVENPORT. Is Abby leaving too?

[DR. HAGGETT *enters by the front door.*]

SUSAN. Abby's going to Chicago, and . . . [*She puts out a warning hand.*] Shhh. [DR. HAGGETT *comes in, haggard, gives them a look of agony, and sinks wearily into a chair.*] Why, Pa! What's the matter? Where have you been?

DR. HAGGETT. I've been around.

SUSAN. You look awful!

DR. HAGGETT. I feel awful.

SUSAN. I'm just taking Mr. Davenport out to see the village, but . . .

DR. HAGGETT. Take him out.

DAVENPORT. I think your father wants to rest and your young man should certainly have things to tell me. I must talk with Abby, too, before she leaves.

SUSAN. Well, it's just across the street.

[*They go.* MRS. HAGGETT *has come in from the kitchen.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. Well, Milton?

DR. HAGGETT. I been all over. Up to the hill pasture. Down to the covered bridge. Up to the graveyard.

MRS. HAGGETT. What'd you go there for?

DR. HAGGETT. Looking for that scoundrel who robbed me this morning.

MRS. HAGGETT. You didn't think he'd died and buried himself, did you?

DR. HAGGETT. He's still here. Painting somewhere.

MRS. HAGGETT. Painting!

DR. HAGGETT. I found out that much at the hotel. He checked in there this morning and he ain't checked out yet.

MRS. HAGGETT. Well, if the pictures are in his room, why didn't you . . . ?

DR. HAGGETT. He took 'em to the bank. They're in the vault. The bank won't let me have 'em. Now he's gone out again. He's got his lunch and painting things with him. His name's Tallant.

MRS. HAGGETT. Tallant. With two "L's" or one?

DR. HAGGETT. Two. [*He calls.*] Abby!

ABBY [*off-stage*]. Yes?

DR. HAGGETT [*to* MRS. HAGGETT]. I've been running and running all afternoon! [ABBY *enters.*] Bring me a cracker and a glass of milk.

ABBY. Wouldn't you like something hot, Doctor Haggett?

DR. HAGGETT. I got no time for anything hot.

[ABBY *returns to the kitchen.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. There was three more telephone calls from New York while you was out. And here's seven more telegrams that come. . . .

DR. HAGGETT. I got no time for telegrams neither. Look. [*Pathetically he holds up his trembling hand.*] This kind of thing is not good for no man of my age! This morning I was a peaceful country doctor filled with gentle thoughts of a medical description and I coveted nothing, not even my collections! Look at me now! [*The shaking hand again*] Hannah, if a patient came in with an appendix now I'd miss it so far I'd put his eye out! [*He concludes desperately*] Once you get started on a thing like this, though, once you let it get a hold on you!

MRS. HAGGETT. Oh, stick to business!

DR. HAGGETT. That's what I'm doing! I remembered Abby's train goes at five, and we can't let her take that portrait with her. It's the only one we can be sure to get our hands on.

MRS. HAGGETT. You'll have to work on her, then. I ain't up to no more today.

DR. HAGGETT. That's just what I come back home to do. Leave it to me. You started this, but I got to finish it. I got everything all thought out. [ABBY *enters with glass of milk and a cracker.*] I thank you, Abby. That's just what I need.

ABBY. But I got a nice pork chop I could heat up for you.

[*He shudders.*]

DR. HAGGETT. Look! [*He shows* ABBY *his hand.*]

ABBY. I never seen you in such a state, Doctor Haggett! It's all them New York folks coming here!

DR. HAGGETT [*deep self-pity*]. And they're all coming back any minute, too!

ABBY. Why do you bother with 'em, Doctor Haggett?

DR. HAGGETT. Can't avoid responsibilities in this life, Abby. [*Then, with unaccountable intention he adds*] Wouldn't mind so much if this room looked right. It's that patch over the fireplace where Ada's picture was.

ABBY. I'll wash off where it's smoked.

DR. HAGGETT. There isn't time.

MRS. HAGGETT. You could hang one of Warren Creamer's pictures.

DR. HAGGETT. Warren's pictures ain't big enough for that. We need something to cover up the whole place. A big picture.

ABBY. Well, then, I got nothing to suggest. [*She starts for the kitchen.*]

DR. HAGGETT [*as though a thought struck him suddenly*]. Abby, ain't you got a picture Chris Bean painted of you before he died?

[MRS. HAGGETT *starts.*]

ABBY. I got my portrait.

DR. HAGGETT. Well, if that isn't just the thing! We'll hang that there!

ABBY. Oh, Doctor Haggett!

DR. HAGGETT. Just till you go!

ABBY. I'd like very much to oblige. I certainly would like to oblige. But, Doctor . . . [*She is covered with embarrassment.*] Why, I couldn't have my portrait hanging in here! It wouldn't look right!

DR. HAGGETT. Why wouldn't it?

ABBY. What'd people say if they come into your dining room and seen a picture of me hanging there, scraping carrots?

DR. HAGGETT. What do I care what people'd say? Ain't this a democracy? I'd rather have you there scraping carrots than half these society women who can't do nothing!

ABBY. But my portrait hasn't even got no frame, Doctor Haggett!

DR. HAGGETT. That don't matter, either. Anything to cover up that patch!

MRS. HAGGETT. Don't refuse him, Abby!

DR. HAGGETT [*piteously*]. Look, Abby! [*He holds up his trembling hand again.*]

ABBY. I never could say no to Doctor Haggett! [*She goes. The* HAGGETTS *catch each other's eyes.*]

DR. HAGGETT. A much better way than stealing it would have been. This has got to be done, but it's got to be done legitimate!

MRS. HAGGETT. She ain't give it up to you yet!

DR. HAGGETT. You can't take more than one step at a time. I got it all thought out. . . .

[ABBY *returns, carrying the portrait so that the* HAGGETTS *can see it and the audience cannot.*]

ABBY. Well, here it is!

DR. HAGGETT. That's very nice of you, Abby. I appreciate that.

ABBY. It'd look better if it had a frame.

DR. HAGGETT. There's no time for frames.

MRS. HAGGETT [*to* DR. HAGGETT]. That picture of your Ma in the upstairs hall's about the size of this, and it's got a beautiful frame!

ABBY. Why don't you hang that up?

MRS. HAGGETT. No. His Ma's been dead so long, she's just as happy in the upstairs hall.

DR. HAGGETT. Ada!

MRS. HAGGETT. You go and get it, Abby.

ABBY. But I wouldn't want for Doctor Haggett to take the frame off his Ma's picture!

DR. HAGGETT. It gives me real pleasure, Abby, to show you this little mark of my esteem.

ABBY. But my picture'll look too dressed up in that fine frame!

DR. HAGGETT. Abby, if I put my mother's frame around your picture, it's not for you to say that it isn't fitting!

ABBY. I didn't mean no offense, Doctor Haggett. I guess you know best. I guess I'll . . . [*She takes the portrait—always back to the audience—leans it against a chair and goes up the stair.*]

DR. HAGGETT. I said I'd pay her something, and I will. I'll give her twenty-five dollars.

MRS. HAGGETT [*darkly contemplating the portrait*]. Milton, you'll never get your money back!

DR. HAGGETT. It ain't for you, who burnt up a fortune, to fret me for risking twenty-five dollars! [*He joins her before the portrait.*] I'll be frank with you, though. If it hadn't been for them telegrams and telephone calls, I wouldn't be risking twenty-five cents on it!

MRS. HAGGETT. Look at that dab of red on the nose, will you! And the hands is blue!

DR. HAGGETT. Mebbe she'd just done the wash. [*He bends to examine it closely.*] What's that she's holding?

MRS. HAGGETT. A knife. She *is* scraping carrots!

[ABBY *comes down the stair, carrying a large, old-fashioned dark*

frame. She goes to the table and places the frame down upon it.]

ABBY. I feel so embarrassed, Mrs. Haggett!

DR. HAGGETT. Put it right down there, Abby.

MRS. HAGGETT. I'll just clear away these . . . [*She takes the vase and the glass of milk to the sideboard.*]

DR. HAGGETT. We'll see if it fits. [*He lifts the canvas and places it in the frame, using his fist to force matters.*]

ABBY. Take care not to scratch yourself on them rusty nails!

MRS. HAGGETT. Oh, it's too small!

DR. HAGGETT. No! It's a little tight, maybe. That's funny! It was always loose on Ma. [*The job is finished.*] Now, wouldn't you say that frame had been just made for it? Now we'll just have a look! [*He lifts the frame and leans it against the table, its back to the audience. He then stands off. The effect is admired, too warmly by the* HAGGETTS, *ecstatically by* ABBY.]

ABBY. Who'd ever have thought my portrait could look like that!

MRS. HAGGETT. Wouldn't Chris Bean be proud to see it like that?

ABBY. I wish he could see it!

DR. HAGGETT. It's like you, Abby! There's no denying that!

ABBY. All the time he was painting it he kept saying: "Abby, this is my masterpiece I'm painting now!"

MRS. HAGGETT [*sharp*]. Do you hear that, Milton?

DR. HAGGETT [*sharper*]. Are you sure he said that?

ABBY. Oh, yes! And when it was all done he thanked me. He thanked me just like I'd done something for him! [*Her voice choking*] Boys like him . . . 'Tain't right for boys like him to die so young!

MRS. HAGGETT. Don't cry, Abby. You'll have me crying too.

DR. HAGGETT. You'll have us all crying. [*He pats* ABBY *on shoulder, blows his nose and calls*] Ada! Come down here and see Abby's portrait!

ABBY. You're all so good to me!

[ADA *comes down the stair.*]

DR. HAGGETT. We're fond of you, Abby. We're fond of you! Look, Ada! Don't you think that makes a handsome effect?

ADA [*who catches the drift at once*]. I should say it does!

DR. HAGGETT. We got two Abbies in here now! One of 'em standing here in flesh and blood and the other there in an oil painting! Seems a pity to let the both of 'em leave us, don't it? [*Hearty laughter*]

ABBY. Oh, Doctor Haggett! My, I don't know how to thank you! And I won't never forget. . . .

DR. HAGGETT. If seeing the both don't give me an idea!

MRS. HAGGETT. I'll bet it's a good one, Milton!

ABBY. Doctor Haggett couldn't have nothing but good ideas!

DR. HAGGETT. Well, I'll let you have it just as it come to me. Since you're going away after all these years it'd be awful nice for you to leave your portrait behind you here with us.

[MRS. HAGGETT *and* ADA *draw close together.* ABBY *is unable to grasp the implication.*]

ABBY. Leave it here for good! Go away without it!

DR. HAGGETT. Oh, I wouldn't ask you to make such a sacrifice without giving you something in return!

ABBY. How could you give me anything in return?

DR. HAGGETT. Oh, I don't say I could give you anything equal to what the portrait would mean to us! But I guess twenty-five dollars would come in kind of handy in Chicago!

[ABBY *shakes her head.*]

ADA. Make it fifty, Pa!

[MRS. HAGGETT'S *hand goes to her heart.*]

DR. HAGGETT. All right! I will make it fifty! Yes, I will, Abby! It comes pretty hard to be handing out presents that size these days, but I'll make it fifty! I guess you ain't got much to say against that!

ABBY. No, Doctor Haggett. I ain't got nothing to say against it! It's real generous of you!

DR. HAGGETT [*turning to* MRS. HAGGETT]. There! You see? It's settled!

MRS. HAGGETT. Milton, you're wonderful!

DR. HAGGETT. Everything open and above-board!

ABBY. Oh, but I couldn't never see my way to giving up my portrait!

DR. HAGGETT. Abby, you amaze me!

ABBY. Well, I'm funny that way about things I had so long.

DR. HAGGETT. You'd better think twice, Abby, before you refuse what I must say is a generous offer.

ADA. How'd it be, Abby, if we had a nice photograph made of it, and gave you that to keep with you in Chicago?

MRS. HAGGETT. Now, ain't that a clever idea of Ada's, Milton! I declare, I never would have thought of it myself!

ABBY. You got me too upset to know what to do! I hadn't no idea you was so fond of me!

MRS. HAGGETT. Abby!

ABBY. No, I hadn't, Mrs. Haggett! I knew Susie was, but I hadn't no idea about you and Ada and the doctor! And it's awful hard for me to deny you, only . . .

DR. HAGGETT. Then don't deny us, Abby! Say yes and shake hands on it!

ABBY. I'll tell you! I'll get the photograph for you, Mrs. Haggett. I'll get it made in Chicago and send it back!

DR. HAGGETT. But don't you see, Abby, it's the . . .
ADA. The color and all makes it so much . . . } *Simultaneously*

MRS. HAGGETT. No photograph'd ever give us the comforting feeling that we still had you with us!

ABBY. Would it really mean so much to all of you to have me hanging up there in an oil painting?

MRS. HAGGETT. Would we want anyone we didn't love in our dining-room?

ABBY. But I got so used to looking at that portrait!

DR. HAGGETT. Why, Abby! That's no better than if you was to sit all day in front of a looking glass!

ABBY. But it ain't me I see! It's . . . it's . . . it's the time when I was young! It's all how things used to be in the old days! It's . . . it's . . . [*But this is too private.*] I can't say it! Oh, I can't say it!

[*The doorbell rings.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. There's someone at the door!

ADA. Don't disappoint us, Abby!

DR. HAGGETT. She won't! You know you won't, Abby! You'll say yes! Think! Fifty dollars!

ABBY. Well, if you're all so bent . . . [*The doorbell rings again.*] If you're so bent on having it . . .

MRS. HAGGETT. Now our own dear Abby's speaking!

ABBY. No! I still got to think!

DR. HAGGETT. Of course you have, Abby! And I want you to think! And I know you won't reach no wrong decision! You go set alone in your room for ten minutes. . . .

[*The front door opens to admit* TALLANT, *a painting dangling carefully from his right hand. A general gasp from the three* HAGGETTS.]

TALLANT. No one answered the bell, so I took the liberty of . . . [*He sets the picture down, back to audience.*]

ABBY. If you come for my portrait, I can't let you have it. [TALLANT *sees* ABBY'S *portrait and is not for some time conscious of anything else.*] I made up my mind I couldn't anyway, and now it looks like I got to make other arrangements. So if you'll excuse me, Mr. Davis. . . . [*She disappears quickly into the kitchen.*]

ADA. Was you after Abby's portrait, as well as what you got?

MRS. HAGGETT. You said you was Davenport! She called you Davis! Who in blazes are you?

DR. HAGGETT. I didn't expect you to come here of your own free will, Mr. Tallant.

TALLANT. Would you ask the ladies to leave us alone together?

MRS. HAGGETT. Have you got secrets?

TALLANT. Of the most delicate nature.

DR. HAGGETT [*to his wife and daughter*]. You can leave me to attend to him.

ADA [*indicating the portrait in which* TALLANT *is still absorbed*]. Watch out, Pa! If he tries to get that, too, shoot him!

MRS. HAGGETT. Just call out, Milton. We'll be listening.

TALLANT. I'm certain you will! But your husband and I are going to be friends, now. [*He bows them into the entry and closes the doors.*]

DR. HAGGETT. Don't take much stock in that last remark, Mr. Tallant. You as good as stole a pile of money from me this morning.

TALLANT. I must ask you to be more careful with your language, Doctor Haggett.

DR. HAGGETT. What's your opinion of the trick you played on me?

TALLANT. It was a simple business operation, carried through in the classic tradition of art collecting. Not a day passes but some collector finds some rare and unappreciated work of art. . . .

DR. HAGGETT. Did you even know Chris Bean?

TALLANT. I never heard of him till a month ago.

DR. HAGGETT. Well, you certainly have got your nerve with you!

TALLANT. Quite. But to come down to business. How much have you told Davenport about the pictures Bean left here?

DR. HAGGETT. Didn't tell him nothing. I was still hoping I might find the rest.

TALLANT. You haven't succeeded?

DR. HAGGETT. They've been burnt! All but the two you got and that one there! [*He indicates the portrait.*]

TALLANT. A masterpiece!

DR. HAGGETT. I'm glad you like it.

TALLANT. Oh, you and I can hardly hope to reach that height.

DR. HAGGETT. You and I? What are you driving at?

TALLANT. Corot. The name means nothing to you?

DR. HAGGETT. Not a thing.

TALLANT. Corot was a French painter of landscapes. He died in 1875. The bulk of his painting has been done since then. [DR. HAGGETT *is startled.*] The same is true of the late Cezanne. He died in 1906. I know a dozen excellent Cezanne's, all painted in the last year. [*He goes for the picture he brought in with him.*] I spoke this morning of a business partnership between us. Allow me . . . [*He exhibits.*] The Hill Pasture, by the late Christopher Bean. [DR. HAGGETT *starts to take it from him.*] Careful! Don't touch it! It's not dry yet!

DR. HAGGETT. Where did you find it?

TALLANT. I didn't find it. I painted it.

DR. HAGGETT. What are you?

TALLANT. A forger. [*Light dawns on* DR. HAGGETT.] I see that you begin to understand. Those letters in the Atlantic tell us about the pictures Bean left here. The originals are lost. Thanks to my peculiar gifts, their loss needn't disturb us. [DR. HAGGETT *gasps.*] I assure you, Doctor Haggett, I am offering you a gold mine. We have an absolute corner on Christopher Bean. Because you cannot only vouch for my forgeries, but can also discredit my competitors in the trade. Have I made myself clear?

[*A pause.* DR. HAGGETT *mops his brow or the equivalent. Then*]

DR. HAGGETT. It's too risky!

TALLANT. Not at all!

DR. HAGGETT. It's criminal!

TALLANT. Perhaps. But no picture-collecting sucker ever admits that he's been stung, so . . .

DR. HAGGETT. I don't like the sound of it. I was all right this morning before you come in. I was respected by the world and at peace with myself, and I wasn't tempted by nothing nor no man!

TALLANT. As I remarked this morning, we are all mortal. You have a wife and two lovely daughters . . .

DR. HAGGETT [*brightening*]. That's so! I have! And being tempted for your loved ones ain't as bad as if it was just on your own account! How much would I get from this scheme of yours?

TALLANT. I thought twenty percent.

DR. HAGGETT. 'Tain't worth it.

TALLANT. I'll be liberal. Twenty-five.

DR. HAGGETT. Not a cent under fifty!

TALLANT. If you persist in letting your greed come between you and . . .

DR. HAGGETT. *My* greed! Mine! [*A pause, then he adds craftily*] You can't work this scheme of yours without my help. Because *I'm* in a position to discredit *you!*

TALLANT [*holding out his hand*]. Doctor Haggett, it's done!

[*Then* DR. HAGGETT *realizes. It is hard for him to take the hand, but he manages to do it. Voices are audible in the entry.* ROSEN *opens the door, stopping astonished on the threshold.*]

MRS. HAGGETT [*in the meanwhile*]. There's someone else in there but I guess you can go in. . . .

DR. HAGGETT [*shaking the hand*]. I better warn Hannah and Ada not to talk . . .

ROSEN [*to* TALLANT]. You up here too!

TALLANT. I got here first, Rosen!

ROSEN. So it was you beat me to it! I might have known it!

DR. HAGGETT. You two acquainted with each other?

TALLANT. Mr. Rosen will be the selling end of our firm.

DR. HAGGETT [*to* MRS. HAGGETT, *who is visible in the entry*]. Hannah, shut that door and keep out!

TALLANT. We've just organized, Rosen. Coming in on the ground floor?

ROSEN. I'm not talking your kind of business today. I've come up here after the real thing and I'm going to get it!

TALLANT [*indicating* ABBY's *portrait*]. There it is, if you can pay the price for it.

ROSEN. Aha! [*He bends over to examine.*] It isn't signed.

TALLANT. That's easily fixed.

ROSEN. Oh, one of yours, is it?

TALLANT. Thanks!

DR. HAGGETT. I should say not! It's . . .

TALLANT. Leave him be, Doctor! He's not one of the suckers. I forge most of the pictures he sells.

ROSEN. I know you're good, Tallant, but I never knew you were this good!

TALLANT [*delighted*]. You do recognize my brushwork, then?

ROSEN. You can't fool me! [*To the* DOCTOR] If it were real I'd buy it, but . . .

DR. HAGGETT. It is real!

ROSEN [*pointing to* TALLANT]. With him on the premises!

TALLANT. Word of honor!

ROSEN. Yours?

DR. HAGGETT. Mine!

TALLANT. There you are! We'll take twenty thousand for it.

[HAGGETT *gasps.*]

ROSEN. Now, isn't that good of you? Would you throw in the frame?

TALLANT. You'll get twice twenty thousand in a year.

ROSEN. If it were genuine I might.

DR. HAGGETT. But I assure you, Mr. Rosen, it is genuine! Only trouble is I ain't in a position . . .

ROSEN. Excuse me for doubting your word, Doctor Haggett, but in my profession we judge pictures by the company they keep.

TALLANT. Come on, now, Rosen! Admit you don't know!

[*Bewildered by* TALLANT'S *mockery* ROSEN *returns to the portrait.*]

ROSEN. Well, which is it? Genuine or not?

[DAVENPORT *opens the entry door.*]

TALLANT. Here's Davenport back again! Ask him!

[SUSAN *has come with* DAVENPORT *and goes up the stair.*]

DAVENPORT. Well, Doctor Haggett, have you found the missing treasures? [*He sees the portrait.*] Ah! [*To* ROSEN] Allow me? . . . [ROSEN *moves aside. Pause. Then*] And the man who painted this died miserably! Here is all womanhood. Its nobility, its tenderness and its strength. This is beautiful as only . . . only . . . Damn comparisons! The thing's beautiful!

ROSEN. That's all I need to hear. Doctor Haggett, I'll give you seventy-five hundred for it.

[MRS. HAGGETT *opens the door and enters quickly.*]

DAVENPORT. You're not buying it, Rosen?

ROSEN. Yes, I am, Mr. Davenport, and I'm glad to have you here to see me do it!

DAVENPORT. What do you want with it?

[ADA *enters.*]

ROSEN [*exultant*]. To show it in my gallery! A one-man show! A

one-picture show! For a whole month before I try to sell it! I'm going to bring all Duveen's customers over to Lexington Avenue![1]

DAVENPORT. Are you going to force me to respect you at last?

ROSEN. Yes, I am, Mr. Davenport, if it ruins me! Come on, now, Doctor! Be reasonable and I'll talk business. [*He sits for the purpose at the dining room table.* SUSAN *comes down the stair.*]

DR. HAGGETT [*utterly distracted*]. I . . . I . . . I . . . I'd like to sell it to you, but I ain't in a position . . .

SUSAN. Don't you do nothing you'd be ashamed of, Pa!

DR. HAGGETT. You get out of here! I won't have no child of mine criticizing me!

DAVENPORT. Doctor Haggett, please!

DR. HAGGETT. I can't talk business with women folks around!

ROSEN. Ten thousand, Doctor Haggett!

DR. HAGGETT. I tell you I ain't in a position to sell it yet!

MRS. HAGGETT. You ain't got much time! Her train goes at five!

DR. HAGGETT. I know it does! Where *is* Abby?

MRS. HAGGETT. She's out there in the kitchen.

DR. HAGGETT [*he changes his mind*]. No, never mind her. Might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb.

TALLANT. Leave this to me, partner. I'll handle it.

DR. HAGGETT. You shut up too! You got no part in this deal! [*He glances nervously towards the kitchen door, then sits down opposite* ROSEN *and goes off the deep end.*] Ten thousand ain't enough.

ROSEN. Don't be foolish!

DR. HAGGETT. It ain't enough.

ROSEN. You've got to think of my expenses.

DR. HAGGETT. Don't care about 'em. Ten thousand ain't . . .

ROSEN. How do I know I'll ever be able to sell it?

DR. HAGGETT. I ain't so anxious to sell.

ADA. Pa!

MRS. HAGGETT. Remember you risked fifty dollars on it!

DR. HAGGETT. I ain't risked it yet!

ROSEN. Twelve thousand, then, but that's the top!

DR. HAGGETT. No.

ROSEN. How much do you want?

[1] ***Duveen's . . . Lexington Avenue.*** *Duveen's, on Fifth Avenue, is the most elegant and austere of all the New York art dealers. Lexington Avenue, which parallels Fifth Avenue three blocks away, has a middle-class air in its small, moderate-price shops.*

DR. HAGGETT [*another anxious glance toward the kitchen door, then*]. I ain't quite ready to sell this yet, but if I'm going to sell it you got to make it worth my while. [*He gulps.*] I'd take forty thousand!

[*A gasp from the* HAGGETT *ladies.*]

ROSEN. You're crazy!

DR. HAGGETT. Thirty-five!

ROSEN. Even that, Mr. Davenport . . .

DAVENPORT. A little high.

DR. HAGGETT. All right. Thirty!

MRS. HAGGETT. Don't be easy, Milton!

DR. HAGGETT. I won't go no lower . . . [*A nervous glance towards the kitchen door.*] And you got to be quick about it.

ROSEN. Fifteen!

MRS. HAGGETT AND ADA [*together*]. No!

ROSEN. Seventeen and a half!

ALL THREE HAGGETTS. No!

DAVENPORT [*to* ROSEN]. You're dealing with a united family.

SUSAN. Not with me, Mr. Davenport! And I want to say that I got no use for anyone trying to . . .

DR. HAGGETT [*beside himself*]. Go up to your room! You'll get what's coming to you for mixing in matters you can't grasp!

SUSAN. I don't care. I just can't stand to see Abby . . . [*she goes out and upstairs indignantly.*]

ADA [*covering quickly*]. My sister ain't right on account of falling on her head when she was a baby.

MRS. HAGGETT. She's a sentimental fool, that's all she is! [*She pushes* ADA *ahead of her toward kitchen.*] She just can't bear to part with this after having it around so long.

DR. HAGGETT. I can part with it, though! [*He looks at his watch.*] Good God Almighty!

MRS. HAGGETT [*low to Ada*]. Keep Abby out of here!

[ADA *goes into the kitchen.*]

DR. HAGGETT. Thirty thousand, Mr. Rosen! Take it or leave it!

ROSEN. Well, I certainly won't take it!

DAVENPORT [*to* ROSEN]. You've met your match this time!

ROSEN. Twenty!

DR. HAGGETT. Thirty!

ROSEN. Cash in three days!

DR. HAGGETT [*quickly*]. Twenty-nine!

MRS. HAGGETT. Don't slip, Milton!

ROSEN. Twenty-three! Half of it down and the balance tomorrow!

DR. HAGGETT. Twenty-five on the same terms.

ROSEN. Done!

DAVENPORT. Good work, Rosen!

DR. HAGGETT [*on the verge of collapse but still painfully conscious of that kitchen door*]. Let's see the money!

ROSEN. Good God, give me time!

[ADA *returns.*]

ADA. Ma!

MRS. HAGGETT. What is it?

ADA. The new maid from Boston . . .

MRS. HAGGETT. What about her?

ADA. She's going back to Boston.

MRS. HAGGETT. Let her go! We're going to get a butler now! [*The doorbell rings.*] See who that is! If it's a patient, tell him your Pa's retired from doctoring!

[ADA *goes to the front door.* DR. HAGGETT *hovers over* ROSEN.]

ROSEN. I had that bill-of-sale with me for a thousand. [*He empties his pockets.* ADA *admits* WARREN CREAMER.] Now I'll just have to alter it to fit. [*He writes.* DR. HAGGETT *watches him, fascinated.*]

ADA. What are you doing here, Warren?

WARREN. I've come for Abby's trunk.

DAVENPORT. Ah, the boy marvel!

MRS. HAGGETT. Who? Warren?

WARREN. Hello, Mr. Davenport!

DAVENPORT. I've been looking at his pictures, Mrs. Haggett. You produce talented painters in this village.

MRS. HAGGETT. Are his pictures good too? [*Her eyes shine. She hurries towards the entry door, calling out*] Susie! Warren's here! Come in, Warren! Don't be afraid! We kind of changed our minds about artists since this morning!

WARREN. Guess I'll just get that trunk. [*He goes through the entry behind.* SUSAN *has hurried down the stair and follows him out.*]

ROSEN [*to* DR. HAGGETT]. Now, you sign here. [DR. HAGGETT *glances toward the kitchen door and signs.*] And here's the check. [*He delivers.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. Let's see it, Milton!

DR. HAGGETT. How do I know I get the balance tomorrow?

ROSEN. My God, it's in writing, isn't it?

DR. HAGGETT. Well, so long as you get that picture on out of here before . . .

ROSEN. That's what I'm going to do. [*He is removing the portrait from the frame.*]

DR. HAGGETT [*at the same time*]. Hannah, watch that door . . .

[*But before* MRS. HAGGETT *can prevent,* ABBY *enters, dressed for her departure, and carrying a handbag.* MRS. HAGGETT *gasps.*]

ABBY. Please excuse me for interrupting, Doctor Haggett, but it's time for me to go— [*she sets the bag down beside the kitchen door*]— and I had to tell you that much as I hate denying you what you asked, I made up my mind . . .

DR. HAGGETT [*rushing her*]. I knew it was all right, Abby! I knew it was! [*He fumbles bills out of his pocket.*] And here's the fifty dollars I promised you! God bless you, Abby! [*He is hurrying her back towards the kitchen.*]

ABBY. What's that man doing there with my portrait?

ROSEN [*blandly*]. Taking it to New York, Abby! To exhibit it! Where everybody will come to look at it! Could you let me have some string and wrapping paper?

ABBY [*wrenching free from* DR. HAGGETT]. What right have you got to take my portrait away?

ROSEN. Well, I never paid more for a right in my life!

ABBY. It belongs to me!

[*Sensation.* TALLANT *is overjoyed.*]

ROSEN. How's that?

ABBY. It belongs to me.

DR. HAGGETT. What's come over you, Abby? Did anyone ask you to come in like this? What are you after in here anyway?

ABBY. I come in to say goodbye and get my portrait, and I seen him fixing to go off with it!

DR. HAGGETT. But you just sold it to me!

ABBY. I never! I never!

MRS. HAGGETT. You got the money there in your hand, Abby!

DAVENPORT. Oh, Doctor Haggett! It can't be that you . . .

ABBY [*violently at the same time*]. Here! Take this money back! Go on, take it! You said you wanted my portrait to remember me by! I said I'd think about giving it to you! And I have thought! And I ain't never going to part with it! And now you're trying to sell it behind my back! I'd be ashamed!

MRS. HAGGETT. Abby!

ABBY. I would! I'd be ashamed! Of all the sharp, underhanded tricks!

DR. HAGGETT. This house is mine and everything in it's mine, and you're my paid help!

DAVENPORT. Good God, Doctor Haggett!

ABBY [*fortissimo*]. My portrait ain't yours!

DR. HAGGETT [*desperately*]. If you'd all step into the entry, Mr. Davenport, and leave me to explain things quietly to Abby, there won't be no more difficulty! Just five minutes, Hannah!

ROSEN [*protesting*]. Damn it, Doctor, I just gave you a check for. . .

DR. HAGGETT. Now don't you get upset, Mr. Rosen. There's just a little misunderstanding here! [*General murmurs as* MRS. HAGGETT *and he urge the company out and he closes the doors upon them. He mops his brow and turns to* ABBY. ABBY *moves close to her portrait.*] You ain't showing much gratitude for all we done for you, Abby, all these years!

ABBY [*at bay*]. I can't help that. I won't part with my portrait.

DR. HAGGETT. And I was just working up such a nice surprise for you!

ABBY. Well, I caught you at it! And I'd be ashamed!

DR. HAGGETT. You think I was trying to do something sneaky!

ABBY. Sneaky and greedy! I knew your wife and Ada was both greedy! But I never knew you was!

DR. HAGGETT [*hurt*]. Oh, Abby, how could you say that of me? When I was only trying to make some money for you! I don't mean that fifty! That was just for fun! I was really going to give you a thousand dollars! A thousand dollars, Abby!

ABBY. And you were going to get it by selling my portrait!

DR. HAGGETT. People in your circumstances ain't got no right to own things that are worth so much money!

ABBY. That may be! But my portrait's all I got in the world! The boy who painted it . . . Well, I ain't ashamed to say it now, it's so long ago. I loved him and I still love him! And he died just after he finished painting it, so it was the last thing he ever painted! That's why it means so much to me! It means all the happiness I ever had! And you know that I ain't had so much, Doctor Haggett! Now I guess I getter go and catch my train! [*And she starts back to get her bag where she left it.*]

DR. HAGGETT [*stopping her*]. Abby, you're thinking only of yourself. How about your poor brother and his children? He's a poor man, Abby!

ABBY. I know he is!

DR. HAGGETT. And he ain't got work now!

ABBY. I know that!

DR. HAGGETT. You'll all be poor out there in Chicago!

ABBY. I can't help it, Doctor!

DR. HAGGETT. And his children! Wouldn't you like to give 'em advantages?

ABBY. But I promised Chris Bean I'd never part with my portrait! The last time I ever seen him I promised him that! He painted it for me!

DR. HAGGETT. Who's being greedy now? Who would your brother's children say was greedy?

ABBY. Don't keep after me! Let me go and catch . . .

DR. HAGGETT. Abby, there's something else you ain't thought of! That portrait don't even belong to you! [ABBY *gasps. He drives on.*] It was time I paid for you wasted sitting for Chris Bean to paint it when you'd ought to have been working for me instead.

ABBY. It ain't so! I worked every minute he was painting! Every minute! I remember how we used to set out in that barn, me working and him painting!

DR. HAGGETT. You used to take him out our coffee to drink!

ABBY. I never! You know how Mrs. Haggett always watched the coffee! That was my own breakfast coffee that I saved for him and took out to him. It was all I ever had to give him, my coffee was! There now! What more meanness can you think up?

DR. HAGGETT. I'll be honest with you! Honesty's the best policy, after all! They want to pay me twenty-five thousand for your portrait!

ABBY [*stunned*]. Twenty-five thou . . . !

DR. HAGGETT. Divide with me, Abby! Take half and give me half! If it wasn't for me you wouldn't have none of it!

ABBY. No!

DR. HAGGETT. Take more than half!

ABBY. No!

DR. HAGGETT. Take fifteen thousand!

ABBY. No!

DR. HAGGETT. Think what you could do for your brother's children with fifteen thousand!

ABBY. No! No, I tell you!

DR. HAGGETT [*holding her*]. Take twenty thousand!

ABBY. Let go of my dress!

DR. HAGGETT. Greed, Abby, greed!

ABBY. It ain't greed! I wouldn't take a million. You ought to be ashamed! ! !

[*Pause. Then*]

DR. HAGGETT. I am.

[*Long pause*]

ABBY. Well, now will you let me go?

DR. HAGGETT. Yes, God help me, I'll have to let you go.

[*She turns lovingly back to the portrait. Then a thought strikes her.*]

ABBY. He was so poor, Chris was. He never had no good coat nor nothing warm, only that one sweater I knitted for him. He never had no warm room to sleep in nights nor nothing he needed, he was so poor! If he could have afforded to go away from here down South he needn't have died. I used to pray that we'd get an early thaw just for Chris's sake. How is it a man dies so poor when he painted pictures that's worth so much?

DR. HAGGETT. Because nobody had any use for his pictures while he was living.

ABBY. I always liked 'em. That's why I kept so many. Not only just because he painted 'em. I thought . . .

DR. HAGGETT. You kept so many?

ABBY. Yes, I kept them!

DR. HAGGETT [*wetting his dry lips feverishly*]. How did you get them?

ABBY. Mrs. Haggett she put 'em on the bonfire and I took them off! [*She has again started for her handbag.*]

DR. HAGGETT. Where are they now?

ABBY. In my trunk. I rolled 'em up. But they're all right. I looked. . . .

DR. HAGGETT. How many are there?

ABBY. There's seventeen of them.

[DR. HAGGETT *gasps.*]

DR. HAGGETT. Seventeen, Abby? Did you say seventeen? [*He turns from her and runs to the entry door shouting*] Hannah! Hannah!

[*The entry door is opened from without.*]

MRS. HAGGETT [*as she enters*]. What is it, Milton?
DR. HAGGETT. Ada!
ADA [*as she enters*]. Pa!
DR. HAGGETT. Mr. Rosen!
ROSEN [*as he enters*] Good God, what now?

Almost together

DR. HAGGETT. Come back in here! Never mind the portrait! [THE OTHERS *pour back into the room.*] The other pictures have been found!

TALLANT [*as he enters*]. No!

[ABBY *listens in confusion and alarm.*]

DR. HAGGETT. The ones you burned, Hannah! [*He hugs her.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. Milton!

DR. HAGGETT. Only you never burned 'em! Abby's got 'em in her trunk! There's seventeen of 'em!

DAVENPORT. Seventeen new Christopher Beans!

[WARREN CREAMER *comes into the entry, carrying* ABBY'S *old leather trunk,* SUSAN *following to steer it clear of the paint.*]

MRS. HAGGETT. It's a fortune, Milton!

ADA. And it's ours!

DR. HAGGETT [*breaking loose from the women*]. Put that trunk down and open it. [*He charges the entry.*]

WARREN. I just roped it up!

DR. HAGGETT [*as* MRS. HAGGETT *and* ADA *crowd into the entry after him,* ABBY *bringing up the rear*]. Unrope it! Got a knife, ain't you!

ABBY. You'll make me miss my train, Doctor Haggett!

ADA. Talking about trains at a time like this!

WARREN [*cutting the rope*]. There!

[DR. HAGGETT *throws up the lid of the trunk.*]

DR. HAGGETT. Now, Abby, where are they?

ABBY. Better let me! I don't like for folks to go messing in my trunk! [*She bends over the trunk and takes out a fattish roll of canvases.*]

DR. HAGGETT. Hah! [*He snatches them from her and comes back to* ROSEN.] Now I'll talk business with you, Mr. Rosen!

ROSEN. Excuse me, Doctor Haggett, but I'm the picture dealer! [*He takes the roll of canvases from Doctor Haggett and goes to the desk.* MRS. HAGGETT, ADA *and* DR. HAGGETT *follow.* ROSEN *places the roll before him, sits in the doctor's chair, and spreads out the pictures.* MRS. HAGGETT, ADA *and* DAVENPORT *hover about him. Only* TALLANT *holds back.*] Well, Doctor Haggett, I wasn't prepared for any such deal as this!

DAVENPORT [*as he sees the first one*]. Carefully now! Don't harm them! Ah!

DR. HAGGETT. What do you think it's worth?

DAVENPORT. Well, I don't know! That requires thought!

ABBY [*still in the door with* SUSAN *and* WARREN]. Will you rope up my trunk for me again, please, Warren?

[WARREN *ropes up the trunk,* SUSAN *assisting.* ABBY *looks from the trunk to the group at the desk.*]

DR. HAGGETT. What would you say it's worth, Mr. Davenport? You said you'd tell me. Is it worth ten thousand?

DAVENPORT. Easily, I should say.

DR. HAGGETT. Do you hear that, Hannah? Easily ten thousand for the first one on the pile! And seventeen of 'em!

ADA. We're rich, Ma! We're rich!

[ROSEN *turns over a new picture.*]

DAVENPORT. Oh!

MRS. HAGGETT. Seems like we must be, but it kind of gets my stomach.

ABBY [*trying pitifully to edge in*]. Were you aiming to sell those too, Dr. Haggett?

DR. HAGGETT. What's that?

DAVENPORT [*as he bends over the second canvas*]. The Hill Pasture! It *must* be The Hill Pasture!

[TALLANT *picks up his own Hill Pasture, looks at it and shrugs his shoulders.*]

DR. HAGGETT. Certainly it's The Hill Pasture!

[TALLANT *turns, puts on his hat and takes his picture out with him.*]

ABBY. I saved them! [*She stops as she sees* TALLANT *go.*]

DAVENPORT [*as he sees another painting*]. Oh, look!

ABBY. I saved those from burning and I thought they'd be mine to keep!

ROSEN [*to* DR. HAGGETT]. Before we start talking business, I've got to know if you really are the rightful owner this time.

MRS. HAGGETT. Who would be if he ain't?

DR. HAGGETT [*to* ROSEN]. I got your word for it they're mine. Did the boy have any family living? And weren't they left here against an unpaid bill?

DAVENPORT. Yes, Rosen, I expect they do belong to him.

ABBY. Oh!

DR. HAGGETT. There, you see!

ABBY. Well . . .

DAVENPORT. Let's look through the rest.

[*No one pays the slightest attention to* ABBY.]

ABBY. Goodbye.

ROSEN. Well, as I say, I never tackled anything this big before. A corner in Christopher Beans, though.

ABBY. Goodbye, Doctor Haggett. I'll be going now.

DR. HAGGETT. That's what it is, Mr. Rosen! [*He laughs joyously.*] A corner!

DAVENPORT. I wouldn't be in any hurry to sell, Doctor. Not the lot, anyway.

ROSEN. I wasn't figuring on that, Mr. Davenport. Why, he may have a couple of hundred thousand in this pile!

ADA. Ma!

ABBY. Goodbye, Ada. Goodbye, Mrs. Haggett.

ROSEN. I don't know, though. I might get the deal financed. Would you give me time?

DR. HAGGETT. Don't know about giving time.

ABBY. Goodbye, I got to be going now . . . well . . . [*She turns back to* WARREN.] Well, I'll just go! I guess there ain't nothing else to do!

ROSEN [*low, as he figures on a bit of paper*]. Schmidt might come in on this . . . And there's Goldstein. I might put him down for a . . .

[*The group at the desk turn over another and another with low exclamations of delighted amazement.*]

ABBY. Will you take my trunk out, Warren?

[WARREN *nods to* SUSAN *who goes by front door.* WARREN *picks up the trunk and follows after her.* ABBY *goes for the handbag by the kitchen door, picks it up and returns to get the portrait.*]

ROSEN. I tell you what, Doctor Haggett. Suppose you keep that check I gave you for a thirty day option?

DR. HAGGETT. Well if you set a price on the lot now. But a good price, mind.

ROSEN. Let me figure up.

DR. HAGGETT [*laughing*]. You go right ahead, Mr. Rosen! We're not going to stop you figuring!

[ROSEN *proceeds to figure, all the others watching over his shoulder.* DAVENPORT, *losing interest in the bargaining turns and sees* ABBY.]

ABBY [*to herself in the meanwhile*]. Well, if they're too busy to say goodbye I can't make 'em. I ain't going to miss my train. I'll just get my portrait and . . .

DAVENPORT. Oh, Abby! [*He goes to her.*] You're going, are you?

ABBY. Yes, I'm going. I tried to say goodbye, but they're so busy!

DAVENPORT. Will you let me say just one word to you about your portrait? [*She is frightened again.*] Oh, I'm not trying to take it from you! But, Abby, a work of art like that is a responsibility. It's yours, but only yours in trust for the future. Take it with you to Chicago by all means. But when you get there, don't keep it where it won't be safe. Lend it to the Chicago Art Institute. You could go and see it every day, you know. Would you do that, Abby?

ABBY. I'd think about it.

ROSEN [*looking up from his figures*]. A hundred and eighty thousand.

DR. HAGGETT. You said two hundred!

ROSEN. I appeal to Mr. Davenport!

DAVENPORT [*holding up his hand for silence*]. Please, Abby! I know it's more than a work of art to you. [MRS. HAGGETT *looks up.*] I know the bond that must have existed between you and Chris Bean when he painted it.

MRS. HAGGETT [*a supercilious sniff*]. Bond! Huh! Carryings on! If you call that a bond!

[ABBY *looks at her, but turns back with her own dignity to answer* DAVENPORT.]

ABBY. Mr. Davenport, Chris was the only man ever asked me to marry him. [*Though the words are spoken quietly they fall like lead upon the room's sudden attention.*]

DR. HAGGETT. You . . . [*He moves toward her.*] You didn't marry him, though, Abby?

ABBY. He was so sick, I couldn't refuse him nothing.

[*The idea strikes all present simultaneously.*]

DAVENPORT. Then you're his widow!

ABBY. I know I am!

DR. HAGGETT [*frenetic crescendo*]. She's got to prove it! She's got to prove it!! She's got to prove it!!!

[WARREN *enters, picks up picture and bag and carries them out. This will not be noticed, however, except as adding to the general agitation. Everyone is talking at once and at the top of his or her voice, protesting to everyone else, and paying not the least attention to anyone else. This is what each one of them says:*]

DAVENPORT. I believe she can!

ABBY [*to one after the other and to all at once*]. Certainly I can! I got my marriage lines out in my . . . Do you want to see . . . ? And my wedding ring on a . . . Look! [*She jerks the ring on a*

ribbon from within her dress and holds it up so that all present can see.] I wanted to hold folks' good opinion and my . . . But I don't care who knows it now! I'm Mrs. Christopher Bean, that's who I am, just as much as she's Mrs. Haggett and I never carried on with . . .

ROSEN [*at the same time*]. In that case these pictures belong to her! My God! I can't do business this way! If they don't know the difference between . . . Oh, I give it up!

MRS. HAGGETT [*snatching the roll of paintings from* ROSEN'S *lap*]. Well, she doesn't get these away from me! Not over my dead body she doesn't. If these pictures were mine to burn they're mine to keep and . . .

ADA [*at the same time, through gushing tears*]. Ma, does that mean Pa can't . . . ? Answer me, Ma! Aren't these pictures ours to sell? Oh, it isn't fair! It just isn't fair! I don't think it's . . .

DAVENPORT [*at the same time to* ABBY *in complete delight*]. And you never told! But, Abby, why didn't you? This is magnificent! And it's turning out just as Chris Bean would have . . .

[*But, like* ROSEN, DR. HAGGETT *has given up. He gave up after that first glimpse of* ABBY'S *wedding ring. He turned from that to* ROSEN, *thrust the fatal check back upon him, snatched the pictures from his wife's arms and finally, if somewhat roughly, planted them in* ABBY'S.]

DR. HAGGETT [*barely audible above the din*]. There!

ABBY [*no more audible than her late employer*]. Oh, are you giving me back . . . ?

[*But the confusion has not abated and it seems best for the curtain to fall without further explanation.*].

S. N. BEHRMAN (1893-)

America's master of the comedy of manners has led a largely uneventful life, inconspicuous but for his steady stream of plays on Broadway stages during the past twenty-five years. Samuel Nathaniel Behrman was born into a middle-class Jewish family in Worcester, Massachusetts, and studied in Clark University in that city for two years. But he was stage-struck from early youth and left college to act in a vaudeville skit that he had written himself. When his parents persuaded him to go back for his degree, it was to Harvard, where he attended George Pierce Baker's "47 Workshop" in the drama.

Behrman's efforts to gain a footing in the theater were unsuccessful for many years, so that he fell back repeatedly on university life. In 1918 he took an M.A. at Columbia, studying with Brander Matthews, the drama teacher, and St. John Ervine, the famous Irish playwright. After collaborating on unsuccessful plays in 1923 and 1926, he was at last discouraged and was about to accept an instructorship in a small college when a friend persuaded him to tear up his railway ticket. A year later his career was finally launched when the Theatre Guild produced *The Second Man*. In retrospect Behrman himself is mystified by his persistence through eleven years of rejections.

Behrman's high-comedy style was developed in the carefree twenties, and his early plays—*The Second Man* (1927), *Meteor* (1929), *Brief Moment* (1931), and *Biography* (1932)—remain his purest achievements. Their sparkling dialogue and graceful wit gave the American theater its first mature comedy of manners, which could challenge

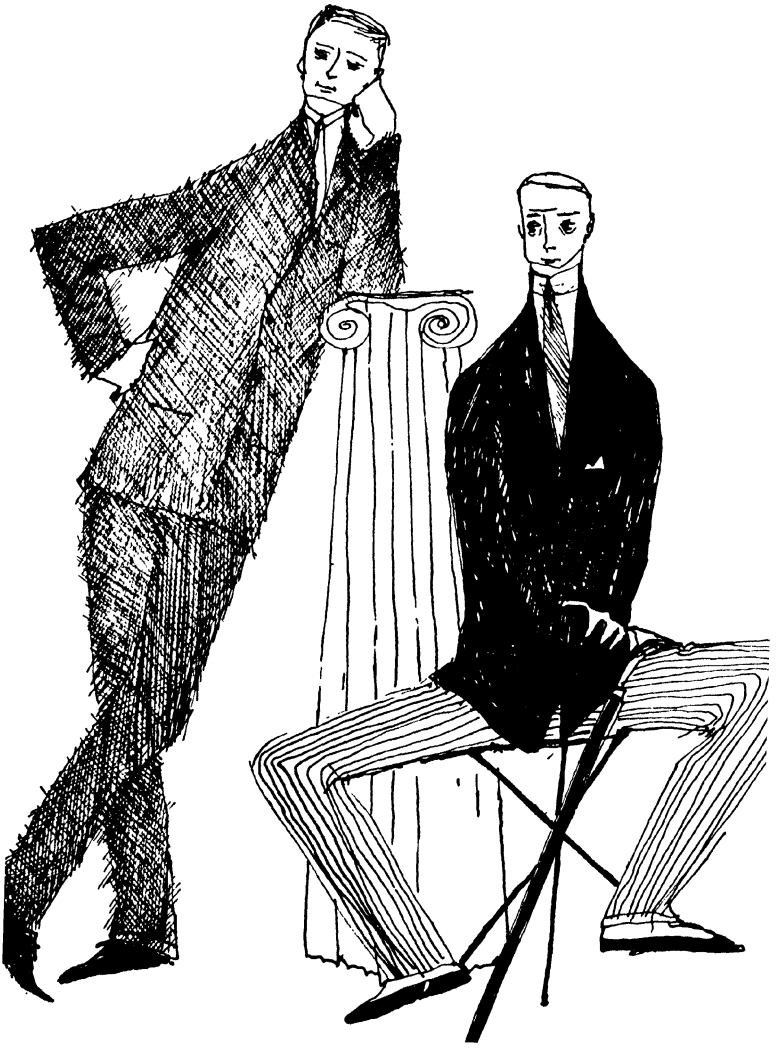
the English school of Somerset Maugham and Noel Coward in its urbanity. Yet *Biography,* in a sense his transition play, shows an increasing interest in character and a growing seriousness about political issues.

During the depression years Behrman's social conscience fought with his artistic talent as it came to seem irresponsible in a comedian to ignore the grave issues of the day. His conflicting impulses were dramatized in the character of the playwright-hero in *No Time for Comedy* (1939), whose dilemma was stated in the title. But Behrman's problem had already become evident in *Rain from Heaven* (1934), *End of Summer* (1936), and *Wine of Choice* (1938), which tried unsuccessfully to use the drawing room for serious political discussion along with comic intrigue and love-making. When he did return to pure comedy with *The Pirate* (1942) during the war, he seemed to have lost his early spontaneity. None of his later works has been worthy of his brilliant early period, which reached its peak in *Biography.*

BIOGRAPHY

The comedy of manners is a hothouse plant which matures very slowly and thrives only in the sensitive soil of a highly sophisticated society. We associate it especially with a few Old-World capitals—London, Paris, Budapest—where a leisure class of ancient growth had developed a somewhat frivolous but severely stylized pattern of social behavior and had perfected a fine art of conversation. It is almost an anachronism in our troubled times when the remaining aristocracy of Europe lives in constant fear for its existence and the idle rich in America are seldom distinguished for their wit or elegant charm. The type revives memories of the suave and abandoned court society of Charles II, for whom Etherege and Congreve composed their exquisite banter of rakes and fops, or the fabulous London dinner parties





of the Gay Nineties, when the painter Whistler and the playwright Wilde matched epigrams over the champagne.

The comedy of manners takes us into the well-appointed drawing room, where fashionable people talk on endlessly about trivialities and are seldom concerned about doing anything at all. Plot is generally quite perfunctory, involving especially the most casual complications of sex, and the characters are often much of a kind, since they are all cut from the same conversation. The essence of this comedy is wit, of a delicately sharpened variety—an idealized repartee that transcends the brilliance of any actual persiflage. Although it must give the impression of complete spontaneity, it is carefully worked out with subtle nuances and studied effects.

This type of play is sometimes called artificial comedy, because the source of its entertainment is not a searching observation of human nature, such as we found in *The Late Christopher Bean,* but a flossy picture of the social deportment of a highly mannered upper class. The problems of these parlor butterflies have little touch with reality, and their sparkling banter is all a pretty fiction of the beau monde. In Congreve and Wilde it made much of epigrams, striking paradoxes, and pithy pronouncements that could be quoted as bon mots apart from their context. But in Sheridan, Maugham, and Behrman the wit lies within the incessant give and take, and is more closely related to character. There are few epigrams as such in *Biography.* In no other kind of drama is style so important as an end in itself. The comedian of manners must write dialogue of a feathery grace and an incisive intellectuality, touching ideas with rapier taps and arousing a steady stream of civilized laughter.

Wilde, Maugham, and Coward inherited an English tradition of the comedy of manners extending back at least two centuries. It is more surprising that modern American drama, without that tradition or the polished social class that inspired it, should have produced in Philip Barry and S. N. Behrman two minor masters of the type. Not all of Behrman's attempts have caught or held the frothy spirit of this elusive genre, but in *Biography* he is in top form throughout.

Written between the two world wars, when the older social order of Europe was breaking down and a freer cosmopolitan society heavily seasoned with Americans was taking its place, *Biography* substitutes for the blasé aristocracy of Wilde's day the new smart set of New York, which is no less urbane and civilized for being less smug and stuffy. Feydak comes from the decaying old world of Continental Europe, Marion from a small town in Tennessee, but they

meet and understand each other on the international plane of artists and Bohemians, living prodigally on their talents and indifferent alike to conventional security and conventional morality. Yet they are essentially worthy people because they live sincerely without shams, and their honesty shows up the empty arrogance of the others.

Marion for all her gayety is a thoughtful person, emancipated and tolerant. She embodies one attitude toward living in the modern world—that of the courageous individualist, who has freed herself from her provincial background with its stuffy taboos so as to explore without prejudice all that experience has to offer. There is never a doubt that Behrman is on her side and that she holds the key to her own destiny as well as to that of everyone else in the play, except Feydak. Marion is a real person, sprightly and charming, a new woman who has demanded a full life and achieved it without the morbid conflicts of Ibsen's troubled heroines a generation or two before. Her numerous amours, or at least affairs, have mellowed her outlook with kindliness rather than hardening it into cynicism. The very number of them has increased her reluctance to sacrifice her freedom to any one man.

Her two suitors, on the other hand, represent two less admirable but more common approaches to modern life, which both betray unresolved personality conflicts in the men themselves. Nolan is the timid, conventional man of affairs who has accepted the standards of a humdrum provincial society and lost his birthright of independence in his eagerness for success. He has unquestioningly accepted the system. Kurt is the typical revolutionary who, having been injured by the system in his youth, pays it the compliment of aspiring to destroy it. In a perverse way he too has fallen under the spell of it and lost his right to the unrestricted enjoyment of life through his violent hate. He is appropriately a young man, while Nolan is middle-aged, but we cannot imagine that any stretch of years could sober Kurt into the pillar of society whom he despises. These unrelaxed people are easy game for the lively wit of Marion, who is free from their tensions and not on the defensive as they are. Of the lesser characters, Wilson, the shallow, conceited actor, and Kinnicott, the extrovert muscle man, come close to caricature, but in the irrepressible Slade the emancipated college girl of today can see her counterpart in the flaming youth of twenty years ago.

Biography is not without its flaws. The plot seems needlessly contrived when we discover at the end that Marion could have avoided most of the complications by admitting the innocent nature of her

references to Nolan in her autobiography. Indeed, to have left poor Nolan for so long in an agony of worry contributes a fault of something like sadism to her character. As if in compensation, Behrman shows a good deal of sympathy for Nolan in the last scenes, where he rises far above his original stature as a person. Further, the addition of the Kinnicotts so late in the play suggests that Behrman was running out of comic ideas, though they do produce a hilarious third act.

Yet these weaknesses pass hardly noticed in the able portraiture, the keen observation of manners, and the unflagging brilliance of the style. From the rise of the curtain we are caught up in the infectious buoyancy of the dialogue, which flatters our perception with its subtle innuendoes and neat turns of idea. In this and his other early comedies, Behrman gave the American stage a high comedy of which we may well feel proud.

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S. N. BEHRMAN

BIOGRAPHY[1]

CHARACTERS

Richard Kurt

Minnie
Marion Froude's maid

Melchior Feydak
a Viennese composer

Marion Froude

Leander Nolan

Warwick Wilson

Orrin Kinnicott

Slade Kinnicott
his daughter

Scenes

The entire action takes place in Marion Froude's studio in New York City. The time is 1932.

Act One
About five o'clock of an afternoon in November

Act Two
Afternoon, three weeks later

Act Three
Late afternoon, two weeks later

The curtain is lowered during the act to denote a lapse of time.

[1] *Copyright, 1932, 1933 by S. N. Behrman.*
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act 1

SCENE: *The studio apartment of* MARION FROUDE *in an old-fashioned studio building in West 57th St., New York. A great, cavernous room expressing in its polyglot furnishings the artistic patois of the various landlords who have sublet this apartment to wandering tenants like* MARION FROUDE. *The styles range from medieval Florence to contemporary Grand Rapids; on a movable raised platform in the center is a papal throne chair in red velvet and gold fringes. Not far from it is an ordinary American kitchen chair. The hanging lamp which sheds a mellow light over a French Empire sofa is filigreed copper Byzantine. Another and longer sofa across the room against the grand piano is in soft green velvet and has the gentility of a polite Park Avenue drawing room. Under the stairs, rear, which go up to* MARION'S *bedroom, are stacks of her canvases. There is a quite fine wood carving of a Madonna which seems to be centuries old and in the wall spaces looking at audience are great, dim canvases—copies by some former tenant left probably in lieu of rent —of Sargent's Lord Ribblesdale and Mme. X.*

Whether it is due to the amenable spirit of the present incumbent or because they are relaxed in the democracy of art, these oddments of the creative spirit do not suggest disharmony. The room is warm, musty, with restful shadows and limpid lights. The enormous leaded window on the right, though some of its members are patched and cracked, gleams in the descending twilight with an opalescent light; even the copper cylinder of the fire extinguisher and its attendant axe, visible in the hall, seem to be not so much implements against calamity, as amusing museum-bits cherished from an earlier time. Every school is represented here except the modern. The studio has the mellowness of anachronism.

There is a door upstage left leading to the kitchen and MINNIE'S *bedroom; a door, center, under the stairs leads into hallway. A door on the stair landing, center, leads to* MARION'S *bedroom.*

TIME: *About five o'clock of an afternoon in November.*

AT RISE: RICHARD KURT *is finishing a nervous cigarette. He has the essential audacity which comes from having seen the worst happen, from having endured the keenest pain. He has the hardness of one who knows that he can be devastated by pity, the bitterness which comes from having seen, in early youth, justice thwarted and tears unavailing, the self-reliance which comes from having seen everything go in a disordered world save one stubborn, unyielding core of belief—at everything else he laughs, in this alone he trusts. He has the intensity of the fanatic and the carelessness of the vagabond. He goes to the door from the hall and calls.*

KURT. Say, you, hello there—what's your name?

[MINNIE, MARION FROUDE'S *inseparable maid, a German woman of about fifty, comes in. She is indignant at being thus summarily summoned, and by a stranger.*]

MINNIE [*with dignity*]. My name iss Minnie, if you please.

KURT. What time did Miss Froude go out?

MINNIE. About two o'clock.

KURT. It's nearly five now. She should be home, shouldn't she?

MINNIE. She said she vas coming home to tea and that iss all I know.

KURT [*grimly*]. I know. She invited me to tea. . . . Where did she go to lunch?

MINNIE [*acidly*]. That I do not know.

KURT. Did someone call for her or did she go out alone? I have a reason for asking.

MINNIE. She went out alone. Any more questions?

KURT. No. I see there's no point in asking you questions.

MINNIE. Den vy do you ask dem? [*The doorbell rings.* MINNIE *throws up her hands in despair. She goes out muttering "Ach Gott."* KURT *is rather amused at her. He lights another cigarette.*]

[*Sounds of vociferous greeting outside. "Ach mein lieber Herr Feydak . . ."* MELCHIOR FEYDAK, *the Austrian composer, comes in. He is forty-five, tall, hook-nosed, thin-faced, a humorist with a rather sad face.*]

FEYDAK. Nun, Minnie, und wo is die schlechte. . . . ?[1] [MINNIE *makes a sign to him not to disclose their free-masonry in the presence of strangers. She is cautious. . . .*] Not home yet, eh, Minnie? Where

[1] *Nun . . . schlechte? Now, Minnie, where is the bad girl?*

is she? Well—well. How do they say—gallivanting—I love that word —gallivanting as usual. Well, I'll wait. It's humiliating—but I'll wait. Chilly! Brr! I don't mind so much being cold in London or Vienna, I expect it. But I can't stand it in New York. [*He warms himself before fire.*] And who is this young man?

MINNIE [*shortly*]. Ich weiss nicht! . . . Er hat alle fünf Minuten gefragt wo Sie ist—[1] [*She goes out.*]

FEYDAK. You've offended Minnie, I can see that.

KURT. That's just too bad!

FEYDAK. We all tremble before Minnie. . . . Been waiting long?

KURT. Over half an hour!

FEYDAK. Extraordinary thing—ever since I've known Marion there's always been someone waiting for her. There are two kinds of people in one's life—people whom one keeps waiting—and the people for whom one waits. . . .

KURT. Is that an epigram?

FEYDAK. Do you object to epigrams?

KURT [*with some pride*]. I despise epigrams.

FEYDAK [*tolerantly sizing* KURT *up*]. Hm! Friend of Miss Froude's?

KURT. Not at all.

FEYDAK. That at least is no cause for pride.

KURT. I just don't happen to be, that's all.

FEYDAK. I commiserate you.

KURT. I despise gallantry also.

FEYDAK [*lightly*]. And I thought Americans were so sentimental. . . .

KURT. And, together with other forms of glibness, I loathe generalization. . . .

FEYDAK [*drily*]. Young man, we have a great deal in common.

KURT. Also, there is a faint flavor of condescension in the way you say "young man" for which I don't really care. . . .

FEYDAK [*delighted and encouraging him to go on*]. What about me do you like? There must be something.

KURT. If I were that kind your question would embarrass me.

FEYDAK [*very pleased*]. Good for Marion!

KURT. Why do you say that?

FEYDAK. She always had a knack for picking up originals!

KURT. You are under a misapprehension. Miss Froude did not pick me up. I picked her up. [FEYDAK *stares at him. This does shock him.*]

[1] *Ich . . . ist, I don't know. He's been asking every five minutes where she is.*

I wrote Miss Froude a letter—a business-letter. She answered and gave me an appointment for four-thirty. It is now after five. She has taken a half-hour out of my life. . . .

FEYDAK. I gather that fragment of time has great value. . . .

KURT. She has shortened my life by thirty minutes. God, how I hate Bohemians!

FEYDAK [*innocently*]. Are you by any chance—an Evangelist?

KURT. I am—for the moment—a businessman. I'm not here to hold hands or drink tea. I'm here on business. My presence here is a favor to Miss Froude and likely to bring her a handsome profit. . . .

FEYDAK. Profit! Ah! That accounts for her being late. . . .

KURT [*sceptically*]. You despise profit, I suppose! Are you—by any chance—old-world?

FEYDAK. Young man, your technique is entirely wasted on me. . . .

KURT. Technique! What are you talking about?

FEYDAK. When I was a young man—before I achieved any sort of success—I was rude on principle. Deliberately rude and extravagantly bitter in order to make impression. When it is no longer necessary for you to wait around for people in order to do them favors you'll mellow down, I assure you.

KURT [*fiercely, he has been touched*]. You think so, do you! That's where you're mistaken! I'm rude now. When I'm successful I'll be murderous!

FEYDAK [*genially*]. More power to you! But I've never seen it happen yet. Success is the great muffler! Not an epigram, I hope. If it is—forgive me.

[*A moment's pause.* KURT *studies him while* FEYDAK *crosses to stove and warms his hands.*]

KURT. I know you from somewhere. It's very tantalizing.

FEYDAK. I don't think so. I have only just arrived in this country. . . .

KURT. Still I know you—I'm sure—I've seen you somewhere. . . .

FEYDAK [*understanding the familiarity*]. Maybe you know Miss Froude's portrait of me. . . .

KURT [*doubtfully*]. Yes—maybe that's it . . . may I ask . . . ?

FEYDAK. Certainly. My name is Feydak.

KURT. The composer?

FEYDAK [*drily*]. Yes. . . .

KURT. I thought he was dead. . . .

FEYDAK. That is true. But I hope you won't tell anyone—for I am his ghost. . . .

KURT [*putting this down for Continental humor and genuinely contrite*]. Forgive me. . . .

FEYDAK. But why?

KURT. If you really are Feydak the composer—I have the most enormous admiration for you. I worship music above everything.

FEYDAK [*slightly bored*]. Go on. . . .

KURT. I read in the paper—you're on your way to Hollywood. . . .

FEYDAK. Yes. I am on my way to Hollywood. . . .

KURT. In the new state men like you won't have to prostitute themselves in Hollywood. . . .

FEYDAK. Ah! A Utopian!

KURT. Yes. You use the word as a term of contempt. Why? Every artist is a Utopian. You must be very tired or you wouldn't be so contemptuous of Utopians.

FEYDAK [*with a charming smile*]. I am rather tired. Old-world, you would call it.

KURT. You can be anything you like. . . .

FEYDAK [*satirically*]. Thank you. . . .

KURT. You've written lovely music—I have a friend who plays every note of it. I didn't see your operetta when it was done here. . . . I didn't have the price . . . it was very badly done though, I heard. . . .

FEYDAK. I must explain to you—you are under a misapprehension. . . .

KURT. It was done here, wasn't it?

FEYDAK. Not about the operetta. You are under a misapprehension —about me. I am a composer—but I didn't write "Danubia." That was my brother, Victor Feydak. You are right. He is dead. You are the first person I have met in New York who even suspected it.

KURT. I'm sorry.

FEYDAK. Not at all. I am flattered. At home our identities were never confused. Is this the well-known American hospitality? It is, in some sort, compensation for his death. . . .

[KURT *is embarrassed and uncomfortable. It is part of his essential insecurity; he is only really at home in protest. He wants to get out.*]

KURT. I'm sorry—I. . . .

FEYDAK [*easily*]. But why?

KURT. I think I'll leave a note for Miss Froude—get that girl in here, will you?

FEYDAK. Let's have some tea—she's sure to be in any minute. . . .

KURT. No, thanks. And you might tell her for me that if she wants to see me about the matter I wrote her about she can come to my office. . . .

[MARION FROUDE *comes in. She is one of those women the sight of whom on Fifth Ave., where she has just been walking, causes foreigners to exclaim enthusiastically that American women are the most radiant in the world. She is tall, lithe, indomitably alive. Unlike* KURT, *the tears in things have warmed without scalding her; she floats life like a dancer's scarf in perpetual enjoyment of its colors and contours.*]

MARION [*to* KURT]. I'm *so* sorry!

FEYDAK [*coming toward her*]. I don't believe a word of it!

[*She is overjoyed at seeing* FEYDAK. *She can't believe for a second that it is he. Then she flies into his arms.*]

MARION. Feydie! Oh, Feydie, I've been trying everywhere to reach you—I can't believe it. . . . Feydie darling!

FEYDAK [*severely*]. Is this how you keep a business appointment, Miss Froude?

MARION. How long have you waited? If I'd only known. . . . [*Suddenly conscious that* KURT *had waited too*] Oh, I'm sorry, Mr.—Mr.— . . . ?

KURT. Kurt. Richard Kurt.

MARION. Oh, of course, Mr. Kurt. I say—could you possibly—would it be too much trouble—could you come back?

FEYDAK [*same tone*]. This young man is here on business. It is more important. I can wait. I'll come back.

MARION. No, no, Feydie—no, no. I can't wait for that. I'm sure Mr. Kurt will understand. Mr. Feydak is an old friend whom I haven't seen in ever so long. It isn't as if Mr. Kurt were a regular businessman.

FEYDAK [*amused*]. How do you know he isn't?

MARION [*breathless with excitement*]. I can tell. He's not a bit like his letter. When I got your letter I was sure you were jowley and, you know—[*she makes a gesture*]—convex. I'm sure, Feydie—whatever the business is—[*to* KURT]—you did say you had some, didn't you?—I'm sure it can wait. A half-hour anyway. Can't it wait a half-hour? You see, Feydie and I haven't seen each other since. . . .

KURT. Vienna!

MARION [*astonished*]. Yes. How did you know?

KURT. It's always since Vienna that Bohemians haven't seen each other, isn't it? I'll be back in thirty minutes. [*He goes.*]

MARION. What a singular young man!

FEYDAK. I've been having a very amusing talk with him. Professional rebel, I think. Well, my dear—you look marvelous!

[*They take each other in.*]

MARION. Isn't it wonderful. . . .

FEYDAK. It is nice!

[*They sit on sofa,* MARION *left of* FEYDAK.]

MARION. How long is it?

FEYDAK. Well, it's since. . . .

MARION [*firmly*]. Since Vicki died.

FEYDAK. That's right. I haven't seen you since.

MARION. Since that day—we walked behind him.

FEYDAK. Yes.

MARION. I felt I couldn't bear to stay on. I left for London that night.

FEYDAK. Yes.

MARION. It's six years, isn't it?

FEYDAK. Yes. Six years last June.

[*A pause*]

MARION. What's happened since then? Nothing. . . .

FEYDAK. How long have you been here?

MARION. Two weeks.

FEYDAK. Busy?

MARION. Not professionally, I'm afraid. People are charming—they ask me to lunch and dinner and they're—"oh, so interested"—but no commissions so far. And God, how I need it. . . .

FEYDAK. I'm surprised. I gathered you'd been very successful.

MARION. It's always sounded like it, hasn't it? The impression, I believe, is due to the extreme notoriety of some of my sitters. Oh, I've managed well enough up to now—if I'd been more provident I dare say I could have put a tidy bit by—but at the moment people don't seem in a mood to have their portraits done. Are they less vain than they used to be? Or just poorer?

FEYDAK. Both, I think. . . .

MARION. Last time I came here I was awfully busy. Had great réclame because I'd been in Russia doing leading Communists. Obeying some subtle paradox the big financiers flocked to me. Pittsburgh manufacturers wanted to be done by the same brush that had tackled Lenin. Now they seem less eager. Must be some reason, Feydie. But what about you? Let me hear about you. How's Kathie?

FEYDAK. Well. She's here with me.

MARION. And Sadye?

FEYDAK. Splendid.

MARION. She must be a big girl now.

FEYDAK. As tall as you are.

MARION. Kathie used to hate me, didn't she? Frightened to death of me. Was afraid I was after Vicki's money. . . .

FEYDAK. Yes. She was afraid you'd marry him and that we should have less from him. When we knew he was dying she was in a panic.

MARION. Poor dear—I could have spared her all that worry if she'd been halfway civil to me.

FEYDAK. Kathie is practical. And she is a good mother. Those are attributes which make women avaricious.

MARION. Did Vicki leave you very much?

FEYDAK. Not very much. Half to you.

MARION. Really? How sweet of him! How dear of him!

FEYDAK. We've spent it. . . .

MARION. Of course you should.

FEYDAK. But I'll soon be in position to repay you your share. I'm on my way to Hollywood.

MARION. Are you really? How wonderful for you, Feydie! I'm so glad.

FEYDAK. You've been there, haven't you?

MARION. Yes. Last time I was in America.

FEYDAK. Did you like it?

MARION. Well, it's the new Eldorado—art on the gold-rush.

FEYDAK [*with a kind of ironic bitterness*]. Vicki left me an inheritance subject, it appears, to perpetual renewal.

MARION. How do you mean?

FEYDAK. Things have been going from bad to worse in Vienna—you haven't been there since '25 so you don't know. The theatre's pretty well dead—even the first-rate fellows have had a hard time making their way. I managed to get several scores to do—but they were not—except that they were failures—up to my usual standard. . . .

MARION [*laughing, reproachful*]. Oh, Feydie . . . !

FEYDAK. If it weren't for the money Vicki left me—and you!—I don't know how we should have got through at all these six years. About a month ago we reached the end of our rope—we were hopelessly in debt—no means of getting out—when the miracle happened. . . .

[MARION *is excited, touches his knee with her hand.*]

MARION [*murmuring*]. I can't bear it. . . .

FEYDAK. It was my dramatic agent on the phone. A great American film magnate was in town and wanted to see me. Ausgerechnet me and no other. Even my agent couldn't keep the surprise out of his voice. Why me? I asked. God knows, says the agent. Well, we went around to the Bristol to see the magnate. And, as we talked to him, it gradually became apparent. He thought I was Vicki. He didn't know Vicki was dead! He thought I had written "Danubia."

MARION. Did he say so?

FEYDAK. No—not at all. But as we shook hands at the end he said to me: "Any man that can write a tune like this is the kind of man we want." And he whistled, so out of tune that I could hardly recognize it myself, the waltz from Danubia. Do you remember it? [*He starts to hum the waltz and* MARION *joins him. They hum together, then* FEYDAK *continues to talk as* MARION *continues to hum a few more measures.*] He was so innocent, so affable that I had an impulse to say to him: "Look here, old fellow, you don't want me, you want my brother and, in order to get him, you'll have to resurrect him!" But noble impulses are luxury impulses. You have to be well off to gratify them. I kept quiet. We shook hands and here I am. Tonight they're giving me a dinner at the Waldorf Astoria for the press to meet my brother! Irony if you like, eh, Marion?

[*There is a pause.*]

MARION. Feydie . . . [*A moment. He does not answer.*] Feydie—do you mind if I say something to you—very frankly?

FEYDAK. I doubt whether you can say anything to me more penetrating than the remarks I habitually address to myself.

MARION. You know Vicki was very fond of you. He used to say you put too high a valuation on genius.

FEYDAK. Because he had it he could afford to deprecate it.

MARION. Over and over again he used to say to me: "You know, Marion," he would say, "as a human being Feydie's far superior to me, more amiable, more witty, more talented, more patient. . . ."

FEYDAK [*shakes his head*]. Not true. I simply give the impression of these things. . . .

MARION. You underrate yourself, Feydie. . . . How this would have amused him—this incident with the Hollywood man!

FEYDAK [*smiling bitterly*]. It would rather. . . .

MARION. Why do you grudge giving him a laugh somewhere? I never had a chance to tell you in Vienna—things were so—so close and terrible—at the end—but he had the greatest tenderness for you.

He used to speak of you—I can't tell you how much. "Because of this sixth sense for making tunes which I have and he hasn't," he said to me one day—not a week before he died— "he thinks himself less than me." He used to tell me that everything he had he owed to you—to the sacrifices you made to send him to the Conservatory when he was a boy. . . . The extent to which he had outstripped you hurt him—hurt him. I felt he would have given anything to dip into the golden bowl of his genius and pour it over you. And do you know what was the terror of his life, the obsessing terror of his life? —his fear of your resenting him. . . .

FEYDAK [*moved, deeply ashamed*]. Marion. . . .

MARION. Don't resent him now, Feydie. . . . Why, it's such fun—don't you see? It's such a curious, marginal survival for him—that a badly remembered waltz-tune, five years after his death, should be the means of helping you at a moment when you need it so badly. . . . It's delicious, Feydie. It's such fun! The only awful thing is the possibility that he is unaware of it. It would have pleased him so, Feydie. Must you grudge him it?

FEYDAK. You make me horribly ashamed. . . .

MARION [*brightly*]. Nonsense. . . .

FEYDAK. Because I did grudge him it—yes—I won't, though—I see now that it never occurred to me how . . . [*Bursts out laughing suddenly*] God, it is funny, isn't it. . . .

MARION [*joining in his laughter*]. Of course—it's delightful. . . .

[*They both laugh heartily and long.*]

MARION. And the funny thing is—you'll be much better for them out there than he would have been.

FEYDAK. Surely! They'll be able to whistle *my* tunes!

MARION. Don't you see!

FEYDAK. Oh, Lieber Schatzel,[1] come out there with me.

MARION. Can't.

FEYDAK. I wish, Marion, you would come. I never feel life so warm and good as when you are in the neighborhood.

MARION. Dear Feydie, you're very comforting.

FEYDAK. Is there someone that keeps you here?

MARION. No, there's no one. I'm quite alone.

FEYDAK. Well then . . . !

MARION. No, this isn't the moment for me, Feydie. Besides, I can't afford the journey. I'm frightfully hard up[2] at the moment.

[1] ***Lieber Schatzel,*** *darling.*

[2] ***hard up,*** *a plant leading to Marion's acceptance of Kurt's offer soon after.*

FEYDAK. Well, look here, I . . .

MARION. No, that's sweet of you but I couldn't.

FEYDAK. I don't see why—it's too silly. . . .

MARION. Vanity. A kind of vanity.

FEYDAK. But I owe it to you!

MARION. I suppose it is foolish in a way—but I've a kind of pride in maneuvering on my own. I always have done it—in that way at least I've been genuinely independent. I'm a little proud of my ingenuity. And do you know, Feydie, no matter how hard up I've been at different times something's always turned up for me. I have a kind of curiosity to know what it will be this time. It would spoil the fun for me to take money from my friends. Nothing so much as that would make me doubtful of my own—shall we say—marketability?

FEYDAK. Paradoxical, isn't it?

MARION. Why not? Anyway, it's a pet idée of mine, so be a darling and let me indulge it, will you, Feydie, and don't offer me money. Anyway, I've a business proposition on. . . .

FEYDAK. Have you?

MARION. That young man who was just here. Do you suppose he'll come back? Now I think of it we were a bit short with him, weren't we? I was so glad to see you I couldn't be bothered with him! [*Sound of doorbell*] Ah! You see! [*Calls outside*] Show him in, Minnie!

[MINNIE *comes in and exits hall door to admit the visitor.*]

FEYDAK. What are you doing for dinner?

MARION. There's a young man who attached himself to me on the boat.

FEYDAK. Oh, Marion!

MARION. I seem to attract youth, Feydie. What shall I do about it?

FEYDAK. Where are you dining?

MARION. I don't know. . . . Which speakeasy? Tell me which one and I'll . . .

[MINNIE *ushers in* MR. LEANDER NOLAN. *He is middle-aged, ample, handsome. Looks like the late Warren Gamaliel Harding.*[1] *Soberly dressed and wears a waistcoat with white piping on it. The façade is impeccable but in* NOLAN'S *eye you may discern, at odd moments, an uncertainty, an almost boyish anxiety to please, to be right, that is rather engaging.* MARION, *who expected the young man, is rather startled.* MR. NOLAN *regards her with satisfaction.*]

[1] ***Warren Gamaliel Harding.*** *The twenty-ninth president of the United States was a handsome middle-aged man, but otherwise undistinguished.*

NOLAN. Hello, Marion.

MARION [*doubtfully, feels she should remember him*]. How do you do? Er—will you excuse me—just a second . . . ?

NOLAN [*genially*]. Certainly. [*He moves right.* MARION *walks* FEYDIE *to the hall door.*]

FEYDAK [*under his breath to her*]. Looks like a commission. [*She makes a gesture of silent prayer.*]

MARION [*out loud*]. Telephone me in an hour, will you, Feydie, and let me know which speakeasy. . . .

FEYDAK [*once he has her in the hallway out of* NOLAN'S *hearing*]. Also, du kommst ganz sicher?[1]

MARION. Vielleicht später.[2] 'Bye, Feydie dear.

[FEYDIE *goes out.* MARION *turns to face* NOLAN *who is standing with his arms behind his back rather enjoying the surprise he is about to give her.*]

NOLAN. How are you, Marion?

MARION [*delicately*]. Er—do I know you?

NOLAN. Yes. You know me.

MARION. Oh, yes—of course!

NOLAN. About time!

MARION [*brightly insecure*]. Lady Winchester's garden-party at Ascot—two summers ago. . . .

NOLAN. Guess again!

MARION. No—I know you perfectly well—it's just that—no, don't tell me. . . . [*She covers her eyes with her hand, trying to conjure him out of the past.*]

NOLAN. This is astonishing. If someone had said to me that I could walk into a room in front of Marion Froude and she not know me I'd have told 'em they were crazy . . . !

MARION [*desperate*]. I do know you. I know you perfectly well —it's just that . . .

NOLAN. You'll be awful sore at yourself—I warn you . . .

MARION. I can't forgive myself now—I know!

NOLAN. I don't believe it!

MARION. The American Embassy dinner in Rome on the Fourth of July—last year—you sat on my right.

NOLAN. I did not!

MARION [*miserably*]. Well, you sat somewhere. Where did you sit?

[1] ***Also . . . sicher?*** *So you'll come for sure?*
[2] ***Vielleicht später,*** *maybe later.*

NOLAN. I wasn't there.

MARION. Well, I think it's very unkind of you to keep me in suspense like this. I can't bear it another second!

NOLAN. I wouldn't have believed it!

MARION. Well, give me some hint, will you?

NOLAN. Think of home—think of Tennessee!

MARION. Oh . . . !

NOLAN. Little Mary Froude. . . .

MARION. [*a light breaking in on her*]. No! Oh, no!

NOLAN. Well, it's about time. . . .

MARION. But . . . ! You were . . .

NOLAN. Well, so were you!

MARION. But—Bunny—you aren't Bunny Nolan, are you? You're his brother!

NOLAN. I have no brother.

MARION. But Bunny—Bunny dear—how important you've become!

NOLAN. I haven't done badly—no.

MARION. Here, give me your coat and hat— [MARION, *taking his coat and hat, crosses upstage to piano, and leaves them there. Laughing, a little hysterical*] You should have warned me. It's not fair of you. Bunny! Of all people—I can scarcely believe it. . . . [*A moment's pause. He doesn't quite like her calling him Bunny but he doesn't know how to stop it. She sits on model stand looking up at him as she says*] You look wonderful. You look like a—like a—Senator or something monumental like that.

NOLAN [*sits on sofa below piano*]. That's a good omen. I'll have to tell Orrin.

MARION. What's a good omen? And who is Orrin?

NOLAN. Your saying I look like a Senator. Because—I don't want to be premature—but in a few months I may be one.

MARION. A Senator!

NOLAN [*smiling*]. Senator. Washington. Not Nashville.

MARION. Do you want to be a Senator or can't you help it?

NOLAN [*to whom this point of view is incomprehensible*]. What do you mean?

MARION. I'll paint you, Bunny. Toga. Ferrule. Tribune of the people.

NOLAN. Not a bad idea. Not a bad idea at all. I remember now—you were always sketching me. Sketching everything. Say, you've done pretty well yourself, haven't you?

MARION. Not as well as you have, Bunny. Imagine. Bunny Nolan

—a Senator at Washington. Well, well! And tell me—how do I seem to you? You knew me at once, didn't you?

NOLAN. Sure I did. You haven't changed so much—a little, perhaps.

MARION [*delicately*]. Ampler?

NOLAN [*inspecting her*]. No . . . not that I can notice. . . .

MARION [*with a sigh of relief*]. That's wonderful. . . .

NOLAN. You look just the same. You are just the same.

MARION. Oh, you don't know, Bunny. I'm artful. How long is it since we've seen each other? Twelve years anyway. More than that —fifteen . . .

NOLAN. Just about—hadn't even begun to practice law yet. . . .

MARION. We were just kids . . . children. . . . And now look at you! I can see how successful you are, Bunny.

NOLAN. How?

MARION. White piping on your vest. That suggests directorates to me. Multiple control. Vertical corporations. Are you vertical or horizontal, Bunny?

NOLAN. I'm both.

MARION. Good for you! Married?

NOLAN. Not yet . . .

MARION. How did you escape? You're going to be, though.

NOLAN. I'm engaged.

MARION. Who's the lucky girl?

NOLAN. Slade Kinnicott. Daughter of Orrin Kinnicott.

MARION. Orrin Kinnicott. The newspaper publisher?

NOLAN. Yes. He's backing me for the Senate.

MARION. Well, if he's backing you you ought to get in. All that circulation—not very good circulation, is it? Still, one vote's as good as another, I suppose. . . .

NOLAN [*hurt*]. In my own State the Kinnicott papers are as good as any . . .

MARION. Well, I wish you luck. I'm sure you'll have it. My! Senator Nolan!

NOLAN. If I get in I'll be the youngest Senator . . .

MARION. And the best-looking too, Bunny . . .

NOLAN [*embarrassed*]. Well . . .

MARION. You're fussed! How charming of you! [*She sits beside him.*] Oh, Bunny, I'm very proud of you, really.

NOLAN. You see, Marion, I've been pretty successful in the law. Tremendously successful, I may say. I've organized some of the biggest mergers of recent years. I've made a fortune—a sizeable fortune. Well,

one day I woke up and I said to myself: Look here, Nolan, you've got to take stock. You've got to ask yourself where you're heading. I'd been so busy I'd never had a chance to ask myself these fundamental questions before. And I decided to call a halt. You've got enough, more than enough for life, I said to myself. It's time you quit piling up money for yourself and began thinking about your fellow-man. I've always been ambitious, Marion. You know that. You shared all my early dreams . . .

MARION. Of course I did. . . .

NOLAN. Remember I always told you I didn't want money and power for their own sakes—I always wanted to be a big man in a real sense—to do something for my country and my time . . .

MARION. Yes. Sometimes you sounded like Daniel Webster, darling. I'm not a bit surprised you're going in the Senate.

NOLAN. I never thought—even in my wildest dreams. . . .

MARION. Well, you see you underestimated yourself. You may go even higher—the White House—why not?

NOLAN. I never let myself think of that.

MARION. Why not? It's no more wonderful than what's happened already, is it?

NOLAN [*Napoleon at Saint Helena*]. Destiny!

MARION. Exactly. Destiny!

NOLAN [*kind, richly human, patronizing*]. And you, my dear . . . ?

MARION. As you see. Obscure. Uncertain. Alone. Nowhere at all. Not the remotest chance of my getting into the Senate—unless I marry into it. Oh, Bunny, after you get to Washington will you introduce me to some Senators?

NOLAN. Well, that's premature . . . Naturally if the people should favor me I'd do what I could. I never forget a friend. Whatever faults I may have, disloyalty, I hope, is not one of them.

MARION. Of course it isn't. You're a dear. You always were.

[*A moment's pause.*]

NOLAN. Who was that fellow I found you with when I came in?

MARION. An old friend of mine from Vienna—a composer.

NOLAN. You've been a lot with foreigners, haven't you?

MARION. A good deal . . .

NOLAN. Funny, I don't understand that.

MARION. Foreigners are people, you know, Bunny. Some of 'em are rather nice.

NOLAN. When I'm abroad a few weeks home begins to look pretty good to me.

MARION. I love New York but I can't say I feel an acute nostalgia for Tennessee.

[*Another pause. He stares at her suddenly—still incredulous that he should be seeing her at all, and that, after all these years and quite without him, she should be radiant still.*]

NOLAN. Little Marion Froude! I can't believe it somehow. . . .

MARION. Oh, Bunny! You're sweet! You're so—ingenuous. That's what I always liked about you.

NOLAN. What do you mean?

MARION. The way you look at me, the incredulity, the surprise. What did you expect to see? A hulk, a remnant, a whitened sepulchre . . . what?

NOLAN [*uncomfortable at being caught*]. Not—not at all. . . .

MARION. Tell me, Bunny, what . . . ? I won't be hurt . . .

NOLAN [*miserably, stumbling*]. Well, naturally, after what I'd heard . . .

MARION. What have you heard? Oh, do tell me, Bunny.

NOLAN. Well, I mean—about your life. . . .

MARION. Racy, Bunny? Racy?

NOLAN. No use going into that. You chose your own way. Everybody has a right to live their own life, I guess.

MARION [*pats his arm*]. That's very handsome of you Bunny. I hope you take that liberal point of view when you reach the Senate.

NOLAN. I came here, Marion, in a perfectly sincere mood, to say something to you, something that's been on my mind ever since we parted, but if you're going to be flippant I suppose there's no use my saying anything—I might as well go, in fact. [*But he makes no attempt to do so.*]

MARION [*seriously*]. Do forgive me, Bunny. One gets into an idiom that passes for banter but really I'm not so changed. I'm not flippant. I'm awfully glad to see you, Bunny. [*An undertone of sadness creeps into her voice.*] After all, one makes very few real friends in life—and you are part of my youth—we are part of each other's youth . . .

NOLAN. You didn't even know me!

MARION. Complete surprise! After all I've been in New York many times during these years and never once—never once have you come near me. You've dropped me all these years. [*With a sigh*] I'm afraid, Bunny, your career has been too much with you.

NOLAN [*grimly*]. So has yours!

MARION. I detect an overtone—faint but unmistakable—of moral censure.

NOLAN [*same tone*]. Well, I suppose it's impossible to live one's life in art without being sexually promiscuous! [*He looks at her accusingly.*]

MARION. Oh, dear me, Bunny! What shall I do? Shall I blush? Shall I hang my head in shame? What shall I do? How does one react in the face of an appalling accusation of this sort? I didn't know the news had got around so widely . . .

NOLAN. Well, so many of your lovers have been famous men. . . .

MARION. Well, you were obscure . . . But you're famous now, aren't you? I seem to be stimulating if nothing else . . .

NOLAN. If I had then some of the fame I have now you probably wouldn't have walked out on me at the last minute the way you did . . .

MARION. Dear, dear Bunny, that's not quite—

NOLAN [*irritated beyond control*]. I wish you wouldn't call me Bunny. . . .

MARION. Well, I always did. What is your real name?

NOLAN. You know perfectly well . . .

MARION. I swear I don't. . . .

NOLAN. My name is Leander. . . .

MARION. Bunny, really. . . .

NOLAN. That is my name.

MARION. Really I'd forgotten that. Leander![1] Who was he—he did something in the Hellespont, didn't he? What did he do in the Hellespont?

NOLAN [*sharply*]. Beside the point.

MARION. Sorry! You say you wanted to tell me something—

NOLAN [*grimly*]. Yes!

MARION. I love to be told things.

NOLAN. That night you left me—

MARION. We'd quarrelled about something, hadn't we?

NOLAN. I realized after you left me how much I'd grown to depend on you—

MARION. Dear Bunny!

NOLAN. I plunged into work. I worked fiercely to forget you. I did forget you— [*He looks away from her.*] And yet—

[1] ***Leander.*** *According to the Greek myth the handsome youth Leander swam the Hellespont by night to see his beloved Hero on the opposite shore.*

MARION. And yet—?

NOLAN. The way we'd separated and I never heard from you—it left something bitter in my mind—something— [*He hesitates for a word.*]

MARION [*supplying it*]. Unresolved?

NOLAN [*Quickly—relieved that she understands so exactly*]. Yes. All these years I've wanted to see you, to get it off my mind—

MARION. Did you want the last word, Bunny dear?

NOLAN [*fiercely*]. I wanted to see you, to stand before you, to tell myself—"Here she is and—and what of it!"

MARION. Well, can you?

NOLAN [*heatedly, with transparent overemphasis*]. Yes! Yes!

MARION. Good for you, Bunny. I know just how you feel—like having a tooth out, isn't it? [*Sincerely*] In justice to myself—I must tell you this—that the reason I walked out on you in the summary way I did was not, as you've just suggested, because I doubted your future—it was obvious to me, even then, that you were destined for mighty things—but the reason was that I felt a disparity in our characters not conducive to matrimonial contentment. You see how right I was. I suspected in myself a—a tendency to explore, a spiritual and physical wanderlust—that I knew would horrify you once you found it out. It horrifies you now when we are no longer anything to each other. Imagine, Leander dear, if we were married how much more difficult it would be— If there is any one thing you have to be grateful to me for it is that instant's clear vision I had which made me see, which made me look ahead, which made me tear myself away from you. Why, everything you have now—your future, your prospects—even your fiancée, Leander dear—you owe to me—no, I won't say to me—to that instinct—to that premonition. . . .

NOLAN [*nostalgic*]. We might have done it together. . . .

MARION. I wouldn't have stood for a fiancée, Bunny dear—not even I am as promiscuous as that. . . .

NOLAN. Don't use that word!

MARION. But, Leander! It's your own!

NOLAN. Do you think it hasn't been on my conscience ever since, do you think it hasn't tortured me . . . !

MARION. What, dear?

NOLAN. That thought!

MARION. Which thought?

NOLAN. Every time I heard about you—all the notoriety that's

attended you in the American papers . . . painting pictures of Communist statesmen, running around California with movie comedians!

MARION. I have to practice my profession, Bunny. One must live, you know. Besides, I've done Capitalist statesmen too. And at Geneva. . . .

NOLAN [*darkly*]. You know what I mean . . . !

MARION. You mean—[*she whispers through her cupped hand*]—you mean promiscuous? Has that gotten around, Bunny? Is it whispered in the sewing-circles of Nashville? Will I be burned for a witch if I go back home? Will they have a trial over me? Will you defend me?

NOLAN [*quite literally, with sincere and disarming simplicity*]. I should be forced, as an honest man, to stand before the multitude and say: In condemning this woman you are condemning me who am asking your suffrages to represent you. For it was I with whom this woman first sinned before God. As an honorable man that is what I should have to do.

MARION. And has this worried you—actually . . . !

NOLAN. It's tortured me . . . !

MARION. You're the holy man and I'm Thais![1] That gives me an idea for the portrait which I hope you will commission me to do. I'll do you in a hair-shirt. Savonarola.[2] He was a Senator too, wasn't he? Or was he?

NOLAN [*gloomily contemplating her*]. I can't forget that it was I who . . .

MARION. Did you think you were the first, Bunny? Was I so unscrupulously coquettish as to lead you to believe that I—oh, I couldn't have been. It's not like me. [*She crosses to right of model stand.*]

NOLAN [*fiercely*]. Don't lie to me!

MARION [*sitting on stand*]. Bunny, you frighten me!

NOLAN [*stands over her almost threateningly*]. You're lying to me to salve my conscience but I won't have it! I know my guilt and I'm going to bear it!

MARION. Well, I don't want to deprive you of your little pleasures but . . .

[1] ***holy man . . . Thais.*** *In the novel of Anatole France, Thais, a beautiful courtesan of Alexandria, is converted to Christianity by the young monk Paphnutius, who is at the same time tempted into an earthly love for her.*

[2] ***Savonarola*** *(1452-1498), the fiery religious reformer of Florence.*

NOLAN. You're evil, Marion. You haven't the face of evil but you're evil—evil!

MARION. Oh, Bunny darling, now you can't mean that surely. What's come over you? You never were like that—or were you? You know perfectly well I'm not evil. Casual—maybe—but not evil. Good Heavens, Bunny, I might as well say you're evil because you're intolerant. These are differences in temperament, that's all—charming differences in temperament.

NOLAN [*shakes his head, unconvinced*]. Sophistry!

MARION. All right, Dean Inge.[1] Sophistry. By the way I've met the Gloomy Dean and he's not gloomy at all—he's very jolly. [*Gets up from stand*] Let's have a cup of tea, shall we? Will your constituents care if you have a cup of tea with a promiscuous woman? Will they have to know?

NOLAN. I'm afraid I can't, Marion. I have to be getting on. . . .

MARION. Oh, stay and have some tea— [*Makes him sit down*] What do you have to do that can't wait for a cup of tea? . . . [*Calls off*] Minnie—Minnie. . . .

MINNIE [*appears in doorway*]. Ja, Fräulein. . . .

MARION. Bitte—Thee. . . .[2]

MINNIE. Ja, Fräulein. . . . [*She goes out.* MARION *smiles at* NOLAN *and sits beside him. He is quite uncomfortable.*]

NOLAN [*slightly embarrassed*]. About the painting, Marion. . . .

MARION. Oh, I was only joking . . . don't let yourself be bullied into it . . .

NOLAN. I've never been painted in oils. It might do for campaign purposes. And, if I should be elected, it would be very helpful to you in Washington.

MARION. You're awfully kind, Bunny. I must tell you frankly though that the dignified Senatorial style isn't exactly my forte. However, I might try. Yes—I'll try . . . [*She gives him a long look.*] I'll go the limit on you, Bunny—when I get through with you you'll be a symbol of Dignity. Solid man. No nonsense. Safe and sane. Holds the middle course—a slogan in a frock-coat. I'll make you look like Warren G. Harding—even handsomer— Get you the women's votes.

NOLAN. Well, that'll be very nice of you. . . .

[1] ***Dean Inge,*** *of St. Paul's, London, an Anglican prelate popularly known as the Gloomy Dean.*

[2] ***Bitte—Thee,*** please, tea.

[MARION *suddenly kisses him.*]

MARION. Thank you, darling! [*He is very uncomfortable, embarrassed and thrilled.*]

NOLAN. Marion . . . !

MARION. Just a rush of feeling, dear!

NOLAN. You understand that this—this commission . . .

MARION. Of course. Strictly business. Don't worry. I shan't kiss you again till it's finished.

NOLAN. I don't know whether I told you—I'm going to be married in a month.

MARION. I'll have the portrait ready for your wedding-day.

NOLAN. And I am devoted to Slade with ever fibre of my being. . . .

MARION. Every fibre—how thorough!

NOLAN. I'm not a Bohemian, you know, Marion.

MARION. Don't tell me! You're a gypsy! [*She continues to study him, poses him, poses his hand.* MINNIE *enters from left with tea tray containing teapot, cups and saucers, spoons, sugar and cream, and a plate of cakes. She puts tray on model stand and exits left.*] Oh, Bunny, what fun it'll be to do you. Thank you, Minnie. Tell me—how do you see yourself?

NOLAN. What do you mean?

MARION. In your heart of hearts—how do you see yourself? Napoleon, Scipio, Mussolini . . . ?

NOLAN. Nonsense! Do you think I'm an actor?

MARION. Of course. Everybody is. Everybody has some secret vision of himself. Do you know what mine is? Do you know how I see myself?

[*The doorbell rings.*]

NOLAN [*ironically*]. More visitors!

MARION [*calls to* MINNIE]. See who it is, will you, Minnie? . . . Probably the young man I met on the boat coming to take me to dinner.

NOLAN. What's his name?

MARION. I've forgotten. He's just a boy I met on the boat.

NOLAN. How can anybody live the way you live?

MARION. It's a special talent, dear. [*Doorbell rings again.*] Minnie, go to the door. [MINNIE *comes in and exits hallway.*] This is my lucky day, Bunny.

NOLAN. Would you mind, in front of strangers, not calling me Bunny?

MARION. Oh, of course, what is it?

NOLAN [*irritated*]. Leander.

MARION [*mnemonic*]. Leander—Hellespont—Leander. . . .

[MINNIE *comes downstage a few feet from the door.*]

MINNIE [*just inside the room*]. It's the Junge[1] who was here before—er sagt er ist ausgeschifft da—[2]

MARION. Oh, show him in, Minnie, and bring a cup for him too.

MINNIE [*as she goes*]. Ja.

NOLAN. And don't use these extravagant terms of endearment—anybody who didn't know you would misunderstand it. . . .

MARION [*very happy*]. All right, darling. [MINNIE *ushers in* RICHARD KURT, *goes out, comes back again with more tea.* MARION *comes forward to greet him.*] I'm so glad to see you again, Mr.——

KURT. Kurt.

MARION. Oh. . . .

KURT. With a K.

MARION [*reassured*]. Oh—I'll try to remember. This is Senator Nolan—Mr. Kurt. . . .

NOLAN [*glowering*]. I am not Senator Nolan.

MARION. But you will be. [*She offers him a cup of tea, he takes it.*] Can't I just call you that—between ourselves? It gives me such a sense of quiet power. And maybe it'll impress my visitor. Do have a cup of tea, Mr. Kurt. [*She gives him one.*]

KURT [*puts his hat on sofa left*]. I am not impressed by politicians. And I didn't come to drink tea. I am here on business. [*Nevertheless he takes a hearty sip.*]

MARION. Well, you can do both. They do in England. American businessmen are so tense.

KURT. I'm not a businessman.

NOLAN. Well, whatever you are, you are very ill-mannered.

KURT [*pleased*]. That's true!

MARION [*delighted*]. Isn't it nice you agree? For a moment I thought you weren't going to hit it off. . . .

NOLAN. In my day if a boy came in and behaved like this before a lady he'd be horsewhipped.

KURT. Well, when you get into the Senate you can introduce a horsewhipping bill. Probably bring you great kudos.

NOLAN. You talk like a Bolshevik.

KURT. Thank you! You talk like a Senator!

[1] ***Junge,*** *boy.*

[2] ***er sagt . . . da,*** *he says he has landed there.*

[MARION *wants to laugh but thinks better of it. She looks at* KURT *with a new eye.*]

MARION [*quickly offering him more tea.*] Another cup, Mr. Kurt. . . .

KURT [*taking it*]. Thank you.

MARION. And one of these cakes—they're very nice . . . Minnie made them—almost as good as lebkuchen. Minnie spoils me.

KURT [*taking it*]. Thank you. [*Eats cake*] Having said, from our respective points of view, the worst thing we could say about each other, having uttered the ultimate insult, there's no reason we can't be friends, Senator. Damn good cake. No lunch as a matter of fact.

MARION. That's what's the matter with him—he was hungry —hungry boy. . . .

NOLAN [*puts teacup on piano*]. He probably wants to sell you some insurance. . . .

KURT. Not at all. I'm not here to sell. I'm here to buy.

MARION. A picture!

KURT. Do I look like a picture-buyer?

MARION. As a matter of fact you don't . . . but I haven't anything to sell except pictures.

KURT [*confidently*]. I think you have!

MARION [*to* NOLAN]. This young man is very tantalizing.

NOLAN. Well, why don't you ask him to state his proposition and have done with it?

MARION [*turns to* KURT *and repeats mechanically*]. State your proposition and have done with it.

KURT [*puts his cup down on table rear of sofa left*]. What a nuisance women are!

NOLAN [*starting toward him*]. Why, you insolent young whelp— I've half a mind to . . .

KURT [*pleasantly*]. That's an impulse you'd better control. I wrote this lady a business letter asking for an appointment. She granted it to me at four o'clock. It is now six. In that interval I've climbed these five flights of stairs three times. I've lost over an hour of my life going away and coming back. An hour in which I might have read a first-class book or made love to a girl or had an idea—an irreparable hour. That's rudeness if you like. It's unbusinesslike. It's sloppy. [*To* MARION] Now will you see me alone or will you keep me here fencing with this inadequate antagonist?

MARION. You are unquestionably the most impossible young man I've ever met. Go away!

KURT. Right! [*He turns to go and means it and she knows that he means it. And she is consumed with curiosity. As he goes*] So long, Senator! Yours for the Revolution!

MARION [*as he reaches door, goes after him—pleads pitifully*]. Young man! Mr. Nolan is an old friend of mine. I should consult him in any case about whatever business you may suggest. Can't you speak in front of him? [*At the same time she shakes her head to him not to go away.*]

KURT. I cannot!

MARION. Please wait a minute. . . .

KURT. All right—one. [*He picks up a magazine and leafs through it negligently.*]

MARION [*to* LEANDER]. After all, Leander, I can't afford—it may be something. . . . [*She takes his arm and starts walking him to the door, whispering*] I'm just curious to hear what he's got to say for himself. . . .

NOLAN. I'm not sure it's safe to leave you alone with a character like that. . . .

MARION. Minnie's in her room . . . with a bow and arrow!

NOLAN [*going up to hall door*]. I have to go in any case—I'm late now.

MARION. When will I see you, Bunny? [*She is at door with him.*]

NOLAN [*taking up his hat and coat*]. I don't know. I'm very busy. I'll telephone you.

MARION. Do. Telephone me tonight. I'll tell you what he said. It'll probably be funny.

NOLAN [*out loud at* KURT]. It pains me, Marion, that you are so unprotected that any hooligan—[KURT *turns page of magazine*]—can write you and come to see you in your apartment. However, that is the way you have chosen. Good night.

MARION. Good night, dear. Are you in the book? I'll telephone you . . .

NOLAN [*hastily*]. No—no—you'd better not. I shall communicate with you. Good-bye.

KURT. Good-bye, Sir Galahad.

[NOLAN *starts to retort, changes his mind and, in a very choleric mood, he goes out. There is a pause.*]

MARION. Well, I'm afraid you didn't make a very good impression on him!

KURT [*putting magazine away*]. That's just too bad!

MARION. That's no way for a young man to get on in the world—he's a very important person.

KURT. That's what passes for importance. You're not taken in by him, are you? Stuffed shirt—flatulent and pompous—perfect legislator!

MARION. As a matter of fact he's a very nice man—simple and kindly. [*Gets cigarettes and offers one to* KURT *who takes it and lights it. She takes one too but he forgets to light hers.*]

KURT. I bet he isn't simple and he isn't kindly. I bet he's greedy and vicious. Anyway he's a hypocrite. When a man starts worrying out loud about unprotected women you may know he's a hypocritical sensualist.

MARION. You're a violent young man, aren't you? [*Not getting light from* KURT *she lights her own. Throwing match to floor*]

KURT. Yes. The world is full of things and people that make me see red. . . . Why do you keep calling me youth and young man? I'm twenty-five.

MARION. Well, you seem to have the lurid and uncorrected imagination of the adolescent.

KURT. Imagination! That's where you're wrong. I may tell you, Miss Froude, that I'm as realistic as anybody you've ever met.

MARION [*sitting on upstage arm of sofa, right*]. Anybody who'd be so unreasonable over a nice fellow like Bunny Nolan . . . if you only knew—if only you'd been present at the interview I had with him just before you came. You'd have seen how wrong you are about him. Why, he was—he was awfully funny—but he was also touching.

KURT. You're one of those tolerant people, aren't you—see the best in people?

MARION. You say that as if tolerance were a crime.

KURT. Your kind is. It's criminal because it encourages dishonesty, incompetence, weakness and all kinds of knavery. What you call tolerance I call sloppy laziness. You're like those book-reviewers who find something to praise in every mediocre book.

MARION. You are a fanatical young man.

KURT. Having said that you think you dispose of me. Well, so be it. I'm disposed of. Now, let's get down to business. [*His manner plainly says: "Well, why should I bother to convince you? What importance can it possibly have what you think of me?" It is not wasted on* MARION.]

MARION. You are also a little patronizing . . .

KURT [*pleased*]. Am I?

MARION. However, I don't mind being patronized. That's where my tolerance comes in. It even amuses me a little bit. [*Crossing to piano seat*] But as I have to change for dinner perhaps you'd better . . .

KURT. Exactly.

MARION. Please sit down . . . [*A moment . . . She sits on piano bench facing him.*]

KURT [*goes to piano and talks to her across it*]. I am the editor of a magazine called Every Week. Do you know it?

MARION. It seems to me I've seen it on newsstands. . . .

KURT. You've never read it?

MARION. I'm afraid I haven't.

KURT. That is a tribute to your discrimination. We have an immense circulation. Three millions, I believe. With a circulation of that size you may imagine that the average of our readers' intelligence cannot be very high. Yet occasionally we flatter them by printing the highbrows—in discreet doses we give them, at intervals, Shaw and Wells and Chesterton. So you'll be in good company anyway. . . .

MARION [*amazed*]. *I* will?

KURT. Yes. I want you to write your biography to run serially in Every Week. Later of course you can bring it out as a book.

MARION. My biography!

KURT. Yes. The story of your life.

MARION [*with dignity*]. I know the meaning of the word.

KURT. The money is pretty good. I am prepared to give you an advance of two thousand dollars.

MARION. Good Heavens, am I as old as that—that people want my biography?

KURT. We proceed on the theory that nothing exciting happens to people after they are forty. . . .

MARION. What a cruel idea!

KURT. Why wait till you're eighty? Your impressions will be dimmed by time. Most autobiographies are written by corpses. Why not do yours while you are still young, vital, in the thick of life?

MARION. But I'm not a writer. I shouldn't know how to begin.

KURT. You were born, weren't you? Begin with that.

MARION. I write pleasant letters, my friends tell me. . . . But look here, why should you want this story from me—why should anybody be interested?—I'm not a first-rate artist you know—not by far—I'm just clever. . . .

KURT [*bluntly*]. It's not you—it's the celebrity of your subjects. . . .

MARION [*amused*]. You're a brutal young man—I rather like you . . .

KURT. Well, you've been courageous. You've been forthright. For an American woman you've had a rather extraordinary career—you've done pretty well what you wanted. . . .

MARION. The-Woman-Who-Dared sort of thing. . . . Isn't that passé?

KURT. I think your life will make good copy. You might have stayed here and settled down and done Pictorial Review covers of mothers hovering fondly over babies. Instead you went to Europe and managed to get the most inaccessible people to sit for you. How did you do it?

MARION. You'd be surprised how accessible some of these inaccessible people are!

KURT. Well, that's just what I want to get from your story. Just that. Tell what happened to you, that's all. The impulse that made you leave home, that made you go, for instance, to Russia, before the popular emigration set in, that's made you wander ever since, that's kept you from settling down in any of the places where you had a chance to get established.

MARION [*quite seriously*]. But supposing I don't know that. . . .

KURT. Well, that's interesting. That enigma is interesting. Maybe, while writing, you can solve it. It's a form of clarification. The more I talk to you the more I feel there's a great story in you and that you'll have great fun telling it.

MARION. Young man, you make me feel like an institution!

KURT. Should do you a lot of good in your professional career too —we'll reprint the portraits you've made of Lenin, Mussolini, Shaw—anything you like. . . .

[*She begins to laugh, quietly at first, then heartily.*]

MARION. Forgive me. . . .

KURT [*unperturbed*]. What's the matter?

MARION. Something I remembered—the funniest thing—isn't it funny how the oddest things pop into your mind?

KURT. What was it?

MARION. Something that happened years ago. . . .

KURT. What?

MARION. Oh, I couldn't possibly tell you. It wouldn't be fair!

KURT. In that case it'll probably be great for the magazine. Save it!

MARION [*frightened*]. You won't do anything lurid, will you?

KURT. Just print the story—just as you write it—practically as you write it.

MARION. I'm scared! [*She puts out her cigarette in ash tray on the piano.*]

KURT. Nonsense. Here's your first check. Two thousand dollars. [*He puts the check down on the table in front of her.*]

MARION [*wretched suddenly, picks up check, rises, looks at check*]. I can't tell you how old this makes me feel!

KURT. Suppose I asked you to write a novel! That wouldn't make you feel old, would it? Well, I'm simply asking you to write a novel of your life. The only lively reading these days is biography. People are bored with fiction. It's too tame. The fiction-writers haven't the audacity to put down what actually happens to people.

MARION. You may be disappointed, you know. You probably see headlines in your mind. The Woman of a Hundred Affairs, The Last of the Great Adventuresses, The Magda[1] Who Wouldn't Go Home. I promise you—it won't be a bit like that.

KURT. We'll announce it next month—first installment the following month. O.K.?

MARION [*puts down check, paces down right*]. Oh dear! I can't promise a thing like that—I really can't. . . .

KURT. Why not?

MARION. It'll worry me too much.

KURT. Well, don't promise. Just get to work.

MARION [*faces him*]. But what'll I do first?

KURT [*getting up*]. Well, if I were you I'd sit down. [*She does so helplessly on piano bench.* KURT *then gives her paper, one of his own pencils.*] There now! You're all set!

MARION [*wailing*]. How can I go out to dinner—how can I ever do anything—with a chapter to write?

KURT. After all you don't have to make up anything. Just tell what happened to you. [*He lights a fresh cigarette.*]

MARION. Can I use names?

KURT. When they're prominent, yes. The obscure ones you can fake if you want to. Nobody'll know 'em anyway.

[1] ***Magda,*** *the famous heroine of Sudermann's play,* Die Heimat, *a "new woman," who returns to her father's house as the mother of an illegitimate child and encounters his implacable wrath. The play had recently been revived in New York with Bertha Kalich in the leading role.*

MARION [*looks at him*]. Oh . . . what's your name?

KURT [*looks at her*]. I told you—my name's Kurt.

MARION. I know—with a K—I can't call you Kurt! What's your *name?*

KURT [*sulkily*]. Richard.

MARION. That's better. I tell you, Dickie, when I think—when I think—of the funny men I've known . . . they're pretty nearly all brothers under the skin you know, Dickie.

KURT. Well, that, as they say in the office, is an angle.

[*Suddenly her fear vanishes and she is overcome with the marvelous possibilities.*]

MARION [*jumps up and leans toward him as if to kiss him, but quickly thinks better of it*]. Dickie, I think it'll be marvelous! It'll be a knockout. And imagine— [*picking up check*] —I'm going to be paid for it! Dickie, you're an angel!

KURT [*sardonically*]. That's me. Angel Kurt! Well, so long. I'll be seeing you. [*Starts upstage toward hall door*]

MARION [*suddenly panicky*]. Oh, don't go!

KURT. You don't think I'm going to sit here and hold your hand while you're remembering your conquests, do you?

MARION. Well, you can't go away and leave me like this—alone with my life. . . .

KURT. Perhaps it's time you got a good, straight, clear-eyed look at it—alone by yourself, without anybody around to hold your hand. . . .

MARION [*suddenly*]. No. I don't want to. [*Shrugs her shoulders as if she were cold*] I think it would worry me. Besides, I feel superstitious about it.

KURT [*following her downstage*]. Superstitious!

MARION. Yes. A kind of—ultimate act. After you've written your biography, what else could there possibly be left for you to do?

KURT. Collect material for another!

MARION. What could you do over again—that wouldn't be repetitious? [*Sits on right arm of sofa right*]

KURT. It's repetitious to eat or to make love, isn't it? You keep on doing it.

MARION. You're cynical!

KURT [*almost spits it out*]. You're sentimental.

MARION. I am—Sentimental Journey[1]—no, that's been used, hasn't it?

[1] **Sentimental Journey,** *the title of an autobiographical novel by Laurence Sterne.*

KURT. Don't worry about a title—I'll get that from the story after you've finished it.

MARION. There's something about it—I don't know—

KURT. What?

MARION. Vulgar. *Everybody* spouting memoirs. Who cares?

KURT. Well, wrong hunch! Sorry to have taken your valuable time. Good-bye.

MARION [*the finality frightens her*]. What do you mean?

KURT [*he is withering—crosses to her*]. I'm prepared to admit I was mistaken—that's all. In your desire to escape vulgarity you would probably be—thin. You might even achieve refinement. I'm not interested. Padded episodes hovering on the edge of amour—

MARION [*turns on him*]. Young man, you're insufferable!

KURT. And you're a false alarm!

MARION [*after a moment*]. I congratulate you! You've brought me to the verge of losing my temper! But I tell you this—you're quite mistaken about the character of my life—and about my relations with my friends. My story won't be thin and episodic because my life hasn't been thin and episodic. And I won't have to pad—the problem will be to select. I'm going to write the damn thing just to show you. Come in tomorrow afternoon for a cocktail.

KURT. Whose memoirs are these going to be, yours or mine?

MARION. Well, you're an editor, aren't you? [*She smiles at him.*] Come in and edit.

KURT. All right, I'll come. But if you aren't here I'll go away. I won't wait a minute. [*He goes out quickly.* MARION *stands looking after him, inclined to laugh, and yet affected. This is a new type even for her.*]

MARION [*she speaks to herself*]. What an extraordinary young man! [*In a moment* KURT *comes back in.* MARION *is very glad to see him, greets him as if there had been a long separation.*] Oh, hello!

KURT [*embarrassed*]. I forgot my hat! [*He can't see it at once.*]

MARION [*without moving nor looking away from him, she indicates the hat on the sofa left*]. There it is! Right next to mine.

KURT [*crosses for it*]. Oh yes. [*Picks up the hat*] Thanks. [*For a moment he stands uncertainly, hat in hand, looking at* MARION *who has not taken her eyes off him. He is embarrassed.*] Well, so long!

MARION. So long. [KURT *leaves again. She stands as before looking after him. She turns toward the piano—sees the check—picks it up*

and reads it to make sure it's true. The whole thing has a slightly fantastic quality to her. She is very happy and excited. She waves the check in her hand like a pennant and humming she crosses to the piano seat and sits and plays the waltz from "Danubia." She sees the pad and pencil on the piano and stops playing and, picking up the pencil and the pad, she crosses to the small armchair in the upstage end of the window and sits with her feet on the window seat. She repeats the first words of the first chapter aloud to herself as she writes them down] I am born . . . [MINNIE *enters from door left to get the tea things she had left on the model stand.* MARION *taps the pencil on the pad as she repeats the words.*] I am born . . . [*The time seems remote to her.*] I am born—I meet Richard Kurt—Well, Minnie, here's the outline—I am born . . . I meet Richard Kurt —now all I have to do is to fill in. . . .

[MINNIE, *used to having irrelevancies addressed to her, takes this program rather stolidly.*]

MINNIE. Was, Marion?

MARION [*trying to get rid of her*]. Fix something light, will you, Minnie . . . I'm not going out.

MINNIE. Aber der Junge kommt![1]

MARION. What Junge?

MINNIE. Der Junge dem Sie . . .[2]

MARION. Oh, yes! The Junge I met on the boat. You'll have to send him away. I can't go out tonight. From now on, Minnie, no more frivolous engagements!

MINNIE [*astonished*]. Sie bleiben ganzen abend zu Hause?[3]

MARION. Yes, Minnie. I'm spending the evening alone with my life . . . [*She remembers* KURT'S *words and repeats them as if, after all, they have made a profound impression on her*] . . . get a good, straight, clear-eyed look at it . . .

MINNIE [*picks up the tea tray and, bustling toward the kitchen, promising delights*]. Ein Fleischbrühe und Pfannkuchen![4] . . . [MINNIE *exits door left.*]

MARION [*already brooding over her past*]. I am born. . . .

[*Slowly the curtain falls.*]

[1] ***Aber . . . kommt!*** *But the boy is coming!*

[2] ***Der . . . Sie,*** *the boy that you. . . .*

[3] ***Sie . . . Hause?*** *You are spending the whole evening at home?*

[4] ***Ein . . . Pfannkuchen!*** *Consommé and pancakes.*

act 2

SCENE: *The same. About three weeks later. Afternoon.*

AT RISE: MARION *is putting some touches on the full-length portrait of* LEANDER NOLAN *which stands away from the audience. She is wearing her working costume, baggy red corduroy trousers, a sash and a worn blue smock over a kind of sweater-jacket. She is very happy.... On the piano nearby are her writing things. While touching up* LEANDER *she is struck by an idea for her book. Puts down her brush and palette and goes to the piano to jot down some notes. The idea pleases her. She giggles to herself. Then she returns to her easel.* MINNIE *comes in and stands watching her a moment before* MARION *sees her.*

MARION [*sees* MINNIE *at last*]. Oh yes, Minnie—do you want anything?

MINNIE. You asked me to come right away, Marion.

MARION. Did I?

MINNIE. Ja. [*Sitting on sofa right*] Zo! You have left a note on the kitchen I should come in right away I am back from the market.

MARION [*studying the portrait*]. Of course I did. That's right, Minnie.

MINNIE. Well, what did you want, Marion?

MARION [*washing paint brush in turpentine jar*]. Did I tell you there'd be two for dinner?

MINNIE. Ja. Gewiss![1] Das ist vy I vent to the market.

MARION. Well, I've changed my plans. I'm dining out with Feydie after all.

MINNIE [*rising and looking at picture*]. Ach, Gott! [*She studies the portrait.*]

MARION [*looks humorously at* MINNIE *and puts her arm about* MINNIE'S *shoulders.*] Gut?

MINNIE. Ziemlich gut—[2]

MARION. Do you know who it is?

[1] ***Gewiss,*** *certainly.*
[2] ***Ziemlich gut,*** *rather good.*

MINNIE. Oh, das sieht man ja gleich. Das ist Herr Nolan![1]

MARION [*shaking her hand in gratitude*]. Thank you, Minnie. [*Doorbell rings*] See who that is, will you, Minnie?

MINNIE. Fräulein ist zu Hause?[2]

MARION. Ich erwarte Herr Feydak. Für ihn bin ich immer zu Hause.[3]

MINNIE [*agreeing heartily as she crosses to the door*]. Ja, Ja, der Herr Feydak. . . . [MINNIE *goes out.* MARION *jots down a note on the pad which is on the piano.* FEYDAK *enters.* MINNIE *closes the door and exits left.*]

MARION [*at piano*]. Hello, Feydie! Sit down!

FEYDAK. Well, my dear, which career do I interrupt?

MARION [*laughing*]. I don't know!

FEYDAK. One comes to see you with diffidence nowadays. [FEYDAK *removes coat and hat and places them on the upstage end of the sofa right, and sits on the left side of the sofa.*]

MARION. While I'm painting I think of funny things to say, funny phrases. It won't be a serious biography, thank God. I'm dedicating it to Vicki: "To Vicki—the gayest person I have ever known!" By the way, have you got any little snapshots of Vicki—all I've got are formal photographs with his orders. I'd like to get something a little more intimate.

FEYDAK. I'll hunt some up for you.

MARION. Have you heard from the Powers yet, when you are to leave?

FEYDAK. Tomorrow.

MARION [*stricken—sits right of him*]. Feydie!

FEYDAK [*fatalistically*]. Tomorrow. [*They sit.*] I shall leave you with sorrow, Marion.

MARION. I'll have no one to laugh with.

FEYDAK. For me it's an exile.

MARION. You'll have a wonderful time. I shall miss you terribly.

FEYDAK. Perhaps you'll come out.

MARION. Perhaps I will. I've always wanted to go to China. If I have enough money left from all my labors I'll stop in on you—en route to China.

FEYDAK. That would be marvelous.

[1] *Oh, das. . . . Nolan! Oh, you can see that at once. It's Mr. Nolan!*

[2] *Fräulein . . . Hause?* Are you at home?

[3] *Ich. . . . Hause, I'm expecting Mr. Feydak. I'm always at home to him.*

MARION. You know writing one's life has a sobering effect on one —you get it together and you think: "Well! look at the damn thing . . ."

FEYDAK. Do you want to be impressive?

MARION. Well, I don't want to be trivial . . .

FEYDAK. I think *you* escape that.

MARION. My friendships haven't been trivial. . . . [*She gives his hand a squeeze.*]

FEYDAK. Have you seen that bombastic young man?

MARION. Oh, yes. He comes in every once in a while to see how I'm getting on. He's quite insulting. Underneath his arrogance I suspect he's very uncertain.

FEYDAK. Oh, now, don't tell me he has an inferiority complex!

MARION. Well, I think he has!

FEYDAK. The new psychology is very confusing. In my simple day you said: "That young man is bumptious and insufferable" and you dismissed him. Now you say: "He has an inferiority complex" and you encourage him to be more bumptious and more insufferable. It's very confusing.

MARION. There's a kind of honesty about him that I like.

FEYDAK [*instantly putting two and two together*]. Oh!

MARION. Nothing like that, Feydie! As a matter of fact—I don't mind telling you . . . I like him very much—

FEYDAK. I think he is destined . . .

MARION. He's not interested. He's some kind of fanatic. Social, I think: I've met that kind in Russia—quite unassailable. But I'm optimistic. . . . [*They laugh.*] Well, one must never despair, must one. Life is so much more resourceful and resilient than one is oneself. Three weeks ago when you came to see me I felt quite at the end of my rope. I didn't tell you quite but I actually didn't know which way to turn. I felt tired too—which troubled me. Well, now I find myself, quite suddenly—[*she indicates portrait*]—doing Leander and—[*she indicates manuscript on piano*]—doing myself. New Vista. Very exciting.

FEYDAK. All this enthusiasm for art alone?

MARION [*laughing*]. Of course!—Feydie, what did you think?

FEYDAK. I don't believe it.

MARION. Come here and have a look at Leander!

FEYDAK [*he rises—walks to the canvas on the easel*]. Hm! Formal!

MARION. It's to hang in the White House. [*She winks at him, he laughs, puts his arm around her shoulder.*]

FEYDAK. Marion, you're adorable!

[*They walk downstage together, their arms around each other's shoulders, very affectionately.*]

MARION. Oh, Feydie, I'm having a wonderful time. Quiet too. Writing *enforces* silence and solitude on one. I've always lived in such a rush—a kind of interminable scherzo. . . .

FEYDAK. Good title! . . .

MARION. Think so? I'll put it down. . . . [*Writes on pad on piano.* FEYDAK *sits on right arm of sofa left, facing her.*] Interminable scherzo. . . . How do you spell it? A little affected. Might do for a chapter heading maybe. . . . [*Returns to him—sitting on model stand —facing him*] But I realize now I haven't in years had time to stop and think. I sit here for hours, Feydie, and nothing comes to me. Then, suddenly, the past will come in on me with such a rush—odd, remote, semi-forgotten things of the past. Are they true? How much is true? One can never be sure, can one? I remember certain griefs and fears. I remember their existence without recalling at all their intensity—their special anguish. Why? What was the matter with me? What made them so acute? It is like recalling a landscape without color, a kind of color-blindness of the memory. [*Doorbell rings. She calls out to her factotum.*] Minnie! [MINNIE *enters left and crosses rapidly to hall door.* MARION *arranges the model stand on which stands the papal armchair in red and gold.*] This is probably the Hon. Nolan. He's due for a sitting. He pretends he doesn't like to have his picture painted, but I know he does.

[MINNIE *enters from hallway. She is flustered and giggly.*]

MINNIE [*very high-pitched voice*]. Herr Varvick Vilson!

MARION. Tympi Wilson!

MINNIE [*to* FEYDAK]. Der *film star!*

FEYDAK. So?

MINNIE [*radiant*]. Ja! Ja!

MARION. Oh, Feydie, you'll adore this. Ask him in, Minnie.

MINNIE [*as she goes out to admit* WILSON]. Gott, ist er schön![1]

MARION. Warwick's public.

FEYDAK. And mine!

MARION [*in a quick whisper*]. Whatever you do—outstay him!

[MINNIE *has opened the door and* WARWICK WILSON *enters. He is very handsome, explosively emotional, and given to cosmic generalization. He is in evening clothes, a red carnation in his buttonhole.*]

[1] *Gott . . . schön! God, is he handsome!*

WILSON [*crossing to* MARION *and kissing her hand*]. Marion!

MARION. Warwick!

WILSON. Darling! How are you?

MARION. I'm splendid. Been up all night?

WILSON. No, no! This is business.

[MINNIE *has crossed to kitchen door upper left, never taking her eyes from* WILSON.]

MARION. This is Mr. Feydak. Mr. Warwick Wilson, the famous film star.

WILSON [*crosses to sofa and shakes hands with* FEYDAK—*dramatically*]. Feydak! *The* Mr. Feydak?

FEYDAK [*again mistaken for his brother*]. Ja.

WILSON. I've heard of you indeed!

FEYDAK. Have you? Thanks.

MARION. Mr. Feydak is on his way to Hollywood. He is to write the music for . . .

WILSON [*sits on the model stand—facing front*]. Of course! I am honored, Mr. Feydak—deeply honored. That unforgettable waltz—how does it go? . . . [*He starts to hum with a swaying gesture the waltz from the "Merry Widow."*] Music's my one passion!

MARION. Once you said it was me.

WILSON. A lot of good it did me!

MARION [*to* WILSON]. Well, tell me . . . [*She sees* MINNIE, *who is still staring at* WILSON.] Look at Minnie. The mere sight of you has upset her so that she's speechless.

MINNIE. Aber, Fräulein![1]

[WILSON *rises graciously and gives* MINNIE *a friendly wave of the hand. He's no snob.* MINNIE, *speechless with delight, exits left.* WILSON *returns to his position on the model stand.*]

MARION. All right, Minnie! Warwick, Warwick! You mustn't do things like that to Minnie, at her age!

WILSON [*tragically*]. There you are! This face! This cursed face! I should go masked really. One has no private life!

MARION [*sits in throne chair on model stand*]. What would you do with it if you had it, eh, Tympi?

WILSON [*delighted*]. That nickname!

MARION. It just rolled off my tongue. Did I call you that?

WILSON. You did! You invented it. No one's called me that since you left Hollywood. And you promised to explain the significance to me, but you never did.

[1] *Aber. Fräulein! But, Miss!*

MARION. Did it have a significance?

FEYDAK. Marion has a knack for nicknames.

MARION. I love 'em. I'd like to do a chapter on nicknames.

WILSON [*highly pleased*]. Tympi! Tympi! [*Very patronizing to* FEYDAK] You are an intuitive person, Mr. Feydak. I can see that. [FEYDAK *ad libs: "Danke schön."*] Can you imagine what she meant?

FEYDAK. Her vagaries are beyond me, Mr. Wilson.

WILSON [*leaning back toward* MARION]. Speak, Oracle! No! Don't tell me now. Put it into that book you're writing.

MARION [MARION *and* FEYDAK *exchange glances*]. How things get around.

WILSON. It's been in the back of my mind for years, Marion . . . to have you paint me. Now that we're both in town together . . .

MARION. Well, I'd *love* to . . .

WILSON. In the costume of the Dane. [MARION *and* FEYDAK *exchange a look. Strikes a pose*] I'd like to be done in *his* costume. I hope, Mr. Feydak, that they won't break your spirit in Hollywood as they've almost broken mine!

FEYDAK [*with a smile*]. My spirit is indestructible!

WILSON [*rises and crosses to rear of sofa and pats* FEYDAK *on the back*]. I'm glad to hear it. [*Returns to left of model stand and stands with his right foot on it*] You know, for years I've been begging them to do Shakespeare. [*Gesticulates*]

MARION [*interrupting him*]. Sit down and be comfortable.

WILSON. They simply won't listen. But I'm going to give up acting and produce!

MARION. Oh, good God! Don't do that!

WILSON. Why not?

MARION. What would Minnie do with her night off?

WILSON [*smiles*]. My public, eh?

MARION. Yes!

WILSON. Quite so! [*Patronizingly*] You artists who work in media like painting or literature—[*to* FEYDAK]—or music, that too is a beautiful art, Mr. Feydak—transcends speech—transcends everything; by saying nothing it says all.

FEYDAK. Ja!

[*The doorbell rings.*]

WILSON. You are certainly lucky compared to us poor actors. We—[MINNIE *enters and crosses to hall door upper center.*] Wouldn't it be ironic if all that remained of me after I am gone were your

painting of me? That is why I want it, perhaps—my poor grasp on immortality.

FEYDAK. You see, Marion, you confer immortality!

MARION. I think immortality is an overrated commodity. But tell me, Tympi, what are you doing away from Hollywood?

MINNIE [*comes in announcing*]. Der Herr Nolan! [MINNIE *then looks at* WILSON. WILSON *stands—looks at* MINNIE.]

MARION. Show him in. Show him in. [*With a lingering look at* WILSON, MINNIE *goes back. To others, after watching* MINNIE *exit*] You see!

FEYDAK. The effect is instantaneous—like music . . .

[NOLAN *enters.* MINNIE *follows* NOLAN *in and exits into kitchen, murmuring ecstatically, "Gott! Ist er schön!", looking at* WILSON.]

MARION. Hello, Bunny. [*Introducing* NOLAN] You know Mr. Feydak. Mr. Nolan, this is Warwick Wilson, you've heard of him.

[FEYDAK *bows to* NOLAN, *who returns the bow.*]

WILSON. It's a pleasure, Mr. Nolan. I've heard of you indeed!

[*They shake hands.*]

MARION. You're late for your sitting, Bunny. Will the presence of these gentlemen embarrass you? I don't mind if you don't.

NOLAN [*has entered rather worried and angry. He has a magazine rolled in his hand. He now speaks very irritatedly*]. As a matter of fact, Marion . . .

MARION [*putting him in throne chair on model stand*]. Oh, sit down, like a good fellow. The light is getting bad. [NOLAN *sits.* WILSON *sits on the right arm of the sofa left on which* FEYDAK *is sitting.* MARION *gets to work on* BUNNY.] How did you find me, Tympi?

WILSON. I read in a magazine that you were barging into literature . . .

NOLAN [*half rising, showing magazine*]. This is true then!

MARION. Don't get up, Bunny . . . [*Nevertheless she takes the magazine and looks at it.*] Well, Dickie has gone and spread himself, hasn't he? [*She sits on sofa left between* WILSON *and* FEYDAK.] Look here, Feydie! [*Shows him the full-page announcement of her book in magazine.*]

FEYDAK [*looking*]. Do you think you can live up to this?

MARION. Why will they write this sort of thing? [*Rises and goes back*] Makes me out a kind of female Casanova. [*She drops the*

magazine on the stand at NOLAN's *feet.*] Well, they'll be disappointed.

NOLAN [*bitterly*]. Will they?

MARION. Bunny! [*But she thinks nothing of it—merely pushes him into a better light.*]

FEYDAK [*tactfully—he senses danger*]. May I ask, Mr. Wilson—are you making a picture at the moment?

WILSON. No, I'm in New York making some personal appearances.

MARION. Personal appearances. I love that phrase. Has such an air of magnanimity about it. [*Crosses to painting*]

WILSON. Pretty boring, I can tell you! I've got writer's cramp signing autograph books. It's a perfect martyrdom I assure you. It's no fun at all. [WILSON *crosses to stand—puts his right foot on it, leans on his knee with his right arm and studies* NOLAN, *his face not six inches away from* NOLAN's. NOLAN *fidgets.*]

MARION. I can imagine! What's the matter, Bunny? You seem under a strain today . . . not relaxed.

NOLAN [*bursting out and glaring at all of them*]. It's like being watched while you're taking a bath!

MARION. Oh, I'm so sorry, Bunny!

FEYDAK [*rising*]. I quite sympathize with Mr. Nolan.

WILSON [*moves away*]. Supposing I were so shy, eh, Mr. Nolan?

FEYDAK [*crosses to* MARION *who is above her easel, right*]. I'm off, Marion. [*Kisses her hand*] Auf Wiedersehen!

MARION [*meaningfully*]. You'll have to go—[WILSON *sits again on arm of sofa left*]—both of you . . .

WILSON [*rises*]. I was just going myself. My next appearance is at 6:45. [*Speaks to others*]

FEYDAK [*to help her*]. Perhaps I can drop you, Mr. Wilson.

WILSON [*faces* FEYDAK]. No, I'll drop you . . . [*Turns to* MARION] I say, Marion . . .

[FEYDAK, *helpless, goes upstage putting on coat.*]

MARION. Yes, Tympi?

WILSON. If you started my portrait right away and it turns out—I am sure it will turn out—you might put it in your book, mightn't you? I'm frankly sick of just appearing in fan magazines.

MARION. We'll see. Why not?

WILSON. Splendid! *Don't fail to come tonight.* Good-bye, dearest

Marion. Good-bye again, Mr. Nolan. [*He starts to shake* NOLAN'S *hand but is interrupted by* MARION, *almost screaming.*]

MARION. No, no, no! Don't do *that*—don't touch him.

WILSON. Most happy! See you later. . . . [*He waves himself off at last*—MARION *returns to her easel.*]

MARION [*to* FEYDAK]. Don't forget—I'm dining with you.

FEYDAK [*like the player in "Hamlet" who burlesques Polonius*]. Most happy—see you later. [FEYDAK *leaves.*]

MARION [*with relief*]. Now then . . .

NOLAN [*muttering to himself*]. Silly ass!

MARION [*working on painting*]. That young man is one of the most famous people in the world, do you realize that, Bunny? His profile follows you all over Europe—*and* Asia. Ubiquitous profile. Have you ever seen him?

NOLAN [*unswerved*]. He's a silly ass!

MARION. I admit he's somewhat on that side—but that other one—that Feydie—he's the darling of the world!

NOLAN [*very short—bitterly*]. Evidently!

MARION [*surprised*]. Bunny!

NOLAN [*savage now*]. Who isn't a darling? Everyone's a darling as far as I can see! The world's full of darlings. Your world at any rate.

MARION. But, darling . . . [*She suddenly stops—sits at right end of sofa right.*] Oh, Bunny, I remember now!

NOLAN. You remember what?

MARION. Tympi! Why I nicknamed him Tympi. Don't you see?

NOLAN. No, I don't see . . .

MARION. For tympanum—a large instrument in the orchestra producing a hollow sound. [*She beats an imaginary drum with her paint brush.*] Boom! [*Suddenly* NOLAN *quits the pose.*] What is it?

NOLAN. I can't sit today. I'm not in the mood.

MARION. I could tell there was something worrying you.

NOLAN. There is something worrying me!

MARION. Well, what is it?

NOLAN. This confounded story! Are you really writing it?

MARION. Well, yes—I am.

NOLAN. What do you intend to tell?

MARION. Well, that's a rather difficult question to answer—it's like asking me what I've been doing all my life.

NOLAN. When does this biography start?

MARION [*beginning to wonder about this questioning*]. With my birth—coincidence, isn't it?

NOLAN. All the time back home—when you were a girl in Knoxville?

MARION. Yes, of course. I've had a wonderful time going back over it all.

NOLAN. Everything?

MARION. Everything I can remember.

NOLAN. Do I come into it?

MARION [*smiling to herself*]. You do! You certainly do!

NOLAN. You must leave me out of that story!

MARION. But Bunny, how can I possibly leave you out?

NOLAN. You must, that's all!

MARION. But how can I? You were too important—think of the rôle you played in my life. By your own confession, Bunny darling, you—you started me. That's a good idea for a chapter heading, isn't it? "Bunny Starts Me." I must put that down.

NOLAN. This is no joke, Marion. [*With menace*] I warn you . . .

MARION. Warn me! Let me understand you. Are you seriously asking me to give up an opportunity like this just because . . .

NOLAN [*rises and gets down from the model stand. Speaks with brutal command*]. Opportunity! Cheap exhibitionism! A chance to flaunt your affairs in a rag like this. [*Indicating magazine on piano*] I won't be drawn into it. I can tell you that! [*He is in a towering rage.*]

MARION [*after a pause*]. I know that by your standards, Bunny, I'm a loose character. But there are other standards, there just are.

NOLAN [*crosses to center—drops magazine on model stand*]. Not in Tennessee!

MARION [*rises*]. I'm afraid you're provincial, Bunny.

NOLAN. I'm sorry.

MARION [*takes off her smock, crosses to small table down right, gets her notes, then crosses to desk upper right*]. I don't care what the advertisements say about my story—I know what I'm writing . . .

NOLAN. I'm sorry.

MARION. That's all right. [*But this has gone pretty deep.*]

NOLAN [*after a pause*]. If you're doing this for money—[*She turns and watches him.*] I know you've been pretty hard up—I promise you I'll get you commissions enough to more than make up for this story. I was talking about you only the other day to my

prospective father-in-law. He's a big man, you know. I am sure I can get him to sit for you . . .

MARION. The tip isn't big enough.

NOLAN [*scared now that he sees the extent to which he has hurt her*]. Marion! . . .

MARION. It amuses me to write my life. I am pleasure-loving—you know that—I will therefore pass up the opportunity of painting your big father-in-law. I will even give up the pleasure of painting you. And we can part friends, then, can't we? [*She reaches out her hand to him.*] Good-bye, Bunny.

NOLAN [*devastated*]. Marion—you can't do this to me—you can't send me away like this . . .

MARION. I don't think I've ever in my life had a vulgar quarrel with anyone. This is the nearest I've come to it. I'm a little annoyed with you for that. I think it's better we part now while we can still do so with some—dignity. Shall we?

NOLAN. You don't realize what's involved—or you wouldn't talk like that . . .

MARION. What *is* involved?

NOLAN. My entire career. That's what's involved.

MARION. Oh!

NOLAN. This is the most critical moment of my life. My fiancée's father is the most powerful leader of opinion in my state. Frankly, I depend on him for support. To have this kind of thing bandied about now might cause a permanent rift between him and me—might seriously interfere, not only with my candidacy for the Senate, but with my marriage.

MARION. They are interlocking—I quite understand.

NOLAN. A revelation of this kind—coming at this moment—might be fatal . . .

MARION. Revelation! You make me feel like—I can't tell you what you make me feel like . . . [*She laughs—semihysterically.*]

NOLAN [*sepulchral*]. You must give this up, Marion.

MARION. I've met distinguished men abroad—politicians, statesmen—a Prime Minister even—and this kind of "revelation"—as you so luridly call it—is no more to them than a theme for after-dinner banter. They take it in their stride. My God, Bunny, you take it so big!

NOLAN. These people I'm depending on to elect me aren't sophisticated like you or me. [MARION *looks at* NOLAN *with some*

surprise.] What I mean is—they're country people essentially—my future father-in-law is sympathetic to their point of view.

MARION. Tell me—your father-in-law, is he the man with the chest expansion?

NOLAN. He's a fine sturdy man—as you perhaps know, he makes a fetish of exercise.

MARION [*bubbling again*]. You see his pictures in shorts in health magazines.

NOLAN. There's no disgrace in that.

MARION [*sits on right arm of sofa left*]. It doesn't shock me, Bunny. I was just identifying him, that's all.

NOLAN. I owe everything to Kinnicott—I wouldn't be running for the Senate right now if not for him. I can't risk offending him.

MARION. What the devil's happened to you anyway? You used to be quite a nice boy—even fun occasionally . . .

NOLAN [*wistful—turns away*]. Maybe—if you had stuck to me . . .

MARION. Ts! Ts! Ts! Poor Bunny. I'm sorry for you. Really I am. [*She strokes his arm.*]

NOLAN [*suddenly passionate—faces her*]. Don't touch me!

MARION [*amazed*]. Bunny!

NOLAN. Do you think I'm not human!

MARION. Well, if you aren't the most contradictory . . .

NOLAN. I realized the moment I came in here the other day—the moment I saw you . . .

MARION [*interrupting*]. But Bunny! You're engaged and you're going to be a Senator.

NOLAN [*walks away from her*]. Forget it! Forget I ever said it. . . .

MARION. You bewilder me . . .

NOLAN [*bitterly*]. I'm not surprised I bewilder you. You've spent your life among a lot of foreign counts. It's well known that foreigners are more immoral than we are.

MARION. I'm very touched. I am really. [*She kisses him in a friendly way.*]

NOLAN. Don't do that! I forbid you!

MARION. All right. I'll never attack you again, I promise.

NOLAN. I wish I had never come back into your life—it was a terrible mistake—you'd forgotten me.

MARION [*seriously*]. Oh, you're wrong. First love—one doesn't forget that.

NOLAN [*passionately*]. But you did! You forgot me! And if you got the chance again, you'd humiliate me again.

MARION. Humiliate! What queer notions you have— Is it a question of pride or vanity between us? We're old friends—friends.

NOLAN [*moves a step right*]. Please forget this—I don't know what came over me—I . . .

MARION. Of course. There's nothing to forget. [*Moves a step toward him*] It's quite all right, dear . . . [*She pats him on his hand.*] . . . Oh, excuse me . . .

NOLAN. I warn you, Marion—I solemnly warn you—if you persist in this—

MARION. Never in my life have I seen a man vacillate so between passion and threat . . .

NOLAN. I shall find ways to stop you. Mr. Kinnicott, my future father-in-law, is a powerful man.

MARION. I know. Extraordinary biceps.

NOLAN. I warn you, Marion. This matter is beyond flippancy.

MARION [*sits*]. There'll be some very distinguished people in my biography. You needn't be ashamed.

NOLAN. That movie-actor!

MARION. Tympi in Hamlet costume—you in a toga. I'll print your portraits on opposite pages—my two men!

NOLAN. You are malicious!

MARION. I must admit, Bunny, that you provoke in me all my malicious impulses. You come here suddenly and you convey to me what I've missed in not marrying you. [*The back-door bell rings.* MINNIE *crosses to answer it during* MARION'S *speech.*] You dangle before me the inventory of your felicities—a career, a fortune, a fabulous bride—and then, because I get a chance to chronicle my own adventures—you object—you tell me I mustn't! I have a nice nature, Bunny, or I should be angry—I should be indignant.

[KURT *enters.*]

NOLAN [*sharply and with threat*]. Now, Marion, I've warned you . . . You'll regret this.

MARION. Hello, Dickie, do talk to Bunny for a minute, will you? [*Crosses to the stairs and starts up them to her bedroom*] I've simply got to change. [MINNIE *enters up center and exits left.*] Feydie's coming to take me out to dinner.

NOLAN. But, Marion . . .

MARION. I couldn't do anything about this in any case, Bunny dear, because I've promised Dickie. In fact, I signed something, didn't I,

Dickie? Don't go away, either of you. . . . [MARION *blows them a kiss and exits into her bedroom. A pause between the two men.* KURT *crosses downstage to above the model stand. Suddenly,* NOLAN *goes to* KURT *and reaches out his hand to him.*]

NOLAN. How do you do, young man?

KURT [*very much surprised*]. How do *you* do? [*He looks at him narrowly, his head a little on one side, a terrier appraising a mastiff.*]

NOLAN. I am very glad to see you.

KURT. Isn't that nice . . . ?

NOLAN. You may be surprised to learn that on the one occasion when we met you made quite an impression on me.

KURT. Did I?

NOLAN [*sits on sofa right*]. You did. Sit down. In fact—I hope you don't mind—if you will allow me as a prerogative of seniority—to ask you a few questions. I have a purpose in mind and not—I trust—an idle purpose.

KURT. Shoot! [*Sits*] Anything to enlighten the professor! [*He knows he is going to be pumped and has decided to be casual, naive and even respectful.*]

NOLAN [*clearing his throat*]. Now then—your present position on the magazine you represent—have you been on it long?

KURT. About two years.

NOLAN. And before that?

KURT. Newspaper work.

NOLAN. And before that?

KURT. Tramping around the world. Odd jobs. Quite a variety.

NOLAN. College?

KURT. Believe it or not—Yale—two years . . . worked my way through—washed dishes.

NOLAN. Very interesting preparation . . . very interesting . . . Tell me now—your present work—do you find it interesting? Is the remuneration satisfactory?

KURT. Two hundred smackers a week. That's twice what I've ever earned in my life before.

NOLAN. Now then—to come to the point—no doubt you've heard of my prospective father-in-law, Mr. Orrin Kinnicott?

KURT. Heard of him! We pay him the compliment of imitation. He is our model, our criterion, our guiding star!

NOLAN. As you know, Mr. Kinnicott's interests are varied. He owns some powerful newspapers in my state. The other day I heard him say that he wanted a new man in Washington.

KURT [*playing naively excited*]. Now that's something to give one's eye-teeth for!

NOLAN [*pleased at the result*]. I think it might be possible to swing it—very possible.

KURT. God, what a break!

NOLAN. As it happens, Mr. Kinnicott is at present in town. I shall arrange an appointment for you in the next few days. Naturally, I expect you to keep the matter entirely confidential.

KURT. Naturally! You needn't worry on that score, Senator, I assure you.

NOLAN. Thank you, Mr. Kurt. That is all I ask.

[*A pause*]

KURT. Mr. Nolan—do you mind if I ask *you* something?

NOLAN. Certainly not . . .

KURT. You won't consider me impertinent?

NOLAN [*with a smile*]. I don't object to impertinence, Mr. Kurt. I was often considered impertinent myself when I was your age.

KURT. Why are you making me this offer?

NOLAN. I am not making you an offer. I shall merely attempt to expedite . . .

KURT. Why? The first time we met we didn't exactly hit it off, now, did we? Why then are you going to all this trouble?

NOLAN. I have discussed you with Miss Froude, who is an old friend of mine and whose opinion I greatly respect. She thinks very highly of you, Mr. Kurt. My own impression . . .

KURT [*inexorably*]. Why? What, as they say, is the pay-off?

NOLAN. I'll tell you. I'll tell you quite frankly. I don't want Miss Froude's autobiography, which you have persuaded her to write, to appear in your magazine. I want it killed!

KURT. Oh! You want it killed?

NOLAN. Exactly.

KURT. Why?

NOLAN. Marion knows why. We needn't go into that.

KURT [*wounded by a sudden and devastating jealousy*]. Good God! You! You too!

[MARION *enters from balcony. She is wearing a dove-colored evening dress—the gamine transformed into lady-of-the-world.*]

MARION. Well! How have you two boys been getting on? What do you think?

KURT [*seething. Crosses to foot of stairs*]. I'll tell you what I think. . . .

MARION. About the dress I mean . . . [*She does a turn for them.*]

NOLAN [*without looking up at her or the dress. He is watching* KURT]. It's charming.

MARION. Thank you, Bunny. With all his faults Bunny is much more satisfactory than you are, Dickie.

KURT [*at boiling point*]. He's chivalrous, he is! His chivalry is so exquisite that he has just been attempting to bribe me to keep your story from being published. His gallantry is so delicate that he's terrified about being mentioned in it.

MARION [*comes down stairs during* KURT'S *speech*]. Don't be so worked up about it, Dickie. You're another one who takes it big. It's catching!

KURT [*flaring at her*]. You're not very sensitive. . . .

MARION. Why should I be? You misapprehend Bunny. If he doesn't want to be in the same story with me that's his business. And it's nothing to do with chivalry or gallantry or nonsense like that.

NOLAN. Marion—this young man . . .

KURT [*taunting him*]. What about Washington, Mr. Nolan? Mr. Nolan, a prospective Senator, offers to bribe me with a post in Washington controlled by his prospective father-in-law. . . .

MARION. If it's a good job take it, Dickie, by all means. . . .

KURT. I am afraid, Marion, that your code is more relaxed than mine . . .

MARION. Code, nonsense! I gave up codes long ago. I'm a big laissez-faire girl!

NOLAN. If this young man is an example of the distinguished company you've come to associate with, Marion . . .

MARION. Don't quarrel, children—please. It distresses me.

NOLAN. He's extremely objectionable.

KURT. What about Washington, now, *Senator?* Are you still willing to expedite . . . ! [KURT *and* NOLAN *stand glaring at each other.* MARION *tries to calm the troubled waters. Crosses to* NOLAN]

MARION. Really, Dickie, you're very naughty. Don't mind him, Bunny. He's very young.

KURT. And incorruptible!

NOLAN. Marion, I claim the privilege of a friendship that antedates Mr. Kurt's by some years, to beg you, very solemnly, not to prostitute your talents to his contemptible, sensation-mongering rag.

KURT [*faces them*]. There's a Senatorial sentence!

MARION. Hush, Dickie, hush! Bunny darling, it's true that Dickie's magazine isn't the Edinburgh Review. On the other hand your as-

sumption that my story will be vulgar and sensational is a little gratuitous, isn't it?

NOLAN. You *refuse* then?

MARION [*gently but with a serious overtone*]. Yes. This—censorship before publication seems to me, shall we say, unfair. It is—even in an old friend—dictatorial.

NOLAN [*with an air of finality*]. You leave me then no alternative. I am very sorry.

KURT. Don't let him frighten you, Marion, he can't do anything.

NOLAN. I can forgive you anything, Marion, but the fact that you value my wishes below those of this insolent young man.

MARION. But this insolent young man hasn't anything to do with it! Can't you see, Bunny—it's my own wish that is involved.

NOLAN. I have explained to you the special circumstances. If you would consent to delay publication till after election. . . .

[*She turns to* KURT *to ask him to make this concession but can't get a word in. She is wedged between both of them.*]

KURT. She has nothing to do with the publication date. That's my province. Gosh, what a chance for the circulation manager in Tennessee! [*He rubs his palms together in mock anticipation of profits.*]

NOLAN [*losing his temper at last*]. You are tampering with more than you bargain for Mr.— Mr.— . . .

KURT. Kurt.

MARION. With a "K."

NOLAN. There are ways of dealing with a young man like this and you'll soon find out what they are!

KURT. Them's harsh words, Senator!

NOLAN. You wait and see.

MARION. Bunny!

NOLAN. Don't speak to me! I never want to see you again! [*He goes out.*]

MARION [*really distressed*]. This is awful!

KURT [*highly elated*]. It's wonderful!

MARION. But I'm very fond of Bunny. Oh dear! I'll telephone him tonight . . .

KURT [*grimly*]. Over my dead body!

MARION. Can it be, Dickie, that I control the election of Senators from Tennessee? [*Sits at right end of sofa left*]

KURT [*after a moment*]. How could you ever have loved a stuffed shirt like that?

MARION. He wasn't a stuffed shirt. That's the funny part. He was

charming. He was a charming boy. Rather thin. Rather reticent. He was much nicer than you, as a matter of fact. . . .

KURT. I'm sure he was!

MARION. He was much less violent!

KURT [*sits*]. Hypocritical old buccaneer!

MARION. He used to work hard all day and at night he studied law. We used to walk the country lanes and dream about the future. He was scared—he was wistful. How did he emerge into this successful, ambitious, overcautious—mediocrity? How do we all emerge into what we are? How did I emerge into what I am? I've dug up some of my old diaries. I was a tremulous young girl. I was eager. I believe I was naive. Look at me now! Time, Dickie . . . What will you be at forty? A bondholder and a commuter . . . Oh, Dickie!

KURT [*tensely*]. I'll never be forty!

MARION [*laughing*]. How will you avoid it?

KURT [*same tone*]. I'll use myself up before I'm forty.

MARION. Do you think so? I don't think so. [*Rises*] I sometimes wake up on certain mornings feeling absolutely — immortal! Indestructible! One is perpetually reborn, I think, Dickie. Everyone should write one's life, I think—but not for publication. For oneself. A kind of spiritual Spring-cleaning!

KURT. The Ego preening . . . !

MARION [*sitting on right arm of sofa left*]. Well, why not? After all, one's ego is all one really has.

KURT. Reminiscence is easy. So is anticipation. It's the *present* that's difficult and most people are too lazy or too indifferent to cope with it.

MARION. It's natural for you to say that—at your age one has no past and no future either, because the intimation of the future comes only with the sense of the past . . .

KURT [*with sudden bitterness*]. *I* see the past as an *evil thing*—to be extirpated.

MARION. How awful! [*Pause*] Why?

KURT. That's not important.

MARION [*rises*]. You freeze up so whenever I try to find out anything about you. I'm not used to that. Usually people open up to me —I'm a born confidante. But not you. . . . I'm interested too, because in an odd way I've become very fond of you.

KURT. My life's very dull, I assure you. *My* past lacks completely what you would call *glamour*.

MARION. No, Dickie. I don't believe that. I don't believe that's true of anybody's life.

KURT. Well, it's true. Moreover it's true of most people's lives. It's easy for anyone who's lived as you have to make romantic generalizations. It's very pleasant for you to believe them. Well, I shan't disillusion you. [*Turns away from her*] Why should I? It's not important. [*She is sitting down, smoking a cigarette in a holder, watching him. He becomes conscious that she is studying him.*]

MARION. I had no idea you felt this way about me—you despise me, don't you? [*He doesn't answer.*] Don't you?

KURT. Yes.

MARION. Why?

KURT [*rises. Walks away*]. Why did we start this?

MARION. You're annoyed at having even momentarily revealed yourself, aren't you? I'll have your secret, Dickie—I'll pluck out the heart of your mystery.

KURT. Secret! Mystery! More romantic nonsense. I have no secret. Nobody has a secret. There are different kinds of greed, different kinds of ambition—that's all!

MARION. Oh, you simplify too much—really I'm afraid you do. Tell me—why do you disapprove of me? Is it—as Bunny does—on moral grounds?

KURT [*right end of sofa left—angrily*]. You're superficial and casual and irresponsible. You take life, which is a tragic thing, as though it were a trivial bedroom farce. You're a second-rate artist who's acquired a reputation through vamping celebrities to sit for you.

MARION [*quietly, she continues smoking*]. Go on . . .

KURT. As an unglamorous upstart who has been forced to make my way I resent parasitism, that's all!

MARION. Isn't there in biology something about benevolent parasites, Dickie? Many great men, I believe, owe a debt of gratitude to their parasites, as many plants do . . . there are varieties. Again, Dickie, you simplify unduly. It is a defect of the radical and the young.

KURT. To return to the Honorable Nolan . . .

MARION. I return to him with relief . . .

KURT. He may exert pressure on us, you know . . .

MARION. How? I'm very interested. . . .

KURT. Well, for one thing, his future father-in-law might get me fired.

MARION. Could he do that?

KURT. He might. He might easily. [MARION *sits upright and looks at him.*] Some form of bribery. He might go to my chief and offer him a bigger job—anything.

MARION. All on account of my poor little biography— It seems incredible that anyone would take all this trouble. . . .

KURT. I'd just like to see them try—I'd just like to, that's all . . .

MARION. What would you do?

KURT. Do? I'd make the Honorable Nolan the laughing stock of the country, and his athletic father-in-law too. I'd just plaster them, that's what I'd do.

MARION. You sound vindictive.

KURT. Baby, I am vindictive!

MARION. Funny, I'm just amused. . . .

KURT. Well, everything's a spectacle to you! [*Turns away from her*] God, how I hate detachment!

MARION. Your desire to break up Bunny is quite impersonal then.

KURT. Surgical. Just as impersonal as that.

MARION. You're a funny boy, Dickie.

KURT [*turns away from her*]. I'm not funny and I'm not a boy. You've been around with dilettantes so long you don't recognize seriousness when you see it.

MARION. But it's the serious people who are funny, Dickie! Look at Bunny.

KURT [*faces her*]. Yes, look at him! An epitome of the brainless muddle of contemporary life, of all the self-seeking second-raters who rise to power and wield power. That's why I'm going to do him in. [*The phone rings—for a moment they pay no attention to it.*] It's the most beautiful chance anybody ever had and I'd just like to see them try and stop me.

[*Phone keeps ringing.* MARION *answers it.*]

MARION. Yes . . . yes . . . certainly. [*To* KURT—*a bit surprised*] It's for you . . . [*She hands him hand-receiver.*]

KURT [*takes phone and talks from rear of sofa*]. Yes. Hello . . . sure. Well, what about it? . . . Oh, you want to talk to me about it, do you? . . . I thought you would . . . I'll be around . . . sure . . . so long. [*He hangs up.*] They've begun! [*He is almost gay with the heady scent of battle.*]

MARION. What do you mean?

KURT. That was my chief. He wants to talk to me about your

story. Kinnicott's begun to put the screws on him. He's going to ask me to kill it. All right—I'll kill it!

MARION [*faintly*]. I can't believe it. . . .

KURT. Neff's had a call from the father-in-law . . .

MARION. Did he say so?

KURT. No, but you can bet he has!

MARION. I must say this puts my back up . . .

KURT. I'll make a fight for it to keep my job. But if he's stubborn I'll tell him to go to hell—and go to a publisher with your manuscript. And if I don't get quick action that way I'll publish it myself —I'll put every penny I've saved into it . . .

MARION. But why should you? Why does it mean so much to you?

KURT. Do you think I'd miss a chance like this?— It'll test the calibre of our magazines, of our press, our Senators, our morality . . .

MARION. All on account of my poor little story—how Vicki would have laughed.

KURT [*a spasm of jealousy again*]. Who's Vicki?

MARION [*aware of it*]. An old friend to whom I'm dedicating the biography.

KURT. Yeah! [*Sits beside her, then speaks*] Where is he now?

MARION. He's dead. [*A pause. She gets up and crosses to center.*] I've always rather despised these contemporary women who publicize their emotions. [*Another moment. She walks upstage. She is thinking aloud.*] And here I am doing it myself. Too much self-revelation these days. Loud speakers in the confessional. Why should I add to the noise? I think, as far as this story is concerned, I'll call it a day, Dickie.

KURT. What!

MARION. Let's forget all about it, shall we?

KURT. If you let me down now, I'll hate you.

MARION. Will you? Why won't you take me into your confidence then? Why won't you tell me about yourself? What are you after?

KURT [*after a moment of inhibition decides to reveal his secret dream*]. My ambition is to be critic-at-large of things-as-they-are. I want to find out everything there is to know about the intimate structure of things. I want to reduce the whole system to absurdity. I want to laugh the powers that-be out of existence in a great winnowing gale of laughter.

MARION. That's an interesting research. Of course it strikes me it's vitiated by one thing—you have a preconceived idea of what you

will find. In a research biased like that from the start you are apt to overlook much that is noble and generous and gentle.

KURT [*challenging and bitter*]. Have you found generosity and gentleness and nobility?

MARION. A good deal—yes.

KURT. Well, I haven't!

MARION. I'm sorry for you.

KURT. You needn't be. Reserve your pity for weaklings. I don't need it!

MARION. Are you so strong? [*A pause.* KURT *doesn't answer.*] How old are you, Dickie?

KURT [*turns away*]. What difference does that make?

MARION. Who do you live with?

KURT. I live alone.

MARION. Are you in love with anybody?

KURT. No.

MARION. Where are your parents?

KURT. They're dead.

MARION. Long?

KURT. My mother is. I hardly remember her. Just barely remember her.

MARION. Your father? [*He doesn't answer.*] Do you remember your father?

KURT [*in a strange voice*]. Yes. I remember him all right.

MARION. What did your father do?

KURT. He was a coal miner.

MARION. Oh! Won't you tell me about him? I'd like to know.

KURT. I was a kid of fourteen. There was a strike. One day my father took me out for a walk. Sunny spring morning. We stopped to listen to an organizer. My father was a mild little man with kind of faded, tired blue eyes. We stood on the outskirts of the crowd. My father was holding me by the hand. Suddenly somebody shouted: "The militia!" There was a shot. Everybody scattered. My father was bewildered—he didn't know which way to turn. A second later he crumpled down beside me. He was bleeding. He was still holding my hand. He died like that. . . . [*A moment. He concludes harshly—coldly—like steel*] Are there any other glamorous facts of my existence you would like to know?

MARION [*stirred to her heart*]. You poor boy . . . I knew there was something . . . I knew . . . !

KURT [*hard and ironic*]. It's trivial really. People exaggerate the importance of human life. One has to die. [*Turns to her*] The point is to have fun while you're alive, isn't it? Well, you've managed. I congratulate you!

MARION [*her heart full*]. Dickie darling—why are you so bitter against me? Why against me . . . ?

KURT. Do you want to know that too? Well, it's because . . . [*His voice rises. She suddenly doesn't want him to speak.*]

MARION. Hush, dearest—hush—don't say any more—I understand —not any more . . .

[*His defenses vanish suddenly. He sinks to his knees beside her, his arms around her.*]

KURT. Marion, my angel!

MARION [*infinitely compassionate, stroking his hair*]. Dickie—Dickie—Dickie . . . Why have you been afraid to love me?

CURTAIN

act 3

SCENE: *The same.*

TIME: *Late afternoon. Two weeks later.*

The telephone is ringing as the curtain rises. There is a moment and MINNIE *enters and crosses to rear of the table, rear of the sofa left. She picks up the receiver.*

MINNIE [*speaking into the phone*]. Hello.—No, Mr. Kurt, she's not yet back. Vot? You're not coming home to dinner?!—But I've made the Pfannkuchen you like— Vot?— You're tired of my damn Pfannkuchen—[*She shouts angrily.*] Every night I make dinner and you and Marion go out!—I'm *not* yelling— Vot? Vot shall I tell Marion?— Vot?— [*Doorbell rings.*] Vait—vait a minute.— Someone's ringing. [*She puts the receiver on the table and goes to the door.* MINNIE *shows in* LLANDER NOLAN, *who is followed by* ORRIN KINNICOTT, *who is a big, well-developed Southerner, about fifty-five, with a high-pitched voice. He is a superbly-built man with a magnificent chest development. He is aware that he is a fine figure of a man, impeccably dressed in formal afternoon clothes.*]

NOLAN [*to* MINNIE, *who has preceded him into the room*]. Did Miss Froude say she was expecting us for tea, Minnie?

MINNIE. No, Mr. Nolan. She didn't say nothing to me.

NOLAN. Not even when she'd be back?

MINNIE [*hangs up coats*]. No. She just went out.

NOLAN. All right, Minnie. We'll wait.

MINNIE. Yes, Mr. Nolan. [*She is about to go out into kitchen when she remembers that* KURT *is on the telephone. She picks up the receiver and says*] Hello—Mr. Kurt—you dere?— Good-bye! [*She then hangs up the receiver and exits left.*]

KINNICOTT [*querulously. Sits on sofa right*]. Did you tell her four o'clock?

NOLAN. Yes. I told her. [NOLAN's *manner with his father-in-law-to-be in this scene conveys the beginnings of a secret irritation, an inner rebellion.*]

KINNICOTT. Does she know I'm a busy man?

NOLAN [*gloomily*]. She's not impressed much by busy men.

KINNICOTT. I know these fly-by-night characters. I've dealt with 'em before . . . Bad— [*he sniffs the air of the room*] —bad air. [*Rises—tries to open window, fails, sits on window seat*] Bet she's underexercised.

NOLAN. On the contrary—she's radiantly healthy!

KINNICOTT. Cosmetics, I bet! These fly-by-night characters. . . .

NOLAN [*very irritated*]. Why do you keep calling her a fly-by-night character? She's nothing of the sort!

KINNICOTT [*crosses to* NOLAN]. Look here, Leander. . . .

NOLAN. Well?

KINNICOTT. Have you been entirely frank with me, in this matter?

NOLAN. Of course I have. . . .

KINNICOTT [*cryptic*]. About the past—yes. But I refer to the present.

NOLAN. I don't know what you mean.

KINNICOTT. I think you do know what I mean. Sometimes the way you talk I suspect—I suspect, Leander—that you are still in love with this woman.

NOLAN. Nonsense! I simply tell you that she's not a fly-by-night character. That doesn't mean I'm in love with her!

KINNICOTT. My daughter feels the same thing.

NOLAN. Slade! You've discussed this with Slade!

KINNICOTT. She's discussed it with me. She's no fool, that girl. She's noticed things lately.

NOLAN. What things?

KINNICOTT. She says she talks to you and that you're off somewhere else—dreaming. I tried to put her on another scent—but she was positive. She said: "Come on now, dad—don't stall me—come clean!" So I told her!

NOLAN. You did!

KINNICOTT. Yes.

NOLAN. When?

KINNICOTT. Yesterday. Told her it happened fifteen years ago, that you were a naive young feller, didn't know anything about women, were just naturally taken in . . .

NOLAN. That's not true though. I was not taken in.

KINNICOTT. There you go again—defending the woman that's endangering your entire career and using up my energies and yours when you ought to be home right now getting together with folks and thinking how to cinch this here election. Not going to be a walk-over, you know. [*Again trying the window*] How do you open this thing to get some air? [*Sits on window seat*]

NOLAN. I don't know. What did Slade say when you told her?

KINNICOTT. Nothin'. You know Slade's not the talkin' kind.

NOLAN. Funny she didn't mention it to me last night.

KINNICOTT. Didn't want to worry yer probably . . . all wool and a yard wide that girl is. I warn you, Leander, don't tamper with the most precious and rare thing. . . .

NOLAN [*impatient of oratory*]. I know—I know. The point is—what are we going to do?

KINNICOTT. 'Course I can get that young fellow—what's his name?

NOLAN. Kurt.

KINNICOTT. I can get him fired all right. From what you've told me, Leander, he's got something else up his sleeve. . . .

NOLAN. I'm afraid so.

KINNICOTT. That's what I want to find out from your lady friend. And I've got a pretty sure idea right now what it is.

NOLAN. What do you mean?

KINNICOTT. Money!

NOLAN [*still not understanding*]. Money . . .?

KINNICOTT. Blackmail!

NOLAN. You're crazy!

KINNICOTT. You don't know much about women, Leander; when you know the sex as well as I do you'll know that every woman has blackmail up her sleeve.

NOLAN. Look here, Orrin . . . !

KINNICOTT [*rises, confronts* NOLAN]. Now, you listen to me for a moment, son. . . . This situation's gone about far enough right now. You'd better make up your mind whether you want this blackmailing female or whether you want my daughter . . . and you'd better make it up right quick.

NOLAN [*flaring up*]. I resent your tone, Orrin, and I won't be ordered around as if I were a high-grade servant!

KINNICOTT. Now son, when you get control of your temper, and cool down a little bit, you'll see that my ordering hasn't been so bad for you. I'll acknowledge you were mighty successful as a lawyer, but in politics, you're nothing but a novice.

NOLAN [*resentful*]. Am I?

[*Doorbell*]

KINNICOTT. Just look back a bit, that's all—I've had to push and bolster you to get you where you are.

NOLAN [*desperately*]. I know—I have every reason to be grateful to you—that's the worst of it.

[MINNIE *enters and crosses to hall door. Both men turn and watch to see who it is that is calling.*]

MINNIE [*speaking to someone at the door*]. Ja, Fräulein?

SLADE [*off stage*]. Is Miss Froude in?

MINNIE. Nein, Fraulein.

SLADE [*entering*]. Well, I'll just wait. [SLADE KINNICOTT *is a good-looking, dark, high-spirited girl, a rather inspiriting and healthy example of the generation growing up on D. H. Lawrence.*[1] *To her father and* NOLAN *as she crosses downstage between them*] Hello.

NOLAN. Slade!

KINNICOTT [*severely*]. Daughter! What are you doing here?

SLADE. Came to have my picture painted. What are you?

KINNICOTT. Your coming here at this time is most inopportune, daughter. We are here on business.

SLADE [*mischievously*]. I can imagine!

NOLAN. I'm very glad you came, Slade. I want you to meet the woman whom your father has just been accusing of the most reprehensible crimes!

SLADE. I'm pretty anxious to get a load of her myself. [*Looks about the room taking it in and then sits on the left end of the sofa*

[1] ***D. H. Lawrence,*** *British author whose writings took a liberal attitude toward free love.*

below the piano] Nice lay-out. Gee, I wish I were artistic. What a lucky gal she is! A paint-brush and an easel and she can set up shop anywhere in the world. That's independence for you! Gosh! [*She looks about, admiring and envious.*]

KINNICOTT. Why must you come here to get your picture painted? We have tolerable good artists in Knoxville.

SLADE. Well, if you *must* know I'm very keen to have a heart-to-heart talk with my fiancé's old girl. Natural, isn't it?

KINNICOTT. No, it isn't natural!

NOLAN [*crosses angrily to window and back toward* KINNICOTT *and sits down on stool right near sofa on which* SLADE *and her father are sitting*]. This is what you get for telling her, Orrin.

SLADE. If you think I didn't suspect something was up ever since Froude arrived here, you don't know your little bride. Maybe I haven't been watching the clouds gather on that classic brow! Where is my rival? Don't tell me she's holding up two big shots like you two boys.

KINNICOTT. Slade, this is no time . . . please leave us before she comes.

SLADE. Not I! Just my luck; when a story is going to come out which has something in it *I* want to read, you two killjoys are going to suppress it!

NOLAN. This isn't exactly a joke, you know, Slade. . . .

SLADE. I mean it. . . .

KINNICOTT [*sadly*]. I've spoiled you, Slade—I've been too easy with you. . . .

SLADE. At least I hope you'll buy the *manuscript.* My God, father, I'm curious. Can't you understand that? I want to find out what Leander was like before he became ambitious. I've a right to know! This story might hurt you with the voters in Tennessee, Leander, but it's given me a kick out of you I didn't know was there! How did she make you, Leander—that's what I'd like to know. You've been pretty unapproachable to me but I sort of took it for granted National Figures were like that. Also I'd gotten to the point when I was going to suggest that we break our engagement, but this little incident revives my interest.

NOLAN [*furious*]. Indeed!

SLADE. Yes indeed. Where is this woman? What is that secret? How to Make National Figures . . . there's a title for you!

KINNICOTT. Slade, you're talking too much! Shut up!

NOLAN [*rises and moves stool toward them a bit*]. No, she isn't

at all. . . . [*To* SLADE] If your interest in me requires the artificial stimulus of an episode that happened twenty years ago . . .

SLADE [*leaning toward him*]. It requires something. . . .

NOLAN [*leaning closer toward her. The three heads are now close together,* KINNICOTT's *in the center*]. Does it?

SLADE. It does. We were getting so that conversation, when we were alone, was rather difficult.

[NOLAN *starts to argue.*]

KINNICOTT [*pushes them apart*]. Children! Children!

NOLAN. We're not children! [*To* SLADE] If our relationship is so—

SLADE. Tenuous . . . ?

NOLAN. . . . That it requires artificial . . .

SLADE. Respiration . . . ?

NOLAN. If it's as bad as that then I think perhaps we'd both better . . .

SLADE. Call it a day? . . . You'll need me in the Senate, Leander, to fill in the gaps when you get hung up in a speech. Consider carefully what you are discarding. . . .

NOLAN. If that is the case I tell you solemnly we'd better separate now.

SLADE [*mock tragedy*]. Father, Leander is giving your daughter the air. Do something!

KINNICOTT. I don't blame him for being irritated. You should not be here. Please go home.

SLADE [*lights cigarette*]. Don't worry, dad. I'll get him back.

KINNICOTT. This is a bad mess, Leander. And I must tell you frankly that I don't altogether approve of your attitude . . .

NOLAN. And I must tell you frankly that I don't approve of *yours*. . . .

KINNICOTT. Is that so!

NOLAN. I don't like your tone in speaking of a woman with whom at one time I had a relation of the tenderest emotion—for whom I still have a high regard. . . .

KINNICOTT. That's evident anyway!

NOLAN. When you apply to such a woman the terms you used before Slade came in, when you impute to her motives so base, you cast an equal reflection on my judgment and my character. . . .

SLADE. And that, pop, is lèse-majesté.

NOLAN. And it may be perfectly true, Slade, that knowing Miss Froude has spoiled me for the flippant modernisms with which you study. . . .

SLADE. I'm dying to ask her one thing: when you made love to her in the old days did it always sound like a prepared speech on tariff schedules?

KINNICOTT. This is getting us nowhere. . . .

SLADE. Well, dad, what do you expect? Leander and I have broken our engagement since I came into this room. That's progress, isn't it?

KINNICOTT. Your coming here at this time was most unfortunate.

SLADE. Leander doesn't think so. [*Ironically*] He's free now to pursue the lady for whom he still has a high regard. [*Rises*] Are we no longer engaged, Leander?

NOLAN. That's not for me to say.

SLADE [*rises and shakes hands with* NOLAN]. Gentleman to the last! And at the very moment—

KINNICOTT [*in despair—speaks as* SLADE *starts to speak*]. Slade, if you would only go home!

SLADE [*crosses left*]. *Just* at the very moment when I was saying to myself: Well, if a brilliant and beautiful woman who has played footie with royalty in the capitals of the world loved him, maybe there's a secret charm in him that I've overlooked—just when I was saying that and preparing to probe and discover—[*lightly*]—he gives me the air. [*Sits on sofa left*] By God, Orrin, there's life for you. [*Bell rings.*] Ah, that must be my rival!

[NOLAN *gets up and fixes his tie, expecting* MARION. *But it is* KURT *who comes in. He faces them. He is in a white heat of anger.*]

KURT. Well, gentlemen, I'm not surprised to find you here! [*Drops hat on model stand and comes downstage left*]

NOLAN [*about to introduce* KINNICOTT]. How do you do, Mr. Kurt . . . this is. . . .

KURT. I can guess who it is. I can guess why you're here. Having failed to intimidate *me* you are here to intimidate Miss Froude. [SLADE *rises, excited by this tempest.*] Well, I can advise you that you will fail with her too.

NOLAN. This is his usual style, Orrin. Don't mind him.

KURT. I have just come from my office where I have been informed by Mr. Neff— [SLADE *stands below* KURT—*just behind him—watching him*]—whom *you* doubtless know, Mr. Kinnicott—that I could decide between publishing Miss Froude's story or giving up my job. I invited him to go to hell. That invitation I now cordially extend to you two gentlemen.

SLADE. Why doesn't somebody introduce me to this interesting young man? [*She comes toward him.* KURT *is embarrassed, but covers it in a gruff manner. He has actually not been aware of her in the room.*]

KURT. I'm sorry—I—I didn't know.

SLADE. Why are you sorry? I'm Slade Kinnicott. [*She gives him her hand. He takes it, limply.*]

KURT. All right—all right. [*He is disarmed and feels, suddenly, rather foolish.*]

SLADE. Leander, why have you kept me apart from this young man?

KURT. I'm sorry—I . . .

SLADE. Nonsense. What's your name?

KURT. Richard Kurt.

SLADE. Go to it— [*Turns him toward others*]

KINNICOTT [*impressively—interposing between them*]. You're being very foolish, young man.

KURT [*crosses toward them—to right of model stand*]. Possibly.

NOLAN. You can't argue with him. I've tried it. He's a fanatic.

KURT. But if you ask me I think *you're* being very foolish.

KINNICOTT [*who wants to find out what's in* KURT's *mind*]. Are we? How do you figure that, young man?

SLADE [*parroting—crosses and sits on model stand. She is having a wonderful time*]. Yes, how!

KINNICOTT. Oh, hush your mouth.

KURT. Because I'm going to publish Miss Froude's book myself. And I promise you that it'll be the best-advertised first book that's come out in a long time.

SLADE. Thank God! Will you send me the advance sheets? I'll make it worth your while, Mr. Kurt.

KINNICOTT. I can see you are an extremely impulsive young man. Have you ever inquired, may I ask . . . ?

SLADE [*edges a bit closer to* KURT]. This is going to be dangerous! Look out, Richard. . . .

[NOLAN *sits on stool, disgusted with* SLADE.]

KINNICOTT [*smoothly*]. Have you inquired into the penalties for libel, Mr. Kurt?

KURT. Libel! You're going to sue me for libel, are you?

KINNICOTT [*same voice*]. Yes. You and Miss Froude both . . . yes. . . .

KURT. Well, you just go ahead and try it, that's all I can tell you.

Go ahead and sue. [*Crosses to above* NOLAN] It'll put Mr. Nolan in a charming position before those *moral* constituents of his, won't it? [*Includes both* NOLAN *and* KINNICOTT] Go ahead and sue, both of you—sue your heads off . . . ! I promise the two of you I'll give you the fight of your lives!

SLADE [*delighted*]. Good for you, Richard!

[MARION *comes in. She wears a long red velvet coat, and a little red cap stuck on the side of her golden head—she looks a little like Portia.*[1] *She is at the top of her form.*]

MARION [*beaming with hospitality*]. Well! How nice! Minnie!

KURT [*goes upstage to right of* MARION]. This chivalrous gentleman has just been proposing to sue you for libel—he considers . . .

SLADE [*who rises and stands just below the model stand*]. I'm Slade Kinnicott.

MARION [*crosses downstage to her and they shake hands over the model stand*]. How very nice of you to come! [*Turns and faces* KINNICOTT] Is this Mr. Kinnicott? [*He bows.*] I'm so glad to see you. [*They shake hands.*] I'm so sorry to be late. [*Waves hello to* NOLAN] Hello, Bunny.

SLADE [*this is too much for her*]. Oh, my God—BUNNY! [*She sits, overcome.*]

MARION [*to* NOLAN]. I'm so sorry . . .

NOLAN [*glaring at* SLADE]. It's all right, Marion!

MARION. Has Minnie given you tea? I'll just . . . Minnie! [MINNIE *enters.*] Tea, Minnie, please. . . . [*To the men*] Or cocktails—highballs . . . ?

KINNICOTT. I never drink alcoholic mixtures.

NOLAN [*asserting his independence*]. I'll have a highball!

KINNICOTT. I must tell you, Leander, that I do not approve—

NOLAN. I'll have *two* whiskies straight!

MARION. Good! Highball for you, Miss Kinnicott?

SLADE. Thanks.

MARION. I'll fix them myself, Minnie. Just bring us some tea, Minnie.

KINNICOTT. Nor do I wish any tea.

KURT [*crosses down left*]. Nor do I.

MARION. Do you mind if I have a cup? Do sit down, Miss Kinnicott. A tiring day. . . . [SLADE *sits on model stand.* MARION *goes up to rear of piano.*] Minnie, please bring me a cup of tea—

[1] ***Portia,*** *the heroine of* The Merchant of Venice, *dressed for her role as lawyer.*

MINNIE. Ja, Fräulein. [*Remembering*] A telegram for you, Fräulein.

MARION. Oh, thank you, Minnie. Just put it there on the table. [MINNIE *leaves the telegram on the table rear of the sofa left and then exits left.* MARION *removes her coat and hat and crosses to rear of piano and starts to mix the highballs.*] Now then! What is all this nice cheerful talk about a libel suit? That's what they're always having in England, isn't it, on the least provocation. It's when you've circulated a lie about someone—defamed someone—maliciously—isn't it? Bunny! [*She gives* NOLAN *his two drinks. He takes them and returns to his position.* MARION *picks up the other glass and crosses with it to* SLADE.] Now then—whom have I defamed?

KURT. You've defamed the Honorable Mr. Nolan!

MARION [*hands drink to* SLADE]. Have I? Oh, I am tired. . . . [*She sits on sofa.*] Sit by me, won't you, Miss Kinnicott?

SLADE [*sauntering over*]. Thanks. [*She sits by* MARION *on the sofa.*]

MARION. You're very pretty. . . .

SLADE [*more warmly*]. Thanks!

MARION. Bunny, I congratulate you. I've heard so much about you, Miss Kinnicott. And I think it's very gracious of you to come and see me. If Bunny lets me I'd like to paint you—[MINNIE *enters*]—and give you the portrait for a wedding-present. [*She rises and crosses to above model stand to get cup of tea from* MINNIE. MINNIE *exits left.*] Thank you, Minnie.

SLADE. You're very lovely.

MARION. Thank you, my dear.

SLADE. I can't tell you how curious I've been about you—I—

KINNICOTT. This is all very well—but I'm a busy man . . .

MARION [*looks at* KINNICOTT *as she crosses and sits right of* SLADE. *A moment, then* MARION *speaks*]. It seems so strange to see you with all your clothes on. It seems a pity—as an artist I must say it seems a pity—to conceal that wonderful chest development that I've admired so often in The Body Beautiful.

KINNICOTT. That's neither here nor there.

MARION [*this is almost an aside to* SLADE]. It seems to me that it's decidedly *there.* [MARION *and* SLADE *laugh quietly together.*]

KINNICOTT. Slade, you've upset everything by coming here. . . .

[KURT *comes forward. He has been eaten up with irritation that the superb indignation he felt should have been so dissipated by this cascade of small talk. He can stand it no longer.*]

KURT [*crosses to right of model stand*]. If you understood better what these gentlemen mean to do . . . !

NOLAN [*protests*]. It wasn't my idea!

KURT. You wouldn't be quite so friendly, Marion. . . .

MARION. I couldn't possibly be unfriendly to anyone so frank—and—and gladiatorial—as Mr. Kinnicott.

KURT [*furious at her for not letting him launch into it*]. A libel suit . . . !

MARION. Oh, yes! A libel suit! It sounds so cozy. Sit down, won't you? [KINNICOTT *sits on stool.*] A libel suit. Now then—what shall it be about?

KURT. The Honorable Nolan is going to sue you for libel. . . .

NOLAN. I'll punch your head if you say that again. . . .

KURT. On the assumption that when you say in your story that you and he were lovers you are lying and defaming his character!

MARION. Dear Bunny, you must want to be a Senator very very badly!

NOLAN [*in despair*]. I never said it, I tell you!

MARION. As a matter of fact, how could I prove it? Come to think of it, are there any letters? Did you ever write to me, Bunny?

NOLAN. I don't remember.

MARION. I don't think you ever did. You see—we were always—during that dim brief period of your youth—we were always so close—letters were hardly necessary, were they? Did I ever send you any letters, Bunny?

NOLAN. I don't remember, I tell you.

MARION. Neither do I. You might look around in old trunks and places and see if you can find some old letters of an affectionate nature—I'd love to read them—they'd probably make wonderful reading now. Why is it that the things one writes when one's young always sound so foolish afterwards? Has that ever occurred to you, Mr. Kinnicott?

KINNICOTT. I don't admit the fact.

MARION. No.

KINNICOTT. No. I was looking over some old editorials of mine written in the depression of 1907 and they're just as apropos today. I haven't changed my ideas in twenty-five years.

MARION. Haven't you really? How very steadfast. Now if the world were equally changeless, how consistent that would make you. [*To* KURT] Well, there isn't any documentary evidence.

KURT. It doesn't matter. . . .

KINNICOTT. As I said before, this is getting us nowhere. Don't you think, Miss Froude, that the only way we can settle this is by ourselves? [*She smiles at him.*] I can see you're a sensible woman.

MARION. I am very sensible.

KINNICOTT. And you and I can settle this matter in short order.

KURT. You don't have to talk to him at all if you don't want to.

MARION [*smiling at* KINNICOTT]. But I'd love to. I've always wanted to meet Mr. Kinnicott. There are some questions I want very much to ask him. [*To the others*] You can all wait in my bedroom. It's fairly tidy, I think.

SLADE [*to* KURT— *Rises, crosses to him*]. Why don't you take me for a walk, Richard?

MARION [*as* KURT *hesitates*]. Do that, Dickie. A walk'll do you good.

NOLAN. What'll I do?

MARION [*as if it were another dilemma*]. You wait in my bedroom. [*Aware suddenly of the proprieties*] No—in Minnie's bedroom. It's just next to the kitchen.

NOLAN [*defiantly*]. I will! [*He exits into bedroom.*]

KURT [*sulky—he doesn't quite like the turn affairs have taken*]. We'll be back in ten minutes.

SLADE [*as they go out*]. You can't tell, Richard. [SLADE *and* KURT *exit.*]

[MARION *draws a deep breath. She assumes at once with* KINNICOTT *the air of two equals, mature people talking freely to each other after they've gotten rid of the children.*]

MARION [*they cross to sofa left*]. Now we can talk! It's funny—I feel we've put the children to bed and can have a quiet talk after a lot of chatter.

KINNICOTT. Same here!

MARION. Please sit down. [*They do.*]

KINNICOTT. I feel sure you and I can come to an understanding.

MARION. I'm sure we can.

KINNICOTT. Now then, about this little matter of the story—You won't mind if I speak very frankly to you . . . ?

MARION. Not at all.

KINNICOTT. You see, Miss Froude . . .

MARION. Oh, call me Marion. Everybody does.

KINNICOTT. Thanks. Call me Orrin.

MARION. All right, I'll try. Not a very usual name. Orrin. Fits you. Strong. Rugged strength.

KINNICOTT. Thank you.

MARION. You're welcome. What were you going to say when I interrupted you? You were going to say something. . . .

KINNICOTT. I was going to say—you're not at all what I expected to meet.

MARION. No? What did you think I'd be like? Tell me—I'd love to know.

KINNICOTT. Well, you're kind of homey—you know—folksy . . .

MARION. Folksy. [*Smiles*] After all, there's no reason I shouldn't be, is there? I'm just a small-town girl from Tennessee. I sometimes wonder at myself—how I ever got so far away. . . .

KINNICOTT [*positively*]. Metabolism!

MARION. I beg your pardon. . . .

KINNICOTT. I always say—take most of the bad men and most of the loose women and correct their metabolism and you'll correct them.

MARION. Really?

KINNICOTT [*seriously*]. Absolutely. Trouble with our penology experts—so-called—is that they're psychologists—so-called—when they should be physiologists.

MARION. That is very interesting indeed. Have you ever written anything about that?

KINNICOTT. Off and on.

MARION. Any definitive work I mean?

KINNICOTT. I'm considering doing that right now.

MARION. Oh, I do wish you would! It's extraordinary how little one knows about one's own body, isn't it? I get so impatient of myself sometimes—of my physical limitations. My mind is seething with ideas but I haven't the physical energy to go on working. I tire so quickly—and often for no apparent reason. Why is that, Mr. Kinnicott?

KINNICOTT. Defective—

[*She says at same time with him*]

MARION—KINNICOTT. Metabolism!

KINNICOTT. Tell me—

MARION. What?

KINNICOTT. Do you eat enough roughage?

MARION. I don't know, offhand.

KINNICOTT [*firmly*]. Well, you should know!

MARION. As I say, Orrin—one is so ignorant of these fundamental things.

KINNICOTT [*definitely aware now of* MARION *as a personal possibility*]. I can see this, Marion—if you'd met me—instead of Leander —when you were a young girl—you'd have been a different woman.

MARION. I'm sure I would. Imagine—with one's metabolism disciplined early in life—how far one could go.

KINNICOTT [*confidentially offering her hope*]. It's not too late!

MARION. Isn't it?

KINNICOTT. Er. . . . [*He drops his voice still lower.*] What are you doing tomorrow evenin'?

MARION. I—I'm free.

KINNICOTT [*same voice*]. Will you have dinner with me?

MARION. I'd be delighted.

KINNICOTT. Fine! Then we can go over this little matter of the story and Leander quietly. Leander isn't strong on tact. . . .

MARION. You know, some men aren't.

KINNICOTT. You and I can make a friendly adjustment.

MARION. What fun! [*They chuckle.*]

KINNICOTT. What time shall we meet? Say seven-thirty?

MARION. Let's say eight . . . do you mind?

KINNICOTT. My apartment?

MARION. If you like.

KINNICOTT. Here's my card with the address. It's a roof apartment. I'm a widower.

MARION. Irresistible combination!

KINNICOTT. By the way—

MARION. What?

KINNICOTT. Don't mention our little date for tomorrow evenin' to Leander.

MARION [*rising*]. No, I agree with you. I don't think that would be wise.

KINNICOTT [*nodding trustingly—rises*]. Fine! At seven-thirty?

MARION. No—no. Eight.

KINNICOTT. Oh yes . . . eight. [*A moment's pause. He visibly preens before her, buttoning his beautifully-fitting frock coat across his heroic chest.*]

MARION [*approving*]. Wonderful! Wonderful!

KINNICOTT [*going toward bedroom. To her*]. Do you mind if I . . . Leander . . .

MARION. Not at all.

KINNICOTT. I'll take the load off his mind.

[*He goes out. She can't believe it. The whole situation is so*

fantastic. She flings off her little red cap and shaking with laughter collapses on the couch. MINNIE *comes in to clear up the tea-things.*]

MARION [*as* MINNIE *enters*]. It's too good to be true, Minnie. . . .

MINNIE. Vat is too good to be true?

MARION. I must write some of it down before I forget it . . . [*The bell again.* MARION *gets up to make notes on her script.*] —A widower's penthouse— [*With an irritated sigh* MINNIE *goes out to answer bell.* MARION *sits at desk jotting notes very fast.* SLADE *and* KURT *come in.* KURT *is morose.* MARION *gets up to greet them.*] Well, children?

SLADE. That walk was a total loss.

MARION [*laughing*]. What did you expect?

SLADE. Well, a little encouragement—just a soupçon . . .

MARION. Dickie's very serious.

SLADE. How did you come out with dad?

MARION. Wonderful! I'm crazy about him!

SLADE. But he got you to renege on the story . . .

MARION. Well, he thinks so. However, we're going to discuss it tomorrow evenin'.

SLADE. Thought he'd date you up—could tell by the way he eyed you. . . .

MARION. He's going to teach me how to live in a state of virtuous metabolism.

SLADE. Oh! Don't you believe it! Dad's an awful old chaser.

MARION [*rather shocked*]. Slade!

SLADE [*amused*]. Are you shocked?

MARION. You make me feel a little old-fashioned.

[KURT *is intensely irritated by this conversation.*]

KURT. Where are they?

MARION. They're in there sitting on Minnie's bed. Orrin is probably telling Bunny that everything'll be all right.

SLADE [*sits left of* MARION]. Marion. . . .

MARION. Yes. . . .

SLADE. What is there about Bunny you can't help liking?

[*Utterly disgusted,* KURT *goes to sofa down left and sits staring moodily into a gloomily-tinted future.*]

MARION. He's a dear—there's something very touching about Bunny —sweet . . .

SLADE. Were you in love with him once?

MARION. Yes.

SLADE. Are you in love with him now?

MARION. No.

SLADE [*in a whisper*]. Are you in love with—someone else?

MARION [*a moment's pause*]. Yes.

SLADE. I thought you were. He's mad about you.— I envy you, Marion.

MARION. Do you? Why?

SLADE. You're independent. You're—yourself. You can do anything you like.

MARION. Yes, I know. But it's possible one can pay too much for independence. I'm adrift. Sometimes—you know what seems to me the most heavenly thing—the only thing—for a woman? Marriage, children—the dear boundaries of routine . . .

SLADE. If you had married Bunny he would've given 'em to you. He's still in love with you, but he doesn't quite know it. Shall I tell him?

MARION [*parrying*]. What are you talking about?

SLADE. I wish we could change places, Marion. You can with me but I can't with you.

[KINNICOTT *and* NOLAN *come in from the bedroom.* KINNICOTT *is at his most oleaginous.*]

KINNICOTT [*to* KURT]. Well, young man! Over your little temper?

KURT. No, I'm not over it! What makes you think I'm over it?

KINNICOTT. Well, well, well! As far as I'm concerned there are no hard feelings. I'm going to call up your employer myself when I get home and tell him, that as far as you are concerned, to let bygones be bygones. Can't do more than that, can I?

KURT. To what do I owe this generosity?

KINNICOTT. To the fact that in Miss Froude you have a most gracious friend and intercepter. [*He gives* MARION *a gallant, old-South bow.*] Miss Froude—this has been a very great pleasure.

MARION [*rises—with an answering bow*]. Thank you!

[SLADE *also rises.*]

KINNICOTT [*giving her his hand*]. Auf wiedersehen.

MARION. Auf Wiedersehen. Ich kann es kaum erwarten![1]

KINNICOTT [*pretending to understand*]. Yes, oh, yes, yes, of course! [*To* SLADE] Come, Slade. [*He goes to hall door.*]

SLADE. All right, dad. [*To* NOLAN] Coming—Bunny?

NOLAN. Well, yes—I'm coming.

SLADE [*to* NOLAN]. You want to stay. Why don't you?

[1] *Ich . . . erwarten! I can hardly wait!*

KINNICOTT [*quickly marshaling his little following with a military precision*]. I think Leander had better come with us—

SLADE [*to* MARION]. Good-bye, Marion.

MARION [*to* SLADE]. Good-bye, Slade. [*They shake hands.*] Come to see me.

SLADE. Thanks, I will.

KINNICOTT [*smiles at* MARION]. Miss Froude! [*Bows to* MARION *who returns his bow*] Come, daughter. Come, Leander. [*To* KURT] Good-bye, young man. No hard feelings. [KURT *glares at him.* KINNICOTT *again bows to* MARION.] Miss Froude! [MARION *is startled into still a third bow. He calls without looking back*] Come, Slade! Leander!!

SLADE [*as she exits*]. Bunny!

NOLAN [*lingers an instant then crosses to* MARION]. I'll be back.

MARION. When?

NOLAN. In a few minutes. All right?

MARION. I'll be in. [*He goes out quickly.* MARION *is in wonderful spirits. She runs to* KURT *and throws her arms around him.*] Oh, Dickie. That Orrin! That Orrin!

KURT. What did you say to him that put him in such good spirits?

MARION. Everything I said put him in good spirits. I can't wait for tomorrow evenin'. I can't wait for that dinner. It'll probably consist entirely of roughage—just imagine! He's the quaintest man I ever met in my life. He's too good to be true. [*Sits right of* KURT]

KURT. Well, he may be quaint to you but to me he's a putrescent old hypocrite and I don't see how you can bear to have him come near you, say less go to dinner with him!

MARION [*sobered by his intensity*]. You're so merciless in your judgments, Dickie. You quite frighten me sometimes—you do really.

KURT. And so do you me.

MARION. I do? That's absurd!

KURT. You do. It's like thinking a person fastidious and exacting and finding her suddenly . . .

MARION. Gross—indiscriminating?

KURT [*bluntly*]. Yes!

MARION. You know, Dickie, I adore you and I'm touched by you and I love you but I'd hate to live in a country where you were Dictator. It would be all right while you loved me but when you stopped. . . .

KURT. It wouldn't make any difference if I stopped—I shouldn't be that kind of a Dictator . . .

MARION [*glances at him. Almost sadly*]. I see you've thought of it. . . .

KURT [*inexorably*]. What did you say to Kinnicott?

MARION. Your manner is so—inquisitorial. I haven't been able to get used to it.

KURT [*angry and jealous*]. I heard you tell Nolan to come back too . . . How do you think I feel?

MARION. Dickie!

KURT. When Nolan sat there and told me he had been your lover, I felt like socking him. Even when we're alone together, I can't forget that . . . yet you encourage him, and Kinnicott— My God, Marion, you seem to like these people!

MARION. I certainly like Slade.

KURT. Well I don't. She's conceited and overbearing. Thinks she can have anything she likes because she's Orrin Kinnicott's daughter.

MARION. That's where you're wrong. She's a nice girl—and she's unhappy.

KURT [*bitterly*]. Maladjusted, I suppose!

MARION. Dickie, Dickie, Dickie! Studying you, I can see why so many movements against injustice become such absolute—tyrannies.

KURT. That beautiful detachment again. . . . [*He is white with fury. He hates her at this moment.*]

MARION [*with a little laugh*]. You hate me, don't you . . . ?

KURT. Yes! Temporizing with these . . . ! Yes . . . ! I hate you. [*She says nothing, sits there looking at him.*] These people flout you, they insult you in the most flagrant way. God knows I'm not a gentleman, but it horrifies me to think of the insufferable arrogance of their attitude toward you . . . as if the final insult to their pride and their honor could only come from the discovery that this stuffed shirt Nolan had once been your lover! The blot on the immaculate Tennessee scutcheon! Why, it's the God-damndest insolence I ever heard of. And yet you flirt and curry favor and bandy with them. And you're amused—always amused!

MARION. Yes. I am amused.

KURT. I can't understand such . . . !

MARION. Of course you can't. That's the difference—one of the differences—between 25 and 35!

KURT. If the time ever comes when I'm amused by what I should hate, I hope somebody shoots me. What did you tell Kinnicott?

MARION. Nothing. Simply nothing. I saw no point in having a scene with him so I inquired into his favorite subject. He gave me health hints. He thinks tomorrow night he will cajole me—through the exercise of his great personal charm—into giving up my plan to publish.

KURT. Well, why didn't you tell him right out that you wouldn't?

MARION. Because I wanted to avoid a scene.

KURT. You can't always avoid scenes. That's the trouble with you —you expect to go through life as if it were a beautifully-lit drawing room with modulated voices making polite chatter. Life isn't a drawing room . . . !

MARION. I have—once or twice—suspected it.

KURT [*rises*]. What the devil are you afraid of, anyway? I had a scene today in the office and I was prepared for one here—until you let me down—

MARION [*lightly*]. Prepared? I think you were eager. . . .

KURT. What if I was! It's in your behalf, isn't it?

MARION. Is it? But you forget, Dickie. You're a born martyr. I'm not. I think the most uncomfortable thing about martyrs is that they look down on people who aren't. [*Thinks—looks at him*] As a matter of fact, Dickie, I don't really understand. Why do you insist so on this story? Why is it so important—now wouldn't it be better to give it up?

KURT. Give it up!

MARION. Yes.

KURT. You'd give it up!

MARION. Why not?

KURT [*obeying a sudden manic impulse*]. After all this—after all I've—! Oh, yes, of course! Then you could marry Nolan and live happily forever after. And be amused. Good-bye! [*He rushes up center, grabs his hat from the stand as he passes it, and continues on out the door.*]

MARION [*rises and runs after him*]. Dickie!

KURT [*going out the door*]. Good-bye!

MARION. Dickie! Dickie! [*The door slams.* MARION *walks back into the room. A pause. She stands still for a moment; she shakes her head. . . . She is very distressed and saddened and a deep unhappiness is gnawing in her heart, an awareness of the vast, uncrossable deserts between the souls of human beings. She makes a*

little helpless gesture with her hands, murmuring to herself] Poor Dickie! Poor boy! [*In its Italian folder the manuscript of her book is lying on the piano before her. She picks it up—she gives the effect of weighing the script in her hand. Slowly, as if in a trance, she walks with the script to the Franklin stove downstage left and sits before it on a little stool. She opens the manuscript and then the isinglass door of the stove. The light from behind it glows on her face. She looks again down on her manuscript, at this morsel of her recorded past. She tears out a page or two and puts them into the fire. A moment and she has put the entire script into the stove and she sits there watching its cremation. The doorbell rings. As* MINNIE *comes in to answer it, she shuts the door of the stove quickly.*]

MARION. It's probably Mr. Nolan.

[MINNIE *goes out.* MARION *makes a visible effort to shake herself out of her mood.* NOLAN *comes in followed by* MINNIE *who crosses stage and goes in the bedroom left.* NOLAN *is excited and distrait.*]

NOLAN. Hello, Marion. . . .

MARION. Hello, Bunny dear.

NOLAN [*sparring for time*]. Excuse me for rushing in on you like this . . . I . . .

MARION. I've been expecting you.

NOLAN. That's right! I told you I was coming back, didn't I? . . .

MARION. You did—yes.

NOLAN. I must have known—I must have felt it—what would happen. . . . Marion . . .

MARION. Bunny dear, you're all worked up. Won't you have a highball?

NOLAN. No, thanks. Marion. . . .

MARION. Yes, Bunny . . .

NOLAN. I've done it!

MARION. You've done what?

NOLAN. I've broken with Slade. I've broken with Kinnicott. I've broken with all of them.

MARION. You haven't!

NOLAN. Yes! I have!

MARION. Oh—oh, Bunny!

NOLAN [*sits*]. When Orrin told me what you'd done—that you were going to give up the story. . . .

MARION. But I—

NOLAN. He said he was sure he could get you to do it. It all came over me—your generosity—your wonderful generosity.

MARION [*beyond words*]. Oh, Bunny! [*Sits. She is in a sort of laughing despair. He hardly notices her attitude. He rushes on.*]

NOLAN. I realized in that moment that in all this time—since I'd been seeing you—I'd been hoping you wouldn't give up the story, that you would go through with it, that my career would go to smash. . . .

MARION [*faintly*]. Bunny. . . .

NOLAN. I saw then that all this—which I'd been telling myself I wanted—Slade, a career, Washington, public life—all of it—that I didn't want it, that I was sick at the prospect of it—that I wasn't up to it, that I was scared to death of it. I saw all that—and I told her—I told Slade. . . .

MARION. You did!

NOLAN. Yes.

MARION. What did she say?

NOLAN. She said she knew it. She's clever, that girl. She's cleverer than I am. She's cleverer than you are. I'm afraid of her cleverness. I'm uncomfortable with it. Marion, I know I seem stupid and ridiculous to you—just a Babbitt—clumsy—but I love you, Marion. I always have—never anyone else. Let me go with you wherever you go— [*lest she think it a "proposition"*] —I mean—I want to marry you.

MARION. I'm terribly touched by this, Bunny darling, but I can't marry you.

NOLAN. Why not?

MARION. If I married you it would be for the wrong reasons. And it wouldn't be in character really—neither for me—nor for you. Besides that, I think you're wrong about Slade. She's very nice, you know. I like her very much.

NOLAN. I don't understand her. I never will.

MARION. If you did you'd like her. You better have another try. Really, Bunny, I wish you would.

NOLAN. Letting me down easy, aren't you?

MARION. It's Slade's manner that shocks you—her modern—gestures. If you really understood me—as you think you do—I'd really shock you very much, Bunny.

NOLAN. I'll risk it. Marion, my dearest Marion, won't you give me some hope? . . .

MARION [*sees she must tell him*]. Besides,—I'm in love.

NOLAN [*stunned*]. Really! With whom?

MARION. Dickie . . . You see, Bunny . . . [*He can't get over this. There is a considerable pause.*] You see, Bunny . . .

NOLAN [*slowly*]. Do you mean that you and he—you don't mean that . . . ?

MARION. Yes, Bunny.

NOLAN [*dazed*]. Are you going to marry him?

MARION. No.

NOLAN [*he passes his hand over his forehead*]. This is a shock to me, Marion.

MARION [*gently*]. I thought it only fair to tell you.

NOLAN [*in a sudden passion*]. You—you. . . . [*He feels like striking her, controls himself with difficulty.*] Anybody else but him . . . !

MARION. You see, Bunny.

NOLAN [*after a moment—rises*]. Sorry! Funny, isn't it? Joke, isn't it?

MARION. I'm terribly fond of you, Bunny. [*Takes his hand*] I always will be. That kind of tenderness outlasts many things.

NOLAN [*blindly*]. I'll go on, I suppose.

MARION. Of course you will! [NOLAN *crosses to model stand and gets his hat.* KURT *comes in. There is a silence.* NOLAN *forces himself to look at him.* KURT *does not meet his glance.* KURT *is white and shaken—not in the least truculent.*] Good-bye, Bunny dear. Bunny!

NOLAN. Yes, Marion.

MARION. Will you do me a favor?

NOLAN. Yes.

MARION. Will you please tell Mr. Kinnicott for me—that as I've been called out of town suddenly—I can't dine with him tomorrow night. You *will* see him, won't you, and you'll tell him?

NOLAN. Yes. [NOLAN *leaves. A silence again. . . . Suddenly* KURT *goes to her, embraces her with a kind of hopeless intensity.*]

KURT [*in a whisper, like a child*]. Please forgive me. . . .

MARION. Yes.

KURT. These moods come over me—I can't control myself—afterwards I hate myself—it's because I love you so much—I can't bear to. . . .

MARION. I know, dear—I know. . . .

KURT. I'm torn up all the time—torn to bits.

MARION. I know, dear . . .

KURT. When this is all blown over—could we—do you think . . .

MARION. What, dear?

KURT. If we could only go away together, the two of us—somewhere away from people, by ourselves?

MARION. Why not, Dickie? We can go now, if you want to. . . .

KURT. Now? But you're crazy. How can we possibly leave now—with the book. . . .

MARION. Dickie—I must tell you. . . .

KURT. You must tell me what?

MARION. You must be patient—you must hear me out for once—you must try to understand my point of view. [*She leads him to sofa left and sits beside him.*]

KURT. What do you mean?

MARION. You know, Dickie, I've been very troubled about you. I've been sad. I've been sad.

KURT. I was angry . . . I didn't mean . . . It was just that . . .

MARION. No, you don't understand—it wasn't your anger that troubled me. It was ourselves—the difference between us—not the years alone but the immutable difference in temperament. Your hates frighten me, Dickie. These people—poor Bunny, that ridiculous fellow Kinnicott—to you these rather ineffectual, blundering people symbolize the forces that have hurt you and you hate them. But I don't hate them. I can't hate them. Without feeling it, I can understand your hate but I can't bring myself to foster it. To you, this book has become a crusade. It couldn't be to me. Do you know, Dickie dear—and this has made me laugh so to myself—that there was nothing in the book about Bunny that would ever have been recognized by anybody. It was an idyllic chapter of first love—that's all—and there was nothing in it that could remotely have been connected with the Bunny that is now. . . .

KURT. So much the better—! Think of the spectacle they'll make of themselves—destroyed by laughter. . . .

MARION. I don't believe in destructive campaigns, Dickie . . . outside of the shocking vulgarity of it all—I couldn't do it—for the distress it would cause. . . .

KURT. You've decided not to publish then. . . .

MARION. I've destroyed the book, Dickie.

KURT. You've destroyed it!

MARION. Yes. I'm sorry.

KURT. You traitor!

MARION. It seemed the simple thing to do—the inevitable thing.

KURT. What about *me?* You might have consulted me—after what I've . . .

MARION. I'm terribly sorry—but I couldn't possibly have published that book.

KURT [*in a queer voice*]. I see now why everything is this way. . . .

MARION. I couldn't . . . !

KURT. Why the injustice and the cruelty go on—year after year—century after century—without change—because—as they grow older—people become—*tolerant!* Things amuse them. I hate you and I hate your tolerance. I always did.

MARION. I know you do. You hate my essential quality—the thing that is me. That's what I was thinking just now and that's what made me sad.

KURT. Nothing to be said, is there? [*Rises*] Good-bye.

MARION [*rises*]. All right! [KURT *starts to go. She calls after him, pitifully*] Won't you kiss me good-bye?

KURT. All right.

[MARION *goes up after him. They kiss each other passionately.*]

MARION [*whispering to him*]. I would try to change you. I know I would. And if I changed you I should destroy what makes me love you. Good-bye, my darling. Good-bye, my dearest. Go quickly. [KURT *goes upstage and exits without a word. He is blinded by pain.*] Dickie . . . !

[MARION *is left alone. She is trembling a little. She feels cold. She goes to the stove and sits in front of it, her back to it, trying to get warm. She becomes aware that her eyes are full of tears. As* MINNIE *comes in, she brushes them away.*]

MINNIE. Are you worried from anything, Marion?

MARION. No, Minnie. I'm all right.

MINNIE. I tink maybe dot telegram bring you bad news.

MARION. Telegram? What telegram?

MINNIE. Dot telegram I bring you.

MARION. Of course—I haven't even—where is it?

MINNIE [*gets telegram from table rear of sofa left and hands it to* MARION]. There it is!

MARION. Thank you, Minnie. [*Opens telegram and reads it*] This is from heaven! Minnie, I want you to pack right away. We're leaving! [She springs up.]

MINNIE. Leaving? Ven?

MARION. Right away. Tonight! This is from Feydie! Listen! [*Reads telegram aloud to* MINNIE] "Can get you commission to

paint prize winners Motion Picture Academy—wire answer at once. Feydie." [*Hysterically grateful for the mercy of having something to do at once, of being busy, of not having time to think*] Something always turns up for me! Pack everything, Minnie. I want to get out right away. [*She rushes upstage right, picks up her hat and coat and then runs to the stairs left.*]

MINNIE. Don't you tink you better vait till tomorrow?

MARION. No, Minnie. Once the temptation to a journey comes into my head I can't bear it till I'm on my way! This time, Minnie, we'll have a real trip. From Hollywood we'll go to Honolulu and from Honolulu to China. How would you like that, Minnie? [*She starts up the stairs.*]

MINNIE [*for her, enthusiastic*]. Fine, Marion! [*Calls after her as she runs upstairs*] Dot crazy Kurt he goes vit us?

MARION [*as she disappears into her bedroom*]. No, Minnie—no one—we travel alone!

[*Quick curtain*]

EUGENE O'NEILL (1888-1953)

Though no one playwright was responsible for the sudden flowering of American drama in the twenties, Eugene O'Neill towered above his contemporaries with his titanic individuality, his bold experimentation, and his prolific production during the fifteen years after the First World War. Only O'Neill earned an international reputation for our drama, which was based not only on his commanding stature as a writer but also on his close ties with the European tradition from Strindberg to the German expressionists. He gave a Continental cast to our stage in his restless exploration of new dramatic techniques, and if he founded no school and had no imitators, it was in part because his styles were too personal and too varied to be copied, in part because they were themselves derived from European writers whose work had never been much at home in the theaters of England and America. The dramas of this dedicated and somberly brooding spirit ranged from amazing successes to embarrassing failures, both commercially and artistically. Half of his plays are mercifully forgotten today, but the others, covering every period of his career, provide an exciting study in self-expression and self-fulfillment. Above all, they reveal a sure sense of theatrical know-how which enabled him to attain the most unlikely triumphs with uncompromising plays that tax the intellect and the patience of his audiences to the breaking point.

This sense of the stage may well have sprung from his background, for O'Neill actually grew up in the theater. The son of the famous romantic actor James O'Neill, who traveled the country from one end to the other in *The*

Count of Monte Cristo, he was literally born on Broadway, in a hotel where his parents were staying during the theater season. The O'Neills summered at New London, Connecticut, which was home to the growing boy. The devout Catholicism of his mother and his early education in Catholic schools may be revealed in the strong current of mysticism in his plays and in his persistent quest for spiritual peace amid the disturbing realities of modern life.

His expulsion from Princeton for a freshman escapade in 1907 began a decade of seemingly aimless living, in which he was slowly finding himself through a great variety of experiences in many parts of the Western Hemisphere. He prospected for gold in Honduras in 1909 and struck nothing but a case of malaria. He worked intermittently in his father's touring company as actor and stage manager. Most influential of all his experiences was his turn as a merchant seaman on several ships, where he gained that understanding of the sailor's life that was to inspire his first acted plays, the *S. S. Glencairn* series. Stranded in Buenos Aires, he worked as a clerk in the Argentine offices of several American firms. He took to drink and dissipation there and later lived for a time among the derelicts in Jimmy the Priest's saloon on the New York waterfront, which formed the setting of his last play produced on Broadway, *The Iceman Cometh.*

Gradually the urge to write took possession of O'Neill, and he went to work as a reporter and columnist on a newspaper in his old home of New London. The praise of his editor first encouraged him to concentrate upon creative work. At this turning point in his career he contracted tuberculosis, and during his long convalescence in a sanatorium at Wallingford, Connecticut, his reading in the older playwrights focused his ambition on the drama. This year of 1913-1914, then, saw the completion of his youthful exploration of life. Thereafter he was directed by a purposeful creative energy that drove him on through experiment and triumph in the theater until his sudden retirement in 1933.

But five years of apprenticeship lay ahead before his first première in a Broadway theater. Feeling the need of technical discipline he studied for a year (1914-1915) with George Pierce Baker in his "47 Workshop" at Harvard, and then joined the Provincetown Players, who gave summer

performances at their tiny Wharf Theatre on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and winter performances on a little stage down in the Greenwich Village section of New York City. At Provincetown in 1916 O'Neill saw his first play produced, a one-acter in the *S. S. Glencairn* series called *Bound East for Cardiff*. In part because of the interruption of the First World War, it was not until February 2, 1920, that the first of his full-length plays, *Beyond the Horizon,* was staged in a Broadway theater. This date marks conveniently, if inaccurately, the new drama's conquest of the professional stage. But O'Neill continued to present his plays at the Provincetown Playhouse in the Village until its demise in 1929. Thereafter he was taken over by the Theatre Guild, which was in a position to provide adequate productions for his most taxing works, such as *Strange Interlude* and *Mourning Becomes Electra.*

Some playwrights have seemed to work within a very narrow area, perfecting a formula or two to be repeated in play after play. Such were Philip Barry and S. N. Behrman. O'Neill, on the other hand, has seemed to write with a driving fear of repeating himself. Every modern dramatic style—realism, naturalism, romanticism, symbolism, expressionism—is represented in his work, as well as most of the dramatic types from the gloomy naturalistic tragedy of *Beyond the Horizon* and the historical romance of *The Fountain* to folk comedy in *Ah, Wilderness!* and social satire in *Marco Millions.* His success in experimenting with bizarre technical devices—the masks of *The Great God Brown,* the asides and soliloquies of *Strange Interlude,* the trilogy form of *Mourning Becomes Electra,* the alter ego character in *Days Without End*—has seldom moved him to try the same thing a second time. Each represented an artistic challenge to be met, but once the problem was solved, he would move on to a new one. It would almost seem that the badge of an O'Neill play is its differentness from all other plays by O'Neill.

Actually, nearly all of his works betray a strong affinity with each other, which lies not in the formal matters of the type of play, style, and technical experiment, but in the enveloping mood of the play and the undercurrent of moral idea that obsesses them. In the most ambitious and

provocative study of O'Neill's work that has yet appeared, R. D. Skinner has traced what he calls "a poet's quest" for resolution of the moral conflicts of modern man in a world dedicated to materialism. This full-length critical analysis undoubtedly ascribes a more consistent design to O'Neill's plays than he was himself aware of, but it does not falsify the facts in arguing for an underlying pattern of ideas that may reveal a cycle of question and answer in the mind, or the conscience, of the artist himself.

O'Neill is a highly subjective writer who put nearly all of his own problems and experiences into his plays. This means not simply the superficial happenings of his life: his New England background in the locale of *Desire Under the Elms* and *Mourning Becomes Electra;* his sea voyages in the *S. S. Glencairn* plays and the sea and sailor motifs in a host of others, especially *Anna Christie;* the tuberculosis sanatorium that forms the setting of *The Straw;* or Jimmy the Priest's of *The Iceman Cometh.* It means not simply the authors who impressed him: the Greek dramatists who inspired in part *The Great God Brown* and *Mourning Becomes Electra,* Freud and the psychoanalysts who honeycomb O'Neill's drama, particularly *Strange Interlude* and *Mourning Becomes Electra;* and above all August Strindberg, whose shocking interpretation of the sex duel appeared especially in O'Neill's early plays, like *Before Breakfast, Beyond the Horizon, Welded,* and *All God's Chillun Got Wings.*

Beyond these obvious ties with his personal life, O'Neill's plays suggest his trial of soul and his abiding concern with the problem of good and evil in the cold steel world of *Dynamo.* Being both an Irishman and a Catholic by background, he possesses that curious combination of mysticism and almost Calvinist conscience that has haunted so much of modern Irish literature. Despite the testimony of *Days Without End,* O'Neill has never returned to the faith of his fathers, but he has been temperamentally unable to accept the godless materialism of our century, which dwarfs the dignity of man and tries to dispel the mystery of the universe. For O'Neill the revolution wrought by physical science and psychoanalysis has not destroyed the realities of older periods of man's spiritual life but given him a new under-

standing of their meaning. To the interpretation of these spiritual realities he has brought not simply the soul-baring realism of Strindberg and Freud, but also the cumulated tradition of centuries of inquiry. He believes that facing the truth about the nature of man, however unpleasant, must precede any final security. Like Socrates he must know before he can find contentment and rest. Like Dante he must go through the inferno of horror and disillusionment to reach the truth and the eventual peace of the spirit.

MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA

Although no one work of O'Neill can summarize all of the dramatic styles, the shifts in intellectual outlook, and the technical experiments that he passed through in the crowded fifteen years of his maturity as an artist, *Mourning Becomes Electra* is his most ambitious work and probably the most typical. In it his searching naturalism, his obsession with the sexual substructure of man's personality, his interest in the Freudian interpretation of this inner life, and his fondness for reviving in modern terms dramatic conventions and themes out of the past are fused in a stark tragedy, or series of tragedies, of relentless gloom and power. In sheer size and scope it was the climax of a development that began in 1916 with the little one-act plays about the sea, grew to two- and three-act dramas around 1920, expanded to the nine-act dimensions of *Strange Interlude* in 1926-1927, and here stretched to a trilogy of three connected plays comprising thirteen acts—as far as an audience is likely to follow a playwright in one evening. By his own admission *Mourning Becomes Electra* occupied O'Neill's attention longer than any other of his works—the three years of 1929 to 1931—and since then he has disclosed only three new plays, all of minor importance by comparison.

This mammoth drama can be approached on various critical levels, but it is perhaps easiest to see the work against its classical background as one of the most striking re-creations of a traditional

dramatic story in the history of the theater. The story and its traditional treatment take us back to the Greek stage of 2500 years ago. In Athens of the fifth century B.C., where Western drama first reached maturity, the production of a play was in part a religious occasion for the populace of the city, rigidly circumscribed by conventions growing out of the sacred character of the performance. A play, or a trilogy of plays on one general subject, embodied a tale of gods or national heroes out of the Greeks' heritage, conceived to inspire religious fervor and patriotic pride, much as the production of a passion play may induce a mood of reverence in a Christian audience today. Hence Greek playwrights showed their originality, not in devising new plots, but in reinterpreting the hallowed ones with their own conceptions of character, arrangement of incidents, and invention of dialogue. This remains to our day one approach to dramatic plot, though it is now much less common than the use of new material and is used for special artistic purposes.

In time a few of the ancient myths of the Greeks became especially popular as dramatic material because of their unusual artistic possibilities and their special usefulness for moral instruction. Of these none was more familiar than the somber saga of the House of Atreus, which carried a curse of vengeful murder through four generations of one ill-starred family. All three ancient Greek tragedians from whom plays survive treated it, and the version by Aeschylus is the one complete trilogy to have been preserved from the Greek theater. Parts of the grisly tale were reworked by the Roman dramatist Seneca, and when drama was revived during the Renaissance it returned to favor with the new playwrights, notably the Frenchman Voltaire and the Italian Alfieri in the eighteenth century. In modern times not only O'Neill has used it for notable play-making, but also the Austrian Hugo von Hofmannsthal, the Frenchman Jean-Paul Sartre, and the Americans Robinson Jeffers and Robert Turney. Like a few other recurring stories in world literature, such as Ulysses, Faust, Don Juan, and the Wandering Jew, the House of Atreus has seemed to many generations to embody timeless truths about the meaning of life.

O'Neill's version is specifically modeled on the original trilogy of Aeschylus, though with a completely modern interpretation of the characters and incidents. The pagan Greek saw in the fateful descent of the murderous curse through the family the inexorable operation of divine destiny, which carried a duty of vengeful punish-





ment in kind through the generations. The sins of the fathers were visited upon the children to the third and fourth generations, and the revenge recalls the "eye for an eye" formula of the Old Testament.

With the opening of the first play the Greek general and king, Agamemnon, returns from victory in the Trojan War to his palace in Argos, which is already deeply stained with the gore of past crimes and the bloodthirsty designs of those who receive him. His hateful wife, Clytemnestra, carrying an old grievance against him, has made common cause with his cousin, Aegistheus, who is dedicated to avenging a crime of Agamemnon's father against his own. On the very night of Agamemnon's return his wife murders him with the assistance of her paramour, enticing Agamemnon into a show of pride that will justify her act before the gods.

In the second play, which opens several years later, the resolute daughter Electra smoulders with hatred of her mother and Aegistheus, loyal to her father's memory and awaiting the return of her brother Orestes from the court of their uncle, where he has been reared in safety from his mother's fears of him. He returns in disguise, plots with his sister, and eventually kills both Clytemnestra and Aegistheus for their murder of his father. Despite the fact that he was merely carrying out a duty of revenge demanded of him by the god Apollo, Orestes in the third play is pursued from place to place by the relentless Furies, terrible goddesses of retribution. At last Athena, the goddess of wisdom, demands a public trial for Orestes before a body of Athenian citizens, at which Apollo himself defends Orestes from the charges of the Furies. The jury is evenly divided, but Athena casts the deciding vote for acquittal, and the Furies at last drop their terrifying aspect and settle in Athens as the kindly Eumenides. Thus Aeschylus used his tale to show a justice of community law supplanting the private law of personal revenge which derived from a more primitive period of Greek civilization.

For O'Neill this great story carried no lesson in civics, but an illustration of the sexual structure of the family, the consequences of its operation without moral restraints, and its eventual subjection to moral law. His master in psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, had already gone back to the old tale to name one important concept in his system the Electra complex, which denotes a strong bond within the family between father and daughter which can produce a love triangle with the mother. Its counterpart, called from another Greek myth the Oedipus complex, defines an exaggeration of the mother-son

tie. If Freud did not name this latter relationship the Orestes complex, it was because Orestes in the play of Aeschylus had grown up apart from his mother and eventually killed her at his sister's behest. To give a complete symmetry to his family structure O'Neill deviated most sharply, and most significantly, from his model in treating Orin's youth and Christine's death, borrowing the sexual tie between Orin and his mother, Christine, from the ancient tale of Oedipus, who actually married his mother, Jocasta. Otherwise the modern playwright has followed the framework of the ancient trilogy very closely in his first two plays.

Ezra Mannon is Agamemnon, the weary general returned from the war to his ominous mansion with its Greek temple front, built out of the hates of an older generation. Like Aegistheus, his secret cousin Adam has returned to avenge a family crime and has become the lover of Ezra's wife, Christine, whose hatred of her husband is Strindberg's sexual hate that has its beginnings in an original love. The chorus of townspeople recalls the Greek chorus in Aeschylus' plays, "a human background for the drama," and the masklike faces of all the Mannons parallel the actual masks of tragedy worn by the ancient actors.

The townspeople suggest also the subtle appropriateness of the New England locale for the translation of this ancient tale of lust and crime into modern American terms. The façade of frigid restraint in New England character, symbolized by the cold white pillars before so many Greek Revival houses, may conceal depths of passion and bitterness held in check by three centuries of Puritan repression as they were restrained in Greece by a different code of self-control. In a larger sense all civilized living imposes restraints upon the desires of the self to possess and reject or destroy people around one, but in O'Neill's unsparing analysis of the Mannons these savage desires are stripped naked, retaining only the veneer of stiff respectability that largely deceives the lesser characters. The House of Mannon is the soul of man, compounded of terrifying urges, but also of the longing for love and the civilized conscience that rises above gratification of the libido to a spiritual fulfillment. The unattractive people who embody these secrets of the soul will seem morbid and repulsive symbols, especially to the reader unacquainted with Freud, for not one is a normal human being or carries the sympathy that surrounds the major characters of every other play in this book. But O'Neill's point is that all of their acts arise from urges common to all of us, which are seldom granted free expression and hence are generally converted into socially

acceptable behavior. In the Mannons they take an overt and extreme form that outrages our sentimental view of family ties and romantic love.

For his third play O'Neill borrowed from Aeschylus chiefly the persecution of the Furies, who become the haunting conscience of Orin driving him to insanity and suicide. They are the ghosts of the house, the glowering portraits on the wall, the spectral memories in every room. But Orestes was the major character of the Greek trilogy, whereas in O'Neill it is the daughter Lavinia. For her, too, conventional happiness is impossible. The blissful island of peace of which the Mannons all dreamed cannot be hers for long, because both children carry now until death the weight of their own crimes and those of the family. Her conscience too demands expiation, not through self-murder, but through the greater punishment of living on with the terrible ghosts of her house to haunt her. Mourning indeed becomes Electra, for with one of those word plays so common in O'Neill he suggests not only that the black robes of grief suit her character throughout the plays, but that at the end all of the lamentations of her house find union in her.

The inescapable Fate of Aeschylus, a force outside man whose dictates he must accept without question, becomes in O'Neill a complex of forces within man's personality that brings him in conflict with others and eventually with a higher law to which he must accede sooner or later. Both playwrights reduce the free will of man drastically and make him in large part the victim of forces beyond his control. Yet most men stop short of the uninhibited actions of these characters, so that the Mannons are not simply the epitome of human nature but the dreadful examples of those who do not use their free will to restrain the darkest impulses in their souls. For the chorus of villagers their sorry end is still "like fate," and one of them phrases the very philosophy of Aeschylus: "You've always said about the Mannons that pride goeth before a fall and that some day God would humble them in their sinful pride."

These are the simple terms of popular interpretation, innocent of the cold and probing explanations of modern science, but ultimately some such human meaning must emerge from these plays if they are more than a fascinating clinical study. For O'Neill himself they certainly had that higher significance as he reached a major milestone in his own search for light. Through a fearless facing of the grim facts of self he cleared the ground for faith in the higher realities that remained.

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EUGENE O'NEILL

MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA

A TRILOGY

Part One

HOMECOMING

A play in four acts

Part Two

THE HUNTED

A play in five acts

Part Three

THE HAUNTED

A play in four acts

GENERAL SCENE OF THE TRILOGY

The action of the trilogy, with the exception of an act of the second play, takes place in or immediately outside the Mannon residence, on the outskirts of one of the small New England seaport towns.

A special curtain shows the house as seen from the street. From this, in each play, one comes to the exterior of the house in the opening act and enters it in the following act.

This curtain reveals the extensive grounds—about thirty acres—which surround the house, a heavily wooded ridge in the background, orchards at the right and in the immediate rear, a large flower garden and a greenhouse to the left.

In the foreground, along the street, is a line of locust and elm trees. The property is enclosed by a white picket fence and a tall hedge. A driveway curves up to the house from two entrances with white gates. Between the house and the street is a lawn. By the right corner of the house is a grove of pine trees. Farther forward, along the driveway, maples and locusts. By the left corner of the house is a big clump of lilacs and syringas.

The house is placed back on a slight rise of ground about three hundred feet from the street. It is a large building of the Greek temple type that was the vogue in the first half of the nineteenth century. A white wooden portico with six tall columns contrasts with the wall of the house proper which is of gray cut stone. There are five windows on the upper floor and four on the ground floor, with the main entrance in the middle, a doorway with squared transom and sidelights flanked by intermediate columns. The window shutters are painted a dark green. Before the doorway a flight of four steps leads from the ground to the portico.

The three plays take place in either spring or summer of the years 1865-1866.

HOMECOMING

CHARACTERS

Brigadier-General Ezra Mannon
Christine, his wife
Lavinia, their daughter
Captain Adam Brant, of the clipper "Flying Trades"
Captain Peter Niles, U. S. Artillery
Hazel Niles, his sister
Seth Beckwith
Amos Ames
Louisa, his wife
Minnie, her cousin

Scenes

Act One: Exterior of the Mannon house in New England—April, 1865

Act Two: Ezra Mannon's study in the house—no time has elapsed

Act Three: The same as Act One—exterior of the house—a night a week later

Act Four: A bedroom in the house—later the same night

act 1

SCENE: *Exterior of the Mannon house on a late afternoon in April, 1865. At front is the driveway which leads up to the house from the two entrances on the street. Behind the driveway the white Grecian temple portico with its six tall columns extends across the stage. A big pine tree is on the lawn*

at the edge of the drive before the right corner of the house. Its trunk is a black column in striking contrast to the white columns of the portico. By the edge of the drive, left front, is a thick clump of lilacs and syringas. A bench is placed on the lawn at front of this shrubbery which partly screens anyone sitting on it from the front of the house.

It is shortly before sunset and the soft light of the declining sun shines directly on the front of the house, shimmering in a luminous mist on the white portico and the gray stone wall behind, intensifying the whiteness of the columns, the somber grayness of the wall, the green of the open shutters, the green of the lawn and shrubbery, the black and green of the pine tree. The white columns cast black bars of shadow on the gray wall behind them. The windows of the lower floor reflect the sun's rays in a resentful glare. The temple portico is like an incongruous white mask fixed on the house to hide its somber gray ugliness.

In the distance, from the town, a band is heard playing "John Brown's Body." Borne on the light puffs of wind this music is at times quite loud, then sinks into faintness as the wind dies.

From the left rear, a man's voice is heard singing the chanty "Shenandoah"—a song that more than any other holds in it the brooding rhythm of the sea. The voice grows quickly nearer. It is thin and aged, the wraith of what must once have been a good baritone.

"Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you
A-way, my rolling river
Oh, Shenandoah, I can't get near you
Way-ay, I'm bound away
Across the wide Missouri."

The singer, SETH BECKWITH, *finishes the last line as he enters from around the corner of the house. Closely following him are* AMOS AMES, *his wife* LOUISA, *and her cousin* MINNIE.

SETH BECKWITH, *the Mannons' gardener and man of all work, is an old man of seventy-five with white hair and beard, tall, raw-boned and stoop-shouldered, his joints stiffened by rheumatism, but still sound and hale. He has*

a gaunt face that in repose gives one the strange impression of a life-like mask. It is set in a grim expression, but his small, sharp eyes still peer at life with a shrewd prying avidity and his loose mouth has a strong suggestion of ribald humor. He wears his earth-stained working clothes.

AMOS AMES, *carpenter by trade but now taking a holiday and dressed in his Sunday best, as are his wife and her cousin, is a fat man in his fifties. In character he is the townsfolk type of garrulous gossip-monger who is at the same time devoid of evil intent, scandal being for him merely the subject most popular with his audience.*

His wife, LOUISA, *is taller and stouter than he and about the same age. Of a similar scandal-bearing type, her tongue is sharpened by malice.*

Her cousin, MINNIE, *is a plump little woman of forty, of the meek, eager-listener type, with a small round face, round stupid eyes, and a round mouth pursed out to drink in gossip.*

These last three are types of townsfolk rather than individuals, a chorus representing the town come to look and listen and spy on the rich and exclusive Mannons.

Led by SETH, *they come forward as far as the lilac clump and stand staring at the house.* SETH, *in a mood of aged playfulness, is trying to make an impression on* MINNIE. *His singing has been for her benefit. He nudges her with his elbow, grinning.*

SETH. How's that fur singin' fur an old feller? I used to be noted fur my chanties. [*Seeing she is paying no attention to him but is staring with open-mouthed awe at the house, he turns to* AMES—*jubilantly*] By jingo, Amos, if that news is true, there won't be a sober man in town tonight! It's our patriotic duty to celebrate!

AMES [*with a grin*]. We'd ought to, that's sartin!

LOUISA. You ain't goin' to git Amos drunk tonight, surrender or no surrender! An old reprobate, that's what you be!

SETH [*pleased*]. Old nothin'! On'y seventy-five! My old man lived to be ninety! Licker can't kill the Beckwiths! [*He and* AMES *laugh.* LOUISA *smiles in spite of herself.* MINNIE *is oblivious, still staring at the house.*]

MINNIE. My sakes! What a purty house!

SETH. Wal, I promised Amos I'd help show ye the sights when you

came to visit him. 'Taint everyone can git to see the Mannon place close to. They're strict about trespassin'.

MINNIE. My! They must be rich! How'd they make their money?

SETH. Ezra's made a pile, and before him, his father, Abe Mannon, he inherited some and made a pile more in shippin'. Started one of the fust Western Ocean packet lines.

MINNIE. Ezra's the General, ain't he?

SETH [*proudly*]. Ayeh. The best fighter in the hull of Grant's army!

MINNIE. What kind is he?

SETH [*boastfully expanding*]. He's able, Ezra is! Folks think he's cold-blooded and uppish, 'cause he's never got much to say to 'em. But that's only the Mannons' way. They've been top dog around here for near on two hundred years and don't let folks fergit it.

MINNIE. How'd he come to jine the army if he's so rich?

SETH. Oh, he'd been a soldier afore this war. His paw made him go to West P'int. He went to the Mexican war and come out a major. Abe died that same year and Ezra give up the army and took holt of the shippin' business here. But he didn't stop there. He learned law on the side and got made a judge. Went in fur politics and got 'lected mayor. He was mayor when this war broke out but he resigned to once and jined the army again. And now he's riz to be General. Oh, he's able, Ezra is!

AMES. Ayeh. This town's real proud of Ezra.

LOUISA. Which is more'n you kin say fur his wife. Folks all hates her! She ain't the Mannon kind. French and Dutch descended, she is. Furrin lookin' and queer. Her father's a doctor in New York, but he can't be much of a one 'cause she didn't bring no money when Ezra married her.

SETH [*his face growing grim—sharply*]. Never mind her. We ain't talkin' 'bout her. [*Then abruptly changing the subject*] Wal, I've got to see Vinnie. I'm goin' round by the kitchen. You wait here. And if Ezra's wife starts to run you off fur trespassin', you tell her I got permission from Vinnie to show you round. [*He goes off around the corner of the house, left. The three stare about them gawkily, awed and uncomfortable. They talk in low voices.*]

LOUISA. Seth is so proud of his durned old Mannons! I couldn't help givin' him a dig about Ezra's wife.

AMES. Wal, don't matter much. He's allus hated her.

LOUISA. Ssshh! Someone's comin' out. Let's get back here! [*They crowd to the rear of the bench by the lilac clump and peer through*

the leaves as the front door is opened and CHRISTINE MANNON *comes out to the edge of the portico at the top of the steps.* LOUISA *prods her cousin and whispers excitedly.*] That's her!

[CHRISTINE MANNON *is a tall striking-looking woman of forty but she appears younger. She has a fine, voluptuous figure and she moves with a flowing animal grace. She wears a green satin dress, smartly cut and expensive, which brings out the peculiar color of her thick curly hair, partly a copper brown, partly a bronze gold, each shade distinct and yet blending with the other. Her face is unusual, handsome rather than beautiful. One is struck at once by the strange impression it gives in repose of being not living flesh but a wonderfully life-like pale mask, in which only the deep-set eyes, of a dark violet blue, are alive. Her black eyebrows meet in a pronounced straight line above her strong nose. Her chin is heavy, her mouth large and sensual, the lower lip full, the upper a thin bow, shadowed by a line of hair. She stands and listens defensively, as if the music held some meaning that threatened her. But at once she shrugs her shoulders with disdain and comes down the steps and walks off toward the flower garden, passing behind the lilac clump without having noticed* AMES *and the women.*]

MINNIE [*in an awed whisper*]. My! She's awful handsome, ain't she?

LOUISA. Too furrin lookin' fur my taste.

MINNIE. Ayeh. There's somethin' queer lookin' about her face.

AMES. Secret lookin'—'s if it was a mask she'd put on. That's the Mannon look. They all has it. They grow it on their wives. Seth's growed it on too, didn't you notice—from bein' with 'em all his life. They don't want folks to guess their secrets.

MINNIE [*breathlessly eager*]. Secrets?

LOUISA. The Mannons got skeletons in their closets same as others! Worse ones. [*Lowering her voice almost to a whisper—to her husband*] Tell Minnie about old Abe Mannon's brother David marryin' that French Canuck nurse girl he'd got into trouble.

AMES. Ssshh! Shet up, can't you? Here's Seth comin'. [*But he whispers quickly to* MINNIE] That happened way back when I was a youngster. I'll tell you later. [SETH *has appeared from around the left corner of the house and now joins them.*]

SETH. That durned nigger cook is allus askin' me to fetch wood fur her! You'd think I was her slave! That's what we get fur freein'

'em! [*Then briskly*] Wal, come along, folks. I'll show you the peach orchard and then we'll go to my greenhouse. I couldn't find Vinnie.

[*They are about to start when the front door of the house is opened and* LAVINIA *comes out to the top of the steps where her mother had stood. She is twenty-three but looks considerably older.*[1] *Tall like her mother, her body is thin, flat-breasted and angular, and its unattractiveness is accentuated by her plain black dress. Her movements are stiff and she carries herself with a wooden, square-shouldered, military bearing. She has a flat dry voice and a habit of snapping out her words like an officer giving orders. But in spite of these dissimilarities, one is immediately struck by her facial resemblance to her mother. She has the same peculiar shade of copper-gold hair, the same pallor and dark violet-blue eyes, the black eyebrows meeting in a straight line above her nose, the same sensual mouth, the same heavy jaw. Above all, one is struck by the same strange, life-like mask impression her face gives in repose. But it is evident* LAVINIA *does all in her power to emphasize the dissimilarity rather than the resemblance to her parent. She wears her hair pulled tightly back, as if to conceal its natural curliness, and there is not a touch of feminine allurement to her severely plain get-up. Her head is the same size as her mother's, but on her thin body it looks too large and heavy.*]

SETH [*seeing her*]. There she be now.

[*He starts for the steps—then sees she has not noticed their presence, and stops and stands waiting, struck by something in her manner. She is looking off right, watching her mother as she strolls through the garden to the greenhouse. Her eyes are bleak and hard with an intense, bitter enmity. Then her mother evidently disappears in the greenhouse, for* LAVINIA *turns her head, still oblivious to* SETH *and his friends, and looks off left, her attention caught by the band, the music of which, borne on a freshening breeze, has suddenly become louder. It is still playing "John Brown's Body."* LAVINIA *listens, as her mother had a moment before, but her reaction is the direct opposite to what*

[1] ***but . . . older.*** *In addition to reflecting the characters of the two women, the youthful appearance of Christine and the elderly appearance of Lavinia make their being rivals in love more plausible.*

her mother's had been. Her eyes light up with a grim satisfaction, and an expression of strange vindictive triumph comes into her face.]

LOUISA [*in a quick whisper to* MINNIE]. That's Lavinia!

MINNIE. She looks like her mother in face—queer lookin'—but she ain't purty like her.

SETH. You git along to the orchard, folks. I'll jine you there. [*They walk back around the left of the house and disappear. He goes to* LAVINIA *eagerly.*] Say, I got fine news fur you, Vinnie. The telegraph feller says Lee is a goner sure this time! They're only waitin' now fur the news to be made official. You can count on your paw comin' home!

LAVINIA [*grimly*]. I hope so. It's time.

SETH [*with a keen glance at her—slowly*]. Ayeh.

LAVINIA [*turning on him sharply*]. What do you mean, Seth?

SETH [*avoiding her eyes—evasively*]. Nothin'—'cept what you mean. [LAVINIA *stares at him. He avoids her eyes—then heavily casual*] Where was you gallivantin' night afore last and all yesterday?

LAVINIA [*starts*]. Over to Hazel and Peter's house.

SETH. Ayeh. There's where Hannah said you'd told her you was goin'. That's funny now—'cause I seen Peter upstreet yesterday and he asked me where you was keepin' yourself.

LAVINIA [*again starts—then slowly as if admitting a secret understanding between them*]. I went to New York, Seth.

SETH. Ayeh. That's where I thought you'd gone, mebbe. [*Then with deep sympathy*] It's durned hard on you, Vinnie. It's a durned shame.

LAVINIA [*stiffening—curtly*]. I don't know what you're talking about.

SETH [*nods comprehendingly*]. All right, Vinnie. Just as you say. [*He pauses—then after hesitating frowningly for a moment, blurts out*] There's somethin' been on my mind lately I want to warn you about. It's got to do with what's worryin' you—that is, if there's anythin' in it.

LAVINIA [*stiffly*]. There's nothing worrying me. [*Then sharply*] Warn me? About what?

SETH. Mebbe it's nothin'—and then again mebbe I'm right, and if I'm right, then you'd ought t'be warned. It's to do with that Captain Brant.

LAVINIA [*starts again but keeps her tone cold and collected*]. What about him?

SETH. Somethin' I calc'late no one'd notice 'specially 'ceptin' me, because— [*Then hastily as he sees someone coming up the drive*] Here's Peter and Hazel comin'. I'll tell you later, Vinnie. I ain't got time now anyways. Those folks are waitin' for me.

LAVINIA. I'll be sitting here. You come back afterwards. [*Then her cold disciplined mask breaking for a moment—tensely*] Oh, why do Peter and Hazel have to come now? I don't want to see anyone! [*She starts as if to go into the house.*]

SETH. You run in. I'll git rid of 'em fur you.

LAVINIA [*recovering herself—curtly*]. No. I'll see them.

[SETH *goes back around the corner of the house, left. A moment later* HAZEL *and* PETER NILES *enter along the drive from left, front.* HAZEL *is a pretty, healthy girl of nineteen, with dark hair and eyes. Her features are small but clearly modelled. She has a strong chin and a capable, smiling mouth. One gets a sure impression of her character at a glance—frank, innocent, amiable and good—not in a negative but in a positive, self-possessed way. Her brother,* PETER, *is very like her in character—straight-forward, guileless and good-natured. He is a heavily built young fellow of twenty-two, awkward in movement and hesitating in speech. His face is broad, plain, with a snubby nose, curly brown hair, fine gray eyes and a big mouth. He wears the uniform of an artillery captain in the Union Army*].

LAVINIA [*with forced cordiality*]. Good afternoon. How are you? [*She and* HAZEL *kiss and she shakes hands with* PETER.]

HAZEL. Oh, we're all right. But how are you, Vinnie, that's the question? Seems as if we hadn't seen you in ages! You haven't been sick, I hope!

LAVINIA. Well—if you call a pesky cold sick.

PETER. Gosh, that's too bad! All over it now?

LAVINIA. Yes—almost. Do sit down, won't you?

[HAZEL *sits at left of bench,* LAVINIA *beside her in the middle.* PETER *sits gingerly on the right edge so that there is an open space between him and* LAVINIA.]

HAZEL. Peter can stay a while if you want him to, but I just dropped in for a second to find out if you'd had any more news from Orin.

LAVINIA. Not since the letter I showed you.

HAZEL. But that was ages ago! And I haven't had a letter in months.

I guess he must have met another girl some place and given me the go by. [*She forces a smile but her tone is really hurt.*]

PETER. Orin not writing doesn't mean anything. He never was much of a hand for letters.

HAZEL. I know that, but—you don't think he's been wounded, do you, Vinnie?

LAVINIA. Of course not. Father would have let us know.

PETER. Sure he would. Don't be foolish, Hazel! [*Then after a little pause*] Orin ought to be home before long now. You've heard the good news, of course, Vinnie?

HAZEL. Peter won't have to go back. Isn't that fine?

PETER. My wound is healed and I've got orders to leave tomorrow but they'll be cancelled, I guess. [*Grinning*] I won't pretend I'm the sort of hero that wants to go back, either! I've had enough!

HAZEL [*impulsively*]. Oh, it will be so good to see Orin again. [*Then embarrassed, forces a self-conscious laugh and gets up and kisses* LAVINIA] Well, I must run. I've got to meet Emily. Good-bye, Vinnie. Do take care of yourself and come to see us soon. [*With a teasing glance at her brother*] And be kind to Peter. He's nice—when he's asleep. And he has something he's just dying to ask you!

PETER [*horribly embarrassed*]. Darn you! [HAZEL *laughs and goes off down the drive, left front.* PETER *fidgets, his eyes on the ground.* LAVINIA *watches him. Since* HAZEL'S *teasing statement, she has visibly withdrawn into herself and is on the defensive. Finally* PETER *looks up and blurts out awkwardly*] Hazel feels bad about Orin not writing. Do you think he really—loves her?

LAVINIA [*stiffening—brusquely*]. I don't know anything about love! I don't want to know anything! [*Intensely*] I hate love!

PETER [*crushed by this but trying bravely to joke*]. Gosh, then, if that's the mood you're in, I guess I better not ask—something I'd made up my mind to ask you today.

LAVINIA. It's what you asked me a year ago when you were home on leave, isn't it?

PETER. And you said wait till the war was over. Well, it's over now.

LAVINIA [*slowly*]. I can't marry anyone, Peter. I've got to stay home. Father needs me.

PETER. He's got your mother.

LAVINIA [*sharply*]. He needs me more! [*A pause. Then she turns pityingly and puts her hand on his shoulder.*] I'm sorry, Peter.

PETER [*gruffly*]. Oh, that's all right.

LAVINIA. I know it's what girls always say in books, but I do love you as a brother, Peter. I wouldn't lose you as a brother for anything. We've been like that ever since we were little and started playing together—you and Orin and Hazel and I. So please don't let this come between us.

PETER. 'Course it won't. What do you think I am? [*Doggedly*] Besides, I'm not giving up hope but what you'll change your mind in time. That is, unless it's because you love someone else—

LAVINIA [*snatching her hand back*]. Don't be stupid, Peter!

PETER. But how about this mysterious clipper captain that's been calling?

LAVINIA [*angrily*]. Do you think I care anything about that—that—!

PETER. Don't get mad. I only meant, folks say he's courting you.

LAVINIA. Folks say more than their prayers!

PETER. Then you don't—care for him?

LAVINIA [*intensely*]. I hate the sight of him!

PETER. Gosh! I'm glad to hear you say that, Vinnie. I was afraid—I imagined girls all liked him. He's such a darned romantic-looking cuss. Looks more like a gambler or a poet than a ship captain. I got a look as he was coming out of your gate—I guess it was the last time he was here. Funny, too. He reminded me of someone. But I couldn't place who it was.

LAVINIA [*startled, glances at him uneasily*]. No one around here, that's sure. He comes from out West. Grandfather Hamel happened to meet him in New York and took a fancy to him, and Mother met him at Grandfather's house.

PETER. Who is he, anyway, Vinnie?

LAVINIA. I don't know much about him in spite of what you think. Oh, he did tell me the story of his life to make himself out romantic, but I didn't pay much attention. He went to sea when he was young and was in California for the Gold Rush. He's sailed all over the world—he lived on a South Sea island once, so he says.

PETER [*grumpily*]. He seems to have had plenty of romantic experience, if you can believe him!

LAVINIA [*bitterly*]. That's his trade—being romantic! [*Then agitatedly*] But I don't want to talk any more about him. [*She gets up and walks toward right to conceal her agitation, keeping her back turned to* PETER.]

PETER [*with a grin*]. Well, I don't either. I can think of more interesting subjects.

[CHRISTINE MANNON *appears from left, between the clump of lilacs and the house. She is carrying a big bunch of flowers.* LAVINIA *senses her presence and whirls around. For a moment, mother and daughter stare into each other's eyes. In their whole tense attitudes is clearly revealed the bitter antagonism between them. But* CHRISTINE *quickly recovers herself and her air resumes its disdainful aloofness.*]

CHRISTINE. Ah, here you are at last! [*Then she sees* PETER, *who is visibly embarrassed by her presence.*] Why, good afternoon, Peter, I didn't see you at first.

PETER. Good afternoon, Mrs. Mannon. I was just passing and dropped in for a second. I guess I better run along now, Vinnie.

LAVINIA [*with an obvious eagerness to get him off—quickly*]. All right. Good-bye, Peter.

PETER. Good-bye. Good-bye, Mrs. Mannon.

CHRISTINE. Good-bye, Peter. [*He disappears from the drive, left.* CHRISTINE *comes forward.*] I must say you treat your one devoted swain pretty rudely. [LAVINIA *doesn't reply.* CHRISTINE *goes on coolly.*] I was wondering when I was going to see you. When I returned from New York last night you seemed to have gone to bed.

LAVINIA. I had gone to bed.

CHRISTINE. You usually read long after that. I tried your door—but you had locked yourself in. When you kept yourself locked in all day I was sure you were intentionally avoiding me. But Annie said you had a headache. [*While she has been speaking she has come toward* LAVINIA *until she is now within arm's reach of her. The facial resemblance, as they stand there, is extraordinary.* CHRISTINE *stares at her coolly, but one senses an uneasy wariness beneath her pose.*] Did you have a headache?

LAVINIA. No. I wanted to be alone—to think over things.

CHRISTINE. What things, if I may ask? [*Then, as if she were afraid of an answer to this question, she abruptly changes the subject.*] Who are those people I saw wandering about the grounds?

LAVINIA. Some friends of Seth's.

CHRISTINE. Because they know that lazy old sot, does it give them the privilege of trespassing?

LAVINIA. I gave Seth permission to show them around.

CHRISTINE. And since when have you the right without consulting me?

LAVINIA. I couldn't very well consult you when Seth asked me.

You had gone to New York—[*she pauses a second—then adds slowly, staring fixedly at her mother*]—to see Grandfather. Is he feeling any better? He seems to have been sick so much this past year.

CHRISTINE [*casually, avoiding her eyes*]. Yes. He's much better now. He'll soon be going the rounds to his patients again, he hopes. [*As if anxious to change the subject, looking at the flowers she carries*] I've been to the greenhouse to pick these. I felt our tomb needed a little brightening. [*She nods scornfully toward the house.*] Each time I come back after being away it appears more like a sepulchre! The "whited" one of the Bible—pagan temple front stuck like a mask on Puritan gray ugliness! It was just like old Abe Mannon to build such a monstrosity—as a temple for his hatred. [*Then with a little mocking laugh*] Forgive me, Vinnie. I forgot you liked it. And you ought to. It suits your temperament. [LAVINIA *stares at her but remains silent.* CHRISTINE *glances at her flowers again and turns toward the house.*] I must put these in water. [*She moves a few steps toward the house—then turns again—with a studied casualness*] By the way, before I forget, I happened to run into Captain Brant on the street in New York. He said he was coming up here today to take over his ship and asked me if he might drop in to see you. I told him he could—and stay to supper with us. [*Without looking at* LAVINIA, *who is staring at her with a face grown grim and hard*] Doesn't that please you, Vinnie? Or do you remain true to your one and only beau, Peter?

LAVINIA. Is that why you picked the flowers—because he is coming? [*Her mother does not answer. She goes on with a threatening undercurrent in her voice.*] You have heard the news, I suppose? It means Father will be home soon!

CHRISTINE [*without looking at her—coolly*]. We've had so many rumors lately. This report hasn't been confirmed yet, has it? I haven't heard the fort firing a salute.

LAVINIA. You will before long!

CHRISTINE. I'm sure I hope so as much as you.

LAVINIA. You can say that!

CHRISTINE [*concealing her alarm—coldly*]. What do you mean? You will kindly not take that tone with me, please! [*Cuttingly*] If you are determined to quarrel, let us go into the house. We might be overheard out here. [*She turns and sees* SETH *who has just come to the corner of the house, left, and is standing there watching*

them.] See. There is your old crony doing his best to listen now! [*Moving to the steps*] I am going in and rest a while. [*She walks up the steps.*]

LAVINIA [*harshly*]. I've got to have a talk with you, Mother—before long!

CHRISTINE [*turning defiantly*]. Whenever you wish. Tonight after the Captain leaves you, if you like. But what is it you want to talk about?

LAVINIA. You'll know soon enough!

CHRISTINE [*staring at her with a questioning dread—forcing a scornful smile*]. You always make such a mystery of things, Vinnie. [*She goes into the house and closes the door behind her.* SETH *comes forward from where he had withdrawn around the corner of the house.* LAVINIA *makes a motion for him to follow her, and goes and sits on the bench at left. A pause. She stares straight ahead, her face frozen, her eyes hard. He regards her understandingly.*]

LAVINIA [*abruptly*]. Well? What is it about Captain Brant you want to warn me against? [*Then as if she felt she must defend her question from some suspicion that she knows is in his mind*] I want to know all I can about him because—he seems to be calling to court me.

SETH [*managing to convey his entire disbelief of this statement in one word*]. Ayeh.

LAVINIA [*sharply*]. You say that as if you didn't believe me.

SETH. I believe anything you tell me to believe. I ain't been with the Mannons for sixty years without learning that. [*A pause. Then he asks slowly*] Ain't you noticed this Brant reminds you of someone in looks?

LAVINIA [*struck by this*]. Yes. I have—ever since I first saw him—but I've never been able to place who— Who do you mean?

SETH. Your Paw, ain't it, Vinnie?

LAVINIA [*startled—agitatedly*]. Father? No! It can't be! [*Then as if the conviction were forcing itself on her in spite of herself*] Yes! He does—something about his face—that must be why I've had the strange feeling I've known him before—why I've felt—[*Then tensely as if she were about to break down*] Oh! I won't believe it! You must be mistaken, Seth! That would be too—!

SETH. He ain't only like your Paw. He's like Orin, too—and all the Mannons I've known.

LAVINIA [*frightenedly*]. But why—why should he—?

SETH. More speshully he calls to my mind your Grandpaw's brother,

David. How much do you know about David Mannon, Vinnie? I know his name's never been allowed to be spoke among Mannons since the day he left—but you've likely heard gossip, ain't you—even if it all happened before you was born.

LAVINIA. I've heard that he loved the Canuck nurse girl who was taking care of Father's little sister who died, and had to marry her because she was going to have a baby; and that Grandfather put them both out of the house and then afterwards tore it down and built this one because he wouldn't live where his brother had disgraced the family. But what has that old scandal got to do with—

SETH. Wait. Right after they was throwed out they married and went away. There was talk they'd gone out West, but no one knew nothin' about 'em afterwards—'ceptin' your Grandpaw let out to me one time she'd had the baby—a boy. He was cussin' it. [*Then impressively*] It's about her baby I've been thinkin', Vinnie.

LAVINIA [*a look of appalled comprehension growing on her face*]. Oh!

SETH. How old is that Brant, Vinnie?

LAVINIA. Thirty-six, I think.

SETH. Ayeh! That'd make it right. And here's another funny thing —his name. Brant's sort of queer fur a name. I ain't never heard tell of it before. Sounds made up to me—like short fur somethin' else. Remember what that Canuck girl's name was, do you, Vinnie? Marie Brantôme! See what I'm drivin' at?

LAVINIA [*agitatedly, fighting against a growing conviction*]. But—don't be stupid, Seth—his name would be Mannon and he'd be only too proud of it.

SETH. He'd have good reason not to use the name of Mannon when he came callin' here, wouldn't he? If your Paw ever guessed—!

LAVINIA [*breaking out violently*]. No! It can't be! God wouldn't let it! It would be too horrible—on top of—! I won't even think of it, do you hear? Why did you have to tell me?

SETH [*calmingly*]. There now! Don't take on, Vinnie. No need gettin' riled at me. [*He waits—then goes on insistently.*] All I'm drivin' at is that it's durned funny—his looks and the name—and you'd ought fur your Paw's sake to make sartin.

LAVINIA. How can I make certain?

SETH. Catch him off guard sometime and put it up to him strong —as if you knowed it—and see if mebbe he don't give himself away. [*He starts to go—looks down the drive at left.*] Looks like him comin' up the drive now, Vinnie. There's somethin' about his walk

calls back David Mannon, too. If I didn't know it was him I'd think it was David's ghost[1] comin' home. [*He turns away abruptly.*] Wal, calc'late I better git back to work. [*He walks around the left corner of the house. A pause. Then* CAPTAIN ADAM BRANT *enters from the drive, left, front. He starts on seeing* LAVINIA *but immediately puts on his most polite, winning air. One is struck at a glance by the peculiar quality his face in repose has of being a life-like mask rather than living flesh. He has a broad, low forehead, framed by coal-black straight hair which he wears noticeably long, pushed back carelessly from his forehead as a poet's might be. He has a big aquiline nose, bushy eyebrows, swarthy complexion, hazel eyes. His wide mouth is sensual and moody—a mouth that can be strong and weak by turns. He wears a mustache, but his heavy cleft chin is clean-shaven. In figure he is tall, broad-shouldered and powerful. He gives the impression of being always on the offensive or defensive, always fighting life. He is dressed with an almost foppish extravagance, with touches of studied carelessness, as if a romantic Byronic appearance were the ideal in mind. There is little of the obvious ship captain about him, except his big, strong hands and his deep voice.*]

BRANT [*bowing with an exaggerated politeness*]. Good afternoon. [*Coming and taking her hand which she forces herself to hold out to him*] Hope you don't mind my walking in on you without ceremony. Your mother told me—

LAVINIA. I know. She had to go out for a while and she said I was to keep you company until she returned.

BRANT [*gallantly*]. Well, I'm in good luck, then. I hope she doesn't hurry back to stand watch over us. I haven't had a chance to be alone with you since—that night we went walking in the moonlight, do you remember? [*He has kept her hand and he drops his voice to a low, lover-like tone.* LAVINIA *cannot repress a start, agitatedly snatching her hand from his and turning away from him.*]

LAVINIA [*regaining command of herself—slowly*]. What do you think of the news of Lee surrendering, Captain? We expect my father home very soon now. [*At something in her tone he stares at her suspiciously, but she is looking straight before her.*] Why don't you sit down?

BRANT. Thank you. [*He sits on the bench at her right. He has become wary now, feeling something strange in her attitude but*

[1] ***David's ghost,*** *another instance of O'Neill's fondness for stating ideas in visual symbols.*

not able to make her out—casually] Yes, you must be very happy at the prospect of seeing your father again. Your mother has told me how close you've always been to him.

LAVINIA. Did she? [*Then with intensity*] I love Father better than anyone in the world. There is nothing I wouldn't do—to protect him from hurt!

BRANT [*watching her carefully—keeping his casual tone*]. You care more for him than for your mother?

LAVINIA. Yes.

BRANT. Well, I suppose that's the usual way of it. A daughter feels closer to her father and a son to his mother. But I should think you ought to be a born exception to that rule.

LAVINIA. Why?

BRANT. You're so like your mother in some ways. Your face is the dead image of hers. And look at your hair. You won't meet hair like yours and hers again in a month of Sundays. I only know of one other woman who had it. You'll think it strange when I tell you. It was my mother.

LAVINIA [*with a start*]. Ah!

BRANT [*dropping his voice to a reverent, hushed tone*]. Yes, she had beautiful hair like your mother's, that hung down to her knees, and big, deep, sad eyes that were blue as the Caribbean Sea!

LAVINIA [*harshly*]. What do looks amount to? I'm not a bit like her! Everybody knows I take after Father!

BRANT [*brought back with a shock, astonished at her tone*]. But—you're not angry at me for saying that, are you? [*Then filled with uneasiness and resolving he must establish himself on an intimate footing with her again—with engaging bluntness*] You're puzzling today, Miss Lavinia. You'll excuse me if I come out with it bluntly. I've lived most of my life at sea and in camps and I'm used to straight speaking. What are you holding against me? If I've done anything to offend you, I swear it wasn't meant. [*She is silent, staring before her with hard eyes, rigidly upright. He appraises her with a calculating look, then goes on.*] I wouldn't have bad feeling come between us for the world. I may only be flattering myself, but I thought you liked me. Have you forgotten that night walking along the shore?

LAVINIA [*in a cold, hard voice*]. I haven't forgotten. Did Mother tell you you could kiss me?

BRANT. What—what do you mean? [*But he at once attributes the question to her naïveté—laughingly*] Oh! I see! But, come now,

Lavinia, you can't mean, can you, I should have asked her permission?

LAVINIA. Shouldn't you?

BRANT [*again uneasy—trying to joke it off*]. Well, I wasn't brought up that strictly and, should or shouldn't, at any rate, I didn't—and it wasn't the less sweet for that! [*Then at something in her face he hurriedly goes off on another tack.*] I'm afraid I gabbed too much that night. Maybe I bored you with my talk of clipper ships and my love for them?

LAVINIA [*dryly*]. "Tall, white clippers," you called them. You said they were like beautiful, pale women to you. You said you loved them more than you'd ever loved a woman. Is that true, Captain?

BRANT [*with forced gallantry*]. Aye. But I meant, before I met you. [*Then thinking he has at last hit on the cause of her changed attitude toward him—with a laugh*] So that's what you're holding against me, is it? Well, I might have guessed. Women are jealous of ships. They always suspect the sea. They know they're three of a kind when it comes to a man! [*He laughs again but less certainly this time, as he regards her grim, set expression.*] Yes, I might have seen you didn't appear much taken by my sea gamming that night. I suppose clippers are too old a story to the daughter of a ship builder. But unless I'm much mistaken, you were interested when I told you of the islands in the South Seas where I was shipwrecked my first voyage at sea.

LAVINIA [*in a dry, brittle tone*]. I remember your admiration for the naked native women. You said they had found the secret of happiness because they had never heard that love can be a sin.

BRANT [*surprised—sizing her up puzzledly*]. So you remember that, do you? [*Then romantically*] Aye! And they live in as near the Garden of Paradise before sin was discovered as you'll find on this earth! Unless you've seen it, you can't picture the green beauty of their land set in the blue of the sea! The clouds like down on the mountain tops, the sun drowsing in your blood, and always the surf on the barrier reef singing a croon in your ears like a lullaby! The Blessed Isles, I'd call them! You can forget there all men's dirty dreams of greed and power!

LAVINIA. And their dirty dreams—of love?

BRANT [*startled again—staring at her uneasily*]. Why do you say that? What do you mean, Lavinia?

LAVINIA. Nothing. I was only thinking—of your Blessed Isles.

BRANT [*uncertainly*]. Oh! But you said— [*Then with a confused,*

stupid persistence he comes closer to her, dropping his voice again to his love-making tone.] Whenever I remember those islands now, I will always think of you, as you walked beside me that night with your hair blowing in the sea wind and the moonlight in your eyes! [*He tries to take her hand, but at his touch she pulls away and springs to her feet.*]

LAVINIA [*with cold fury*]. Don't you touch me! Don't you dare—! You liar! You—! [*Then as he starts back in confusion, she seizes this opportunity to follow* SETH'S *advice—staring at him with deliberately insulting scorn*] But I suppose it would be foolish to expect anything but cheap romantic lies from the son of a low Canuck nurse girl!

BRANT [*stunned*]. What's that? [*Then rage at the insult to his mother overcoming all prudence—springs to his feet threateningly*] Belay, damn you!—or I'll forget you're a woman—no Mannon can insult her while I—

LAVINIA [*appalled now she knows the truth*]. So—it is true—You are her son! Oh!

BRANT [*fighting to control himself—with harsh defiance*]. And what if I am? I'm proud to be! My only shame is my dirty Mannon blood! So that's why you couldn't stand my touching you just now, is it? You're too good for the son of a servant, eh? By God, you were glad enough before—!

LAVINIA [*fiercely*]. It's not true! I was only leading you on to find out things!

BRANT. Oh, no! It's only since you suspected who I was! I suppose your father has stuffed you with his lies about my mother! But, by God, you'll hear the truth of it, now you know who I am— And you'll see if you or any Mannon has the right to look down on her!

LAVINIA. I don't want to hear— [*She starts to go toward the house.*]

BRANT [*grabbing her by the arm—tauntingly*]. You're a coward, are you, like all Mannons, when it comes to facing the truth about themselves? [*She turns on him defiantly. He drops her arm and goes on harshly.*] I'll bet he never told you your grandfather, Abe Mannon, as well as his brother, loved my mother!

LAVINIA. It's a lie!

BRANT. It's the truth. It was his jealous revenge made him disown my father and cheat him out of his share of the business they'd inherited!

LAVINIA. He didn't cheat him! He bought him out!

BRANT. Forced him to sell for one-tenth its worth, you mean! He knew my father and mother were starving! But the money didn't last my father long! He'd taken to drink. He was a coward—like all Mannons—once he felt the world looked down on him. He skulked and avoided people. He grew ashamed of my mother—and me. He sank down and down and my mother worked and supported him. I can remember when men from the corner saloon would drag him home and he'd fall in the door, a sodden carcass. One night when I was seven he came home crazy drunk and hit my mother in the face. It was the first time he'd ever struck her. It made me blind mad. I hit at him with the poker and cut his head. My mother pulled me back and gave me a hiding. Then she cried over him. She'd never stopped loving him.

LAVINIA. Why do you tell me this? I told you once I don't want to hear—

BRANT [*grimly*]. You'll see the point of it damned soon! [*Unheeding—as if the scene were still before his eyes*] For days after, he sat and stared at nothing. One time when we were alone he asked me to forgive him hitting her. But I hated him and I wouldn't forgive him. Then one night he went out and he didn't come back. The next morning they found him hanging in a barn!

LAVINIA [*with a shudder*]. Oh!

BRANT [*savagely*]. The only decent thing he ever did!

LAVINIA. You're lying! No Mannon would ever—

BRANT. Oh, wouldn't they? They are all fine, honorable gentlemen, you think! Then listen a bit and you'll hear something about another of them! [*Then going on bitterly with his story*] My mother sewed for a living and sent me to school. She was very strict with me. She blamed me for his killing himself. But she was bound she'd make a gentleman of me—like he was!—if it took her last cent and her last strap! [*With a grim smile*] She didn't succeed, as you notice! At seventeen I ran away to sea—and forgot I had a mother, except I took part of her name—Brant was short and easy on ships—and I wouldn't wear the name of Mannon. I forgot her until two years ago when I came back from the East. Oh, I'd written to her now and then and sent her money when I happened to have any. But I'd forgotten her just the same—and when I got to New York I found her dying—of sickness and starvation! And I found out that when she'd been laid up, not able to work, not knowing where to reach me, she'd sunk her last shred of pride and written to your father asking for a loan. He never answered her.

And I came too late. She died in my arms. [*With vindictive passion*] He could have saved her—and he deliberately let her die! He's as guilty of murder as anyone he ever sent to the rope when he was a judge!

LAVINIA [*springing to her feet—furiously*]. You dare say that about Father! If he were here—

BRANT. I wish to God he was! I'd tell him what I tell you now—that I swore on my mother's body I'd revenge her death on him.

LAVINIA [*with cold deadly intensity*]. And I suppose you boast that now you've done so, don't you?—in the vilest, most cowardly way—like the son of a servant you are!

BRANT [*again thrown off guard—furiously*]. Belay, I told you, with that kind of talk!

LAVINIA. She is only your means of revenge on Father, is that it?

BRANT [*stunned—stammers in guilty confusion*]. What?—She?—Who?—I don't know what you're talking about!

LAVINIA. Then you soon will know! And so will she! I've found out all I wanted to from you. I'm going in to talk to her now. You wait here until I call you!

BRANT [*furious at her tone*]. No! Be damned if you can order me about as if I was your servant!

LAVINIA [*icily*]. If you have any consideration for her, you'll do as I say and not force me to write my father. [*She turns her back on him and walks to the steps woodenly erect and square-shouldered.*]

BRANT [*desperately now—with a grotesque catching at his lover's manner*]. I don't know what you mean, Lavinia. I swear before God it is only you I—[*She turns at the top of the steps at this and stares at him with such a passion of hatred that he is silenced. Her lips move as if she were going to speak, but she fights back the words, turns stiffly and goes into the house and closes the door behind her.*]

CURTAIN

act 2

SCENE: *In the house*—EZRA MANNON'S *study. No time has elapsed. The study is a large room with a stiff, austere atmosphere. The furniture is old colonial. The walls are plain plastered surfaces tinted a dull gray with a flat white trim. At rear, right, is a door leading to the hall. On the right*

wall is a painting of George Washington in a gilt frame, flanked by smaller portraits of Alexander Hamilton and John Marshall. At rear, center, is an open fireplace. At left of fireplace, a bookcase filled with law books. Above the fireplace, in a plain frame, is a large portrait of EZRA MANNON *himself, painted ten years previously. One is at once struck by the startling likeness between him and* ADAM BRANT. *He is a tall man in his early forties, with a spare, wiry frame, seated stiffly in an armchair, his hands on the arms, wearing his black judge's robe. His face is handsome in a stern, aloof fashion. It is cold and emotionless and has the same strange semblance of a life-like mask that we have already seen in the faces of his wife and daughter and* BRANT.

On the left are two windows. Between them a desk. A large table with an armchair on either side, right and left, stands at left center, front. At right center is another chair There are hooked rugs on the floor.

Outside the sun is beginning to set and its glow fills the room with a golden mist. As the action progresses this becomes brighter, then turns to crimson, which darkens to somberness at the end.

LAVINIA *is discovered standing by the table. She is fighting to control herself, but her face is torn by a look of stricken anguish. She turns slowly to her father's portrait and for a moment stares at it fixedly. Then she goes to it and puts her hand over one of his hands with a loving, protecting gesture*

LAVINIA. Poor Father! [*She hears a noise in the hall and moves hastily away. The door from the hall is opened and* CHRISTINE *enters. She is uneasy underneath, but affects a scornful indignation.*]

CHRISTINE. Really, this unconfirmed report must have turned your head—otherwise I'd find it difficult to understand your sending Annie to disturb me when you knew I was resting.

LAVINIA. I told you I had to talk to you.

CHRISTINE [*looking around the room with aversion*]. But why in this musty room, of all places?

LAVINIA [*indicating the portrait—quietly*]. Because it's Father's room.

CHRISTINE [*starts, looks at the portrait and quickly drops her eyes.* LAVINIA *goes to the door and closes it.* CHRISTINE *says with forced scorn*]. More mystery?

LAVINIA. You better sit down. [CHRISTINE *sits in the chair at rear center.* LAVINIA *goes back to her father's chair*[1] *at left of table.*]

CHRISTINE. Well—if you're quite ready, perhaps you will explain.

LAVINIA. I suppose Annie told you I'd been to visit Hazel and Peter while you were away.

CHRISTINE. Yes. I thought it peculiar. You never visit anyone overnight. Why did you suddenly take that notion?

LAVINIA. I didn't.

CHRISTINE. You didn't visit them?

LAVINIA. No.

CHRISTINE. Then where did you go?

LAVINIA [*accusingly*]. To New York! [CHRISTINE *starts.* LAVINIA *hurries on a bit incoherently.*] I've suspected something—lately—the excuse you've made for all your trips there the past year, that Grandfather was sick—[*As* CHRISTINE *is about to protest indignantly*] Oh! I know he has been—and you've stayed at his house—but I've suspected lately that wasn't the real reason—and now I can prove it isn't! Because I waited outside Grandfather's house and followed you. I saw you meet Brant!

CHRISTINE [*alarmed but concealing it—coolly*]. Well, what if you did? I told you myself I ran into him by accident—

LAVINIA. You went to his room!

CHRISTINE [*shaken*]. He asked me to meet a friend of his—a lady. It was her house we went to.

LAVINIA. I asked the woman in the basement. He had hired the room under another name, but she recognized his description. And yours too. She said you had come there often in the past year.

CHRISTINE [*desperately*]. It was the first time I had ever been there. He insisted on my going. He said he had to talk to me about you. He wanted my help to approach your father—

LAVINIA [*furiously*]. How can you lie like that? How can you be so vile as to try to use me to hide your adultery?

CHRISTINE [*springing up—with weak indignation*]. Vinnie!

LAVINIA. Your adultery, I said!

CHRISTINE. No!

LAVINIA. Stop lying, I tell you! I went upstairs! I heard you telling him—"I love you, Adam"—and kissing him! [*With a cold bitter fury*] You vile—! You're shameless and evil! Even if you are my mother, I say it!

[CHRISTINE *stares at her, overwhelmed by this onslaught, her*

[1] *to her father's chair, as she prepares to accuse Christine in his name.*

poise shattered for the moment. She tries to keep her voice indifferent but it trembles a little.]

CHRISTINE. I—I knew you hated me, Vinnie—but not as bitterly as that! [*Then with a return of her defiant coolness*] Very well! I love Adam Brant. What are you going to do?

LAVINIA. How you say that—without any shame! You don't give one thought to Father—who is so good—who trusts you! Oh, how could you do this to Father? How could you?

CHRISTINE [*with strident intensity*]. You would understand if you were the wife of a man you hated!

LAVINIA [*horrified—with a glance at the portrait*]. Don't! Don't say that—before him! I won't listen!

CHRISTINE [*grabbing her by the arm*]. You will listen! I'm talking to you as a woman now, not as mother to daughter! That relationship has no meaning between us! You've called me vile and shameless! Well, I want you to know that's what I've felt about myself for over twenty years, giving my body to a man I—

LAVINIA [*trying to break away from her, half putting her hands up to her ears*]. Stop telling me such things! Let me go! [*She breaks away, shrinking from her mother with a look of sick repulsion. A pause. She stammers*] You—then you've always hated Father?

CHRISTINE [*bitterly*]. No. I loved him once—before I married him—incredible as that seems now! He was handsome in his lieutenant's uniform! He was silent and mysterious and romantic! But marriage soon turned his romance into—disgust!

LAVINIA [*wincing again—stammers harshly*]. So I was born of your disgust! I've always guessed that, Mother—ever since I was little—when I used to come to you—with love—but you would always push me away! I've felt it ever since I can remember—your disgust! [*Then with a flare-up of bitter hatred*] Oh, I hate you! It's only right I should hate you!

CHRISTINE [*shaken—defensively*]. I tried to love you. I told myself it wasn't human not to love my own child, born of my body. But I never could make myself feel you were born of any body but his! You were always my wedding night to me—and my honeymoon!

LAVINIA. Stop saying that! How can you be so—! [*Then suddenly—with a strange jealous bitterness*] You've loved Orin! Why didn't you hate him, too?

CHRISTINE. Because by then I had forced myself to become resigned in order to live! And most of the time I was carrying him, your father was with the army in Mexico. I had forgotten him. And

when Orin was born he seemed my child, only mine,[1] and I loved him for that! [*Bitterly*] I loved him until he let you and your father nag him into the war, in spite of my begging him not to leave me alone. [*Staring at* LAVINIA *with hatred*] I know his leaving me was your doing principally, Vinnie!

LAVINIA [*sternly*]. It was his duty as a Mannon to go! He'd have been sorry the rest of his life if he hadn't! I love him better than you! I was thinking of him!

CHRISTINE. Well, I hope you realize I never would have fallen in love with Adam if I'd had Orin with me. When he had gone there was nothing left—but hate and a desire to be revenged—and a longing for love! And it was then I met Adam. I saw he loved me—

LAVINIA [*with taunting scorn*]. He doesn't love you! You're only his revenge on Father! Do you know who he really is? He's the son of that low nurse girl Grandfather put out of our house!

CHRISTINE [*concealing a start—coolly*]. So you've found that out? Were you hoping it would be a crushing surprise to me? I've known it all along. He told me when he said he loved me.

LAVINIA. Oh! And I suppose knowing who he was gave you all the more satisfaction—to add that disgrace!

CHRISTINE [*cuttingly*]. Will you kindly come to the point and tell me what you intend doing? I suppose you'll hardly let your father get in the door before you tell him!

LAVINIA [*suddenly becoming rigid and cold again—slowly*]. No. Not unless you force me to. [*Then as she sees her mother's astonishment—grimly*] I don't wonder you're surprised! You know you deserve the worse punishment you could get. And Father would disown you publicly, no matter how much the scandal cost him!

CHRISTINE. I realize that. I know him even better than you do!

LAVINIA. And I'd like to see you punished for your wickedness! So please understand this isn't for your sake. It's for Father's. He hasn't been well lately. I'm not going to have him hurt! It's my first duty to protect him from you!

CHRISTINE. I know better than to expect any generosity on my account.

LAVINIA. I won't tell him, provided you give up Brant and never see him again—and promise to be a dutiful wife to Father and make up for the wrong you've done him!

[1] ***my child, only mine.*** *The circumstances preceding the births of Lavinia and Orin are made to anticipate the Electra and Oedipus complexes.*

CHRISTINE [*stares at her daughter—a pause—then she laughs dryly*]. What a fraud you are, with your talk of your father and your duty! Oh, I'm not denying you want to save his pride—and I know how anxious you are to keep the family from more scandal! But all the same, that's not your real reason for sparing me!

LAVINIA [*confused—guiltily*]. It is!

CHRISTINE. You wanted Adam Brant yourself!

LAVINIA. That's a lie!

CHRISTINE. And now you know you can't have him, you're determined that at least you'll take him from me!

LAVINIA. No!

CHRISTINE. But if you told your father, I'd have to go away with Adam. He'd be mine still. You can't bear that thought, even at the price of my disgrace, can you?

LAVINIA. It's your evil mind!

CHRISTINE. I know you, Vinnie! I've watched you ever since you were little, trying to do exactly what you're doing now! You've tried to become the wife of your father and the mother of Orin![1] You've always schemed to steal my place!

LAVINIA [*wildly*]. No! It's you who have stolen all love from me since the time I was born! [*Then her manner becoming threatening*] But I don't want to listen to any more of your lies and excuses! I want to know right now whether you're going to do what I told you or not!

CHRISTINE. Suppose I refuse! Suppose I go off openly with Adam! Where will you and your father and the family name be after that scandal? And what if I were disgraced myself? I'd have the man I love, at least!

LAVINIA [*grimly*]. Not for long! Father would use all his influence and get Brant blacklisted so he'd lose his command and never get another! You know how much the "Flying Trades" means to him. And Father would never divorce you. You could never marry. You'd be an anchor around his neck. Don't forget you're five years older than he is! He'll still be in his prime when you're an old woman with all your looks gone! He'd grow to hate the sight of you!

CHRISTINE [*stung beyond bearing—makes a threatening move as if to strike her daughter's face*]. You devil! You mean little—!

[1] ***the wife . . . Orin!*** *Christine's remarkable perception suggests that the playwright rather than the character is speaking in this clinical epigram.*

[*But* LAVINIA *stares back coldly into her eyes and she controls herself and drops her hand.*]

LAVINIA. I wouldn't call names if I were you! There is one you deserve!

CHRISTINE [*turning away—her voice still trembling*]. I'm a fool to let you make me lose my temper—over your jealous spite! [*A pause.* LAVINIA *stares at her.* CHRISTINE *seems considering something. A sinister expression comes to her face. Then she turns back to* LAVINIA—*coldly*] But you wanted my answer, didn't you? Well, I agree to do as you said. I promise you I'll never see Adam again after he calls this evening. Are you satisfied?

LAVINIA [*stares at her with cold suspicion*]. You seem to take giving him up pretty easily!

CHRISTINE [*hastily*]. Do you think I'll ever give you the satisfaction of seeing me grieve? Oh, no, Vinnie! You'll never have a chance to gloat!

LAVINIA [*still suspiciously—with a touch of scorn*]. If I loved anyone—!

CHRISTINE [*tauntingly*]. If? I think you do love him—as much as you can love! [*With a sudden flurry of jealousy*] You little fool! Don't you know I made him flirt with you, so you wouldn't be suspicious?

LAVINIA [*gives a little shudder—then fiercely*]. He didn't fool me! I saw what a liar he was! I just led him on—to find out things! I always hated him! [CHRISTINE *smiles mockingly and turns away, as if to go out of the room.* LAVINIA'S *manner becomes threatening again.*] Wait! I don't trust you! I know you're thinking already how you can fool me and break the promise you've just made! But you better not try it! I'll be watching you every minute! And I won't be the only one! I wrote to Father and Orin as soon as I got back from New York!

CHRISTINE [*startled*]. About Adam?

LAVINIA. Only enough so they'd be suspicious and watch you too. I said a Captain Brant had been calling and folks had begun to gossip.

CHRISTINE. Ah! I see what it's going to mean—that you'll always have this to hold over me and I'll be under your thumb for the rest of my life! [*She cannot restrain her rage—threateningly*] Take care, Vinnie! You'll be responsible if—! [*She checks herself abruptly.*]

LAVINIA [*suspiciously*]. If what?

CHRISTINE [*quickly*]. Nothing. I only meant if I went off with

Adam. But of course you know I won't do that. You know there's nothing I can do now—but obey your orders!

LAVINIA [*continues to stare at her suspiciously—grimly*]. You ought to see it's your duty to Father, not my orders—if you had any honor or decency! [*Then brusquely*] Brant is waiting outside. You can tell him what you've got to do—and tell him if he ever dares come here again—! [*Forcing back her anger*] And see that you get rid of him right now! I'm going upstreet to get the latest news. I won't be gone more than a half-hour and I want him out of the house by the time I get back, do you hear? If he isn't, I'll write Father again. I won't even wait for him to come home! [*She turns her back on her mother and marches out the door, square-shouldered and stiff, without a backward glance.* CHRISTINE *looks after her, waiting until she hears the side door of the house close after her. Then she turns and stands in tense calculating thought. Her face has become like a sinister evil mask. Finally, as if making up her mind irrevocably, she comes to the table, tears off a slip of paper and writes two words on it. She tucks this paper in the sleeve of her dress and goes to the open window and calls.*]

CHRISTINE. Adam! [*She moves toward the door to wait for him. Her eyes are caught by the eyes of her husband in the portrait over the fireplace. She stares at him with hatred and addresses him vindictively, half under her breath.*] You can thank Vinnie, Ezra! [*She goes to the door and reaches it just as* BRANT *appears from the hall. She takes his hand and draws him into the room, closing the door behind him. One is immediately struck by the resemblance between his face and that of the portrait of* EZRA MANNON].

BRANT [*glancing uneasily at her, as they come to the center of the room*]. She knows—?

CHRISTINE. Yes. She followed me to New York. And she's found out who you are too, Adam.

BRANT [*with a grim smile*]. I know. She got that out of me—the proof of it, at any rate. Before I knew what was up I'd given myself away.

CHRISTINE. She must have noticed your resemblance to Orin. I was afraid that might start her thinking.

BRANT [*sees the portrait for the first time. Instantly his body shifts to a fighting tenseness. It is as if he were going to spring at the figure in the painting. He says slowly*]. That, I take it, is General Mannon?

CHRISTINE. Judge Mannon then. Don't forget he used to be a judge. He won't forget it.

BRANT [*his eyes still fixed on the portrait—comes and sits in* MANNON'S *chair on the left of table. Unconsciously he takes the same attitude as* MANNON, *sitting erect, his hands on the arms of the chair—slowly*]. Does Orin by any chance resemble his father?

CHRISTINE [*stares at him—agitatedly*]. No! Of course not! What put such a stupid idea in your head?

BRANT. It would be damned queer if you fell in love with me because I recalled Ezra Mannon to you!

CHRISTINE [*going to him and putting an arm around his shoulder*]. No, no, I tell you! It was Orin you made me think of! It was Orin!

BRANT. I remember that night we were introduced and I heard the name Mrs. Ezra Mannon! By God, how I hated you then for being his! I thought, by God, I'll take her from him and that'll be part of my revenge! And out of that hatred my love[1] came! It's damned queer, isn't it?

CHRISTINE [*hugging him to her*]. Are you going to let him take me from you now, Adam?

BRANT [*passionately*]. You ask that!

CHRISTINE. You swear you won't—no matter what you must do?

BRANT. By God, I swear it!

CHRISTINE [*kisses him*]. Remember that oath! [*She glances at the portrait—then turns back to* BRANT *with a little shiver—nervously*] What made you sit there? It's his chair. I've so often seen him sitting there— [*Forcing a little laugh*] Your silly talk about resemblances— Don't sit there. Come. Bring that chair over here. [*She moves to the chair at right center. He brings the chair at right of table close to hers.*]

BRANT. We've got to decide what we must do. The time for skulking and lying is over—and by God I'm glad of it! It's a coward's game I have no stomach for! [*He has placed the chair beside hers. She is staring at the portrait.*] Why don't you sit down, Christine?

CHRISTINE [*slowly*]. I was thinking—perhaps we had better go to the sitting-room. [*Then defiantly*] No! I've been afraid of you long enough, Ezra! [*She sits down.*]

BRANT. I felt there was something wrong the moment I saw her. I tried my damnedest to put her off the course by giving her some

[1] ***hatred . . . love, the paradox of Strindberg enforced by Freud.***

softsoap—as you'd told me to do to blind her. [*Frowning*] That was a mistake, Christine. It made her pay too much attention to me—and opened her eyes!

CHRISTINE. Oh, I know I've made one blunder after another. It's as if love drove me on to do everything I shouldn't. I never should have brought you to this house. Seeing you in New York should have been enough for me. But I loved you too much. I wanted you every possible moment we could steal! And I simply couldn't believe that he ever would come home. I prayed that he should be killed in the war so intensely that I finally believed it would surely happen! [*With savage intensity*] Oh, if he were only dead!

BRANT. That chance is finished now.

CHRISTINE [*slowly—without looking at him*]. Yes—in that way.

BRANT [*stares at her*]. What do you mean? [*She remains silent. He changes the subject uneasily.*] There's only one thing to do! When he comes home I'll wait for him and not give Vinnie the satisfaction of telling him. I'll tell him myself. [*Vindictively*] By God! I'd give my soul to see his face when he knows you love Marie Brantôme's son! And then I'll take you away openly and laugh at him! And if he tries to stop me—! [*He stops and glances with savage hatred at the portrait.*]

CHRISTINE. What would you do then?

BRANT. If ever I laid hands on him, I'd kill him!

CHRISTINE. And then? You would be hanged for murder! And where would I be? There would be nothing left for me but to kill myself!

BRANT. If I could catch him alone, where no one would interfere, and let the best man come out alive—as I've often seen it done in the West!

CHRISTINE. This isn't the West.

BRANT. I could insult him on the street before everyone and make him fight me! I could let him shoot first and then kill him in self-defense.

CHRISTINE [*scornfully*]. Do you imagine you could force him to fight a duel with you? Don't you know duelling is illegal? Oh, no! He'd simply feel bound to do his duty as a former judge and have you arrested! [*She adds calculatingly, seeing he is boiling inside*] It would be a poor revenge for your mother's death to let him make you a laughing stock!

BRANT. But when I take you off, the laugh will be on him! You can come on the "Flying Trades."

CHRISTINE [*calculatingly reproachful*]. I don't think you'd propose that, Adam, if you stopped thinking of your revenge for a moment and thought of me! Don't you realize he would never divorce me, out of spite? What would I be in the world's eyes? My life would be ruined and I would ruin yours! You'd grow to hate me!

BRANT [*passionately*]. Don't talk like that! It's a lie and you know it!

CHRISTINE [*with bitter yearning*]. If I could only believe that, Adam! But I'll grow old so soon! And I'm afraid of time! [*Then abruptly changing tone*] As for my sailing on your ship, you'll find you won't have a ship! He'll see to it you lose this command and get you blacklisted so you'll have no chance of getting another.

BRANT [*angrily*]. Aye! He can do that if he sets about it. There are twice as many skippers as ships these days.

CHRISTINE [*calculatingly—without looking at him*]. If he had only been killed, we could be married now and I would bring you my share of the Mannon estate. That would only be justice. It's yours by right. It's what his father stole from yours.

BRANT. That's true enough, damn him!

CHRISTINE. You wouldn't have to worry about commands or owners' favors then. You could buy your own ship and be your own master!

BRANT [*yearningly*]. That's always been my dream—some day to own my own clipper! And Clark and Dawson would be willing to sell the "Flying Trades." [*Then forgetting everything in his enthusiasm*] You've seen her, Christine. She's as beautiful a ship as you're a woman. Aye, the two of you are like sisters. If she was mine, I'd take you on a honeymoon then! To China—and on the voyage back, we'd stop at the South Pacific Islands I've told you about. By God, there's the right place for love and a honeymoon!

CHRISTINE [*slowly*]. Yes—but Ezra is alive!

BRANT [*brought back to earth—gloomily*]. I know it's only a dream.

CHRISTINE [*turning to stare at him—slowly*]. You can have your dream—and I can have mine. There is a way. [*Then turning away again*] You remember my telling you he had written complaining of pains about his heart?

BRANT. You're surely not hoping—

CHRISTINE. No. He said it was nothing serious. But I've let it be known that he has heart trouble. I went to see our old family

doctor and told him about Ezra's letter. I pretended to be dreadfully worried, until I got him worried too. He's the town's worst old gossip. I'm sure everyone knows about Ezra's weak heart by this time.

BRANT. What are you driving at, Christine?

CHRISTINE. Something I've been thinking of ever since I realized he might soon come home. And now that Vinnie—but even if we didn't have to consider her, it'd be the only way! I couldn't fool him long. He's a strange, hidden man. His silence always creeps into my thoughts. Even if he never spoke, I would feel what was in his mind and some night, lying beside him, it would drive me mad and I'd have to kill his silence by screaming out the truth! [*She has been staring before her—now she suddenly turns on* BRANT—*slowly*] If he died suddenly now, no one would think it was anything but heart failure. I've been reading a book in Father's medical library. I saw it there one day a few weeks ago—it was as if some fate in me forced me to see it! [*She reaches in the sleeve of her dress and takes out the slip of paper she had written on.*] I've written something here. I want you to get it for me. [*His fingers close on it mechanically. He stares at it with a strange stupid dread. She hurries on so as not to give him time for reflection.*] The work on the "Flying Trades" is all finished, isn't it? You sail to Boston tomorrow, to wait for cargo?

BRANT [*dully*]. Aye.

CHRISTINE. Get this at some druggist's down by the waterfront the minute you reach there. You can make up some story about a sick dog on your ship. As soon as you get it, mail it to me here. I'll be on the lookout, so Vinnie will never know it came. Then you must wait on the "Flying Trades" until you hear from me or I come to you—afterward!

BRANT [*dully*]. But how can you do it—so no one will suspect?

CHRISTINE. He's taking medicine. I'll give him his medicine. Oh, I've planned it carefully.

BRANT. But—if he dies suddenly, won't Vinnie—

CHRISTINE. There'll be no reason for her to suspect. She's worried already about his heart. Besides, she may hate me, but she would never think—

BRANT. Orin will be coming home, too.

CHRISTINE. Orin will believe anything I want him to. As for the people here, they'd never dream of such a thing in the Mannon house! And the sooner I do it, the less suspicion there'll be! They

will think the excitement of coming home and the reaction were too much for his weak heart! Doctor Blake will think so. I'll see that's what he thinks.

BRANT [*harshly*]. Poison! It's a coward's trick!

CHRISTINE [*with fierce scorn now, seeing the necessity of goading him*]. Do you think you would be braver to give me up to him and let him take away your ship?

BRANT. No!

CHRISTINE. Didn't you say you wanted to kill him?

BRANT. Aye! But I'd give him his chance!

CHRISTINE. Did he give your mother her chance?

BRANT [*aroused*]. No, damn him!

CHRISTINE. Then what makes you suddenly so scrupulous about his death? [*With a sneer*] It must be the Mannon in you coming out! Are you going to prove, the first time your love is put to a real test, that you're a weak coward like your father?

BRANT. Christine! If it was any man said that to me—!

CHRISTINE [*passionately*]. Have you thought of this side of his homecoming—that he's coming back to my bed? If you love me as much as you claim, I should think that would rid you of any scruples! If it was a question of some woman taking you from me, I wouldn't have qualms about which was or wasn't the way to kill her! [*More tauntingly*] But perhaps your love has been only a lie you told me—to take the sneaking revenge on him of being a backstairs lover! Perhaps—

BRANT [*stung, grabbing her by the shoulders—fiercely*]. Stop it! I'll do anything you want! You know it! [*Then with a change to somber grimness—putting the paper in his pocket*] And you're right. I'm a damn fool to have any feeling about how Ezra Mannon dies!

CHRISTINE [*a look of exultant satisfaction comes to her face as she sees he is definitely won over now. She throws her arms around him and kisses him passionately*]. Ah! Now you're the man I love again, not a hypocritical Mannon! Promise me, no more cowardly romantic scruples! Promise me!

BRANT. I promise. [*The boom of a cannon sounds from the fort that guards the harbor. He and* CHRISTINE *start frightenedly and stand staring at each other. Another boom comes, reverberating, rattling the windows.* CHRISTINE *recovers herself.*]

CHRISTINE. You hear? That's the salute to his homecoming! [*She kisses him—with fierce insistence*] Remember your mother's death!

Remember your dream of your own ship! Above all, remember you'll have me!—all your own—your wife! [*Then urgently*] And now you must go! She'll be coming back—and you're not good at hiding your thoughts. [*Urging him toward the door*] Hurry! I don't want you to meet her! [*The cannon at the fort keep booming at regular intervals until the end of the scene.* BRANT *goes out in the hall and a moment later the front door is heard closing after him.* CHRISTINE *hurries from the door to the window and watches him from behind the curtains as he goes down the drive. She is in a state of tense, exultant excitement. Then, as if an idea had suddenly come to her, she speaks to his retreating figure with a strange sinister air of elation.*] You'll never dare leave me now, Adam—for your ships or your sea of your naked Island girls—when I grow old and ugly! [*She turns back from the window. Her eyes are caught by the eyes of her husband in the portrait and for a moment she stares back into them, as if fascinated. Then she jerks her glance away and, with a little shudder she cannot repress, turns and walks quickly from the room and closes the door behind her.*]

CURTAIN

act 3

SCENE: *The same as Act One, Scene One—exterior of the Mannon house. It is around nine o'clock of a night a week later. The light of a half moon falls on the house, giving it an unreal, detached, eerie quality. The pure white temple front seems more than ever like an incongruous mask fixed on the somber, stone house. All the shutters are closed. The white columns of the portico cast black bars of shadow on the gray wall behind them. The trunk of the pine at right is an ebony pillar, its branches a mass of shade.*

LAVINIA *is sitting on the top of the steps to the portico. She is dressed, as before, severely in black. Her thin figure, seated stiffly upright, arms against her sides, the legs close together, the shoulders square, the head upright, is like that of an Egyptian statue. She is staring straight before her. The sound of* SETH'S *thin, aged baritone mournfully singing the chanty "Shenandoah" is heard from down the drive, off right*

front. He is approaching the house and the song draws quickly nearer:

"Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you
A-way, my rolling river.
Oh, Shenandoah, I can't get near you
Way-ay, I'm bound away
Across the wide Missouri.

"Oh, Shenandoah, I love your daughter
A-way, my rolling river."

He enters right front. He is a bit drunk but holding his liquor well. He walks up by the lilacs starting the next line "Oh, Shenandoah"—then suddenly sees LAVINIA *on the steps and stops abruptly, a bit sheepish.*

LAVINIA [*disapprovingly*]. This is the second time this week I've caught you coming home like this.

SETH [*unabashed, approaches the steps—with a grin*]. I'm aimin' to do my patriotic duty, Vinnie. The first time was celebratin' Lee's surrender and this time is drownin' my sorrow for the President gittin' shot! And the third'll be when your Paw gits home!

LAVINIA. Father might arrive tonight.

SETH. Gosh, Vinnie, I never calc'lated he could git here so soon!

LAVINIA. Evidently you didn't. He'd give you fits if he caught you drunk. Oh, I don't believe he'll come, but it's possible he might.

SETH [*is evidently trying to pull himself together. He suddenly leans over toward her and, lowering his voice, asks soberly*]. Did you find out anything about that Brant?

LAVINIA [*sharply*]. Yes. There's no connection. It was just a silly idea of yours.

SETH [*stares at her—then understandingly*]. Wal, if you want it left that way, I'll leave it that way. [*A pause. He continues to stand looking at her, while she stares in front of her.*]

LAVINIA [*in a low voice*]. What was that Marie Brantôme like, Seth?

SETH. Marie? She was always laughin' and singin'—frisky and full of life—with something free and wild about her like an animile.

Purty she was, too! [*Then he adds*] Hair just the color of your Maw's and yourn she had.

LAVINIA. I know.

SETH. Oh, everyone took to Marie—couldn't help it. Even your Paw. He was only a boy then, but he was crazy about her, too, like a youngster would be. His mother was stern with him, while Marie, she made a fuss over him and petted him.

LAVINIA. Father, too!

SETH. Ayeh—but he hated her worse than anyone when it got found out she was his Uncle David's fancy woman.

LAVINIA [*in a low voice, as if to herself, staring at the house*]. It's all so strange! It frightens me! [*She checks herself abruptly—turns to* SETH, *curtly*] I don't believe that about Father. You've had too much whiskey. Go to bed and sleep it off. [*She walks up the steps again.*]

SETH [*gazes at her with understanding*]. Ayeh. [*Then warningly, making a surreptitious signal as he sees the front door opening behind her*] Ssstt! [CHRISTINE *appears outlined in the light from the hall. She is dressed in a gown of green velvet that sets off her hair. The light behind her glows along the edges of the dress and in the color of her hair. She closes the door and comes into the moonlight at the edge of the steps, standing above and a little to the right of* LAVINIA. *The moonlight, falling full on them, accentuates strangely the resemblance between their faces and at the same time the hostile dissimilarity in body and dress.* LAVINIA *does not turn or give any sign of knowing her mother is behind her. There is a second's uncomfortable silence.* SETH *moves off left.*] Wal, I'll trot along! [*He disappears around the corner of the house. There is a pause. Then* CHRISTINE *speaks in a dry mocking tone.*]

CHRISTINE. What are you moongazing at? Puritan maidens shouldn't peer too inquisitively into Spring! Isn't beauty an abomination and love a vile thing? [*She laughs with bitter mockery—then tauntingly*] Why don't you marry Peter? You don't want to be left an old maid, do you?

LAVINIA [*quietly*]. You needn't hope to get rid of me that way. I'm not marrying anyone. I've got my duty to Father.

CHRISTINE. Duty! How often I've heard that word in this house! Well, you can't say I didn't do mine all these years. But there comes an end.

LAVINIA [*grimly*]. And there comes another end—and you must do your duty again!

CHRISTINE [*starts as if to retort defiantly—they says calmly*]. Yes, I realize that.

LAVINIA [*after a pause—suspiciously*]. What's going on at the bottom of your mind? I know you're plotting something!

CHRISTINE [*controlling a start*]. Don't be stupid, please!

LAVINIA. Are you planning how you can see Adam again? You better not!

CHRISTINE [*calmly*]. I'm not so foolish. I said good-bye once. Do you think I want to make it harder for myself?

LAVINIA. Has it been hard for you? I'd never guess it—and I've been watching you.

CHRISTINE. I warned you you would have no chance to gloat! [*After a pause*] When do you expect your father home? You want me to play my part well when he comes, don't you?—for his sake. I'd like to be forewarned.

LAVINIA. His letter said he wouldn't wait until his brigade was disbanded but would try to get leave at once. He might arrive tonight—or tomorrow—or the next day. I don't know.

CHRISTINE. You think he might come tonight? [*Then with a mocking smile*] So he's the beau[1] you're waiting for in the spring moonlight! [*Then after a pause*] But the night train got in long ago.

LAVINIA [*glances down the drive, left front—then starts to her feet excitedly*]. Here's someone!

[CHRISTINE *slowly rises. There is the sound of footsteps. A moment later* LEVI MANNON *enters from left, front. He stops short in the shadow for a second and stands, erect and stiff, as if at attention, staring at his house, his wife and daughter. He is a tall, spare, big-boned man of fifty, dressed in the uniform of a Brigadier-General. One is immediately struck by the mask-like look of his face in repose, more pronounced in him than in the others. He is exactly like the portrait in his study, which we have seen in Act Two, except that his face is more lined and lean and the hair and beard are grizzled. His movements are exact and wooden and he has a mannerism of standing and sitting in stiff, posed attitudes that suggest the statues of military heroes. When he speaks, his deep voice has a hollow repressed quality, as if he were continually withholding emotion from it. His air is brusque and authoritative.*]

[1] ***beau.*** *Again Christine's perception is almost too clear to be plausible.*

LAVINIA [*seeing the man's figure stop in the shadow—calls excitedly*]. Who's that?

MANNON [*stepping forward into the moonlight*]. It's I.

LAVINIA [*with a cry of joy*]. Father! [*She runs to him and throws her arms around him and kisses him.*] Oh, Father! [*She bursts into tears and hides her face against his shoulder.*]

MANNON [*embarrassed—patting her head—gruffly*]. Come! I thought I'd taught you never to cry.

LAVINIA [*obediently forcing back her tears*]. I'm sorry, Father—but I'm so happy!

MANNON [*awkwardly moved*]. Tears are queer tokens of happiness! But I appreciate your—your feeling.

CHRISTINE [*has slowly descended the steps, her eyes fixed on him—tensely*]. Is it really you, Ezra? We had just given up hope of your coming tonight.

MANNON [*going stiffly to meet her*]. Train was late. The railroad is jammed up. Everybody has got leave. [*He meets her at the foot of the steps and kisses her with a chill dignity—formally*] I am glad to see you, Christine. You are looking well. [*He steps back and stares at her—then in a voice that betrays a deep undercurrent of suppressed feeling*] You have changed, somehow. You are prettier than ever— But you always were pretty.

CHRISTINE [*forcing a light tone*]. Compliments from one's husband! How gallant you've become, Ezra! [*Then solicitously*] You must be terribly tired. Wouldn't you like to sit here on the steps for a while? The moonlight is so beautiful.

LAVINIA [*who has been hovering about jealously, now manages to worm herself between them—sharply*]. No. It's too damp out here. And Father must be hungry. [*Taking his arm*] Come inside with me and I'll get you something to eat. You poor dear! You must be starved.

MANNON [*really revelling in his daughter's coddling but embarrassed before his wife—pulling his arm back—brusquely*]. No, thanks! I would rather rest here for a spell. Sit down, Vinnie. [CHRISTINE *sits on the top step at center; he sits on the middle step at right;* LAVINIA *on the lowest step at left. While they are doing this he keeps on talking in his abrupt sentences, as if he were trying to cover up some hidden uneasiness.*] I've got leave for a few days. Then I must go back and disband my brigade. Peace ought to be signed soon. The President's assassination is a frightful calamity. But it can't change the course of events.

LAVINIA. Poor man! It's dreadful he should die just at his moment of victory.

MANNON. Yes! [*Then after a pause—somberly*] All victory ends in the defeat of death. That's sure. But does defeat end in the victory of death? That's what I wonder!

[*They both stare at him,* LAVINIA *in surprise,* CHRISTINE *in uneasy wonder. A pause*]

CHRISTINE. Where is Orin? Couldn't you get leave for him too?

MANNON [*hesitates—then brusquely*]. I've been keeping it from you. Orin was wounded.

LAVINIA. Wounded! You don't mean—badly hurt?

CHRISTINE. [*half starting to her feet impulsively—with more of angry bitterness than grief*]. I knew it! I knew when you forced him into your horrible war—! [*Then sinking back—tensely*] You needn't trouble to break the news gradually, Ezra. Orin is dead, isn't he?

LAVINIA. Don't say that! It isn't true, is it, Father?

MANNON [*curtly—a trace of jealousy in his tone*]. Of course it isn't! If your mother would permit me to finish instead of jumping at conclusions about her baby—! [*With a grim, proud satisfaction*] He's no baby now. I've made a man of him. He did one of the bravest things I've seen in the war. He was wounded in the head—a close shave but it turned out only a scratch. But he got brain fever from the shock. He's all right now. He was in a rundown condition, they say at the hospital. I never guessed it. Nerves. I wouldn't notice nerves. He's always been restless. [*Half turning to* CHRISTINE] He gets that from you.

CHRISTINE. When will he be well enough to come home?

MANNON. Soon. The doctor advised a few more days' rest. He's still weak. He was out of his head for a long time. Acted as if he were a little boy again. Seemed to think you were with him. That is, he kept talking to "Mother."

CHRISTINE [*with a tense intake of breath*]. Ah!

LAVINIA [*pityingly—with a tinge of scorn in her voice*]. Poor Orin!

MANNON. I don't want you to baby him when he comes home, Christine. It would be bad for him to get tied to your apron strings again.

CHRISTINE. You needn't worry. That passed—when he left me.

[*Another pause. Then* LAVINIA *speaks.*]

LAVINIA. How is the trouble with your heart, Father? I've been

so afraid you might be making it out less serious than it really was to keep us from worrying.

MANNON [*gruffly*]. If it was serious, I'd tell you, so you'd be prepared. If you'd seen as much of death as I have in the past four years, you wouldn't be afraid of it. [*Suddenly jumping to his feet—brusquely*] Let's change the subject! I've had my fill of death. What I want now is to forget it. [*He turns and paces up and down to the right of steps.* LAVINIA *watches him worriedly.*] All I know is the pain is like a knife. It puts me out of commission while it lasts. The doctor gave me orders to avoid worry or any over-exertion or excitement.

CHRISTINE [*staring at him*]. You don't look well. But probably that's because you're so tired. You must go to bed soon, Ezra.

MANNON [*comes to a stop in his pacing directly before her and looks into her eyes—a pause—then he says in a voice that he tries to make ordinary*]. Yes, I want to—soon.

LAVINIA [*who has been watching him jealously—suddenly pulling him by the arm—with a childish volubility*]. No! Not yet! Please, Father! You've only just come! We've hardly talked at all! [*Defiantly to her mother*] How can you tell him he looks tired? He looks as well as I've ever seen him. [*Then to her father with a vindictive look at* CHRISTINE] We've so much to tell you. All about Captain Brant. [*If she had expected her mother to flinch at this, she is disappointed.* CHRISTINE *is prepared and remains unmoved beneath the searching, suspicious glance Mannon now directs at her.*]

MANNON. Vinnie wrote me you'd had company. I never heard of him. What business had he here?

CHRISTINE [*with an easy smile*]. You had better ask Vinnie! He's her latest beau! She even went walking in the moonlight with him!

LAVINIA [*with a gasp at being defied so brazenly*]. Oh!

MANNON [*now jealous and suspicious of his daughter*]. I notice you didn't mention that in your letter, young lady!

LAVINIA. I only went walking once with him—and that was before—[*She checks herself abruptly.*]

MANNON. Before what?

LAVINIA. Before I knew he's the kind who chases after every woman he sees.

MANNON [*angrily to* CHRISTINE]. A fine guest to receive in my absence!

LAVINIA. I believe he even thought Mother was flirting with him. That's why I felt it my duty to write you. You know how folks in town gossip, Father. I thought you ought to warn Mother she was foolish to allow him to come here.

MANNON. Foolish! It was downright—!

CHRISTINE [*coldly*]. I would prefer not to discuss this until we are alone, Ezra—if you don't mind! And I think Vinnie is extremely inconsiderate the moment you're home—to annoy you with such ridiculous nonsense! [*She turns to* LAVINIA.] I think you've done enough mischief. Will you kindly leave us?

LAVINIA. No.

MANNON [*sharply*]. Stop your squabbling, both of you! I hoped you had grown out of that nonsense! I won't have it in my house!

LAVINIA [*obediently*]. Yes, Father.

MANNON. It must be your bedtime, Vinnie.

LAVINIA. Yes, Father. [*She comes and kisses him—excitedly*] Oh, I'm so happy you're here! Don't let Mother make you believe I—You're the only man I'll ever love![1] I'm going to stay with you!

MANNON [*patting her hair—with gruff tenderness*]. I hope so. I want you to remain my little girl—for a while longer, at least. [*Then suddenly catching* CHRISTINE's *scornful glance—pushes* LAVINIA *away—brusquely*] March now!

LAVINIA. Yes, Father. [*She goes up the steps past her mother without a look. Behind her mother, in the portico, she stops and turns.*] Don't let anything worry you, Father. I'll always take care of you. [*She goes in.* MANNON *looks at his wife who stares before her. He clears his throat as if about to say something—then starts pacing self-consciously up and down at the right of steps.*]

CHRISTINE [*forcing a gentle tone*]. Sit down, Ezra. You will only make yourself more tired, keeping on your feet. [*He sits awkwardly two steps below her, on her left, turned sideways to face her. She asks with disarming simplicity*] Now please tell me just what it is you suspect me of?

MANNON [*taken aback*]. What makes you think I suspect you?

CHRISTINE. Everything! I've felt your distrust from the moment you came. Your eyes have been probing me, as if you were a judge again and I were the prisoner.

MANNON [*guiltily*]. I—?

CHRISTINE. And all on account of a stupid letter Vinnie had no

[1] ***only . . . love.*** *O'Neill is quite specific in having his characters state their relationships.*

business to write. It seems to me a late day, when I am an old woman with grown-up children, to accuse me of flirting with a stupid ship captain!

MANNON [*impressed and relieved—placatingly*]. There's no question of accusing you of that. I only think you've been foolish to give the gossips a chance to be malicious.

CHRISTINE. Are you sure that's all you have in your heart against me?

MANNON. Yes! Of course! What else? [*Patting her hand embarrassedly*] We'll say no more about it. [*Then he adds gruffly*] But I'd like you to explain how this Brant happened—

CHRISTINE. I'm only too glad to! I met him at Father's. Father has taken a fancy to him for some reason. So when he called here I couldn't be rude, could I? I hinted that his visits weren't welcome, but men of his type don't understand hints. But he's only been here four times in all, I think. And as for there having been gossip, that's nonsense! The only talk has been that he came to court Vinnie! You can ask anyone in town.

MANNON. Damn his impudence! It was your duty to tell him flatly he wasn't wanted!

CHRISTINE [*forcing a contrite air*]. Well, I must confess I didn't mind his coming as much as I might have—for one reason. He always brought me news of Father. Father's been sick for the past year, as I wrote you. [*Then with a twitch of the lips, as if she were restraining a derisive smile*] You can't realize what a strain I've been under—worrying about Father and Orin and—you.

MANNON [*deeply moved, turns to her and takes her hand in both of his—awkwardly*]. Christine—I deeply regret—having been unjust. [*He kisses her hand impulsively—then embarrassed by this show of emotion, adds in a gruff, joking tone*] Afraid old Johnny Reb[1] would pick me off, were you?

CHRISTINE [*controlling a wild impulse to burst into derisive laughter*]. Do you need to ask that?

[*A pause. He stares at her, fascinated and stirred.*]

MANNON [*finally blurts out*]. I've dreamed of coming home to you, Christine! [*Leans toward her, his voice trembling with desire and a feeling of strangeness and awe—touching her hair with an awkward caress*] You're beautiful! You look more beautiful than ever—and strange to me. I don't know you. You're younger. I feel

[1] ***Johnny Reb,*** *the "rebels," i.e., Confederate soldiers.*

like an old man beside you. Only your hair is the same—your strange beautiful hair I always—

CHRISTINE [*with a start of repulsion, shrinking from his hand*]. Don't! [*Then as he turns away, hurt and resentful at this rebuff—hastily*] I'm sorry, Ezra. I didn't mean—I—I'm nervous tonight. [MANNON *paces to the right and stands looking at the trees.* CHRISTINE *stares at his back with hatred. She sighs with affected weariness and leans back and closes her eyes.*]

CHRISTINE. I'm tired, Ezra.

MANNON [*blurts out*]. I shouldn't have bothered you with that foolishness about Brant tonight. [*He forces a strained smile.*] But I was jealous a mite, to tell you the truth. [*He forces himself to turn and, seeing her eyes are shut, suddenly comes and leans over her awkwardly, as if to kiss her, then is stopped by some strangeness he feels about her still face.*]

CHRISTINE [*feeling his desire and instinctively shrinking—without opening her eyes*]. Why do you look at me like that?

MANNON [*turns away guiltily*]. Like what? [*Uneasily*] How do you know? Your eyes are shut. [*Then, as if some burden of depression were on him that he had to throw off, he blurts out heavily*] I can't get used to home yet. It's so lonely. I've got used to the feel of camps with thousands of men around me at night—a sense of protection, maybe! [*Suddenly uneasy again*] Don't keep your eyes shut like that! Don't be so still! [*Then, as she opens her eyes—with an explosive appeal*] God, I want to talk to you, Christine! I've got to explain some things—inside me—to my wife—try to, anyway! [*He sits down beside her.*] Shut your eyes again! I can talk better. It has always been hard for me to talk—about feelings. I never could when you looked at me. Your eyes were always so—so full of silence! That is, since we've been married. Not before, when I was courting you. They used to speak then. They made me talk—because they answered.

CHRISTINE [*her eyes closed—tensely*]. Don't talk, Ezra.

MANNON [*as if he had determined, once started, to go on doggedly without heeding any interruption*]. It was seeing death all the time in this war got me to thinking these things. Death was so common, it didn't mean anything. That freed me to think of life. Queer, isn't it? Death made me think of life. Before that life had only made me think of death!

CHRISTINE [*without opening her eyes*]. Why are you talking of death?

MANNON. That's always been the Mannons' way of thinking. They went to the white meeting-house on Sabbaths and meditated on death. Life was a dying. Being born was starting to die. Death was being born. [*Shaking his head with a dogged bewilderment*] How in hell people ever got such notions! That white meeting-house. It stuck in my mind—clean-scrubbed and whitewashed—a temple of death! But in this war I've seen too many white walls splattered with blood that counted no more than dirty water. I've seen dead men scattered about, no more important than rubbish to be got rid of. That made the white meeting-house seem meaningless—making so much solemn fuss over death!

CHRISTINE [*opens her eyes and stares at him with a strange terror*]. What has this talk of death to do with me?

MANNON [*avoiding her glance—insistently*]. Shut your eyes again. Listen and you'll know. [*She shuts her eyes. He plods on with a note of desperation in his voice.*] I thought about my life—lying awake nights—and about your life. In the middle of battle I'd think maybe in a minute I'll be dead. But my life as just me ending, that didn't appear worth a thought one way or another. But listen, me as your husband being killed that seemed queer and wrong—like something dying that had never lived. Then all the years we've been man and wife would rise up in my mind and I would try to look at them. But nothing was clear except that there'd always been some barrier between us—a wall hiding us from each other! I would try to make up my mind exactly what that wall was but I never could discover. [*With a clumsy appealing gesture*] Do you know?

CHRISTINE [*tensely*]. I don't know what you're talking about.

MANNON. But you've known it was there! Don't lie, Christine! [*He looks at her still face and closed eyes, imploring her to reassure him—then blunders on doggedly*] Maybe you've always known you didn't love me. I call to mind the Mexican War. I could see you wanted me to go. I had a feeling you'd grown to hate me. Did you? [*She doesn't answer.*] That was why I went. I was hoping I might get killed. Maybe you were hoping that too. Were you?

CHRISTINE [*stammers*]. No, no, I— What makes you say such things?

MANNON. When I came back you had turned to your new baby, Orin. I was hardly alive for you any more. I saw that. I tried not to hate Orin. I turned to Vinnie, but a daughter's not a wife. Then I made up my mind I'd do my work in the world and leave you

alone in your life and not care. That's why the shipping wasn't enough—why I became a judge and a mayor and such vain truck, and why folks in town look on me as so able! Ha! Able for what? Not for what I wanted most in life! Not for your love! No! Able only to keep my mind from thinking of what I'd lost! [*He stares at her—then asks pleadingly*] For you did love me before we were married. You won't deny that, will you?

CHRISTINE [*desperately*]. I don't deny anything!

MANNON [*drawing himself up with a stern pride and dignity and surrendering himself like a commander against hopeless odds*]. All right, then. I came home to surrender to you—what's inside me. I love you. I loved you then, and all the years between, and I love you now.

CHRISTINE [*distractedly*]. Ezra! Please!

MANNON. I want that said! Maybe you have forgotten it. I wouldn't blame you. I guess I haven't said it or showed it much —ever. Something queer in me keeps me mum about the things I'd like most to say—keeps me hiding the things I'd like to show. Something keeps me sitting numb in my own heart—like a statue of a dead man in a town square. [*Suddenly he reaches over and takes her hand.*] I want to find what that wall is marriage put between us! You've got to help me smash it down! We have twenty good years still before us! I've been thinking of what we could do to get back to each other. I've a notion if we'd leave the children and go off on a voyage together—to the other side of the world—find some island where we could be alone a while. You'll find I have changed, Christine. I'm sick of death! I want life! Maybe you could love me now! [*In a note of final desperate pleading*] I've got to make you love me!

CHRISTINE [*pulls her hand away from him and springs to her feet wildly*]. For God's sake, stop talking. I don't know what you're saying. Leave me alone! What must be, must be! You make me weak! [*Then abruptly*] It's getting late.

MANNON [*terribly wounded, withdrawn into his stiff soldier armor—takes out his watch mechanically*]. Yes—six past eleven. Time to turn in. [*He ascends two steps, his face toward the door. He says bitterly*] You tell me to stop talking! By God, that's funny!

CHRISTINE [*collected now and calculating—takes hold of his arm, seductively*]. I meant—what is the good of words? There is no wall between us. I love you.

MANNON [*grabs her by the shoulders and stares into her face*].

Christine! I'd give my soul to believe that—but—I'm afraid! [*She kisses him. He presses her fiercely in his arms—passionately*] Christine!

[*The door behind him is opened and* LAVINIA *appears at the edge of the portico behind and above him. She wears slippers over her bare feet and has a dark dressing-gown over her night dress. She shrinks back from their embrace with aversion. They separate, startled.*]

MANNON [*embarrassed—irritably*]. Thought you'd gone to bed, young lady!

LAVINIA [*woodenly*]. I didn't feel sleepy. I thought I'd walk a little. It's such a fine night.

CHRISTINE. We are just going to bed. Your father is tired. [*She moves up, past her daughter, taking* MANNON'S *hand, leading him after her to the door.*]

MANNON. No time for a walk, if you ask me. See you turn in soon.

LAVINIA. Yes, Father.

MANNON. Good night.

[*The door closes behind them.* LAVINIA *stands staring before her—then walks stiffly down the steps and stands again. Light appears between the chinks of the shutters in the bedroom on the second floor to the left. She looks up.*]

LAVINIA [*in an anguish of jealous hatred*]. I hate you! You steal even Father's love from me again! You stole all love from me when I was born! [*Then almost with a sob, hiding her face in her hands*] Oh, Mother! Why have you done this to me? What harm had I done you? [*Then looking up at the window again—with passionate disgust*] Father, how can you love that shameless harlot? [*Then frenziedly*] I can't bear it! I won't! It's my duty to tell him about her! I will! [*She calls desperately*] Father! Father!

[*The shutter of the bedroom is pushed open and* MANNON *leans out.*]

MANNON [*sharply*]. What is it? Don't shout like that!

LAVINIA [*stammers lamely*]. I—I remembered I forgot to say good night, Father.

MANNON [*exasperated*]. Good heavens! What— [*Then gently*] Oh—all right—good night, Vinnie. Get to bed soon, like a good girl.

LAVINIA. Yes, Father. Good night. [*He goes back in the bedroom*

and pulls the shutter closed. She stands staring fascinatedly up at the window, wringing her hands in a pitiful desperation.]

CURTAIN

act 4

SCENE: EZRA MANNON'S *bedroom. A big four-poster bed is at rear, center, the foot front, the head against the rear wall. A small stand, with a candle on it, is by the head of the bed on the left. To the left of the stand is a door leading into* CHRISTINE'S *room. The door is open. In the left wall are two windows. At left, front, is a table with a lamp on it and a chair beside it. In the right wall, front, is a door leading to the hall. Further back, against the wall, is a bureau.*

None of these details can be discerned at first because the room is in darkness, except for what moonlight filters feebly through the shutters. It is around dawn of the following morning.

CHRISTINE'S *form can be made out, a pale ghost in the darkness, as she slips slowly and stealthily from the bed. She tiptoes to the table, left front, and picks up a light-colored dressing-gown that is flung over the chair and puts it on. She stands listening for some sound from the bed. A pause. Then* MANNON'S *voice comes suddenly from the bed, dull and lifeless.*

MANNON. Christine.

CHRISTINE [*starts violently—in a strained voice*]. Yes.

MANNON. Must be near daybreak, isn't it?

CHRISTINE. Yes. It is beginning to get gray.

MANNON. What made you jump when I spoke? Is my voice so strange to you?

CHRISTINE. I thought you were asleep.

MANNON. I haven't been able to sleep. I've been lying here thinking. What makes you so uneasy?

CHRISTINE. I haven't been able to sleep either.

MANNON. You slunk out of bed so quietly.

CHRISTINE. I didn't want to wake you.

MANNON [*bitterly*]. Couldn't you bear it—lying close to me?

CHRISTINE. I didn't want to disturb you by tossing around.

MANNON. We'd better light the light and talk a while.

CHRISTINE [*with dread*]. I don't want to talk! I prefer the dark.

MANNON. I want to see you. [*He takes matches from the stand by the bed and lights the candle on it.* CHRISTINE *hastily sits down in the chair by the table, pushing it so she sits facing left, front, with her face turned three-quarters away from him. He pushes his back up against the head of the bed in a half-sitting position. His face, with the flickering candle light on its side, has a grim, bitter expression.*] You like the dark where you can't see your old man of a husband, is that it?

CHRISTINE. I wish you wouldn't talk like that, Ezra. If you are going to say stupid things, I'll go in my own room. [*She gets to her feet but keeps her face turned away from him.*]

MANNON. Wait! [*Then a note of pleading in his voice*] Don't go. I don't want to be alone. [*She sits again in the same position as before. He goes on humbly.*] I didn't mean to say those things. I guess there's bitterness inside me—my own cussedness, maybe—and sometimes it gets out before I can stop it.

CHRISTINE. You have always been bitter.

MANNON. Before we married?

CHRISTINE. I don't remember.

MANNON. You don't want to remember you ever loved me!

CHRISTINE [*tensely*]. I don't want to talk of the past! [*Abruptly changing the subject*] Did you hear Vinnie the first part of the night? She was pacing up and down before the house like a sentry guarding you. She didn't go to bed until two. I heard the clock strike.

MANNON. There is one who loves me, at least! [*Then after a pause*] I feel strange, Christine.

CHRISTINE. You mean—your heart? You don't think you are going to be—taken ill, do you?

MANNON [*harshly*]. No! [*A pause—then accusingly*] Is that what you're waiting for? Is that why you were so willing to give yourself tonight? Were you hoping—?

CHRISTINE [*springing up*]. Ezra! Stop talking like that! I can't stand it! [*She moves as if to go into her own room.*]

MANNON. Wait! I'm sorry I said that. [*Then, as she sits down again, he goes on gloomily.*] It isn't my heart. It's something un-

easy troubling my mind—as if something in me was listening, watching, waiting for something to happen.

CHRISTINE. Waiting for what to happen?

MANNON. I don't know. [*A pause—then he goes on somberly.*] This house is not my house. This is not my room nor my bed. They are empty—waiting for someone to move in! And you are not my wife! You are waiting for something!

CHRISTINE [*beginning to snap under the strain—jumps to her feet again*]. What would I be waiting for?

MANNON. For death—to set you free!

CHRISTINE. Leave me alone! Stop nagging at me with your crazy suspicions! [*Then anger and hatred come into her voice.*] Not your wife! You acted as if I were your wife—your property—not so long ago!

MANNON [*with bitter scorn*]. Your body? What are bodies to me? I've seen too many rotting in the sun to make grass greener! Ashes to ashes, dirt to dirt! Is that your notion of love? Do you think I married a body? [*Then, as if all the bitterness and hurt in him had suddenly burst its dam*] You were lying to me tonight as you've always lied! You were only pretending love! You let me take you as if you were a nigger slave I'd bought at auction! You made me appear a lustful beast in my own eyes!—as you've always done since our first marriage night! I would feel cleaner now if I had gone to a brothel! I would feel more honor between myself and life!

CHRISTINE [*in a stifled voice*]. Look out, Ezra! I won't stand—

MANNON [*with a harsh laugh*]. And I had hoped my homecoming would mark a new beginning—new love between us! I told you my secret feelings. I tore my insides out for you—thinking you'd understand! By God, I'm an old fool!

CHRISTINE [*her voice grown strident*]. Did you think you could make me weak—make me forget all the years? Oh, no, Ezra! It's too late! [*Then her voice changes, as if she had suddenly resolved on a course of action, and becomes deliberately taunting.*] You want the truth? You've guessed it! You've used me, you've given me children, but I've never once been yours! I never could be! And whose fault is it? I loved you when I married you! I wanted to give myself! But you made me so I couldn't give! You filled me with disgust!

MANNON [*furiously*]. You say that to me! [*Then trying to calm*

himself—stammers] No! Be quiet! We mustn't fight! I mustn't lose my temper! It will bring on—!

CHRISTINE [*goading him with calculating cruelty*]. Oh, no! You needn't adopt that pitiful tone! You wanted the truth and you're going to hear it now!

MANNON [*frightened—almost pleading*]. Be quiet, Christine!

CHRISTINE. I've lied about everything! I lied about Captain Brant! He is Marie Brantôme's son! And it was I he came to see, not Vinnie! I made him come!

MANNON [*seized with fury*]. You dared—! You—! The son of that—!

CHRISTINE. Yes, I dared! And all my trips to New York weren't to visit Father but to be with Adam! He's gentle and tender, he's everything you've never been. He's what I've longed for all these years with you—a lover! I love him! So now you know the truth!

MANNON [*in a frenzy—struggling to get out of bed*]. You—you whore—I'll kill you! [*Suddenly he falls back, groaning, doubled up on his left side, with intense pain.*]

CHRISTINE [*with savage satisfaction*]. Ah! [*She hurries through the doorway into her room and immediately returns with a small box in her hand. He is facing away from her door, and, even if the intense pain left him any perception, he could not notice her departure and return, she moves so silently.*]

MANNON [*gaspingly*]. Quick—medicine!

CHRISTINE [*turned away from him, takes a pellet from the box, asking tensely as she does so*]. Where is your medicine?

MANNON. On the stand! Hurry!

CHRISTINE. Wait. I have it now. [*She pretends to take something from the stand by the head of the bed—then holds out the pellet and a glass of water which is on the stand.*] Here. [*He turns to her groaning and opens his mouth. She puts the pellet on his tongue and presses the glass of water to his lips.*] Now drink.

MANNON [*takes a swallow of water—then suddenly a wild look of terror comes over his face. He gasps*]. That's not—my medicine! [*She shrinks back to the table, the hand with the box held out behind her, as if seeking a hiding place. Her fingers release the box on the table top and she brings her hand in front of her as if instinctively impelled to prove to him she has nothing. His eyes are fixed on her in a terrible accusing glare. He tries to call for help but his voice fades to a wheezy whisper.*] Help! Vinnie! [*He falls back in a coma, breathing stertorously.* CHRISTINE *stares at him fascinatedly—*

then starts with terror as she hears a noise from the hall and frantically snatches up the box from the table and holds it behind her back, turning to face the door as it opens and LAVINIA *appears in the doorway. She is dressed as at the end of Act Three, in nightgown, wrapper and slippers. She stands, dazed and frightened and hesitating, as if she had just awakened.*]

LAVINIA. I had a horrible dream—I thought I heard Father calling me—it woke me up—

CHRISTINE [*trembling with guilty terror—stammers*]. He just had —an attack.

LAVINIA [*hurries to the bed*]. Father! [*She puts her arms around him.*] He's fainted!

CHRISTINE. No. He's all right now. Let him sleep.

[*At this moment* MANNON, *with a last dying effort, straightens up in a sitting position in* LAVINIA'S *arms, his eyes glaring at his wife, and manages to raise his arm and point an accusing finger at her.*]

MANNON [*gasps*]. She's guilty—not medicine! [*He falls back limply.*]

LAVINIA. Father! [*Frightenedly she feels for his pulse, puts her ear against his chest to listen for a heartbeat.*]

CHRISTINE. Let him alone. He's asleep.

LAVINIA. He's dead!

CHRISTINE [*repeats mechanically*]. Dead? [*Then in a strange flat tone*] I hope—he rests in peace.

LAVINIA [*turning on her with hatred*]. Don't you dare pretend—! You wanted him to die! You— [*She stops and stares at her mother with a horrified suspicion—then harshly accusing*] Why did he point at you like that? Why did he say you were guilty? Answer me!

CHRISTINE [*stammers*]. I told him—Adam was my lover.

LAVINIA [*aghast*]. You told him that—when you knew his heart—! Oh! You did it on purpose! You murdered him!

CHRISTINE. No—it was your fault—you made him suspicious—he kept talking of love and death—he forced me to tell him! [*Her voice becomes thick, as if she were drowsy and fighting off sleep. Her eyes half close.*]

LAVINIA [*grabbing her by the shoulders—fiercely*]. Listen! Look at me! He said "not medicine"! What did he mean?

CHRISTINE [*keeping the hand with the poison pressed against her back*]. I—I don't know.

LAVINIA. You do know! What was it? Tell me!

CHRISTINE [*with a last effort of will manages to draw herself up and speak with a simulation of outraged feeling*]. Are you accusing your mother of—

LAVINIA. Yes! I—! [*Then distractedly*] No—you can't be that evil!

CHRISTINE [*her strength gone—swaying weakly*]. I don't know what—you're talking about. [*She edges away from* LAVINIA *toward her bedroom door, the hand with the poison stretched out behind her—weakly*] I—feel faint. I must go—and lie down. I—[*She turns as if to run into the room, takes a tottering step—then her knees suddenly buckle under her and she falls in a dead faint at the foot of the bed. As her hand strikes the floor the fingers relax and the box slips out onto one of the hooked rugs.*]

LAVINIA [*does not notice this. Startled by* CHRISTINE'S *collapse, she automatically bends on one knee beside her and hastily feels for her pulse. Then satisfied she has only fainted, her anguished hatred immediately returns and she speaks with strident denunciation*]. You murdered him just the same—by telling him! I suppose you think you'll be free to marry Adam now! But you won't! Not while I'm alive! I'll make you pay for your crime! I'll find a way to punish you! [*She is starting to her feet when her eyes fall on the little box on the rug. Immediately she snatches it up and stares at it, the look of suspicion changing to a dreadful, horrified certainty. Then with a shuddering cry she shrinks back along the side of the bed, the box clutched in her hand, and sinks on her knees by the head of the bed, and flings her arms around the dead man. With anguished beseeching*] Father! Don't leave me alone! Come back to me! Tell me what to do!

CURTAIN

THE HUNTED

CHARACTERS

Christine, Ezra Mannon's widow
Lavinia (Vinnie), her daughter
Orin, her son, First Lieutenant of Infantry
Captain Adam Brant
Hazel Niles
Peter, her brother, Captain of Artillery
Josiah Borden, manager of the shipping company
Emma, his wife
Everett Hills, D.D., of the First Congregational Church
His Wife
Doctor Joseph Blake
The Chantyman

Scenes

Act One: Exterior of the Mannon house—a moonlight night two days after the murder of Ezra Mannon

Act Two. Sitting-room in the house—immediately follows Act One

Act Three: Ezra Mannon's study—immediately follows Act Two

Act Four: The stern of the clipper ship "Flying Trades," at a wharf in East Boston—a night two days later

Act Five: Same as Act One—Exterior of the Mannon house the night of the following day

act 1

SCENE: *The same as Acts One and Three of "Homecoming"*
—Exterior of the Mannon House.
It is a moonlight night two days after the murder of EZRA

MANNON. *The house has the same strange eerie appearance, its white portico like a mask in the moonlight, as it had on that night. All the shutters are closed. A funeral wreath is fixed to the column at the right of steps. Another wreath is on the door.*

There is a sound of voices from inside the house, the front door is opened and JOSIAH BORDEN *and his wife,* EVERETT HILLS, *the Congregational minister, and his wife, and* DOCTOR JOSEPH BLAKE, *the Mannons' family physician, come out.* CHRISTINE *can be seen in the hall just inside the door. There is a chorus of "Good night, Mrs. Mannon," and then turn to the steps and the door is closed.*

These people—the BORDENS, HILLS *and his wife and* DOCTOR BLAKE—*are, as were the Ames of Act One of "Homecoming," types of townsfolk, a chorus representing as those others had, but in a different stratum of society, the town as a human background for the drama of the Mannons.*

JOSIAH BORDEN, *the manager of the Mannon shipping company, is shrewd and competent. He is around sixty, small and wizened, white hair and beard, rasping nasal voice, and little sharp eyes. His wife, about ten years his junior, is a typical New England woman of pure English ancestry, with a horse face, buck teeth and big feet, her manner defensively sharp and assertive.* HILLS *is the type of well-fed minister of a prosperous small-town congregation—stout and unctuous, snobbish and ingratiating, conscious of godliness, but timid and always feeling his way. He is in the fifties, as is his wife, a sallow, flabby, self-effacing minister's wife.* DOCTOR BLAKE *is the old kindly best-family physician—a stout, self-important old man with a stubborn opinionated expression.*

They come down the steps to the drive. MRS. BORDEN *and* MRS. HILLS *walk together toward left front until they are by the bench. There they stop to wait for the men who stand at the foot of the steps while* BORDEN *and* BLAKE *light cigars.*

MRS. BORDEN [*tartly*]. I can't abide that woman!

MRS. HILLS. No. There's something queer about her.

MRS. BORDEN [*grudgingly honest*]. Still and all, I come nearer to liking her now than I ever did before when I see how broken down she is over her husband's death.

MRS. HILLS. Yes. She looks terrible, doesn't she? Doctor Blake says she will have herself in bed sick if she doesn't look out.

MRS. BORDEN. I'd never have suspected she had that much feeling in her. Not but what she hasn't always been a dutiful wife, as far as anyone knows.

MRS. HILLS. Yes. She's seemed to be.

MRS. BORDEN. Well, it only goes to show how you can misjudge a person without meaning to—especially when that person is a Mannon. They're not easy to make head or tail of. Queer, the difference in her and Lavinia—the way they take his death. Lavinia is cold and calm as an icicle.

MRS. HILLS. Yes. She doesn't seem to feel as much sorrow as she ought.

MRS. BORDEN. That's where you're wrong. She feels it as much as her mother. Only she's too Mannon to let anyone see what she feels. But did you notice the look in her eyes?

MRS. HILLS. I noticed she never said a word to anyone. Where did she disappear to all of a sudden?

MRS. BORDEN. Went to the train with Peter Niles to meet Orin. I overheard her mother talking to Lavinia in the hall. She was insisting Peter should escort her to meet the train. Lavinia must have been starting to go alone. Her mother seemed real angry about it. [*Then glancing toward the men who have moved a little away from the steps and are standing talking in low tones*] Whatever are those men gossiping about? [*She calls.*] Josiah! It's time we were getting home.

BORDEN. I'm coming, Emma. [*The three men join the women by the bench,* BORDEN *talking as they come.*] It isn't for me to question the arrangements she's made, Joe, but it does seem as if Ezra should have been laid out in the town hall where the whole town could have paid their respects to him, and had a big public funeral tomorrow.

HILLS. That's my opinion. He was mayor of the town and a national war hero—

BLAKE. She says it was Ezra's wish he'd often expressed that everything should be private and quiet. That's just like Ezra. He never was one for show. He did the work and let others do the showing off.

HILLS [*unctuously*]. He was a great man. His death is a real loss to everyone in this community. He was a power for good.

BORDEN. Yes. He got things done.

HILLS. What a tragedy to be taken his first night home after passing unharmed through the whole war!

BORDEN. I couldn't believe the news. Who'd ever suspect— It's queer. It's like fate.

MRS. HILLS [*breaks in tactlessly*]. Maybe it is fate. You remember, Everett, you've always said about the Mannons that pride goeth before a fall and that some day God would humble them in their sinful pride. [*Everyone stares at her, shocked and irritated.*]

HILLS [*flusteredly*]. I don't remember ever saying—

BLAKE [*huffily*]. If you'll excuse me, that's darn nonsense! I've known Ezra Mannon all my life, and to those he wanted to know he was as plain and simple—

HILLS [*hastily*]. Of course, Doctor. My wife entirely misunderstood me. I was, perhaps wrongly, referring to Mrs. Mannon.

BLAKE. She's all right too—when you get to know her.

HILLS [*dryly*]. I have no doubt.

BLAKE. And it's a poor time, when this household is afflicted by sudden death, to be—

HILLS. You are quite right, Doctor. My wife should have remembered—

MRS. HILLS [*crushed*]. I didn't mean anything wrong, Doctor.

BLAKE [*mollifiedly*]. Let's forget it then. [*Turning to* BORDEN—*with a self-satisfied, knowing air*] As for your saying who'd ever expect it—well, you and Emma know I expected Ezra wouldn't last long.

BORDEN. Yes. I remember you said you were afraid his heart was bad.

MRS. BORDEN. I remember you did too.

BLAKE. From the symptoms Mrs. Mannon described from his letter to her, I was as certain as if I'd examined him he had angina. And I wasn't surprised neither. I'd often told Ezra he was attempting more than one man could handle and if he didn't rest he'd break down. The minute they sent for me I knew what'd happened. And what she told me about waking up to find him groaning and doubled with pain confirmed it. She'd given him his medicine—it was what I would have prescribed myself—but it was too late. And as for dying, his first night home—well, the war was over, he was worn out, he'd had a long, hard trip home—and angina is no respecter of time and place. It strikes when it has a mind to.

BORDEN [*shaking his head*]. Too bad. Too durned bad. The town won't find another as able as Ezra in a hurry. [*They all shake their heads and look sad. A pause.*]

MRS. BORDEN. Well, we aren't doing anyone any good standing here. We ought to get home, Josiah.

MRS. HILLS. Yes. We must, too, Everett. [*They begin moving slowly off left,* HILLS *going with the two women.* DOCTOR BLAKE *nudges* BORDEN *and motions him to stay behind. After the others disappear, he whispers with a meaning grin.*]

BLAKE. I'll tell you a secret, Josiah—strictly between you and me.

BORDEN [*sensing something from his manner—eagerly*]. Of course. What is it, Joe?

BLAKE. I haven't asked Christine Mannon any embarrassing questions, but I have a strong suspicion it was love killed Ezra!

BORDEN. Love?

BLAKE. That's what! Leastways, love made angina kill him, if you take my meaning. She's a damned handsome woman and he'd been away a long time. Only natural between man and wife—but not the treatment I'd recommend for angina. He should have known better, but—well—he was human.

BORDEN [*with a salacious smirk*]. Can't say as I blame him! She's a looker! I don't like her and never did but I can imagine worse ways of dying! [*They both chuckle.*] Well, let's catch up with the folks. [*They go off, left. They have hardly disappeared before the door of the house is opened and* CHRISTINE MANNON *comes out and stands at the head of the steps a moment, then descends to the drive. She is obviously in a terrible state of strained nerves. Beneath the mask-like veneer of her face there are deep lines about her mouth, and her eyes burn with a feverish light. Feeling herself free from observation for a moment she lets go, her mouth twitches, her eyes look desperately on all sides, as if she longed to fly from something.* HAZEL NILES *comes out of the house to the head of the steps. She is the same as in "Homecoming."* CHRISTINE *at once senses her presence behind her and regains her tense control of herself.*]

HAZEL [*with a cheering, sympathetic air*]. So here you are. I looked everywhere around the house and couldn't find you.

CHRISTINE [*tensely*]. I couldn't stay in. I'm so nervous. It's been a little harrowing—all these people coming to stand around and stare at the dead—and at me.

HAZEL. I know. But there won't be any more now. [*Then a tone*

of eagerness breaking through in spite of herself] Peter and Vinnie ought to be back soon, if the train isn't late. Oh, I hope Orin will surely come!

CHRISTINE [*strangely*]. The same train! It was late that night he came! Only two days ago! It seems a lifetime! I've grown old.

HAZEL [*gently*]. Try not to think of it.

CHRISTINE [*tensely*]. As if I hadn't tried! But my brain keeps on—over and over and over!

HAZEL. I'm so afraid you will make yourself sick.

CHRISTINE [*rallying herself and forcing a smile*]. There, I'm all right. I mustn't appear too old and haggard when Orin comes, must I? He always liked me to be pretty.

HAZEL. It will be so good to see him again! [*Then quickly*] He ought to be such a comfort to you in your grief.

CHRISTINE. Yes. [*Then strangely*] He used to be my baby, you know—before he left me. [*Suddenly staring at* HAZEL, *as if struck by an idea*] You love Orin, don't you?

HAZEL [*embarrassed—stammers shyly*]. I—I—

CHRISTINE. I am glad. I want you to. I want him to marry you. [*Putting an arm around her—in a strained tone*] We'll be secret conspirators, shall we, and I'll help you and you'll help me?

HAZEL. I don't understand.

CHRISTINE. You know how possessive Vinnie is with Orin. She's always been jealous of you. I warn you she'll do everything she can to keep him from marrying you.

HAZEL [*shocked*]. Oh, Mrs. Mannon, I can't believe Vinnie—!

CHRISTINE [*unheeding*]. So you must help me. We mustn't let Orin come under her influence again. Especially now in the morbid, crazy state of grief she's in! Haven't you noticed how queer she's become? She hasn't spoken a single word since her father's death! When I talk to her she won't answer me. And yet she follows me around everywhere—she hardly leaves me alone a minute. [*Forcing a nervous laugh*] It gets on my nerves until I could scream!

HAZEL. Poor Vinnie! She was so fond of her father. I don't wonder she—

CHRISTINE [*staring at her—strangely*]. You are genuinely good and pure of heart, aren't you?

HAZEL [*embarrassed*]. Oh, no! I'm not at all—

CHRISTINE. I was like you once—long ago—before— [*Then with bitter longing*] If I could only have stayed as I was then! Why can't all of us remain innocent and loving and trusting? But God

won't leave us alone. He twists and wrings and tortures our lives with others' lives until—we poison each other to death! [*Seeing* HAZEL's *look, catches herself—quickly*] Don't mind what I said! Let's go in, shall we? I would rather wait for Orin inside. I couldn't bear to wait and watch him coming up the drive—just like—he looks so much like his father at times—and like—but what nonsense I'm talking! Let's go in. I hate moonlight. It makes everything so haunted. [*She turns abruptly and goes into the house.* HAZEL *follows her and shuts the door. There is a pause. Then footsteps and voices are heard from off right front and a moment later* ORIN MANNON *enters with* PETER *and* LAVINIA. *One is at once struck by his startling family resemblance to* EZRA MANNON *and* ADAM BRANT *(whose likeness to each other we have seen in "Homecoming"). There is the same life-like mask quality of his face in repose, the same aquiline nose, heavy eyebrows, swarthy complexion, thick straight black hair, light hazel eyes. His mouth and chin have the same general characteristics as his father's had, but the expression of his mouth gives an impression of tense oversensitiveness quite foreign to the General's, and his chin is a refined, weakened version of the dead man's. He is about the same height as* MANNON *and* BRANT, *but his body is thin and his swarthy complexion sallow. He wears a bandage around his head high up on his forehead. He carries himself by turns with a marked slouchiness or with a self-conscious square-shouldered stiffness that indicates a soldierly bearing is unnatural to him. When he speaks it is jerkily, with a strange, vague, preoccupied air. But when he smiles naturally his face has a gentle boyish charm which makes women immediately want to mother him. He wears a mustache similar to* BRANT'S *which serves to increase their resemblance to each other. Although he is only twenty, he looks thirty. He is dressed in a baggy, ill-fitting uniform —that of a first lieutenant of infantry in the Union Army.*]

ORIN [*as they enter looks eagerly toward the house—then with bitter, hurt disappointment in his tone*]. Where's Mother? I thought she'd surely be waiting for me. [*He stands staring at the house.*] God, how I've dreamed of coming home! I thought it would never end, that we'd go on murdering and being murdered until no one was left alive! Home at last! No, by God, I must be dreaming again! [*Then in an awed tone*] But the house looks strange. Or is it something in me? I was out of my head so long, everything has seemed queer since I came back to earth. Did the house always look so ghostly and dead?

PETER. That's only the moonlight, you chump.

ORIN. Like a tomb. That's what mother used to say it reminded her of, I remember.

LAVINIA [*reproachfully*]. It is a tomb—just now, Orin.

ORIN [*hurriedly—shamefacedly*]. I—I'd forgotten. I simply can't realize he's dead yet. I suppose I'd come to expect he would live forever. [*A trace of resentment has crept into his tone.*] Or, at least outlive me. I never thought his heart was weak. He told me the trouble he had wasn't serious.

LAVINIA [*quickly*]. Father told you that, too? I was hoping he had. [*Then turning to* PETER] You go ahead in, Peter. Say we're coming a little behind. I want to speak to Orin a moment.

PETER. Sure thing, Vinnie. [*He goes in the front door, closing it behind him.*]

ORIN. I'm glad you got rid of him. Peter is all right but—I want to talk to you alone. [*With a boyish brotherly air—putting an arm around her*] You certainly are a sight for sore eyes, Vinnie! How are you, anyway, you old bossy fuss-buzzer! Gosh, it seems natural to hear myself calling you that old nickname again. Aren't you glad to see me?

LAVINIA [*affectionately*]. Of course I am!

ORIN. I'd never guess it! You've hardly spoken a word since you met me. What's happened to you? [*Then, as she looks at him reproachfully, he takes away his arm—a bit impatiently*] I told you I can't get used to the idea of his being dead. Forgive me, Vinnie. I know what a shock it must be to you.

LAVINIA. Isn't it a shock to you, Orin?

ORIN. Certainly! What do you think I am? But—oh, I can't explain! You wouldn't understand, unless you'd been at the front. I hardened myself to expect my own death and everyone else's, and think nothing of it. I had to—to keep alive! It was part of my training as a soldier under him. He taught it to me, you might say! So when it's his turn he can hardly expect— [*He has talked with increasing bitterness.* LAVINIA *interrupts him sharply.*]

LAVINIA. Orin! How can you be so unfeeling?

ORIN [*again shamefaced*]. I didn't mean that. My mind is still full of ghosts. I can't grasp anything but war, in which he was so alive. He was the war to me—the war that would never end until I died. I can't understand peace—his end! [*Then with exasperation*] God damn it, Vinnie, give me a chance to get used to things!

LAVINIA. Orin!

ORIN [*resentfully*]. I'm sorry! Oh, I know what you're thinking! I used to be such a nice gentlemanly cuss, didn't I?—and now—Well, you wanted me to be a hero in blue, so you better be resigned! Murdering doesn't improve one's manners! [*Abruptly changing the subject*] But what the devil are we talking about me for? Listen, Vinnie. There's something I want to ask you before I see Mother.

LAVINIA. Hurry, then! She'll be coming right out! I've got to tell you something too!

ORIN. What was that stuff you wrote about some Captain Brant coming to see Mother? Do you mean to tell me there's actually been gossip started about her? [*Then without waiting for a reply, bursting into jealous rage*] By God, if he dares come here again, I'll make him damned sorry he did!

LAVINIA [*grimly*]. I'm glad you feel that way about him. But there's no time to talk now. All I want to do is warn you to be on your guard. Don't let her baby you the way she used to and get you under her thumb again. Don't believe the lies she'll tell you! Wait until you've talked to me! Will you promise me?

ORIN [*staring at her bewilderedly*]. You mean—Mother? [*Then angrily*] What the hell are you talking about, anyway? Are you loony? Honestly, Vinnie, I call that carrying your everlasting squabble with Mother a bit too far! You ought to be ashamed of yourself! [*Then suspiciously*] What are you being so mysterious about? Is it Brant—?

LAVINIA [*at a sound from inside the house*]. Ssshh!

[*The front door of the house is opened and* CHRISTINE *hurries out.*]

CHRISTINE [*angrily to* PETER *who is in the hall*]. Why didn't you call me, Peter? You shouldn't have left him alone! [*She calls uncertainly*] Orin.

ORIN. Mother!

[*She runs down the steps and flings her arms around him.*]

CHRISTINE. My boy! My baby! [*She kisses him.*]

ORIN [*melting, all his suspicion forgotten*]. Mother! God, it's good to see you! [*Then almost roughly, pushing her back and staring at her*] But you're different! What's happened to you?

CHRISTINE [*forcing a smile*]. I? Different? I don't think so, dear. Certainly I hope not—to you! [*Touching the bandage on his head—tenderly*] Your head! Does it pain dreadfully? You poor darling, how you must have suffered! [*She kisses him.*] But it's all over now,

thank God. I've got you back again! [*Keeping her arm around him, she leads him up the steps.*] Let's go in. There's someone else waiting who will be so glad to see you.

LAVINIA [*who has come to the foot of the steps—harshly*]. Remember, Orin! [CHRISTINE *turns around to look down at her. A look of hate flashes between mother and daughter.* ORIN *glances at his mother suspiciously and draws away from her.*]

CHRISTINE [*immediately recovers her poise—to* ORIN, *as if* LAVINIA *hadn't spoken*]. Come on in, dear. It's chilly. Your poor head—[*She takes his hand and leads him through the door and closes it behind them.* LAVINIA *remains by the foot of the steps, staring after them. Then the door is suddenly opened again and* CHRISTINE *comes out, closing it behind her, and walks to the head of the steps. For a moment mother and daughter stare into each other's eyes. Then* CHRISTINE *begins haltingly in a tone she vainly tries to make kindly and persuasive.*] Vinnie, I—I must speak with you a moment—now Orin is here. I appreciate your grief has made you—not quite normal—and I make allowances. But I cannot understand your attitude toward me. Why do you keep following me everywhere—and stare at me like that? I had been a good wife to him for twenty-three years—until I met Adam. I was guilty then, I admit. But I repented and put him out of my life. I would have been a good wife again as long as your father had lived. After all, Vinnie, I am your mother. I brought you into the world. You ought to have some feeling for me. [*She pauses, waiting for some response, but* LAVINIA *simply stares at her, frozen and silent. Fear creeps into* CHRISTINE's *tone.*] Don't stare like that! What are you thinking? Surely you can't still have that insane suspicion—that I—[*Then guiltily*] What did you do that night after I fainted? I—I've missed something—some medicine I take to put me to sleep— [*Something like a grim smile of satisfaction forms on* LAVINIA's *lips.* CHRISTINE *exclaims frightenedly*] Oh, you did—you found—and I suppose you connect that—but don't you see how insane—to suspect—when Doctor Blake knows he died of—! [*Then angrily*] I know what you've been waiting for—to tell Orin your lies and get him to go to the police! You don't dare do that on your own responsibility—but if you can make Orin— Isn't that it? Isn't that what you've been planning the last two days? Tell me! [*Then, as* LAVINIA *remains silent,* CHRISTINE *gives way to fury and rushes down the steps and grabs her by the arm and shakes her.*] Answer me when I speak to you! What are you plotting? What are you going to do? Tell

me! [LAVINIA *keeps her body rigid, her eyes staring into her mother's.* CHRISTINE *lets go and steps away from her. Then* LAVINIA, *turning her back, walks slowly and woodenly off left between the lilac clump and the house.* CHRISTINE *stares after her, her strength seems to leave her, she trembles with dread. From inside the house comes the sound of* ORIN'S *voice calling sharply "Mother! Where are you?"* CHRISTINE *starts and immediately by an effort of will regains control over herself. She hurries up the steps and opens the door. She speaks to* ORIN *and her voice is tensely quiet and normal.*] Here I am, dear! [*She shuts the door behind her.*]

CURTAIN

act 2

SCENE: *The sitting-room of the Mannon house. Like the study, but much larger, it is an interior composed of straight severe lines with heavy detail. The walls are plain plastered surfaces, light gray with a white trim. It is a bleak room without intimacy, with an atmosphere of uncomfortable, stilted stateliness. The furniture is stationed about with exact precision. On the left, front, is a doorway leading to the dining-room. Further back, on the left, are a wall table and chair and a writing desk and chair. In the rear wall, center, is the doorway giving on the main hall and the stairs. At right is a fireplace with a chimneypiece of black marble, flanked by two windows. Portraits of ancestors hang on the walls. At the rear of the fireplace, on the right, is one of a grim-visaged minister of the witch-burning era. Between fireplace and front is another of* EZRA MANNON'S *grandfather, in the uniform of an officer in Washington's army. Directly over the fireplace is the portrait of* EZRA'S *father,* ABE MANNON, *done when he was sixty. Except for the difference in ages, his face looks exactly like* EZRA'S *in the painting in the study.*

Of the three portraits on the other walls, two are of women —ABE MANNON'S *wife and the wife of Washington's officer. The third has the appearance of a prosperous shipowner of Colonial days. All the faces in the portraits have the same mask quality of those of the living characters in the play.*

At the left center of the room, front, is a table with two

chairs. There is another chair at center, front, and a sofa at right, front, facing left.

The opening of this scene follows immediately the close of the preceding one. HAZEL *is discovered sitting on the chair at center, front.* PETER *is sitting on the sofa at right. From the hall* ORIN *is heard calling "Mother! Where are you?" as at the close of the preceding act.*

HAZEL. Where can she have gone? She's worked herself into such a state of grief I don't think she knows what she's doing.

PETER. Vinnie's completely knocked out, too.

HAZEL. And poor Orin! What a terrible homecoming this is for him! How sick and changed he looks, doesn't he, Peter?

PETER. Head wounds are no joke. He's darned lucky to have come out alive.

[*They stop talking self-consciously as* ORIN *and* CHRISTINE *enter from the rear.* ORIN *is questioning her suspiciously.*]

ORIN. Why did you sneak away like that? What were you doing?

CHRISTINE. [*forcing a wan smile*]. The happiness of seeing you again was a little too much for me, I'm afraid, dear. I suddenly felt as if I were going to faint, so I rushed out in the fresh air.

ORIN [*immediately ashamed of himself—tenderly, putting his arm around her*]. Poor Mother! I'm sorry— Look here, then. You sit down and rest. Or maybe you better go right to bed.

HAZEL. That's right, Orin, you make her. I've been trying to get her to but she won't listen to me.

CHRISTINE. Go to bed the minute he comes home! I should say not!

ORIN [*worried and pleased at the same time*]. But you mustn't do anything to—

CHRISTINE [*patting his cheek*]. Fiddlesticks! Having you again is just the medicine I need to give me strength—to bear things. [*She turns to* HAZEL.] Listen to him, Hazel! You'd think I was the invalid and not he.

HAZEL. Yes. You've got to take care of yourself, too, Orin.

ORIN. Oh, forget me. I'm all right.

CHRISTINE. We'll play nurses, Hazel and I, and have you your old self again before you know it. Won't we, Hazel?

HAZEL [*smiling happily*]. Of course we will.

CHRISTINE. Don't stand, dear. You must be worn out. Wait. We'll make you comfortable. Hazel, will you bring me a cushion?

[HAZEL *gets a cushion and helps to place it behind his back in the chair at right of table.* ORIN'S *eyes light up and he grins boyishly, obviously revelling in being coddled.*]

ORIN. How's this for the comforts of home, Peter? The front was never like this, eh?

PETER. Not so you'd notice it!

ORIN [*with a wink at* HAZEL]. Peter will be getting jealous! You better call Vinnie in to put a pillow behind him!

HAZEL [*with a smile*]. I can't picture Vinnie being that soft.

ORIN [*a jealous resentment creeping into his voice*]. She can be soft—on occasion. She's always coddling Father and he likes it, although he pretends—

CHRISTINE [*turning away and restraining a shudder*]. Orin! You're talking as if he were—alive!

[*There is an uncomfortable silence.* HAZEL *goes quietly back to her chair at center.* CHRISTINE *goes around the table to the chair opposite* ORIN *and sits down.*]

ORIN [*with a wry smile*]. We'd all forgotten he's dead, hadn't we? Well, I can't believe it even yet. I feel him in this house—alive!

CHRISTINE. Orin!

ORIN [*strangely*]. Everything is changed—in some queer way—this house, Vinnie, you, I—everything but Father. He's the same and always will be—here—the same! Don't you feel that, Mother?

[*She shivers, looking before her but doesn't answer.*]

HAZEL [*gently*]. You mustn't make your mother think of it, Orin.

ORIN [*staring at her—in a queer tone of gratitude*]. You're the same, Hazel—sweet and good. [*He turns to his mother accusingly.*] At least Hazel hasn't changed, thank God!

CHRISTINE [*rousing herself—turns to force a smile at him*]. Hazel will never change, I hope. I am glad you appreciate her. [HAZEL *looks embarrassed.* CHRISTINE *goes on—with motherly solicitude*] Wasn't the long train trip terribly hard on you, dear?

ORIN. Well, it wasn't a pleasure trip exactly. My head got aching till I thought it would explode.

CHRISTINE [*leans over and puts her hand on his forehead*]. Poor boy! Does it pain now?

ORIN. Not much. Not at all when your hand is there. [*Impulsively he takes her hand and kisses it—boyishly*] Gosh, Mother, it feels so darned good to be home with you! [*Then staring at her suspiciously again*] Let me have a good look at you. You're so different. I noticed it even outside. What is it?

CHRISTINE [*avoiding his eyes—forcing a smile*]. It's just that I'm getting old, I'm afraid, dear.

ORIN. No. You're more beautiful than ever! You're younger, too, somehow. But it isn't that. [*Almost pushing her hand away—bitterly*] Maybe I can guess!

CHRISTINE [*forces a laugh*]. Younger and more beautiful! Do you hear him going on, Hazel? He has learned to be very gallant, I must say!

[LAVINIA *appears in the doorway at rear. She enters but remains standing just inside the doorway and keeps her eyes fixed on her mother and* ORIN.]

ORIN [*who is again looking at* HAZEL, *breaks out harshly*]. Do you remember how you waved your handkerchief, Hazel, the day I set off to become a hero? I thought you would sprain your wrist! And all the mothers and wives and sisters and girls did the same! Sometime in some war they ought to make the women take the men's place for a month or so. Give them a taste of murder!

CHRISTINE. Orin!

ORIN. Let them batter each other's brains out with rifle butts and rip each other's guts with bayonets! After that, maybe they'd stop waving handkerchiefs and gabbing about heroes!

[HAZEL *gives a shocked exclamation.*]

CHRISTINE. Please!

PETER [*gruffly*]. Give it a rest, Orin! It's over. Give yourself a chance to forget it. None of us liked it any more than you did.

ORIN [*immediately shamefaced*]. You're right, Peter. I'm a damned whining fool! I'm sorry, Hazel. That was rotten of me.

HAZEL. It was nothing, Orin. I understand how you feel. Really I do.

ORIN. I—I let off steam when I shouldn't. [*Then suddenly*] Do you still sing, Hazel? I used to hear you singing—down there. It made me feel life might still be alive somewhere—that, and my dreams of Mother, and the memory of Vinnie bossing me around like a drill sergeant. I used to hear you singing at the queerest times—so sweet and clear and pure! It would rise above the screams of the dying—

CHRISTINE [*tensely*]. I wish you wouldn't talk of death!

LAVINIA [*from the doorway—in a brusque commanding tone like her father's*]. Orin! Come and see Father.

ORIN [*starts up from his chair and makes an automatic motion*

as if to salute—mechanically] Yes, sir. [*Then confusedly*] What the devil—? You sounded just like him. Don't do that again, for heaven's sake! [*He tries to force a laugh—then shamefacedly*] I meant to look at him the first thing—but I got talking—I'll go in right now.

CHRISTINE [*her voice tense and strained*]. No! Wait! [*Angrily to* LAVINIA] Can't you let your brother have a minute to rest? You can see how worn out he is! [*Then to* ORIN] I've hardly had a chance to say a word to you yet—and it has been so long! Stay with me a little while, won't you?

ORIN [*touched, coming back to her*]. Of course, Mother! You come before everything!

LAVINIA [*starts to make a bitter retort, glances at* PETER *and* HAZEL, *then remarks evenly*]. Very well. Only remember what I said, Orin. [*She turns her back and starts to go into the hall.*]

CHRISTINE [*frightenedly*]. Vinnie! Where are you going?

LAVINIA [*does not answer her but calls back to her brother over her shoulder*]. You'll come in a little while, won't you? [*She disappears across the hall.* ORIN *gives his mother a sidelong glance of uneasy suspicion.* CHRISTINE *is desperately trying to appear calm.* PETER *and* HAZEL *stand up, feeling uncomfortable.*]

HAZEL. Peter, we really must be getting home.

PETER. Yes.

CHRISTINE. It was so kind of you to come.

HAZEL [*giving her hand to* ORIN]. You must rest all you can now, Orin—and try not to think about things.

ORIN. You're darned kind, Hazel. It's fine to see you again—the same as ever!

HAZEL [*delighted but pulling her hand away shyly*]. I'm glad, too. Good night, Orin.

PETER [*shakes his hand*]. Good night. Rest up and take it easy.

ORIN. Good night, Peter. Thanks for meeting me.

CHRISTINE [*goes with them to the hall*]. I'm afraid this isn't a very cheerful house to visit just now—but please come soon again. You will do Orin more good than anyone, Hazel. [*The look of suspicion again comes to* ORIN's *eyes. He sits down in the chair at left of table and stares before him bitterly.* CHRISTINE *returns from the hall, closing the sliding doors behind her silently. She stands for a moment looking at* ORIN, *visibly bracing herself for the ordeal of the coming interview, her eyes full of tense calculating fear.*]

ORIN [*without looking at her*]. What's made you take such a fancy to Hazel all of a sudden? You never used to think much of her. You didn't want me going around with her.

CHRISTINE [*coming forward and sitting across the table from him—in her gentle motherly tone*]. I was selfish then. I was jealous, too, I'll confess. But all I want now is your happiness, dear. I know how much you used to like Hazel—

ORIN [*blurts out*]. That was only to make you jealous![1] [*Then bitterly*] But now you're a widow, I'm not home an hour before you're trying to marry me off! You must be damned anxious to get rid of me again! Why?

CHRISTINE. You mustn't say that! If you knew how horribly lonely I've been without you—

ORIN. So lonely you've written me exactly two letters in the last six months!

CHRISTINE. But I wrote you much more! They must have been lost—

ORIN. I received all of Hazel's letters—and Vinnie's. It's darned funny yours should be the only ones to get lost! [*Unable to hold back any longer, he bursts forth.*] Who is this Captain Brant who's been calling on you?

CHRISTINE [*prepared for this—with well-feigned astonishment*]. On me? You mean on Vinnie, don't you? [*Then as* ORIN *looks taken aback*] Wherever did you get that silly idea? Oh, of course, I know! Vinnie must have written you the same nonsense she did your father.

ORIN. She wrote him? What did he do?

CHRISTINE. Why, he laughed at it, naturally! Your father was very fond of Vinnie but he knew how jealous she's always been of me and he realized she'd tell any lie she could to—

ORIN. Oh, come on now, Mother! Just because you're always getting on each other's nerves it doesn't mean Vinnie would ever deliberately—

CHRISTINE. Oh, doesn't it, though? I think you'll discover before you're much older that there isn't anything your sister will stop at—that she will even accuse me of the vilest, most horrible things!

ORIN. Mother! Honestly now! You oughtn't to say that!

CHRISTINE [*reaching out and taking his hand*]. I mean it, Orin. I wouldn't say it to anyone but you. You know that. But we've

[1] *only . . . jealous! Orin shares the family's uninhibited awareness of sex motivations.*

always been so close, you and I. I feel you are really—my flesh and blood! She isn't! She is your father's! You're a part of me!

ORIN [*with strange eagerness*]. Yes! I feel that, too, Mother!

CHRISTINE. I know I can trust you to understand now as you always used to. [*With a tender smile*] We had a secret little world of our own in the old days, didn't we?—which no one but us knew about.

ORIN [*happily*]. You bet we did! No Mannons allowed was our password, remember!

CHRISTINE. And that's what your father and Vinnie could never forgive us! But we'll make that little world of our own again, won't we?

ORIN. Yes!

CHRISTINE. I want to make up to you for all the injustice you suffered at your father's hands. It may seem a hard thing to say about the dead, but he was jealous of you. He hated you because he knew I loved you better than anything in the world!

ORIN [*pressing her hand in both of his—intensely*]. Do you, Mother? Do you honestly? [*Then he is struck by what she said about his father—woundedly*] I knew he had it in for me. But I never thought he went as far as to—hate me.

CHRISTINE. He did, just the same!

ORIN [*with resentful bitterness*]. All right, then! I'll tell you the truth, Mother! I won't pretend to you I'm sorry he's dead!

CHRISTINE [*lowering her voice to a whisper*]. Yes. I am glad, too! —that he has left us alone! Oh, how happy we'll be together, you and I, if you only won't let Vinnie poison your mind against me with her disgusting lies!

ORIN [*immediately uneasy again*] What lies? [*He releases her hand and stares at her, morbidly suspicious.*] You haven't told me about that Brant yet.

CHRISTINE. There's nothing to tell—except in Vinnie's morbid revengeful mind! I tell you, Orin, you can't realize how she's changed while you've been away! She's always been a moody and strange girl, you know that, but since you've gone she has worried and brooded until I really believe she went a little out of her head. She got so she'd say the most terrible things about everyone. You simply wouldn't believe it, if I told you some of the things. And now, with the shock of your father's death on top of everything, I'm convinced she's actually insane. Haven't you noticed how queerly she acts? You must have!

ORIN. I saw she'd changed a lot. She seemed strange. But—

CHRISTINE. And her craziness all works out in hatred for me! Take this Captain Brant affair, for example—

ORIN. Ah!

CHRISTINE. A stupid ship captain I happened to meet at your grandfather's who took it into his silly head to call here a few times without being asked. Vinnie thought he was coming to court her. I honestly believe she fell in love with him, Orin. But she soon discovered that he wasn't after her at all!

ORIN. Who was he after—you?

CHRISTINE [*sharply*]. Orin! I'd be very angry with you if it weren't so ridiculous! [*She forces a laugh.*] You don't seem to realize I'm an old married woman with two grown-up children! No, all he was after was to insinuate himself as a family friend and use your father when he came home to get him a better ship! I soon saw through his little scheme and he'll never call here again, I promise you that! [*She laughs—then with a teasing air*] And that's the whole of the great Captain Brant scandal! Are you satisfied now, you jealous goose, you?

ORIN [*penitent and happy*]. I'm a fool! The war has got me silly, I guess! If you knew all the hell I've been through!

CHRISTINE. It was Vinnie's fault you ever went to war! I'll never forgive her for that! It broke my heart, Orin! [*Then quickly*] But I was going to give you an example of her insane suspicions from the Captain Brant incident. Would you believe it that she has worked it all out that because his name is Brant, he must be the son of that nurse girl Marie Brantôme? Isn't that crazy? And to imagine for a moment, if he were, he'd ever come here to visit!

ORIN [*his face hardening*]. By God, I'd like to see him! His mother brought disgrace enough on our family without—

CHRISTINE [*frightened, shrinking from him*]. Orin! Don't look like that! You're so like your father! [*Then hurrying on*] But I haven't told you the worst yet. Vinnie actually accuses me—your mother—of being in love with that fool and of having met him in New York and gone to his room! I am no better than a prostitute in your sister's eyes!

ORIN [*stunned*]. I don't believe it! Vinnie couldn't!

CHRISTINE. I told you she'd gone crazy! She even followed me to New York, when I went to see your sick grandfather, to spy on me. She saw me meet a man—and immediately to her crazy brain the

man was Brant. Oh, it's too revolting, Orin! You don't know what I've had to put up with from Vinnie, or you'd pity me!

ORIN. Good God! Did she tell Father that? No wonder he's dead! [*Then harshly*] Who was this man you met in New York?

CHRISTINE. It was Mr. Lamar, your grandfather's old friend who has known me ever since I was a baby! I happened to meet him and he asked me to go with him to call on his daughter. [*Then, seeing* ORIN *wavering, pitifully*] Oh, Orin! You pretend to love me! And yet you question me as if you suspected me, too! And you haven't Vinnie's excuse! You aren't out of your mind! [*She weeps hysterically.*]

ORIN [*overcome at once by remorse and love*]. No! I swear to you! [*He throws himself on his knees beside her and puts his arm around her.*] Mother! Please! Don't cry! I do love you! I do!

CHRISTINE. I haven't told you the most horrible thing of all! Vinnie suspects me of having poisoned your father!

ORIN [*horrified*]. What! No, by God, that's too much! If that's true, she ought to be put in an asylum!

CHRISTINE. She found some medicine I take to make me sleep, but she is so crazy I know she thinks— [*Then, with real terror, clinging to him*] Oh, Orin, I'm so afraid of her! God knows what she might do, in her state! She might even go to the police and— Don't let her turn you against me! Remember you're all I have to protect me! You are all I have in the world, dear!

ORIN [*tenderly soothing her*]. Turn me against you? She can't be so crazy as to try that! But listen. I honestly think you— You're a little hysterical, you know. That—about Father—is all such damned nonsense! And as for her going to the police—do you suppose I wouldn't prevent that—for a hundred reasons—the family's sake—my own sake and Vinnie's, too, as well as yours—even if I knew—

CHRISTINE [*staring at him—in a whisper*]. Knew? Orin, you don't believe—?

ORIN. No! For God's sake! I only meant that no matter what you ever did, I love you better than anything in the world and—

CHRISTINE [*in an outburst of grateful joy—pressing him to her and kissing him*]. Oh, Orin, you are my boy, my baby! I love you!

ORIN. Mother! [*Then seizing her by the shoulders and staring into her eyes—with somber intensity*] I could forgive anything—anything!—in my mother—except that other—that about Brant!

CHRISTINE. I swear to you—!

ORIN. If I thought that damned—! [*With savage vengefulness*] By God, I'd show you then I hadn't been taught to kill for nothing!

CHRISTINE [*full of new terror now—for* BRANT'S *life—distractedly*]. For God's sake, don't talk like that! You're not like my Orin! You're cruel and horrible! You frighten me!

ORIN [*immediately contrite and soothing, petting her*]. There, there, Mother! We won't ever think about it again! We'll talk of something else. I want to tell you something. [*He sits on the floor at her feet and looks up into her face. A pause. Then he asks tenderly, taking her hand*] Did you really want me to come back, Mother?

CHRISTINE [*has calmed herself, but her eyes are still terrified and her voice trembles*]. What a foolish question, dear.

ORIN. But your letters got farther and farther between—and they seemed so cold! It drove me crazy! I wanted to desert and run home—or else get killed! If you only knew how I longed to be here with you—like this! [*He leans his head against her knee. His voice becomes dreamy and low and caressing.*] I used to have the most wonderful dreams about you. Have you ever read a book called "Typee"[1]—about the South Sea Islands?

CHRISTINE [*with a start—strangely*]. Islands! Where there is peace?

ORIN. Then you did read it?

CHRISTINE. No.

ORIN. Someone loaned me the book. I read it and reread it until finally those Islands came to mean everything that wasn't war, everything that was peace and warmth and security. I used to dream I was there. And later on all the time I was out of my head I seemed really to be there. There was no one there but you and me. And yet I never saw you, that's the funny part. I only felt you all around me.[2] The breaking of the waves was your voice. The sky was the same color as your eyes. The warm sand was like your skin. The whole island was you. [*He smiles with a dreamy tenderness.*] A strange notion, wasn't it? But you needn't be provoked at being an island because this was the most beautiful island in the world—as beautiful as you, Mother!

CHRISTINE [*has been staring over his head, listening fascinatedly, more and more deeply moved. As he stops, an agonizing tenderness for him wells up in her—with tortured longing*]. Oh, if only you

[1] **Typee,** *the novel by Herman Melville.*

[2] ***I only . . . me,*** *prenatal recession.*

had never gone away! If you only hadn't let them take you from me!

ORIN [*uneasily*]. But I've come back. Everything is all right now, isn't it?

CHRISTINE [*hastily*]. Yes! I didn't mean that. It had to be.

ORIN. And I'll never leave you again now. I don't want Hazel or anyone. | *With a tender grin* | You're my only girl!

CHRISTINE [*again with tenderness, stroking his hair—smiling*]. You're a big man now, aren't you? I can't believe it. It seems only yesterday when I used to find you in your nightshirt hiding in the hall upstairs on the chance that I'd come up and you'd get one more good-night kiss! Do you remember?

ORIN [*with a boyish grin*]. You bet I remember! And what a row there was when Father caught me![1] And do you remember how you used to let me brush your hair and how I loved to? He hated me doing that, too. You've still got the same beautiful hair, Mother. That hasn't changed. [*He reaches up and touches her hair caressingly. She gives a little shudder of repulsion and draws away from him but he is too happy to notice.*] Oh, Mother, it's going to be wonderful from now on! We'll get Vinnie to marry Peter and there will be just you and I!

[*The sliding doors in rear are opened a little and* LAVINIA *slips silently in and stands looking at them.*]

CHRISTINE [*immediately senses her presence—controlling a start, harshly*]. What do you want?

[ORIN *turns to look at his sister resentfully.*]

LAVINIA [*in a flat, emotionless voice*]. Aren't you coming in to see Father, Orin?

ORIN [*scrambling to his feet—irritably*]. Oh, all right, I'll come now. [*He hurries out past* LAVINIA *with the air of one with a disagreeable duty he wants to get over quickly and closes the door with a bang behind him.* LAVINIA *stares at her mother a moment—then about-faces stiffly to follow him.*]

CHRISTINE [*springs to her feet*]. Vinnie! [*As* LAVINIA *turns to face her—sharply*] Come here—please. I don't want to shout across the room. [LAVINIA *comes slowly forward until she is at arm's length. Her eyes grow bleak and her mouth tightens to a thin line. The resemblance between mother and daughter as they stand confronting each other is strikingly brought out.* CHRISTINE *begins to speak in a low voice, coolly defiant, almost triumphant.*] Well, you can

[1] ***when father caught me,*** *a Freudian triangle.*

go ahead now and tell Orin anything you wish! I've already told him—so you might as well save yourself the trouble. He said you must be insane! I told him how you lied about my trips to New York—for revenge!—because you loved Adam yourself! [LAVINIA *makes a movement like a faint shudder but is immediately stiff and frozen again.* CHRISTINE *smiles tauntingly.*] So hadn't you better leave Orin out of it? You can't get him to go to the police for you. Even if you convinced him I poisoned your father, you couldn't! He doesn't want—any more than you do, or your father, or any of the Mannon dead—such a public disgrace as a murder trial would be! For it would all come out! Everything! Who Adam is and my adultery and your knowledge of it—and your love for Adam! Oh, believe me, I'll see to it that comes out if anything ever gets to a trial! I'll show you to the world as a daughter who desired her mother's lover and then tried to get her mother hanged out of hatred and jealousy! [*She laughs tauntingly.* LAVINIA *is trembling but her face remains hard and emotionless. Her lips open as if to speak but she closes them again.* CHRISTINE *seems drunk with her own defiant recklessness.*] Go on! Try and convince Orin of my wickedness! He loves me! He hated his father! He's glad he's dead! Even if he knew I had killed him, he'd protect me! [*Then all her defiant attitude collapses and she pleads, seized by an hysterical terror, by some fear she has kept hidden.*] For God's sake, keep Orin out of this! He's still sick! He's changed! He's grown hard and cruel! All he thinks of is death! Don't tell him about Adam! He would kill him! I couldn't live then! I would kill myself! [LAVINIA *starts and her eyes light up with a cruel hatred. Again her pale lips part as if she were about to say something but she controls the impulse and about-faces abruptly and walks with jerky steps from the room like some tragic mechanical doll.* CHRISTINE *stares after her—then as she disappears, collapses, catching at the table for support—terrifiedly*] I've got to see Adam! I've got to warn him! [*She sinks in the chair at right of table.*]

CURTAIN

act 3

SCENE: *The same as Act Two of "Homecoming"*—EZRA MANNON'S *study. His body, dressed in full uniform, is laid out on*

a bier draped in black which is placed lengthwise directly before the portrait of him over the fireplace. His head is at right. His mask-like face is a startling reproduction of the face in the portrait above him, but grimly remote and austere in death, like the carven face of a statue.

The table and chairs which had been at center have been moved to the left. There is a lamp on this table. Two stands of three lighted candles are at each end of the black marble chimneypiece, throwing their light above on the portrait and below on the dead man. There is a chair by the dead man's head, at front of bier.

ORIN *is standing by the head of the bier, at the rear of it, stiffly erect like a sentinel at attention. He is not looking down at his father but is staring straight before him, deep in suspicious brooding. His face in the candlelight bears a striking resemblance to that of the portrait above him and the dead man's.*

The time of the opening of this act precedes by a few moments that of the end of the previous act.

ORIN [*ashamed and guilty—bursts out angrily at himself*]. Christ, I won't have such thoughts! I am a rotten swine to—Damn Vinnie! She must be crazy! [*Then, as if to distract his mind from these reflections, he turns to gaze down at his father. At the same moment* LAVINIA *appears silently in the doorway from the hall and stands looking at him. He does not notice her entrance. He stares at his father's mask-like face and addresses it with a strange friendly mockery.*] Who are you? Another corpse! You and I have seen fields and hillsides sown with them—and they meant nothing!—nothing but a dirty joke life plays on life! [*Then with a dry smile*] Death sits so naturally on you! Death becomes the Mannons! You were always like a statue of an eminent dead man—sitting on a chair in a park or straddling a horse in a town square—looking over the head of life without a sign of recognition—cutting it dead for the impropriety of living! [*He chuckles to himself with a queer affectionate amusement.*] You never cared to know me in life—but I really think we might be friends now you are dead!

LAVINIA [*sternly*]. Orin!

ORIN [*turns to her startledly*]. Damn it, don't sneak around like that! What are you trying to do, anyway? I'm jumpy enough with-

out—[*Then as she turns and locks the door behind her—suspiciously*] What are you locking the door for?

LAVINIA. I've got to talk to you—and I don't want to be interrupted. [*Then sternly*] What made you say such things just then? I wouldn't believe you could have grown so callous to all feeling of respect—

ORIN [*guilty and resentful*]. You folks at home take death so solemnly! You would have soon learned at the front that it's only a joke! You don't understand, Vinnie. You have to learn to mock or go crazy, can't you see? I didn't mean it in an unkind way. It simply struck me he looks so strangely familiar—the same familiar stranger[1] I've never known. [*Then glancing at the dead man with a kindly amused smile*] Do you know his nickname in the army? Old Stick—short for Stick-in-the-Mud. Grant himself started it—said Father was no good on an offensive but he'd trust him to stick in the mud and hold a position until hell froze over!

LAVINIA. Orin! Don't you realize he was your father and he is dead?

ORIN [*irritably*]. What Grant said was a big compliment in a way.

LAVINIA. When I think of how proud of you he was when he came home! He boasted that you had done one of the bravest things he'd seen in the war!

ORIN [*astonished—then grins with bitter mockery*]. One of the bravest things he'd seen! Oh, that's too rich! I'll tell you the joke about that heroic deed. It really began the night before when I sneaked through their lines. I was always volunteering for extra danger. I was so scared anyone would guess I was afraid! There was a thick mist and it was so still you could hear the fog seeping into the ground. I met a Reb crawling toward our lines. His face drifted out of the mist toward mine. I shortened my sword and let him have the point under the ear. He stared at me with an idiotic look as if he'd sat on a tack—and his eyes dimmed and went out—[*His voice has sunk lower and lower, as if he were talking to himself. He pauses and stares over his father's body fascinatedly at nothing.*]

LAVINIA [*with a shudder*]. Don't think of that now!

ORIN [*goes on with the same air*]. Before I'd gotten back I had to kill another in the same way. It was like murdering the same

[1] *strangely familiar . . . familiar stranger, an instance of O'Neill's fondness for word-play.*

man twice. I had a queer feeling that war meant murdering the same man over and over, and that in the end I would discover the man was myself! Their faces keep coming back in dreams—and they change to Father's face—or to mine— What does that mean, Vinnie?

LAVINIA. I don't know! I've got to talk to you! For heaven's sake, forget the war! It's over now!

ORIN. Not inside us who killed! [*Then quickly—with a bitter, joking tone*] The rest is all a joke! The next morning I was in the trenches. This was at Petersburg. I hadn't slept. My head was queer. I thought what a joke it would be on the stupid Generals like Father if everyone on both sides suddenly saw the joke war was on them and laughed and shook hands! So I began to laugh and walked toward their lines with my hand out. Of course, the joke was on me and I got this wound in the head for my pains. I went mad, wanted to kill, and ran on, yelling. Then a lot of our fools went crazy, too, and followed me and we captured a part of their line we hadn't dared tackle before. I had acted without orders, of course —but Father decided it was better policy to overlook that and let me be a hero! So do you wonder I laugh!

LAVINIA [*soothingly, coming to him and taking his arm*]. You were brave and you know it. I'm proud of you, too.

ORIN [*helplessly*]. Oh, all right! Be proud, then! [*He leaves her and sprawls in the chair at left of table. She stands by the head of the bier and faces him. He says resentfully*] Well? Fire away and let's get this over! But you're wasting your breath. I know what you're going to say. Mother warned me. [*The whole memory of what his mother had said rushes over him.*] My God, how can you think such things of Mother? What the hell's got into you? [*Then humorously*] But I realize you're not yourself. I know how hard his death has hit you. Don't you think it would be better to postpone our talk until—

LAVINIA. No! [*Bitterly*] Has she succeeded in convincing you I'm out of my mind? Oh, Orin, how can you be so stupid? [*She goes to him and, grasping him by his shoulders, brings her face close to him—compellingly*] Look at me! You know in your heart I'm the same as I always was—your sister—who loves you, Orin!

ORIN [*moved*]. I didn't mean—I only think the shock of his death—

LAVINIA. I've never lied to you, have I? Even when we were little you always knew I told you the truth, didn't you?

ORIN. Yes—but—

LAVINIA. Then you must believe I wouldn't lie to you now!

ORIN. No one is saying you'd deliberately lie. It's a question of—

LAVINIA. And even if she's got you so under her thumb again that you doubt my word, you can't doubt the absolute proof!

ORIN [*roughly*]. Never mind what you call proofs! I know all about them already! [*Then excitedly*] Now, listen here, if you think you're going to tell me a lot of crazy stuff about Mother, I warn you I won't listen! So shut up before you start!

LAVINIA [*threateningly now*]. If you don't, I'll go to the police!

ORIN. Don't be a damn fool!

LAVINIA. As a last resort I will—if you force me to!

ORIN. By God, you must be crazy even to talk of—!

LAVINIA. They won't think so!

ORIN. Vinnie! Do you realize what it would mean—?

LAVINIA. I realize only too well! You and I, who are innocent, would suffer a worse punishment than the guilty—for we'd have to live on! It would mean that Father's memory and that of all the honorable Mannon dead would be dragged through the horror of a murder trial! But I'd rather suffer that than let the murder of our father go unpunished!

ORIN. Good God, do you actually believe—?

LAVINIA. Yes! I accuse her of murder! [*She takes the little box she has found in* CHRISTINE'S *room right after the murder (Act Four "Homecoming") from the bosom of her dress and holds it out to him.*] You see this? I found it right after Father died!

ORIN. Don't be a damned lunatic! She told me all about that! It's only some stuff she takes to make her sleep!

LAVINIA [*goes on implacably, ignoring his interruptions*]. And Father knew she'd poisoned him! He said to me, "She's guilty!"

ORIN. That's all your crazy imagination! God, how can you think—? Do you realize you're deliberately accusing your own mother— It's too horrible and mad! I'll have you declared insane by Doctor Blake and put away in an asylum!

LAVINIA. I swear by our dead father I am telling you the truth! [*She puts her hand on the dead man and addresses him.*] Make Orin believe me, Father!

ORIN [*harshly*]. Don't drag him in! He always sided with you against Mother and me! [*He grabs her arm and forces the box from her hand.*] Here! Give me that! [*He slips it into his coat pocket.*]

LAVINIA. Ah! So you are afraid it's true!

ORIN. No! But I'm going to stop your damned— But I'm a fool to pay any attention to you! The whole thing is too insane! I won't talk to a crazy woman! But, by God, you look out, Vinnie! You leave Mother alone or—!

LAVINIA [*regarding him bitterly*]. Poor Father! He thought the war had made a man of you! But you're not! You're still the spoiled crybaby that she can make a fool of whenever she pleases!

ORIN [*stung*]. That's enough from you!

LAVINIA. Oh, she warned me just now what to expect! She boasted that you wouldn't believe me, and that even if you knew she'd murdered Father you would be glad because you hated him! [*Then a note of entreaty in her voice*] Orin! For God's sake—here, before him!—tell me that isn't true, at least!

ORIN [*overcome by a sense of guilt—violently defensive*]. Of course, I never said that—and I don't believe she did. But Mother means a thousand times more to me than he ever did! I say that before him now as I would if he could hear me!

LAVINIA [*with a calculated scornful contempt now*]. Then if I can't make you see your duty one way, I will another! If you won't help me punish her, I hope you're not such a coward that you're willing to let her lover escape!

ORIN [*in a tone of awakening suspicion*]. Lover? Who do you mean?

LAVINIA. I mean the man who plotted Father's murder with her, who must have got the poison for her! I mean the Captain Brant I wrote you about!

ORIN [*thickly, trying to fight back his jealous suspicion*]. You lie! She told me your rotten lies—about him—about following her to New York. That was Mr. Lamar she met.

LAVINIA. So that's what she told you! As if I could mistake Lamar for Adam Brant! What a fool you are, Orin! She kisses you and pretends she loves you—when she'd forgotten you were ever alive, when all she's thought of is this low lover of hers—!

ORIN [*wildly*]. Stop! I won't stand—!

LAVINIA. When all she is thinking of right now is how she can use you to keep me from doing anything, so she'll get a chance to run off and marry him!

ORIN. You lie!

LAVINIA. She pets you and plays the loving mother and you're so blind you can't see through her! I tell you she went to his room!

I followed them upstairs. I heard her telling him, "I love you, Adam." She was kissing him!

ORIN [*grabs her by the shoulder and shakes her, forcing her to her knees—frenziedly*] Damn you! Tell me you're lying or—!

LAVINIA [*unafraid—looking up into his eyes—coldly*]. You know I'm not lying! She's been going to New York on the excuse of visiting Grandfather Hamel, but really to give herself to—!

ORIN [*in anguish*]. You lie, damn you! [*Threateningly*] You dare say that about Mother! Now you've got to prove it or else—! You're not insane! You know what you're saying! So you prove it—or by God, I'll—!

LAVINIA [*taking his hands off her shoulders and rising*]. All I ask is a chance to prove it! [*Then intensely*] But when I do, will you help me punish Father's murderers?

ORIN [*in a burst of murderous rage*]. I'll kill that bastard! [*In anguished uncertainty again*] But you haven't proved anything yet! It's only your word against hers! I don't believe you! You say Brant is her lover! If that's true, I'll hate her! I'll know she murdered Father then! I'll help you punish her! But you've got to prove it!

LAVINIA [*coldly*]. I can do that very soon. She's frightened out of her wits! She'll go to see Brant the first chance she gets. We must give her that chance. Will you believe me when you find them together?

ORIN [*torturedly*]. Yes. [*Then in a burst of rage*] God damn him, I'll—!

LAVINIA [*sharply*]. Ssshh! Be quiet. There's someone in the hall!

[*They wait, staring at the door. Then someone knocks loudly.*]

CHRISTINE [*her voice comes through the door, frightened and strained*]. Orin!

ORIN [*stammers*]. God! I can't face her now!

LAVINIA [*in a quick whisper*]. Don't let her know you suspect her. Pretend you think I'm out of my mind, as she wanted you to.

CHRISTINE. Orin! Why don't you answer me? [*She tries the doorknob, and finding the door locked, her voice becomes terrified.*] Why have you locked me out? Let me in! [*She pounds on the door violently.*]

LAVINIA [*in a whisper*]. Answer her. Let her in.

ORIN [*obeying mechanically—calls in a choked voice*]. All right. I'm coming. [*He moves reluctantly toward the door.*]

LAVINIA [*struck by a sudden idea—grasps his arm*]. Wait! [*Before*

he can prevent it, she reaches in his pocket and gets possession of the box and puts it conspicuously on the body over the dead man's heart.] Watch her when she sees that—if you want proof!

CHRISTINE. Open the door! [*He forces himself to open the door and steps aside.* CHRISTINE *almost falls in. She is in a state bordering on collapse. She throws her arms around* ORIN *as if seeking protection from him.*] Orin! I got so afraid—when I found the door locked!

ORIN [*controls a furious jealous impulse to push her violently away from him—harshly*]. What made you afraid, Mother?

CHRISTINE [*stammers*]. Why do you look at me—like that? You look—so like—your father!

ORIN. I am his son, too, remember that!

LAVINIA [*warningly*]. Orin!

CHRISTINE [*turning on* LAVINIA *who stands by the head of the bier*]. I suppose you've been telling him your vile lies, you—

ORIN [*remembering his instructions, forces himself to blurt out*]. She—she's out of her head, Mother.

CHRISTINE. Didn't I tell you! I knew you'd see that! [*Then anxiously, keeping her eyes on* LAVINIA] Did she tell you what she's going to do, Orin? I know she's plotting something—crazy! Did she threaten to go to the police? They might not believe she's crazy—[*Pleading desperately, her eyes still on* LAVINIA] You won't let her do anything dreadful like that, will you?

ORIN [*feeling her guilt, stammers*]. No, Mother.

CHRISTINE [*her eyes, which have been avoiding the corpse, now fasten on the dead man's face with fascinated horror*]. No—remember your father wouldn't want—any scandal—he mustn't be worried, he said—he needs rest and peace—[*She addresses the dead man directly in a strange tone of defiant scorn.*] You seem the same to me in death, Ezra! You were always dead to me! I hate the sight of death! I hate the thought of it! [*Her eyes shift from his face and she sees the box of poison. She starts back with a stifled scream and stares at it with guilty fear.*]

ORIN. Mother! For God's sake, be quiet! [*The strain snaps for him and he laughs with savage irony.*] God! To think I hoped home would be an escape from death! I should never have come back to life—from my island of peace! [*Then staring at his mother strangely*] But that's lost now! You're my lost island, aren't you, Mother? [*He turns and stumbles blindly from the room.* LAVINIA *reaches out stealthily and snatches up the box. This breaks the spell for*

CHRISTINE *whose eyes have been fixed on it hypnotically. She looks wildly at* LAVINIA'S *frozen accusing face.*]

LAVINIA [*in a cold, grim voice*]. It was Brant who got you this—medicine to make you sleep—wasn't it?

CHRISTINE [*distractedly*]. No! No! No!

LAVINIA. You're telling me it was. I knew it—but I wanted to make sure. [*She puts the box back in the bosom of her dress—turns, rigid and square-shouldered, and walks woodenly from the room.*]

CHRISTINE [*stares after her wildly, then her eyes fasten again on the dead man's face. Suddenly she appeals to him distractedly*]. Ezra! Don't let her harm Adam! I am the only guilty one! Don't let Orin—! [*Then, as if she read some answer in the dead man's face, she stops in terror and, her eyes still fixed on his face, backs to the door and rushes out.*]

CURTAIN

act 4

The stern section of a clipper ship moored alongside a wharf in East Boston, with the floor of the wharf in the foreground. The vessel lies with her bow and amidships off left and only the part aft of the mizzenmast is visible with the curve of the stern at right. The ship is unloaded and her black side rises nine or ten feet above the level of the wharf. On the poop deck above, at right, is the wheel. At left is the chart room and the entrance to the companionway stairs leading below to the cabin. At extreme left is the mizzenmast, the lowest yard just visible above, the boom of the spanker extending out above the deck to the right. Below the deck the portholes show a faint light from the interior of the cabin. On the wharf the end of a warehouse is at left front.

It is a night two days after Act Two—the day following EZRA MANNON'S *funeral. The moon is rising above the horizon off left rear, its light accentuating the black outlines of the ship.*

Borne on the wind the melancholy refrain of the capstan chanty "Shenandoah," sung by a chantyman with the crew coming in on the chorus, drifts over the water from a ship

that is weighing anchor in the harbor. Half in and half out of the shadow of the warehouse, the CHANTYMAN *lies sprawled on his back, snoring in a drunken slumber. The sound of the singing seems to strike a responsive chord in his brain, for he stirs, grunts, and with difficulty raises himself to a sitting position in the moonlight beyond the shadow.*

He is a thin, wiry man of sixty-five or so, with a tousled mop of black hair, unkempt black beard and mustache. His weather-beaten face is dissipated, he has a weak mouth, his big round blue eyes are bloodshot, dreamy and drunken. But there is something romantic, a queer troubadour-of-the-sea quality about him.

CHANTYMAN [*listens to the singing with critical disapproval*]. A hell of a chantyman that feller be! Screech owls is op'ry singers compared to him! I'll give him a taste of how "Shenandoah" ought t' be sung! [*He begins to sing in a surprisingly good tenor voice, a bit blurry with booze now and sentimentally mournful to a degree, but still managing to get full value out of the chanty.*]

"Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you—
A-way, my rolling river!
Oh, Shenandoah, I can't get near you—
Way—ay, I'm bound away
Across the wide Missouri!

"Oh, Shenandoah, I love your daughter
A-way, my rolling river!"

[*He stops abruptly, shaking his head—mournfully*] No good! Too drunk to do myself jestice! Pipe down, my John! Sleep it off! [*He sprawls back on his elbows—confusedly*] Where am I? What the hell difference is it? There's plenty o' fresh air and the moon fur a glim. Don't be so damn pertic'lar! What ye want anyways? Featherbed an' a grand piany? [*He sings with a maudlin zest.*]

"A bottle o' wine and a bottle o' beer
And a bottle of Irish whiskey oh!
So early in the morning
The sailor likes his bottle oh!"

[*He stops and mutters*] Who'll buy a drink fur the slickest chanty-

man on the Western or any other damn ocean? Go to hell then! I kin buy it myself! [*He fumbles in his pants pocket.*] I had it in this pocket—I remember I put it there pertic'lar—ten dollars in this pocket— [*He pulls the pocket inside out—with bewildered drunken anger*] By Christ, it's gone! I'm plucked clean! [*He struggles to a sitting position.*] Where was I last? Aye, I remember! That yaller-haired pig with the pink dress on! Put her arm around me so lovin'! Told me how fine I could sing! [*He scrambles unsteadily to his feet.*] By Christ, I'll go back an' give her a seaboot in her fat tail that'll learn her—! [*He takes a step but lurches into the shadow and leans against the warehouse.*] Hard down! Heavy gales around Cape Stiff! All is sunk but honor, as the feller says, an' there's damn little o' that afloat! [*He stands against the warehouse, waiting for the swaying world to subside. The companionway door on the poop deck of the vessel is opened and* ADAM BRANT *comes cautiously out. He looks around him quickly with an uneasy suspicious air. He is dressed in a merchant captain's blue uniform. Satisfied that there is no one on the deck, he comes to the rail and stares expectantly up the wharf, off left. His attitude is tense and nervous and he keeps one hand in his coat pocket. The* CHANTYMAN *loses his balance, lurches forward, then back against the warehouse with a thump.* BRANT *leaps back from the rail startedly, jerking a revolver from his coat pocket—then leans over the rail again and calls threateningly.*]

BRANT. Who's there? Come out and let me have a look at you or by God I'll shoot!

CHANTYMAN [*stares up, startled in his turn and momentarily sobered—hastily*]. Easy goes, shipmate! Stow that pistol! I'm doin' you no harm. [*He lurches out into the moonlight—suddenly pugnacious*] Not that I'm skeered o' you or your shooter! Who the hell are you to be threatenin' the life of an honest chantyman? Tryin' to hold me up, air ye? I been robbed once tonight! I'll go to the police station and tell 'em there's a robber here—

BRANT [*hastily, with a placating air*]. No harm meant. I'm skipper of this vessel and there have been a lot of waterfront thieves around here lately. I'm lacking a watchman and I've got to keep my weather eye open.

CHANTYMAN [*again momentarily sobered—touching his forehead*]. Aye—aye, sir. Mind your eye. I heer'd tell robbers broke in the "Annie Lodge's" cabin two nights back. Smashed everything and stole two hundred dollars off her skipper. Murderous, too, they be! Near beat the watchman's brains out! [*Then drunken pugnacious-*

ness comes over him again.] Think I'm one o' that gang, do ye? Come down out o' that and I'll show ye who's a thief! I don't give a damn if ye air a skipper! Ye could be Bully Watermann himself an' I'd not let you insult me! I ain't signed on your old hooker! You've got no rights over me! I'm on dry land, by Christ, and this is a free country and— [*His voice has risen to a shout.* BRANT *is alarmed that this uproar will attract someone. He puts the pistol back in his pocket hastily and peers anxiously down the wharf. Then he interrupts the* CHANTYMAN'S *tirade by a sharp command.*]

BRANT. Stow your damned jaw! Or, by the Eternal, I'll come down and pound some sense in your head!

CHANTYMAN [*automatically reacts to the voice of authority—quietly*]. Aye—aye, sir. [*Then inconsequentially*] You ain't needin' a chantyman fur your next vi'ge, are ye, sir?

BRANT. I'm not sailing for a month yet. If you're still out of a job then—

CHANTYMAN [*proudly*]. You don't know me, that's plain! I'm the finest damn chantyman that ever put a tune to his lip! I ain't lookin' fur berths—they're lookin' fur me! Aye! Skippers are on'y too glad to git me! Many's a time I've seed a skipper an' mates sweatin' blood to beat work out of a crew but nary a lick could they git into 'em till I raised a tune—and then there'd be full sail on her afore ye knowed it!

BRANT [*impatiently*]. I'm not doubting your ability. But I'd advise you to turn in and sleep it off.

CHANTYMAN [*not heeding this—sadly*]. Aye, but it ain't fur long, steam is comin' in, the sea is full o' smoky tea-kettles, the old days is dyin', an' where'll you an' me be then? [*Lugubriously drunken again*] Everything is dyin'! Abe Lincoln is dead. I used to ship on the Mannon packets an' I seed in the paper where Ezra Mannon was dead! [BRANT *starts guiltily. The* CHANTYMAN *goes on maudlinly.*] Heart failure killed him, it said, but I know better! I've sailed on Mannon hookers an' been worked t' death and gotten swill fur grub, an' I know he didn't have no heart in him! Open him up an' you'd find a dried turnip! The old skinflint must have left a pile o' money. Who gits it, I wonder? Leave a widder, did he?

BRANT [*harshly*]. How would I know? [*Changing the subject calculatingly*] What are you doing here, Chantyman? I'd expect a man with your voice would be in a saloon, singing and making merry!

CHANTYMAN. So I would! So I would! But I was robbed, sir—aye

—an' I know who done it—a yaller-haired wench had her arm around me. Steer clear o' gals or they'll skin your hide off an' use it fur a carpet! I warn ye, skipper! They're not fur sailormen like you an' me, 'less we're lookin' fur sorrow! [*Then insinuatingly*] I ain't got the price of a drink, that's why I'm here, sir.

BRANT [*reaches in his pocket and tosses him down a silver dollar*]. Here!

CHANTYMAN [*fumbles around and finds the dollar*]. Thank ye, sir. [*Then flatteringly*]. It's a fine ship you've got there, sir. Crack sail on her and she'll beat most of 'em—an' you're the kind to crack sail on, I kin tell by your cut.

BRANT [*pleased, glancing up at his ship's lofty rig*]. Aye! I'll make her go right enough!

CHANTYMAN. All you need is a good chantyman to help ye. Here's "Hanging Johnny" fur ye! [BRANT *starts at this. The* CHANTYMAN *suddenly begins to sing the chanty "Hanging Johnny" with sentimental mournfulness.*]

"Oh, they call me Hanging Johnny
Away—ay—i—oh!
They says I hangs for money
Oh, hang, boys, hang!"

BRANT [*harshly*]. Stop that damned dirge! And get out of here! Look lively now!

CHANTYMAN [*starting to go*]. Aye—aye, sir. [*Then resentfully*] I see ye ain't got much ear fur music. Good night.

BRANT [*with exasperated relief*]. Good night. [*The* CHANTYMAN *goes unsteadily off left, between the warehouse and the ship. He bursts again into his mournful dirge, his voice receding:*

"They say I hanged my mother
Away—ay—i—oh!
They say I hanged my mother
Oh, hang, boys, hang!"

BRANT, *standing by the rail looking after him, mutters a curse and starts pacing up and down the deck.*] Damn that chanty! It's sad as death! I've a foreboding I'll never take this ship to sea. She doesn't want me now—a coward hiding behind a woman's skirts! The sea hates a coward! [*A woman's figure dressed in black, heavily veiled,*

moves stealthily out from the darkness between the ship and the warehouse, left. She sees the figure on the deck above her and shrinks back with a stifled gasp of fear. BRANT *hears the noise. Immediately his revolver is in his hand and he peers down into the shadows of the warehouse.*] Who's there?

CHRISTINE [*with a cry of relief*]. Adam!

BRANT. Christine! [*Then quickly*] Go back to the gangplank. I'll meet you there. [*She goes back. He hurries along the deck and disappears off left to meet her. Their voices are heard and a moment later they enter on the poop deck, from left. She leans against him weakly and he supports her with his arm around her.*] I have to bring you this way. I bolted the door to the main deck.

CHRISTINE. I was so frightened! I wasn't sure which ship! Some drunken man came along singing—

BRANT. Aye. I just got rid of him. I fired the watchman this morning so I'd be alone at night. I was hoping you'd come soon. Did that drunk see you?

CHRISTINE. No. I hid behind some boxes. [*Then frightenedly*] Why have you got that pistol?

BRANT [*grimly*]. I was going to give them a fight for it—if things went wrong.

CHRISTINE. Adam!

BRANT. By God, you don't think I'll ever let them take me alive, do you?

CHRISTINE. Please, please! Don't talk of that for a moment! Only hold me close to you! Tell me you love me!

BRANT [*harshly*]. It's no time! I want to know what's happened! [*Then immediately repentant he kisses her—with rough tenderness*] Don't mind me! My nerves are gone from waiting alone here not knowing anything but what I read in the papers—that he was dead. These last days have been hell!

CHRISTINE. If you knew what they have been for me!

BRANT. There's something gone wrong! I can read that in your face! What is it, Christine?

CHRISTINE [*falteringly*]. Vinnie knows—! She came into the room when he was dying! He told her—

BRANT [*harshly*]. God! What is she going to do? [*Then, without giving her time to answer his question, he suddenly looks around uneasily.*] Christine! How did you get away? She'd suspect you weren't going to your father's now. She followed you once before—

CHRISTINE. No. It's all right. This morning Orin said his cousins,

the Bradfords, had invited him and Vinnie to visit them overnight at Blackridge and he was taking Vinnie with him because he thought a change would bring her back to her senses. I've made him think she's out of her head with grief—so he wouldn't listen to her—

BRANT [*eagerly*]. And he believes that?

CHRISTINE [*weakly*]. Yes—he does—now—but I don't know how long—

BRANT. Ah!

CHRISTINE. So I told him by all means to go. It gave me the chance I wanted to come to you. They went this morning. They don't know I've gone and even after they've found out they can't prove where I went. I can only stay a little while, Adam—we've got to plan—so many things have happened I couldn't foresee— I came to warn you—

BRANT. Ssshh! Come below in the cabin! We're fools to be talking out here. [*He guides her with his arm around her through the door to the companionway stairs and closes it quietly behind them. A pause in which the singing of the crew on the ship in the harbor comes mournfully over the water. Then* ORIN *and* LAVINIA *come in stealthily along the deck from the left. She is dressed in black as before. He wears a long cloak over his uniform and has a slouch hat pulled down over his eyes. Her manner is cold and grim.* ORIN *is holding in a savage, revengeful rage. They approach the cabin skylight silently.* ORIN *bends down by it to listen. His face, in the light from the skylight, becomes distorted with jealous fury.* LAVINIA *puts a restraining hand on his arm.*]

The scene fades out into darkness. Several minutes are supposed to elapse. When the light comes on again, a section of the ship has been removed to reveal the interior of the cabin, a small compartment, the walls newly painted a light brown. The skylight giving on the deck above is in the middle of the ceiling. Suspended in the skylight is a ship's compass. Beneath it is a pine table with three chairs, one at rear, the other two at the table ends, left and right. On the table is a bottle of whiskey, half full, with a glass and a pitcher of water.

Built against the right wall of the cabin is a long narrow couch, like a bunk, with leather cushions. In the rear wall, at right, is a door leading into the captain's stateroom.

A big sideboard stands against the left wall, center. Above it, a ship's clock. Farther back is a door opening on the alleyway leading to the main deck. The companionway stairs lead down to this alleyway.

There is a lighted lamp on the sideboard and a ship's lantern, also lighted, at the right end of the table.

In the cabin, BRANT *is seated at the right of table,* CHRISTINE *to the rear of it. Her face looks haggard and ageing, the mouth pinched and drawn down at the corners, and her general appearance, the arrangement of her hair and clothes, has the dishevelled touch of the fugitive. She is just finishing her story of the murder and the events following it. He is listening tensely.*

On the deck above, ORIN *and* LAVINIA *are discovered as before with* ORIN *bending down by the transom, listening.*

CHRISTINE. When he was dying he pointed at me and told her I was guilty! And afterwards she found the poison—

BRANT [*springing to his feet*]. For God's sake, why didn't you—

CHRISTINE [*pitifully*]. I fainted before I could hide it! And I had planned it all so carefully. But how could I foresee that she would come in just at that moment? And how could I know he would talk to me the way he did? He drove me crazy! He kept talking of death! He was torturing me! I only wanted him to die and leave me alone!

BRANT [*his eyes lighting up with savage satisfaction*]. He knew before he died whose son I was, you said? By God, I'll bet that maddened him!

CHRISTINE [*repeats pitifully*]. I'd planned it so carefully—but something made things happen!

BRANT [*overcome by gloomy dejection, sinks down on his chair again*]. I knew it! I've had a feeling in my bones! It serves me right, what has happened and is to happen! It wasn't that kind of revenge I had sworn on my mother's body! I should have done as I wanted—fought with Ezra Mannon as two men fight for love of a woman! [*With bitter self-contempt*] I have my father's rotten coward blood in me, I think! Aye!

CHRISTINE. Adam! You make me feel so guilty!

BRANT [*rousing himself—shamefacedly*]. I didn't mean to blame you, Christine. [*Then harshly*] It's too late for regrets now, anyway. We've got to think what to do.

CHRISTINE. Yes! I'm so terrified of Vinnie! Oh, Adam, you must promise me to be on your guard every minute! If she convinces Orin you are my lover— Oh, why can't we go away, Adam? Once we're out of her reach, she can't do anything.

BRANT. The "Flying Trades" won't be sailing for a month or more. We can't get cargo as soon as the owners thought.

CHRISTINE. Can't we go on another ship—as passengers—to the East—we could be married out there—

BRANT [*gloomily*]. But everyone in the town would know you were gone. It would start suspicion—

CHRISTINE. No. Orin and Vinnie would lie to people. They'd have to for their own sakes. They'd say I was in New York with my father. Oh, Adam, it's the only thing we can do! If we don't get out of Vinnie's reach right away I know something horrible will happen!

BRANT [*dejectedly*]. Aye. I suppose it's the only way out for us now. The "Atlantis" is sailing on Friday for China. I'll arrange with her skipper to give us passage—and keep his mouth shut. She sails at daybreak Friday. You'd better meet me here Thursday night. [*Then with an effort*] I'll write Clark and Dawson tonight they'll have to find another skipper for the "Flying Trades."

CHRISTINE [*noticing the hurt in his tone—miserably*]. Poor Adam! I know how it hurts you to give up your ship.

BRANT [*rousing himself guiltily—pats her hand—with gruff tenderness*]. There are plenty of ships—but there is only one you, Christine!

CHRISTINE. I feel so guilty! I've brought you nothing but misfortune!

BRANT. You've brought love—and the rest is only the price. It's worth it a million times! You're all mine now, anyway! [*He hugs her to him, staring over her head with sad blank eyes.*]

CHRISTINE [*her voice trembling*]. But I'm afraid I'm not much to boast about having—now. I've grown old in the past few days. I'm ugly. But I'll make myself beautiful again—for you—! I'll make up to you for everything! Try not to regret your ship too much, Adam!

BRANT [*gruffly*]. Let's not talk of her any more. [*Then forcing a wry smile*] I'll give up the sea. I think it's through with me now anyway! The sea hates a coward.

CHRISTINE [*trying pitifully to cheer him*]. Don't talk like that! You have me, Adam! You have me! And we will be happy—once

we're safe on your Blessed Islands! [*Then suddenly, with a little shudder*] It's strange. Orin was telling me of an island—

[*On the deck above,* ORIN, *who has bent closer to the transom, straightens up with a threatening movement.* LAVINIA *grips his arm, restraining him.*]

BRANT [*with a bitter, hopeless yearning*]. Aye—the Blessed Isles—Maybe we can still find happiness and forget! [*Then strangely, as if to himself*] I can see them now—so close—and a million miles away! The warm earth in the moonlight, the trade winds rustling the coco palms, the surf on the barrier reef singing a croon in your ears like a lullaby! Aye! There's peace, and forgetfulness for us there—if we can ever find those islands now!

CHRISTINE [*desperately*]. We will find them! We will! [*She kisses him. A pause. Suddenly she glances frightenedly at the clock.*] Look at the time! I've got to go, Adam!

BRANT. For the love of God, watch out for Vinnie. If anything happened to you now—!

CHRISTINE. Nothing will happen to me. But you must be on your guard in case Orin—Good-bye, my lover! I must go! I must! [*She tears herself from his arms but immediately throws herself in them again—terrifiedly*] Oh! I feel so strange—so sad—as if I'd never see you again! [*She begins to sob hysterically.*] Oh, Adam, tell me you don't regret! Tell me we're going to be happy! I can't bear this horrible feeling of despair!

BRANT. Of course we'll be happy! Come now! It's only a couple of days. [*They start for the door.*] We'll go by the main deck. It's shorter. I'll walk to the end of the wharf with you. I won't go further. We might be seen.

CHRISTINE. Then we don't have to say good-bye for a few minutes yet! Oh, thank God! [*They go out to the alleyway,* BRANT *closing the door behind him. A pause. On the deck above* ORIN *pulls a revolver from under his cloak and makes a move, as if to rush off left down to the main deck after them.* LAVINIA *has been dreading this and throws herself in his way, grasping his arm.*]

ORIN [*in a furious whisper*]. Let me go!

LAVINIA [*struggling with him*]. No! Be quiet! Ssshh! I hear them on the main deck! Quick! Come to his cabin! [*She urges him to the companionway door, gets him inside and shuts the door behind them. A moment later the door on the left of the cabin below is opened and they enter.*]

LAVINIA. He's going to the end of the wharf. That gives us a few

minutes. [*Grimly*] You wanted proof! Well, are you satisfied now?

ORIN. Yes! God damn him! Death is too good for him! He ought to be—

LAVINIA [*sharply commanding*]. Orin! Remember you promised not to lose your head. You've got to do everything exactly as we planned it, so there'll be no suspicion about us. There would be no justice if we let ourselves—

ORIN [*impatiently*] You've said all that before! Do you think I'm a fool? I'm not anxious to be hanged—for that skunk! [*Then with bitter anguish*] I heard her asking him to kiss her! I heard her warn him against me! [*He gives a horrible chuckle.*] And my island I told her about—which was she and I—she wants to go there—with him! [*Then furiously*] Damn you! Why did you stop me? I'd have shot his guts out in front of her!

LAVINIA [*scornfully*]. Outside on deck where the shot would be sure to be heard? We'd have been arrested—and then I'd have to tell the truth to save us. She'd be hanged, and even if we managed to get off, our lives would be ruined! The only person to come off lucky would be Brant! He could die happy, knowing he'd revenged himself on us more than he ever dared hope! Is that what you want?

ORIN [*sullenly*]. No.

LAVINIA. Then don't act like a fool again. [*Looks around the cabin calculatingly—then in a tone of command*] Go and hide outside. He won't see you when he passes along the alleyway in the dark. He'll come straight in here. That's the time for you—

ORIN [*grimly*]. You needn't tell me what to do. I've had a thorough training at this game—thanks to you and Father.

LAVINIA. Quick! Go out now! He won't be long!

ORIN [*goes to the door—then quickly*]. I hear him coming. [*He slips out silently. She hurriedly hides herself by the sideboard at left, front. A moment later* BRANT *appears in the doorway and stands just inside it blinking in the light. He looks around the cabin sadly.*]

BRANT [*huskily*]. So it's good-bye to you, "Flying Trades"! And you're right! I wasn't man enough for you!

[ORIN *steps through the door and with the pistol almost against* BRANT'S *body fires twice.* BRANT *pitches forward to the floor by the table, rolls over, twitches a moment on his back and lies still.* ORIN *springs forward and stands over the body, his pistol aimed down at it, ready to fire again.*]

LAVINIA [*stares fascinatedly at* BRANT'S *still face*]. Is he—dead?

ORIN. Yes.

LAVINIA [*sharply*]. Don't stand there! Where's the chisel you brought? Smash open everything in his stateroom. We must make it look as if thieves killed him, remember! Take anything valuable! We can sink it overboard afterwards! Hurry!

[ORIN *puts his revolver on the table and takes a chisel that is stuck in his belt under his cloak and goes into the stateroom. A moment later there is the sound of splintering wood as he pries open a drawer.*]

LAVINIA [*goes slowly to the body and stands looking down into* BRANT'S *face. Her own is frozen and expressionless. A pause.* ORIN *can be heard in the stateroom prying open* BRANT'S *desk and scattering the contents of drawers around. Finally* LAVINIA *speaks to the corpse in a grim bitter tone*]. How could you love that vile old woman so? [*She throws off this thought—harshly*] But you're dead! It's ended! [*She turns away from him resolutely—then suddenly turns back and stands stiffly upright and grim beside the body and prays coldly, as if carrying out a duty.*] May God find forgiveness for your sins! May the soul of our cousin, Adam Mannon, rest in peace!

[ORIN *comes in from the stateroom and overhears the last of her prayer.*]

ORIN [*harshly*]. Rest in hell, you mean! [*He comes to her.*] I've pried open everything I could find.

LAVINIA. Then come along. Quick. There's your pistol. Don't forget that. [*She goes to the door.*]

ORIN [*putting it in his pocket*]. We've got to go through his pockets to make everything look like a burglary. [*He quickly turns* BRANT'S *pockets inside out and puts the revolver he finds, along with bills and coins, watch and chain, knife, etc., into his own*]. I'll sink these overboard from the dock, along with what was in his stateroom. [*Having finished this, he still remains stooping over the body and stares into* BRANT'S *face, a queer fascinated expression in his eyes.*]

LAVINIA [*uneasily*]. Orin!

ORIN. By God, he does look like Father!

LAVINIA. No! Come along!

ORIN [*as if talking to himself*]. This is like my dream. I've killed him before—over and over.

LAVINIA. Orin!

ORIN. Do you remember me telling you how the faces of the men

I killed came back and changed to Father's face and finally became my own? [*He smiles grimly.*] He looks like me, too! Maybe I've committed suicide!

LAVINIA [*frightenedly—grabbing his arm*]. Hurry! Someone may come!

ORIN [*not heeding her, still staring at* BRANT—*strangely*]. If I had been he I would have done what he did! I would have loved her as he loved her—and killed Father too—for her sake!

LAVINIA [*tensely—shaking him by the arm*]. Orin, for God's sake, will you stop talking crazy and come along? Do you want us to be found here? [*She pulls him away forcibly.*]

ORIN [*with a last look at the dead man*]. It's queer! It's a rotten dirty joke on someone! [*He lets her hustle him out to the alley-way.*]

CURTAIN

act 5

SCENE: *The same as Act Three of "Homecoming"—exterior of the Mannon house. It is the following night. The moon has just risen. The right half of the house is in the black shadow cast by the pine trees but the moonlight falls full on the part to the left of the doorway. The door at center is open and there is a light in the hall behind. All the shutters of the windows are closed.*

CHRISTINE *is discovered walking back and forth on the drive before the portico, passing from moonlight into the shadow of the pines and back again. She is in a frightful state of tension, unable to keep still.*

She sees someone she is evidently expecting approaching the house from up the drive, off left, and she hurries down as far as the bench to meet her.

HAZEL [*enters from left—with a kindly smile*]. Here I am! Seth brought your note and I hurried right over.

CHRISTINE [*kissing her—with unnatural effusiveness*]. I'm so glad you've come! I know I shouldn't have bothered you.

HAZEL. It's no bother at all, Mrs. Mannon. I'm only too happy to keep you company.

CHRISTINE. I was feeling so terribly sad—and nervous here. I had let Hannah and Annie have the night off. I'm all alone. [*She sits on the bench.*] Let's sit out here. I can't bear it in the house.

[HAZEL *sits beside her.*]

HAZEL [*pityingly*]. I know. It must be terribly lonely for you. You must miss him so much.

CHRISTINE [*with a shudder*]. Please don't talk about— He is buried! He is gone!

HAZEL [*gently*]. He is at peace, Mrs. Mannon.

CHRISTINE [*with bitter mockery*]. I was like you once! I believed in heaven! Now I know there is only hell!

HAZEL. Ssshh! You mustn't say that.

CHRISTINE [*rousing herself—forcing a smile*]. I'm not fit company for a young girl, I'm afraid. You should have youth and beauty and freedom around you. I'm old and ugly and haunted by death! [*Then, as if to herself—in a low desperate tone*] I can't let myself get ugly! I can't!

HAZEL. You're only terribly worn out. You ought to try and sleep.

CHRISTINE. I don't believe there's such a thing on this earth as sleep! It's only in the earth one sleeps! One must feel so at peace—at last—with all one's fears ended! [*Then forcing a laugh*] Good heavens, what a bore it must be for you, listening to my gloomy thoughts! I honestly didn't send for you to— I wanted to ask if you or Peter had heard anything from Orin and Vinnie.

HAZEL [*surprised*]. Why, no. We haven't seen them since the funeral.

CHRISTINE [*forcing a smile*]. They seem to have deserted me. [*Then quickly*] I mean they should have been home before this. I can't imagine what's keeping them. They went to Blackridge to stay overnight at the Bradfords'.

HAZEL. Then there's nothing to worry about. But I don't see how they could leave you alone—just now.

CHRISTINE. Oh, that part is all right. I urged them to go. They left soon after the funeral, and afterwards I thought it would be a good opportunity for me to go to New York and see my father. He's sick, you know, but I found him so much better I decided to come home again last night. I expected Vinnie and Orin back this noon, but here it's night and no sign of them. I—I must confess I'm worried—and frightened. You can't know the horror of being all night—alone in that house! [*She glances at the house behind her with a shudder.*]

HAZEL. Would it help you if I stayed with you tonight—I mean if they don't come?

CHRISTINE [*eagerly*]. Oh, would you? [*Hysterical tears come to her eyes. She kisses* HAZEL *with impulsive gratitude.*] I can't tell you how grateful I'd be! You're so good! [*Then forcing a laugh*] But it's an imposition to ask you to face such an ordeal. I can't stay still. I'm terrified at every sound. You would have to sit up.

HAZEL. Losing a little sleep won't hurt me any.

CHRISTINE. I mustn't sleep! If you see me falling asleep you must promise to wake me!

HAZEL. But it's just what you need.

CHRISTINE. Yes—afterwards—but not now. I must keep awake. [*In tense desperation*] I wish Orin and Vinnie would come!

HAZEL [*worriedly*]. Perhaps Orin got so sick he wasn't able to. Oh, I hope that isn't it! [*Then getting up*] If I'm going to stay all night I'll have to run home and tell Mother, so she won't worry.

CHRISTINE. Yes—do. [*Then frightenedly*] You won't be long, will you? I'm afraid—to be alone.

HAZEL [*kisses her—pityingly*]. I'll be as quick as I possibly can. [*She walks down the drive, off left, waving her hand as she disappears.* CHRISTINE *stands by the bench—then begins to pace back and forth again.*]

CHRISTINE [*her eyes caught by something down the drive—in a tense whisper*]. She's met someone by the gate! Oh, why am I so afraid! [*She turns, seized by panic, and runs to the house—then stops at the top of the steps and faces around, leaning against a column for support.*] Oh, God, I'm afraid to know!

[*A moment later* ORIN *and* LAVINIA *come up the drive from the left.* LAVINIA *is stiffly square-shouldered, her eyes hard, her mouth grim and set.* ORIN *is in a state of morbid excitement. He carries a newspaper in his hand.*]

ORIN [*speaking to* VINNIE *as they enter—harshly*]. You let me do the talking! I want to be the one— [*He sees his mother—startledly*] Mother! [*Then with vindictive mockery*] Ah! So this time at least you are waiting to meet me when I come home!

CHRISTINE [*stammers*]. Orin! What kept you—?

ORIN. We just met Hazel. She said you were terribly frightened at being alone here. That is strange—when you have the memory of Father for company!

CHRISTINE. You—you stayed all this time—at the Bradfords'?

ORIN. We didn't go to the Bradfords'!

CHRISTINE [*stupidly*]. You didn't go—to Blackridge?

ORIN. We took the train there but we decided to stay right on and go to Boston instead.

CHRISTINE [*terrifiedly*]. To—Boston—?

ORIN. And in Boston we waited until the evening train got in. We met that train.

CHRISTINE. Ah!

ORIN. We had an idea you would take advantage of our being in Blackridge to be on it—and you were! And we followed you when you called on your lover in his cabin!

CHRISTINE [*with a pitiful effort at indignation*]. Orin! How dare you talk—! [*Then brokenly*] Orin! Don't look at me like that! Tell me—

ORIN. Your lover! Don't lie! You've lied enough, Mother! I was on deck, listening! What would you have done if you had discovered me? Would you have gotten your lover to murder me, Mother? I heard you warning him against me! But your warning was no use!

CHRISTINE [*chokingly*]. What—? Tell me—!

ORIN. I killed him!

CHRISTINE [*with a cry of terror*]. Oh—oh! I knew! [*Then clutching at* ORIN] No—Orin! You—you're just telling me that—to punish me, aren't you? You said you loved me—you'd protect me—protect your mother—you couldn't murder—!

ORIN [*harshly, pushing her away*]. You could murder Father, couldn't you? [*He thrusts the newspaper into her hands, pointing to the story.*] Here! Read that, if you don't believe me! We got it in Boston to see whom the police would suspect. It's only a few lines. Brant wasn't important—except to you!

[*She looks at the paper with fascinated horror. Then she lets it slip through her fingers, sinks down on the lowest step and begins to moan to herself, wringing her hands together in stricken anguish.* ORIN *turns from her and starts to pace up and down by the steps.* LAVINIA *stands at the left of the steps, rigid and erect, her face mask-like*].

ORIN [*harshly*]. They think exactly what we planned they should think—that he was killed by waterfront thieves. There's nothing to connect us with his death! [*He stops by her. She stares before her, wringing her hands and moaning. He blurts out*] Mother! Don't moan like that! [*She gives no sign of having heard him. He starts to pace up and down again—with savage resentment*] Why do you

grieve for that servant's bastard? I know he was the one who planned Father's murder! You couldn't have done that! He got you under his influence to revenge himself! He hypnotized you! I saw you weren't yourself the minute I got home, remember? How else could you ever have imagined you loved that low swine! How else could you ever have said the things— [*He stops before her.*] I heard you planning to go with him to the island I had told you about —our island—that was you and I! [*He starts to pace up and down again distractedly. She remains as before except that her moaning has begun to exhaust itself.* ORIN *stops before her again and grasps her by the shoulders, kneeling on the steps beside her—desperately pleading now*] Mother! Don't moan like that! You're still under his influence! But you'll forget him! I'll make you forget him! I'll make you happy! We'll leave Vinnie here and go away on a long voyage—to the South Seas—

LAVINIA [*sharply*]. Orin!

ORIN [*not heeding her, stares into his mother's face. She has stopped moaning, the horror in her eyes is dying into blankness, the expression of her mouth congealing to one of numbed grief. She gives no sign of having heard him.* ORIN *shakes her—desperately*]. Mother! Don't you hear me? Why won't you speak to me? Will you always love him? Do you hate me now? [*He sinks on his knees before her.*] Mother! Answer me! Say you forgive me!

LAVINIA [*with bitter scorn*]. Orin! After all that's happened, are you becoming her crybaby again? [ORIN *starts and gets to his feet, staring at her confusedly, as if he had forgotten her existence.* LAVINIA *speaks again in curt commanding tone that recalls her father.*] Leave her alone! Go in the house! [*As he hesitates—more sharply*] Do you hear me? March!

ORIN [*automatically makes a confused motion of military salute —vaguely*]. Yes, sir. [*He walks mechanically up the steps—gazing up at the house—strangely*] Why are the shutters still closed? Father has gone. We ought to let in the moonlight. [*He goes into the house.* LAVINIA *comes and stands beside her mother.* CHRISTINE *continues to stare blankly in front of her. Her face has become a tragic death mask. She gives no sign of being aware of her daughter's presence.* LAVINIA *regards her with bleak, condemning eyes.*]

LAVINIA [*finally speaks sternly*]. He paid the just penalty for his crime. You know it was justice. It was the only way true justice could be done. [*Her mother starts. The words shatter her merciful numbness and awaken her to agony again. She springs to her feet*

and stands glaring at her daughter with a terrible look in which a savage hatred fights with horror and fear. In spite of her frozen self-control, LAVINIA *recoils before this. Keeping her eyes on her,* CHRISTINE *shrinks backward up the steps until she stands at the top between the two columns of the portico before the front door.* LAVINIA *suddenly makes a motion, as if to hold her back. She calls shakenly as if the words were wrung out of her against her will*] Mother! What are you going to do? You can live!

CHRISTINE [*glares at her as if this were the last insult—with strident mockery*]. Live! [*She bursts into shrill laughter; stops it abruptly, raises her hands between her face and her daughter and pushes them out in a gesture of blotting* LAVINIA *forever from her sight. Then she turns and rushes into the house.* LAVINIA *again makes a movement to follow her. But she immediately fights down this impulse and turns her back on the house determinedly, standing square-shouldered and stiff like a grim sentinel in black.*]

LAVINIA [*implacably to herself*]. It is justice! [*From the street, away off right front,* SETH'S *thin wraith of a baritone is raised in his favorite mournful "Shenandoah," as he nears the gateway to the drive, returning from his nightly visit to the saloon:*

> *"Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you*
> *A-way, my rolling river!*
> *Oh, Shenandoah, I can't get near you*
> *Way—ay, I'm bound away*
> *Across the wide—"*

There is the sharp report of a pistol from the left ground floor of the house where EZRA MANNON'S *study is.* LAVINIA *gives a shuddering gasp, turns back to the steps, starts to go up them, stops again and stammers shakenly*] It is justice! It is your justice, Father!

[ORIN'S *voice is heard calling from the sitting-room at right "What's that"! A door slams. Then* ORIN'S *horrified cry comes from the study as he finds his mother's body, and a moment later he rushes out frantically to* LAVINIA.]

ORIN. Vinnie! [*He grabs her arm and stammers distractedly*] Mother—shot herself—Father's pistol—get a doctor—[*Then with hopeless anguish*] No—it's too late—she's dead! [*Then wildly*] Why—why did she, Vinnie? [*With tortured self-accusation*] I drove her to it! I wanted to torture her! She couldn't forgive me! Why did I have to boast about killing him? Why—?

LAVINIA [*frightenedly, puts her hand over his mouth*]. Be quiet!

ORIN [*tears her hand away—violently*]. Why didn't I let her believe burglars killed him? She wouldn't have hated me then! She would have forgotten him! She would have turned to me! [*In a final frenzy of self-denunciation*] I murdered her!

LAVINIA [*grabbing him by the shoulders*]. For God's sake, will you be quiet?

ORIN [*frantically—trying to break away from her*]. Let me go! I've got to find her! I've got to make her forgive me! I—! [*He suddenly breaks down and weeps in hysterical anguish.* LAVINIA *puts her arm around him soothingly. He sobs despairingly*] But she's dead— She's gone—how can I ever get her to forgive me now?

LAVINIA [*soothingly*]. Ssshh! Ssshh! You have me, haven't you? I love you. I'll help you to forget. [*He turns to go back into the house, still sobbing helplessly.* SETH'S *voice comes from the drive, right, close at hand:*

"She's far across the stormy water
Way-ay, I'm bound away—"

He enters right, front. LAVINIA *turns to face him.*]

SETH [*approaching*]. Say, Vinnie, did you hear a shot—?

LAVINIA [*sharply*]. I want you to go for Doctor Blake. Tell him Mother has killed herself in a fit of insane grief over Father's death. [*Then as he stares, dumbfounded and wondering, but keeping his face expressionless—more sharply*] Will you remember to tell him that?

SETH [*slowly*]. Ayeh. I'll tell him, Vinnie—anything you say. [*His face set grimly, he goes off, right front.* LAVINIA *turns and, stiffly erect, her face stern and mask-like, follows* ORIN *into the house.*]

CURTAIN

THE HAUNTED

CHARACTERS

Lavinia Mannon
Orin, her brother
Peter Niles
Hazel, his sister
Seth
Amos Ames
Ira Mackel
Joe Silva
Abner Small

Scenes

Act One—Scene I: Exterior of the Mannon house—an evening in the summer of 1866

Act One—Scene II: Sitting-room in the house (immediately follows Scene One)

Act Two: The study—an evening a month later

Act Three: The sitting-room (immediately follows Act Two)

Act Four: Same as Act One, Scene One—Exterior of the Mannon house—a late afternoon three days later

act 1 scene 1

Exterior of the Mannon house (as in the two preceding plays) on an evening of a clear day in summer a year later. It is shortly after sunset but the afterglow in the sky still bathes the white temple portico in a crimson light. The columns cast black bars of shadow on the wall behind them. All the shutters are closed and the front door is boarded up, showing that the house is unoccupied.

A group of five men is standing on the drive by the bench at left, front. SETH BECKWITH *is there and* AMOS AMES, *who appeared in the first act of "Homecoming." The others are* ABNER SMALL, JOE SILVA *and* IRA MACKEL.

These four—AMES, SMALL, SILVA *and* MACKEL—*are, as were the townsfolk of the first acts of "Homecoming" and "The Hunted," a chorus of types representing the town as a human background for the drama of the Mannons.*

SMALL *is a wiry little old man of sixty-five, a clerk in a hardware store. He has white hair and a wispy goat's beard, bright inquisitive eyes, ruddy complexion, and a shrill rasping voice.* SILVA *is a Portuguese fishing captain—a fat, boisterous man, with a hoarse bass voice. He has matted gray hair and a big grizzled mustache. He is sixty.* MACKEL, *who is a farmer, hobbles along with the aid of a cane. His shiny wrinkled face is oblong with a square white chin whisker. He is bald. His yellowish brown eyes are sly. He talks in a drawling wheezy cackle.*

All five are drunk. SETH *has a stone jug in his hand. There is a grotesque atmosphere of boys out on a forbidden lark about these old men.*

SMALL. God A'mighty, Seth, be you glued to that jug?

MACKEL. Gol durn him, he's gittin' stingy in his old age!

SILVA [*bursts into song*].

"A bottle of beer and a bottle of gin
And a bottle of Irish whiskey oh!
So early in the morning
A sailor likes his bottle oh!"

AMES [*derisively*]. You like your bottle 'ceptin' when your old woman's got her eye on ye!

SILVA. She's visitin' her folks to New Bedford. What the hell I care! [*Bursts into song again*]

"Hurrah! Hurrah! I sing the jubilee
Hurrah! Hurrah! Her folks has set me free!"

AMES [*slapping him on the back*]. God damn you, Joe, you're gittin' to be a poet! [*They all laugh.*]

SMALL. God A'mighty, Seth, ain't ye got no heart in ye? Watch me perishin' fur lack o' whiskey and ye keep froze to that jug! [*He reaches out for it.*]

SETH. No, ye don't! I'm onto your game! [*With a wink at the*

others] He's aimin' to git so full of Injun courage he wouldn't mind if a ghost sot on his lap! Purty slick you be, Abner! Swill my licker so's you kin skin me out o' my bet!

MACKEL. That's it, Seth! Don't let him play no skin games!

JOE. By God, if ghosts look like the livin', I'd let Ezra's woman's ghost set on my lap! M'm! [*He smacks his lips lasciviously.*]

AMES. Me, too! She was a looker!

SMALL [*with an uneasy glance at the house*]. It's her ghost folks is sayin' haunts the place, ain't it?

SETH [*with a wink at the others*]. Oh, hers and a hull passel of others. The graveyard's full of Mannons and they all spend their nights to hum here. You needn't worry but you'll have plenty o' company, Abner!

[*The others laugh, their mirth a bit forced, but* SMALL *looks rather sick.*]

SMALL. It ain't in our bet for you to put sech notions in my head afore I go in, be it? [*Then forcing a perky bravado*] Think you kin scare me? There ain't no sech thing as ghosts!

SETH. An' I'm sayin' you're scared to prove there ain't! Let's git our bet set out plain afore witnesses. I'm lettin' you in the Mannon house and I'm bettin' you ten dollars and a gallon of licker you dasn't stay there till moonrise at ten o'clock. If you come out afore then, you lose. An' you're to stay in the dark and not even strike a match! Is that agreed?

SMALL [*trying to put a brave face on it*]. That's agreed—an' it's like stealin' ten dollars off you!

SETH. We'll see! [*Then with a grin*] An' you're supposed to go in sober! But I won't make it too dead sober! I ain't that hard-hearted. I wouldn't face what you'll face with a gallon under my belt! [*Handing him the jug*] Here! Take a good swig! You're lookin' a mite pale about the gills a'ready!

SMALL. No sech thing! [*But he puts the jug to his lips and takes an enormous swallow.*]

MACKEL. Whoa thar! Ye ain't drinkin' fur all on us! [SMALL *hands the jug to him and he drinks and passes it around until it finally reaches* SETH *again. In the meantime* SMALL *talks to* SETH.]

SMALL. Be it all right fur me to go in afore dark? I'd like to know where I'm at while I kin see.

SETH. Wal, I calc'late you kin. Don't want you runnin' into furniture an' breakin' things when them ghosts git chasin' you! Vinnie an' Orin's liable to be back from Chiny afore long an' she'd give

me hell if anythin' was broke. [*The jug reaches him. He takes a drink—then sets it down on the drive.*] Come along! I've took the screws out o' that door. I kin let you right in. [*He goes toward the portico,* SMALL *following him, whistling with elaborate nonchalance.*]

SMALL [*to the others who remain where they are*]. So long, fellers. We'll have a good spree on that ten dollars.

MACKEL [*with a malicious cackle*]. Mebbe! Would you like me fur one o' your pallbearers, Abner?

AMES. I'll comfort your old woman—providin' she'll want comfortin', which ain't likely!

SILVA. And I'll water your grave every Sunday after church! That's the kind of man I be, by God. I don't forget my friends when they're gone!

SETH [*from the portico*]. We'll all jine in, Joe! If he ain't dead, by God, we'll drown him!

[*They all roar with laughter.* SMALL *looks bitter. The jest strikes him as being unfeeling— All glow has faded from the sky and it is getting dark.*]

SMALL. To hell with ye!

[SETH *pries off the board door and unlocks the inner door.*]

SETH. Come on. I'll show you the handiest place to say your prayers. [*They go in. The group outside becomes serious.*]

AMES [*voicing the opinion of all of them*]. Wal, all the same, I wouldn't be in Abner's boots. It don't do to monkey with them thin's.

MACKEL. You believe in ghosts, Amos?

AMES. Mebbe. Who knows there ain't?

MACKEL. Wal, I believe in 'em. Take the Nims' place out my way. Asa Nims killed his wife with a hatchet—she'd nagged him—then hung himself in the attic. I knew Ben Willet that bought the place. He couldn't live thar—had to move away. It's fallen to ruins now. Ben used to hear things clawin' at the walls an' winders and see the chairs move about. He wasn't a liar nor chicken-hearted neither.

SILVA. There is ghosts, by God! My cousin, Manuel, he seen one! Off on a whaler in the Injun Ocean, that was. A man got knifed and pushed overboard. After that, on moonlight nights, they'd see him a-settin' on the yards and hear him moanin' to himself. Yes, sir, my cousin Manuel, he ain't no liar neither—'ceptin' when he's drunk—and he seen him with his own eyes!

AMES [*with an uneasy glance around, reaching for the jug*]. Wal,

let's have a drink. [*He takes a swig just as* SETH *comes out of the house, shutting the door behind him.*]

MACKEL. That's Seth. He ain't anxious to stay in thar long, I notice!

[SETH *hurries down to them, trying to appear to saunter.*]

SETH [*with a forced note to his joking*]. God A'mighty, ye'd ought to see Abner! He's shyin' at the furniture covers an' his teeth are clickin' a'ready. He'll come runnin' out hell fur leather afore long. All I'm wonderin' is, has he got ten dollars.

MACKEL [*slyly*]. You seem a mite shaky.

SETH [*with a scowl*]. You're a liar. What're ye all lookin' glum as owls about?

MACKEL. Been talkin' of ghosts. Do you really believe that there house is haunted, Seth, or are ye only jokin' Abner?

SETH [*sharply*]. Don't be a durned fool! I'm on'y jokin' him, of course!

MACKEL [*insistently*]. Still, it'd be only natural if it was haunted. She shot herself there. Do you think she done it fur grief over Ezra's death, like the daughter let on to folks?

SETH. 'Course she did!

MACKEL. Ezra dyin' sudden his first night to hum—that was durned queer!

SETH [*angrily*]. It's durned queer old fools like you with one foot in the grave can't mind their own business in the little time left to 'em. That's what's queer!

MACKEL [*angry in his turn*]. Wal, all I say is if they hadn't been Mannons with the town lickin' their boots, there'd have been queer doing's come out! And as fur me bein' an old fool, you're older an' a worse fool! An' your foot's deeper in the grave than mine be!

SETH [*shaking his fist in* MACKEL'S *face*]. It ain't so deep but what I kin whale the stuffin' out o' you any day in the week!

SILVA [*comes between them*]. Here, you old roosters! No fightin' allowed!

MACKEL [*subsiding grumpily*]. This is a free country, ain't it? I got a right to my opinions!

AMOS [*suddenly looking off down left*]. Ssshh! Look, Seth! There's someone comin' up the drive.

SETH [*peering*]. Ayeh! Who the hell—? It's Peter'n Hazel. Hide that jug, durn ye! [*The jug is hidden under the lilacs. A moment later,* HAZEL *and* PETER *enter. They stop in surprise on seeing* SETH

and his friends. SETH *greets them self-consciously.*] Good evenin'. I was just showin' some friends around—

PETER. Hello, Seth. Just the man we're looking for. We've just had a telegram. Vinnie and Orin have landed in New York and—

[*He is interrupted by a muffled yell of terror from the house. As they all turn to look, the front door is flung open and* SMALL *comes tearing out and down the portico steps, his face chalky white and his eyes popping.*]

SMALL [*as he reaches them—terrifiedly*]. God A'mighty! I heard 'em comin' after me, and I run in the room opposite, an' I seed Ezra's ghost dressed like a judge comin' through the wall—and, by God, I run! [*He jerks a bill out of his pocket and thrusts it on* SETH.] Here's your money, durn ye! I wouldn't stay in there fur a million!

[*This breaks the tension, and the old men give way to an hysterical, boisterous, drunken mirth, roaring with laughter, pounding each other on the back.*]

PETER [*sharply*]. What's this all about? What was he doing in there?

SETH [*controlling his laughter—embarrassedly*]. Only a joke, Peter. [*Then turning on* SMALL*—scornfully*] That was Ezra's picture hangin' on the wall, not a ghost, ye durned idjut!

SMALL [*indignantly*]. I know pictures when I see 'em an' I knowed him. This was him! Let's get out o' here. I've had enough of this durned place!

SETH. You fellers trot along. I'll jine you later. [*They all mutter good evenings to* PETER *and* HAZEL *and go off, left front.* SMALL'S *excited voice can be heard receding as he begins to embroider on the horrors of his adventure.* SETH *turns to* PETER *apologetically.*] Abner Small's always braggin' how brave he is—so I bet him he dasn't stay in there—

HAZEL [*indignantly*]. Seth! What would Vinnie say if she knew you did such things?

SETH. There ain't no harm done. I calc'late Abner didn't break nothin'. And Vinnie wouldn't mind when she knew why I done it. I was aimin' to stop the durned gabbin' that's been goin' round town about this house bein' haunted. You've heard it, ain't ye?

PETER. I heard some silly talk but didn't pay any attention—

SETH. That durned idjut female I got in to clean a month after Vinnie and Orin sailed started it. Said she'd felt ghosts around.

You know how them things grow. Seemed to me Abner's braggin' gave me a good chance to stop it by turnin' it all into a joke on him folks'd laugh at. An' when I git through tellin' my story of it round town tomorrow you'll find folks'll shet up and not take it serious no more.

PETER [*appreciatively*]. You're right, Seth. That was a darned slick notion! Nothing like a joke to lay a ghost!

SETH. Ayeh. But— [*He hesitates—then decides to say it.*] Between you 'n' me 'n' the lamp-post, it ain't all sech a joke as it sounds—that about the hauntin', I mean.

PETER [*incredulously*]. You aren't going to tell me you think the house is haunted too!

SETH [*grimly*]. Mebbe, and mebbe not. All I know is I wouldn't stay in there all night if you was to give me the town!

HAZEL [*impressed but forcing a teasing tone*]. Seth! I'm ashamed of you!

PETER. First time I ever heard you say you were afraid of anything!

SETH. There's times when a man's a darn fool not to be scared! Oh, don't git it in your heads I take stock in spirits trespassin' round in windin' sheets or no sech lunatic doin's. But there is sech a thing as evil spirit. An' I've felt it, goin' in there daytimes to see to things—like somethin' rottin' in the walls!

PETER. Bosh!

SETH [*quietly*]. 'Tain't bosh, Peter. There's been evil in that house since it was first built in hate—and it's kept growin' there ever since, as what's happened there has proved. You understand I ain't sayin' this to no one but you two. An' I'm only tellin' you fur one reason—because you're closer to Vinnie and Orin than anyone and you'd ought to persuade them, now they're back, not to live in it. [*He adds impressively*] Fur their own good! [*Then with a change of tone*] An' now I've got that off my chest, tell me about 'em. When are they comin'?

PETER. Tomorrow. Vinnie asked us to open the house. So let's start right in.

SETH [*with evident reluctance*]. You want to do it tonight?

HAZEL. We must, Seth. We've got so little time. We can at least tidy up the rooms a little and get the furniture covers off.

SETH. Wal, I'll go to the barn and git lanterns. There's candles in the house. [*He turns abruptly and goes off left between the lilacs and the house.*]

HAZEL [*looking after him—uneasily*]. I can't get over Seth acting so strangely.

PETER. Don't mind him. It's rum and old age.

HAZEL [*shaking her head—slowly*]. No. There is something queer about this house. I've always felt it, even before the General's death and her suicide. [*She shudders.*] I can still see her sitting on that bench as she was that last night. She was so frightened of being alone. But I thought when Vinnie and Orin came back she would be all right. [*Then sadly*] Poor Orin! I'll never forget to my dying day the way he looked when we saw him at the funeral. I hardly recognized him, did you?

PETER. No. He certainly was broken up.

HAZEL. And the way he acted— like someone in a trance! I don't believe when Vinnie rushed him off on this trip to the East he knew what he was doing or where he was going or anything.

PETER. A long voyage like that was the best thing to help them both forget.

HAZEL [*without conviction*]. Yes. I suppose it was—but— [*She stops and sighs—then worriedly*] I wonder how Orin is. Vinnie's letters haven't said much about him, or herself, for that matter— only about the trip. [*She sees* SETH *approaching, whistling loudly, from left, rear, with two lighted lanterns.*] Here's Seth. [*She walks up the steps to the portico.* PETER *follows her. She hesitates and stands looking at the house—in a low tone, almost of dread*] Seth was right. You feel something cold grip you the moment you set foot—

PETER. Oh, nonsense! He's got you going, too! [*Then with a chuckle*] Listen to him whistling to keep his courage up!

[SETH *comes in from the left. He hands one of the lanterns to* PETER.]

SETH. Here you be, Peter.

HAZEL. Well, let's go in. You better come out to the kitchen and help me first, Peter. We ought to start a fire. [*They go in. There is a pause in which* PETER *can be heard opening windows behind the shutters in the downstairs rooms. Then silence. Then* LAVINIA *enters, coming up the drive from left, front, and stands regarding the house. One is at once aware of an extraordinary change in her. Her body, formerly so thin and undeveloped, has filled out. Her movements have lost their square-shouldered stiffness. She now bears a striking resemblance to her mother in every respect, even to being*

dressed in the green her mother had affected. She walks to the clump of lilacs and stands there staring at the house.]

LAVINIA [*turns back and calls coaxingly in the tone one would use to a child*]. Don't stop there, Orin! What are you afraid of? Come on!

[*He comes slowly and hesitatingly in from left, front. He carries himself woodenly erect now like a soldier. His movements and attitudes have the statue-like quality that was so marked in his father. He now wears a close-cropped beard in addition to his mustache, and this accentuates his resemblance to his father. The Mannon semblance of his face in repose to a mask is more pronounced than ever. He has grown dreadfully thin and his black suit hangs loosely on his body. His haggard swarthy face is set in a blank lifeless expression.*]

LAVINIA [*glances at him uneasily—concealing her apprehension under a coaxing motherly tone*]. You must be brave! This is the test! You have got to face it! [*Then anxiously as he makes no reply*] Do you feel you can—now we're here?

ORIN [*dully*]. I'll be all right—with you.

LAVINIA [*takes his hand and pats it encouragingly*]. That's all I wanted—to hear you say that. [*Turning to the house*] Look, I see a light through the shutters of the sitting-room. That must be Peter and Hazel. [*Then as she sees he still keeps his eyes averted from the house*] Why don't you look at the house? Are you afraid? [*Then sharply commanding*] Orin! I want you to look now! Do you hear me?

ORIN [*dully obedient*]. Yes, Vinnie. [*He jerks his head around and stares at the house and draws a deep shuddering breath.*]

LAVINIA [*her eyes on his face—as if she were willing her strength into him*]. Well? You don't see any ghosts, do you? Tell me!

ORIN [*obediently*]. No.

LAVINIA. Because there are none! Tell me you know there are none, Orin!

ORIN [*as before*]. Yes.

LAVINIA [*searches his face uneasily—then is apparently satisfied*]. Come. Let's go in. We'll find Hazel and Peter and surprise them—[*She takes his arm and leads him to the steps. He walks like an automaton. When they reach the spot where his mother had sat moaning, the last time he had seen her alive (Act Five of "The Hunted") he stops with a shudder.*]

ORIN [*stammers—pointing*]. It was here—she—the last time I saw her alive—

LAVINIA [*quickly, urging him on commandingly*]. That is all past and finished! The dead have forgotten us! We've forgotten them! Come! [*He obeys woodenly. She gets him up the steps and they pass into the house.*]

CURTAIN

act 1 scene 2

Same as Act Two of "The Hunted"—The sitting-room in the Mannon house. PETER *has lighted two candles on the mantel and put the lantern on the table at front. In this dim, spotty light the room is full of shadows. It has the dead appearance of a room long shut up, and the covered furniture has a ghostly look. In the flickering candlelight the eyes of the Mannon portraits stare with a grim forbiddingness.*

LAVINIA *appears in the doorway at rear. In the lighted room, the change in her is strikingly apparent. At a first glance, one would mistake her for her mother as she appeared in the first act of "Homecoming." She seems a mature woman, sure of her feminine attractiveness. Her brown-gold hair is arranged as her mother's had been. Her green dress is like a copy of her mother's in Act One of "Homecoming." She comes forward slowly. The movements of her body now have the feminine grace her mother's had possessed. Her eyes are caught by the eyes of the Mannons in the portraits and she approaches as if compelled in spite of herself until she stands directly under them in front of the fireplace. She suddenly addresses them in a harsh resentful voice.*

LAVINIA. Why do you look at me like that? I've done my duty by you! That's finished and forgotten! [*She tears her eyes from theirs and, turning away, becomes aware that* ORIN *has not followed her into the room, and is immediately frightened and uneasy and hurries toward the door, calling*] Orin!

ORIN [*his voice comes from the dark hall*]. I'm here.

LAVINIA. What are you doing out there? Come here! [ORIN *ap-*

pears in the doorway. His face wears a dazed expression and his eyes have a wild, stricken look. He hurries to her as if seeking protection. She exclaims frightenedly.] Orin! What is it?

ORIN [*strangely*]. I've just been in the study. I was sure she'd be waiting for me in there, where— [*Torturedly*] But she wasn't! She isn't anywhere. It's only they—[*He points to the portraits.*] They're everywhere! But she's gone forever. She'll never forgive me now!

LAVINIA [*harshly*]. Orin! Will you be quiet!

ORIN [*unheeding—with a sudden turn to bitter resentful defiance*]. Well, let her go! What is she to me? I'm not her son any more! I'm Father's! I'm a Mannon! And they'll welcome me home!

LAVINIA [*angrily commanding*]. Stop it, do you hear me!

ORIN [*shocked back to awareness by her tone—pitifully confused*]. I—I didn't—don't be angry, Vinnie!

LAVINIA [*soothing him now*]. I'm not angry, dear—only do get hold of yourself and be brave. [*Leading him to the sofa*] Here. Come. Let's sit down for a moment, shall we, and get used to being home? [*They sit down. She puts an arm around him reproachfully.*] Don't you know how terribly you frighten me when you act so strangely? You don't mean to hurt me, do you?

ORIN [*deeply moved*]. God knows I don't, Vinnie! You're all I have in the world! [*He takes her hand and kisses it humbly.*]

LAVINIA [*soothingly*]. That's a good boy. [*Then with a cheerful matter-of-fact note*] Hazel and Peter must be back in the kitchen. Won't you be glad to see Hazel again?

ORIN [*dully now*]. You've kept talking about them all the voyage home. Why? What can they have to do with us—now?

LAVINIA. A lot. What we need most is to get back to simple normal things and begin a new life. And their friendship and love will help us more than anything to forget.

ORIN [*with sudden harshness*]. Forget? I thought you'd forgotten long ago—if you ever remembered, which you never seemed to! [*Then with somber bitterness*] Love! What right have I—or you—to love?

LAVINIA [*defiantly*]. Every right!

ORIN [*grimly*]. Mother felt the same about— [*Then with a strange, searching glance at her*] You don't know how like Mother you've become, Vinnie. I don't mean only how pretty you've gotten—

LAVINIA [*with a strange shy eagerness*]. Do you really think I'm as pretty now as she was, Orin?

ORIN [*as if she hadn't interrupted*]. I mean the change in your soul, too. I've watched it ever since we sailed for the East. Little by little it grew like Mother's soul—as if you were stealing hers—as if her death had set you free—to become her![1]

LAVINIA [*uneasily*]. Now don't begin talking nonsense again, please!

ORIN [*grimly*]. Don't you believe in souls any more? I think you will after we've lived in this house awhile! The Mannon dead will convert you. [*He turns to the portraits mockingly.*] Ask them if I'm not right!

LAVINIA [*sharply*]. Orin! What's come over you? You haven't had one of these morbid spells since we left the Islands. You swore to me you were all over them, or I'd never have agreed to come home.

ORIN [*with a strange malicious air*]. I had to get you away from the Islands. My brotherly duty! If you'd stayed there much longer—[*He chuckles disagreeably.*]

LAVINIA [*with a trace of confusion*]. I don't know what you're talking about. I only went there for your sake.

ORIN [*with another chuckle*]. Yes—but afterwards—

LAVINIA [*sharply*]. You promised you weren't going to talk any more morbid nonsense. [*He subsides meekly. She goes on reproachfully.*] Remember all I've gone through on your account. For months after we sailed you didn't know what you were doing. I had to live in constant fear of what you might say. I wouldn't live through those horrible days again for anything on earth. And remember this homecoming is what you wanted. You told me that if you could come home and face your ghosts, you knew you could rid yourself forever of your silly guilt about the past.

ORIN [*dully*]. I know, Vinnie.

LAVINIA. And I believed you, you seemed so certain of yourself. But now you've suddenly become strange again. You frighten me. So much depends on how you start in, now we're home. [*Then sharply commanding*] Listen, Orin! I want you to start again—by facing all your ghosts right now! [*He turns and his eyes remain*

[1] ***to become her!*** *Although there is a sound psychological basis for the adoption by Orin and Lavinia of the characteristics of their parents, and for the incestuous overtones of the third play, O'Neill may have exaggerated somewhat to round out his Freudian interpretation of the family.*

fixed on hers from now on. She asks sternly] Who murdered Father?

ORIN [*falteringly*]. Brant did—for revenge because—

LAVINIA [*more sternly*]. Who murdered Father? Answer me!

ORIN [*with a shudder*]. Mother was under his influence—

LAVINIA. That's a lie! It was he who was under hers. You know the truth!

ORIN. Yes.

LAVINIA. She was an adulteress and a murderess, wasn't she?

ORIN. Yes.

LAVINIA. If we'd done our duty under the law, she would have been hanged, wouldn't she?

ORIN. Yes.

LAVINIA. But we protected her. She could have lived, couldn't she? But she chose to kill herself as a punishment for her crime—of her own free will! It was an act of justice! You had nothing to do with it! You see that now, don't you? [*As he hesitates, trembling violently, she grabs his arm fiercely.*] Tell me!

ORIN [*hardly above a whisper*]. Yes.

LAVINIA. And your feeling of being responsible for her death was only your morbid imagination! You don't feel it now! You'll never feel it again!

ORIN. No.

LAVINIA [*gratefully—and weakly because the strength she has willed into him has left her exhausted*]. There! You see! You can do it when you will to! [*She kisses him. He breaks down, sobbing weakly against her breast. She soothes him.*] There! Don't cry! You ought to feel proud. You've proven you can laugh at your ghosts from now on. [*Then briskly, to distract his mind*] Come now. Help me to take off these furniture covers. We might as well start making ourselves useful. [*She starts to work. For a moment he helps. Then he goes to one of the windows and pushes back a shutter and stands staring out.* PETER *comes in the door from rear. At the sight of* LAVINIA *he stops startledly, thinks for a second it is her mother's ghost and gives an exclamation of dread. At the same moment she sees him. She stares at him with a strange eager possessiveness. She calls softly.*]

LAVINIA. Peter! [*She goes toward him, smiling as her mother might have smiled.*] Don't you know me any more, Peter?

PETER [*stammers*]. Vinnie! I—I thought you were—! I can't realize it's you! You've grown so like your—[*Checking himself awk-*

wardly] I mean you've changed so—and we weren't looking for you until— [*He takes her hand automatically, staring at her stupidly.*]

LAVINIA. I know. We had intended to stay in New York tonight but we decided later we'd better come right home. [*Then taking him in with a smiling appreciative possessiveness*] Let me look at you, Peter. You haven't gone and changed, have you? No, you're the same, thank goodness! I've been thinking of you all the way home and wondering—I was so afraid you might have.

PETER [*plucking up his courage—blurts out*]. You—you ought to know I'd never change—with you! [*Then, alarmed by his own boldness, he hastily looks away from her.*]

LAVINIA [*teasingly*]. But you haven't said yet you're glad to see me!

PETER [*has turned back and is staring fascinatedly at her. A surge of love and desire overcomes his timidity and he bursts out*]. I—you know how much I—! [*Then he turns away again in confusion and takes refuge in a burst of talk.*] Gosh, Vinnie, you ought to have given us more warning. We've only just started to open the place up. I was with Hazel, in the kitchen, starting a fire—

LAVINIA [*laughing softly*]. Yes. You're the same old Peter! You're still afraid of me. But you mustn't be now. I know I used to be an awful old stick, but—

PETER. Who said so? You were not! [*Then with enthusiasm*] Gosh, you look so darned pretty—and healthy. Your trip certainly did you good! [*Staring at her again, drinking her in*] I can't get over seeing you dressed in color. You always used to wear black.

LAVINIA [*with a strange smile*]. I was dead then.

PETER. You ought always to wear color.

LAVINIA [*immensely pleased*]. Do you think so?

PETER. Yes. It certainly is becoming. I— [*Then embarrassedly changing the subject*] But where's Orin?

LAVINIA [*turning to look around*]. Why, he was right here. [*She sees him at the window.*] Orin, what are you doing there? Here's Peter. [ORIN *closes the shutter he has pushed open and turns back from the window. He comes forward, his eyes fixed in a strange preoccupation, as if he were unaware of their presence.* LAVINIA *watches him uneasily and speaks sharply.*] Don't you see Peter? Why don't you speak to him? You mustn't be so rude.

PETER [*good-naturedly*]. Give him a chance. Hello, Orin. Darned

glad to see you back. [*They shake hands.* PETER *has difficulty in hiding his pained surprise at* ORIN'S *sickly appearance.*]

ORIN [*rousing himself, forces a smile and makes an effort at his old friendly manner with* PETER]. Hello, Peter. You know I'm glad to see you without any polite palaver. Vinnie is the same old bossy fuss-buzzer—you remember—always trying to teach me manners!

PETER. You bet I remember! But say, hasn't she changed, though? I didn't know her, she's grown so fat! And I was just telling her how well she looked in color. Don't you agree?

ORIN [*in a sudden strange tone of jeering malice*]. Did you ask her why she stole Mother's colors? I can't see why—yet—and I don't think she knows herself. But it will prove a strange reason, I'm certain of that, when I do discover it!

LAVINIA [*making a warning sign to* PETER *not to take this seriously—forcing a smile*]. Don't mind him, Peter.

ORIN [*his tone becoming sly, insinuating and mocking*]. And she's become romantic! Imagine that! Influence of the "dark and deep blue ocean"—and of the Islands, eh, Vinnie?

PETER [*surprised*]. You stopped at the Islands?

ORIN. Yes. We took advantage of our being on a Mannon ship to make the captain touch there on the way back. We stopped a month. [*With resentful bitterness*] But they turned out to be Vinnie's islands, not mine. They only made me sick—and the naked women disgusted me. I guess I'm too much of a Mannon, after all, to turn into a pagan. But you should have seen Vinnie with the men—!

LAVINIA [*indignantly but with a certain guiltiness*]. How can you—!

ORIN [*jeeringly*]. Handsome and romantic-looking, weren't they, Vinnie?—with colored rags around their middles and flowers stuck over their ears! Oh, she was a bit shocked at first by their dances, but afterwards she fell in love with the Islanders. If we'd stayed another month, I know I'd have found her some moonlight night dancing under the palm trees—as naked as the rest!

LAVINIA. Orin! Don't be disgusting!

ORIN [*points to the portraits mockingly*]. Picture, if you can, the feelings of the God-fearing Mannon dead at that spectacle!

LAVINIA [*with an anxious glance at* PETER]. How can you make up such disgusting fibs?

ORIN [*with a malicious chuckle*]. Oh, I wasn't as blind as I pretended to be! Do you remember Avahanni?

LAVINIA [*angrily*]. Stop talking like a fool! [*He subsides meekly again. She forces a smile and a motherly tone.*] You're a naughty boy, do you know it? What will Peter think? Of course, he knows you're only teasing me—but you shouldn't go on like that. It isn't nice. [*Then changing the subject abruptly*] Why don't you go and find Hazel? Here. Let me look at you. I want you to look your best when she sees you. [*She arranges him as a mother would a boy, pulling down his coat, giving a touch to his shirt and tie.* ORIN *straightens woodenly to a soldierly attention. She is vexed by this.*] Don't stand like a ramrod! You'd be so handsome if you'd only shave off that silly beard and not carry yourself like a tin soldier!

ORIN [*with a sly cunning air*]. Not look so much like Father, eh? More like a romantic clipper captain, is that it? [*As she starts and stares at him frightenedly, he smiles an ugly taunting smile.*] Don't look so frightened, Vinnie!

LAVINIA [*with an apprehensive glance at* PETER—*pleading and at the same time warning*]. Ssshh! You weren't to talk nonsense, remember! [*Giving him a final pat*] There! Now run along to Hazel.

ORIN [*looks from her to* PETER *suspiciously*]. You seem damned anxious to get rid of me. [*He turns and stalks stiffly with hurt dignity from the room.* LAVINIA *turns to* PETER. *The strain of* ORIN'S *conduct has told on her. She seems suddenly weak and frightened.*]

PETER [*in shocked amazement*]. What's come over him?

LAVINIA [*in a strained voice*]. It's the same thing—what the war did to him—and on top of that Father's death—and the shock of Mother's suicide.

PETER [*puts his arm around her impulsively—comfortingly*]. It'll be all right! Don't worry, Vinnie!

LAVINIA [*nestling against him gratefully*]. Thank you, Peter. You're so good. [*Then looking into his eyes*] Do you still love me, Peter?

PETER. Don't have to ask that, do you? [*He squeezes her awkwardly—then stammers*] But do you—think now—you maybe—can love me?

LAVINIA. Yes!

PETER. You really mean that!

LAVINIA. Yes! I do! I've thought of you so much! Things were always reminding me of you—the ship and the sea—everything

that was honest and clean! And the natives on the Islands reminded me of you too. They were so simple and fine— [*Then hastily*] You mustn't mind what Orin was saying about the Islands. He's become a regular bigoted Mannon.

PETER [*amazed*]. But, Vinnie—!

LAVINIA. Oh, I know it must sound funny hearing me talk like that. But remember I'm only half Mannon. [*She looks at the portraits defiantly.*] And I've done my duty by them! They can't say I haven't!

PETER [*mystified but happy*]. Gosh, you certainly have changed! But I'm darned glad!

LAVINIA. Orin keeps teasing that I was flirting with that native he spoke about, simply because he used to smile at me and I smiled back.

PETER [*teasingly*]. Now, I'm beginning to get jealous, too.

LAVINIA. You mustn't. He made me think of you. He made me dream of marrying you—and everything.

PETER. Oh, well then, I take it all back! I owe him a vote of thanks! [*He hugs her.*]

LAVINIA [*dreamily*]. I loved those Islands. They finished setting me free. There was something there mysterious and beautiful—a good spirit—of love—coming out of the land and sea. It made me forget death. There was no hereafter. There was only this world—the warm earth in the moonlight—the trade wind in the coco palms—the surf on the reef—the fires at night and the drum throbbing in my heart—the natives dancing naked and innocent—without knowledge of sin! [*She checks herself abruptly and frightenedly.*] But what in the world! I'm gabbing on like a regular chatterbox. You must think I've become awfully scatter-brained!

PETER [*with a chuckle*]. Gosh no! I'm glad you've grown that way! You never used to say a word unless you had to!

LAVINIA [*suddenly filled with grateful love for him, lets herself go and throws her arms around him*]. Oh, Peter, hold me close to you! I want to feel love! Love is all beautiful! I never used to know that! I was a fool! [*She kisses him passionately. He returns it, aroused and at the same time a little shocked by her boldness. She goes on longingly.*] We'll be married soon, won't we, and settle out in the country away from folks and their evil talk. We'll make an island for ourselves on land, and we'll have children and love them

hate and death! [*She gives a start—in a whisper as if to herself*] But I'm forgetting Orin!

PETER. What's Orin got to do with us marrying?

LAVINIA. I can't leave him—until he's all well again. I'd be afraid—

PETER. Let him live with us.

LAVINIA [*with sudden intensity*]. No! I want to be rid of the past. [*Then after a quick look at him—in a confiding tone*] I want to tell you what's wrong with Orin—so you and Hazel can help me. He feels guilty about Mother killing herself. You see, he'd had a quarrel with her that last night. He was jealous and mad and said things he was sorry for after and it preyed on his mind until he blames himself for her death.

PETER. But that's crazy!

LAVINIA. I know it is, Peter, but you can't do anything with him when he gets his morbid spells. Oh, I don't mean he's the way he is tonight most of the time. Usually he's like himself, only quiet and sad—so sad it breaks my heart to see him—like a little boy who's been punished for something he didn't do. Please tell Hazel what I've told you, so she'll make allowances for any crazy thing he might say.

PETER. I'll warn her. And now don't you worry any more about him. We'll get him all right again one way or another.

LAVINIA [*again grateful for his simple goodness—lovingly*]. Bless you, Peter! [*She kisses him. As she does so,* HAZEL *and* ORIN *appear in the doorway at rear.* HAZEL *is a bit shocked, then smiles happily.* ORIN *starts as if he'd been struck. He glares at them with jealous rage and clenches his fists as if he were going to attack them.*]

HAZEL [*with a teasing laugh*]. I'm afraid we're interrupting, Orin.

[PETER *and* VINNIE *jump apart in confusion.*]

ORIN [*threateningly*]. So that's it! By God—!

LAVINIA [*frightened but managing to be stern*]. Orin!

ORIN [*pulls himself up sharply—confusedly, forcing a sickly smile*]. Don't be so solemn—Fuss Buzzer! I was only trying to scare you—for a joke! [*Turning to* PETER *and holding out his hand, his smile becoming ghastly*] I suppose congratulations are in order. I—I'm glad.

[PETER *takes his hand awkwardly.* HAZEL *moves toward* LAVINIA *to greet her, her face full of an uneasy bewilderment.* LAVINIA *stares at* ORIN *with eyes full of dread.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE: *Same as Act Three of "The Hunted"*—EZRA MANNON'S *study—on an evening a month later. The shutters of the windows are closed. Candles on the mantel above the fireplace light up the portrait of* EZRA MANNON *in his judge's robes.* ORIN *is sitting in his father's chair at left of table, writing by the light of a lamp. A small pile of manuscript is stacked by his right hand. He is intent on his work. He has aged in the intervening month. He looks almost as old now as his father in the portrait. He is dressed in black and the resemblance between the two is uncanny. A grim smile of satisfaction twitches his lips as he stops writing and reads over the paragraph he has just finished. Then he puts the sheet down and stares up at the portrait, sitting back in his chair.*

ORIN [*sardonically, addressing the portrait*]. The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth! Is that what you're demanding, Father? Are you sure you want the whole truth? What will the neighbors say if this whole truth is ever known? [*He chuckles grimly.*] A ticklish decision for you, Your Honor! [*There is a knock on the door. He hastily grabs the script and puts it in the drawer of the desk.*] Who's there?

LAVINIA. It's I.

ORIN [*hastily locking the drawer and putting the key in his pocket*]. What do you want?

LAVINIA [*sharply*]. Please open the door!

ORIN. All right. In a minute. [*He hurriedly straightens up the table and grabs a book at random from the bookcase and lays it open on the table as if he had been reading. Then he unlocks the door and comes back to his chair as* LAVINIA *enters. She wears a green velvet gown similar to that worn by* CHRISTINE *in Act Three of "Homecoming." It sets off her hair and eyes. She is obviously concealing beneath a surface calm a sense of dread and desperation.*]

LAVINIA [*glances at him suspiciously, but forces a casual air*]. Why did you lock yourself in? [*She comes over to the table.*] What are you doing?

ORIN. Reading.

LAVINIA [*picks up the book*]. Father's law books?

ORIN [*mockingly*]. Why not? I'm considering studying law. He wanted me to, if you remember.

LAVINIA. Do you expect me to believe that, Orin? What is it you're really doing?

ORIN. Curious, aren't you?

LAVINIA [*forcing a smile*]. Good gracious, why wouldn't I be? You've acted so funny lately, locking yourself in here with the blinds closed and the lamp burning even in the daytime. It isn't good for you staying in this stuffy room in this weather. You ought to get out in the fresh air.

ORIN [*harshly*]. I hate the daylight. It's like an accusing eye! No, we've renounced the day, in which normal people live—or rather it has renounced us. Perpetual night—darkness of death in life—that's the fitting habitat for guilt! You believe you can escape that, but I'm not so foolish!

LAVINIA. Now you're being stupid again!

ORIN. And I find artificial light more appropriate for my work—man's light, not God's—man's feeble striving to understand himself, to exist for himself in the darkness! It's a symbol of his life—a lamp burning out in a room of waiting shadows!

LAVINIA [*sharply*]. Your work? What work?

ORIN [*mockingly*]. Studying the law of crime and punishment as you saw.

LAVINIA [*forcing a smile again and turning away from him*]. All right, if you won't tell me. Go on being mysterious, if you like. [*In a tense voice*] It's so close in here! It's suffocating! It's bad for you! [*She goes to the window and throws the shutters open and looks out.*] It's black as pitch tonight. There isn't a star.

ORIN [*somberly*]. Darkness without a star to guide us! Where are we going, Vinnie? [*Then with a mocking chuckle*] Oh, I know you think you know where you're going, but there's many a slip, remember!

LAVINIA [*her voice strident, as if her will were snapping*]. Be quiet! Can't you think of anything but— [*Then controlling herself, comes to him—gently*] I'm sorry. I'm terribly nervous tonight. It's the heat, I guess. And you get me so worried with your incessant brooding over the past. It's the worst thing for your health. [*She pats him on the arm—soothingly*] That's all I'm thinking about, dear.

ORIN. Thank you for your anxiety about my health! But I'm afraid there isn't much hope for you there! I happen to feel quite well!

LAVINIA [*whirling on him—distractedly*]. How can you insinuate such horrible—! [*Again controlling herself with a great effort, forcing a smile*] But you're only trying to rile me—and I'm not going to let you. I'm so glad you're feeling better. You ate a good supper tonight—for you. The long walk we took with Hazel did you good.

ORIN [*dully*]. Yes. [*He slumps down in his chair at left of table.*] Why is it you never leave me alone with her more than a minute? You approved of my asking her to marry me—and now we're engaged you never leave us alone! [*Then with a bitter smile*] But I know the reason well enough. You're afraid I'll let something slip.

LAVINIA [*sits in the chair opposite him—wearily*]. Can you blame me, the way you've been acting?

ORIN [*somberly*]. No. I'm afraid myself of being too long alone with her—afraid of myself. I have no right in the same world with her. And yet I feel so drawn to her purity! Her love for me makes me appear less vile to myself! [*Then with a harsh laugh*] And, at the same time, a million times more vile, that's the hell of it! So I'm afraid you can't hope to get rid of me through Hazel. She's another lost island! It's wiser for you to keep Hazel away from me, I warn you. Because when I see love for a murderer in her eyes my guilt crowds up in my throat like poisonous vomit and I long to spit it out—and confess!

LAVINIA [*in a low voice*]. Yes, that is what I live in terror of—that in one of your fits you'll say something before someone—now after it's all past and forgotten—when there isn't the slightest suspicion—

ORIN [*harshly*]. Were you hoping you could escape retribution? You can't! Confess and atone to the full extent of the law! That's the only way to wash the guilt of our mother's blood from our souls!

LAVINIA [*distractedly*]. Ssshh! Will you stop!

ORIN. Ask our father, the Judge, if it isn't! He knows! He keeps telling me!

LAVINIA. Oh, God! Over and over and over! Will you never lose your stupid guilty conscience! Don't you see how you torture me? You're becoming my guilty conscience, too! [*With an instinctive*

flare-up of her old jealousy] How can you still love that vile woman so—when you know all she wanted was to leave you without a thought and marry that—

ORIN [*with fierce accusation*]. Yes! Exactly as you're scheming now to leave me and marry Peter! But, by God, you won't! You'll damn soon stop your tricks when you know what I've been writing!

LAVINIA [*tensely*]. What have you written?

ORIN [*his anger turned to gloating satisfaction*]. Ah! That frightens you, does it? Well, you better be frightened!

LAVINIA. Tell me what you've written!

ORIN. None of your damned business.

LAVINIA. I've got to know!

ORIN. Well, as I've practically finished it—I suppose I might as well tell you. At his earnest solicitation— [*he waves a hand to the portrait mockingly*]—as the last male Mannon—thank God for that, eh!— I've been writing the history of our family! [*He adds with a glance at the portrait and a malicious chuckle*] But I don't wish to convey that he approves of all I've set down—not by a damned sight!

LAVINIA [*trying to keep calm—tensely*]. What kind of history do you mean?

ORIN. A true history of all the family crimes, beginning with Grandfather Abe's—all of the crimes, including ours, do you understand?

LAVINIA [*aghast*]. Do you mean to tell me you've actually written—

ORIN. Yes! I've tried to trace to its secret hiding place in the Mannon past the evil destiny behind our lives! I thought if I could see it clearly in the past I might be able to foretell what fate is in store for us, Vinnie—but I haven't dared predict that—not yet—although I can guess— [*He gives a sinister chuckle.*]

LAVINIA. Orin!

ORIN. Most of what I've written is about you! I found you the most interesting criminal of us all!

LAVINIA [*breaking*]. How can you say such dreadful things to me, after all I—

ORIN [*as if he hadn't heard—inexorably*]. So many strange hidden things out of the Mannon past combine in you! For one example, do you remember the first mate, Wilkins, on the voyage to Frisco? Oh, I know you thought I was in a stupor of grief—but I wasn't blind! I saw how you wanted him!

LAVINIA [*angrily, but with a trace of guilty confusion*]. I never gave him a thought! He was an officer of the ship to me, and nothing more!

ORIN [*mockingly*]. Adam Brant was a ship's officer, too, wasn't he? Wilkins reminded you of Brant—

LAVINIA. No!

ORIN. And that's why you suddenly discarded mourning in Frisco and bought new clothes—in Mother's colors!

LAVINIA [*furiously*]. Stop talking about her! You'd think, to hear you, I had no life of my own!

ORIN. You wanted Wilkins just as you'd wanted Brant!

LAVINIA. That's a lie!

ORIN. You're doing the lying! You know damned well that behind all your pretense about Mother's murder being an act of justice was your jealous hatred! She warned me of that and I see it clearly now! You wanted Brant for yourself!

LAVINIA [*fiercely*]. It's a lie! I hated him!

ORIN. Yes, after you knew he was her lover! [*He chuckles with a sinister mockery.*] But we'll let that pass for the present—I know it's the last thing you could ever admit to yourself!—and come to what I've written about your adventures on my lost islands. Or should I say, Adam Brant's islands! He had been there too, if you'll remember! Probably he'd lived with one of the native women! He was that kind! Were you thinking of that when we were there?

LAVINIA [*chokingly*]. Stop it! I—I warn you—I won't bear it much longer!

ORIN [*as if he hadn't heard—in the same sinister mocking tone*]. What a paradise the Islands were for you, eh? All those handsome men staring at you and your strange beautiful hair! It was then you finally became pretty—like Mother! You knew they all desired you, didn't you? It filled you with pride! Especially Avahanni! You watched him stare at your body through your clothes, stripping you naked! And you wanted him!

LAVINIA. No!

ORIN. Don't lie! [*He accuses her with fierce jealousy.*] What did you do with him the night I was sick and you went to watch their shameless dance? Something happened between you! I saw your face when you came back and stood with him in front of our hut!

LAVINIA [*quietly—with simple dignity now*]. I had kissed him good night, that was all—in gratitude! He was innocent and good.

He had made me feel for the first time in my life that everything about love could be sweet and natural.

ORIN. So you kissed him, did you? And that was all?

LAVINIA [*with a sudden flare of deliberately evil taunting that recalls her mother in the last act of "Homecoming," when she was goading Ezra Mannon to fury just before his murder*]. And what if it wasn't? I'm not your property! I have a right to love!

ORIN [*reacting as his father had—his face grown livid—with a hoarse cry of fury grabs her by the throat*]. You—you whore! I'll kill you! [*Then suddenly he breaks down and becomes weak and pitiful.*] No! You're lying about him, aren't you? For God's sake, tell me you're lying, Vinnie!

LAVINIA [*strangely shaken and trembling—stammers*]. Yes—it was a lie—how could you believe I—Oh, Orin, something made me say that to you—against my will—something rose up in me—like an evil spirit!

ORIN [*laughs wildly*]. Ghosts! You never seemed so much like Mother as you did just then!

LAVINIA [*pleading distractedly*]. Don't talk about it! Let's forget it ever happened! Forgive me! Please forget it!

ORIN. All right—if the ghosts will let us forget! [*He stares at her fixedly for a moment—then satisfied*] I believe you about Avahanni. I never really suspected, or I'd have killed him—and you, too! I hope you know that! [*Then with his old obsessed insistence*] But you were guilty in your mind just the same!

LAVINIA [*in a flash of distracted anger*]. Stop harping on that! Stop torturing me or I—! I've warned you! I warn you again! I can't bear any more! I won't!

ORIN [*with a mocking diabolical sneer—quietly*]. Then why don't you murder me? I'll help you plan it, as we planned Brant's, so there will be no suspicion on you! And I'll be grateful! I loathe my life!

LAVINIA [*speechless with horror—can only gasp*]. Oh!

ORIN [*with a quiet mad insistence*]. Can't you see I'm now in Father's place and you're Mother? That's the evil destiny out of the past I haven't dared predict! I'm the Mannon you're chained to! So isn't it plain—

LAVINIA [*putting her hands over her ears*]. For God's sake, won't you be quiet! [*Then suddenly her horror turning into a violent rage —unconsciously repeating the exact threat she had goaded her mother*

to make to her in Act Two of "Homecoming."] Take care, Orin! You'll be responsible if—! [*She stops abruptly, terrified by her own words.*]

ORIN [*with a diabolical mockery*]. If what? If I should die mysteriously of heart failure?

LAVINIA. Leave me alone! Leave me alone! Don't keep saying that! How can you be so horrible? Don't you know I'm your sister, who loves you, who would give her life to bring you peace?

ORIN [*with a change to a harsh threatening tone*]. I don't believe you! I know you're plotting something! But you look out! I'll be watching you! And I warn you I won't stand your leaving me for Peter! I'm going to put this confession I've written in safe hands—to be read in case you try to marry him—or if I should die—

LAVINIA [*frantically grabbing his arm and shaking him fiercely*]. Stop having such thoughts! Stop making me have them! You're like a devil torturing me! I won't listen! [*She breaks down and sobs brokenly.* ORIN *stares at her dazedly—seems half to come back to his natural self and the wild look fades from his eyes leaving them glazed and lifeless.*]

ORIN [*strangely*]. Don't cry. The damned don't cry. [*He slumps down heavily in his father's chair and stares at the floor. Suddenly he says harshly again*] Go away, will you? I want to be alone—to finish my work. [*Still sobbing, her hand over her eyes,* LAVINIA *feels blindly for the door and goes out closing it after her.* ORIN *unlocks the table drawer, pulls out his manuscript, and takes up his pen.*]

CURTAIN

act 3

SCENE: *Same as Act One, Scene Two—the sitting-room. The lamp on the table is lighted but turned low. Two candles are burning on the mantel over the fireplace at right, shedding their flickering light on the portrait of* ABE MANNON *above, and of the other Mannons on the walls on each side of him. The eyes of the portraits seem to possess an intense bitter life, with their frozen stare "looking over the head of life, cutting it dead for the impropriety of living," as* ORIN *had said of his father in Act Two of "The Hunted."*

No time has elapsed since the preceding act. LAVINIA *enters from the hall in the rear, having just come from the study. She comes to the table and turns up the lamp. She is in a terrific state of tension. The corners of her mouth twitch, she twines and untwines the fingers of her clasped hands with a slow wringing movement which recalls her mother in the last Act of "The Hunted."*

LAVINIA [*torturedly—begins to pace up and down, muttering her thoughts aloud*]. I can't bear it! Why does he keep putting his death in my head? He would be better off if— Why hasn't he the courage—? [*Then in a frenzy of remorseful anguish, her eyes unconsciously seeking the Mannon portraits on the right wall, as if they were the visible symbol of her God*] Oh, God, don't let me have such thoughts! You know I love Orin! Show me the way to save him! Don't let me think of death! I couldn't bear another death! Please! Please! [*At a noise from the hall she controls herself and pretends to be glancing through a book on the table.* SETH *appears in the doorway.*]

SETH. Vinnie!

LAVINIA. What is it, Seth?

SETH. That durned idjut, Hannah, is throwin' fits agin. Went down cellar and says she felt ha'nts crawlin' behind her. You'd better come and git her calmed down—or she'll be leavin'. [*Then he adds disgustedly*] That's what we git fur freein' 'em!

LAVINIA [*wearily*]. All right. I'll talk to her. [*She goes out with* SETH. *A pause. Then a ring from the front door bell. A moment later* SETH *can be seen coming back along the hall. He opens the front door and is heard greeting* HAZEL *and* PETER *and follows them in as they enter the room.*]

SETH. Vinnie's back seein' to somethin'. You set down and she'll be here soon as she kin.

PETER. All right, Seth.

[SETH *goes out again. They come forward and sit down.* PETER *looks hearty and good-natured, the same as ever, but* HAZEL'S *face wears a nervous, uneasy look although her air is determined.*]

PETER. I'll have to run along soon and drop in at the Council meeting. I can't get out of it. I'll be back in half an hour—maybe sooner.

HAZEL [*suddenly with a little shiver*]. I hate this house now. I hate coming here. If it wasn't for Orin— He's getting worse. Keeping him shut up here is the worst thing Vinnie could do.

PETER. He won't go out. You know very well she has to force him to walk with you.

HAZEL. And comes along herself! Never leaves him alone hardly a second!

PETER [*with a grin*]. Oh, that's what you've got against her, eh?

HAZEL [*sharply*]. Don't be silly, Peter! I simply think, and I'd say it to her face, that she's a bad influence for Orin! I feel there's something awfully wrong—somehow. He scares me at times—and Vinnie—I've watched her looking at you. She's changed so. There's something bold about her.

PETER [*getting up*]. If you're going to talk like that—! You ought to be ashamed, Hazel!

HAZEL. Well, I'm not! I've got some right to say something about how he's cared for! And I'm going to from now on! I'm going to make her let him visit us for a spell. I've asked Mother and she'll be glad to have him.

PETER. Say, I think that's a darned good notion for both of them. She needs a rest from him, too.

HAZEL. Vinnie doesn't think it's a good notion! I mentioned it yesterday and she gave me such a look! [*Determinedly*] But I'm going to make him promise to come over tomorrow, no matter what she says!

PETER [*soothingly, patting her shoulder*]. Don't get angry now—about nothing. I'll help you persuade her to let him come. [*Then with a grin*] I'll help you do anything to help Orin get well—if only for selfish reasons. As long as Vinnie's tied down to him we can't get married.

HAZEL [*stares at him—slowly*]. Do you really want to marry her—now?

PETER. Why do you ask such a fool question? What do you mean, do I want to now?

HAZEL [*her voice trembles and she seems about to burst into tears*]. Oh, I don't know, Peter! I don't know!

PETER [*sympathetic and at the same time exasperated*]. What in the dickens is the matter with you?

HAZEL [*hears a noise from the hall and collects herself—warningly*]. Ssshh!

[ORIN *appears in the doorway at rear. He glances at them, then quickly around the room to see if* LAVINIA *is there. They both greet him with "Hello, Orin."*]

ORIN. Hello! [*Then in an excited whisper, coming to them*] Where's Vinnie?

HAZEL. She's gone to see to something, Seth said.

PETER [*glancing at his watch*]. Gosh, I've got to hurry to that darned Council meeting.

ORIN [*eagerly*]. You're going?

PETER [*jokingly*]. You needn't look so darned tickled about it! It isn't polite!

ORIN. I've got to see Hazel alone!

PETER. All right! You don't have to put me out! [*He grins, slapping* ORIN *on the back and goes out.* ORIN *follows him with his eyes until he hears the front door close behind him.*]

ORIN [*turning to* HAZEL—*with queer furtive excitement*]. Listen, Hazel! I want you to do something! But wait! I've got to get—[*He rushes out and can be heard going across the hall to the study.* HAZEL *looks after him worriedly. A moment later he hurries back with a big sealed envelope in his hand which he gives to* HAZEL, *talking breathlessly, with nervous jerks of his head, as he glances apprehensively at the door.*] Here! Take this! Quick! Don't let her see it! I want you to keep it in a safe place and never let anyone know you have it! It will be stolen if I keep it here! I know her! Will you promise?

HAZEL. But—what is it, Orin?

ORIN. I can't tell you. You mustn't ask me. And you must promise never to open it—unless something happens to me.

HAZEL [*frightened by his tone*]. What do you mean?

ORIN. I mean if I should die—or—but this is the most important, if she tries to marry Peter—the day before the wedding—I want you to make Peter read what's inside.

HAZEL. You don't want her to marry Peter?

ORIN. No! She can't have happiness! She's got to be punished! [*Suddenly taking her hand—excitedly*] And listen, Hazel! You mustn't love me any more. The only love I can know now is the love of guilt for guilt which breeds more guilt—until you get so deep at the bottom of hell there is no lower you can sink and you rest there in peace! [*He laughs harshly and turns away from her.*]

HAZEL. Orin! Don't talk like that! [*Then conquering her horror—resolutely tender and soothing*] Ssshh! Poor boy! Come here to

me. [*He comes to her. She puts an arm around him.*] Listen. I know something is worrying you—and I don't want to seem prying—but I've had such a strong feeling at times that it would relieve your mind if you could tell me what it is. Haven't you thought that, Orin?

ORIN [*longingly*]. Yes! Yes! I want to confess to your purity! I want to be forgiven! [*Then checking himself abruptly as he is about to speak—dully*] No. I can't. Don't ask me. I love her.

HAZEL. But, you silly boy, Vinnie told Peter herself what it is and told him to tell me.

ORIN [*staring at her wildly*]. What did she tell?

HAZEL. About your having a quarrel with your poor mother that night before she—and how you've brooded over it until you blame yourself for her death.

ORIN [*harshly*]. I see! So in case I did tell you—oh, she's cunning! But not cunning enough this time! [*Vindictively*] You remember what I've given you, Hazel, and you do exactly what I said with it. [*Then with desperate pleading*] For God's sake, Hazel, if you love me help me to get away from here—or something terrible will happen!

HAZEL. That's just what I want to do! You come over tomorrow and stay with us.

ORIN [*bitterly*]. Do you suppose for a moment she'll ever let me go?

HAZEL. But haven't you a right to do as you want to?

ORIN [*furtively*]. I could sneak out when she wasn't looking—and then you could hide me and when she came for me tell her I wasn't there.

HAZEL [*indignantly*]. I won't do any such thing! I don't tell lies, Orin! [*Then scornfully*] How can you be so scared of Vinnie?

ORIN [*hearing a noise from the hall—hastily*]. Ssshh! She's coming! Don't let her see what I gave you. And go home right away and lock it up! [*He tiptoes away as if he were afraid of being found close to her and sits on the sofa at right, adopting a suspiciously careless attitude.* HAZEL *looks self-conscious and stiff.* LAVINIA *appears in the doorway and gives a start as she sees* HAZEL *and* ORIN *are alone. She quickly senses something in the atmosphere and glances sharply from one to the other as she comes into the room.*]

LAVINIA [*to* HAZEL, *forcing a casual air*]. I'm sorry being so long.

HAZEL. I didn't mind waiting.

LAVINIA [*sitting down on the chair at center*]. Where's Peter?

HAZEL. He had to go to a Council meeting. He's coming back.

LAVINIA [*uneasiness creeping into her tone*]. Has he been gone long?

HAZEL. Not very long.

LAVINIA [*turning to* ORIN—*sharply*]. I thought you were in the study.

ORIN [*sensing her uneasiness—mockingly*]. I finished what I was working on.

LAVINIA. You finished—? [*She glances sharply at* HAZEL—*forcing a joking tone*] My, but you two look mysterious! What have you been up to?

HAZEL [*trying to force a laugh*]. Why, Vinnie? What makes you think—?

LAVINIA. You're hiding something.

[HAZEL *gives a start and instinctively moves the hand with the envelope farther behind her back.* LAVINIA *notices this. So does* ORIN *who uneasily comes to* HAZEL'S *rescue.*]

ORIN. We're not hiding anything. Hazel has invited me over to their house to stay for a while—and I'm going.

HAZEL [*backing him up resolutely*]. Yes. Orin is coming tomorrow.

LAVINIA [*alarmed and resentful—coldly*]. It's kind of you. I know you mean it for the best. But he can't go.

HAZEL [*sharply*]. Why not?

LAVINIA. I don't care to discuss it, Hazel. You ought to know—

HAZEL [*angrily*]. I don't know! Orin is of age and can go where he pleases!

ORIN. Let her talk all she likes, Hazel. I'll have the upper hand for a change, from now on!

[LAVINIA *looks at him, frightened by the triumphant satisfaction in his voice.*]

HAZEL [*anxious to score her point and keep* ORIN'S *mind on it*]. I should think you'd be glad. It will be the best thing in the world for him.

LAVINIA [*turns on her—angrily*]. I'll ask you to please mind your own business, Hazel!

HAZEL [*springs to her feet, in her anger forgetting to hide the envelope which she now holds openly in her hand*]. It is my business! I love Orin better than you! I don't think you love him at all, the way you've been acting!

ORIN [*sees the envelope in plain sight and calls to her warningly*]. Hazel! [*She catches his eye and hastily puts her hand behind her.* LAVINIA *sees the movement but doesn't for a moment realize the meaning of it.* ORIN *goes on warningly.*] You said you had to go home early. I don't want to remind you but—

HAZEL [*hastily*]. Yes, I really must. [*Starting to go, trying to keep the envelope hidden, aware that* LAVINIA *is watching her suspiciously—defiantly to* ORIN] We'll expect you tomorrow, and have your room ready. [*Then to* LAVINIA—*coldly*] After the way you've insulted me, Vinnie, I hope you realize there's no more question of any friendship between us. [*She tries awkwardly to sidle toward the door.*]

LAVINIA [*suddenly gets between her and the door—with angry accusation*]. What are you hiding behind your back? [HAZEL *flushes guiltily, but refusing to lie, says nothing.* LAVINIA *turns on* ORIN.] Have you given her what you've written? [*As he hesitates—violently*] Answer me!

ORIN. That's my business! What if I have?

LAVINIA. You—you traitor! You coward! [*Fiercely to* HAZEL] Give it to me! Do you hear?

HAZEL. Vinnie! How dare you talk that way to me! [*She tries to go but* LAVINIA *keeps directly between her and the door.*]

LAVINIA. You shan't leave here until—! [*Then breaking down and pleading*] Orin! Think what you're doing! Tell her to give it to me!

ORIN. No!

LAVINIA [*goes and puts her arms around him—beseechingly as he avoids her eyes*]. Think sanely for a moment! You can't do this! You're a Mannon!

ORIN [*harshly*]. It's because I'm one!

LAVINIA. For Mother's sake, you can't! You loved her!

ORIN. A lot she cared! Don't call on her!

LAVINIA [*desperately*]. For my sake, then! You know I love you! Make Hazel give that up and I'll do anything—anything you want me to!

ORIN [*stares into her eyes, bending his head until his face is close to hers—with morbid intensity*]. You mean that?

LAVINIA [*shrinking back from him—falteringly*]. Yes.

ORIN [*laughs with a crazy triumph—checks this abruptly—and goes to* HAZEL *who has been standing bewilderedly, not understand-*

ing what is behind their talk but sensing something sinister, and terribly frightened. ORIN *speaks curtly, his eyes fixed on* LAVINIA.] Let me have it, Hazel.

HAZEL [*hands him the envelope—in a trembling voice*]. I'll go home. I suppose—we can't expect you tomorrow—now.

ORIN. No. Forget me. The Orin you loved was killed in the war. [*With a twisted smile*] Remember only that dead hero and not his rotting ghost! Good-bye! [*Then harshly*] Please go! [HAZEL *begins to sob and hurries blindly from the room.* ORIN *comes back to* LAVINIA *who remains kneeling by the chair. He puts the envelope in her hand—harshly*] Here! You realize the promise you made means giving up Peter? And never seeing him again?

LAVINIA [*tensely*]. Yes.

ORIN. And I suppose you think that's all it means, that I'll be content with a promise I've forced out of you, which you'll always be plotting to break? Oh, no! I'm not such a fool! I've got to be sure—[*She doesn't reply or look at him. He stares at her and slowly a distorted look of desire comes over his face.*] You said you would do anything for me. That's a large promise, Vinnie—anything!

LAVINIA [*shrinking from him*]. What do you mean? What terrible thing have you been thinking lately—behind all your crazy talk? No, I don't want to know! Orin! Why do you look at me like that?

ORIN. You don't seem to feel all you mean to me now—all you have made yourself mean—since we murdered Mother!

LAVINIA. Orin!

ORIN. I love you now with all the guilt in me—the guilt we share! Perhaps I love you too much, Vinnie!

LAVINIA. You don't know what you're saying!

ORIN. There are times now when you don't seem to be my sister, nor Mother, but some stranger with the same beautiful hair— [*He touches her hair caressingly. She pulls violently away. He laughs wildly.*] Perhaps you're Marie Brantôme, eh? And you say there are no ghosts in this house?

LAVINIA [*staring at him with fascinated horror*]. For God's sake—! No! You're insane! You can't mean—!

ORIN. How else can I be sure you won't leave me? You would never dare leave me—then! You would feel as guilty then as I do! You would be as damned as I am! [*Then with sudden anger as he sees the growing horrified repulsion on her face*] Damn you, don't you see I must find some certainty some way or go mad? You don't want me to go mad, do you? I would talk too much! I would con-

fess! [*Then as if the word stirred something within him his tone instantly changes to one of passionate pleading.*] Vinnie! For the love of God, let's go now and confess and pay the penalty for Mother's murder, and find peace together!

LAVINIA [*tempted and tortured, in a longing whisper*]. Peace! [*Then summoning her will, springs to her feet wildly*] No! You coward! There is nothing to confess! There was only justice!

ORIN [*turns and addresses the portraits on the wall with a crazy mockery*]. You hear her? You'll find Lavinia Mannon harder to break than me! You'll have to haunt and hound her for a lifetime!

LAVINIA [*her control snapping—turning on him now in a burst of frantic hatred and rage*]. I hate you! I wish you were dead! You're too vile to live! You'd kill yourself if you weren't a coward!

ORIN [*starts back as if he'd been struck, the tortured mad look on his face changing to a stricken terrified expression*]. Vinnie!

LAVINIA. I mean it! I mean it! [*She breaks down and sobs hysterically.*]

ORIN [*in a pitiful pleading whisper*]. Vinnie! [*He stares at her with the lost stricken expression for a moment more—then the obsessed wild look returns to his eyes—with harsh mockery*] Another act of justice, eh? You want to drive me to suicide as I drove Mother! An eye for an eye, is that it? But— [*He stops abruptly and stares before him, as if this idea were suddenly taking hold of his tortured imagination and speaks fascinatedly to himself.*] Yes! That would be justice—now you are Mother! She is speaking now through you! [*More and more hypnotized by this train of thought*] Yes! It's the way to peace—to find her again—my lost island—Death is an Island of Peace, too—Mother will be waiting for me there— [*With excited eagerness now, speaking to the dead*] Mother! Do you know what I'll do then? I'll get on my knees and ask your forgiveness—and say— [*His mouth grows convulsed, as if he were retching up poison.*] I'll say, I'm glad you found love, Mother! I'll wish you happiness—you and Adam! [*He laughs exultantly.*] You've heard me! You're here in the house now! You're calling me! You're waiting to take me home! [*He turns and strides toward the door.*]

LAVINIA [*who has raised her head and has been staring at him with dread during the latter part of his talk—torn by remorse, runs after him and throws her arms around him*]. No, Orin! No!

ORIN [*pushes her away—with a rough brotherly irritation*]. Get out of my way, can't you? Mother's waiting! [*He gets to the door. Then he turns back and says sharply*] Ssshh! Here's Peter! Shut

up, now! [*He steps back in the room as* PETER *appears in the doorway.*]

PETER. Excuse my coming right in. The door was open. Where's Hazel?

ORIN [*with unnatural casualness*]. Gone home. [*Then with a quick, meaning, mocking glance at* LAVINIA] I'm just going in the study to clean my pistol. Darn thing's gotten so rusty. Glad you came now, Peter. You can keep Vinnie company. [*He turns and goes out the door.* PETER *stares after him puzzledly.*]

LAVINIA [*with a stifled cry*]. Orin! [*There is no answer but the sound of the study door being shut. She starts to run after him, stops herself, then throws herself into* PETER'S *arms, as if for protection against herself and begins to talk volubly to drown out thought.*] Hold me close, Peter! Nothing matters but love, does it? That must come first! No price is too great, is it? Or for peace! One must have peace—one is too weak to forget—no one has the right to keep anyone from peace! [*She makes a motion to cover her ears with her hands.*]

PETER [*alarmed by her hectic excitement*]. He's a darned fool to monkey with a pistol—in his state. Shall I get it away from him?

LAVINIA [*holding him tighter—volubly*]. Oh, won't it be wonderful, Peter—once we're married and have a home with a garden and trees! We'll be so happy! I love everything that grows simply—up toward the sun—everything that's straight and strong! I hate what's warped and twists and eats into itself and dies for a lifetime in shadow. [*Then her voice rising as if it were about to break hysterically—again with the instinctive movement to cover her ears*] I can't bear waiting—waiting and waiting and waiting—! [*There is a muffled shot from the study across the hall.*]

PETER [*breaking from her and running for the door*]. Good God! What's that? [*He rushes into the hall.*]

LAVINIA [*sags weakly and supports herself against the table—in a faint, trembling voice*]. Orin! Forgive me! [*She controls herself with a terrible effort of will. Her mouth congeals into a frozen line. Mechanically she hides the sealed envelope in a drawer of the table and locks the drawer.*] I've got to go in— [*She turns to go and her eyes catch the eyes of the* MANNONS *in the portraits fixed accusingly on her—defiantly*] Why do you look at me like that? Wasn't it the only way to keep your secret, too? But I'm through with you forever now, do you hear? I'm Mother's daughter—not one of you! I'll live in spite of you! [*She squares her shoulders, with*

a return of the abrupt military movement copied from her father which she had of old—as if by the very act of disowning the MANNONS *she had returned to the fold—and marches stiffly from the room.*]

CURTAIN

act 4

SCENE: *Same as Act One, Scene One—exterior of the house. It is in the late afternoon of a day three days later. The Mannon house has much the same appearance as it had in the first act of "Homecoming." Soft golden sunlight shimmers in a luminous mist on the Greek temple portico, intensifying the whiteness of the columns, the deep green of the shutters, the green of the shrubbery, the black and green of the pines. The columns cast black bars of shadow on the gray stone wall behind them. The shutters are all fastened back, the windows open. On the ground floor, the upper part of the windows, raised from the bottom, reflect the sun in a smouldering stare, as of brooding revengeful eyes.*

SETH *appears walking slowly up the drive from right, front. He has a pair of grass clippers and potters along pretending to trim the edge of the lawn along the drive. But in reality he is merely killing time, chewing tobacco, and singing mournfully to himself, in his aged, plaintive wraith of a once good baritone, the chanty "Shenandoah":*

SETH.

"Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you
A-way, my rolling river,
Oh, Shenandoah, I can't get near you
Way-ay, I'm bound away
Across the wide Missouri.

"Oh, Shenandoah, I love your daughter
A-way, you rolling river."

SETH [*stops singing and stands peering off left toward the flower garden—shakes his head and mutters to himself*]. There she be pickin' my flowers agin. Like her Maw used to—on'y wuss. She's

got every room in the house full of 'em a'ready. Durn it, I hoped she'd stop that once the funeral was over. There won't be a one left in my garden! [*He looks away and begins pottering about again, and mutters grimly*] A durn queer thin' fur a sodger to kill himself cleanin' his gun, folks is sayin'. They'll fight purty shy of her now. A Mannon has come to mean sudden death to 'em. [*Then with a grim pride*] But Vinnie's able fur 'em. They'll never git her to show nothin'. Clean Mannon strain!

[LAVINIA *enters from the left. The three days that have intervened have effected a remarkable change in her. Her body, dressed in deep mourning, again appears flat-chested and thin. The* MANNON *mask-semblance of her face appears intensified now. It is deeply lined, haggard with sleeplessness and strain, congealed into a stony emotionless expression. Her lips are bloodless, drawn taut in a grim line. She is carrying a large bunch of flowers. She holds them out to* SETH *and speaks in a strange, empty voice.*]

LAVINIA. Take these, Seth, and give them to Hannah. Tell her to set them around inside. I want the house to be full of flowers. Peter is coming, and I want everything to be pretty and cheerful. [*She goes and sits at the top of the steps, bolt upright, her arms held stiffly to her sides, her legs and feet pressed together, and stares back into the sun-glare with unblinking, frozen, defiant eyes.*]

SETH [*stands holding the flowers and regarding her worriedly.*] I seed you settin' out here on the steps when I got up at five this mornin'—and every mornin' since Orin— Ain't you been gittin' no sleep? [*She stares before her as if she had not heard him. He goes on coaxingly.*] How'd you like if I hauled one of them sofas out fur you to lie on, Vinnie? Mebbe you could take a couple o' winks an' it'd do you good.

LAVINIA. No, thank you, Seth. I'm waiting for Peter. [*Then after a pause, curiously*] Why didn't you tell me to go in the house and lie down? [SETH *pretends not to hear the question, avoiding her eyes.*] You understand, don't you? You've been with us Mannons so long! You know there's no rest in this house which Grandfather built as a temple of Hate and Death!

SETH [*blurts out*]. Don't you try to live here, Vinnie! You marry Peter and git clear!

LAVINIA. I'm going to marry him! And I'm going away with him and forget this house and all that ever happened in it!

SETH. That's talkin', Vinnie!

LAVINIA. I'll close it up and leave it in the sun and rain to die. The portraits of the Mannons will rot on the walls and the ghosts will fade back into death. And the Mannons will be forgotten. I'm the last and I won't be one long. I'll be Mrs. Peter Niles. Then they're finished! Thank God! [*She leans back in the sunlight and closes her eyes.* SETH *stares at her worriedly, shakes his head and spits. Then he hears something and peers down the drive, off left.*]

SETH. Vinnie. Here's Hazel comin'.

LAVINIA [*jerks up stiffly with a look of alarm*]. Hazel? What does she want? [*She springs up as if she were going to run in the house, then stands her ground on the top of the steps, her voice hardening.*] Seth, you go work in back, please!

SETH. Ayeh. [*He moves slowly off behind the lilacs as* HAZEL *enters from left, front—calling back*] Evenin', Hazel.

HAZEL. Good evening, Seth. [*She stops short and stares at* LAVINIA. LAVINIA'S *eyes are hard and defiant as she stares back.* HAZEL *is dressed in mourning. Her face is sad and pale, her eyes show evidence of much weeping, but there is an air of stubborn resolution about her as she makes up her mind and walks to the foot of the steps.*]

LAVINIA. What do you want? I've got a lot to attend to.

HAZEL [*quietly*]. It won't take me long to say what I've come to say, Vinnie. [*Suddenly she bursts out*] It's a lie about Orin killing himself by accident! I know it is! He meant to!

LAVINIA. You better be careful what you say. I can prove what happened. Peter was here—

HAZEL. I don't care what anyone says!

LAVINIA. I should think you'd be the last one to accuse Orin—

HAZEL. I'm not accusing him! Don't you dare say that! I'm accusing you! You drove him to it! Oh, I know I can't prove it—any more than I can prove a lot of things Orin hinted at! But I know terrible things must have happened—and that you're to blame for them, somehow!

LAVINIA [*concealing a start of fear—changing to a forced reproachful tone*]. What would Orin think of you coming here the day of his funeral to accuse me of the sorrow that's afflicted our family?

HAZEL [*feeling guilty and at the same time defiant and sure she is right*]. All right, Vinnie. I won't say anything more. But I know there's something—and so do you—something that was driving Orin crazy— [*She breaks down and sobs.*] Poor Orin!

LAVINIA [*stares straight before her. Her lips twitch. In a stifled voice between her clenched teeth*]. Don't—do that!

HAZEL [*controlling herself—after a pause*]. I'm sorry. I didn't come to talk about Orin.

LAVINIA [*uneasily*]. What did you come for?

HAZEL. About Peter.

LAVINIA [*as if this were something she had been dreading—harshly*]. You leave Peter and me alone!

HAZEL. I won't! You're not going to marry Peter and ruin his life! [*Pleading now*] You can't! Don't you see he could never be happy with you, that you'll only drag him into this terrible thing—whatever it is—and make him share it?

LAVINIA. There is no terrible thing!

HAZEL. I know Peter can't believe evil of anyone, but living alone with you, married, you couldn't hide it, he'd get to feel what I feel. You could never be happy because it would come between you! [*Pleading again*] Oh, Vinnie, you've got to be fair to Peter! You've got to consider his happiness—if you really love him!

LAVINIA [*hoarsely*]. I do love him!

HAZEL. It has started already—his being made unhappy through you!

LAVINIA. You're lying!

HAZEL. He fought with Mother last night when she tried to talk to him—the first time he ever did such a thing! It isn't like Peter. You've changed him. He left home and went to the hotel to stay. He said he'd never speak to Mother or me again. He's always been such a wonderful son before—and brother. We three have been so happy. It's broken Mother's heart. All she does is sit and cry. [*Desperately*] Oh, Vinnie, you can't do it! You will be punished if you do! Peter would get to hate you in the end!

LAVINIA. No!

HAZEL. Do you want to take the risk of driving Peter to do what Orin did? He might—if he ever discovered the truth!

LAVINIA [*violently*]. What truth, you little fool! Discover what?

HAZEL [*accusingly*]. I don't know—but you know! Look in your heart and ask your conscience before God if you ought to marry Peter!

LAVINIA [*desperately—at the end of her tether*]. Yes! Before God! Before anything! [*Then glaring at her—with a burst of rage*] You leave me alone—go away—or I'll get Orin's pistol and kill you!

[*Her rage passes, leaving her weak and shaken. She goes to her chair and sinks on it.*]

HAZEL [*recoiling*]. Oh! You are wicked! I believe you would—! Vinnie! What's made you like this?

LAVINIA. Go away!

HAZEL. Vinnie! [LAVINIA *closes her eyes.* HAZEL *stands staring at her. After a pause—in a trembling voice*] All right. I'll go. All I can do is trust you. I know in your heart you can't be dead to all honor and justice—you, a Mannon! [LAVINIA *gives a little bitter laugh without opening her eyes.*] At least you owe it to Peter to let him read what Orin had in that envelope. Orin asked me to make him read it before he married you. I've told Peter about that, Vinnie.

LAVINIA [*without opening her eyes—strangely, as if to herself*]. The dead! Why can't the dead die!

HAZEL [*stares at her frightenedly, not knowing what to do—looks around her uncertainly and sees someone coming from off left, front—quickly*]. Here he comes now. I'll go by the back. I don't want him to meet me. [*She starts to go but stops by the clump of lilacs—pityingly*] I know you're suffering, Vinnie—and I know your conscience will make you do what's right—and God will forgive you. [*She goes quickly behind the lilacs and around the house to the rear.*]

LAVINIA [*looks after her and calls defiantly*]. I'm not asking God or anybody for forgiveness. I forgive myself! [*She leans back and closes her eyes again—bitterly*] I hope there is a hell for the good somewhere!

[PETER *enters from the left, front. He looks haggard and tormented. He walks slowly, his eyes on the ground—then sees* LAVINIA *and immediately makes an effort to pull himself together and appear cheerful.*]

PETER. Hello, Vinnie. [*He sits on the edge of the portico beside her. She still keeps her eyes closed, as if afraid to open them. He looks at her worriedly.*] You look terribly worn out. Haven't you slept? [*He pats her hand with awkward tenderness. Her mouth twitches and draws down at the corners as she stifles a sob. He goes on comfortingly.*] You've had an awfully hard time of it, but never mind, we'll be married soon.

LAVINIA [*without opening her eyes—longingly*]. You'll love me and keep me from remembering?

PETER. You bet I will! And the first thing is to get you away from

this darned house! I may be a fool but I'm beginning to feel superstitious about it myself.

LAVINIA [*without opening her eyes—strangely*]. Yes. Love can't live in it. We'll go away and leave it alone to die—and we'll forget the dead.

PETER [*a bitter resentful note coming into his voice*]. We can't move too far away to suit me! I hate this damned town now and everyone in it!

LAVINIA [*opens her eyes and looks at him startledly*]. I never heard you talk that way before, Peter—bitter!

PETER [*avoiding her eyes*]. Some things would make anyone bitter!

LAVINIA. You've quarreled with your mother and Hazel—on account of me—is that it?

PETER. How did you know?

LAVINIA. Hazel was just here.

PETER. She told you? The darned fool! What did she do that for?

LAVINIA. She doesn't want me to marry you.

PETER [*angrily*]. The little sneak! What right has she—? [*Then a bit uneasily—forcing a smile*] Well, you won't pay any attention to her, I hope.

LAVINIA [*more as if she were answering some voice in herself than him—stiffening in her chair—defiantly*]. No!

PETER. She and Mother suddenly got a lot of crazy notions in their heads. But they'll get over them.

LAVINIA [*staring at him searchingly—uneasily*]. Supposing they don't?

PETER. They will after we are married—or I'm through with them!

LAVINIA [*a pause. Then she takes his face in her hands and turns it to hers*]. Peter! Let me look at you! You're suffering! Your eyes have a hurt look! They've always been so trustful! They look suspicious and afraid of life now! Have I done this to you already, Peter? Are you beginning to suspect me? Are you wondering what it was Orin wrote?

PETER [*protesting violently*]. No! Of course I'm not! Don't I know Orin was out of his mind? Why would I pay any attention—?

LAVINIA. You swear you'll never suspect me—of anything?

PETER. What do you think I am?

LAVINIA. And you'll never let anyone come between us? Nothing can keep us from being happy, can it? You won't let anything, will you?

PETER. Of course I won't!

LAVINIA [*more and more desperately*]. I want to get married right away, Peter! I'm afraid! Would you marry me now—this evening? We can find a minister to do it. I can change my clothes in a second and put on the color you like! Marry me today, Peter! I'm afraid to wait!

PETER [*bewildered and a bit shocked*]. But—you don't mean that, do you? We couldn't. It wouldn't look right the day Orin—out of respect for him. [*Then suspicious in spite of himself*] I can't see why you're so afraid of waiting. Nothing can happen, can it? Was there anything in what Orin wrote that would stop us from—?

LAVINIA [*with a wild beaten laugh*]. The dead coming between! They always would, Peter! You trust me with your happiness! But that means trusting the Mannon dead—and they're not to be trusted with love! I know them too well! And I couldn't bear to watch your eyes grow bitter and hidden from me and wounded in their trust of life! I love you too much!

PETER [*made more uneasy and suspicious by this*]. What are you talking about, Vinnie? You make me think there was something—

LAVINIA [*desperately*]. No—nothing! [*Then suddenly throwing her arms around him*] No! Don't think of that—not yet! I want a little while of happiness—in spite of all the dead! I've earned it! I've done enough—! [*Growing more desperate—pleading wildly*] Listen, Peter! Why must we wait for marriage? I want a moment of joy—of love—to make up for what's coming! I want it now! Can't you be strong, Peter? Can't you be simple and pure? Can't you forget sin and see that all love is beautiful? [*She kisses him with desperate passion.*] Kiss me! Hold me close! Want me! Want me so much you'd murder anyone to have me! I did that—for you! Take me in this house of the dead and love me! Our love will drive the dead away! It will shame them back into death! [*At the topmost pitch of desperate, frantic abandonment*] Want me! Take me, Adam! [*She is brought back to herself with a start by this name escaping her—bewilderedly, laughing idiotically*] Adam? Why did I call you Adam? I never even heard that name before—outside of the Bible! [*Then suddenly with a hopeless, dead finality*] Always the dead between! It's no good trying any more!

PETER [*convinced she is hysterical and yet shocked and repelled by her display of passion*]. Vinnie! You're talking crazy! You don't know what you're saying! You're not—like that!

LAVINIA [*in a dead voice*]. I can't marry you, Peter. You mustn't ever see me again. [*He stares at her, stunned and stupid.*] Go home. Make it up with your mother and Hazel. Marry someone else. Love isn't permitted to me. The dead are too strong!

PETER [*his mind in a turmoil*]. Vinnie! You can't—! You've gone crazy—! What's changed you like this? [*Then suspiciously*] Is it—what Orin wrote? What was it? I've got a right to know, haven't I? [*Then as she doesn't answer—more suspiciously*] He acted so queer about—what happened to you on the Islands. Was it something there—something to do with that native—?

LAVINIA [*her first instinctive reaction one of hurt insult*]. Peter! Don't you dare—! [*Then suddenly seizing on this as a way out—with calculated coarseness*] All right! Yes, if you must know! I won't lie any more! Orin suspected I'd lusted with him! And I had!

PETER [*shrinking from her aghast—brokenly*]. Vinnie! You've gone crazy! I don't believe— You—you couldn't!

LAVINIA [*stridently*]. Why shouldn't I? I wanted him! I wanted to learn love from him—love that wasn't a sin! And I did, I tell you! He had me! I was his fancy woman!

PETER [*wincing as if she had struck him in the face, stares at her with a stricken look of horrified repulsion—with bitter, broken anger*]. Then—Mother and Hazel were right about you—you are bad at heart—no wonder Orin killed himself—God, I—I hope you'll be punished—I—! [*He hurries blindly off down the drive to the left.*]

LAVINIA [*watches him go—then with a little desperate cry starts after him*]. Peter! It's a lie! I didn't—! [*She stops abruptly and stiffens into her old, square-shouldered attitude. She looks down the drive after him—then turns away, saying in a lost, empty tone*] Good-bye, Peter.

[SETH *enters from the left rear, coming around the corner of the house. He stands for a moment watching her, grimly wondering. Then to call her attention to his presence, he begins singing half under his breath his melancholy "Shenandoah" chanty, at the same time looking at the ground around him as if searching for something.*]

SETH.

"Oh, Shenandoah, I can't get near you
Way-ay, I'm bound away—"

LAVINIA [*without looking at him, picking up the words of the*

chanty—with a grim writhen smile] I'm not bound away—not now, Seth. I'm bound here—to the Mannon dead! [*She gives a dry little cackle of laughter and turns as if to enter the house.*]

SETH [*frightened by the look on her face, grabs her by the arm*]. Don't go in there, Vinnie!

LAVINIA [*grimly*]. Don't be afraid. I'm not going the way Mother and Orin went. That's escaping punishment. And there's no one left to punish me. I'm the last Mannon. I've got to punish myself! Living alone here with the dead is a worse act of justice than death or prison! I'll never go out or see anyone! I'll have the shutters nailed closed so no sunlight can ever get in. I'll live alone with the dead, and keep their secrets, and let them hound me, until the curse is paid out and the last Mannon is let die! [*With a strange cruel smile of gloating over the years of self-torture*] I know they will see to it I live for a long time! It takes the Mannons to punish themselves for being born!

SETH [*with grim understanding*]. Ayeh. And I ain't heard a word you've been sayin', Vinnie. [*Pretending to search the ground again*] Left my clippers around somewheres.

LAVINIA [*turns to him sharply*]. You go now and close the shutters and nail them tight.

SETH. Ayeh.

LAVINIA. And tell Hannah to throw out all the flowers.

SETH. Ayeh. [*He goes past her up the steps and into the house. She ascends to the portico—and then turns and stands for a while, stiff and square-shouldered, staring into the sunlight with frozen eyes.* SETH *leans out of the window at the right of the door and pulls the shutters closed with a decisive bang. As if this were a word of command,* LAVINIA *pivots sharply on her heel and marches woodenly into the house, closing the door behind her.*]

CURTAIN

MAXWELL ANDERSON (1888-)

In the sheer quantity of his output and the diversity of his achievements, no American playwright excells Maxwell Anderson. Since *The White Desert* in 1923 he has never ceased writing, and in at least one season, 1936-1937, he had the satisfaction of seeing three of his most serious plays launched almost simultaneously. By 1952 he had contributed at least twenty-seven dramas to the American stage. Though he began with a romantic tragedy in verse and has frequently returned to this genre in later years, his works include many other dramatic types. He achieved his first success as co-author, with Lawrence Stallings, of *What Price Glory?* (1924), which shocked and at the same time delighted audiences for years with its comically realistic picture of soldier life in wartime.

Anderson's comedies range from the touching portrayal of youthful marriage in *Saturday's Children* (1927) to the sharp satire of the national Congress in *Both Your Houses* (1933). But the undercurrent of serious theme in even his musical comedies, such as *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938) and *Lost in the Stars* (1949), confirms the impression that Anderson is basically a very earnest writer with the highest objectives in the realm of art and in the sphere of social criticism and political reform. In *Gods of the Lightning* (1928) he helped to write one of the most severe indictments of American justice in our history. He returned to the subject in *Winterset* (1935), a grim tale of underworld violence in the surprising medium of poetic tragedy.

The best of his historical plays in verse, such as *Valley Forge* (1934), sometimes transcend conventional

romance to a searching comment on history, usually with a pointed application to modern life. Because he has been uniquely successful in reviving the romantic verse play on our stage, he is represented here with a drama of this kind, but no single work of Anderson's can suggest the scope of his writing. He is second only to O'Neill among modern American playwrights, though his fame is confined very largely to the United States.

Anderson came to the Broadway theater after a tempestuous and frustrated career as an English professor in California and as a journalist in California and New York. The son of a Baptist minister in Pennsylvania, he was educated at the University of North Dakota and Stanford University. His liberal ideas won him dismissal from a teaching position at Whittier College and from various editorial jobs on big-city newspapers. At last he reached New York and was writing for the liberal *Morning World* when *What Price Glory?* brought him sudden fame in the theater. From that time to this he has been known to the public almost exclusively through his long series of vigorous plays, not consistently skillful or successful, but always high-minded and filled with energy and aspiration. At his worst Anderson can be pretentious and pompously rhetorical, but even his mistakes have been committed in a worthy cause.

VALLEY FORGE

In 1930 Maxwell Anderson scored a remarkable success with his historical play, *Elizabeth the Queen,* which retold largely in blank verse the romantic love story of Elizabeth and Essex. Its popularity was especially remarkable because the play revived a type of drama that seemingly had been banished from our theater by the triumph of the realistic prose play of contemporary life which ushered in the modern school. When he repeated this success three years later with *Mary of*

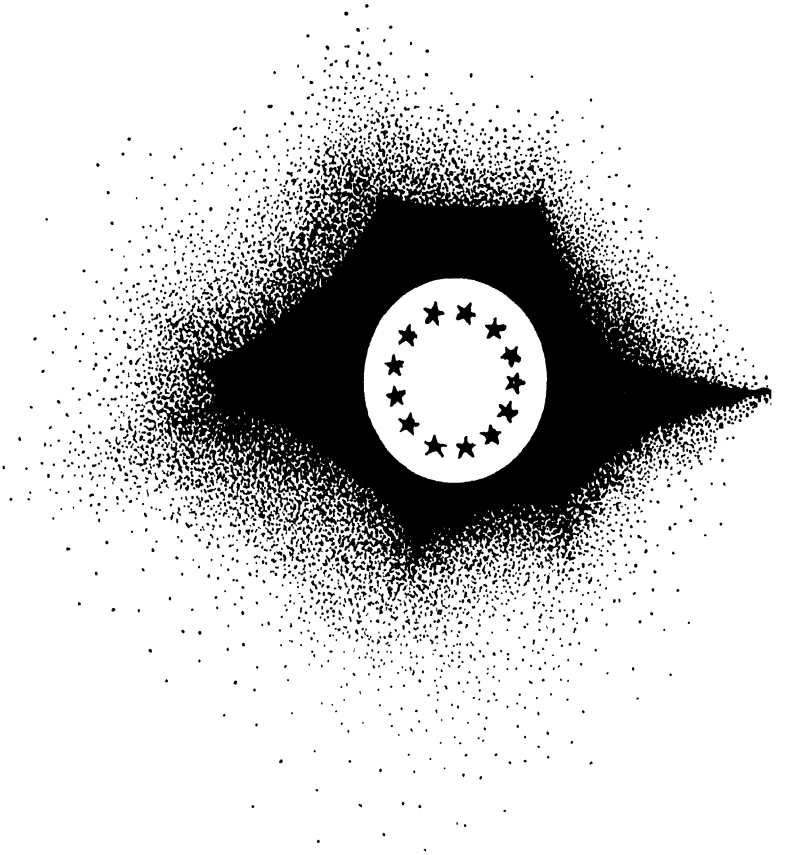
Scotland, some friendly critics urged him to try an American subject closer to our time and traditions. *Valley Forge* was Anderson's attempt to re-create a crucial episode in our national history with the same poetic quality and romantic appeal that he had brought to the familiar tales of shadowy British queens.

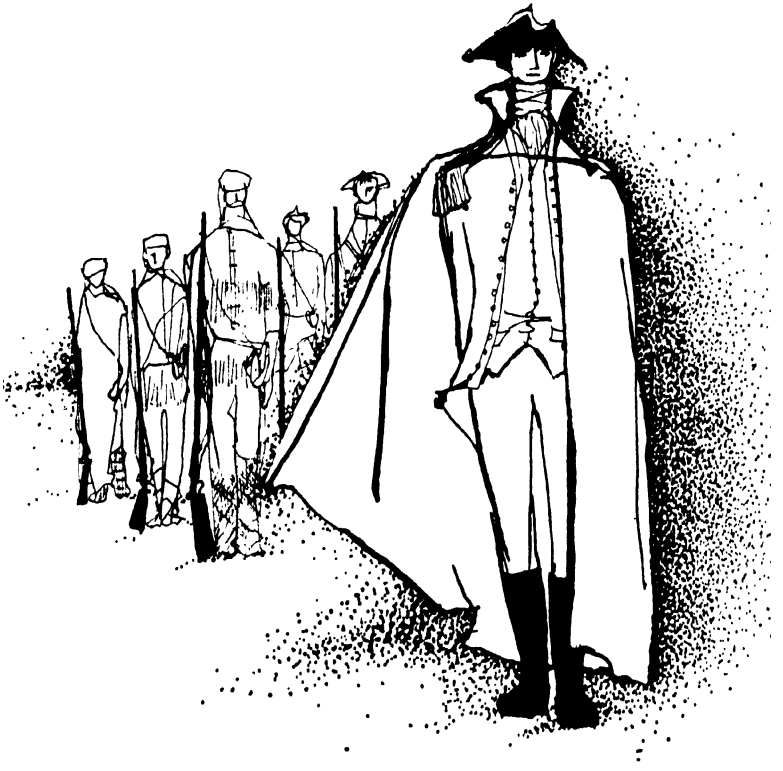
But this play has still other objectives, which recall the desperate period of our history in which it was written. In 1933 the United States reached the depths of its greatest economic depression after more than three years of steady decline. With unemployment at a staggering peak and the streets full of citizen-beggars, with banks closing on all sides and foreclosed mortgages driving farmers from the land, the national Congress seemed paralyzed and lost without a leader. American democracy was tried as it had not been since its birth in the Revolution. In 1933 the looked-for leader arrived in Franklin D. Roosevelt, and by the time *Valley Forge* reached the stage, sweeping measures from Washington were reviving national courage and hope. The depression was far from over, but the long, slow process of recovery had been set in motion.

At such a time Anderson chose to remind his demoralized contemporaries of another period in our history when the American way of life almost succumbed, not simply to unspeakable hardship, but also to selfishness and treachery within the camp and to the indecision and cynicism of politicians. The American ideal of freedom survived that crucial winter of 1777-1778, in spite of a bumbling and short-sighted congress, because of the determination and self-sacrifice of the loyal little army at Valley Forge and the vision and leadership of their commander and his staff. It would be foolish to push this parallel too far, because we would soon overreach the intention of the playwright and destroy his larger message to his countrymen in all periods of stress when our nation needs to be reminded of the idealistic basis of our political system. As Anderson has Washington say:

> "This liberty will look easy by and by
> when nobody dies to get it."

Historical drama is not necessarily history. Indeed, it almost never could be in the strict sense of fact. Characters in history may have been dramatic, and an incident in history may have been theatrical, but the facts in themselves lack the requirements of a drama. Only the imagination of the playwright who discerns the ingredients of a work of art in the raw material of the chronicle can select and shape them to the end of a play.





Valley Forge is no exception, and Anderson's deviations from the record provide an interesting study of the creative process at work. The central situation of the play is absolutely true to the facts. The diary of the German general, Von Steuben, who somehow whipped the survivors of the terrible winter into an efficient fighting force in the spring, records the unspeakable condition of the men, many of them without clothing or shoes. Indeed, Washington was criticized by some for having chosen such a desolate spot for his winter camp, remote from sources of food supply. It is also true that the Quakers of Pennsylvania not only refused to fight because of their religious principles, but also bet on the British in Philadelphia to win and kept them plentifully supplied with provisions while the Continental army starved. Under the circumstances the widespread desertions were not surprising: by March a third of the original nine thousand at Valley Forge had gone over to the British. Contemporaries and later historians have wondered why General Howe did not march out from Philadelphia to Valley Forge during the winter and end the war then and there. Actually, he was not in complete sympathy with the British policy that he represented and continued to hope for a negotiated peace. And the social life in Philadelphia was as gay as Anderson represents it, to say nothing of Howe's interest in his mistress, Mrs. Loring, whose husband was meanwhile augmenting his fortune from the funds paid him to feed Colonial prisoners in New York.

Anderson's picture of the American leaders at Valley Forge is also accurate. If Washington seems idealized as a grim heroic figure without flaw, all the records of this winter support this impression of the selfless leader whose encouragement to his men and shining example of Spartan endurance kept the army together until the spring. His shortcomings as a military strategist and disciplinarian have little bearing upon this episode of the war. Also, the impulsive young Lafayette and the dogged "Lord Stirling" were the fanatically loyal supporters of the general that we find here.

It is in Anderson's picture of the opposition that he deviates most from the facts. With only two hours in which to state his case the dramatist of history must simplify the issues and draw the lines sharply. If Washington is the sympathetic hero, his opposition of whatever complexion become the villains. Though he certainly endured much from the Continental Congress during the winter, that body, exiled to York, Pennsylvania, by the British occupation of Philadelphia, was a mere ghost of its memorable predecessor, sometimes reduced to only fifteen active members. With no word as yet of French aid,

this dispossessed body had good reason to feel discouraged about the cause after Washington's defeats the preceding summer at Germantown and Brandywine. Indeed, the one bright spot was the notable victory of General Horatio Gates at Saratoga, which was eventually responsible for the decision of France to come to the aid of the Colonies. In January a committee of five, including Folsom and Harvie, arrived at Valley Forge to investigate the condition of the army. It remained until March. In the time-honored tradition of Congressmen they blundered because of their ignorance and complicated things a good deal for Washington, who finally stayed away from their meetings. But Harvie, an able delegate from Virginia, also left the committee in protest, and the activities of all were much less irresponsible than they are made to seem here.

Nor was the congress as a body disloyal to Washington and the cause, as Anderson suggests. There was certainly strong minority sentiment for peace, and the success of Gates, who was largely in debt to his subordinates for his victory at Saratoga, had naturally magnified his worth as a military leader and inspired a party bent on making him commander-in-chief. But this opposition evaporated after Washington's masterful exposure of the Conway Cabal, which he actually accomplished with somewhat more subtlety and dignity than in the scene in which Anderson has condensed the incident for dramatic purposes. This plot of an officer clique to replace Washington with Gates has been unfairly named after the professional soldier who figured in the exposure, and Anderson has not only perpetuated the injustice but made Conway's guilt seem indisputable.

His greatest fiction, however, was devised to give a flicker of love interest to the somber chronicle of men in uniform. In 1756, over twenty years before, the dashing young Washington had lingered in New York paying court to the fair (and very wealthy) Miss Mary Philipse. But she was already interested in a former army officer, Roger Morris, whose wife she became. Anderson gives his imagination full rein in picturing her sentimental pilgrimage across the lines in a soldier's uniform to satisfy her curiosity about the man she might have married. As if uneasy about this weakest element in his play, he has her exclaim, "Was there ever another meeting less likely than this we've had?"

But we are bored with her maudlin adventure in any case. The great issue of the play is whether the men and their leader and the cause they stand for can weather the overwhelming forces against them. The turning point is reached with their renewed determination

to carry on in spite of apparently hopeless odds. Their decision may seem a bit contrived, and the whole conflict in the play may be too intellectualized to be completely dramatic. But it serves the purpose that the playwright had in mind: it leaves us with a new sense of pride in our heritage.

It was no small achievement of Anderson to revive the Shakespearian chronicle play with great popular success on the modern American stage and to present it for the most part in verse. Although more than half of his plays have been realistic dramas of modern life in prose, Anderson has fervently declared that only a poetic drama can really lift the spirit and hope to outlive its generation. The blank verse of *Valley Forge* does not appear until the drama is well under way, nor is it of a kind to delight a conservative prosodist. Often the beat is hard to follow, and unfriendly critics have sometimes dismissed it as affected prose. But others have praised it for being untraditional, since there is hardly a place for merely neo-Shakespearian drama on the modern stage. Probably it is harmonious with the heightened language of the dialogue, which has more gusto and more metaphor than a realistic treatment of conversation would allow. The whole purpose of the play transcends the more usual purpose of our theater and revives in a new form the romantic outlook of an older day.

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MAXWELL ANDERSON

VALLEY FORGE

CHARACTERS

Andrew
Spad
Alcock
Teague
Mason
Jock
Oscar
Nick
Minto
Marty
Tavis
Auntie
Neil
Lieutenant Cutting
Rover
Lieut. Col. Lucifer Tench
An Aide
Gen. George Washington
Marquis de Lafayette
Major Andre
A Brigadier
Sir William Howe
Mary Philipse
A Captain
Fielding
"The Washington" (In masquerade scene)
First Soldier
Second Soldier
Third Soldier
A Civilian
General Varnum
General Stirling
Rafe
Mr. Harvie
Mr. Folsom
General Conway
Five Ladies (In masquerade scene)
Musicians and others

act 1 scene 1

SCENE: *A bunk-house at Valley Forge in January, 1778. The building is of logs, long, low and windowless. At the right is an entrance door, at the left a stone fireplace. Between the two, bunks are built against the wall in double tiers, constructed entirely of saplings, about twelve in all. Logs are heaped at the fireplace and a few cut logs are used as seats. A wash stand also stands not far from the fire, built of hewn timber, and a table, similarly made, is placed not far from the center of the room. The bunks are filled, over the sapling bottoms, with straw and pine needles, covered with what blankets the men have. It is evening; some candles burn on the table, and about half the bunks are occupied. Three or four of the men still have mess-dishes in their hands, out of which they eat with pen knives, or try to eat, for the food this evening is inedible.—The clothes of the men are dirty, torn, patched, threadbare, and in many cases almost non-existent. There are no uniforms. The boots are worn out—many feet are on the floor. Socks are undreamed-of. A shirt is a rarity. Many of those still dressed wear coarse cloth or sacking tied on their feet for shoes, some wrap their legs with cloths in the manner of Russian peasants. What clothes are still recognizable were once Colonial homespun, and retain vestiges of the Colonial style. But most of the cocks have fallen on the hats, and many wear coonskin or other furred caps. One or two are dressed Indian style, in buckskin. These are the better dressed of the company. Long muskets are stacked in the corners, with pendant powder-horns.*

SPAD, *a round and red-faced Virginian, sits at the table with his tin of food.* TEAGUE, *wearing hunters' clothes, leans at the doorway, a man of fifty-five, lean and corded.* ALCOCK, *a beefy man, wearing a blanket, is sitting on one of the log ends.* MINTO, *an oldish, graying fellow, is at the fire, carefully preparing kindling with his knife and a piece of pine.* NEIL BONNIWELL, *a thin, handsome lad, with feverish eyes, lies in one of the bunks. His brother,* MASON BONNIWELL, *sits beside him.* OSCAR, *a stolid shipwright, is bending himself a snow-shoe out of green wood.* MARTY, *the feeble wit of the house,*

is lying back on his bunk, half asleep. JOCK, *a Scotchman, is combing his hair before the fire with a fine tooth comb.* ANDREW, JOCK'S *brother, looks on and warms his hands.*

SPAD [*going to the door and pitching his food outside*]. Peugh, it's no chaw for a white man.

ALCOCK. You should 'a' saved it for Teague, there; his pappy was a Seminole brave—they won't eat meat till you can stir it with a spoon.

TEAGUE. Don't talk to me; you ate horse last week, you horse-eating cannibal.

ALCOCK. Nobody could eat this carrion tonight. I wouldn't set it down to a good dog.

MASON. That's Congress food, that is. Sent straight from the Continental Congress to their Continental army. And well they think of us, too. [*He pushes the food about on his plate with distaste.*]

JOCK. Toot—toot—speak na treason!

MASON. Treason—! Toward the gabble-mongers in Congress! 'T'd be a service to the cause of freedom to try out the fat that's in them and use it for carriage grease. Or flay the tough hides off them for a commodity of shoes.

ALCOCK. What this army needs is pants. If I had a pair of pants I might stand a chance of getting a pair of boots—but you can't walk up to a lady's back door without pants on—not for no purpose whatever.—And you can't borrow a pair to stand sentry duty in! Teague, there—wouldn't even loan me his leather britches at night when he wasn't using 'em—

TEAGUE. Who said I wasn't using 'em?

ALCOCK. And as a consequence I stood out from ten to six in a blizzard—with a magenta-colored behind pointing into the northeast wind. I got chilblains on my backside till I don't dare turn it toward a fire. You'd 'a' been honored to have a man inside those stinking clouts of yours—

TEAGUE. If I was to sit on my bottom and wait for britches to come to it I wouldn't have any, either. I took these off an Injun seven years ago in revenge for his tommy-hawkin' my grandmother.—

ALCOCK. I'm surprised you had a grandmother! You've no heart and no balls of compassion—

TEAGUE [*moving toward* ALCOCK]. I'll tear your cullions out of you, you roosting squab!

MASON. Let him alone! There's no gouging here to-night!

TEAGUE. Why not?

MASON. Because my brother's sick, and it's not good for him.

SPAD. There's a parcel of clothes coming down from New England, according to the Sergeant.

JOCK. We wouldn't get 'em. Not i' this regiment.

ALCOCK. There's no clothes coming—you might know that. What happened was General Washington sent a requisition for pants to Congress. And Congress looked at the officer that brought the requisition and says: "Pants, my dear man, is both dear and scarce. We can't send you any pants. Moreover, the countryside around Philadelphia is full of Quakers with more pants on than they need. Go out and take the pants off the Quakers." Two or three weeks later the officer got back and reported to General Washington. The air around the General's headquarters turned blue to an altitude of eighty foot and the Schoolkill River ran backward a distance of some fourteen miles. This went on for quite a spell—and then the General came to enough so's you could distinguish what he was talking about. "You go back to Congress," says he, "and ask 'em if they ever tried to take the pants off a civilian.—Pants," he continues, "is one of the inalienable rights of man under the Declaration of Independence and the Ten Commandments. At this moment," he says, "I have three thousand soldiers whose pants are wide open from Genesis to Revelations, and while we remain in this defenceless condition, there's nothing to stop the British regulars from marching up to York[1] and taking the pants off the Continental Congress, which I rather hope they will do!" I was there when he said it, and boys, I'd like to be there when he gets his answer back.

[*The door opens and two women come with a flurry of cold behind them.* TEAGUE *helps them shut the door against it. The woman who enters first is a slatternly work-woman in a thin dress covered with a worn homespun coat. She is known as* AUNTIE. *The second is fairly young and pretty, the widow of a soldier. She goes to* NEIL BONNIWELL'S *bunk, carrying a wisp of black straw and a stone bottle.*]

JOCK. Aye—now maybe I could hae my shirt back.

AUNTIE. Oh, that's what it was—a shirt!

JOCK. Am I to hae it—or not?

AUNTIE. How was I to know what it was—bucko?—The rag you gave me had no tails, no collar, no arms, and one button with no buttonhole to it!—And it's a shirt, is it?

[1] ***York.*** *Because of the British occupation of Philadelphia, the Continental Congress was seated at York, Pennsylvania.*

JOCK. Call it what you like, but I'll have it back, you travelling witch!

AUNTIE [*giving the shirt*]. You'd 'a' had it before, mannie, only there was no soap and no water and no fire. I think I got the itch washing it, besides. Let me see you putting it on, just for the entertainment.

[JOCK *dons his shirt, which does little toward covering him.*]

TAVIS [*to* MASON]. My hands are cold—you'd best lift his head. [*He lifts* NEIL *and she puts the straw under the blanket.*] There's hot broth in the bottle.—Now, God save you, boy, you've a fever.

NEIL. How is it you—come twice in an evening?

TAVIS. Twice?

NEIL. Why—you were here before—with the great gold plate—and the flowers.—No, that's true, isn't it?

AUNTIE. You've been dreaming again—! Now where would she get a gold plate and flowers, soldier honey?

NEIL. Was it—my mother, then—with the dirty wings—one of them dragged a little? [*A pause*] There—I'm a fool—

TAVIS. It's the fever, just—that's what makes your eyes so bright.

SPAD. I suppose you saw the general orders this morning, Auntie?

AUNTIE. Now what would I want reading the general orders?

SPAD. If you don't read 'em you'll hear about 'em. Hark ye. [*He turns to a handwritten scroll pasted on the inside of the door jamb.*] "Owing to over-crowded conditions and the scarcity of provender for the troops of the encampment, each company commander is requested to inquire into the status of all camp followers and the like quartered in his vicinity, there appearing to be a remarkable number of women, and especially of pregnant women, established within the lines, and greatly in excess of the allotment for companies under our military articles. Commanders are reminded that six women are allowed to a company, for washing and other necessary duties, but under no circumstances more." What are these here—necessary duties?

AUNTIE. Who signed it?

SPAD. Washington.

AUNTIE. Well, he can't say I'm pregnant! I haven't been pregnant this twenty years, and won't be—not while I know the signs of the zodiac.

ANDREW. What's the receipt, Auntie?

AUNTIE. I'm not so young but I can stay away from it under a full moon, bucko.—Tavis, there, wouldn't take my advice, and as a result she looks to me to be coming in around the first of July.

NEIL. I'll give you thanks not to joke about it, then! If she is, it's my doing, and the baby's mine, and I'll marry her!

AUNTIE. Nobody's keeping you from it, child—and the babe'll need a father—that's certain.

TAVIS. Must you anger him now!—when it's too much for him?

AUNTIE. There, I'm sorry—and may you live like larks in a pie! [*She hands a small bundle to* OSCAR.] Those were socks once, God mend them. [*To* TAVIS] I told you beforehand he looked to me like the last run of shad, but you've picked your straw and the next thing's to find a blanket for it.

[*She goes out.* TEAGUE'S *son,* NICK, *enters, and kneels to adjust his leggings.*]

NEIL. There's only one thing I want to ask you, Tavis. Don't let them take me to the pest house. It's bad enough to die, but a man doesn't want to be scared to death.

MASON. You'll stay here, and you won't die.

TAVIS. Quit this talk about dying, and take some of the broth.

[*She runs her hand over his hair.*]

NEIL. All right, I will. [*He sits up.*] Where did you get it?

TAVIS. Stole it, dear—stole it, so I know it's good.

SPAD. God damn this blasted army!

ALCOCK. This army! If God was to damn and blast this army every working day for a full year He couldn't do anything to it that hasn't been done. We've got everything from the itch to the purple fever, nothing to eat, nothing to wear, and the coldest son-of-a-bitch of a winter since the lake of Galilee froze over and Jesus walked on the water.

SPAD. He could 'a' walked across Chesapeake Bay yesterday and hauled a fourteen-pounder[1] behind Him.

ANDREW. Will you quit talking about God for now? He might be listening.

JOCK. Who's got a book?

MASON. You'll find the sermons of Jonathan Edwards[2] under the slop-pail there. All about hell-fire.

JOCK. Good. I could use a bit of hell-fire.

TEAGUE. What's it like outside?

NICK. Fine and black. Coast's clear around by Mount Misery.[3]

[1] ***fourteen-pounder,*** *a cannon that shoots a fourteen-pound ball.*

[2] ***Jonathan Edwards*** *(1703–1758), the American theologian, popularly remembered for his hellfire sermon,* Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.

[3] ***Mount Misery,*** *a hill to the southwest of Valley Forge.*

TEAGUE. Eh, Minto? [*Taking up his gun*]

MINTO. Coming, Teague. [*Rising and going to the corner*]

SPAD. What's all this?

TEAGUE. Just stepping out.

SPAD. The Leftenant's coming in to-night.

TEAGUE. For what?

SPAD. Orders, you coonskin! Orders!

TEAGUE. I'm going to get me something to eat.

SPAD. I allow so.

ALCOCK. What's he doing? Absconding?

SPAD. Um. [*The group looks on at the preparations in silence.*] Don't count on me to put up a story for you. If you're gone you've decamped, that's all!

TEAGUE. How long do you reckon any of you'll be here? I took a look around the commissary today. There's about enough grist there to make thin gruel for a clergyman's family, and that's all. They've been trading cavalry horses for shoats[1] till they've dismounted two regiments, and there's no more shoats to be had. I aim to walk away from here while I've got strength to walk.

ALCOCK. All right, all right. I don't want to know anything about it.

MASON. There was a Hessian Johnny here to-day with leather boots on—looking for a job as a general—or maybe commander-in-chief. He stayed long enough to soak in a few fair-sized impressions and then took out for Philadelphia to join up with General Howe.[2]

SPAD. They eat over in Philadelphia.

MASON. Sure, the big-hearted patriots of Pennsylvania—we fight for their liberty and they carry their butter and eggs to Philadelphia in a steady stream to feed King George's troops. And you can't stop 'em. Shoot 'em dead and you can't stop 'em.

ALCOCK. King George pays cash and we pay in continentals. Did you ever meet up with a Quaker that didn't prefer a guinea in the hand to any amount of liberty in the bush? You can shoot 'em, hang 'em, damn 'em, give 'em the water cure, rip their guts out and fill 'em up with old iron, they go right on selling hogs to the English.

TEAGUE. I'm no Quaker, son, and I'll fill anybody up with old iron that says I'd sell out to General Howe! We're going home, that's all.

[1] ***shoats,*** *young pigs.*

[2] ***General Howe.*** *Sir William Howe (1729–1814), the British commander-in-chief, having defeated Washington at Brandywine and Germantown, had taken up winter quarters in the Colonists' capital of Philadelphia.*

ALCOCK. All right, all right. You've read the orders: the new penalty for desertion is seventy-five lashes on the bare back, well laid on—or hanging if there's treason connected with it. Don't get caught, that's all.

TEAGUE. I've never been caught yet.

ALCOCK. How often have you taken French leave?

TEAGUE. Whenever there's nothing to do here I go home.

ALCOCK. All right.

[*The door opens and* LIEUTENANT CUTTING *comes in. He is somewhat better dressed than the men and wears a neatly cocked and corded hat. A dog follows him in and goes instantly to the plate of food which* ALCOCK *has set beside him on the floor.*]

CUTTING. What dog's that?

ALCOCK. Hell, he came in with you, Leftenant.

CUTTING. The cur's been following me all the way from the King of Prussia Inn.[1]

SPAD. You'd better avast from that mess, pup. It'll poison you.

CUTTING. Time to bunk in if you want any sleep, Alcock. You're all to be on parade at five for manual of arms under Baron Steuben.[2] After that you'll spend the day making cartridges.

TEAGUE. Now what the hell good is a cartridge?

ALCOCK. Saves time and keeps your powder dry.

TEAGUE. I'm willing to put it to a test with old Steuben himself! I can load and fire old Happy Thought with horn and charger three times to his two with those paper rigs of his. Watch here!

[*He upends his gun and reaches for the powderhorn.*]

ALCOCK. You shoot that thing in here and I'll have you cashiered, you mud-for-breakfast—

TEAGUE. If I had mud for breakfast I got it here and not where I came from! I'd be damn glad to be cashiered and get my four months' back pay.

A VOICE [*outside*]. Hey, boy, what regiment's this?

ANOTHER VOICE [*outside*]. Who goes?

FIRST VOICE. You keep kind of an offhand guard here, soldier. If you must know it's Lieutenant Colonel Lucifer Tench, and I asked you a question.

[1] ***King of Prussia Inn,*** *a famous inn nearby, built in 1709 and operated by a native of Prussia, which was named for Frederick I of Prussia.*

[2] ***Baron Steuben*** *(1730–1794), the German professional soldier who drilled the Continental forces at Valley Forge into the highly disciplined army that went out to fight again the following spring.*

SECOND VOICE. First Virginia.

TENCH. Good. [*He enters.*] I didn't know whether that was a sentry you had out there or a prehistoric animal. He's standing with his feet in his hat and a blanket over his ears, making no sense whatever. [*Two or three of the men rise or half-rise out of respect.*] Sit down! Sit down and put your feet in your hats if that's the latest fashion.

MASON. We've lost a couple of sentries with frostbite this month, sir, and the boy's shoes are none too good.

TENCH. I'm sorry to hear it, because I'm looking for a squad with passable footwear. How many able-bodied men in your company, Leftenant?

CUTTING. Seventy-two this morning.

TENCH. How many with guns, shoes and equipment for a little stroll across country in the snow?

CUTTING. Twenty-eight—or thereabout.

ALCOCK. Put me in! I'm going if I go in my shirt-tails!

CUTTING. Twenty-eight.

TENCH. Twenty-eight! It'll have to do. This is a raid on the hay islands below Darby under the personal supervision of the Commander-in-chief. We have information that Sir William Howe is running short of horse-fodder in Philadelphia and will shortly make an attempt to bring in the forage which was stored last fall on the islands of the Delaware. We mean to get there first with a party of horse to cut off his approach and a small party of pioneers to salvage the hay for ourselves or else dump it in the river. This company is made up of the kind of men we need for the work—hunters, farmers, fishermen, outdoor fellows and equal to anything.

SPAD. Right.

CUTTING. When are we supposed to start?

TENCH. To-night. We must be there by three in the morning. Draw four days' rations for each man. We may be gone some time.

CUTTING. We don't start to-night, though.

TENCH. Sir!

CUTTING. Not to-night, sir.

TENCH. You heard the order, I believe!

CUTTING. With my compliments, sir, it happens the thing is impossible. We've drawn the last ration for this regiment, such as it was. If that dog keeps it on his stomach he'll probably go to meet his maker before morning.

TENCH. The supplies for your regiment were sufficient for ten more days.

CUTTING. On paper, yes. But when they rolled out the last twenty barrels the meat was spoiled. As for the flour, they baked the remains of it this morning.

TENCH. It appears to me you enjoy this situation.

CUTTING. Not at all. Nor am I to blame for it. The blame, I believe, attaches elsewhere.

TENCH. Do you wish to say where?

CUTTING. I have said before and I say again that this is probably the worst managed army in the history of military operations.

TENCH. Yes, I've heard you—and I say mismanaged by whom?

CUTTING. When I served abroad there was never any doubt where the management of an army lay. It might be as well if you informed yourself on that head. [*A slight pause*]

TENCH. It's of very little moment what you wish to say about me, Mr. Cutting—but there are certain names I don't care to hear insulted—

CUTTING. I insult nobody!

TENCH. Let me judge of that for myself!

[*The door opens and an* AIDE *appears.*]

THE AIDE. General Washington wishes to know if this matter is arranged, Colonel. He's in haste to reach General Wayne—[1]

TENCH. Will you say to General Washington that I've encountered unexpected difficulties, and would be glad if he could step in for a moment.—I'll tell him myself.

[*He turns and goes out, followed by the* AIDE. *There is tension in the air. One or two of the men adjust their clothes. A tall, dark* FRENCH OFFICER *of nineteen or twenty enters in resplendent uniform.* WASHINGTON *comes in after him in shabby boots, a long, much-worn cloak, and an old cocked hat.* TENCH *reenters. The men have all risen save* NEIL *and* MARTY. NEIL *rises on one elbow and* SPAD *nudges* MARTY, *who gets up, open-mouthed.*]

WASHINGTON. I'm distressed to hear of this shortage of supplies, Lieutenant, but happily we are not entirely without resource. A long-expected wagon train began to arrive this evening, and though the first wagons are loaded only with munitions there are eighteen long

[1] ***General Wayne,*** *"Mad Anthony" Wayne (1745–1796), the impetuous Pennsylvania commander, who had served at Brandywine and Germantown under Washington and was to lead the advance of the summer campaign after Valley Forge.*

tons of flour and pork bringing up the rear, and it should be possible to victual your expedition by the time you can put yourselves in marching order.

CUTTING. We shall make our preparations at once then. Is this the train which was sent on from Fishkill by General Putnam,[1] sir?

WASHINGTON. It is. Though how you may have learned of that I'm at a loss to conceive.

CUTTING. I supped this evening with General Conway,[2] who had received a letter from Putnam. And if the information in the letter is correct I very much fear you will be disappointed of your expectations in regard to the salt pork and flour. Putnam was unable to locate mules or wagons to accommodate the food allotment.

WASHINGTON. Unable—?

CUTTING. Completely unable, as he said.

WASHINGTON. You have information that the food was not sent?

CUTTING. So it would seem. [*A pause*]

WASHINGTON. When did the letter arrive?

CUTTING. I believe yesterday.

WASHINGTON [*to* TENCH]. Can there be truth in this?

TENCH. As a matter of fact the bills of lading failed to cover the food supplies, but I supposed them in error—

WASHINGTON. I should like to hope this report was erroneous, but some little experience with the commissary department has taught me to credit any amount of ill news from that quarter. It sticks in my crop a little, let me add, that I should receive important intelligence in a manner so singularly circuitous. General Putnam writes, not to me, but to General Conway, and General Conway conveys his intelligence, not to me, but to a junior officer with whom he has supped. Quite by chance I encounter this officer and in the course of conversation these little military details are relayed to me—

CUTTING. Sir, I hope I have not offended—

WASHINGTON. Not in the least, sir. I am in your debt for the in-

[1] ***General Putnam.*** *Israel Putnam (1718–1790), the picturesque and courageous but inadequate soldier, who had charge of removing stores from New York after the defeat on Long Island, was in command of the Highlands on the Hudson. Washington was repeatedly annoyed by Putnam's insubordination.*

[2] ***General Conway,*** *Thomas Conway (1735–c. 1800), titular leader of the "Conway Cabal" to oust Washington as commander-in-chief after his defeats in the summer of 1777 and substitute General Horatio Gates, who had won the notable victory of Saratoga the previous year. Conway was finally discredited but went on to greater fame in France and India.*

formation, and can only congratulate you and General Conway on the celerity with which you receive dispatches which have not been vouchsafed to the Commander-in-chief. [*He turns to* TENCH.] The expedition will be postponed or assigned to some other company better prepared to move. Meanwhile food must be obtained for this regiment if we have to cut steaks off the members of the Board of War. They're all prime, I've noticed. [*He has turned to go.*]

LAFAYETTE [*looking at the dog's collar*]. General, would you care to know whose dog this is?

WASHINGTON. We're in haste, Marquis.

LAFAYETTE. Yes, but the inscription on this collar reads: Rover,[1] Sir William Howe. This rover has roved all the way from Philadelphia. It is General Howe's dog.

ALCOCK. I was planning to skin him—and now I'll eat him.

WASHINGTON. I might have known by the fat on his ribs he was no local product. We must see that he's returned. Have you pen and ink here?

SPAD. Yes, sir. [*He sets an inkhorn and quill on the table.*]

WASHINGTON. Lucifer! [TENCH *crosses to take dictation at the table.*] "Sir Wm. Howe, British Headquarters, Philadelphia. Dear Sir: The bearer of this note will return to you a dog of which you appear to be the owner, since he wears your name on his collar. May I say that I was the more astonished to find him at Valley Forge because I believed the desertions to be going the other way. G. Washington." Choose a reliable man and send him to Philadelphia with a flag. The animal is to be delivered to the General himself with this note and my compliments. [*Indicating* ALCOCK] This is a man I know. Would the errand amuse you?

ALCOCK. I'm easy to amuse, General, but the fact is I haven't any britches.

WASHINGTON. Well, that can hardly be considered a defect of character. Choose a messenger, Lieutenant.

CUTTING. Yes, sir.

SPAD. I'd like to carry the note, sir.

WASHINGTON. If it's agreeable to your officer.

CUTTING. Certainly.

WASHINGTON. Then take good care of the brute, and my thanks. [*He hands the note to* SPAD.]

TEAGUE. General Washington!

[1] ***Rover.*** *The dog incident is authentic.*

WASHINGTON. Deliver both into Howe's hands.

TEAGUE. General Washington!

MASON. Hark quiet, you fool!

WASHINGTON. What is it?

TEAGUE. These here new regulations about men going home. Going home without leave. They say it's seventy-five lashes if they catch you now. Why is that?

WASHINGTON. The traditional penalty for desertion is shooting at sunrise. We've been more lenient here.

TEAGUE. But look, General Washington, it don't make sense. It don't stand to reason—

NICK. Do you want to talk your neck into a rope?

WASHINGTON. Let him say what's on his mind.

TEAGUE. Well, here it is: I'm going hungry here and my woman's going hungry at home. You let me go home for the winter, and you won't have to feed me, and that relieves the commissary; I rustle some wild meat for the younguns and the old woman, and they don't starve and I don't starve. More'n that, everybody knows there's two or three thousand men gone home already for that same reason, and if they was here now they'd be chewing the bark off the second-growth birch like so many cottontails. I don't hold it against you and I don't hold it against anybody because I don't know who in thunder to hold it it against, but there's nothing to eat here.

ALCOCK. Stow it, will you? The dog ate the stuff, and he isn't dead yet.

TEAGUE. It ain't that I'm afraid of a good fight. A good fight's ham and eggs to me. Me and my boy here, we make for home every winter when the grub gets scarce, and we come back every spring when the fighting starts. We're coming back next spring, and every spring, till we chase the god-damn red-coats clear out of Chesapeake Bay, and across the Atlantic Ocean and right up a lamp-post in London town! Fighting's fine, but sitting here and starving down to a hide and buttons—I don't savvy it.

WASHINGTON. What is your name, sir?

TEAGUE. Teague, sir. Teague's my name.

WASHINGTON. Well, Master Teague, if they catch you they'll give you seventy-five lashes, and that's a good deal to take and live. On the other hand you're quite right from your own angle, and if I were you I'd feel as you do.—But this you should know, sir: if you go home, and we all go home this winter, you won't need to bother about

coming back in the spring. There'll be no fighting to come back to.—General Howe will march out of Philadelphia and take over these states of ours. If he knew now how many have deserted, how many are sick, how many unfit for duty on account of the lack of food and clothes and munitions, he'd come out in force and wring our necks one by one, and the neck of our sickly little revolution along with us. So far we've kept him pinned in Philadelphia by sheer bluster and bluff and show of arms. We've raided his supplies and cut off his shipping and captured his food-trains and so bedeviled him generally that he thinks there's still an army here. But every able-bodied man, every man that owns a pair of dungarees for his legs and brogans for his feet, has to look like ten men if this nation's coming through the winter alive.—What are we in this war for? Are we tired of it? Do we want to quit?

THE MEN. No, sir. No.

WASHINGTON. I can't blame you if you sound a bit half-hearted about it.

TEAGUE. I'm not half-hearted about it! Not me! I'm fighting to keep King George out of my backyard! I moved west three times to get away from his damn tax-collectors, and every time they caught up to me! I'm sick of tax-collectors, that's why I'm in it!

WASHINGTON. Then it may be you're here in error, and the sooner you discover it the better. You'll get death and taxes under one government as well as another. But I'll tell you why I'm here, and why I've hoped you were here, and why it's seemed to me worth while to stick with it while our guns rust out for lack of powder, and men die around me for lack of food and medicine and women and children sicken at home for lack of clothing and the little they need to eat—yes, while we fight one losing battle after another, and retreat to fight again another year, and yet another and another, and still lose more than we win, and yet fight on while our hair grows gray and our homes break up in our absence, and the best and youngest among us give their blood to swell spring freshets and leave their bones and marrow to flesh the hills. This is no lucky war for me. I thought it was at first. I wanted to astound the world as a military leader, but my head's grayer now and I've had enough of that. What I fight for now is a dream, a mirage, perhaps, something that's never been on this earth since men first worked it with their hands, something that's never existed and will never exist unless we can make it and put it here—the right of free born men to govern themselves in their own

way.—Now men are mostly fools, as you're well aware. They'll govern themselves like fools. There are probably more fools to the square inch in the Continental Congress than in the Continental army, and the percentage runs high in both. But we've set our teeth and trained our guns against the hereditary right of arbitrary kings, and if we win it's curfew for all the kings of the world.—It may take a long time, but one by one, bolster themselves as they will, pour out money as they may for mercenaries, make what victorious wars they can, they'll slip one by one from their thrones and go out with the great wash through this breach we make in their sea walls.—It may not be worth the doing. When you deal with a king you deal with one fool, knave, madman, or whatever he may be. When you deal with a congress you deal with a conglomerate of fools, knaves, madmen and honest legislators, all pulling different directions and shouting each other down. So far the knaves and fools seem to have it. That's why we're stranded here on this barren side-hill, leaving a bloody trail in the snow and chewing the rotten remains of sow-belly on which some merchant has made his seven profits.—So far our government's as rotten as the sow-belly it sends us. I hope and pray it will get better. But whether it gets better or worse it's your own, by God, and you can do what you please with it—and what I fight for is your right to do what you please with your government and with yourselves without benefit of kings.—It's for you to decide, Master Teague—you, and your son, and the rest of you. This is your fight more than mine. I don't know how long the Congress means to keep me where I am nor how long you mean to stay with me. If you desert they may catch you and they may not, but the chances are they won't, for the sentries are men as you are—hungry, shivering, miserable and inclined to look the other way. Make your own decision. But if we lose you—if you've lost interest in this cause of yours—we've lost our war, lost it completely, and the men we've left lying on our battle-fields died for nothing whatever—for a dream that came too early—and may never come true. [*He pauses, looks round at the men, then at the officers.*] We mark time here, gentlemen, and there's much to do. [*He goes to the door, followed by* LAFAYETTE *and the* AIDE.] Tench!

TENCH. I'll follow you in a moment, sir.

[WASHINGTON, LAFAYETTE, *and the* AIDE *go out.* TEAGUE *and* NICK *look at each other briefly—then* TEAGUE *addresses* MINTO.]

TEAGUE. I guess the old woman'll get along. She's brought in her own bear meat before. [MINTO *goes back to his place and sits down.*]

NICK. Well, it's all right with me.

[*He straightens up, deliberately takes in another hole in his belt, crosses to a bunk, and lies back.*]

TENCH. And now, if you don't mind, we'll finish that conversation of ours.

CUTTING. Fire when ready.

TENCH. It's just occurred to me that dog's got General Howe's name on his neck, and it may not be an accident that he's following you around.

CUTTING [*rising slowly*]. Now, by God, you will fight—

TENCH. That's my intention.

CUTTING. And if you mean I've been colloguing with General Howe or the English I'll tamp that lie down your throat and I'll do it now!

TENCH. I don't know whether you have or not, but I say it's fitting and apropos that Howe's dog came in at your heels—

MASON. Gentlemen—

CUTTING. Sir, before you lay charges of treason against me in this offhand manner, let me assure you there's no great mystery about the dog's appearance in our lines. An exchange of prisoners took place at General Conway's headquarters this evening, and the cur may have followed the British party into camp. I'm no friend to the English. If they win it will be because of you and those who side with you in your fanatic devotion to a gentleman whose leadership was long ago discredited.

TENCH. Meaning General Washington.

CUTTING. Meaning whom you will.

TENCH. Name your new leader, then!

CUTTING. Aye, you name him! I have no fancy for laying myself liable to court-martial.

TENCH. It's as open as that, then.

CUTTING. There's open dissatisfaction, if that's what you mean—and you're as well aware of it as I am. I've served as a brigadier-general under the French colors, and I'm cast here as a second lieutenant. There's no place in this army I couldn't fill, and I serve under a captain who sits at table in his stocking feet and got his experience fighting Indians on the Ohio. Why doesn't Benedict Arnold hold a commission? Why is Gates shunted into the northern department? Why are Lee[1] and Conway pensioned off with minor commands—?

[1] *Lee, Charles Lee (1731–1782), the traitorous general who supported Gates.*

TENCH. I thought we'd come to Conway.

CUTTING. Why, because the army's run for the glory of a little inner clique, of which you happen to be one—

TENCH. And you want it run for a little clique of adventurers that's served in every army in Europe, sworn allegiance to every king and cause in Christendom and turned your coats so often for money that you start undressing every time you see a shilling—

CUTTING. You've served abroad, I believe!

TENCH. I know a man when I see one! Washington's a man—and there isn't one among those you've named that he couldn't eat after dinner, with a little brandy and soda to wash down the taste. You may be a good officer, you may have served with all the duchies and principalities between Turkey and the Swedes, but take care how you align yourself with these foreign swashers who come over to cash in on this revolution—with nothing to recommend them but tarnished epaulets, tarnished reputations and a full set of military mustaches! We've had the clippings and sweepings of every European court dumped on us, mostly younger sons and bastard half-brothers, and leavings that were pitched out when the college of heraldry cleaned house!—I beg your pardon heartily if you're a bastard. I meant nothing personal.

CUTTING. I think you did, though, and I'd take the trouble to quarrel with you if I thought it worth my while. It isn't. You can rate Conway and Lee and Gates as low as you like. They'll hold their commissions long after your Washington's gone back to planting tobacco along the Potomac. He's a beaten man. You heard his speech, and if that wasn't a valedictory I never heard one. He's tired and others are tired of him, and when he goes you'll go with him.

TENCH. Come, come—this is news. When may we expect this happy sequel?

CUTTING. I've said my say.

TENCH. You have indeed—and you've said what I wanted to get out of you—

CUTTING. No doubt you're a tale-bearer, too, to go with the rest of your Colonial virtues.

TENCH. You may be right.

CUTTING. Tell it then. I've said nothing that isn't said from here to Boston, and with added flourishes.

TENCH. Good night, sir. Gentlemen, your pardon for a scene hardly calculated to instill respect and discipline. Good night.

[*He goes out. The men are silent.* SPAD *takes the dog by an*

improvised leash and goes to the door. CUTTING *throws himself on a bunk.*]

MASON. Starting now?

SPAD. The least Sir William can give me's a square meal—and if I time it right I'll have beef and kidney pie tomorrow night for supper.

ALCOCK. I hope you over-eat yourself and regurgitate.

SPAD. Thanks. Always a friend.

[*He goes out.* NEIL *sits up and swings his legs out of the bunk.*]

TAVIS. Lie still, sweet. Lie still and rest.

NEIL. This is a poor death to die.

CURTAIN

act 1 scene 2

SCENE: *A ballroom in General Howe's headquarters in Philadelphia. Before the curtain rises a small string orchestra is playing one of Mozart's early minuets, and at its rise three or four furbelowed and periwigged couples are dancing to the music.* SIR WILLIAM, *who is dancing with a woman in a domino, leaves the group to talk with his partner. The end of the room is curtained off for amateur theatricals and there are boxes for spectators.*

MAJOR ANDRE[1] [*to his partner*]. This is the Mozart.

FIRST LADY. Wolferl—the little one?

ANDRE. True, they called him Wolferl. He's older now.
And they print him Wolfgang Amadeus. All the masters
that ever set notes on paper meet in him
or are vanquished by him.

FIRST LADY. But he's so young.

ANDRE. My dear,
I heard him play in London as a child.
Music fell from him in cascades. These things
are inexplicable, like windows to the unseen

[1] ***Major Andre.*** *John André (1751–1780), the dashing young British officer, who was serving on the staff of General Howe at this time, was to be executed three years later for his service as a spy working with Benedict Arnold. André was a gifted writer of skits such as the one presented here.*

that open and show us marvels.

FIRST LADY. Twenty years old!

ANDRE. Barely twenty, I think. There—the dominant—
how fitly that's resolved![1]

[SIR WILLIAM *and his partner enter one of the boxes and draw the curtain. They are screened from the ballroom but not from the audience.*]

A BRIGADIER. Our General
has made another conquest.

SECOND LADY. Nay, rather say
Sir William wins to lose. These victories
of his are Pyrrhic. The husbands get commissions—
a colonelcy at least.

BRIGADIER. For such a known beauty
he must make a brigadier.

SECOND LADY. Her husband's away—
a prisoner.

BRIGADIER. Ah, they play without forfeits.

SECOND LADY. She's not so young
that she has time to lose.

[*Fingers to lips they give the box a wide berth.*]

HOWE. Like pleated silk,
this music. It interweaves.

MARY PHILIPSE.[2] It is silken music.
Silken sad music.

HOWE. Yes, sad too. These artists,
they know so well how to interweave love and death.

MARY. In tapestries—lutes, lovers, battles.

HOWE. There's nothing
to break the heart like these same minuets
we use to dance to. You should have loved a soldier,
masked lady.

MARY. I married a soldier.

HOWE. Yes? His name?

MARY. Is that to the purpose—to inquire names?

HOWE. My dear,
if I knew his name I'd be inclined to practice

[1] ***resolved,*** *passed from dissonance to concord.*

[2] ***Mary Philipse*** *(1730–1825), a charming heiress of Yonkers, whom Washington had courted in 1756.*

King David's stratagem.[1] Poor man, I'd set him
in the forefront of the battle, and then his widow—
I'd keep her for myself.
MARY. And Mistress Loring,[2]
the lovely Mistress Loring?
HOWE. A friend, I swear.
Only a friend.
MARY. A bosom friend, then—one
who gives her all?
HOWE. Is a soldier to have but one,
and she forever? May not a soldier weary
and choose again—a fairer? [*He kisses her.*]
MARY. You mistake me—
HOWE. You are someone I know.
MARY. No, I think not.
I'm no one you have seen—but you're forgiven
for being misled. I smiled and led you on,
and I'm not angry—but in truth I'm sad this evening
for love of someone else.
HOWE. Now, damn it all,
why not for love of me?
MARY. Why, it just happens
this once, you're not the man.
HOWE. Someone outshines me
in my own camp! Darkness and death and devils,
shall this be borne? But tell me his name and place
and you shall have him.
MARY. He's not at your dispose,
Sir William; he serves elsewhere. No—in real truth,
he serves on the other side, and what I wanted
was leave to go out and see him.
HOWE. Insult on insult!
Not only a less than I am, an enemy!
Sweet domino, you humble me my pride—
but you shall have him, and my price is only

[1] ***King David's stratagem.*** *To secure the beautiful Bathsheba the Biblical king caused her husband to be placed "in the forefront of the hottest battle," where he was killed. (II Samuel xi).*

[2] ***Mistress Loring,*** *Howe's mistress, Elizabeth Lloyd Loring, wife of the British commissary of prisoners in New York.*

that you doff this domino. [*She removes her mask.*]
And now I'm sorry
I said I'd help you to him. The devil take him,
some oaf of a musketeer! Would you be a rebel?
MARY. I've set my heart on it.
HOWE. Never rebel, dear lady.
God sets up kings, and all the prayer books teach us
it's irreligious to fight against them.
MARY. Come—
be serious—
HOWE. With a woman?
MARY. Solemn, then, sad—
doleful. I loved and lost when I was a child.
I let my love go then, when I might have had him—
and now it may be too late.
HOWE. See the tears in my eyes—
you have smitten the rock like Moses.[1]
MARY. When I was a child
a young man came wooing from Virginia way.
And we fell in love, but my parents said, No, no—
this is an Indian fighter; you are rich,
and may turn out good-looking; let him go,
and catch yourself a lord. And I let him go
and caught myself a captain of marines
or something of that kind. I've never loved him.
I've wanted what I lost.
HOWE. The Indian fighter.
MARY. Yes.
HOWE. It's someone I know?
MARY. I doubt you've seen him,
but you've heard of him; he's no less on the rebel side
than you on this.
HOWE. Washington?
MARY. I believe
that was the name.
HOWE. Is this some game you play?
MARY. It would be but a poor game. No, I'm deadly earnest,
I'm not jesting now.

[1] *Moses, who smote the rock to bring forth water for the children of Israel (Exodus xvii, 6).*

HOWE. What a strange mad thing
is a woman's heart! To remember all this while
and brood on it, and remember. You'd go to him
and give up all that's civilized to live
on corn bread in log cabins?
MARY. Will it be so long
before we come to terms with the rebels? This
is the last year of their war.
HOWE. A long-headed girl;
you've thought this through.
MARY. Oh, truly.
HOWE. But then I've heard—
the man is married, is he not?
MARY. A widow.
When I refused him he married a widow with land
and a nest of children. Nasty ones, I hope,
with wipey noses.
HOWE. Is there any other kind?
Strange that they're such a pleasure in the getting
and so damp to have about.—Why, no my dear;
the answer's no. As a gallant to a lady,
here in this ballroom, we may talk, look you,
of anything under heaven; but wars are something
which you have hardly imagined, here in this ballroom.
They're fought with blood and iron. I say, for your sake,
for yours alone, you're not to cross the lines.
MARY. I understand that. If you must refuse, why then,
you must refuse. You have your reasons. Still—
I shall go.
HOWE. Without a pass?
MARY. If necessary.
There comes a time when a woman's desperate
to have her youth. It's come to me, and I'll have it
though all the generals in hell should stand
eyes front and bar my passage. Oh, believe me,
I can make my way.
HOWE. And, being warned, I shall find
a way to prevent it. [*The orchestra begins to play Yankee Doodle.*]
Come; the masquerade
is about to begin, and we're to be amused.

MARY. Surely.

[*He pulls back the curtain. A number of couples have drifted in and* ANDRE *takes a central position with a paper in his hand.*]

ANDRE. Ladies and officers, worshippers of beauty and beloved of the fair, it is now my sad duty to announce that the program will be taken over by General George Washington and his Continental army, whose services we have acquired for the evening at the expense of three shillings, sixpence, and three twists of local tobacco, very bad. In a personal interview, which I obtained with General Washington he said, in part, "Yes, sir, by gum, we'll be there, by gum, every man-jack of us, by gum!" Ladies and officers will now find seats or otherwise dispose themselves to view the entertainment. Warning is hereby issued that the committee is not responsible for possible depredations committed by General Washington's horse, a spirited animal and hard to hold! En avant!

[*Amid cheers, jeers and hisses the curtains are pulled back, revealing three ragged soldiers, caricatures of the Continentals, and Washington as impersonated by a British officer on a broomstick hobbyhorse, with movable ears.* THE WASHINGTON *raises his wooden sword.*]

THE WASHINGTON. Stop! Halt! Whoa! Give the password!

[*At each command the horse wags an ear.*]

FIRST SOLDIER.

I am a soldier in a cause,
I march and fight for freedom;
I won't obey nobody's laws,
I never seem to need 'em.

CHORUS [*sung, as* THE WASHINGTON *does a clog dance*].

Yankee Doodle has no shoes,
Yankee Doodle Dandy;
For ham and eggs he has no use,
But he fills up on brandy!
Clippetty, clippetty, clippetty, clippetty,
clop, clop, clop, clop, clop; clip!

FIRST LADY. I think he has a very intelligent face.

ANDRE. The horse? Yes, the horse keeps his countenance well.

SECOND SOLDIER.

When I was young I went to war
My freedom for to win, sirs,
Since then I've travelled fast and far

A-saving of my skin, sirs.

CHORUS.

Yankee Doodle has no home,
From field and farm he's chased, sirs,
And if you ask us why we roam—
There's reason for our haste, sirs.
Clippetty, clippetty, clippetty, clippetty,
Clop, clop, clop, clop, clop! clip!

MARY. Oh, the poor little army! It's really sad.

BRIGADIER. Isn't it? One could almost weep.

THIRD SOLDIER.

I make my shoes of hempen bags;
I'm sorry that I come now,
Because I'm destitute of rags
To cover up my bum now.

CHORUS.

Yankee Doodle, keep it up,
Yankee Doodle Dandy,
Mind the music and the step
And with the girls be handy!
Tootlety, tootlety, tootlety, tootlety,
Toot, toot, toot, toot, toot; peep!

THE WASHINGTON. Eyes front! Manage your weapons! This way, army! Face the war! [*They face in different directions, muskets at every angle.*] Stock arms! Pull out rammer! Catch horn in left hand! Charger in right hand! Fill charger! Empty charger in bore! Grease patches!

SECOND LADY. But what are they doing?

CAPTAIN. They're getting ready to fire.

SECOND LADY. Oh, my dear!

THE WASHINGTON. Patch on muzzle! Ball on patch! Ram ball down! Return rammer to gun! Ready! Aim!

[*They aim wildly in different directions, one gun pointing at* THE WASHINGTON, *who moves.*]

FIRST LADY. Oh, but this is serious!

[*Another woman gives a little scream.*]

THE WASHINGTON. Ready! Aim! Take aim!

[*He moves out of range; the gun follows him.*]

SECOND LADY. The suspense is killing me!

THE WASHINGTON [*to the soldier whose gun points at him*]. Will you do me the favor to turn your weapon in some other direction,

sir? It may be loaded. [*The soldier alters his aim.*] Take aim, men! Take aim! Fire! [*They pull the triggers. One gun goes off with a terrific concussion, kicking its owner over backward. He falls against the other two, who go down likewise. They look about fearfully.*] A victory! An important victory! The Congress shall hear of this! Soldiers of the Continental army, this proves that our cause is righteous! We shall have liberty or death, probably death! Preferably death!

[SPAD *comes wandering onto the stage, leading the dog and watching the proceedings, at first with curiosity and then with growing resentment.*]

BRIGADIER. Reenforcements are arriving!

HOWE. Is that my dog he has there?

SPAD. I'm looking for General Howe.

THE WASHINGTON.

Lift your eyes, my men, and greet the sunrise,
Soldiers, the dawn of liberty is ours!
Long we've battled, long we've faced the foeman
To gain at least six feet of earth—and flowers.

'Twixt liberty and death we pause no longer,
No choice remains to disconcert the brave;
Races are to the swift, power to the stronger—
Taxes we will not pay; we choose—the grave.

I am that Washington on whom you've pondered;
My head is in the clouds, my feet—in mud.
My socks are wet, my shirts are never laundered,
I grind the neighbor's children up for food.

SPAD. Looky here, mister actor!

THE WASHINGTON.

In short to put it briefly, men and matrons.
I'm at the end of what I call my string;
I'll trade this revolution, and its patrons,
For half a gill of rum—or anything.

SPAD. You'll have to get up first then!

[*He socks* THE WASHINGTON *in the jaw, and he sits down hard, very much surprised.*]

ANDRE. What's all this? What's that man doing there?

HOWE. Easy, easy! It may be part of the show!

ANDRE. Oh, no, sir! I wrote the play, and this is no part of it.

HOWE. There may have been changes made in your manuscript, my dear author. These things happen!

ANDRE. I think not.

THE WASHINGTON [*getting up*]. What did you mean by that? Who are you?

SPAD. I'm good enough for you! [*They square off for a fight.*]

HOWE. Part them! Part them, some of you! Professional jealousy, that's all! Actor's jealousy!

[ANDRE *and another officer leap to the stage to hold the combatants.*]

ANDRE. What are you doing on the stage?

SPAD. I was sent here, wasn't I? Let go of me!

[*An officer appears from the wings in his shirt-sleeves.*]

ANDRE. Did you let this madman loose in here?

STAGE MANAGER. Wasn't he in this scene? He was dressed for it!

ANDRE. He's nobody I ever saw before. How did you get in here?

SPAD. I'm bringing General Howe's dog back to him, that's all—and they pushed me in here. I've got a letter for General Howe.

ANDRE. From whom?

SPAD. From General George Washington. And don't fool yourself—that don't look like him!

ANDRE. You have a letter from General Washington?

SPAD. I have. [*He brings it out.*] And a dog. We found this dog at Valley Forge. There's the dog and there's the note, and that ends my business here. I'll go now, if you don't mind, because I don't think much of you—or of your gang!

HOWE [*approaching*]. Let me see the note.

[ANDRE *hands it to him.*]

SPAD. So that's all.

ANDRE. One moment, please.

HOWE. Why yes. Quite right and to the point. Sir, I wish to thank you for the dog, for the note, and for your courtesy. I hope you will remain to be my messenger back again, for I wish to thank General Washington in writing for his consideration.

SPAD. I wasn't instructed to wait for an answer.

ANDRE. Sir, this is no manner in which to address an officer.

SPAD. Fine. You address him any way you like, and I'll address him any way I like.

FIRST LADY. How sweet!

ANDRE. I shall not stand by quietly while some blackguardly curmudgeon of a rebel cheeks the commander of the British army.

SPAD. When I came in here there was a blackguardly officer-of-the-line libelling George Washington as an eater of little children! I won't forget that!

HOWE. No more of this, gentlemen! No more, please! My dear sir, even if you are unwilling to carry my thanks to General Washington you must not refuse some reward for your pains in returning my absent-minded canine.

SPAD. No, thanks.

HOWE. You will at least be my guest at a good dinner before you take the road, for you have come a long way, and I have heard that you fare but lightly along the Schuylkill.

SPAD. Somebody's been lying like hell, then! They told you we were shy of victuals over at Valley Forge? Listen, last night I threw away more than I ate! I'm much obliged but I wouldn't be able to accommodate any dinner. I wouldn't want to take the last few mouthfuls away from a beleaguered army in straitened circumstances. No, thanks just the same, I'll go back to my own side, where the cooking's plentiful and excellent.

HOWE. That must be as you wish, then. Captain, will you see that arrangements are made for this gentleman's safe return through our lines? And will you take the dog also into your custody?

[*The* CAPTAIN *bows.*]

SPAD. I beg your pardon, General, but I'd a little rather you didn't lump me in with your dog. If the dog rates an officer I rate one.

HOWE. And a very fine feeling you have in the matter, too, sir. Again I beg your pardon. Fielding, I place the General's messenger under your protection.

[*Another officer bows and* SPAD *goes out with him.*]

SECOND LADY. And this is doubtless a sample of rebel etiquette!

BRIGADIER. At any rate we're rid of him.

HOWE. I would we might be rid of all of them as easily. They're starving at Valley Forge, you know, and he refused food.

FIRST LADY. A most disagreeable person.

HOWE. Will you announce the next divertissement, Major? We must not interrupt our evening.

ANDRE. Ladies and gentlemen, this puts a rather unexpected period to our masquerade. Shall we retire to the refreshment tables in order to change the subject? [*The party begins to move toward the exits.*]

SECOND LADY. But we'll dance again later?

FIRST LADY. I must hear the Mozart Minuet once more.

BRIGADIER. Lady, we'll dance as long as there are officers atoot and ladies to face them.

ANDRE [*to the musicians*]. The Mozart Minuet?

HOWE. Major, if you'll remain a moment—

CAPTAIN. A fresh shipment of salt water delicacies, they say. [*The Minuet is played softly.*] Oysters from the Chesapeake, clams from Pamlico Sound.

SECOND LADY. They run the blockade, then?

CAPTAIN. What blockade, madame? One mud fort and a few chevaux-de-frise![1]

[HOWE *beckons to* ANDRE, *and the two are left alone save for* MARY *and the* BRIGADIER, *who are half-hidden at the far corner of the ballroom.*]

ANDRE. Sir, at your service.

HOWE. That lady is your guest, sir, I believe?

ANDRE. Yes, General—Mistress Morris, an old friend, and my guest this evening. You'll remember that Major Morris is unfortunately a prisoner?

HOWE. You could vouch
for her loyalty, no doubt?

ANDRE. Why, with my life,
or anything you asked.

HOWE. She tells some tale
of having been affianced to Washington,
or having come near it.

ANDRE. Why, that's no more than truth.
Her family broke it off. She told you that?
But I've heard it often.

HOWE. Oh, she went much further—
wishes to see him—

ANDRE. Yes?

HOWE. Oh, asked my help
to pass her through the lines.

ANDRE. It's not serious.

HOWE. I think it is.

ANDRE. Well, it's hardly to be expected
you'd lend yourself to such a whim. I'm sorry
if she's been intrusive.

HOWE. Not at all. It happens

[1] ***chevaux-de-frise,*** *spiked obstructions.*

I'd been casting about for expedients. I've had
bad news to-night.
ANDRE. Bad news?
HOWE. The French alliance,
which we have feared, is imminent, or likely.—
Should the French lend their fleet and men to aid
the colonies, it will be a long war; it may
hurt England deep in the end. I've no heart for it.
I've seen too much blood shed.
ANDRE. Why, General—
you've won the last three battles!
HOWE. Have I so?
If the French come in, and there's a hellish good prospect
they will, it'll be a long war. Perhaps five years more
of damn dull fighting, and every chance in the world
of losing after it all.
ANDRE. Losing? The British
lost to the Americans?
HOWE. The longer it goes on
the more chance they have.—At this moment the war is won.
Washington's army's a wraith. It lingers on
from month to month by miracle. And now,
now when I've won my war, the French drop on us
and botch the game.—I see one possible hope
of making an end of it. If Washington
can be reached, and convinced it's useless to go on,
the thing is done. He has reason to be discouraged
if ever a man had reason.
ANDRE. But this rumor from France,
this will get to him too.
HOWE. We've taken the packet
that brought his letters. It will be some time
before he learns of it. It's our cue to convince him
there's no hope from France, and he's stuck alone
at Valley Forge with his shambles of an army,
and no help in sight. Suppose I sent this lady
out of his youth with a message?
ANDRE. He'll see her, surely.
She might persuade him.
HOWE. Send off that talking ass

she's dangling with, and bring her here. We'll see
what mettle's in her.

ANDRE. But you'll not let her know
of the French alliance?

HOWE. We'd best lie to the lady
on that one score. Tell her the French refused.
It's fair enough.

ANDRE. Let her carry that lie to him?

HOWE. Why yes. Why not?

[ANDRE *goes to* MARY PHILIPSE, *who disengages herself from the* BRIGADIER *and returns with him.* HOWE *takes a pinch of snuff meanwhile and dusts his frill. The* BRIGADIER *goes out.*]

MARY. You wished to see me, sir?

HOWE. I've been revolving
this request you made, dear lady, and wondering
whether you might be of use.—If I could trust
a woman with a nation's destiny—

MARY. Forgive me,
I'm a woman, but I know where gossip ends.
It's safe with me.

HOWE. And yet the bald fact is
you have an inclination toward one of the rebels,
and perhaps toward all.

MARY. It's not his quality
as rebel that attracts me, General.
I'd like him less so. If it could be managed
I'd make him less so for you.

HOWE. Then perhaps—
if you still wish to see him—?

MARY. Oh, I'm not fickle.
But—you're willing to let me go?

HOWE. I want your help.
I want this war to end. To-night we've learned
one fact that makes it perfect suicide
for the colonies to continue. The French alliance—
well—there's to be none.

MARY. You've learned this?

HOWE. It's quite certain.
And now what hopes have they?

MARY. None—none at all.

HOWE. This Washington of yours,

he's a Virginia squire at heart, he has
about as much to gain as you or I
out of this war. He likes to take his ease
and hunt his foxes. If I had half an hour
to talk things over with him, and make it plain
how little they have to lose, how much to win
by making terms, I'd have him on my side
and there'd be no revolution.

ANDRE. You speak as if it lay
with one man to decide. Let Washington
be ever so discouraged, still there's Congress
and the Boston merchants.

HOWE. Sick of it, one and all. The Boston merchants
and Massachusetts officers are plotting
to put Gates in his place and sue for peace
on any terms. They're ruined by the war,
and losing money every day; no ships,
no commerce, markets shot to fattrels, all
the fat-backed Puritans screaming over taxes
and retching with fear to think how big they signed
their names to the Declaration. Washington—
he's our man.

ANDRE. And is he open to reason?

HOWE. He's a canny gentleman. He knows
how bread is buttered.

MARY. Then—he will talk with you?

HOWE. Well, that was where I thought you might come in,
Mistress Morris. You say he loved you once
and you wish to see him—well, that can be dished up
into some raggle-taggle gypsy tale,
all honey and moonlight—
how you sheer must—must see him; dashed away
forgetting husbands, wives, proprieties,
in one sweet sweep of passion—it's no man's brain
can find the seasoning, but you'll worm your way
into a friendly meeting—

MARY. I can say this truly,
with no help of seasoning. And then—?

HOWE. Why then—
I have no speech prepared—but tell him this
in your own fashion: The war's gone on too long,

both sides lose, both are worn down till there's nothing
left to win should he win. One word from him
and we all forget and forgive—exchange general pardons,
live again like men. What beasts we've been,
we English-speaking brothers, to gash and stab
and drill each other's brains out all these years
over one kind of government or another
when they're all the same! I'm a liberal myself,
want to see men free, as he does—but, good Lord,
when has a king balked freedom, when has the lack
of a king guaranteed it?

MARY. But if I told him this
I should mean it, Sir William.

HOWE. And I should mean it! [*The music begins again.*]
I mean it from my heart! You think because
I dance and take it lightly, and play about
with women, this damned war means nothing to me
but a Colonial interlude, a picnic
on military lines? I tell you and swear it,
if I could keep some semblance of victory
they could have their liberty for all of me!
Three years is much too much to give a cause
you never believed in!

MARY. Well—I'll go.

[*The dancers are returning.*]

HOWE. And tell him
we in this camp know that he's lost, but are loath
to press our advantage home, having held him always
as a magnanimous gentleman and a soldier
just this side of miracle. You'll say this?

MARY. Yes.

HOWE. And say, too, to give up hope of France.

ANDRE. The dancers are returning.

MARY. I'll say all this—
but with one difference—that I'll mean it all.

HOWE. Our compact's drawn
and a kiss shall seal it. Shall we dance, my lady?

[HOWE *and* MARY *take places in the Minuet and the scene ends as it began, with several couples dancing to the Mozart music.*]

CURTAIN

act 1 scene 3

SCENE: *Washington's headquarters. The parlor of a Colonial house. Windows and an entrance door to the left; to the rear a fireplace and a door to dining-room. A small desk is placed at the right, and rather formal chairs are spaced about the room. A large map hangs on the rear wall, showing Philadelphia, the Delaware below the city, and Valley Forge.* TENCH *is seated at the desk.* GENERALS VARNUM[1] *and* STIRLING[2] *are seated near him.* LAFAYETTE *is leaning at the rear doorway and* WASHINGTON *stands near the window, occasionally pacing back and forth.*

WASHINGTON. Now if you will read the minutes, sir.

TENCH [*reading*]. These sentences are to stand: Joseph Cutler, for repeated desertions from different regiments and companies, to be lashed and cashiered with infamy. A man known as Junius Morgan, one time a soldier in the Continental army, to be flogged at a cart's tail for selling provisions to the British and for the wounding of a sergeant when arrested. Abraham Toller, for selling farm produce to the British army, to be stripped of his remaining produce, the same to be turned over to the quartermaster's department. Samuel Jelliffe, who was sentenced to be hanged for espionage, to be reprieved, and returned to the officers' prison, in consideration of his having turned over to the commander of his regiment papers and documents of inestimable value, and made a full and free confession, accompanied by acts of contrition and promises of amendment.

I'd like to add to that, to my simple thinking
the only way to deal with a spy's to hang him,
not the second time, but the first.

WASHINGTON. I gave him my word,
and he kept his to me.

TENCH. It's decided further

[1] ***Varnum,*** *James M. Varnum (1748–1789), whom Washington called "the light of the camp" at Valley Forge.*

[2] ***Stirling,*** *William Alexander, "Lord Stirling" (1726–1783), the brave general who had a part in exposing the Conway Cabal.*

that Generals Stirling and Lafayette will lead
the raid on Howe's hay islands.

WASHINGTON. Let it be understood
that I leave the conduct of this expedition
in your hands who lead it, but only say once more
bring in what you can. What life's left in this camp
we live on hope of salvage. That was all?

TENCH. That's all. Unless you've a minute to squander on
the puke-faced boy you saw in the entrance—

WASHINGTON. Who?

TENCH. Damned if I know his name. I've booted him
some five or six times, but he's back again to-day
asking to see you. I'll pack him out if you like
but the poor calf had such a bleak look about him
I let him sit there this time.

WASHINGTON. Let him come in.

[TENCH *goes out to the hall and a door is heard. He reenters with* NEIL BONNIWELL.]

TENCH. Spit it out and be terse about it. We've got
no time for a history.

WASHINGTON. Why are you here, sir?

NEIL. Why,
I'll say it brief as I can. I've been in the army
nearly three years, sir. I joined it for three years,
and my time's nearly up.—I don't quite know how
to say what I came to say. The truth is, I'm dying.
They tell me it's ague, something wrong with my stomach
the doctors tell me; but I had two brothers die
just the same way. I've taken a consumption
and I'm near the end of it.

WASHINGTON. Colonel Tench will arrange
to send you home at once. I'm glad you came,
and sorry not to have seen you before.

NEIL. Why, thank you,
but that's not what I wanted.

WASHINGTON. I'm afraid that's all
we have to offer.

NEIL. It's harder than hell to say
what it is I wanted. I don't want to die.
Nobody wants to die—not young. But I will
whether I go or stay here. There are certain things

men have in this world, and I'll never have them. Damn it—
let me die for something! I've believed in this war
we're fighting—and you, I've believed in you! A man
doesn't like to go out forever and not one blow
struck for—it sounds like bluster—and that's what it is—
but one chance is all I can ever have—that's all
I could be remembered for—

WASHINGTON. I very much fear
you're not fit for service—

TENCH. Come on—if I'd had any notion
what this was about—

NEIL. Yes, death's a long way from you!
You're alive—God, you're almost so much alive
you can think you're immortal—but let me be on a field
with a gun in my hands, and die there, not die retching
my lungs and brains out!

TENCH. There's no time for this.

WASHINGTON. One moment—

NEIL. Will you try to see it, sir? A lot of men
have died, and I'm only one, but we're dead a long time
and we came to fight for something, my brothers and I—
It was you we believed in!

WASHINGTON. We'll do what we can—
You'll be looked after.

NEIL. That's—all—?

WASHINGTON. That's all I can promise.
Goodnight—and give me your hand.

NEIL. Yes, sir. Good-night.

[*He goes out with* TENCH, *who returns at once.*]

WASHINGTON. You have his name?

TENCH. Yes. [*A pause*]

WASHINGTON. It's not accident,
as you may have thought, that you four are here to-night.
There's a question I ask myself so often now
I must ask it of someone else. The reports before us
show us we've neither food nor clothes nor arms
for the maintenance of an army, nor defense
if we're attacked. In my last letter to Congress
I told them we must either starve or dissolve
unless they sent instant aid. I've written before
almost as urgently, receiving replies—

friendly, cajoling, evasive, full of advice,
mostly unworkable, and a thin stream of goods,
sufficient, say, for half a regiment,
and we've foraged for the rest. They're sending to-morrow
two commissioners to investigate; by the time
we've satisfied these stool-wits that we're dying
the men who have gumption left to arise and walk
will have walked away, and we'll muster nobody here
but the sick and naked. It's begun already.
Great bands of marauders shift away from camp
and range the country like brigands. Some thousand or two
have put out for home; it's reckoned another thousand
have crossed the lines to Howe. One-third of our soldiers,
and those the most able-bodied, have gone—the remainder—
how they hold out, or why, I don't know.—We can't blame them
if they follow their fellows.—Now when our army's gone,
as it seems to be going, Sir William Howe, who's waited
for just this chance, will stroll out in his fat-haunched way
to round us in and we're done for. My question's simply:
Does this end the adventure? Is the revolution over,
or is it worth trying to hold on into spring
when at least there's food to be had?—It will cost lives,
by hundreds, perhaps by thousands.—What it means to me
to say this, I think you know.—I ask General Varnum,
as first in rank, to speak first.

VARNUM. Sir, I'm a soldier. If I were in command
of the Continental army, I'd say now
we can't go on. But I'm not in command.
I'm a soldier, and I take orders. And what I say
as a soldier, one who takes orders, is, now God help you,
you who bear this burden, to find some way
to command though we feed on dust and carrion,
and wear no pelts but our own, that we stick it out.—
What orders you give
may there be men left to follow!

WASHINGTON. And you, General Stirling?

STIRLING. I'll string along with Varnum.
It's not on my conscience, I know, and it is on yours
if men die in a dead cause. As a way to die
it's early and unpleasant, and may come to nothing,
but I think you underestimate the number

who'll see it through with you, if you give the word,
till we've eaten the wolves extinct.
WASHINGTON. Enough, you think,
to hold the English till spring?
STIRLING. No!
there would be enough—
now here I take up a sore subject, and one perhaps
there's no place for in this conference—but there'd be enough
and then to spare, if those moth-eaten drones
who've served abroad, and spread their dog-eared commissions
in every company, to prove they've been in a war—
if they were dumped in the Schuylkill through the ice
till they'd mixed their brandy with water.
WASHINGTON. Let's stay with our subject.
There are many with us who served in England and France,
and in Germany, too, before this war. There are some
of irreplaceable value—
STIRLING. And some, by God,
who'd sell the cannon out of Valley Forge
for three Spanish dollars, paper! They'd sell you out
to Gates, or Lee, or any mother's son
who'd raise their rank by half-a-crown a year—
and stain their good right hands to the bone with ink—
not with blood, mind you—writing their peaching letters
to put you out, and Gates in! What disaffection
there is, they've started most of it!
WASHINGTON. Well, we have
no evidence of it, and this was not the theme
we met here to discuss—
STIRLING. No evidence!
Take out some time for this: Three nights ago
I was drunk with a certain American general
who serves here in this valley. He was drunk, too,
and he boasted to me he'd written to General Gates
and to members of Congress, that in his ripest judgment
this war was lost unless you, Washington,
were superseded!
TENCH. Who was this?
STIRLING. Who? Why, Conway. He's a dirty traitor,
and there are plenty like him!
VARNUM. That's talk in his cups—

STIRLING. You think so?
It sobered me fast enough!
WASHINGTON. When you find such a letter[1]
it will be time enough—
STIRLING. Why, so I thought
when I was sober—and so thinking I saddled a horse
and rode me sixty miles till I caught the post
that carried that letter, and took it from him, and have it,
and there, with your leave, it is! [*He tosses the letter down.*]
WASHINGTON. What does it say?
STIRLING. What he boasted of, and more.
WASHINGTON. I shall see Conway.
TENCH. And while you're about it see a Lieutenant Cutting
who runs his errands for him, and let me witness
what he said to me of the same.
WASHINGTON. We can take both later.
At the moment, who shall be head of this phantom army
is a question almost academic. I've asked
another question of you, and on your answers
it depends, largely, whether there is an army—
or will be one to-morrow, for Gates to covet
or me to say good-bye to. In a republic
treason is not exactly what it seems
under a king. There are rights of opinion here.
Friend Gates has been winning victories of late,
and it may be he'd be better.
TENCH. Now if you meant that—
WASHINGTON. I don't, as it happens! This Conway's three-quarters snake
and you'll see him squirm on a griddle!
TENCH. Thank God for that.
A man can be over-patient.
WASHINGTON. I've asked your counsel
on another point, sir, not that.
TENCH. And you want it now?
WASHINGTON. We're ready for it now.
TENCH. Then I'd see the Congress
damned in hell, before I'd let them ruin
our campaign for us! Who is it sits at York

[1] ***letter.*** *Conway's mysterious letter which actually was misreported to Stirling by youthful Colonel Wilkinson, a favorite of Gates.*

doling supplies out? A pack of puling[1] grimsirs[2]
with one testicle among them to keep their wives
in order and run the state! A school of prissies
thwarting the war and cadging on the side
to fur their gowns! This country'd come to you
with open arms if you said to them once for all:
I'll take just this and that, and I'll take it now
when it's needed! One word, one breath from you and you'd blow
the Congress from here to Maine!

WASHINGTON. A dictator?

TENCH. Why,
are you so afraid of words? It's that or lose.

WASHINGTON. Has it escaped you, sir, that we fight this war
against usurpation of power? Should I usurp
the powers of Congress, which gave me what power I have,
I'd have nothing left to fight for.

TENCH. I beg your pardon!
We're in rebellion against the king of England,
or so I thought.

WASHINGTON. It happens that our Congress
is the heart of what we fight for, good or bad,
and I uphold it. Now, keeping that in mind,
is it possible to go on?

TENCH. No, it is not.
Last night there was mutiny in the Eighteenth; they objected
to their food, and little blame to them. The riot
was quelled only by scouring out the larders
of neighboring battalions. This will happen again
and spread. There's no holding men to discipline
when there's bread in the country, and boots, and bales of clothing
waiting for shipment, and nothing but plain damned fools,
sitting in legislature, withholds them! Who gives
a simple curse for Congress, or theories,
when his guts are rotted out with rotten food
and his toes fall off from freezing? I tell you now
a man would fight as hard for the porpoise turds
that float the Chesapeake, full of hot air, and with reason
quite as good, as for these fastidious wind-bags
that make our laws in session, and draw their pay,

[1] ***puling,*** *whining.*
[2] ***grimsirs,*** *overbearing fellows.*

and leave us to die here. I'm not a pious man;
I'm a soldier, as Varnum says he is, and a soldier's business
is to fight when he has to, run away when he can,
eat if he can get it, drink as much as there is,
and stay alive. I'll fight for the man I believe in,
but if I'm to fight to make Congress permanent
they can take their revolution and stick it back
in the bung it came from!

WASHINGTON. That's plainly said.

TENCH. If it's too plain I'm sorry.

STIRLING. Well, but pause a moment,
my gentle Lucifer; there's treason enough
without our adding to it.

TENCH. If I speak treason,
hell, make the most of it! The whole damned war
is treason to King George! It all depends
on the point of view, and whether you win!

VARNUM. But still
this war's for liberty; and the government
we've set up freely for ourselves, we're here
to defend it—for nothing else.

TENCH. Well, when it comes
to governments you'll have to let me out.
They're all alike, and have one business, governments,
and it's to plunder. This new one we've set up
seems to be less efficient than the old style
in its methods of plundering folk, but give them time;
they'll learn to sink their teeth in what you've got
and take it from you. To hell with the cause! I'll fight
while I'm fed and paid, and I haven't seen much lately
of either one.

WASHINGTON. This is new.

TENCH. I've read your letters
to Congress, and read their replies, and they've sickened me
of our war for freedom!

WASHINGTON. Marquis?

LAFAYETTE. I'm loath to speak,
gentlemen, in this conference. I shall offend,
I know, being but a young man, alien,
the scion of an old kingdom, ancien régime

in word and manner.

WASHINGTON. The more reason we should hear you.

STIRLING. Let's have it, lad.

LAFAYETTE. Shall I begin by saying
something you know, but may have forgotten? This world
you have cut from a wilderness, is a new world, brighter
with sun in summer, colder with winter cold
than the world I knew. The air's strange-sharp, the voice
rings here with a hard ring. I find no man
but looks you in the eye and says his thought
in your teeth, and means it. This was not known before
on this star we inhabit. Europe has thirty kings
and a hundred million slaves. But here in this land
each man's a king, and walks like a king, each woman
bears herself regally, like a queen. You will find
this is not easy to throw away. The air
of this coast has fired your blood, and while three among you,
no more than three, hold hard against the old masters,
the kingdoms lessen and dwindle. They've felt your breath
and feared it, in the old world. Lose! Now the gods
in heaven hear me, you cannot lose! Bow down
and humble yourselves if you can! It's not in you to bow
nor to speak humbly. It's a trick you've never learned
and cannot learn in this air!—As for these thrones
that men have bowed to, I've come from them lately, and seen them,
how they're eaten down with old vices and slimed with worms
till they crumble into the moats! Lower your muzzles,
droop your flags! Even so the kingdoms falter
and go down of themselves!

TENCH. And a very pleasant thought, too.

LAFAYETTE. You must forgive me.
I have an unfortunate eloquence which betrays me
when I launch on this theme.

TENCH. No, no—I meant that comment.

LAFAYETTE. I shall curb it if I can, however, and save you
from the longeurs. But two facts I must state
before I end. The name of Washington
is magical in France. It conjures up
all we have hoped to dare, all our young men
have deemed worth dying for. France inherits a king,

a little king, shall I say, a Louis parvus,
to distinguish from Louis le Grand?[1] And he views your rebels
as the legendary bishop viewed the rats
who came to eat him. He would see your heads
in ten thousand wicker baskets, a dozen to each
and sold for cabbages. But I have a friend
named Beaumarchais,[2] who guides the realm for the moment,
looks on you as I do, has a deft hand
to manoeuvre policies. He has set himself
to send you men, money, ships. The little king
may scream, and cling to his velvet furniture
and stamp on his powdered wig, still he's dragged along
with Beaumarchais, and before the end of spring
you will have these men, money and ships.

STIRLING. The end of spring.

LAFAYETTE. You cannot wait. I know it. Not possibly.
Yet if you knew what dreams and faith rest on you
you would do this impossible. I'm a young noble, rich,
spoiled, and perhaps not wise. I'm twenty years old,
and I left a child wife in France whom I love. I came
because the best life in all this world lives here
in what *you* have to do. It's true that your Congress
has tied your hands with silly errors, true
that foreign captains, enlisted with your arms,
grumble at native generalship and slight
your leaders for advancement, true that the lives,
lost, and to be lost, may seem lost for nothing,
for a false dawn, a chimera; still, soberly,
in fact—in all soberness—not since Prometheus
drew the gods' fires in heaven and left them cold
to bring fire down to men, there's been no action
better worth risk of stapling to the rocks
with vultures at your liver, than your defiance
of Hanoverian kings![3] There—I've slipped again

[1] ***Louis parvus . . . Louis le Grand,*** *Louis the little, i.e. Louis XVI, as distinct from Louis XIV, the Great.*

[2] ***Beaumarchais*** *(1732–1799), the French author of the plays* The Barber of Seville *and* The Marriage of Figaro, *assisted the American cause in France and carried on a considerable trade with the Colonies.*

[3] ***Hanoverian kings.*** *George III was of course a Hanoverian, descended from the Grand Duchess Sophia of Hanover, granddaughter of England's James I.*

into rhapsody—and again you must forgive me
since I meant each word.
WASHINGTON. You're quite forgiven.
VARNUM. Yes, but the question's not what we want to do
but what we can.
WASHINGTON. What's on hand?
TENCH. We might scratch up
by equalizing, three or four days' provision
for every corps.
WASHINGTON. Three days!
As for our high purpose,
we have it still, but the men, the men are mortal
and die around us so fast the heaviest work's
to bury the dead. Our slopes are honeycombed
with digging graves. The wards are crammed with sick
lying on logs without blankets. No medicine,
no food, no care; the farms around us swept
board-clean of grain this thirty miles. It's the men;
the men are human. They chop green wood for fires,
and shiver over them, stand their watch by night,
and drill by day, go to sleep supperless
and watch each other sicken. A stench goes up,
but whether it's from the living, dying or dead
it's too late to care. The lines of war we keep,
one middling wind would blow them with the leaves
and heap them in the gullies. Gentlemen,
looking back over what you've offered—each one of you
has said in his own way—even Lafayette—
there's no immediate hope.—And since I agree
that this is true—we should make our preparations
to break up camp and give over. We should—and yet—
since it's begun
and we're in it deep, while we have men and arms
and a government behind us and a gambler's stake
in what's to happen, we must still stand here
and take things as they come.
LAFAYETTE. This is the man
we heard of overseas!
WASHINGTON. If you heard of a martyr
I fear I'll disappoint you. I'd rather live
and have my fun in my time, before my face hardens

into a mountain crag. I have no taste
for being stood into a hero: St. George and the dragon,
one foot on tyranny's neck, a long spontoon
glittering in my gripe! What's the king to me?
A customer for tobacco. But we have three days.
And the order's given. We gamble our three days
on a change of luck and face what brand of hell's
reserved for madmen. [*The officers rise.*]

TENCH. Our usual brand of hell,
only more of it.

VARNUM. It will come to complete disaster,
very likely.

STIRLING. And yet, if you'd said "We quit, to-night,"
I'd have walked to the other side of the glen
and blown my brains out.

TENCH. You'd have taken a drink
and then another, and said, "All right, we quit."
And so would I.

WASHINGTON. All commanders
meet here at five in the morning.

STIRLING. At five? The night's
half-shot already.

WASHINGTON. At five.

TENCH. Drink one less bottle
and you'll come out plumb at five. Good-night.

WASHINGTON. Good-night, sir.

VARNUM. Sleep well, and my thanks
for taking it on yourself.

WASHINGTON. You'd have done the same.

VARNUM. Not I.

STIRLING. You might have, Varnum. The holder of power
develops a conscience. [*He takes* WASHINGTON's *hand.*]
If I'm drunk to-morrow, drop me.
I'm your man.

WASHINGTON. Thanks, Stirling. Good-night.

STIRLING. Good-night. [STIRLING, VARNUM *and* TENCH *go out.*]

WASHINGTON. If I was short with you when you meant to
praise me
I hope to be forgiven, Marquis. This war
is a democratic war, and one man's name—
You see?

LAFAYETTE. I understood, and I'll forgive you
whatever you wish to say. Sometimes I feel
I'm a difficult guest.

WASHINGTON. If I'd said what I meant
I'd have told you how much you've upheld my hands
when I was close to faltering. When a leader
loses one battle he senses how his world
begins to slide away from him. I've lost
too many since winning one. We're more than a year
from Trenton and Princeton;[1] I've lost at Brandywine
and Germantown since—and on the whole it's better
not to assume too much in company—
not on the record.

LAFAYETTE. Well, to yourself I tell you
if France sends help, it's to you. No other name
counts much with us; and, to my understanding,
in a world that catches rumors while it whirls,
there's surprising justice in it.

WASHINGTON. Oh, I'm not humble.
I stand well in my own opinion. Still,
at the moment I'd trade, say, half-a-bucketful
of fame for a sound bucolic year of farming
with a good sleep thrown in.

LAFAYETTE. It's past tattoo
even now, some four or five hours. I won't keep you.

WASHINGTON. No—
sleep's not a thing that comes on order. I'd rather
sit here and talk than lie awake. But you,
you'll need your rest if you leave at three in the morning,
for Howe's hay islands.

LAFAYETTE. Bah! I shall not lie down!
It's not worth the undressing.

WASHINGTON. True. At nothing-and-twenty
all night means nothing.—There was something you said
that moved me strangely. You left a young wife in France.
Does she mean so little to you?

LAFAYETTE. Little? My friend,
if all the argosies of Spain blew toward me
and left me all treasure they've carried through all time

[1] ***Trenton . . . Princeton,*** *Washington's victories of December 25, 1776 and January 3, 1777.*

and took her away, they'd leave me beggared.
WASHINGTON. And yet,
loving her so, you left her?
LAFAYETTE. It's a poor love
that belittles whom it loves, or would hold him back
from what's best and highest. If I wished to come
she would have me come.
WASHINGTON. You'll find few like her.
LAFAYETTE. None.
None, I should think. And yet for every man
this should come once. Such a love. You must have known
what such a love could be.
WASHINGTON. No. Once perhaps.
LAFAYETTE. It comes but once.
WASHINGTON. There was a girl one time—
when I was twenty-three—I might have loved so,
and might have loved me so. It's long ago.
It came out otherwise. A man begins
to lose his teeth and fear his eyes go bad
at forty-five—and wishes—well, it's trash.
Let it go with the rest.—Your fortune in a wife
has been our good fortune. You fall across our night
like a young star, all flame. Let's hope you're destined
to avoid our quenching.
LAFAYETTE. Sir, the sun's quenched in ocean
and rises in the morning. I gauge my life
it will be so with you.
WASHINGTON. I'll rise in the morning,
if that's what you mean.—Let's part no less good friends
for an exchange of courtesies. [*They clasp hands.* TENCH *enters.*]
TENCH. Damn these females!
WASHINGTON. Yes, Lucifer?
TENCH. There's an officer left over
in the exchange of prisoners. A British major,
or wears that uniform, but it's plain to see
there's a woman inside.
WASHINGTON. It would seem hardly a problem
for my attention.
TENCH. The lady's on our hands.
The escort's gone, and she asks to see Washington
with a verbal message from Howe.

WASHINGTON. She carries no papers?
TENCH. None. Not a scrap. But I must say she looks the lady.
There's been money spent on her breeding.
WASHINGTON. Well—let her in
if she comes from Howe. [TENCH *goes out.*]
LAFAYETTE. I'll take myself away.
WASHINGTON. Stay, stay, you may help
to end the interview.
[TENCH *returns and stands at the door.* MARY PHILIPSE, *dressed in a scarlet uniform, comes to the doorway, and pauses.*]
Come in. Come in. [TENCH *goes out.*]
MARY [*advancing*]. You see before you, sir, one you've long forgotten,
but who's not forgotten you. I bring you a greeting
from Sir William Howe. The man who brought his dog
stayed for no message; it fell on me to return you
the General's kindest thanks.
WASHINGTON. I thank you, madame.
The General was welcome to his dog.
MARY. Such as it was?
WASHINGTON. It's not a breed I fancy.
I should remember you?
MARY. Oh, time long past
you swore not to forget; but love's time's drudge
and works but by the day. [*A pause*]
WASHINGTON. Yes, I remember.
LAFAYETTE. You'll pardon me. Good-night—
MARY. I drive you away!
LAFAYETTE. No—I was going.
WASHINGTON. Wait—
I believe we had more to say—
LAFAYETTE. I shall need my time,
if I may be excused.
[*He bows,* WASHINGTON *acknowledging the salute half-humorously.* LAFAYETTE *goes out.*]
WASHINGTON. Yes I remember.
They say if one waits long enough all things
come round the circle.
MARY. I've heard so—and I waited,
then suddenly, it seemed too long to wait.
We grow old, we mortals.

WASHINGTON. At the risk of being
ungallant, may I ask why you're here? For truly
the dog will hardly serve.
MARY. I came to see you.
WASHINGTON. And this costume?
MARY. It's not becoming?
WASHINGTON. As to that—
it's worn by my enemies.
MARY. A woman's stratagem.
Is a woman never
to follow her heart, and run after him she loves
though she run back twenty years? You read no novels—
always the practical man—I can see it. This
[Indicating her uniform]
is love's disguise. It passed me handily
in the exchange of prisoners.
WASHINGTON. Then you dealt with blind men
at either end.
MARY. Oh, a little pocket money,
properly placed, brings on astigmatism
or incipient cataract.
WASHINGTON. I'm afraid you mistake me.
A war's not quite a game of blind man's bluff,
nor am I a figure in grand opera
with love affairs between battles. It goes grimly
with me and mine. And, though it's true you meant
more than a heartbreak to me in my twenties,
still what treasure may lie there lies too deep
for dredging—nor have I heart nor hours nor patience
for nice romancing. I understand there's time
in plenty for all this in the camp you've left,
and wonder at your leaving.
MARY. There—I expected
just this rebuff, and have my answer ready.
In all these years, these twenty, there's been nothing
to feed a heart, save ashes. See, this is true—
I'll swear it. I'm not light, nor given to lightness—
nor have I come here lightly. The one thing worth having
in a brief life, I have still to seek. It was mine
once, for the taking. It came at your offering
and I tossed it away, believing like all young fools

it grew on every bush. I'm not young now
and I'd risk whatever name the world might give me
to have it back again.

WASHINGTON. You come from Howe.

MARY. I would have caught at any junketing
that brought me here. I came on chance. I ask
for nothing. But I'm here.

WASHINGTON. I shall seem ungracious.
You married Captain Morris, and I am married.
We're fixed in our two worlds. The time's run out
for pleasantries. It's winter in my bones
as well as in the year.

[TEAGUE *enters with two bags, sets them down and goes out.*]
This is your baggage?

MARY. I'm afraid it is.

WASHINGTON. This will be somewhat awkward.

MARY. Will it?

WASHINGTON. We'll find you lodging at the inn.

MARY. I tried the inn. It was full of soldiers—and smelled
rather unwashed.

WASHINGTON. No doubt.

MARY. But if I'm unwelcome
let me find my own lodging.

WASHINGTON. There's none to find—
nearer than Philadelphia.—You can stay here.
Hamilton's room is empty.

MARY. I thank you, sir.

WASHINGTON. It will cause some conversation.—Nothing, I hope,
that can't be weathered.

MARY. What a woman's name
will bear, a man's should be equal to.

WASHINGTON. The sentry
will show you to your room. [*He turns to the door.*]

MARY. Sir, I do bring
a word from General Howe. He wishes to see you—
his proposal is general amnesty
with no surrender on either part—the Congress
to receive all it's petitioned for, nothing
reserved, save the king's sovereignty.

WASHINGTON. When you see him
tell him we intend to fight while we can. We've asked

complete independence.

MARY. And still have hopes of it?

WASHINGTON. We still have hopes.

MARY. I can say to you truly
there's no hope for you on the other side. If I
have come unasked, and unwelcome, still it can't be said
I go with the wind. We have news to-day from Paris
of the French alliance. This is your losing year!
I was willing to lose with you.

WASHINGTON. And your news?
The French will have none of us? Is that your message?

MARY. So the story runs.

WASHINGTON. And so I feared. We must take it
in our stride, if we can. I thank you. No doubt I've been
abrupt beyond all warrant.—Forgive it. I carry
a good many burdens.

MARY. I think no less of you.
I'm sorry for us both.

WASHINGTON. To be quite frank
you lose no lover in me. I'm old and cold
and given over to soldiering. What love
I have is given.

MARY. Sir, would you teach a woman
the art she's skilled in? I read you by your face
and know how deep you've buried what you dreamed
under your soldiering.
A young man has excess of appetite
and eats at every table. When we're older
the body fires less easily. It waits
permission of the mind and memory,
and these come seldom. Young love we've never had
burns underneath and gnaws the upper ground
ready to flame at a breath. For you and me
we must love one another now, or grow old coldly
and make an end to love.

WASHINGTON. It may be so.

MARY. And now, if you'll call the soldier.

WASHINGTON. Yes. [*He goes to the door.*]
Sentry, this lady will occupy Hamilton's room.

[TEAGUE *comes in for the bags.*]

MARY. And good-night.

WASHINGTON. Good-night.

[MARY *goes out.* TEAGUE, *taking up the bags, gives one speaking look at* WASHINGTON'S *back and departs, shaking his head.*]

CURTAIN

act 2 scene 1

SCENE: *The bunk-house early the next morning. A little light glows from the dying fire in the fireplace. Two or three of the men have risen, but most of them are either trying to keep warm in their frost-nipped bunks or lying like piles of rags as near as they can creep to the fire.*

ALCOCK, TEAGUE *and* SPAD *are absent.* JOCK *is sitting on the edge of a bunk carefully wrapping his legs with burlap and string.* MASON BONNIWELL *is kneeling in an upper bunk trying to fill a chink with strips which he tears from the skirt of his coat.* ANDREW *is washing his face in the basin.*

JOCK [*to* MASON]. Now you're getting it. That's where the whole outdoors came in.

ANDREW. The wind was roaring through that east wall all night, like the North Sea down from Rooshia.

JOCK. Are ye washing in yesterday's water, ye swine?

ANDREW. The bucket's froze solid to the bottom. Not a loose drop in it.

MASON. Give Nick a tap on the feet, will you, Andrew? He's due to relieve Alcock at guard.

ANDREW [*looking at the men by the fire*]. There's a heap of feet here, but dommed if I know which from which. [*He kicks somebody's soles.*] Hi!

OSCAR [*stirring*]. Ja, ja!

ANDREW. Lie still, Scandihoovian. It's Nick's wanted.

OSCAR. Mind who you boot then. [*He settles back.*]

ANDREW. How am I to tell fore from aft when you bivouac like a nest of tent-worms?

NICK [*sitting up*]. I don't mind you walking on my face, Scotty, only keep moving. Don't stand on it.

ANDREW. Your face?

NICK. Yes, that was my face that sort of gave under you when you ground a couple of my back teeth out. Never mind, they'll probably grow in again. Think nothing of it.

MASON. The north side's pointed up with sleet or we'd have a three-foot drift on the hearth.

NICK [*getting to his feet*]. Somebody's put gumwood on that fire again, too, and it'll begin to give off heat about the middle of April.

[*He goes to the fire to rearrange it.*]

MASON. We're out of pine, Nick. I lugged that over from Poor's[1] private supply.

[TEAGUE *enters.*]

MARTY [*still half-asleep*]. Shut the door!

TEAGUE [*stopping in the act of closing the door and leaving it half-open*]. Shut it yourself, and get a whiff of what it's like outside.

[*He goes to the fire.*]

JOCK. Shut that door!

TEAGUE. I was about to shut it, but not now.

MASON [*jumping down to close the door*]. You two noble intellects'd freeze the brainpans right off each other. Only you wouldn't give in.

TEAGUE. Better get over there, son. Alcock's hoofin' it right after me.

NICK. Any breakfast dished out so far?

TEAGUE. I've got a dram of rum left. You'll need it up against that west wall. [*He hands over a bottle, which* NICK *pockets.*] You can't soldier around when you're on duty at headquarters, you know. You have to be there.

NICK. I doubt anybody wants to steal a couple of generals out of bed at this hour in the morning.

TEAGUE. There's a woman there, this time, and you can't tell what might happen.

MASON. How do you mean, a woman?

TEAGUE. What do you usually mean by a woman? Well that's what I mean. Howe sent back a bitch in exchange for his dog.

NICK. A lady at headquarters?

TEAGUE. No, she's no lady. Anyway, if she is I lost a shilling piece on her.

ANDREW. How could you lose a shilling? You'd have to find it first.

TEAGUE. I ain't lost it yet.

[ALCOCK *enters.*]

ALCOCK. Well, boy.

TEAGUE. Well?

ALCOCK. You'll have to untie that Geordie from around your neck and pay up, Seminole. She slept alone.

TEAGUE. Prove it first, prove it first!

ALCOCK. Wasn't that her window I set the ladder to?

TEAGUE. Sure it was.

ALCOCK. Well, I looked in that window—and a charming sight it was, too—only I tell you she slept alone.

TEAGUE. That's your opinion.

ALCOCK. Opinion? Seminole, a man don't live to be as old as I am without being able to tell at a glance whether there's one or two under a log-cabin quilt. More than that, the lady's scarlet breeches were draped over a chair within reach of my hand—but no others to keep company with 'em—and to judge by what little I saw of her she's not the kind an officer and gentleman would get up and leave before time for morning services.

JOCK. What's that about scarlet breeches?

ALCOCK. She came in a uniform, I tell you—

MASON. What's the bet?

ALCOCK. Teague, there, bet me a hard shilling General Washington spent the night in the lady's room, and I bet him a hard shilling he spent the night under his own little dormer—and now he's turning Welshman[1] on me—

MINTO [*shivering*]. If anybody slept alone last night he froze to death.

TEAGUE. All I said was, prove it. Maybe I don't know about women, and maybe I can't count through the bed-clothes like some, but when a woman goes brigadiering around the country at night I've got a good idea what she's looking for—

ALCOCK. Many a woman's looked for it where it wasn't to be had—

TEAGUE. And how do I know what you saw through the window? I don't say you'd lie about it, but, after all, you can't expect a man to pin himself down to facts when there's real money involved—

ALCOCK. Look for yourself, then—you can climb a ladder—

NICK. Suppose I take a look—I'm going over there, any way. [*He goes to the door.*] Only you lost your silver, pappy. Do you think the General's a studhorse, covering every mare that jumps his paddock?

[*He goes out. The men have begun to pull themselves together for another day—a process which can hardly be called dressing, since no clothes have been removed.*]

[1] ***turning Welshman,*** *to welsh, or avoid a debt dishonorably.*

JOCK. Any orders o' the day?

MASON. Cutting spent the night over at Conway's.

TEAGUE. Cutting's going up on the carpet this morning—and Conway too.

MASON. Up before Washington?

TEAGUE. That's right.

MASON. What for?

TEAGUE. Too much talk, I'd say. I just happened to hear something, going through.

ALCOCK. In that case this outfit's footloose and fancy-free—and got no more officer than a rabbit.

MASON. Must be some arrangements going on about breakfast somewhere.

ANDREW. Not unless Cutting saw to it.

JOCK. Why would he see to it? He's fixed for breakfast.

MINTO. If it's like the last we had I don't want any breakfast.

OSCAR. No, nor me, too.

JOCK. Go to sleep, Sweden.

MASON. He who sleeps dines, as they say in France.

MARTY. When you can't eat, you sleep. [*He grins.*]

ANDREW. Hear that? That's right, moony, you hit it.

MARTY. That's right.

TEAGUE. Yeah, and I've heard tell if you don't eat at all over a period of time you sleep forever. I feel it kind of coming over me, and I don't look forward to it.

ALCOCK. Any cottontail left on Mount Misery?

MASON. Ask Teague.

TEAGUE. Nary one.

ANDREW. There's three dead mules floated down the crick yesterday and went aground below the chapel. May be a leetle high by this time. [*The news is interesting.*]

MASON. Thanks.

ALCOCK. They're gone. A couple of Deutschers been making sausage all night.

MASON. Well, that dashes my hopes. [*He rises and walks over to* NEIL *who lies quiet, looking at the ceiling.*] How's tricks?

NEIL. Good enough. [MASON *turns toward the fire.*]

ALCOCK [*sings*].

Oh, I'm the son of a unicorn,
I graze the sky, I drink the air,

And many a filly I leave forlorn,
I leave forlorn,
In the race of a comet's hair.

[*The door opens and* SPAD *enters, his pockets bulging. The men turn towards him.*]

Hiyo!—Here's one bastard that's well fed, anyway.—

TEAGUE. Bit late, ain't you, Spad?

ALCOCK. The fact is we thought you'd foundered yourself to death on kidney pie—and you can imagine how hard that hit us.

SPAD. Gentlemen!

MASON. We look it.

ALCOCK. Have a good dinner?

SPAD. Gentlemen, I had the pleasure of turning down General Howe's dinner—turning it down to his face—

TEAGUE. You saw Howe?

SPAD. I did. And his women. And his soldiers. Boys, we can lick him. We can lick him for sour apples. I knocked one of 'em down in his own ballroom! That bunch of wild flowers!

ANDREW. You turned down a dinner?

SPAD. Oh, I ate—but not with those namby-pambies. Do you know what they are—those—any women present? [*He looks around.*] They're hermaphroids, they are. Why, damn it, they're nothing but musicians!

[*He pulls some yellow ears of corn out of his pocket, and lays them on the table.*]

TEAGUE. What the hell?

SPAD. There's more where that came from. About six thousand bushels, if I'm any judge. Bust it up and make yourselves a bowl of samp. I had plenty. [*A few gather round to finger the maize lovingly.*] Help yourselves. It can be chawed. Shell it and parch it by the fire and it makes a damn good imitation of something to eat.

[*The men begin to shell and chew the grains.*]

ALCOCK. Present from General Howe?

SPAD. Yes. Only he ain't aware of it. You see, I got pushed off my course by the sentries, and before I knew it I was down around Mud Island—right where they meant to send us. So I lifted somebody's dinghy and got chased by a patrol and had to land in the middle of that God-forsaken slob-land—all to hell and gone. They've got enough hay stacked there to feed through seven lean years and bed down all King Solomon's wives and children. I clawed through that mess like

a polar bear for a day and a half, and down at the end of the island I came out on about a dozen corn-cribs full of corn with three soldiers on guard. One of 'em's dead now and two still tied up if I'm any good with a rope. I guess I must have surprised 'em some. My face was dirty at the time. They ain't used to that.

TEAGUE. Where is this?

SPAD. That's it. We're going there.

JOCK. We're going where?

SPAD. We're going over to get that corn. The English—they don't even know it's good to eat. They call it maize and they're saving it for horse-feed. Where's the leftenant?

TEAGUE. We don't seem to have any leftenant any more.

SPAD. Fine.

ALCOCK. You're crazy. We've got no boats and the river's full of ice.

SPAD. The current's took all the ice out of the lower end of the island, and there's three old bumboats frozen in at Print's Landing. We can get 'em out, and we can ferry that corn. I tell you there's nobody watching it!

MASON. We ought to report it first.

SPAD. Report it and that's the last you hear of it. You're a corporal, Mason. You say go and we'll go.

MASON. A corporal's got no right to order a party out.—I'll go with you, though.

SPAD. That's the talk.

TEAGUE. Hell, we'll all go.

[*The men begin to pick up accoutrements. Each man takes an ear of corn.*]

SPAD. Only it's devilish cold on the river, I warn you. You'll need more on than a nightshirt.

ALCOCK. You looking at me?

SPAD. I certainly am. You'll freeze off everything you're famous for if you start in that rig.

ALCOCK. I've stood duty in this.

SPAD. Don't try it, old man, don't try it. I'm out of powder. Who's got a full horn?

ANDREW. Oh, oh—lay off my stuff—

MINTO. I'll divvy with you.

SPAD. Somebody take Marty's coat—he don't need to come—

JOCK. That's right.

MARTY [*shrieking*]. You will not take my coat! You will not take it! I'll claw your eyes out if you touch my coat!

MASON. Let his coat alone.

[ALCOCK, *who has been standing silent, slips out the door.* NEIL *raises himself to watch the preparations.*]

OSCAR. Ja, but how about der picket lines?

SPAD. I'll talk to the pickets. Maybe we'll take a couple along.

ANDREW. You going to need your coat, Neil?

MASON. He'll need it to keep warm, won't he? Take it easy, boy, and we'll raid a barnyard for you.

NEIL. I'll be all right.

MASON. Tavis'll be over later.

[TEAGUE, *the first man ready, is about to open the door when* CUTTING *walks in.*]

CUTTING. Morning.

TEAGUE. Morning, sir.

CUTTING. What's going on?

SPAD. Getting ready for roll call, sir.

CUTTING. Looks to me like an unwonted stir of activity for this hour. Where's Alcock?

MASON. He was here a minute ago.

CUTTING. Find him and report on parade ground in half-an-hour with two squads of the ablest men for morning drill.

MASON. There's no breakfast issued yet, sir.

CUTTING. We're short on rations, and most of the regiment's going without breakfast this morning. [*He turns to the door.*]

MASON. I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I can't take the responsibility, Lieutenant.

CUTTING. You can't?

MASON. No, sir.

CUTTING. And why not?

MASON. I don't know whether they'd follow me.

CUTTING. What's in the wind here? [*A silence*] I want to serve notice about one thing. There's no two ways to run an army. I'll have absolute obedience or I'll see a few of you underground.—I think I understand this early rising. There's been a good deal of desertion the last few days. Personally I don't give a damn whether you desert or not, but officially I do. I'm going to keep my military record clean, and while I'm an officer here I'll put a bullet through anybody that attempts to leave camp without permission. Put down your guns. [*The men begin to lay down their arms.* CUTTING *has a hand on his pistol butt.*] And just to make certain I'll go with you to drill when the time comes. Mason, I ask you again what was going on here?

MASON. We were stepping out for breakfast, that's all.

CUTTING. I thought so. Well, sit down and take it easy. Nobody's stepping out anywhere.

TEAGUE [*lifting his rifle and drawing a bead on* CUTTING's *back*]. Don't do anything sudden, Mister Cutting, because I'm a nervous man, and liable to spasms in my trigger finger. [CUTTING *turns toward him.*] If you draw that pistol I'll put a slug through your pump, and I never missed yet with this here iron.

CUTTING. Put down that gun.

TEAGUE. Not me. Back over against that wall. Step. Take your hand off that butt. [CUTTING *moves slowly back to the wall.*] Take that pea shooter away from him. [SPAD *disarms* CUTTING.]

CUTTING. They'll stretch your necks for this, you know—and I'll have the watching of it.

TEAGUE. Don't say things like that, because I never did like you, and I feel one of my spasms coming on. What shall I do with him, Corporal?

MASON. Tie him up.

SPAD. Right-o.

CUTTING. You'll not tie me with your damn dowlas rags!

SPAD. Jock!

[JOCK *and* SPAD *leap on* CUTTING *and pinion him.* OSCAR *and* ANDREW *bring a mass of leg-wrappings to bind his arms and knees. The others come round to help.*]

CUTTING. I'll see you all lashed to shreds, you scabby hounds!

SPAD. You won't see us again, you nor none of you! We're through with your damn camp and your orders! Catch us if you can!

CUTTING. And I will!

[NICK *comes to the door.*]

NICK. Lieutenant Cutting's wanted at headquarters at nine o'clock.

MASON. He'll probably work himself loose about that time.

[*They lay* CUTTING *on a bunk, his boots sticking over the edge.*]

NICK. What's up?

TEAGUE [*who has lowered his gun*]. Grab your stuff, boy. We're going.

NICK. Where?

TEAGUE. We're invited out to eat! Get going, rookies! Come on, boy, you're in on this!

[*In silence and haste the men snatch their arms and go out the door.* CUTTING *and* NEIL *are left alone.*]

CUTTING. Get up and untie me, Neil. [NEIL *gets up from his bunk,*

buckles his coat around him, takes his gun from the corner, and starts for the door.] You hear me?

[NEIL *goes out. There is a brief silence, then* ALCOCK *can be heard singing as he approaches.*]

ALCOCK.

The unicorn with his turban horn
And the zebra build behind,
He crops moon-grass in an earthlit pass,
An earthlit pass,
And glitters from wind to wind.

[*He appears in the doorway, wearing Mary Philipse's scarlet breeches, which he is so intent on pulling together at the side that he fails to see that his companions are gone.* CUTTING *wriggles, but the bonds hold fast.*]

Oh, I'm the son of a unicorn,
I graze the sky, I drink the air
And many a filly I leave forlorn,
I leave forlorn,
In the race of a comet's hair!

CUTTING. Alcock!

ALCOCK [*looking up*]. Hell, they're gone!

[*He turns toward the door.*]

CUTTING. Alcock, untie this damn mess! Alcock! [ALCOCK, *somewhat bewildered, walks over to the bunk and looks at* CUTTING.] The low bastards tied me up.

ALCOCK. Well, what do you know about it. Somebody left a pair of boots here.

[*He kicks the burlap from his feet, pulls off* CUTTING's *boots deliberately, and dons them.*]

CUTTING. If I follow you for the rest of my life I'll get you for this!

ALCOCK. Spew on you!

[*He gives* CUTTING *the Bronx cheer at the doorway, and goes out.*]

CURTAIN

act 2 scene 2

SCENE: *Washington's headquarters.* WASHINGTON, *alone, is sitting at his desk, writing with a quill. A soldier enters.*

WASHINGTON [*dashing the pen to the floor*]. By God, you'd think there'd be a better contrivance for making marks on paper! Who rode into the yard, Rafe?

RAFE. General Lafayette, sir.

WASHINGTON. Back already? He's to come in, of course.

RAFE. Yes, sir.

[*He goes out.* WASHINGTON *picks out another quill and sharpens it.* LAFAYETTE *enters.*]

WASHINGTON. No luck, I daresay?

LAFAYETTE. Well, good and bad.

WASHINGTON. At any rate, you've been on horseback this morning. My life work seems to consist in whittling gray goose feathers and writing letters with them to officials that never answer me.

LAFAYETTE. Mais écoutez, écoutez—I'm here on business. We have a new plan. I've seen General Wayne. We—

WASHINGTON. Come then. The sapient General Howe was there ahead of you.

LAFAYETTE. No. Neither Howe nor I has reached the island yet. But he's on his way to it with a large detachment, and I've returned for reenforcements.

WASHINGTON. He'll be there before you, even so.

LAFAYETTE. You give me too little credit, my friend. He's coming down the river in barges, and General Wayne has blocked the channel.

WASHINGTON [*rising*]. Blocked the channel! Well, bully for Anthony! We shall annoy this lady-killer! How much hay has he there?

LAFAYETTE. Some thousands of tons.

WASHINGTON. An acutely uninteresting article—but worth having. Is Stirling back with you?

LAFAYETTE. We rather anticipated your consent. He's even now furbishing our expedition.

WASHINGTON. From which corps?

LAFAYETTE. His Pennsylvanians. They're fairly well equipped.

WASHINGTON. Excellent. Why, this may turn into a major operation. —You'll need a party of horse along the west bank—and I believe I'll lead them myself.

LAFAYETTE. Now, if you would—we'd be insured against surprise.

WASHINGTON. If I leave early this afternoon?

LAFAYETTE. You'd be in time—we won't be at the river till a little before dawn. Should you need to reach us we're at the mouth of the Schuylkill—

WASHINGTON. And what do you use for boats?

LAFAYETTE. Building rafts—frontier-fashion— [*He turns to go.*]

WASHINGTON. Well, luck go with you! I'll cover the northern flank. Oh, you'll see Stirling—tell him I want him here to face the Commissioners with me. He'll catch up with you.

LAFAYETTE. I'll tell him. By the way, the password's Hay.

WASHINGTON. Hay?

LAFAYETTE. Just hay. Plain hay. Foin—faire les foins. You know, make hay while the sun shines!

WASHINGTON. Oh, pardon! je comprends, je comprends. [LAFAYETTE *goes out gaily.*] Rafe!

[RAFE *enters.*]

RAFE. Yes, sir.

WASHINGTON. The Commissioners will have a bite to eat with me when they arrive. I want you to serve us here—and serve us on tin—and give us the stuff that was left from the fusiliers' dinner—

RAFE. I guess that stuff was worse'n you know, General. The cookie couldn't pass that off on the cat—

WASHINGTON. I know. I tasted it. We'll have it this morning.

[TENCH *enters.*]

RAFE. Yes, sir.

TENCH. I've stabled the horses, sir, and have two Congressmen left over. If you can suggest any disposition for them—

WASHINGTON. We're giving them breakfast here—and you'll stay for it, but I warn you to eat sparingly. Heat the mess, Rafe, heat it just enough to bring out its qualities.

RAFE. Yes, sir. [*He goes out.*]

TENCH. I'm to stay for this?

WASHINGTON. Oh, yes—you'll be called on.

TENCH. Shall I fetch them in? They're even now scraping their boots at your door.

WASHINGTON. That argues a certain amount of respect. By all means, fetch them.

[TENCH *goes out.* WASHINGTON *goes to his desk, takes two letters out of a pigeonhole and lays them on the leaf.* TENCH *enters, ushering in* FOLSOM[1] *and* HARVIE,[2] *Congressmen, fairly young and*

[1] ***Folsom,*** *Nathaniel Folsom (1726–1790), a delegate from New Hampshire to the Continental Congress of 1777–1778, who was one of the committee of five who visited Valley Forge between January and March.*

[2] ***Harvie,*** *John Harvie (1742–1807), an able delegate from Virginia, who later left the committee because of disagreements with its policies.*

dressed in the height of Colonial fashion. HARVIE'S *boots are soiled a trifle, and he tries surreptitiously to clean them from time to time.*]

WASHINGTON. You are welcome, gentlemen. It's long indeed,
since I've exchanged ideas with the Congress
or its committees, face to face.

HARVIE. The roads
from here to York are roads only in name.
We arrive somewhat bedraggled.

WASHINGTON. But no less welcome
for that. I parted company with my luggage
some two months ago, quite suddenly,
and wear mourning for its loss.—This is Colonel Tench,
my aide, who will hear our discussions. Later, perhaps,
General Stirling will join us. [*The men bow.*]

FOLSOM. Must we begin
so early, General? We've been abroad since seven,
and damme, I'm starved!

WASHINGTON. If you'll excuse a light
collation, army fare, it's ready.

FOLSOM. Surely.
Bring on your light collation. I'll lighten it.
Groat-bread or what have you.

HARVIE. That infernal host
at the Red Lion—we asked the man for collops
and he sent us bacon—and bacon sickens me—
I've a tetchy stomach travelling. I hardly ate—
not enough to break a fast.

WASHINGTON. Then it may be
our soldier fodder won't do.

FOLSOM. Oh, yes, it will.
I'll clean my dish this morning.

WASHINGTON. The order's in
and we'll be served in a moment. Now, will you mind
if I make bold meanwhile to open the question,
and say the last letter which I received from you
concerning food for the troops, has left me dark
as to how I'd best proceed? This is how we stand:
The Quartermaster-General was replaced
against my advice, by Congress. Your new man
was most unsatisfactory—gave us, in fact,

almost no co-operation. Food ran low
and I protested, whereon your man resigned
and has not been replaced. It's plain that an army
can't run without a quartermaster, and yet
you've left me so this three months.

FOLSOM. We know it—we know it—
it's most unfortunate, but there's been some quarrel
in Congress over appointments. The North and South
are at odds about the post, each section claiming
the other's had too much. I've done my best
to settle the matter.

WASHINGTON. It's not settled yet?

FOLSOM. God, no,
and I don't know when it will be.

WASHINGTON. The resolution
passed by Congress, that we live off the country
until you agree on a quartermaster—if that's
to be taken seriously, I think you'll find
first, there's not that much food within our range,
and second, if you turn men loose to steal
and ravage what they need—

HARVIE. Steal? Ravage and steal?

WASHINGTON. What else can you call it? Put in a soldier's hands
the right to take what he wants, and where he will,
without reprisal, and how long can you hold him
from rape and wanton plunder? It can't be done.
Better give up at once than sow the country
with foot-pads, armed, insolent and bearing pardons
signed by their officers—

HARVIE. Now, now—

WASHINGTON. You seemed
reluctant to advise me before breakfast,
but within three days you'll have a starving mob
here—one I can't control—one that could eat
this country clean as locusts. Every moment
is precious for our plans.

HARVIE. You speak of a mob—
and truly, it's been rumored here and there
that discipline is easier to maintain
under the European code of arms
than by our backwoods methods. You've preferred

our native leaders, who fight by hook or crook,
and win or lose by chance. But you might win
more regularly if you could bring yourself
to swallow technical advice. Add to that
that there are methods known for drilling a mob
into an army, and holding it to its task
even under difficulties.

WASHINGTON. The art of war
set down in paradigms, like a Greek declension
and conned by schoolboys!

HARVIE. Shall we say that Gates was a schoolboy
when he won at Saratoga?

WASHINGTON. Oh, it was Gates
who won at Saratoga? I had supposed
it was the farmers fighting behind trees
American-fashion. The art of war's much simpler
than's set down in the manuals. Get there first
with superior force if possible, and surprise
the enemy if you can. Any fool knows that.
But before you get there with any force at all
you must write a thousand letters to a thousand fools
begging them for the men, the arms, the food,
the chance to get there late!

HARVIE. I beg your pardon!

WASHINGTON. Sir, I beg yours,
but if Congress had wanted me to fail, had set
itself to favor the English, it couldn't have played
its hand more neatly! Will you show me a rule
for holding an army together on air?

[RAFE *enters with tins of food.*]

FOLSOM. I've held
together all morning on little more. This looks
like a very welcome diversion.

[RAFE *serves* HARVIE *and* FOLSOM, *then* TENCH *and* WASHINGTON.]

WASHINGTON. We might have sat
at table, but when we're busy we adopt
camp manners—and get used to them. [HARVIE *tastes the stuff.*]

HARVIE. Good God!
Good God in heaven!

FOLSOM. What's the matter?

HARVIE. Help!
Help—I'm strangling! [*He reaches out his hands as if falling.*]
Have you tried this offal?
In the name of God!
FOLSOM. Are you dying, man?
HARVIE. Look, look!
Look at your food. It crawls!
WASHINGTON. You exaggerate.
TENCH [*eating*]. This is better than what I've been having lately.
Not bad at all. It moves about a trifle.
A weevil's hard to kill.
FOLSOM. What is it?
TENCH. Mostly beans,
I'd guess. Not what you'd hope for in your beans—
a little rank, but still— [*He eats.*]
FOLSOM [*regarding his plate*]. Let me out of here!
Give me a little air!
WASHINGTON. Rafe, Mr. Folsom's
in need of air. [RAFE *goes to* FOLSOM'S *assistance.*]
FOLSOM. I'm all right. [*He leans against the wall.*]
HARVIE. May Christ forgive you! [*To* TENCH]
Damn you, if you taste that plate again
I'll murder you! Did you mean to poison us?
WASHINGTON. Take the plates out, Rafe.
[RAFE *removes the food.*]
I'm sorry, gentlemen—
this is the mess we've dealt to several corps
lately, for lack of better. It's pretty bad,
what there is of it, and there's very little left.
That's our predicament.
HARVIE. Is that a reason for ladling
Hog-wash to us?
WASHINGTON. You're not compelled to eat it,
but the men are, and you sent it—sent nothing else—
They've no choice.
FOLSOM. Ye gods! Well, it is bad.
I'll admit that.—But give us something else
to clear the air.
WASHINGTON. Later. I've eaten nothing
this morning. Suppose we starve till we've thrashed things out,
just to keep our minds on the commissary.

FOLSOM. Come, now;
that's hardly necessary.
WASHINGTON. Suppose we try it, though.
It may help us to fix on a name for quartermaster
before the morning's over.
HARVIE. What would you say
to Conway?
WASHINGTON. Why, I'd say if you want Conway
I'll resign.
HARVIE. You run things with a high hand,
General Washington! You've set us down to garbage
to teach us ABCs, and you refuse
to serve with an officer you've had no voice
in choosing! You'll learn yet that we were sent here
representing the Congress, and Congress has yet some power
over the military! If we name Conway
it's Conway you'll have!
[STIRLING *enters.*]
WASHINGTON. You're acquainted with General Stirling,
I believe. He's here to discuss this same question.
It's true that if you name Conway it's Conway you'll have,
but I won't have him, under your pleasure, for the reason
that I'll be gone, and none too sad to go.
General Conway's committed himself to an intrigue
to be rid of me and put Gates in my place. It's confined
in the main to officers who have soldiered abroad
and consider my tactics crude. It may be they are,
but certainly if Conway and I were to serve
where reciprocal understanding and regard
were needed, they'd be lacking. Oh, gentlemen,
gentlemen, forget that you're Congressmen, forget
that I'm an officer! Let's put aside
all bickering and rivalries that spring
from personal privilege, take our holds together
and pull out of this slough! If I've been harsh or defiant
or even insulting, I'm desperate, and ready to use
the most desperate means to wake you to what's happened,
what's happening here! Here is our war come down
to a mouldy crust—and you in whose hands it lies
to help, wrangle over ribbons, men dying meanwhile,
our cause dying!

HARVIE. Are your own hands clean? You bicker,
I note, over Conway!
WASHINGTON. Still Conway. We must settle that first
it seems. Has he arrived yet?
STIRLING. He's here with Cutting.
WASHINGTON. There'll be no better time. [STIRLING *steps out.*]
I had no wish
to humiliate an officer, but if I must
we'll get it over.
FOLSOM. Is this a trial?
WASHINGTON. No, no—
an interrogation. There's something to be explained,
and we'll ask him to explain it.
[STIRLING *ushers in* CUTTING *and* CONWAY.]
You gentlemen
are acquainted, I think?
FOLSOM. We know General Conway. [*They bow to him.*]
WASHINGTON. The other's
Lieutenant Cutting. [*Again they bow.*]
CUTTING. I hope I haven't delayed you.
I was a little tardy. The men in my bunk-house
tied me up about sunrise, and then set out
for parts unknown.
TENCH. Deserting?
CUTTING. I imagine so.
WASHINGTON. What men were these?
CUTTING. The same you were good enough
to argue with the other night.
WASHINGTON. I hope
you suffered no injury?
CUTTING. None.
WASHINGTON. Alcock was with them—
and the other—the leatherskin?
CUTTING. Yes, Teague—he led
the pack, I'd say.
WASHINGTON. I'm sorry—if such men leave—
but another time for it.—General Conway, your name
has been brought up in connection with an appointment,
and I must ask you a question.
CONWAY. Well, put your griphs,[1]

[1] *griphs, enigmas.*

and I'll make shift to answer.
WASHINGTON. I've been informed
of a letter written by you to General Gates,
in which you congratulate him on his success
and indicate that it will not be long
before he takes my place.
CONWAY. A letter of mine? [*Pause*]
I've written no such letter.
STIRLING. I crave your pardon.
You wrote and sent such a letter.
CONWAY. Now, surely, Stirling—
you haven't turned informer? Why, General,
men have been known to swagger a bit in their drink
without meaning all that's said. I do recall
that Stirling and I sat down to a bowl or two
and I aired my grievances.—God on the water!
I don't remember what I spilled, and Stirling
was in no condition to.
STIRLING. I'm clear enough
on the essentials.
WASHINGTON. Do you recognize this letter?
CONWAY [*examining the letter*]. Well, I swear this puzzles me.
This is not my writing.
No, I don't know it.
WASHINGTON. You wrote no such letter?
CONWAY. Never.
STIRLING. The reason it's not in your writing's because I made
a copy of it. But that's your letter to Gates,
and you damn well know it is.
CONWAY. You copied it?
STIRLING. Took it myself from your courier's saddlebags
when I overhauled him, made a copy fair as print
with my own hand, and sent the original
along to its destination.
CONWAY. All I can answer
to that is—this is not my letter. Find
an original for it if you can. I've never
trusted a breaker of other people's seals;
I think his word's hardly evidence.
WASHINGTON. I saw

your letter before it was copied and sent on,
General Conway. It was as I have said,
and read like this. [*He indicates the copy.*]
It follows I'm rather weary
of these brummagem[1] excuses and slip-slop
from men who are not my friends but dare not say so,
not to my face! It hardly becomes your straps
to squirm like a hooked eel!

CONWAY. Very well, I wrote it,
since you will have it. I believe it's not treasonous
to hold one man might be better than another
to lead an army.

WASHINGTON. I'm not concerned with that,
but with another letter which has fallen
into my hands, unluckily. There have been
exchanges of prisoners, lately, some of them
at General Conway's headquarters, as most convenient,
as indeed it is. In these exchanges letters
have crossed the lines, which is quite allowable,
friends writing to friends on the opposite side. But among them
were certain notes which might have contained a cipher,
and a British spy named Jelliffe—oh, you know the name—
confirmed them as ciphers, turned state's evidence,
and read them to us.

CONWAY. This is interesting.
You tell a story well.

WASHINGTON. I'll come to my point.
These ciphers were addressed to Lieutenant Cutting
for transmission to General Conway, and through him
to General Gates.

CONWAY. And they contained—?

WASHINGTON. Why, nothing—
nothing incriminating. Only the terms
which would be acceptable to General Howe
and the English crown if the Continental army
were willing to surrender.

CONWAY. Sir, on my word,
I know nothing of this.

WASHINGTON. And I, sir, on my word,

[1] ***brummagem,*** *bogus.*

say that you do, and am willing to bring it to trial!
[*To the* COMMISSIONERS]
You will understand, I think, why I objected
to General Conway's promotion.
FOLSOM. Perfectly.
HARVIE. I
must apologize—
WASHINGTON. It's my unpleasant duty
to turn this matter over to the court-martial
and hold you both for it. [*The* COMMISSIONERS *exchange glances.*]
CONWAY. We shall need your word in this,
Master Harvie.
CUTTING [*to* FOLSOM]. And yours. [*A pause*]
FOLSOM. Why, General—
the truth is, if these officers have acted
with the cognizance of Gates—it's hardly wise
to make a scandal of it— [WASHINGTON *smiles grimly.*]
TENCH. Make a scandal!
It's not of our making.
STIRLING. Good God, do you imagine
you could whitewash over that?
HARVIE. For the good of the service—
at least, we must keep it quiet.
WASHINGTON. For the good of the service,
and in all common justice, the officer's court
must pass on the evidence in hand.
HARVIE. But reflect, sir.
There are names involved—
WASHINGTON. Then they'll be damned as black
as the evidence calls for! What's this sudden concern
of yours for names! The names of these two here
mean nothing to me but two who come sucking around
for favors when they see me, like a couple of squid,
and squirt their ink at my back!
CONWAY. I give fair warning
if I'm court-martialed I have three words to speak
that'll hush it up!
WASHINGTON. Speak them now!
HARVIE [*to* WASHINGTON]. Believe me, sir,
there's more consequence in what you plan than's plain
on the surface—

WASHINGTON. What consequence—?
HARVIE. I say no more—
WASHINGTON. Then we proceed—
CONWAY. Will you speak up for me
or must I speak for myself? [*The* COMMISSIONERS *are silent.*]
Why, these two knew
as well as I of the correspondence with Howe,
and most of the Congress knew it! If I'm a traitor
they're traitors with me! We were commissioned by Congress
to angle for Howe's terms! Well, look at me
if you like.—Does it surprise you? When a war's lost
the usual thing's to feel around for bargains
and that's what's being done!
HARVIE. What he says is true.
It has not yet been brought to a vote in Congress—
nor did we wish it published, but this is true.
There are those among us who know that a war is worth
what it brings on the exchange, no more. And when
your stock is going down, it's best to sell
before it goes to nothing.
STIRLING. What's that? What's that?
HARVIL. Why, I'll say it again. A war, my friend,
is a tactical expedient to gain
certain political ends. Those ends being proved
impossible, the war's without excuse,
and should be pushed no further than need be
to gain an advantageous peace.
STIRLING. You say it,
and I must believe you've said it, but, death of God,
is this like any other war?
HARVIE. The same,
or much the same.
WASHINGTON. Sir, I should have supposed
you'd notify me, before negotiations
were begun with the enemy.
HARVIE. There was thought of it,
but you and your army have so much of the hot-head
in your composition, it was believed unwise
to open the subject. Besides, there was always doubt
what reply we'd get from the English, and it seemed best
not to call off our dogs till we were sure

we had no need for them.

WASHINGTON. Your dogs, you say!

HARVIE. Nay, that's a figure.

WASHINGTON. Not one I'm inclined to relish!
When did this begin?

HARVIE. Some months ago. When you lost at Brandywine
that cooked our goose. Then Gates at Saratoga
made a good talking point in case Sir William
was hard to deal with.

WASHINGTON. We might have won—do they know that?—
If they'd given me the shadow of support
behind the lines. It was not too late last fall—
may not be now. [*To* FOLSOM]
Sir, you say nothing here.
Are your views his?

FOLSOM. We had no right to broach
this matter to you, but it's done now. My views
are similar.

WASHINGTON. But we might have won! Good God,
do you hear what I say? Have they fudged our cause on purpose?
That's the way it sounds.

FOLSOM. No, no.

WASHINGTON. Then why this pother
over Conway and Gates? If we're to lose the war
why not let me lose it? It's hardly like them
to relieve me of that out of kindness?

HARVIE. I see no reason
for keeping you in the dark. Gates is in our counsels,
and quite agrees that we might as well give in
while there's still trade on the seas.

STIRLING. Wait now! Wait now!
You're putting in Gates because he's agreed to surrender!
Is that what you mean to say?

HARVIE. It's ruinous
to drag it out further.

STIRLING. And who's agreed to this?

FOLSOM. There's no agreement!

STIRLING. Yes, but that was his meaning!
[*He strides over to* HARVIE.]
Who's in with you?

HARVIE. I have no mind to be pummeled
for answering a question. Answer your own.
WASHINGTON [*to* STIRLING]. Less ruffling, Stirling.
[STIRLING *steps back.*]
FOLSOM. No more. It's unfortunate
this much has slipped.
HARVIE. As for these professional soldiers
who get the bit in their teeth, and insist on fighting
till it's high-water in hell—perhaps they'll learn
sometime, that it's no treason for a government
to consider a peace—even in war-time!
FOLSOM. No more!
HARVIE. Why not? If he wants his answer I'll give it to him.
This war began to protect our trade. The merchants
were being run out of business by subsidies
to English boats! It cut so deep in Boston
there was no more profit in smuggling—and all our trade
was smuggling, anyway! They dumped the tea
in Boston harbor, and raised a hue and cry
of "Freedom!" "Down with the tyrant!" Christ, what they wanted
was profits, not freedom. But then the inland boys
took up the yell, and ran together in mobs,
and old Sam Adams[1] made speeches, and cock-a-hoop,
hell-bent, pell-mell—it spread till we couldn't stop,
spread to Virginia, and a pack of oyster-faced
backwoodsmen met and signed a declaration,
and then we were in trouble! Where's our trade now?
Nobody makes money—not even the money-lenders—
nobody but the god-damn farmers selling pork
to the British commissary! It's time to stop it!
We've got to settle down and live, that's all,
and why not under King George? If your fire-eaters
can't make a living in time of peace, why, hell,
the rest can't make one now!
WASHINGTON. This sentiment
prevails in Congress?
HARVIE. It does, or it will shortly.
STIRLING. Then fig your Congress!

[1] ***Sam Adams*** *(1732–1799), the fiery Massachusetts statesman, prominent in precipitating the rebellion.*

WASHINGTON. And is this the reason supplies have been withheld
and gone astray—and all our calculations
upset—to discourage us—and call off your dogs,
as you put it so tersely?

HARVIE. I should say there's been little stomach
for expenditures that looked to a longer war
when peace was in the air.

WASHINGTON. I understand you.
Nobody cared to win.

HARVIE. What was there to win? We lose more day by day
than we'll ever gain back!

WASHINGTON. Perhaps we've been unaccustomed
to thinking in terms of money of some things
men give their lives for. You may find this difficult
to comprehend, you who have thought beyond us
and reckon our lives in dollars.

FOLSOM. But that's not so.
Harvie forgets himself, and says too much
and outruns all discretion.

WASHINGTON. I think we know
how to estimate you both. I shall hope no more
for any help from you. Make your appointments.
Make any arrangements you like. You need not consult
with me. Make your plans, and be easy.

FOLSOM. I'm sorry indeed
for the turn we've taken. For we had meant to offer
our full co-operation.

WASHINGTON. Had you so?
Is your report of Congress like your friend's
or is he in error?

FOLSOM. Truly, there's a trend toward peace—
if only for business reasons.

WASHINGTON. Then we've heard enough.

[*The* COMMISSIONERS *bow.*]

CONWAY. And this court-martial that seemed to be in the wind—
is that to go on?

WASHINGTON. I beg your pardon, Conway.
There'll be no court-martial, no, nor for Cutting.

CONWAY. Thank you.

WASHINGTON. It appears the desire to degrade me and put Gates
in charge, so that he might surrender, was patriotic,

and quite in the fashion. I wish you a very good day,
you, and the honorables from Congress also;
may they find good fare on the road.

[CONWAY *and* CUTTING *exit.*]

Whatever plans
you have for ending the war in a gradual way
you may put aside. I'll end the war for you
and do it quickly.

HARVIE. You'll take no steps in that
without instruction!

WASHINGTON. No?

HARVIE. You exceed your powers
if you do. Only the Congress may move in that,
as you're aware.

WASHINGTON. And we've taken orders from you,
tried to find some patriotic purpose
in your shifts and denials—you thing of lace with no guts,
you essence of Judas!

FOLSOM. Come, sir—this is raving!—

WASHINGTON. And you back him in it—the Congress stands
behind him
in this betrayal—

FOLSOM. A Congress may change its mind!
It has that right!

WASHINGTON. You'll find the army, too,
has rights that I'll defend! Your dogs of war are yours
no longer! All further negotiations with
the British, I'll conduct them! You want the war ended!
By God, we'll end it then, but in our own fashion,
and on our own terms! Sir William shall hear from me
but behind your backs this time!

HARVIE. I warn you, sir—
take no steps without instruction! Your service here
is under commission from the Continental Congress!—
Remember it!

WASHINGTON. You'll take steps without instruction,
and take them now!

[*He suddenly grasps* HARVIE *by the collar and the seat of the trousers and turkey-walks him out the door.*]

HARVIE. You—farmer! Take your hands off me!

FOLSOM. What's this?

What's this, sir? Will you lose all your friends?

[*A crash is heard outside.* FOLSOM *follows* WASHINGTON *and* HARVIE *out. A second crash is heard.* WASHINGTON *returns dusting his hands, and sits at the desk.*]

TENCH. A good beginning.

STIRLING. I wanted to do that, and you called me off.
It puts a period.

TENCH. Now let them do their worst.
We've no more to fear from them. I've overstayed
my time. I'll be late at the rendezvous.

WASHINGTON. True—true—
and I was to ride patrol for Lafayette.
Tench, will you ready a troop?

TENCH. If I can find one. [*He goes to the door.*]
It's as I told you. Catch me fighting or dying
for pricks like those. Why should you take it to heart?
All a soldier gets is his pay and his leave
and whatever girls he can catch with a uniform
and never see again. You take no pay
and never see a woman. There's nothing in it
for you. Let them have their war. [*He goes out.*]

STIRLING. Yes. Let them have it.
Do you know what I think of governments, by and large,
I mean in general? They're run by pimps
who get kicked out of hothouses for picking
the customers' pockets. This one we've got—we made it,
set it up, picked the best men we could find
and put them in—and their brains began to rot
before the year was out. It rots a man's brains
to be in power, and he turns pimp, and picks pockets;
the scavengers! At least, when you have a king
you can chop his head off. I'll be on my way.
I must be there before sundown.

[*He goes out.* WASHINGTON *sits moodily at the table.* MARY PHILIPSE, *cloaked, bonneted, and ready for the road, comes in from the stair. She stands motionless for a moment, looking at* WASHINGTON.]

MARY. I'm sorry if I disturb you. I'd have gone
without a word, only I must make my peace
and ask you to forgive the fool I was,
for coming here at all. [WASHINGTON *does not move.*]

The camp I came from
is not like this. I drew my notion of warfare
from the quadrilling officers that dance
attendance on Mistress Loring, and the bevy
of officers' darlings with her. How wrong I was
I've learned through a night of thinking on my ways
and yours. You believe in yourself and what you do
to the verge of martyrdom, and all your men
have cased themselves in some armor of the spirit
to have and hold what's their own. I'm out of place here
with my thwarted love and beribboned misery
where death walks sentry on your night, too near
and real for cavalier fancies. I honor you
and the men you lead, let me say this in saying
farewell, more than I'd thought possible.

WASHINGTON. Eh, but it seems
that you were right.

MARY. Not I.

WASHINGTON. I've been a gull.
They've led me by a ring, like a circus bear
to fright the children for them. Behind my back
they make their shabby deals, shilling for shilling,
men's lives for copper pennies, marked down, sold off
to die for groats and farthings. The devil drench them,
these talking swine! We're in their way, we've fought on
longer than they intended, and they lose money—
money, by God, hard money! They starve us out
to make us stop—two or three hundred tons
of human beeves, pushed out into the dark
to teach us they lose money, by God, hard money,
and can't afford it.—This is our bright new day,
this is our world well lost! The spirit of the eagle
unconquerable, unconquered! So many crows
over a stinking sheep in a bogged cow-yard
would show more nobility!

MARY. But I'm sure you're wrong—
disheartened over some check—

WASHINGTON. You'll return to Howe;
tell him he can buy our Congress for tuppence
if he lays out his money shrewdly. Less; let him save
his cash, and deal out four or five dozen clerkships

in so many pawnshops, found; they'll jump at that—
they were born with the souls of under-secretaries,
and want no more.

MARY. I shall tell him no such thing,
but that you are brave men, honest, and dangerous.
Yes, more than he thinks.

WASHINGTON. The revolution's sold out!
Congress bargains behind my back, asks terms!
Bargains with Howe!—What's left of the revolution
you see here, in these windy shacks and starved men
and the broken boots I wear! What hopes we had
of the French—you dashed them for me!

MARY. But—are you sorry?

WASHINGTON. No. I shall have my life again, and begin
to fence my land where I left it. I've been the fool!
It began to get into my blood, this crusading zeal
pumped up by the counter-jumpers to fill their tills
and edge out competition! I've lived hard,
slept hard, drunk water, made my meals on biscuit,
for some great end!—They've shown me what that's worth!
Six feet of earth, if there's that much left undug.
The corpses crowd in close in this neighborhood—
some get less than that.

MARY. Then this is the end of the war?

WASHINGTON. This is the end.

MARY. What will you do now?

WASHINGTON. Live again, my dear, live what little's left
to live. Drink at least what wine's in the bottle
before I throw it away. My dancing days
are very likely over, but, looking back,
I'd say I've kept too many rules, and laced
too strait for comfort. I think so when I see
these demi-semi-quavers in their purple coats
and periwigs. There's something in knowing what
you want and taking it. May they die in a ditch
and strangle in ditch-water!

MARY. And yet it's something
to be free—to find yourself free.

WASHINGTON. I'd have asked no better
once. But before this quarrel goes out of my hands

I'll make my own bargain with Howe! That satisfaction
I intend to have. [*He takes a pen and writes.*]
When you see His Excellency
tell him from me that the conference with him
to which you bore invitation waits only on
his pleasure. Let him name his hour and place
in fairly neutral territory. I'll meet him—
and I thank you for the message.

MARY. Sir, I thank you
for your kindly entertainment at a time
when you felt less reminiscent than the lady
who knocked upon your door.—
Of all men I have known I least like to think
of you defeated. Defeat seems not for you—
even in a hopeless quarrel. It's not you that lose,
but the speech-making mongrels over you. Even now
you've a king in yourself, unbeaten, one who has within
what men will follow or a woman serve.

WASHINGTON. Aye, once
I was alive, before so many men
had died around me. The gray years weigh like a mask
and set you hard.

MARY. I know.

WASHINGTON. And this victory
called love, adds well to victory, but defeat's
a dull and lonely thing. I think I've seen you
only as a brightness lost, something I wished for
in a happier year, gone now—might wish for again
if there are years to follow—which I doubt—

MARY. There will be better years—

WASHINGTON. I've given myself
to a footless insurrection, drained out my blood
on a mock heroic altar, made a monk
of what might have been a man. And I'll get for that
what Jack Cade[1] got. Three lines in a history,
touching a minor figure in a brief uprising
that died down early in some year of our Lord,

[1] *Jack Cade (d. 1450), the Irish rebel against the ministers of Henry VI, who stormed London successfully with a makeshift army. He appears as a character in Shakespeare's* Henry VI, Part Two.

A.D., God quit the beggar. Let us hope
Jack Cade reached out his hand and took what sweets
went by with the years, before they snared him in
and quartered him. Wait for me here. God knows
the years go fast. If I let you leave me now
I'll not see you again.
MARY. And the word to Howe?
WASHINGTON. Why, later
will do as well as now.
MARY. No, I must take it—
or you'll change your mind. But we shall meet again.—
If you doubt it—was there ever another meeting
less likely than this we've had?
WASHINGTON. No. Then I'll see you?
MARY. I shall manage.
You must leave these things with the woman.
Let's get the soldiering over, and do it quickly.
After that—trust me.
[TENCH *enters.*]
TENCH. We're ready to ride, sir.
And damn little good it'll do us.
WASHINGTON. Well, let's ride then.
We'll be counted on. [*To* MARY]
I've written your passport—
and orders for an escort.
TENCH. You leave us, lady?
MARY. Brokenhearted.
TENCH. You should have come to me.
I mend these broken hearts.
MARY. Now I believe you.
TENCH. This is a poor excuse for a war we're in,
anyway—why, to mend a broken heart I'd leave
at the drop of an eyelash—but, damn it, duty calls,
and, God, we're hounds for duty!
MARY. Good luck!
TENCH. Good luck!
MARY. And to you, General.
WASHINGTON. Good-bye—
MARY. I betray my cause—
but—don't give up yet—hold on while you can—

WASHINGTON. Yes? Dear lady,
this nation's spending its last heart's blood for a package
of liberty. We opened the package today
and it was empty. We ride our last expedition.
And so—good-bye.

MARY. Good-bye. [TENCH *and* WASHINGTON *go out.*]

CURTAIN

act 3

SCENE: *The interior of a barn on Hay Island in the morning light. The place has been long abandoned and though it was well and heavily built begins to rot down. The floor is covered with ancient and matted hay, hay hangs from the black rafters, and remains piled in the corners. To the right is a large double door, one side of it fallen from its hinges; a small door goes out through a stable at the left. A window has fallen out at the rear. To the left rear a granary cuts off the corner of the lower floor; a flimsy door hangs beside its entrance, half-fallen. A few nail kegs and a barrel are set down-stage to the right.*

ALCOCK, *with a wounded thigh, lies on a truss of hay.* MARTY, *with a bandage round his head and over one eye, is playing a jews-harp.* ALCOCK *is still wearing most of the crimson trousers, but now they are stained, ripped and bedraggled from hard use.*

ALCOCK. This is the kind of war that as soon as you get a pair of britches they shoot 'em out from under you. [MARTY *plays on.*] What's that? Did you hear that? [MARTY *shakes his head.*] They ought to be across by this time.

MARTY. Yeah.

ALCOCK. Play that again. [MARTY *plays an air,* ALCOCK *sings.*]

For my first love was nothing paid;
Bright morning caught us where we lay.
Of birchen bark a house was made,
And bright with silver ran our day.

Honey o' dark, honey o' rue,
Where went the kisses I gave to you?

The happy ring I made for her,
That ring was rank with verdigris,
But golden is that's tried with fire,
And golden was her love to me.
Honey o' dark, honey o' rue,
Where went the kisses I gave to you?

[*There is a low detonation in the distance.* ALCOCK *tries to get to his feet, but falls back.* MARTY *starts up.*] That's no musket—that's a long Tom! I told 'em they'd run into something if they stayed past daylight! The damn British have got parties all up and down the river.

MARTY. They got howitzers.

ALCOCK. Boy, they've got everything. [*They are silent for a moment. There is a scattering of distant musket fire.*] Well, we can't do much. [*He moves his gun toward him.*] That was old Teague's Happy Thought. I know the way she talks.

MARTY. Maybe Nick.

ALCOCK. Yeah, Nick was in it, too—I never feel safe on an island. I can't swim.

TENCH [*outside*]. This is the place. It's the only barn in miles.

LAFAYETTE [*outside*]. I don't understand this firing to the south.

ALCOCK [*his gun in his hand*]. Take hold of your weapon, Marty.
[*They train guns on the doorway, right.*]

LAFAYETTE. It's certainly an exchange, but it's not my men.

TENCH. A good mile away, I'd guess.

[*He enters.*]

ALCOCK. Step into the light, you, where I can see you.

TENCH. Easy, easy; who are you?

[LAFAYETTE *enters.*]

LAFAYETTE. There is someone here?

ALCOCK. You're damn right there's somebody here! Desperate men, too. [*He lowers the muzzle.*] I beg your pardon, Colonel. Drop your sights, lad. [MARTY *lowers his weapon.*]

TENCH. Who are you?

ALCOCK. It's all right sir. Virginians.

TENCH. Oh, yes. I know them.—Well, friend, for a minute I was in doubt about you. You're wearing British colors on your legs.

ALCOCK. I got a British bullet through 'em, too. That's why I'm here.

TENCH. And now that I reflect on it Lieutenant Cutting said something about being tied up by the men in his bunk-house. I hope I'm not going to find it necessary to make you both prisoners.

ALCOCK. For what?

TENCH. For desertion.

ALCOCK. We came over here to lift a mess of corn for breakfast. Besides, it was about time somebody tied up Cutting.

TENCH. I agree with you about that. Only I wouldn't advise you to go back to Valley Forge.

ALCOCK. We hadn't figured on going back. And I wouldn't want to get caught here either.

TENCH. Well, that's your own lookout. What's the firing downstream?

ALCOCK. That's our bunch having a little fracas with the English over the last load of corn, if I'm any judge. I told 'em to quit at dawn, but they went right on, and now they've got an army down on 'em.

TENCH. What do you mean by the last load of corn?

ALCOCK. Why, we found Howe had enough ear corn on this island to make a poultice for the state of Pennsylvania. So we commandeered four old monitors below the hook and ferried over a few loads of it in the night. Then we had a brush with some scouts, and Marty and me got clipped. They laid us in here and went back to their navigating.

LAFAYETTE. Why, sir, this was a more important operation than mine; and more successful.

ALCOCK. We certainly laid in materials for a whale of a lot of corn pone. [*Musket fire again*] They're ketching it down there now, though.

LAFAYETTE. We should take a hand in that.

TENCH. We will. Now, listen to me. Howe sent out a flag for a parley, and the Generals are meeting here to talk over the revolution and what they fought each other for and all that. But if you've got a fight going we'll look in on it. How do we get there?

ALCOCK. Follow the shore line south—but keep your eyes open for sharpshooters.

TENCH. How far is it?

ALCOCK. Maybe a furlong to the cribs.

TENCH. Where did you dump the stuff on the mainland?

ALCOCK. Clopton's granary.

TENCH. Good enough.

ALCOCK. Wait a minute—you say the Generals are coming here?

TENCH. Where else? It's the only roof visible in these parts.

ALCOCK. Well, what are we going to do?

TENCH. Lie where you are and let 'em step over you. Only don't shoot 'em as they come in—that's all I ask of you. [TENCH *and* LAFAYETTE *are about to leave by the left door when* MINTO *enters by it, panting and wet. He sits down, exhausted.*] What's going on?

MINTO. They sunk the big scow. With a round shot. But we got off. [*A shot is heard.*] The boys are beating back this way.

[TENCH *and* LAFAYETTE *go out left.*]

ALCOCK. You hurt any?

MINTO. No. Neil's hurt. Got a splinter through his chest. Andrew was carryin' him. [*He rises.*] We'll have to get you out of here.

ALCOCK. Us?

MINTO. The red-coats are coming this way.—Lost my musket in the water.

ANDRE [*outside*]. This is the roof we glimpsed beyond the marsh, I'm sure of it.

BRIGADIER [*outside*]. It's what a man might call
an ancient pile. These oafs of pioneers,
how they can handle their tools! They level these sills
and notch the beams with a broad-axe.

[ANDRE *and the* BRIGADIER *enter.* MINTO *has retreated on hearing the voices.*]

ANDRE. The arms are quiet
some hundred years that did this hewing. Basta!
The roost's inhabited!

ALCOCK. I'd hardly call it that.
We're birds o' passage.

ANDRE. I'm sorry if we intrude.
The truth is we mistook this for a place
appointed for a meeting.

ALCOCK. Well, this is it.
There's been some officers here.

ANDRE. And they're returning?

ALCOCK. That's the idea. [MINTO *has picked up a fork.*]

BRIGADIER [*to* MINTO]. Come out,
fellow—is this an ambush?

ALCOCK. Put down that pitchfork;
man, are you daft?

MINTO. I won't put down any pitchfork,
and they won't take me!

ALCOCK. This is a conversation,
and nobody wants you. [MINTO *leans grimly on his weapon.*]
He won't bother.

BRIGADIER. Good.
There's an old road comes near the further side.
It may be passable.

ANDRE. If not, they'll walk.
Now peace be with you, gentlemen; you, most of all,
with the trident yonder. If you're here in half an hour
we'll see you again.

ALCOCK. Why, drop in any time.
We can do with a little company.

ANDRE. Thank you, sir.
My prayers for a swift recovery.

[*He goes out with the* BRIGADIER, *to the right.*]

ALCOCK. Why, you ancient crow-bait, what do you mean refusing to lay down your arms when addressed by an officer? How far do you think you're going to get, pitching into a couple of brigadiers with farm machinery?

MINTO. How do I know what they're going to do?

ALCOCK. These are headquarters birds, you stingaree—poll-parrots from headquarters. Their business is talking, not fighting. There's a truce on the island, and they're here to parley voo. If you weren't a thousand years old and afflicted with all the animal diseases from stringhalt to rinderpest I'd get up and tan your hide off for disregard of an order!

MINTO. I guess you're an officer.

ALCOCK. Mason's dead, isn't he? He was shot off the boat right behind you! I'm running this shebang now. Do you know what I think?

MINTO. No.

ALCOCK. I've got a premonition this war's going to be over to-night.

MINTO. To-night?

ALCOCK. Otherwise why is Washington talking to Howe?

MINTO. That's right.

[OSCAR *and* SPAD *slip in through the left door and turn to look back for possible pursuers.* SPAD *is wearing a dirty bandage on his right hand.*]

OSCAR. Dey go by Apple Creek, I tall you!

SPAD. Damn if they didn't. They missed us. Take a look out that other door. [OSCAR *runs into the grain-room.*] They won't try rushing the barn. We could pick 'em off as they came.

ALCOCK. You ducking out of trouble?

SPAD. We led 'em off the wrong way so we could get Neil in here. He's hit pretty bad. [*He examines his priming.*] Your gun working?

ALCOCK. Take Marty's.

MARTY. No, sir. Nobody takes my gun! [*He hangs onto it.*]

ALCOCK. Mine's all right.

[SPAD *exchanges guns with* ALCOCK *and goes back to watch the door.*]

SPAD. Any powder here? I'm about done.

ALCOCK. I've got half a horn left. [NICK *and* TEAGUE *come in quietly, quite at ease.*] Where's Neil?

NICK. Andrew's fetchin' him over his shoulders.

TEAGUE. Who was that ran down the bank?

ALCOCK. Tench and Lafayette.

NICK. How come they're here?

ALCOCK. —Jeez—there's more generals around than you ever see in camp. The woods are full of generals.

TEAGUE. It's pretty hot down that way. They're likely to run into something.

ALCOCK. It seems there's a truce at the moment, and nobody's supposed to shoot anybody. If you see any Hessians they're out of season. There was a couple of English brigadiers here a minute ago. They went back after more.

[OSCAR *comes in from the grain-room.*]

TEAGUE. More what?

ALCOCK. Brigadiers.

OSCAR. Dere's six mebbe seven red-coats by de vater!

SPAD. What do you mean? [*He looks out.*] You say Tench went down that way?

ALCOCK. They started out to lend a hand in case you needed it.

[*A gun cracks rather near.*]

SPAD. Sounds to me as if they might want chaperoning. [*As he starts out*] Nick?

NICK. Sure. [*He follows* SPAD.]

SPAD. Keep your head down! There's musket barrels beyond that hummock!

NICK. Keep your own down!

[SPAD *and* NICK *go out. Three or four shots are fired and bullets rattle on the siding.*]

TEAGUE. Spent balls. Wouldn't stop a rabbit.

ALCOCK. Pretty good for English regulars. First time I ever knew they could hit the side of a barn.

[JOCK *enters from the left, holding the door for* ANDREW, *who comes in carrying* NEIL *on his back. They help him to a heap of straw at the rear and lay him down carefully.* TEAGUE *goes over to look at him and the others watch.*]

ANDREW. All right, boy?

[NEIL *nods as well as he can, but makes no answer.*]

TEAGUE. Was that shooting at you?

JOCK. No. They're getting ready to swarm up on this place.

TEAGUE. They are? [*He goes back to his loophole.*]

ANDREW. They'd a' got us, too, only Tench turned up from somewhere and held 'em off.

ALCOCK. Tench wasn't carrying a gun.

ANDREW. He borrowed mine.

[TEAGUE *suddenly whips his musket to the crack and fires.*]

ALCOCK. Hey, how many times have I got to tell you there's a truce and you're not supposed to plug anybody?

TEAGUE. They don't know it out there then. They was creeping in on us. [*He loads his gun.* OSCAR *and* MINTO *go to his aid.*] I got one.

ALCOCK. Is that so? Only one?

TEAGUE. One at a time's good fishing.

MINTO. They don't want any more. They're making back to the boats.

TEAGUE. That's right. They're leaving us.

[*Two rather distant reports are heard.*]

ALCOCK. That's Nick and Spad.

TEAGUE. Just helpin' 'em on their way, that's all.

ALCOCK. Maybe if the guests have all departed somebody with a free hand and a couple of legs would share a drink of water with an invalid.

TEAGUE. Listen, can't you walk?

ALCOCK. No, I can't walk—and I can see where it's going to be a lot of fun for some of you, carrying me around from now on. [TEAGUE *brings out a stone bottle of water, and goes to* ALCOCK.] Try Neil, there, first. [TEAGUE *takes the water to* NEIL, *who drinks thirstily.*]

ANDREW. Well, they're in the longboat—and pulling out.

JOCK. Now that's just too bad. Maybe we didn't treat 'em right.

TEAGUE. I wouldn't want 'em to go away mad.

JOCK. We probably hurt their feelings some way. Damn touchy, these English.

ANDREW. God grant us mileage between me and them. We've lost enough this day.

ALCOCK. And that's no lie.

[*The doors at the right are thrust open and* WASHINGTON *and* STIRLING *appear, followed by* RAFE.]

WASHINGTON. Is this the place?

RAFE. It's where they pointed out.

WASHINGTON. I thought Tench had preceded us.

ALCOCK. He was here, General, but he stepped out to mix in a shindy.

WASHINGTON. Sir, it seems to me there's something remarkably familiar and yet remarkably strange about this place. I have seen these faces before.

ALCOCK. Yes, sir. In the bunk-house at Valley Forge.

WASHINGTON. True—I read you a long and I judge rather distasteful sermon on the evils of desertion. Like most advice it went unheeded.

ALCOCK. Well—not entirely.

WASHINGTON. At any rate, you took the first opportunity to pinion your officer and launch out on your own. I had that report from Lieutenant Cutting.

ALCOCK. Well, what do you expect a man to do—?

WASHINGTON. I've no doubt the circumstances might be termed extenuating. No charges will be brought against you, and you may consider yourselves free of all further obligations to the Continental army. However, your presence is damnably inconvenient. I have appointed to meet here with a British officer for a discussion that will hardly concern you. It would mortify me somewhat to usher him into an apartment overrun by renegade Continentals—

ALCOCK. Cutting's a renegade if you ask me.

WASHINGTON [*to* RAFE]. Is there any other shelter in the neighborhood to which we might remove our conference?

RAFE. No, sir. We could go back to the boats.

STIRLING. The difficulty is that Howe's expected here. I wonder he's not here already.

ALCOCK. Oh, he'll be along. A brace of periwigs strolled in a while past to look us over. I reckon that's his advance guard.

STIRLING. There you are. Would it be possible to move these men into the grain-room yonder?

ALCOCK. I can be moved. In fact, if I'm renegade I'm glad to get out!

STIRLING. Collect your men, then, and post yourselves on guard duty inside. Shut the door behind you and consider yourselves under arrest till you're mustered out.

[WASHINGTON *has pushed a keg into position and sits down beside the barrel to go over papers. The men begin to move uncertainly.*]

TEAGUE. General Washington, maybe you didn't get this just the way it was. I was going on leave for the winter that's true, but I didn't go. Far from it.

WASHINGTON. It's a matter of small moment what you've done with your time since I saw you, but of considerable importance that we clear this room.

TEAGUE. Yes, sir.

[*He goes to* ALCOCK *and helps* OSCAR *lift him to his feet.* ALCOCK *limps between them toward the granary door, the men following.* VARNUM *enters from the right and goes up to* WASHINGTON.]

STIRLING. Varnum's here, sir.

WASHINGTON. Your report?

VARNUM. We took the depot
about three o'clock this morning—with little loss,
for the garrison was asleep. We found some arms
and four or five barrels of powder, but no food.
The food was gone.

STIRLING. It's as if they knew what we needed,
and led us on.

WASHINGTON. They do know what we need.

[*The left door opens and* LAFAYETTE *enters with* SPAD.]

LAFAYETTE. Death of my soul, man, you're a doughty fighter—
I wouldn't be here without you! [*He gives* SPAD *his hand.*]

SPAD. There's many of us
wouldn't be here if it hadn't been for trees
and other natural objects.

LAFAYETTE [*to* WASHINGTON]. Your pardon, sir;
this front was not so quiet as it seemed
when we made the assignation.

WASHINGTON. I hope you've made

no breach of our compact with the English. We
as well as they were bound to an armistice
for this hour or two.

LAFAYETTE. I assure you they fired at us. It became the part of wisdom to crawl a little,
whereupon we crawled. This is what you call
in the native parlance, Indian fighting.

WASHINGTON. Yes.
I've heard of it. We've other business in hand
with your leave.

STIRLING. Stir out, boys. Stir your stumps,
and set a watch, since you're here.

SPAD [*at the right-hand door*]. By cracky, they're coming
on horseback, his nibs and all. Find your stanchions, cattle;
They're here with bells. [*He goes toward the granary.*]

STIRLING [*to* WASHINGTON]. Lord love you, he wouldn't walk!
He must have crossed in state.

TEAGUE. If we move this boy
I'm afraid it'll finish him. Would it dash you much
if he should lie here?

[WASHINGTON *rises and goes back to look at* NEIL, *who lies with closed eyes.* WASHINGTON *lays a hand on* NEIL'S *brow, then rises.*]

WASHINGTON. Stirling, this is the lad—
you remember him?

STIRLING. Aye—this is the one who asked
for what he seems to have got.

WASHINGTON. He's badly wounded?

TEAGUE. It won't take long.

WASHINGTON. Let him stay there if he must.
Keep an eye on him, Stirling.

STIRLING. I will.

A VOICE [*outside*]. We carry
a flag, friend. Ours is a peaceful errand.

ANOTHER VOICE. Yes, sir.
They're waiting for you.

[*The last of the bunk-house squad, leaving* NEIL *behind, enter the granary. There is a rough knocking on the door at left.*]

STIRLING. Come in.

[ANDRE *and the* BRIGADIER *enter, followed by two or three other*

Officers and last by HOWE *and* MARY PHILIPSE, *who wears a soldier's cloak.*]

This is poor shelter,
but perfect for our purpose.

BRIGADIER. It's a spot
that one might refer to as retired.

WASHINGTON. I believe
we're unknown to each other, save in name.

ANDRE. Why, sir,
we carry an interlocutor. This lady—

[*He turns to the door.* MARY PHILIPSE *comes forward.*]

MARY [*to* WASHINGTON]. I've been a faithful postman,
you note—rode hard, and caught you a general
in the midst of his strategy. Sir William, this
is General Washington—the tall one, who looks sad—
and, General, this is Sir William Howe—of whom
you may have heard. The rest is entourage
and may be neglected.

WASHINGTON [*bowing*]. It's good of you to answer
my word in person.

HOWE [*bowing*]. Sir, I have long looked forward
to a meeting with you, though you've avoided it.
I hope we shall be friends.

WASHINGTON. Let's assume we are.
At least our quarrel's not personal. May I take
this opportunity to thank a lady
for bringing us together?

MARY. I have my reward.

WASHINGTON. And since life is never as scheduled, I'll be brief
in apologizing for an exchange of gunfire
you may have heard as you came. Some lawless spirits
from my own army had descended on
this island for their own purposes. There's been
a skirmish and some casualties, and the men
are still about, but will keep the truce.

HOWE. God, man,
whoever ordered it, or how it came about
you've had the best of this day's work. I assure you
I'm more than rueful over my good marsh hay
sunk in ten feet of water; and those rascals of yours,

I'm told, have robbed the corn-cribs. I knew of the hay
but I learned of the maize on my way here.
WASHINGTON. Well, sir, I fear
it was no great loss.
HOWE. Well, it was here and it's gone.
Sic transit horse-feed mundi. I'd sacrifice
much more to make your acquaintance.—Does it meet
your wish that we transact whatever business
we have before witnesses? We can talk alone
if it suits your purpose.
WASHINGTON. Sir, I'd a little rather
this discussion were known to my officers.
HOWE. Right, right.
And so would I.
WASHINGTON. First, let it be understood
that I bind myself to nothing by this meeting,
nor have I altered in my loyalty
to the cause I captain. But you have sent me word
that if a peace were arrived at now, the king
would expunge all statutes over which we differed,
omit taxes of which we complained, and, in simple, grant us
all objects for which we fought originally,
except our independence.
HOWE. You may add also
complete erasure of all charges made
against you as rebels, so that you're received
freely and brotherly again among us
without writ or reprisal.
WASHINGTON. This order would apply
to all, without exception?
HOWE. Without exception.
For I'm free to tell you, since it's kept no secret,
we're sick and sore about this war in England,
would to God it had never started, and want you back
on your own terms.
WASHINGTON. Well, frankly, my own terms
would mean that we never went back at all, for going
would mean we accept the king, but I'm not alone
in these decisions; we have a government,
and plenty in that government are sore
and sick as in your own. I've lately learned

that some backhanded gesture was made toward you
by members of Congress, and I've come in some pique to say
that if any settlement with the king goes forward
it will first go through my hands.

HOWE. I would I might
speak freely, as you have, but I confess I'm bound
to secrecy in that matter.

WASHINGTON. You may well ask
why I have not gone to Congress, and said to them
what I say to you. I would answer, I've said my say
to Congress in so many different ways
and wasted so much language, that the thought
of speaking to them gives me gumboils. I
have come to you directly as a soldier
to warn you there will be no peace, and no peace
can be made effective, without me.

HOWE. How well I knew that
you can judge from the fact that I asked you for this meeting,
not content to deal elsewhere. I have my spies out.
There was a time when Congress had control
of your rebellion. Not now. The city boys
are weary of it, but all your fighting strength
is ranked with farmers, and while they follow you
and you lead them, there's a war. We can begin
with that as a basis. Your word is good with your army
and good with me.

WASHINGTON. Well, there'll be a storm, but if
it's peace the Congress wants, peace it shall have,
only it will be of my making. It's not too easy
to swallow a king, after your gorge has risen
against him so long—

STIRLING. Now, God forbid this, General,
must we take back King George?

WASHINGTON. God damn you, Stirling!
Do you think it's easy for me? [*A pause*]

NEIL. They said it was rain on the roof,
rain, rain, and summer quiet, but it was heartbeat—
heartbeat in the silence—

STIRLING. Lie quiet, lad.

NEIL. She said lie quiet, too. Who are they here?
They've taken me prisoner! It's articles of war

you can die, but not be prisoner!

STIRLING. No, no.

WASHINGTON. Forgive us.
The lad was wounded this morning. [MARY PHILIPSE *goes to* NEIL.]

MARY. Does he lie alone,
untended?

WASHINGTON. The soldiers cared for him.

NEIL. They came in—
oh, you should see them! There were pikes and arms,
and a dying man cried, "Mother of God!" and died,
for they die, too, but not so happy, never
so happy!—They were English bastards!
The bastards of a king! I'm dying, Tavis;
give me your hand. [MARY *gives her hand to him.*]

MARY. Yes, yes.

NEIL. You'll have a child.
You must call it by my name. My name was Neil.
Was sometime. You must not carve it. Let it live in a heartbeat,
yours and mine. You'll remember?

MARY. Yes, Neil.

[TEAGUE *opens the door, and steps out, thinking he may help Others appear behind him.*]

NEIL. I'm sorry.
Something stops my breath. I think I'm dying,
but if I die you will share my legacy,
all men will live free in a free land, all men,
and there will be no more kings. It's hard to believe,
but I believe it.

MARY. You must believe it.

NEIL. I do.
Hold my hand. This is a dark, dark morning. [*He tries to rise.*]
There's light still—there— [*He falls back.*]

TEAGUE. Shall we take him?

MARY. Let him lie still. I'll cover his face.

[*She bends over him.* TENCH *comes in from the left, looks about, and goes directly up to* WASHINGTON.]

TENCH. In regard to certain corn
which this squad of the First Virginia sacked last night
from His Majesty's corn-cribs, let me report it stowed
at Clopton's landing. You'll find it there if you want it.

If General Howe should miss it, that's where it is,
but he won't get it.

[*Nearly all the men have emerged from the granary.*]

HOWE. I've said good-bye to my corn,
not without regret.

TENCH. As to the losses incurred
in this action, there have been some wounded, and some killed,
how many I don't know, but among the latter
Nick Teague and Lucifer Tench. I'm sorry, Teague;
the boy slipped down between the piles. He was hurt
and I couldn't reach him.

TEAGUE. Yes, sir.

WASHINGTON. Do you list yourself
among the slain? It's rather tasteless joking.

TENCH. I'm dead enough. My boots are full of blood.

[*He lays a hand on the barrel for support.*]

To die for hay and grain! There's a high death
for a swashing soldier! The devil damn your kings
and Congresses and their hay! Take your hand from me.
I'll walk to where I lie. A dog dies best
in a corner. [*He starts toward the granary.*]

STIRLING. Lucifer!

TENCH. I've had my day
and it's time for another dog. It's exit, midnight,
and alas and alack for Lucifer. Sir, I've loved you,
but if you set your seal to an English compact
my curse on you.—These dying men have visions
and that's the gist of mine. Bring on your burlap,
and the sailor's needle, and sew me in to sleep;
I'm tired and done. [*He goes into the granary.*]

WASHINGTON. Tench, man! Tench!

[*He follows* TENCH. MARY *lays the blanket gently over* NEIL'S *face and rises, facing* TEAGUE.]

MARY. This was your son?

TEAGUE. No, ma'am.
Nick was different from him. Nick was a boy
you wouldn't see often.

STIRLING. Sir William, it may be
that you'd prefer to wait elsewhere, and this lady,
till we're free again.

HOWE. Thank you. I'm not unmoved
at any brave man's passing, but these griefs are private
and we'll take a turn outside. [*He turns toward* MARY.]

MARY. I'll stay.

[HOWE *bows and goes out right, with his officers.*]

STIRLING. Aye?

[WASHINGTON *reenters. There is a pause.*]

MARY. I heard what this lad said dying, and I'll betray you
no further even by silence. The French alliance
has been signed with the colonies. It was wished, of course,
to keep this from you, but it's true.

LAFAYETTE. It's signed?

MARY. Signed, sealed and made fast by Franklin.

LAFAYETTL. How do you hear this?

MARY. Your letters were on the captured packet. Sir William
had the news yesterday.

LAFAYETTE. Sir, I beg you, before
you pledge yourself to Howe, you gather your troops
and make one final effort—

WASHINGTON. Gather my troops!
Have they strength to come together! Gabriel's trumpet
might rally that vale of bones! Bring me these spectres
with the wind-fed entrails and mouths that open and speak not
gaping their misery! Summon forth brigades
and companies from the lazarettes they lie in,
cry, "Lazarus, arise! On to the field!"
This is no mockery. The cerements
are much too tough for miracle. Look about you
at these remnants of dying and deserting men!
What could I offer them to follow me?
What could I say to them? Call them in to me!
Come in! Come in and hear me—you were some of the best,
you skulkers, who run the woods! Come in! I've told you
no charge will be brought against you. I'll tell you why
I've come here to surrender. The British staff
waits outside for my word. And the reason I quit
is because I've neither a Congress nor an army.
Congress is through with the war—and the army's through
and running out. Look for them in the woods—
you'll find them there. They root for acorns and pignuts
to fill their bellies—and they had good reason to go

for Congress wanted to quit and sent no food
and men must eat or die. There was a time
when you had shoes and powder for your guns
and fought to rule yourselves. There was hope in the air
and possible victory. If you starved and died
you died for a purpose. That's gone now. If you die
you die for nothing. We've set our feet down now
on a bed rock of despair, and I promise those
who'll follow me further, no chance of victory,
for, by my God, I see none, no glory or gain,
or laurels returning home, but wounds and death—
cold and disease and hunger, winters to come
such as this you have, with our bloody trail in the snow
and no end to it till you shovel each other in
with those at Valley Forge! Close in and take
your place in my ranks if you like it. If you don't,
and none will blame you, go your road as you have
and find yourselves food, and live! [*He turns away.*]

SPAD. You'll take us back?

WASHINGTON. Take you back!

SPAD. I'll go with you!

ALCOCK. Yes, by God!

THE MEN. Come on, you fellows, you heard what he said!
And so will I.
We'll go with you!
Do you mean you'll take us?
Put me in!
Anywhere you say to go!
That goes for all of us!

ALCOCK. We thought it was over!
We thought it was falling to pieces, but if you meant
what you said about being plowed under, before we stop,
hell, I'm for being plowed under!

STIRLING. Shall I call in the British delegation?

[WASHINGTON *nods assent.*]

ANDREW. And let them go.

ALCOCK. Let the English soldiers
take their red-coats back to England where they belong!
They can leave the pants. We can use the pants.

SPAD. They won't get me till I get a few of them first!
Let them wash us back to the mountains! When I get

my back to a mountain I'm deadly.

ALCOCK. And about the commissary—
that corn we ferried over—that's yours, you know.

WASHINGTON. What corn?

ALCOCK. We ferried a thousand bushels last night,
and lost three men doing it. Well, that goes to feed the army.

WASHINGTON. That's what you were doing here?

ALCOCK. That's what we were doing. And it was cold work, too,
till the English made it hot!

WASHINGTON. The forge was cold
that smelted these fellows into steel—but steel
they are. I know them now. And now I change
my answer! Let one ragged thousand of them
pledge them to this with me, and we'll see it through.

SPAD. That's what we want to hear!

JOCK. Aye, right!

SPAD. Will you do one thing for me, sir?

WASHINGTON. Name it.

SPAD. I want to shake your hand. That'll be something to
tell the boys.

WASHINGTON. My hand—why, lad,
would I keep my hand from my friends? My heart goes with it
to every man among you. I believe
Sir William Howe is waiting—and now we're ready
to give him his quittance and let him go.

[*There is a movement among the men* VARNUM *steps out.*]

JOCK. Aye, aye—now tell him.

[HOWE *and his officers enter.*]

WASHINGTON. Sir William, I have forgotten
what was last said; something of our accepting
kings or princes. It hardly matters now,
for it's better blank. Gentlemen, I am servant
to these men in the rags of homespun. They've heard from me
this proposition of the king's, and they
refuse it flatly. This war, to your brief misfortune,
is not mine to end, but theirs. I have my orders
and I'm in your debt for a very fruitless errand
over wild water.

HOWE. Your choice of councillors,
sir, is your own, of course, but may I remind you
that the people of a country are never open

to reason in such matters? They're willing to fight
for the virgin birth, or the freedom of the seas,
or the tomb of Christ, when nobody knows where it is,
or your brotherhood of man,—oh, any drivel
that's clean impossible. But tell them once
what a war's really for, perhaps, trade advantage,
or the rights of bankers, and they drop their war like a snake.
This war's for trade advantage.

ALCOCK. Oh, no it's not!
It's because we don't like kings, and won't have a king,
and never will!

WASHINGTON. And there we end.

HOWE. You'll draw out this tragedy further?

WASHINGTON. As far as we must.

HOWE. But you've lost, lost now; your government's opposed,
your men in draglets—the dregs of what's swept up
to eat—

WASHINGTON. We're all too well aware of that.
And we have lost; we know it; by all rules of the game
we're beaten, and should surrender. If this war
were for trade advantage, it would end to-night.
It was made over subsidies, or some such matter,
but it's been taken over. Let the merchants submit
if that's any good to you, then come out and find
my hunters and backwoodsmen, and beat us down
into the land we fight for. When you've done that—
the king may call us subject. For myself, I'd have died
within if I'd surrendered. The spirit of earth
moves over earth like flame and finds fresh home
when the old's burned out. It stands over this my country
in this dark year, and stands like a pillar of fire
to show us an uncouth clan, unread, harsh-spoken,
but followers of dream, a dream that men
shall bear no burdens save of their own choosing,
shall walk upright, masterless, doff a hat to none,
and choose their gods! It's destined to win, this dream,
weak though we are. Even if we should fail,
it's destined to win! If we could hold on till spring
even now the French would be on our side, and beat you.
Have you heard that news?

HOWE. I was not aware it had reached you.

Your work, lady?

MARY. Yes, mine.

HOWE. Why, trust a woman
and tell the world. Sir, I've been more your friend
than you know in this matter. This is my last winter
with the British army here. They'll send someone else
to fight you, but not me. I'm no Quixote,
to battle with dreams and windmills. But it's not over,
make up your minds to that. They'll press you harder
when I'm gone home.

WASHINGTON. Sir, we engage to stand it.

HOWE. No doubt you will. This spikes our guns for us.
There was a storm promised before we came
and I'd like to beat it back. Come, we must go.
The terms I've offered you will not be offered
by my successor.

WASHINGTON. We should hardly expect it.

HOWE. No,
for I've been too much your friend. Heigh-ho, I'll get a drubbing
when I face England. Good-bye!

WASHINGTON. We wish you good morning,
and a fair voyage, Sir William.

[HOWE *goes out. The officers follow.*]

WASHINGTON. We owe you thanks too, madame.

MARY. I hope so.

WASHINGTON. And it will be remembered.

MARY. Why, then, I'm glad.
I know my own destiny, little though I may like it,
and it's not high as yours. There are some men
who lift the age they inhabit—till all men walk
on higher ground in that lifetime. God keep you all
and bring you victory. [*She goes out.*]

WASHINGTON. And so we're left
with some years of revolution on our hands.

ALCOCK. Good God,
you shouldn't have put it up to us. I'm standing
in a man's clothes for the first time in a year.
I'd never say die.

STIRLING. We have food for three days.

WASHINGTON. And then

for three more if we can find it—and three more—
if we can find it. And now I think we will!

[*He goes toward* NEIL.]

Was the brother lost?

STIRLING. Yes, Mason.

WASHINGTON. Mason and Nick and Neil—and Tench. They paid
for our three days. You know best who will pay
for days to come. We must bury them here. They died here
and earned their ground.
This liberty will look easy by and by
when nobody dies to get it. [*They go toward* NEIL *to take him up.*]
Shall we fire a volley
over our dead?

TEAGUE. No, sir. We'll need our powder,
and dead men don't hear volleys.

WASHINGTON. So be it, then.

CURTAIN

CLIFFORD ODETS (1906-)

By the early thirties the playwrights responsible for the birth of modern American drama had taken on the settled appearance of mature and dependable artists, whose success the theater public now took for granted. Drama critics began to scan the horizon for fresh faces to renew the youthful vitality of the early years and to insure the future of our stage. At this anxious time, after six or seven seasons with no important new figures, three very serious newcomers made their bows in rapid succession—Sidney Kingsley, Lillian Hellman, and Clifford Odets.

Despite his rather bumptious debut in a whirlwind of literary violence Odets looked like the liveliest and most promising of the three. The radical politics of *Waiting for Lefty* probably seemed less shocking to the grim audiences of 1935 than to the reader today, but they should be taken in part as a quaint reminder of the mood of America in the years when Odets was growing up. Since he was born in Philadelphia and reared in New York, his political outlook was shaped by the liberal attitudes of big-city people in the depression years. In *Awake and Sing,* his first successful full-length play, he portrayed with pungent realism a lower-middle-class Jewish family in the Bronx, such as he had lived in as a youth, but by this time he was actually a left-wing crusader who was more at home down in the arena of soapbox oratory, Union Square, or perhaps still further downtown in the haven of self-expression and personal rebellion, Greenwich Village.

His passionate interest in the stage led him to join the acting studio of the Theatre Guild, which broke away from

the Guild with a Broadway production in 1931 and became known as the Group Theatre, dedicated to working as a permanent company of actors in the artistic tradition of the Moscow Art Theatre. For them he wrote *Awake and Sing,* which the directors shelved as too uncertain a venture until Odets' next play, *Waiting for Lefty,* earned critical acclaim in its production by the New Theatre League. To write *Waiting for Lefty* Odets shut himself up for three days in a hotel room in Boston, where the Group Theatre was playing at the time, and won with it a prize offered by the League for a new left-wing play.

Thus began a highly successful career as playwright and director which took Odets through several notable productions by the Group Theatre to a Hollywood contract. His political views, if not his tense literary style, seem to have relaxed with the years. His two most recent plays—*The Big Knife* (1949) and *The Country Girl* (1950)—studied the problems of individuals, in both cases actors, who cracked under the strain of economic pressures; his former broadside against the whole social order does not appear here. The power of Odets is a crude, even brutal power, full of swagger and extravagance, but at its best it carries an infectious vitality.

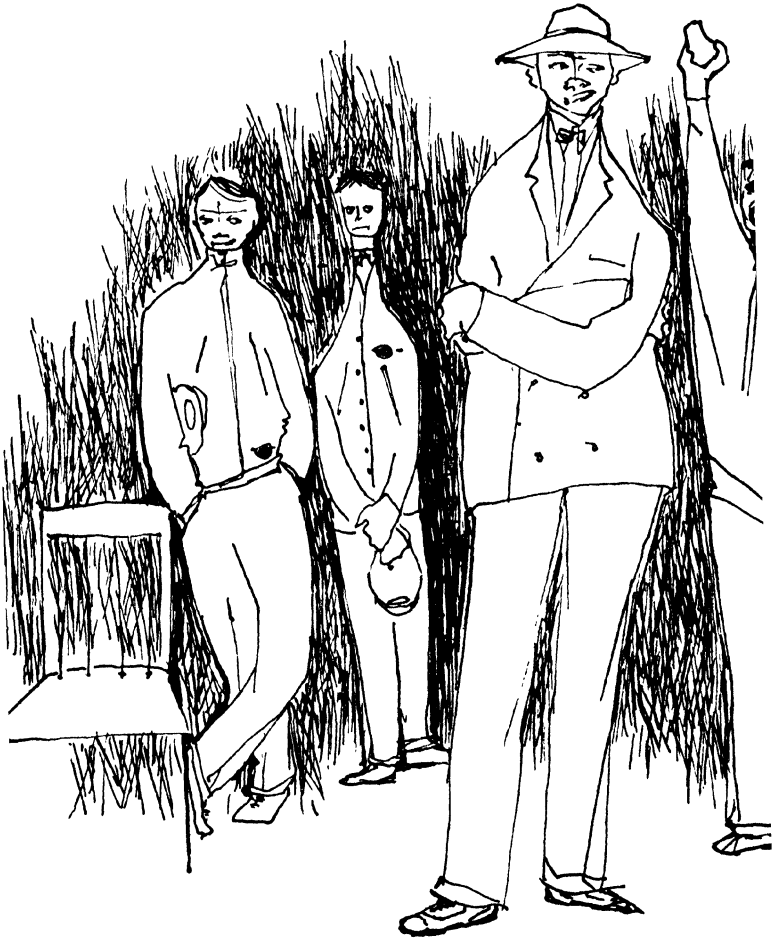
WAITING FOR LEFTY

The proletarian playwrights who flourished in the depression-ridden thirties exploited most of the prevailing dramatic styles. Naturalism took on a new grimness in shocking pictures of the poverty of the workers, the degenerate idleness of the upper classes, and the sadistic cruelty of the fascist overlords in Europe. Expressionism, which had proved an effective means of generalizing group traits for satire, was invoked for slanted interpretations of the class struggle through highly simplified representatives of the various social strata.

The two styles are fused in *Waiting for Lefty* with great dramatic power. The series of brief episodes which suggest by a flashback technique reminiscent of the movies the various backgrounds of the desperate men who might be reduced to driving taxis during an economic depression reveal in their titles the purely symbolic nature of the characters. The heroes may for convenience be named Miller and Philips, but they are really a lab assistant and a young actor; they are of the beloved "masses." And the villains include that species of rat, the labor spy, and the supreme ogre called vaguely "an industrialist."

These severely typed characters take part in no plot of a conventional kind, but a visualized speech from Union Square. The pungent staccato dialogue and the use of the committee as a kind of Greek chorus in the background produce a stylized impression. And the highly original staging, with actors planted in the audience and emphatic lighting on a bare stage to replace realistic scenery, suggests the expressionistic manner unmistakably. Yet the characters and the things they do are also anchored to reality and the lives of those whom the play is intended to persuade. The cross section of proletarian, professional, and artistic classes is designed to appeal to all persecuted victims of the economic aristocracy.

Like all propaganda plays, *Waiting for Lefty* takes a purely pragmatic view of the facts as well as of dramatic styles: everything is chosen with the one purpose of dramatizing the author's message most effectively. There is nothing literally true about the picture of life in this tense little drama. It reduces all the problems of living—self-respect, happiness in love and marriage, professional integrity, artistic expression—to the single issue of economic security, and guarantees a simple solution in eliminating the one villain in the piece, the capitalist system. It is an agitational tract, written with burning conviction but an airy indifference to the whole truth. Its honesty lies in its frankness, not in any fairness or objectivity. If it is true, its truth resides on the higher plane of theory, not in a faithful recording of all the information we need in order to reach an unbiased conclusion. Odets has chosen his instances to suit his case and stacked the cards with savage cynicism. Not a taint of evil infects the downtrodden workers and their good-hearted wives and sweethearts, who ask only the security of a decent wage to maintain happiness and self-respect. Not a shred of worth is left to the industrialist, who is generating a new world war for personal gain, nor to the theatrical producer, whose sole concern beyond his pocketbook is for the health of his





Russian wolfhound. In a time of universal depression the upper classes remain completely immune to the tribulations of the lower.

"Fatt, of course, represents the capitalist system," says Odets in a revealing comment on his play. "The audience should constantly be kept aware of him, the ugly menace which hangs over the lives of all the people who act out their own dramas. . . . In the climaxes of each scene, slogans might very effectively be used—a voice coming out of the dark. Such a voice might announce at the appropriate moment in the 'Young Interne's' scene that the USSR is the only country in the world where anti-Semitism is a crime against the State. Do not hesitate to use music wherever possible. It is very valuable in emotionally stirring an audience." This passage reveals the free inspirational style in which the play was conceived and is to be staged, and reminds us that Odets wrote it almost at one sitting. But it reveals even more the purpose of the propagandist to appeal to the heart and the blood pressure of his audience, not to its reason. If the cause is right, any means is fair.

Waiting for Lefty is a young man's play, full of the swagger and self-assurance of youth. Its picture of life is naive, its world very limited, and its philosophy blissfully simple and cocksure. The characters whom Odets likes here are nearly all young and full of hope and idealism. The brisk, smart-aleck quality of the dialogue, crammed with tough-guy metaphors which pelt the audience without relief, is a style that has become an enduring trademark with Odets, but it too has the brash arrogance of youth. It often shocks for the sake of shocking, and old-fashioned critics might find some of it in questionable taste. But it makes its point, as does everything else about this fiery little pamphlet. Odets was to go on to a more truthful delineation of life and a more searching study of people in his later plays, as he was somewhat sobered by age and success in Hollywood, but in this youthful *tour de force* he put together the definitive specimen of the whole proletarian drama in America.

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CLIFFORD ODETS

WAITING FOR LEFTY

CHARACTERS

Fatt
Joe
Edna
Miller
Fayette
Irv
Florrie
Sid
Clayton
Agate Keller
Henchman
Secretary
Actor
Reilly
Dr. Barnes
Dr. Benjamin
A Man
Voices

As the curtain goes up we see a bare stage. On it are sitting six or seven men in a semicircle. Lolling against the proscenium down left is a young man chewing a toothpick: a gunman. A fat man of porcine appearance is talking directly to the audience. In other words he is the head of a union and the men ranged behind him are a committee of workers. They are now seated in interesting different attitudes and present a wide diversity of type, as we shall soon see. The fat man is hot and heavy under the collar, near the end of a long talk, but not too hot: he is well fed and confident. His name is HARRY FATT.

FATT. You're so wrong I ain't laughing. Any guy with eyes to read knows it. Look at the textile strike—out like lions and in like

lambs. Take the San Francisco tie-up—starvation and broken heads. The steel boys wanted to walk out too, but they changed their minds. It's the trend of the times, that's what it is. All we workers got a good man behind us now. He's top man of the country—looking out for our interests—the man in the White House[1] is the one I'm referrin' to. That's why the times ain't ripe for a strike. He's working day and night—

VOICE [*from the audience*]. For who?

[*The* GUNMAN[2] *stirs himself.*]

FATT. For you! The records prove it. If this was the Hoover régime, would I say don't go out, boys? Not on your tintype! But things is different now. You read the papers as well as me. You know it. And that's why I'm against the strike. Because we gotta stand behind the man who's standin' behind us! The whole country—

ANOTHER VOICE. Is on the blink!

[*The* GUNMAN *looks grave.*]

FATT. Stand up and show yourself, you damn red! Be a man, let's see what you look like! [*Waits in vain*] Yellow from the word go! Red and yellow makes a dirty color, boys. I got my eyes on four or five of them in the union here. What the hell'll they do for you? Pull you out[3] and run away when trouble starts. Give those birds a chance and they'll have your sisters and wives in the whore houses, like they done in Russia. They'll tear Christ off his bleeding cross. They'll wreck your homes and throw your babies in the river. You think that's bunk? Read the papers! Now listen, we can't stay here all night. I gave you the facts in the case. You boys got hot suppers to go to and—

ANOTHER VOICE. Says you!

GUNMAN. Sit down, Punk!

ANOTHER VOICE. Where's Lefty?[4]

[*Now this question is taken up by the others in unison.* FATT *pounds with gavel.*]

[1] ***man in the White House.*** *The skepticism of President Roosevelt's program that is expressed in this scene suggests the impatience of the extreme Left with a liberal policy which would forestall their own program of direct action.*

[2] ***Gunman.*** *The officials of many unions of the time employed gangster tactics to maintain their control of the union and its members.*

[3] ***Pull you out,*** *i.e., lead you out on strike.*

[4] ***Lefty,*** *a suggestive name planted early in the play, becomes a leitmotiv leading to the climax.*

FATT. That's what I wanna know. Where's your pal, Lefty? You elected him chairman—where the hell did he disappear?

VOICES. We want Lefty! Lefty! Lefty!

FATT [*pounding*]. What the hell is this—a circus? You got the committee here. This bunch of cowboys you elected. [*Pointing to man on extreme right end*]

MAN. Benjamin.

FATT. Yeah. Doc Benjamin. [*Pointing to other men in circle in seated order*] Benjamin, Miller, Stein, Mitchell, Phillips, Keller. It ain't my fault Lefty took a run-out powder. If you guys—

A GOOD VOICE. What's the committee say?

OTHERS. The committee! Let's hear from the committee!

[FATT *tries to quiet the crowd, but one of the seated men suddenly comes to the front. The* GUNMAN *moves over to center stage, but* FATT *says*]

FATT. Sure, let him talk. Let's hear what the red boys gotta say!

[*Various shouts are coming from the audience.* FATT *insolently goes back to his seat in the middle of the circle. He sits on his raised platform and relights his cigar. The* GUNMAN *goes back to his post.* JOE, *the new speaker, raises his hand for quiet. Gets it quickly. He is sore.*]

JOE. You boys know me. I ain't a red boy one bit! Here I'm carryin' a shrapnel that big I picked up in the war. And maybe I don't know it when it rains! Don't tell me red! You know what we are? The black and blue boys! We been kicked around so long we're black and blue from head to toes. But I guess anyone who says straight out he don't like it, he's a red boy to the leaders of the union. What's this crap about goin' home to hot suppers? I'm asking to your faces how many's got hot suppers to go home to? Anyone who's sure of his next meal, raise your hand! A certain gent sitting behind me can raise them both. But not in front here! And that's why we're talking strike—to get a living wage!

VOICE. Where's Lefty?

JOE. I honest to God don't know, but he didn't take no run-out powder. That Wop's got more guts than a slaughterhouse. Maybe a traffic jam got him, but he'll be here. But don't let this red stuff scare you. Unless fighting for a living scares you. We gotta make up our minds. My wife made up my mind last week, if you want the truth. It's plain as the nose on Sol Feinberg's face we need a strike. There's us comin' home every night—eight, ten hours on the cab. "God," the wife says, "eighty cents ain't money—don't

buy beans almost. You're workin' for the company," she says to me, "Joe! you ain't workin' for me or the family no more!" She says to me, "If you don't start. . . ."

1. joe and edna

The lights fade out and a white spot picks out the playing space within the space of seated men. The seated men are very dimly visible in the outer dark, but more prominent is FATT *smoking his cigar and often blowing the smoke in the lighted circle.*[1]

A tired but attractive woman of thirty comes into the room, drying her hands on an apron. She stands there sullenly as JOE *comes in from the other side, home from work. For a moment they stand and look at each other in silence.*

JOE. Where's all the furniture, honey?

EDNA. They[2] took it away. No installments paid.

JOE. When?

EDNA. Three o'clock.

JOE. They can't do that.

EDNA. Can't? They did it.

JOE. Why, the palookas, we paid three-quarters.

EDNA. The man said read the contract.

JOE. We must have signed a phony. . . .

EDNA. It's a regular contract and you signed it.

JOE. Don't be so sour, Edna. . . . [*Tries to embrace her*]

EDNA. Do it in the movies, Joe—they pay Clark Gable big money for it.

JOE. This is a helluva house to come home to. Take my word!

EDNA. Take MY word! Whose fault is it?

JOE. Must you start that stuff again?

EDNA. Maybe you'd like to talk about books?

[1] ***The lights. . . . circle.*** *The retention of the background characters who frame the flashback episodes represents visually the interrelationship of the two time levels. Fatt's cigar, which cuts across the levels, symbolizes his selfish prosperity through his sinister power over the others.*

[2] ***They.*** *The matter-of-fact assumption of class struggle is embodied in the ubiquitous "they" (as opposed, of course, to "we"), whom Edna does not have to identify further.*

JOE. I'd like to slap you in the mouth!

EDNA. No you won't.

JOE [*sheepish*]. Jeez, Edna, you get me sore some time. . . .

EDNA. But just look at me—I'm laughing all over!

JOE. Don't insult me. Can I help it if times are bad? What the hell do you want me to do, jump off a bridge or something?

EDNA. Don't yell. I just put the kids to bed so they won't know they missed a meal. If I don't have Emmy's shoes soled tomorrow, she can't go to school. In the meantime let her sleep.

JOE. Honey, I rode the wheels off the chariot today. I cruised around five hours without a call. It's conditions.

EDNA. Tell it to the A & P!

JOE. I booked two-twenty on the clock. A lady with a dog was lit . . . she gave me a quarter tip by mistake. If you'd only listen to me—we're rolling in wealth.

EDNA. Yeah? How much?

JOE. I had "coffee and—" in a beanery. [*Hands her silver coins*] A buck four.

EDNA. The second month's rent is due tomorrow.

JOE. Don't look at me that way, Edna.

EDNA. I'm looking through you, not at you. . . . Everything was gonna be so ducky! A cottage by the waterfall, roses in Picardy. You're a four-star bust! If you think I'm standing for it much longer, you're crazy as a bedbug.

JOE. I'd get another job if I could. There's no work—you know it.

EDNA. I only know we're at the bottom of the ocean.

JOE. What can I do?

EDNA. Who's the man in the family, you or me?

JOE. That's no answer. Get down to brass tacks. Christ, gimme a break, too! A coffee cake and java all day. I'm hungry, too, Babe. I'd work my fingers to the bone if—

EDNA. I'll open a can of salmon.

JOE. Not now. Tell me what to do!

EDNA. I'm not God!

JOE. Jeez, I wish I was a kid again and didn't have to think about the next minute.

EDNA. But you're not a kid and you do have to think about the next minute. You got two blondie kids sleeping in the next room. They need food and clothes. I'm not mentioning anything else—But we're stalled like a flivver in the snow. For five years I laid

awake at night listening to my heart pound. For God's sake, do something, Joe, get wise. Maybe get your buddies together, maybe go on strike for better money. Poppa did it during the war and they won out. I'm turning into a sour old nag.

JOE [*defending himself*]. Strikes don't work!

EDNA. Who told you?

JOE. Besides that means not a nickel a week while we're out. Then when it's over they don't take you back.

EDNA. Suppose they don't! What's to lose?

JOE. Well, we're averaging six-seven dollars a week now.

EDNA. That just pays for the rent.

JOE. That is something, Edna.

EDNA. It isn't. They'll push you down to three and four a week before you know it. Then you'll say, "That's somethin'," too!

JOE. There's too many cabs on the street, that's the whole damn trouble.

EDNA. Let the company worry about that, you big fool! If their cabs didn't make a profit, they'd take them off the streets. Or maybe you think they're in business just to pay Joe Mitchell's rent!

JOE. You don't know a-b-c, Edna.

EDNA. I know this—your boss is making suckers outa you boys every minute. Yes, and suckers out of all the wives and the poor innocent kids who'll grow up with crooked spines and sick bones. Sure, I see it in the papers, how good orange juice is for kids. But dammit our kids get colds one on top of the other. They look like little ghosts. Betty never saw a grapefruit. I took her to the store last week and she pointed to a stack of grapefruits. "What's that!" she said. My God, Joe—the world is supposed to be for all of us.

JOE. You'll wake them up.

EDNA. I don't care, as long as I can maybe wake you up.

JOE. Don't insult me. One man can't make a strike.

EDNA. Who says one? You got hundreds in your rotten union!

JOE. The union ain't rotten.

EDNA. No? Then what are they doing? Collecting dues and patting your back?

JOE. They're making plans.

EDNA. What kind?

JOE. They don't tell us.

EDNA. It's too damn bad about you. They don't tell little Joey what's happening in his bitsie witsie union. What do you think it is—a ping pong game?

JOE. You know they're racketeers. The guys at the top would shoot you for a nickel.

EDNA. Why do you stand for that stuff?

JOE. Don't you wanna see me alive?

EDNA [*after a deep pause*]. No . . . I don't think I do, Joe. Not if you can lift a finger to do something about it, and don't. No, I don't care.

JOE. Honey, you don't understand what—

EDNA. And any other hackie that won't fight . . . let them all be ground to hamburger!

JOE. It's one thing to—

EDNA. Take your hand away! Only they don't grind me to little pieces! I got different plans. [*Starts to take off her apron*]

JOE. Where are you going?

EDNA. None of your business.

JOE. What's up your sleeve?

EDNA. My arm'd be up my sleeve, darling, if I had a sleeve to wear. [*Puts neatly folded apron on back of chair*]

JOE. Tell me!

EDNA. Tell you what?

JOE. Where are you going?

EDNA. Don't you remember my old boy friend?

JOE. Who?

EDNA. Bud Haas. He still has my picture in his watch. He earns a living.

JOE. What the hell are you talking about?

EDNA. I heard worse than I'm talking about.

JOE. Have you seen Bud since we got married?

EDNA. Maybe.

JOE. If I thought. . . . [*He stands looking at her.*]

EDNA. See much? Listen, boy friend, if you think I won't do this it just means you can't see straight.

JOE. Stop talking bull!

EDNA. This isn't five years ago, Joe.

JOE. You mean you'd leave me and the kids?

EDNA. I'd leave *you* like a shot!

JOE. No. . . .

EDNA. Yes!

[JOE *turns away, sitting in a chair with his back to her. Outside the lighted circle of the playing stage we hear the other seated members of the strike committee. "She will . . . she*

will . . . it happens that way," etc. This group should be used throughout for various comments, political, emotional and as general chorus. Whispering. . . . The fat boss now blows a heavy cloud of smoke into the scene.]

JOE [*finally*]. Well, I guess I ain't got a leg to stand on.

EDNA. No?

JOE [*suddenly mad*]. No, you lousy tart, no! Get the hell out of here. Go pick up that bull-thrower on the corner and stop at some cushy hotel downtown. He's probably been coming here every morning and laying you while I hacked my guts out!

EDNA. You're crawling like a worm!

JOE. You'll be crawling in a minute.

EDNA. You don't scare me that much! [*Indicates a half inch on her finger*]

JOE. This is what I slaved for!

EDNA. Tell it to your boss!

JOE. He don't give a damn for you or me!

EDNA. That's what I say.

JOE. Don't change the subject!

EDNA. This is the subject, the EXACT SUBJECT! Your boss makes this subject. I never saw him in my life, but he's putting ideas in my head a mile a minute. He's giving your kids that fancy disease called the rickets. He's making a jellyfish outa you and putting wrinkles in my face. This is the subject every inch of the way! He's throwing me into Bud Haas' lap. When in hell will you get wise—

JOE. I'm not so dumb as you think! But you are talking like a Red.

EDNA. I don't know what that means. But when a man knocks you down you get up and kiss his fist! You gutless piece of baloney.

JOE. One man can't—

EDNA [*with great joy*]. I don't say one man! I say a hundred, a thousand, a whole million, I say. But start in your own union. Get those hack boys together! Sweep out those racketeers like a pile of dirt! Stand up like men and fight for the crying kids and wives. God damn it! I'm tired of slavery and sleepless nights.

JOE [*with her*]. Sure, sure! . . .

EDNA. Yes. Get brass toes on your shoes and know where to kick!

JOE [*suddenly jumping up and kissing his wife full on the mouth*]. Listen, Edna. I'm goin' down to 174th Street to look up

Lefty Costello. Lefty was saying the other day . . . [*He suddenly stops.*] How about this Haas guy?

EDNA. Get out of here!

JOE. I'll be back! [*Runs out*]

[*For a moment* EDNA *stands triumphant.*]

[*There is a blackout and when the regular lights come up,* JOE MITCHELL *is concluding what he has been saying.*]

JOE. You guys know this stuff better than me. We gotta walk out! [*Abruptly he turns and goes back to his seat and blackout*]

2. *lab assistant episode*

Discovered: MILLER, *a lab assistant, looking around; and* FAYETTE, *an industrialist.*

FAY. Like it?

MILLER. Very much. I've never seen an office like this outside the movies.

FAY. Yes, I often wonder if interior decorators and bathroom fixture people don't get all their ideas from Hollywood. Our country's extraordinary that way. Soap, cosmetics, electric refrigerators —just let Mrs. Consumer know they're used by the Crawfords and Garbos—more volume of sale than one plant can handle!

MILL. I'm afraid it isn't that easy, Mr. Fayette.

FAY. No, you're right—gross exaggeration on my part. Competition is cutthroat today. Markets up flush against a stone wall. The astronomers had better hurry—open Mars to trade expansion.

MILL. Or it will be just too bad!

FAY. Cigar?

MILL. Thank you, don't smoke.

FAY. Drink?

MILL. Ditto, Mr. Fayette.

FAY. I like sobriety in my workers . . . the trained ones, I mean. The Pollacks and niggers, they're better drunk—keeps them out of mischief. Wondering why I had you come over?

MILL. If you don't mind my saying—very much.

FAY [*patting him on the knee*]. I like your work.

MILL. Thanks.

FAY. No reason why a talented young man like yourself shouldn't

string along with us—a growing concern. Loyalty is well repaid in our organization. Did you see Siegfried this morning?

MILL. He hasn't been in the laboratory all day.

FAY. I told him yesterday to raise you twenty dollars a month. Starts this week.

MILL. You don't know how happy my wife'll be.

FAY. Oh, I can appreciate it. [*He laughs.*]

MILL. Was that all, Mr. Fayette?

FAY. Yes, except that we're switching you to laboratory A tomorrow. Siegfried knows about it. That's why I had you in. The new work is very important. Siegfried recommended you very highly as a man to trust. You'll work directly under Dr. Brenner. Make you happy?

MILL. Very. He's an important chemist!

FAY [*leaning over seriously*]. We think so, Miller. We think so to the extent of asking you to stay within the building throughout the time you work with him.

MILL. You mean sleep and eat in?

FAY. Yes. . . .

MILL. It can be arranged.

FAY. Fine. You'll go far, Miller.

MILL. May I ask the nature of the new work?

FAY [*looking around first*]. Poison gas. . . .

MILL. Poison!

FAY. Orders from above. I don't have to tell you from where. New type poison gas for modern warfare.

MILL. I see.

FAY. You didn't know a new war was that close, did you?

MILL. I guess I didn't.

FAY. I don't have to stress the importance of absolute secrecy.

MILL. I understand!

FAY. The world is an armed camp today. One match sets the whole world blazing in forty-eight hours. Uncle Sam won't be caught napping!

MILL [*addressing his pencil*]. They say 12 million men were killed in that last one and 20 million more wounded or missing.

FAY. That's not our worry. If big business went sentimental over human life there wouldn't be big business of any sort!

MILL. My brother and two cousins went in the last one.

FAY. They died in a good cause.

MILL. My mother says "no!"

FAY. She won't worry about you this time. You're too valuable behind the front.

MILL. That's right.

FAY. All right, Miller. See Siegfried for further orders.

MILL. You should have seen my brother—he could ride a bike without hands. . . .

FAY. You'd better move some clothes and shaving tools in tomorrow. Remember what I said—you're with a growing organization.

MILL. He could run the hundred yards in 9:8 flat.

FAY. Who?

MILL. My brother. He's in the Meuse-Argonne Cemetery. Mamma went there in 1926. . . .

FAY. Yes, those things stick. How's your handwriting, Miller, fairly legible?

MILL. Fairly so.

FAY. Once a week I'd like a little report from you.

MILL. What sort of report?

FAY. Just a few hundred words once a week on Dr. Brenner's progress.

MILL. Don't you think it might be better coming from the Doctor?

FAY. I didn't ask you that.

MILL. Sorry.

FAY. I want to know what progress he's making, the reports to be purely confidential—between you and me.

MILL. You mean I'm to watch him?

FAY. Yes!

MILL. I guess I can't do that. . . .

FAY. Thirty a month raise. . . .

MILL. You said twenty. . . .

FAY. Thirty!

MILL. Guess I'm not built that way.

FAY. Forty. . . .

MILL. Spying's not in my line, Mr. Fayette!

FAY. You use ugly words, Mr. Miller!

MILL. For ugly activity? Yes!

FAY. Think about it, Miller. Your chances are excellent. . . .

MILL. No.

FAY. You're doing something for your country. Assuring the United States that when those God-damn Japs start a ruckus we'll

have offensive weapons to back us up! Don't you read your newspapers, Miller?

MILL. Nothing but Andy Gump.

FAY. If you were on the inside you'd know I'm talking cold sober truth! Now, I'm not asking you to make up your mind on the spot. Think about it over your lunch period.

MILL. No. . . .

FAY. Made up your mind already?

MILL. Afraid so.

FAY. You understand the consequences?

MILL. I lose my raise—

MILL. And my job!
FAY. And your job!
MILL. You misunderstand—
Simultaneously

MILL. Rather dig ditches first!

FAY. That's a job for foreigners.

MILL. But sneaking—and making poison gas—that's for Americans?

FAY. It's up to you.

MILL. My mind's made up.

FAY. No hard feelings?

MILL. Sure hard feelings! I'm not the civilized type, Mr. Fayette. Nothing suave or sophisticated about me. Plenty of hard feelings! Enough to want to bust you and all your kind square in the mouth! [*Does exactly that*]

BLACKOUT

3. *the young hack and his girl*

Opens with girl and brother. FLORENCE *waiting for* SID *to take her to a dance.*

FLOR. I gotta right to have something out of life. I don't smoke, I don't drink. So if Sid wants to take me to a dance, I'll go. Maybe if you was in love you wouldn't talk so hard.

IRV. I'm saying it for your good.

FLOR. Don't be so good to me.

IRV. Mom's sick in bed and you'll be worryin' her to the grave.

She don't want that boy hanging around the house and she don't want you meeting him in Crotona Park.

FLOR. I'll meet him anytime I like!

IRV. If you do, yours truly'll take care of it in his own way. With just one hand, too!

FLOR. Why are you all so set against him?

IRV. Mom told you ten times—it ain't him. It's that he ain't got nothing. Sure, we know he's serious, that he's stuck on you. But that don't cut no ice.

FLOR. Taxi drivers used to make good money.

IRV. Today they're makin' five and six dollars a week. Maybe you wanta raise a family on that. Then you'll be back here living with us again and I'll be supporting two families in one. Well . . . over my dead body.

FLOR. Irv, I don't care— I love him!

IRV. You're a little kid with half-baked ideas!

FLOR. I stand there behind the counter the whole day. I think about him—

IRV. If you thought more about Mom it would be better.

FLOR. Don't I take care of her every night when I come home? Don't I cook supper and iron your shirts and . . . you give me a pain in the neck, too. Don't try to shut me up! I bring a few dollars in the house, too. Don't you see I want something else out of life. Sure, I want romance, love, babies. I want everything in life I can get.

IRV. You take care of Mom and watch your step!

FLOR. And if I don't?

IRV. Yours truly'll watch it for you!

FLOR. You can talk that way to a girl. . . .

IRV. I'll talk that way to your boy friend, too, and it won't be with words! Florrie, if you had a pair of eyes you'd see it's for your own good we're talking. This ain't no time to get married. Maybe later—

FLOR. "Maybe Later" never comes for me, though. Why don't we send Mom to a hospital? She can die in peace there instead of looking at the clock on the mantelpiece all day.

IRV. That needs money. Which we don't have!

FLOR. Money, Money, Money!

IRV. Don't change the subject.

FLOR. This is the subject!

IRV. You gonna stop seeing him? [*She turns away.*] Jesus, kiddie, I remember when you were a baby with curls down your back. Now I gotta stand here yellin' at you like this.

FLOR. I'll talk to him, Irv.

IRV. When?

FLOR. I asked him to come here tonight. We'll talk it over.

IRV. Don't get soft with him. Nowadays is no time to be soft. You gotta be hard as a rock or go under.

FLOR. I found that out. There's the bell. Take the egg off the stove I boiled for Mom. Leave us alone, Irv.

[SID *comes in—the two men look at each other for a second.* IRV *exits.*]

SID [*enters*]. Hello, Florrie.

FLOR. Hello, Honey. You're looking tired.

SID. Naw, I just need a shave.

FLOR. Well, draw your chair up to the fire and I'll ring for brandy and soda . . . like in the movies.

SID. If this was the movies I'd bring a big bunch of roses.

FLOR. How big?

SID. Fifty or sixty dozen—the kind with long, long stems—big as that. . . .

FLOR. You dope. . . .

SID. Your Paris gown is beautiful.

FLOR [*acting grandly*]. Yes, Percy, velvet panels are coming back again. Madame La Farge told me today that Queen Marie[1] herself designed it.

SID. Gee . . . !

FLOR. Every princess in the Balkans is wearing one like this. [*Poses grandly*]

SID. Hold it. [*Does a nose camera—thumbing nose and imitating grinding of camera with other hand. Suddenly she falls out of the posture and swiftly goes to him, to embrace him, to kiss him with love. Finally*]

SID. You look tired, Florrie.

FLOR. Naw, I just need a shave. [*She laughs tremorously.*]

SID. You worried about your mother?

FLOR. No.

SID. What's on your mind?

[1] ***Queen Marie,*** *of Rumania, had recently made a highly publicized tour of America, from which she profited by endorsing beauty products and writing a women's column.*

FLOR. The French and Indian War.

SID. What's on your mind?

FLOR. I got us on my mind, Sid. Night and day, Sid!

SID. I smacked a beer truck today. Did I get hell! I was driving along thinking of US, too. You don't have to say it—I know what's on your mind. I'm rat poison around here.

FLOR. Not to me. . . .

SID. I know to who . . . and I know why. I don't blame them. We're engaged now for three years. . . .

FLOR. That's a long time. . . .

SID. My brother Sam joined the navy this morning—get a break that way. They'll send him down to Cuba with the hootchy-kootchy girls. He don't know from nothing, that dumb basketball player!

FLOR. Don't you do that.

SID. Don't you worry, I'm not the kind who runs away. But I'm so tired of being a dog, Baby, I could choke. I don't even have to ask what's going on in your mind. I know from the word go, 'cause I'm thinking the same things, too.

FLOR. It's yes or no—nothing in between.

SID. The answer is no—a big electric sign looking down on Broadway!

FLOR. We wanted to have kids. . . .

SID. But that sort of life ain't for the dogs which is us. Christ, Baby! I get like thunder in my chest when we're together. If we went off together I could maybe look the world straight in the face, spit in its eye like a man should do. God damn it, it's trying to be a man on the earth. Two in life together.

FLOR. But something wants us to be lonely like that—crawling alone in the dark. Or they want us trapped.

SID. Sure, the big shot money men want us like that.

FLOR. Highly insulting us—

SID. Keeping us in the dark about what is wrong with us in the money sense. They got the power and mean to be damn sure they keep it. They know if they give in just an inch, all the dogs like us will be down on them together—an ocean knocking them to hell and back and each singing cuckoo with stars coming from their nose and ears. I'm not raving, Florrie—

FLOR. I know you're not, I know.

SID. I don't have the words to tell you what I feel. I never finished school. . . .

FLOR. I know . . .

SID. But it's relative, like the professors say. We worked like hell to send him to college—my kid brother Sam, I mean—and look what he done—joined the navy! The damn fool don't see the cards is stacked for all of us. The money man dealing himself a hot royal flush. Then giving you and me a phony hand like a pair of tens or something. Then keep on losing the pots 'cause the cards is stacked against you. Then he says, what's the matter you can't win—no stuff on the ball, he says to you. And kids like my brother believe it 'cause they don't know better. For all their education, they don't know from nothing. But wait a minute! Don't he come around and say to you—this millionaire with a jazz band—listen, Sam or Sid or what's-your-name, you're no good, but here's a chance. The whole world'll know who you are. Yes, sir, he says, get up on that ship and fight those bastards who's making the world a lousy place to live in. The Japs, the Turks, the Greeks. Take this gun—kill the slobs like a real hero, he says, a real American. Be a hero! And the guy you're poking at? A real louse, just like you, 'cause they don't let him catch more than a pair of tens, too. On that foreign soil he's a guy like me and Sam, a guy who wants his baby like you and hot sun on his face! They'll teach Sam to point the guns the wrong way, that dumb basketball player!

FLOR. I got a lump in my throat, Honey.

SID. You and me—we never even had a room to sit in somewhere.

FLOR. The park was nice . . .

SID. In Winter? The hallways . . . I'm glad we never got together. This way we don't know what we missed.

FLOR [*in a burst*]. Sid, I'll go with you—we'll get a room somewhere.

SID. Naw . . . they're right. If we can't climb higher than this together—we better stay apart.

FLOR. I swear to God I wouldn't care.

SID. You would, you would—in a year, two years, you'd curse the day. I seen it happen.

FLOR. Oh, Sid. . . .

SID. Sure, I know. We got the blues, Babe—the 1935 blues. I'm talkin' this way 'cause I love you. If I didn't, I wouldn't care. . . .

FLOR. We'll work together, we'll—

SID. How about the backwash? Your family needs your nine bucks. My family—

FLOR. I don't care for them!

SID. You're making it up, Florrie. Little Florrie Canary in a cage.

FLOR. Don't make fun of me.

SID. I'm not, Baby.

FLOR. Yes, you're laughing at me.

SID. I'm not.

[*They stand looking at each other, unable to speak. Finally, he turns to a small portable phonograph and plays a cheap, sad, dance tune. He makes a motion with his hand; she comes to him. They begin to dance slowly. They hold each other tightly, almost as though they would merge into each other. The music stops, but the scratching record continues to the end of the scene. They stop dancing. He finally unlooses her clutch and seats her on the couch, where she sits, tense and expectant.*]

SID. Hello, Babe.

FLOR. Hello. [*For a brief time they stand as though in a dream.*]

SID [*finally*]. Good-by, Babe. [*He waits for an answer, but she is silent. They look at each other.*]

SID. Did you ever see my Pat Rooney[1] imitation? [*He whistles "Rosy O'Grady" and soft-shoes to it. Stops. He asks*]

SID. Don't you like it?

FLOR [*finally*]. No. [*Buries her face in her hands*]

[*Suddenly he falls on his knees and buries his face in her lap.*]

BLACKOUT

4. labor spy episode

FATT. You don't know how we work for you. Shooting off your mouth won't help. Hell, don't you guys ever look at the records like me? Look in your own industry. See what happened when the hacks walked out in Philly three months ago! Where's Philly? A thousand miles away? An hour's ride on the train.

VOICE. Two hours!

FATT. Two hours . . . what the hell's the difference. Let's hear from someone who's got the practical experience to back him up. Fellers, there's a man here who's seen the whole parade in Philly,

[1] ***Pat Rooney**, an old-time Irish-American dancer in musical comedies.*

walked out with his pals, got knocked down like the rest—and blacklisted after they went back. That's why he's here. He's got a mighty interestin' word to say. [*Announces*] TOM CLAYTON! [*As* CLAYTON *starts up from the audience,* FATT *gives him a hand which is sparsely followed in the audience.* CLAYTON *comes forward.*] Fellers, this is a man with practical strike experience— Tom Clayton from little ole Philly.

CLAYTON [*a thin, modest individual*]. Fellers, I don't mind your booing. If I thought it would help us hacks get better living conditions, I'd let you walk all over me, cut me up to little pieces. I'm one of you myself. But what I wanna say is that Harry Fatt's right. I only been working here in the big town five weeks, but I know conditions just like the rest of you. You know how it is—don't take long to feel the sore spots, no matter where you park.

CLEAR VOICE [*from audience*]. Sit down!

CLAYTON. But Fatt's right. Our officers is right. The time ain't ripe. Like a fruit don't fall off the tree until it's ripe.

CLEAR VOICE. Sit down, you fruit!

FATT [*on his feet*]. Take care of him, boys.

VOICE [*in audience, struggling*]. No one takes care of me.

[*Struggle in house and finally the owner of the voice runs up on stage, says to speaker*]

SAME VOICE. Where the hell did you pick up that name? Clayton! This rat's name is Clancy, from the old Clancys, way back! Fruit! I almost wet myself listening to that one!

FATT [*gunmen with him*]. This ain't a barn! What the hell do you think you're doing here?

SAME VOICE. Exposing a rat!

FATT. You can't get away with this. Throw him the hell outa here.

VOICE [*preparing to stand his ground*]. Try it yourself. . . . When this bozo throws that slop around. You know who he is? That's a company spy.

FATT. Who the hell are you to make—

VOICE. I paid dues in this union for four years, that's who's me! I gotta right and this pussy-footed rat ain't coming in here with ideals like that. You know his record. Lemme say it out—

FATT. You'll prove all this or I'll bust you in every hack outfit in town!

VOICE. I gotta right. I gotta right. Looka *him*, he don't say boo!

CLAYTON. You're a liar and I never seen you before in my life.

VOICE. Boys, he spent two years in the coal fields breaking up any organization he touched. Fifty guys he put in jail. He's ranged up and down the east coast—shipping, textiles, steel—he's been in everything you can name. Right now—

CLAYTON. That's a lie!

VOICE. Right now he's working for that Bergman outfit on Columbus Circle who furnishes rats for any outfit in the country before, during, and after strikes.

[*The man who is the hero of the next episode goes down to his side with other committee men.*]

CLAYTON. He's trying to break up the meeting, fellers!

VOICE. We won't search you for credentials. . . .

CLAYTON. I got nothing to hide. Your own secretary knows I'm straight.

VOICE. Sure. Boys, you know who this sonovabitch is?

CLAYTON. I never seen you before in my life!!

VOICE. Boys, I slept with him in the same bed sixteen years. HE'S MY OWN LOUSY BROTHER!!

FATT [*after a pause*]. Is this true?

[*No answer from* CLAYTON]

VOICE [*to* CLAYTON]. Scram, before I break your neck!

[CLAYTON *scrams down center aisle.*]

VOICE [*watching him*]. Remember his map—he can't change that—Clancy! [*Standing in his place*] Too bad you didn't know about this, Fatt! [*After a pause*] The Clancy family tree is bearing nuts!

[*Standing isolated clear on the stage is the hero of the next episode.*]

BLACKOUT

5. *the young actor*

A New York theatrical producer's office. Present are a stenographer and a young actor. She is busy typing; he, waiting with card in hand.

STEN. He's taking a hot bath . . . says you should wait.

PHILIPS. [*the actor*]. A bath did you say? Where?

STEN. See that door? Right through there—leads to his apartment.

PHIL. Through there?

STEN. Mister, he's laying there in a hot perfumed bath. Don't say I said it.

PHIL. You don't say!

STEN. An oriental den he's got. Can you just see this big Irishman burning Chinese punk in the bedroom? And a big old rose canopy over his casting couch. . . .

PHIL. What's that—casting couch?

STEN. What's that? You from the sticks?

PHIL. I beg your pardon?

STEN [*rolls up her sleeves, makes elaborate deaf and dumb signs*]. No from side walkies of New Yorkie . . . savvy?

PHIL. Oh, you're right. Two years of dramatic stock out of town. One in Chicago.

STEN. Don't tell him, Baby Face. He wouldn't know a good actor if he fell over him in the dark. Say you had two years with the Group, two with the Guild.[1]

PHIL. I'd like to get with the Guild. They say—

STEN. He won't know the difference. Don't say I said it!

PHIL. I really did play with Watson Findlay in "Early Birds."

STEN [*withering him*]. Don't tell him!

PHIL. He's a big producer, Mr. Grady. I wish I had his money. Don't you?

STEN. Say, I got a clean heart, Mister. I love my fellow man! [*About to exit with typed letters*] Stick around—Mr. Philips. You might be the type. If you were a woman—

PHIL. Please. Just a minute . . . please . . . I need the job.

STEN. Look at him!

PHIL. I mean . . . I don't know what buttons to push, and you do. What my father used to say—we had a gas station in Cleveland before the crash[2]—"Know what buttons to push," Dad used to say, "and you'll go far."

STEN. You can't push me, Mister! I don't ring right these last few years!

PHIL. We don't know where the next meal's coming from. We—

[1] ***Group . . . Guild,*** *the Group Theatre, which produced* Waiting for Lefty, *and the Theatre Guild, from which it sprang.*

[2] ***crash,*** *the Wall Street crash of 1929.*

STEN. Maybe . . . I'll lend you a dollar?

PHIL. Thanks very much: it won't help.

STEN. One of the old families of Virginia? Proud?

PHIL. Oh, not that. You see, I have a wife. We'll have our first baby next month . . . so . . . a dollar isn't much help.

STEN. Roped in?

PHIL. I love my wife!

STEN. Okay, you love her! Excuse me! You married her. Can't support her. No . . . not blaming you. But you're fools, all you actors. Old and young! Watch you parade in and out all day. You still got apples in your cheeks and pins for buttons. But in six months you'll be like them—putting on an act: Phony strutting "pishers"—that's French for dead codfish! It's not their fault. Here you get like that or go under. What kind of job is this for an adult man!

PHIL. When you have to make a living—

STEN. I know, but—

PHIL. Nothing else to do. If I could get something else—

STEN. You'd take it!

PHIL. Anything!

STEN. Telling me! With two brothers in my hair! [MR. GRADY *now enters; played by* FATT.] Mr. Brown[1] sent this young man over.

GRADY. Call the hospital: see how Boris is.

[*She assents and exits.*]

PHIL. Good morning, Mr. Grady. . . .

GRADY. The morning is lousy!

PHIL. Mr. Brown sent me. [*Hands over card*]

GRADY. I heard that once already.

PHIL. Excuse me. . . .

GRADY. What experience?

PHIL. Oh, yes. . . .

GRADY. Where?

PHIL. Two years in stock, sir. A year with the Goodman Theatre in Chicago. . . .

GRADY. That all?

PHIL [*abashed*]. Why, no . . . with the Theatre Guild . . . I was there. . . .

GRADY. Never saw you in a Guild show!

[1] *Mr. Brown, Chamberlain Brown, a well-known casting agent on Broadway.*

PHIL. On the road, I mean . . . understudying Mr. Lunt[1]. . . .

GRADY. What part? [PHILIPS *can not answer.*] You're a lousy liar, son.

PHIL. I did. . . .

GRADY. You don't look like what I want. Can't understand that Brown. Need a big man to play a soldier. Not a lousy soldier left on Broadway! All in pictures, and we get the nances! [*Turns to work on desk*]

PHIL. [*immediately playing the soldier*]. I was in the ROTC in college . . . Reserve Officers' Training Corps. We trained twice a week. . . .

GRADY. Won't help.

PHIL. With real rifles. [*Waits*] Mr. Grady, I weigh a hundred and fifty-five!

GRADY. How many years back? Been eating regular since you left college?

PHIL [*very earnestly*]. Mr. Grady, I could act this soldier part. I could build it up and act it. Make it up—

GRADY. Think I run a lousy acting school around here?

PHIL. Honest to God I could! I need the job—that's why I could do it! I'm strong. I know my business! YOU'll get an A-1 performance. Because I need this job! My wife's having a baby in a few weeks. We need the money. Give me a chance!

GRADY. What do I care if you can act it! I'm sorry about your baby. Use your head, son. Tank town stock is different. Here we got investments to be protected. When I sink fifteen thousand in a show I don't take chances on some youngster. We cast to type!

PHIL. I'm an artist! I can—

GRADY. That's your headache. Nobody interested in artists here. Get a big bunch for a nickel on any corner. Two flops in a row on this lousy street nobody loves you—only God, and He don't count. We protect investments: we cast to type. Your face and height we want, not your soul, son. And Jesus Christ himself couldn't play a soldier in this show . . . with all His talent. [*Crosses himself in quick repentance for this remark*]

PHIL. Anything . . . a bit, a walk-on?

GRADY. Sorry: small cast. [*Looking at papers on his desk*] You try Russia, son. I hear it's hot stuff over there.

[1] *Mr. Lunt, Alfred Lunt, the popular stage star, long associated with the Theatre Guild.*

PHIL. Stage manager? Assistant?

GRADY. All filled, sonny. [*Stands up; crumples several papers from the desk*] Better luck next time.

PHIL. Thanks. . . .

GRADY. Drop in from time to time. [*Crosses and about to exit*] You never know when something— [*The* STENOGRAPHER *enters with papers to put on desk.*] What did the hospital say?

STEN. He's much better, Mr. Grady.

GRADY. Resting easy?

STEN. Dr. Martel said Boris is doing even better than he expected.

GRADY. A damn lousy operation!

STEN. Yes. . . .

GRADY [*belching*]. Tell the nigger boy to send up a bromo seltzer.

STEN. Yes, Mr. Grady. [*He exits.*] Boris wanted lady friends.

PHIL. What?

STEN. So they operated . . . poor dog!

PHIL. A dog?

STEN. His Russian Wolfhound! They do the same to you, but you don't know it! [*Suddenly*] Want advice? In the next office, don't let them see you down in the mouth. They don't like it—makes them shiver.

PHIL. You treat me like a human being. Thanks. . . .

STEN. You're human!

PHIL. I used to think so.

STEN. He wants a bromo for his hangover. [*Goes to door*] Want that dollar?

PHIL. It won't help much.

STEN. One dollar buys ten loaves of bread, Mister. Or one dollar buys nine loaves of bread and one copy of The Communist Manifesto.[1] Learn while you eat. Read while you run. . . .

PHIL. Manifesto? What's that? [*Takes dollar*] What is that, what you said . . . Manifesto?

STEN. Stop off on your way out—I'll give you a copy. From Genesis to Revelation, Comrade Philips! "And I saw a new earth and a new heaven; for the first earth and the first heaven were passed away; and there was no more sea."

[1] ***The Communist Manifesto,*** *of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1847), which summarized early Communist objectives.*

PHIL. I don't understand that. . . .

STEN. I'm saying the meek shall not inherit the earth!

PHIL. No?

STEN. The MILITANT! Come out in the light, Comrade.

BLACKOUT

6. interne episode

DR. BARNES, *an elderly distinguished man, is speaking on the telephone. He wears a white coat.*

DR. BARNES. No, I gave you my opinion twice. You outvoted me. You did this to Dr. Benjamin yourself. That is why you can tell him yourself. [*Hangs up phone, angrily. As he is about to pour himself a drink from a bottle on the table, a knock is heard.*]

BARNES. Who is it?

BENJAMIN [*without*]. Can I see you a minute, please?

BARNES [*hiding the bottle*]. Come in, Dr. Benjamin, come in.

BENJ. It's important—excuse me—they've got Leeds up there in my place—He's operating on Mrs. Lewis—the hysterectomy—it's my job. I washed up, prepared . . . they told me at the last minute. I don't mind being replaced, Doctor, but Leeds is a damn fool! He shouldn't be permitted—

BARNES [*dryly*]. Leeds is the nephew of Senator Leeds.

BENJ. He's incompetent as hell.

BARNES [*obviously changing subject, picks up lab jar*]. They're doing splendid work in brain surgery these days. This is a very fine specimen. . . .

BENJ. I'm sorry, I thought you might be interested.

BARNES [*still examining jar*]. Well, I am, young man, I am! Only remember it's a charity case!

BENJ. Of course. They wouldn't allow it for a second, otherwise.

BARNES. Her life is in danger?

BENJ. Of course! You know how serious the case is!

BARNES. Turn your gimlet eyes elsewhere, Doctor. Jiggling around like a cricket on a hot grill won't help. Doctors don't run these hospitals. He's the Senator's nephew and there he stays.

BENJ. It's too bad.

BARNES. I'm not calling you down either. [*Plopping down jar suddenly*] God damn it, do you think it's my fault?

BENJ. [*about to leave*]. I know . . . I'm sorry.

BARNES. Just a minute. Sit down.

BENJ. Sorry, I can't sit.

BARNES. Stand then!

BENJ [*sits*]. Understand, Dr. Barnes, I don't mind being replaced at the last minute this way, but . . . well, this flagrant bit of class distinction—because she's poor—

BARNES. Be careful of words like that—"class distinction." Don't belong here. Lots of energy, you brilliant young men, but idiots. Discretion! Ever hear that word?

BENJ. Too radical?

BARNES. Precisely. And some day like in Germany,[1] it might cost you your head.

BENJ. Not to mention my job.

BARNES. So they told you?

BENJ. Told me what?

BARNES. They're closing Ward C next month. I don't have to tell you the hospital isn't self-supporting. Until last year that board of trustees met deficits. . . . You can guess the rest. At a board meeting Tuesday, our fine feathered friends discovered they couldn't meet the last quarter's deficit—a neat little sum well over $100,000. If the hospital is to continue at all, it's damn—

BENJ. Necessary to close another charity ward!

BARNES. So they say. . . .

[*A wait*]

BENJ. But that's not all?

BARNES [*ashamed*]. Have to cut down on staff too. . . .

BENJ. That's too bad. Does it touch me?

BARNES. Afraid it does.

BENJ. But after all I'm top man here. I don't mean I'm better than others, but I've worked harder.

BARNES. And shown more promise. . . .

BENJ. I always supposed they'd cut from the bottom first.

BARNES. Usually.

BENJ. But in this case?

BARNES. Complications.

[1] ***Germany.*** *The Nazis had come to power in 1933 and were liquidating the opposition.*

BENJ. For instance?

BARNES [*hesitant*]. I like you, Benjamin. It's one ripping shame.

BENJ. I'm no sensitive plant—what's the answer?

BARNES. An old disease, malignant, tumescent. We need an antitoxin for it.

BENJ. I see.

BARNES. What?

BENJ. I met that disease before—at Harvard first.

BARNES. You have seniority here, Benjamin.

BENJ. But I'm a Jew!

[BARNES *nods his head in agreement.* BENJ. *stands there a moment and blows his nose.*]

BARNES [*blows his nose*]. Microbes!

BENJ. Pressure from above?

BARNES. Don't think Kennedy and I didn't fight for you!

BENJ. Such discrimination, with all those wealthy brother Jews on the board?

BARNES. I've remarked before—don't seem to be much difference between wealthy Jews and rich Gentiles. Cut from the same piece!

BENJ. For myself I don't feel sorry. My parents gave up an awful lot to get me this far. They ran a little dry goods shop in the Bronx until their pitiful savings went in the crash last year. Poppa's peddling neckties. . . . Saul Ezra Benjamin—a man who's read Spinoza[1] all his life.

BARNES. Doctors don't run medicine in this country. The men who know their jobs don't run anything here, except the motormen on trolley cars. I've seen medicine change—plenty—anesthesia, sterilization—but not because of rich men—in *spite* of them! In a rich man's country your true self's buried deep. Microbes! Less. . . . Vermin! See this ankle, this delicate sensitive hand? Four hundred years to breed that. Out of a revolutionary background! Spirit of '76! Ancestors froze at Valley Forge! What's it all mean? Slops! The honest workers were sold out then, in '76. The Constitution's for rich men then and now. Slops!

[*The phone rings.*]

BARNES [*angrily*]. Dr. Barnes. [*Listens a moment, looks at* BENJAMIN] I see. [*Hangs up, turns slowly to the younger Doctor*] They lost your patient.

[1] ***Spinoza,*** *Baruch Spinoza, the Dutch-Jewish philosopher of the seventeenth century.*

[BENJ. *stands solid with the shock of this news but finally hurls his operation gloves to the floor.*]

BARNES. That's right . . . that's right. Young, hot, go and do it! I'm very ancient, fossil, but life's ahead of you, Dr. Benjamin, and when you fire the first shot say, "This one's for old Doc Barnes!" Too much dignity—bullets. Don't shoot vermin! Step on them! If I didn't have an invalid daughter—[*Goes back to his seat, blows his nose in silence*]. I have said my piece, Benjamin.

BENJ. Lots of things I wasn't certain of. Many things these radicals say . . . you don't believe theories until they happen to you.

BARNES. You lost a lot today, but you won a great point.

BENJ. Yes, to know I'm right? To really begin believing in something? Not to say, "What a world!" but to say, "Change the world!" I wanted to go to Russia. Last week I was thinking about it—the wonderful opportunity to do good work in their socialized medicine—

BARNES. Beautiful, beautiful!

BENJ. To be able to work—

BARNES. Why don't you go? I might be able—

BENJ. Nothing's nearer what I'd like to do!

BARNES. Do it!

BENJ. No! Our work's here—America! I'm scared. . . . What future's ahead, I don't know. Get some job to keep alive—maybe drive a cab—and study and work and learn my place—

BARNES. And step down hard!

BENJ. Fight! Maybe get killed, but God damn! We'll go ahead! [BENJAMIN *stands with clenched fist raised high.*]

BLACKOUT

AGATE. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, and don't let anyone tell you we ain't got some ladies in this sea of upturned faces! Only they're wearin' pants. Well, maybe I don't know a thing; maybe I fell outa the cradle when I was a kid and ain't been right since—you can't tell!

VOICE. Sit down, cockeye!

AGATE. Who's paying you for those remarks, Buddy?—Moscow Gold? Maybe I got a *glass eye,* but it come from working in a factory at the age of eleven. They hooked it out because they didn't have a shield on the works. But I wear it like a medal 'cause it tells

the world where I belong—deep down in the working class! We had delegates in the union there—all kinds of secretaries and treasurers . . . walkin' delegates, but not with blisters on their feet! Oh, no! On their fat little ass from sitting on cushions and raking in mazuma. [SECRETARY *and* GUNMAN *remonstrate in words and actions here.*] Sit down, boys. I'm just sayin' that about unions in general. I know it ain't true here! Why, no, our officers is all aces. Why, I seen our own secretary Fatt walk outa his way not to step on a cockroach. No, boys, don't think—

FATT [*breaking in*]. You're out of order!

AGATE [*to audience*]. Am I outa order?

ALL. No, no. Speak. Go on, etc.

AGATE. Yes, our officers is all aces. But I'm a member here—and no experience in Philly either! Today I couldn't wear my union button. The damnedest thing happened. When I take the old coat off the wall, I see she's smoking. I'm a sonovagun if the old union button isn't on fire! Yep, the old celluloid was makin' the most godawful stink: the landlady came up and give me hell! You know what happened?—that old union button just blushed itself to death! Ashamed! Can you beat it?

FATT. Sit down, Keller! Nobody's interested!

AGATE. Yes, they are!

GUNMAN. Sit down like he tells you!

AGATE [*continuing to audience*]. And when I finish—

[*His speech is broken by* FATT *and* GUNMAN *who physically handle him. He breaks away and gets to other side of stage. The two are about to make for him when some of the committee men come forward and get in between the struggling parties.* AGATE'S *shirt has been torn.*]

AGATE [*to audience*]. What's the answer, boys? The answer is, if we're reds because we wanna strike, then we take over their salute too! Know how they do it? [*Makes Communist salute*] What is it? An uppercut! The good old uppercut to the chin! Hell, some of us boys ain't even got a shirt to our back. What's the boss class tryin' to do—make a nudist colony outa us?

[*The audience laughs and suddenly* AGATE *comes to the middle of the stage so that the other cabmen back him up in a strong clump.*]

AGATE. Don't laugh! Nothing's funny! This is your life and mine! It's skull and bones every incha the road! Christ, we're dyin' by inches! For what? For the debutant-ees to have their sweet

comin' out parties in the Ritz! Poppa's got a daughter she's gotta get her picture in the papers. Christ, they make 'em with our blood. Joe said it. Slow death or fight. It's war. [*Throughout this whole speech* AGATE *is backed up by the other six workers, so that from their activity it is plain that the whole group of them are saying these things. Several of them may take alternate lines out of this long last speech*] You, Edna, God love your mouth! Sid and Florrie, the other boys, old Doc Barnes—fight with us for right! It's war! Working class, unite and fight! Tear down the slaughterhouse of our old lives! Let freedom really ring. These slick slobs stand here telling us about bogeymen. That's a new one for the kids—the reds is bogeymen! But the man who got me food in 1932, he called me Comrade! The one who picked me up where I bled—he called me Comrade too! What are we waiting for. . . . Don't wait for Lefty! He might never come. Every minute—

[*This is broken into by a man who has dashed up the center aisle from the back of the house. He runs up on stage, says*]

MAN. Boys, they just found Lefty!

OTHERS. What? What? What?

SOME. Shhh. . . . Shh. . . .

MAN. They found Lefty. . . .

AGATE. Where?

MAN. Behind the car barns with a bullet in his head!

AGATE [*crying*]. Hear it, boys, hear it? Hell, listen to me! Coast to coast! HELLO, AMERICA! HELLO. WE'RE STORM-BIRDS OF THE WORKING CLASS. WORKERS OF THE WORLD. . . . OUR BONES AND BLOOD! And when we die they'll know what we did to make a new world! Christ, cut us up to little pieces. We'll die for what is right! put fruit trees where our ashes are! [*To audience*] Well, what's the answer?

ALL. STRIKE!

AGATE. LOUDER!

ALL. STRIKE!

AGATE AND OTHERS [*on stage*]. AGAIN!

ALL. STRIKE, STRIKE, STRIKE!!!

CURTAIN

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS (1914-)

The international reputation of Tennessee Williams as the most considerable American playwright of the war generation may at first seem surprising, since his best-known works present characters and problems rooted in the highly provincial locale of the American South. We may well wonder what the personal defeats of frail Southern belles out of step with the harsh realities of twentieth-century life can mean to audiences in London, Paris, and Buenos Aires. Yet once more we are reminded that if the greatest of our realistic writers have usually chosen to write of a limited area that they know intimately, it is only to see in this small segment of the world problems common to all humanity. In the frustrations and despair of the heroines of *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* theater audiences the world over may well discern the general bewilderment and weariness of the Western world in the past decade.

Williams is a Southerner who was uprooted from his boyhood home in Mississippi during his school years and came to see his provincial background half romantically, half critically from the border point of St. Louis. Christened Thomas Lanier, he adopted the name of Tennessee, perhaps as a tribute to his pioneering ancestors in that state. His grandfather, a cultured Episcopalian minister, encouraged his early interest in literature, and his mother provided a model for his later portrait of the delicate and charming Southern aristocrat, Amanda Wingfield. But his father was a salesman who had his difficulties, and Williams' study at the University of Missouri was interrupted by the decline of the family's fortunes during the depression years. After taking his degree at the University of Iowa, he worked at a variety of odd jobs around the country before eventually reaching New York for a career in the theater.

Although he experimented industriously with several kinds of writing, he made his first stir with his one-act plays, which are still considered among the best of his works. Winning a prize from the Group Theatre for a series of these, he was brought to the attention of the Theatre Guild, which produced his full-length play, *Battle of the Angels,* in Boston in 1940. After the failure of this tryout he waited nearly five years for his second production and first success, *The Glass Menagerie.* With the aging star, Laurette Taylor, making a remarkable comeback as Amanda (the rôle which proved to be her swan song), this subtle, pathetic play achieved a surprising popularity as well as great critical acclaim.

Williams' record on Broadway has been "every other one." His greatest success is without a doubt *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), which is also his most harrowing play —a morbid tragedy about the complete collapse of a well-born Southern girl into prostitution and insanity under the pressure of economic and sexual problems with which her gentle training has not prepared her to cope. When a similar heroine appeared in Williams' next play, *Summer and Smoke,* a year later, even the friendliest of his critics began to fear that he was limited to a single formula. But in 1951 he broke away from it with *The Rose Tattoo,* the lightest of his full-length plays, which set forth the tempestuous love life of an Italian woman living in an American Gulf Coast village. This near-comedy may reflect Williams' current enthusiam for Italy, where he has spent a great deal of his life recently. But he is no literary expatriate: his art remains fixed in the American scene, and the aspects of it that he knows best.

THE GLASS MENAGERIE

Realism has monopolized our theater for so long that it has come to seem the normal means of dramatic statement to our generation. Yet realism is a mere incident in the total history of drama, and increas-

ingly in recent years our playwrights have felt that a literal transcript of the surface features of life, however accurate and telling, cannot convey the larger meaning of experience or the higher aspirations of the artist. The rancid romanticism of nineteenth-century drama was the dead end of a great tradition. But today our theater reveals once more a hunger for poetry, which is relegating the photographic drama to the ranks of the unimaginative rear guard of our playwrights. Anderson has returned directly to the mode of verse drama, but Williams and Miller are working within the structure of prose realism to express a new poetic vision through larger metaphors permeating the very essence of the play.

Those who saw *The Glass Menagerie* were less conscious of the novelty of Williams' conception than the printed text would suggest, because the projected titles and some other features of the staging that he proposed proved too cumbersome in practice and were abandoned. As we read the play in the complete form in which the author designed it, we must feel that it was good judgment in the director, Eddie Dowling, to curb the exuberance of the playwright and his sometimes exaggerated effort to stylize his play. But the dialogue remained unchanged and preserved that interrelation of narrative and dramatic elements that made the little scenes seem projected episodes in a casual stream of reminiscence. Some critics found in the direct commentary of Tom to the audience a reminder of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town,* in which a so-called stage manager introduced the characters and interpreted their story to the audience. But the "stage manager" this time is a leading character and the characters are colored by his mood of memory, much as the Biblical worthies in *The Green Pastures* of Marc Connelly are conceived in the vocabulary of a naïve but devout narrator who introduces them at the start. One purpose of expressionism is realized here, but without the generalization and distortion of a slanted point of view.

This is a subjective realism, to which memory is the special key. The departures from exact recording are explained by the mood of dreamy reminiscence, which colors the people as they were and the things as they happened with the liberties of imagination. It is Williams himself who is recalling an earlier period of his life with mingled feelings of affection, dissent, and despair. There is a reminder of Proust in Tom's fascination with the past, an indebtedness to D. H. Lawrence in the account of Laura and her frustrated longing for love, and a general affinity with the whole Southern school of con-





temporary writers in the pessimistic study of decaying aristocracy and of the deplorable conditions that hedge it in.

The Glass Menagerie ends on a note of futility and leaves a sensitive audience depressed. Though we sympathize deeply with all the characters, they lack the stature for tragedy. Their problems are not presented as great and universal, Amanda's being rooted in an effete tradition, Laura's in a physical deformity. Their defeat is not on the grand scale, nor ennobled by the playwright. We feel no great relief in the escape of Tom, because it is a flight from responsibility that settles nothing. He claims thereby the right of every man to live his own life, but it still seems a selfish move, which has left him with haunting memories.

Like many Southern writers, Williams has mixed feelings of sentimentality and cynicism about the provincial attitudes of his people, and he sees no future for the values to which they are devoted. This divided feeling is reflected in the imaginative realism of the style, lyrical yet relentlessly true to the facts. The hopelessness of his characters' plight is emphasized by the enveloping tenement framework of their lives, oppressively urban for an outlook sprung from the leisurely plantation of the South, glaringly modern for a perspective grounded in the past. The fragility of his heroines, uprooted from the highly cultivated soil that produced them, is symbolized in the glass menagerie which is vulnerable to every brush with the harsher aspects of reality. They are delicate anachronisms of a tender charm, pale and pathetic, but picturesque as cameos. They come to us from a more gracious world than the one we know, a world that has incapacitated them completely to find happiness in this.

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TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

THE GLASS MENAGERIE

Nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands.
E E CUMMINGS

CHARACTERS

Amanda Wingfield (the mother)
A little woman of great but confused vitality clinging frantically to another time and place. Her characterization must be carefully created, not copied from type. She is not paranoiac, but her life is paranoia. There is much to admire in Amanda, and as much to love and pity as there is to laugh at. Certainly she has endurance and a kind of heroism, and though her foolishness makes her unwittingly cruel at times, there is tenderness in her slight person.

Laura Wingfield (her daughter)
Amanda, having failed to establish contact with reality, continues to live vitally in her illusions, but Laura's situation is even graver. A childhood illness has left her crippled, one leg slightly shorter than the other, and held in a brace. This defect need not be more than suggested on the stage. Stemming from this, Laura's separation increases till she is like a piece of her own glass collection, too exquisitely fragile to move from the shelf.)

Tom Wingfield (her son)
And the narrator of the play. A poet with a job in a warehouse. His nature is not remorseless, but to escape from a trap he has to act without pity.

Jim O'Connor (the gentleman caller)
A nice, ordinary, young man.

Scene

AN ALLEY IN ST. LOUIS

PART I. *Preparation for a Gentleman Caller*

PART II. *The Gentleman calls*

Time: Now and the Past

PRODUCTION NOTES

Being a "memory play," The Glass Menagerie *can be presented with unusual freedom of convention. Because of its considerably delicate or tenuous material, atmospheric touches and subtleties of direction play a particularly important part. Expressionism and all other unconventional techniques in drama have only one valid aim, and that is a closer approach to truth. When a play employs unconventional techniques, it is not, or certainly shouldn't be, trying to escape its responsibility of dealing with reality, or interpreting experience, but is actually or should be attempting to find a closer approach, a more penetrating and vivid expression of things as they are. The straight realistic play with its genuine frigidaire and authentic ice-cubes, its characters*

that speak exactly as its audience speaks, corresponds to the academic landscape and has the same virtue of a photographic likeness. Everyone should know nowadays the unimportance of the photographic in art: that truth, life, or reality is an organic thing which the poetic imagination can represent or suggest, in essence, only through transformation, through changing into other forms than those which were merely present in appearance.

These remarks are not meant as a preface only to this particular play. They have to do with a conception of a new, plastic theatre which must take the place of the exhausted theatre of realistic conventions if the theatre is to resume vitality as a part of our culture.

the screen device

There is only one important difference between the original and acting version of the play *and that is the* omission *in the latter of the device which I tentatively included in my* original *script. This device was the use of a screen on which were projected magic-lantern slides bearing images or titles. I do not regret the omission of this device from the present Broadway production. The extraordinary power of Miss Taylor's performance made it suitable to have the utmost simplicity in the physical production. But I think it may be interesting to some readers to see how this device was conceived. So I am putting it into the published manuscript. These images and legends, projected from behind, were cast on a section of wall between the front-room and dining-room areas, which should be indistinguishable from the rest when not in use.*

The purpose of this will probably be apparent. It is to give accent to certain values in each scene. Each scene contains a particular point (or several) which is structurally the most important. In an episodic play, such as this, the basic structure or narrative line may be obscured from the audience; the effect may seem fragmentary rather than architectural. This may not be the fault of the play so much as a lack of

attention in the audience. The legend or image upon the screen will strengthen the effect of what is merely allusion in the writing and allow the primary point to be made more simply and lightly than if the entire responsibility were on the spoken lines. Aside from this structural value, I think the screen will have a definite emotional appeal, less definable but just as important. An imaginative producer or director may invent many other uses for this device than those indicated in the present script. In fact the possibilities of the device seem much larger to me than the instance of this play can possibly utilize.

the music

Another extra-literary accent in this play is provided by the use of music. A single recurring tune, "The Glass Menagerie," is used to give emotional emphasis to suitable passages. This tune is like circus music, not when you are on the grounds or in the immediate vicinity of the parade, but when you are at some distance and very likely thinking of something else. It seems under those circumstances to continue almost interminably and it weaves in and out of your preoccupied consciousness; then it is the lightest, most delicate music in the world and perhaps the saddest. It expresses the surface vivacity of life with the underlying strain of immutable and inexpressible sorrow. When you look at a piece of delicately spun glass you think of two things: how beautiful it is and how easily it can be broken. Both of those ideas should be woven into the recurring tune, which dips in and out of the play as if it were carried on a wind that changes. It serves as a thread of connection and allusion between the narrator with his separate point in time and space and the subject of his story. Between each episode it returns as reference to the emotion, nostalgia, which is the first condition of the play. It is primarily Laura's music and therefore comes out most clearly when the play focuses upon her and the lovely fragility of glass which is her image.

the lighting

The lighting in the play is not realistic. In keeping with the atmosphere of memory, the stage is dim. Shafts of light are focused on selected areas or actors, sometimes in contradistinction to what is the apparent center. For instance, in the quarrel scene between Tom and Amanda, in which Laura has no active part, the clearest pool of light is on her figure. This is also true of the supper scene, when her silent figure on the sofa should remain the visual center. The light upon Laura should be distinct from the others, having a peculiar pristine clarity such as light used in early religious portraits of female saints or madonnas. A certain correspondence to light in religious paintings, such as El Greco's, where the figures are radiant in atmosphere that is relatively dusky, could be effectively used throughout the play. (It will also permit a more effective use of the screen.) A free, imaginative use of light can be of enormous value in giving a mobile, plastic quality to plays of a more or less static nature.

T. W.

scene 1

The Wingfield apartment is in the rear of the building, one of those vast hive-like conglomerations of cellular living-units that flower as warty growths in overcrowded urban centers of lower middle-class population and are symptomatic of the impulse of this largest and fundamentally enslaved section of American society to avoid fluidity and differentiation and to exist and function as one interfused mass of automatism.

The apartment faces an alley and is entered by a fire-escape, a structure whose name is a touch of accidental poetic truth, for all of these huge buildings are always burning with the slow and implacable fires of human desperation. The fire-escape is included in the set—that is, the landing of it and steps descending from it.

(The scene is memory and is therefore nonrealistic. Memory takes a lot of poetic license. It omits some details; others are exaggerated, according to the emotional value of the articles it touches, for memory is seated predominantly in the heart. The interior is therefore rather dim and poetic.)

At the rise of the curtain, the audience is faced with the dark, grim rear wall of the Wingfield tenement. This building, which runs parallel to the footlights, is flanked on both sides by dark, narrow alleys which run into murky canyons of tangled clotheslines, garbage cans and the sinister latticework of neighboring fire-escapes. It is up and down these side alleys that exterior entrances and exits are made, during the play. At the end of TOM'S *opening commentary, the dark tenement wall slowly reveals (by means of a transparency) the interior of the ground floor Wingfield apartment.*

Downstage is the living room, which also serves as a sleeping room for LAURA, *the sofa unfolding to make her bed. Upstage, center, and divided by a wide arch or second proscenium with transparent faded portieres (or second curtain), is the dining room. In an old-fashioned what-not in the living room are seen scores of transparent glass animals. A blown-up photograph of the father hangs on the wall of the living room, facing the audience, to the left of the archway. It is the face of a very handsome young man in a doughboy's First World War cap. He is gallantly smiling, ineluctably smiling, as if to say, "I will be smiling forever."*

The audience hears and sees the opening scene in the dining room through both the transparent fourth wall of the building and the transparent gauze portieres of the dining-room arch. It is during this revealing scene that the fourth wall slowly ascends, out of sight. This transparent exterior wall is not brought down again until the very end of the play, during TOM'S *final speech.*

(The narrator is an undisguised convention of the play. He takes whatever license with dramatic convention as is convenient to his purposes.)

TOM *enters dressed as a merchant sailor from alley, stage left, and strolls across the front of the stage to the fire-escape. There he stops and lights a cigarette. He addresses the audience.*

TOM. Yes, I have tricks in my pocket, I have things up my sleeve. But I am the opposite of a stage magician. He gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth. I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion.

To begin with, I turn back time. I reverse it to that quaint period, the thirties, when the huge middle class of America was matriculating in a school for the blind. Their eyes had failed them, or they had failed their eyes, and so they were having their fingers pressed forcibly down on the fiery Braille alphabet of a dissolving economy.

In Spain there was revolution. Here there was only shouting and confusion.

In Spain there was Guernica.[1] Here there were disturbances of labor, sometimes pretty violent, in otherwise peaceful cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, Saint Louis . . .

This is the social background of the play.

[MUSIC]

The play is memory.

Being a memory play, it is dimly lighted, it is sentimental, it is not realistic.

In memory everything seems to happen to music. That explains the fiddle in the wings.

I am the narrator of the play, and also a character in it.

The other characters are my mother, Amanda, my sister, Laura, and a gentleman caller who appears in the final scenes.

He is the most realistic character in the play, being an emissary from a world of reality that we were somehow set apart from.

But since I have a poet's weakness for symbols,[2] I am using this character also as a symbol; he is the long delayed but always expected something that we live for.

There is a fifth character in the play who doesn't appear except in this larger-than-life-size photograph over the mantel.

This is our father who left us a long time ago.

[1] ***Guernica,*** *the Basque town in northern Spain which was singled out by General Franco's forces for terroristic bombing from the air early in the Spanish revolution. An autonomous Basque government had been established there briefly. Especially because of a famous painting by the Spanish artist Picasso, Guernica became for liberals and radicals a symbol of the fascist attack upon democracy.*

[2] ***poet's . . . symbols.*** *Williams' fondness for symbols sometimes leads him to pretentious extremes. The invitation to interpret the gentleman caller in allegorical terms overreaches the touching realism of the scenes in which he appears.*

He was a telephone man who fell in love with long distances; he gave up his job with the telephone company and skipped the light fantastic out of town . . .

The last we heard of him was a picture post-card from Mazatlan, on the Pacific coast of Mexico, containing a message of two words—

"Hello— Good-bye!" and no address.

I think the rest of the play will explain itself. . . .

[AMANDA's *voice becomes audible through the portieres.*]

[LEGEND ON SCREEN: "OU SONT LES NEIGES"]

[*He divides the portieres and enters the upstage area.*]

[AMANDA *and* LAURA *are seated at a drop-leaf table. Eating is indicated by gestures without food or utensils.* AMANDA *faces the audience.* TOM *and* LAURA *are seated in profile.*]

[*The interior has lit up softly and through the scrim we see* AMANDA *and* LAURA *seated at the table in the upstage area.*]

AMANDA [*calling*]. Tom?

TOM. Yes, Mother.

AMANDA. We can't say grace until you come to the table!

TOM. Coming, Mother. [*He bows slightly and withdraws, reappearing a few moments later in his place at the table.*]

AMANDA [*to her son*]. Honey, don't *push* with your *fingers.* If you have to push with something, the thing to push with is a crust of bread. And chew—chew! Animals have sections in their stomachs which enable them to digest food without mastication, but human beings are supposed to chew their food before they swallow it down. Eat food leisurely, son, and really enjoy it. A well-cooked meal has lots of delicate flavors that have to be held in the mouth for appreciation. So chew your food and give your salivary glands a chance to function!

[TOM *deliberately lays his imaginary fork down and pushes his chair back from the table.*]

TOM. I haven't enjoyed one bite of this dinner because of your constant directions on how to eat it. It's you that make me rush through meals with your hawk-like attention to every bite I take. Sickening—spoils my appetite—all this discussion of—animal's secretion—salivary glands—mastication!

AMANDA [*lightly*]. Temperament like a Metropolitan star! [*He rises and crosses downstage.*] You're not excused from the table.

TOM. I'm getting a cigarette.

AMANDA. You smoke too much.

[LAURA *rises.*]

LAURA. I'll bring in the blanc mange.

[*He remains standing with his cigarette by the portieres during the following.*]

AMANDA [*rising*]. No, sister, no, sister—you be the lady this time and I'll be the darky.

LAURA. I'm already up.

AMANDA. Resume your seat, little sister—I want you to stay fresh and pretty—for gentlemen callers!

LAURA. I'm not expecting any gentlemen callers.

AMANDA [*crossing out to kitchenette. Airily*]. Sometimes they come when they are least expected! Why, I remember one Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain— [*Enters kitchenette*]

TOM. I know what's coming!

LAURA. Yes. But let her tell it.

TOM. Again?

LAURA. She loves to tell it.

[AMANDA *returns with bowl of dessert.*]

AMANDA. One Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain—your mother received—*seventeen!*—gentlemen callers! Why, sometimes there weren't chairs enough to accommodate them all. We had to send the nigger over to bring in folding chairs from the parish house.

TOM [*remaining at portieres*]. How did you entertain those gentlemen callers?

AMANDA. I understood the art of conversation!

TOM. I bet you could talk.

AMANDA. Girls in those days *knew* how to talk, I can tell you.

TOM. Yes?

[IMAGE: AMANDA AS A GIRL ON A PORCH, GREETING CALLERS]

AMANDA. They knew how to entertain their gentlemen callers. It wasn't enough for a girl to be possessed of a pretty face and a graceful figure—although I wasn't slighted in either respect. She also needed to have a nimble wit and a tongue to meet all occasions.

TOM. What did you talk about?

AMANDA. Things of importance going on in the world! Never anything coarse or common or vulgar. [*She addresses* TOM *as though he were seated in the vacant chair at the table though he remains by portieres. He plays this scene as though he held the book.*] My callers were gentlemen—all! Among my callers were some of the most prominent young planters of the Mississippi Delta —planters and sons of planters!

[TOM *motions for music and a spot of light on* AMANDA.]
[*Her eyes lift, her face glows, her voice becomes rich and elegiac.*]

[SCREEN LEGEND: "OU SONT LES NEIGES"]

There was young Champ Laughlin who later became vice-president of the Delta Planters Bank.

Hadley Stevenson who was drowned in Moon Lake and left his widow one hundred and fifty thousand in Government bonds.

There were the Cutrere brothers, Wesley and Bates. Bates was one of my bright particular beaux! He got in a quarrel with that wild Wainwright boy. They shot it out on the floor of Moon Lake Casino. Bates was shot through the stomach. Died in the ambulance on his way to Memphis. His widow was also well-provided for, came into eight or ten thousand acres, that's all. She married him on the rebound—never loved her—carried my picture on him the night he died!

And there was that boy that every girl in the Delta had set her cap for! That beautiful, brilliant young Fitzhugh boy from Greene County!

TOM. What did he leave his widow?

AMANDA. He never married! Gracious, you talk as though all of my old admirers had turned up their toes to the daisies!

TOM. Isn't this the first you've mentioned that still survives?

AMANDA. That Fitzhugh boy went North and made a fortune —came to be known as the Wolf of Wall Street! He had the Midas touch, whatever he touched turned to gold!

And I could have been Mrs. Duncan J. Fitzhugh, mind you! But—I picked your *father!*

LAURA [*rising*]. Mother, let me clear the table.

AMANDA. No, dear, you go in front and study your typewriter chart. Or practice your shorthand a little. Stay fresh and pretty!— It's almost time for our gentlemen callers to start arriving. [*She flounces girlishly toward the kitchenette.*] How many do you suppose we're going to entertain this afternoon?

[TOM *throws down the paper and jumps up with a groan.*]

LAURA [*alone in the dining room*]. I don't believe we're going to receive any, Mother.

AMANDA [*reappearing, airily*]. What? No one—not one? You must be joking! [LAURA *nervously echoes her laugh. She slips in a fugitive manner through the half-open portieres and draws them gently behind her. A shaft of very clear light is thrown on her face*

against the faded tapestry of the curtains. MUSIC: "THE GLASS MENAGERIE" UNDER FAINTLY. *Lightly*] Not one gentleman caller? It can't be true! There must be a flood, there must have been a tornado!

LAURA. It isn't a flood, it's not a tornado, Mother. I'm just not popular like you were in Blue Mountain. . . . [TOM *utters another groan.* LAURA *glances at him with a faint, apologetic smile. Her voice catching a little*] Mother's afraid I'm going to be an old maid.

THE SCENE DIMS OUT WITH "GLASS MENAGERIE" MUSIC

scene 2

"Laura, Haven't You Ever Liked Some Boy?"

On the dark stage the screen is lighted with the image of blue roses.

Gradually LAURA'S *figure becomes apparent and the screen goes out.*

The music subsides.

LAURA *is seated in the delicate ivory chair at the small claw-foot table.*

She wears a dress of soft violet material for a kimono—her hair tied back from her forehead with a ribbon.

She is washing and polishing her collection of glass.

AMANDA *appears on the fire-escape steps. At the sound of her ascent,* LAURA *catches her breath, thrusts the bowl of ornaments away and seats herself stiffly before the diagram of the typewriter keyboard as though it held her spellbound.*

Something has happened to AMANDA. *It is written in her face as she climbs to the landing: a look that is grim and hopeless and a little absurd.*

She has on one of those cheap or imitation velvety-looking cloth coats with imitation fur collar. Her hat is five or six years old, one of those dreadful cloche hats that were worn in the late twenties and she is clasping an enormous black patent-leather pocketbook with nickel clasps and initials. This is her full-dress outfit, the one she usually wears to the D.A.R.

Before entering she looks through the door.

She purses her lips, opens her eyes very wide, rolls them upward and shakes her head.

Then she slowly lets herself in the door. Seeing her mother's expression LAURA *touches her lips with a nervous gesture.*

LAURA. Hello, Mother, I was— [*She makes a nervous gesture toward the chart on the wall.* AMANDA *leans against the shut door and stares at* LAURA *with a martyred look.*]

AMANDA. Deception? Deception? [*She slowly removes her hat and gloves, continuing the sweet suffering stare. She lets the hat and gloves fall on the floor—a bit of acting.*]

LAURA [*shakily*]. How was the D.A.R. meeting? [AMANDA *slowly opens her purse and removes a dainty white handkerchief which she shakes out delicately and delicately touches to her lips and nostrils.*] Didn't you go to the D.A.R. meeting, Mother?

AMANDA [*faintly, almost inaudibly*]. —No.—No. [*Then more forcibly*] I did not have the strength—to go to the D.A.R. In fact, I did not have the courage! I wanted to find a hole in the ground and hide myself in it forever! [*She crosses slowly to the wall and removes the diagram of the typewriter keyboard. She holds it in front of her for a second, staring at it sweetly and sorrowfully—then bites her lips and tears it in two pieces.*]

LAURA [*faintly*]. Why did you do that, Mother? [AMANDA *repeats the same procedure with the chart of the Gregg Alphabet.*] Why are you—

AMANDA. Why? Why? How old are you, Laura?

LAURA. Mother, you know my age.

AMANDA. I thought that you were an adult; it seems that I was mistaken. [*She crosses slowly to the sofa and sinks down and stares at* LAURA.]

LAURA. Please don't stare at me, Mother.

[AMANDA *closes her eyes and lowers her head. Count ten*]

AMANDA. What are we going to do, what is going to become of us, what is the future?

[*Count ten*]

LAURA. Has something happened, Mother? [AMANDA *draws a long breath and takes out the handkerchief again. Dabbing process*] Mother, has—something happened?

AMANDA. I'll be all right in a minute, I'm just bewildered—[*count five*]—by life. . . .

LAURA. Mother, I wish that you would tell me what's happened!

AMANDA. As you know, I was supposed to be inducted into my office at the D.A.R. this afternoon. [IMAGE: A SWARM OF TYPEWRITERS] But I stopped off at Rubicam's business college to speak to your teachers about your having a cold and ask them what progress they thought you were making down there.

LAURA. Oh. . . .

AMANDA. I went to the typing instructor and introduced myself as your mother. She didn't know who you were. Wingfield, she said. We don't have any such student enrolled at the school!

I assured her she did, that you had been going to classes since early in January.

"I wonder," she said, "if you could be talking about that terribly shy little girl who dropped out of school after only a few days' attendance?"

"No," I said, "Laura, my daughter, has been going to school every day for the past six weeks!"

"Excuse me," she said. She took the attendance book out and there was your name, unmistakably printed, and all the dates you were absent until they decided that you had dropped out of school.

I still said, "No, there must have been some mistake! There must have been some mix-up in the records!"

And she said, "No—I remember her perfectly now. Her hands shook so that she couldn't hit the right keys! The first time we gave a speed-test, she broke down completely—was sick at the stomach and almost had to be carried into the wash-room! After that morning she never showed up any more. We phoned the house but never got any answer"—while I was working at Famous and Barr, I suppose, demonstrating those— Oh!

I felt so weak I could barely keep on my feet!

I had to sit down while they got me a glass of water!

Fifty dollars' tuition, all of our plans—my hopes and ambitions for you—just gone up the spout, just gone up the spout like that.

[LAURA *draws a long breath and gets awkwardly to her feet. She crosses to the victrola and winds it up.*]

What are you doing?

LAURA. Oh! [*She releases the handle and returns to her seat.*]

AMANDA. Laura, where have you been going when you've gone out pretending that you were going to business college?

LAURA. I've just been going out walking.

AMANDA. That's not true.

LAURA. It is. I just went walking.

AMANDA. Walking? Walking? In winter? Deliberately courting pneumonia in that light coat? Where did you walk to, Laura?

LAURA. All sorts of places—mostly in the park.

AMANDA. Even after you'd started catching that cold?

LAURA. It was the lesser of two evils, Mother. [IMAGE: WINTER SCENE IN PARK] I couldn't go back up. I—threw up—on the floor!

AMANDA. From half past seven till after five every day you mean to tell me you walked around in the park, because you wanted to make me think that you were still going to Rubicam's Business College?

LAURA. It wasn't as bad as it sounds. I went inside places to get warmed up.

AMANDA. Inside where?

LAURA. I went in the art museum and the bird-houses at the Zoo. I visited the penguins every day! Sometimes I did without lunch and went to the movies. Lately I've been spending most of my afternoons in the Jewel-box, that big glass house[1] where they raise the tropical flowers.

AMANDA. You did all this to deceive me, just for deception? [LAURA *looks down.*] Why?

LAURA. Mother, when you're disappointed, you get that awful suffering look on your face, like the picture of Jesus' mother in the museum!

AMANDA. Hush!

LAURA. I couldn't face it.

[*Pause. A whisper of strings*]

[LEGEND: "THE CRUST OF HUMILITY"]

AMANDA [*hopelessly fingering the huge pocketbook*]. So what are we going to do the rest of our lives? Stay home and watch the parades go by? Amuse ourselves with the glass menagerie, darling? Eternally play those worn-out phonograph records your father left as a painful reminder of him?

We won't have a business career—we've given that up because it

[1] ***big glass house.*** *Note the recurrent identification of Laura with the fragility of glass objects.*

gave us nervous indigestion! [*Laughs wearily*] What is there left but dependency all our lives? I know so well what becomes of unmarried women who aren't prepared to occupy a position. I've seen such pitiful cases in the South—barely tolerated spinsters living upon the grudging patronage of sister's husband or brother's wife!—stuck away in some little mouse-trap of a room—encouraged by one in-law to visit another—little birdlike women without any nest—eating the crust of humility all their life!

Is that the future that we've mapped out for ourselves?

I swear it's the only alternative I can think of!

It isn't a very pleasant alternative, is it?

Of course—some girls *do marry.*

[LAURA *twists her hands nervously.*]

Haven't you ever liked some boy?

LAURA. Yes. I liked one once. [*Rises*] I came across his picture a while ago.

AMANDA [*with some interest*]. He gave you his picture?

LAURA. No, it's in the year-book.

AMANDA [*disappointed*]. Oh—a high-school boy.

[SCREEN IMAGE: JIM AS HIGH-SCHOOL HERO BEARING A SILVER CUP]

LAURA. Yes. His name was Jim. [LAURA *lifts the heavy annual from the claw-foot table.*] Here he is in *The Pirates of Penzance.*

AMANDA [*absently*]. The what?

LAURA. The operetta the senior class put on. He had a wonderful voice and we sat across the aisle from each other Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays in the Aud. Here he is with the silver cup for debating! See his grin?

AMANDA [*absently*]. He must have had a jolly disposition.

LAURA. He used to call me—Blue Roses.

[IMAGE: BLUE ROSES]

AMANDA. Why did he call you such a name as that?

LAURA. When I had that attack of pleurosis—he asked me what was the matter when I came back. I said pleurosis—he thought that I said Blue Roses! So that's what he always called me after that. Whenever he saw me, he'd holler, "Hello, Blue Roses!" I didn't care for the girl that he went out with. Emily Meisenbach. Emily was the best-dressed girl at Soldan. She never struck me, though, as being sincere . . . It says in the Personal Section—they're engaged. That's—six years ago! They must be married by now.

AMANDA. Girls that aren't cut out for business careers usually

wind up married to some nice man. [*Gets up with a spark of revival*] Sister, that's what you'll do!

[LAURA *utters a startled, doubtful laugh. She reaches quickly for a piece of glass.*]

LAURA. But, Mother—

AMANDA. Yes? [*Crossing to photograph*]

LAURA [*in a tone of frightened apology*]. I'm—crippled!

[IMAGE: SCREEN]

AMANDA. Nonsense! Laura, I've told you never, never to use that word. Why, you're not crippled, you just have a little defect —hardly noticeable, even! When people have some slight disad vantage like that, they cultivate other things to make up for it— develop charm—and vivacity—and—*charm!* That's all you have to do! [*She turns again to the photograph.*] One thing your father had *plenty of*—was *charm!*

[TOM *motions to the fiddle in the wings.*]

THE SCENE FADES OUT WITH MUSIC

scene 3

LEGEND ON SCREEN: "AFTER THE FIASCO—"

TOM *speaks from the fire-escape landing.*

TOM. After the fiasco at Rubicam's Business College, the idea of getting a gentleman caller for Laura began to play a more and more important part in Mother's calculations.

It became an obsession. Like some archetype of the universal unconscious, the image of the gentleman caller haunted our small apartment. . . .

[IMAGE: YOUNG MAN AT DOOR WITH FLOWERS]

An evening at home rarely passed without some allusion to this image, this spectre, this hope. . . .

Even when he wasn't mentioned, his presence hung in Mother's preoccupied look and in my sister's frightened, apologetic manner —hung like a sentence passed upon the Wingfields!

Mother was a woman of action as well as words.

She began to take logical steps in the planned direction.

Late that winter and in the early spring—realizing that extra money would be needed to properly feather the nest and plume

the bird—she conducted a vigorous campaign on the telephone, roping in subscribers to one of those magazines for matrons called *The Home-maker's Companion,* the type of journal that features the serialized sublimations of ladies of letters who think in terms of delicate cup-like breasts, slim, tapering waists, rich, creamy thighs, eyes like wood-smoke in autumn, fingers that soothe and caress like strains of music, bodies as powerful as Etruscan sculpture.

[SCREEN IMAGE: GLAMOR MAGAZINE COVER]

[AMANDA *enters with phone on long extension cord. She is spotted in the dim stage.*]

AMANDA. Ida Scott? This is Amanda Wingfield!

We *missed* you at the D.A.R. last Monday!

I said to myself: She's probably suffering with that sinus condition! How is that sinus condition?

Horrors! Heaven have mercy!—You're a Christian martyr, yes, that's what you are, a Christian martyr!

Well, I just now happened to notice that your subscription to the *Companion's* about to expire! Yes, it expires with the next issue, honey!—just when that wonderful new serial by Bessie Mae Hopper is getting off to such an exciting start. Oh, honey, it's something that you can't miss! You remember how *Gone With the Wind* took everybody by storm? You simply couldn't go out if you hadn't read it. All everybody *talked* was Scarlett O'Hara. Well, this is a book that critics already compare to *Gone With the Wind.* It's the *Gone With the Wind* of the post-World War generation!—What?—Burning?—Oh, honey, don't let them burn, go take a look in the oven and I'll hold the wire! Heavens—I think she's hung up!

DIM OUT

[LEGEND ON SCREEN: "YOU THINK I'M IN LOVE WITH CONTINENTAL SHOEMAKERS?"]

[*Before the stage is lighted, the violent voices of* TOM *and* AMANDA *are heard.*]

[*They are quarreling behind the portieres. In front of them stands* LAURA *with clenched hands and panicky expression.*]

[*A clear pool of light on her figure throughout this scene*]

TOM. What in Christ's name am I—

AMANDA [*shrilly*]. Don't you use that—

TOM. Supposed to do!

AMANDA. Expression! Not in my—

TOM. Ohhh!

AMANDA. Presence! Have you gone out of your senses?

TOM. I have, that's true, *driven* out!

AMANDA. What is the matter with you, you—big—big—IDIOT!

TOM. Look!—I've got *no thing,* no single thing—

AMANDA. Lower your voice!

TOM. In my life here that I can call my OWN! Everything is—

AMANDA. Stop that shouting!

TOM. Yesterday you confiscated my books! You had the nerve to—

AMANDA. I took that horrible novel back to the library—yes! That hideous book by that insane Mr. Lawrence. [TOM *laughs wildly.*] I cannot control the output of diseased minds or people who cater to them— [TOM *laughs still more wildly.*] BUT I WON'T ALLOW SUCH FILTH BROUGHT INTO MY HOUSE! No, no, no, no, no!

TOM. House, house! Who pays rent on it, who makes a slave of himself to—

AMANDA [*fairly screeching*]. Don't you DARE to—

TOM. No, no, *I* mustn't say things! *I've* got to just—

AMANDA. Let me tell you—

TOM. I don't want to hear any more! [*He tears the portieres open. The upstage area is lit with a turgid smoky red glow.*]

[AMANDA'S *hair is in metal curlers and she wears a very old bathrobe, much too large for her slight figure, a relic of the faithless Mr. Wingfield.*]

[*An upright typewriter and a wild disarray of manuscripts is on the drop-leaf table. The quarrel was probably precipitated by* AMANDA'S *interruption of his creative labor. A chair lying overthrown on the floor*]

[*Their gesticulating shadows are cast on the ceiling by the fiery glow.*]

AMANDA. You *will* hear more, you—

TOM. No, I won't hear more, I'm going out!

AMANDA. You come right back in—

TOM. Out, out, out! Because I'm—

AMANDA. Come back here, Tom Wingfield! I'm not through talking to you!

TOM. Oh, go—

LAURA [*desperately*]. —Tom!

AMANDA. You're going to listen, and no more insolence from you! I'm at the end of my patience!

[*He comes back toward her.*]

TOM. What do you think I'm at? Aren't I supposed to have any patience to reach the end of, Mother? I know, I know. It seems unimportant to you, what I'm *doing*—what I *want* to do—having a little *difference* between them! You don't think that—

AMANDA. I think you've been doing things that you're ashamed of. That's why you act like this. I don't believe that you go every night to the movies. Nobody goes to the movies night after night. Nobody in their right minds goes to the movies as often as you pretend to. People don't go to the movies at nearly midnight, and movies don't let out at two A.M. Come in stumbling. Muttering to yourself like a maniac! You get three hours' sleep and then go to work. Oh, I can picture the way you're doing down there. Moping, doping, because you're in no condition.

TOM [*wildly*]. No, I'm in no condition!

AMANDA. What right have you got to jeopardize your job? Jeopardize the security of us all? How do you think we'd manage if you were—

TOM. Listen! You think I'm crazy *about* the *warehouse?* [*He bends fiercely toward her slight figure.*] You think I'm in love with the Continental Shoemakers? You think I want to spend fifty-five *years* down there in that—*celotex interior!* with—*fluorescent—tubes!* Look! I'd rather somebody picked up a crowbar and battered out my brains—than go back mornings! I *go!* Every time you come in yelling that God damn *"Rise and Shine!" "Rise and Shine!"* I say to myself, "How *lucky dead* people are!" But I get up. I *go!* For sixty-five dollars a month I give up all that I dream of doing and being *ever!* And you say self—*self's* all I ever think of. Why, listen, if self is what I thought of, Mother, I'd be where he is—GONE! [*Pointing to father's picture*] As far as the system of transportation reaches! [*He starts past her. She grabs his arm.*] Don't grab at me, Mother!

AMANDA. Where are you going?

TOM. I'm going to the *movies!*

AMANDA. I don't believe that lie!

TOM [*crouching toward her, overtowering her tiny figure. She backs away, gasping*]. I'm going to opium dens! Yes, opium dens, dens of vice and criminals' hang-outs, Mother. I've joined the Hogan gang, I'm a hired assassin, I carry a tommy-gun in a violin case! I run a string of cat-houses in the Valley! They call me Killer, Killer Wingfield, I'm leading a double-life, a simple, honest warehouse worker by day, by night a dynamic *czar* of the *underworld,*

Mother. I go to gambling casinos, I spin away fortunes on the roulette table! I wear a patch over one eye and a false mustache, sometimes I put on green whiskers. On those occasions they call me —*El Diablo!* Oh, I could tell you things to make you sleepless! My enemies plan to dynamite this place. They're going to blow us all sky-high some night! I'll be glad, very happy, and so will you! You'll go up, up on a broomstick, over Blue Mountain with seventeen gentlemen callers! You ugly—babbling old—*witch.* . . . [*He goes through a series of violent, clumsy movements, seizing his overcoat, lunging to the door, pulling it fiercely open. The women watch him, aghast. His arm catches in the sleeve of the coat as he struggles to pull it on. For a moment he is pinioned by the bulky garment. With an outraged groan he tears the coat off again, splitting the shoulder of it, and hurls it across the room. It strikes against the shelf of* LAURA'S *glass collection, there is a tinkle of shattering glass.* LAURA *cries out as if wounded.*]

[MUSIC. LEGEND: "THE GLASS MENAGERIE"]

LAURA [*shrilly*]. *My glass!*—menagerie. . . . [*She covers her face and turns away.*]

[*But* AMANDA *is still stunned and stupefied by the "ugly witch" so that she barely notices this occurrence. Now she recovers her speech.*]

AMANDA [*in an awful voice*]. I won't speak to you—until you apologize! [*She crosses through portieres and draws them together behind her.* TOM *is left with* LAURA. LAURA *clings weakly to the mantel with her face averted.* TOM *stares at her stupidly for a moment. Then he crosses to shelf. Drops awkwardly on his knees to collect the fallen glass, glancing at* LAURA *as if he would speak but couldn't*]

"The Glass Menagerie" steals in as
THE SCENE DIMS OUT

scene 4

The interior is dark. Faint light in the alley.

A deep-voiced bell in a church is tolling the hour of five as the scene commences.

TOM *appears at the top of the alley. After each solemn boom of the bell in the tower, he shakes a little noise-maker*

or rattle as if to express the tiny spasm of man in contrast to the sustained power and dignity of the Almighty. This and the unsteadiness of his advance make it evident that he has been drinking.

As he climbs the few steps to the fire-escape landing light steals up inside. LAURA *appears in night-dress, observing* TOM'S *empty bed in the front room.*

TOM *fishes in his pockets for door-key, removing a motley assortment of articles in the search, including a perfect shower of movie-ticket stubs and an empty bottle. At last he finds the key, but just as he is about to insert it, it slips from his fingers. He strikes a match and crouches below the door.*

TOM [*bitterly*]. One crack—and it falls through!

[LAURA *opens the door.*]

LAURA. Tom! Tom, what are you doing?

TOM. Looking for a door-key.

LAURA. Where have you been all this time?

TOM. I have been to the movies.

LAURA. All this time at the movies?

TOM. There was a very long program. There was a Garbo picture and a Mickey Mouse and a travelogue and a newsreel and a preview of coming attractions. And there was an organ solo and a collection for the milk-fund—simultaneously—which ended up in a terrible fight between a fat lady and an usher!

LAURA [*innocently*]. Did you have to stay through everything?

TOM. Of course! And, oh, I forgot! There was a big stage show! The headliner on this stage show was Malvolio the Magician. He performed wonderful tricks, many of them, such as pouring water back and forth between pitchers. First it turned to wine and then it turned to beer and then it turned to whiskey. I know it was whiskey it finally turned into because he needed somebody to come up out of the audience to help him, and I came up—both shows! It was Kentucky Straight Bourbon. A very generous fellow, he gave souvenirs. [*He pulls from his back pocket a shimmering rainbow-colored scarf.*] He gave me this. This is his magic scarf. You can have it, Laura. You wave it over a canary cage and you get a bowl of gold-fish. You wave it over the gold-fish bowl and they fly away canaries. . . . But the wonderfullest trick of all was the coffin trick. We nailed him into a coffin and he got out of the

coffin without removing one nail. [*He has come inside.*] There is a trick that would come in handy for me—get me out of this 2 by 4 situation! [*Flops onto bed and starts removing shoes*]

LAURA. Tom—Shhh!

TOM. What're you shushing me for?

LAURA. You'll wake up Mother.

TOM. Goody, goody! Pay 'er back for all those "Rise an' Shines." [*Lies down, groaning*] You know it don't take much intelligence to get yourself into a nailed-up coffin, Laura. But who in hell ever got himself out of one without removing one nail?

[*As if in answer, the father's grinning photograph lights up.*]

SCENE DIMS OUT

[*Immediately following: The church bell is heard striking six. At the sixth stroke the alarm clock goes off in* AMANDA'S *room, and after a few moments we hear her calling: "Rise and Shine! Rise and Shine! Laura, go tell your brother to rise and shine!"*]

TOM [*sitting up slowly*]. I'll rise—but I won't shine.

[*The light increases.*]

AMANDA. Laura, tell your brother his coffee is ready.

[LAURA *slips into front room.*]

LAURA. Tom!—It's nearly seven. Don't make Mother nervous. [*He stares at her stupidly. Beseechingly*] Tom, speak to Mother this morning. Make up with her, apologize, speak to her!

TOM. She won't to me. It's her that started not speaking.

LAURA. If you just say you're sorry she'll start speaking.

TOM. Her not speaking—is that such a tragedy?

LAURA. Please—please!

AMANDA [*calling from kitchenette*]. Laura, are you going to do what I asked you to do, or do I have to get dressed and go out myself?

LAURA. Going, going—soon as I get on my coat! [*She pulls on a shapeless felt hat with nervous, jerky movement, pleadingly glancing at* TOM. *Rushes awkwardly for coat. The coat is one of* AMANDA'S, *inaccurately made-over, the sleeves too short for* LAURA.] Butter and what else?

AMANDA [*entering upstage*]. Just butter. Tell them to charge it.

LAURA. Mother, they make such faces when I do that.

AMANDA. Sticks and stones can break our bones, but the ex-

pression on Mr. Garfinkel's face won't harm us! Tell your brother his coffee is getting cold.

LAURA [*at door*]. Do what I asked you, will you, will you, Tom?

[*He looks sullenly away.*]

AMANDA. Laura, go now or just don't go at all!

LAURA [*rushing out*]. Going—going! [*A second later she cries out.* TOM *springs up and crosses to door.* AMANDA *rushes anxiously in.* TOM *opens the door.*]

TOM. Laura?

LAURA. I'm all right. I slipped, but I'm all right.

AMANDA [*peering anxiously after her*]. If anyone breaks a leg on those fire-escape steps, the landlord ought to be sued for every cent he possesses! [*She shuts door. Remembers she isn't speaking and returns to other room.*]

[*As* TOM *enters listlessly for his coffee, she turns her back to him and stands rigidly facing the window on the gloomy gray vault of the areaway. Its light on her face with its aged but childish features is cruelly sharp, satirical as a Daumier print.*]

[MUSIC UNDER: "AVE MARIA"]

[TOM *glances sheepishly but sullenly at her averted figure and slumps at the table. The coffee is scalding hot; he sips it and gasps and spits it back in the cup. At his gasp,* AMANDA *catches her breath and half turns. Then catches herself and turns back to window*]

[TOM *blows on his coffee, glancing sidewise at his mother. She clears her throat.* TOM *clears his. He starts to rise. Sinks back down again, scratches his head, clears his throat again.* AMANDA *coughs.* TOM *raises his cup in both hands to blow on it, his eyes staring over the rim of it at his mother for several moments. Then he slowly sets the cup down and awkwardly and hesitantly rises from the chair.*]

TOM [*hoarsely*]. Mother. I—I apologize, Mother. [AMANDA *draws a quick, shuddering breath. Her face works grotesquely. She breaks into childlike tears.*] I'm sorry for what I said, for everything that I said, I didn't mean it.

AMANDA [*sobbingly*]. My devotion has made me a witch and so I make myself hateful to my children!

TOM. *No,* you *don't.*

AMANDA. I worry so much, don't sleep, it makes me nervous!

TOM [*gently*]. I understand that.

AMANDA. I've had to put up a solitary battle all these years. But you're my right-hand bower! Don't fall down, don't fail!

TOM [*gently*]. I try, Mother.

AMANDA [*with great enthusiasm*]. Try and you will SUCCEED! [*The notion makes her breathless.*] Why, you—you're just *full* of natural endowments! Both of my children—they're *unusual* children! Don't you think I know it? I'm so—*proud!* Happy and—feel I've—so much to be thankful for but— Promise me one thing, Son!

TOM. What, Mother?

AMANDA. Promise, son, you'll—never be a drunkard!

TOM [*turns to her grinning*]. I will never be a drunkard, Mother.

AMANDA. That's what frightened me so, that you'd be drinking! Eat a bowl of Purina!

TOM. Just coffee, Mother.

AMANDA. Shredded wheat biscuit?

TOM. No. No, Mother, just coffee.

AMANDA. You can't put in a day's work on an empty stomach. You've got ten minutes—don't gulp! Drinking too-hot liquids makes cancer of the stomach. . . . Put cream in.

TOM. No, thank you.

AMANDA. To cool it.

TOM. No! No, thank you, I want it black.

AMANDA. I know, but it's not good for you. We have to do all that we can to build ourselves up. In these trying times we live in, all that we have to cling to is—each other. . . . That's why it's so important to— Tom, I— I sent out your sister so I could discuss something with you. If you hadn't spoken I would have spoken to you. [*Sits down*]

TOM [*gently*]. What is it, Mother, that you want to discuss?

AMANDA. *Laura!*

[TOM *puts his cup down slowly.*]

[LEGEND ON SCREEN: "LAURA"]

[MUSIC: "THE GLASS MENAGERIE"]

TOM. —Oh.—Laura . . .

AMANDA [*touching his sleeve*]. You know how Laura is. So quiet but—still water runs deep! She notices things and I think she—broods about them. [TOM *looks up.*] A few days ago I came in and she was crying.

TOM. What about?

AMANDA. You.

TOM. Me?

AMANDA. She has an idea that you're not happy here.

TOM. What gave her that idea?

AMANDA. What gives her any idea? However, you do act strangely. I—I'm not criticizing, understand *that!* I know your ambitions do not lie in the warehouse, that like everybody in the whole wide world—you've had to—make sacrifices, but—Tom—Tom—life's not easy, it calls for—Spartan endurance! There's so many things in my heart that I cannot describe to you! I've never told you but I—*loved* your father. . . .

TOM [*gently*]. I know that, Mother.

AMANDA. And you—when I see you taking after his ways! Staying out late—and—well, you *had* been drinking the night you were in that—terrifying condition! Laura says that you hate the apartment and that you go out nights to get away from it! Is that true, Tom?

TOM. No. You say there's so much in your heart that you can't describe to me. That's true of me, too. There's so much in my heart that I can't describe to *you!* So let's respect each other's—

AMANDA. But, why—*why,* Tom—are you always so *restless?* Where do you *go* to, nights?

TOM. I—go to the movies.

AMANDA. Why do you go to the movies so much, Tom?

TOM. I go to the movies because—I like adventure. Adventure is something I don't have much of at work, so I go to the movies.

AMANDA. But, Tom, you go to the movies *entirely* too *much!*

TOM. I like a lot of adventure.

[AMANDA *looks baffled, then hurt. As the familiar inquisition resumes he becomes hard and impatient again.* AMANDA *slips back into her querulous attitude toward him.*]

[IMAGE ON SCREEN: SAILING VESSEL WITH JOLLY ROGER]

AMANDA. Most young men find adventure in their careers.

TOM. Then most young men are not employed in a warehouse.

AMANDA. The world is full of young men employed in warehouses and offices and factories.

TOM. Do all of them find adventure in their careers?

AMANDA. They do or they do without it! Not everybody has a craze for adventure.

TOM. Man is by instinct a lover, a hunter, a fighter, and none of those instincts are given much play at the warehouse!

AMANDA. Man is by instinct! Don't quote instinct to me! Instinct is something that people have got away from! It belongs to animals! Christian adults don't want it!

TOM. What do Christian adults want, then, Mother?

AMANDA. Superior things! Things of the mind and the spirit! Only animals have to satisfy instincts! Surely your aims are somewhat higher than theirs! Than monkeys—pigs—

TOM. I reckon they're not.

AMANDA. You're joking. However, that isn't what I wanted to discuss.

TOM [*rising*]. I haven't much time.

AMANDA [*pushing his shoulders*]. Sit down.

TOM. You want me to punch in red at the warehouse, Mother?

AMANDA. You have five minutes. I want to talk about Laura.

[LEGEND: "PLANS AND PROVISIONS"]

TOM. All right! What about Laura?

AMANDA. We have to be making some plans and provisions for her. She's older than you, two years, and nothing has happened. She just drifts along doing nothing. It frightens me terribly how she just drifts along.

TOM. I guess she's the type that people call home girls.

AMANDA. There's no such type, and if there is, it's a pity! That is unless the home is hers, with a husband!

TOM. What?

AMANDA. Oh, I can see the handwriting on the wall as plain as I see the nose in front of my face! It's terrifying!

More and more you remind me of your father! He was out all hours without explanation!—then *left! Good-bye!*

And me with the bag to hold. I saw that letter you got from the Merchant Marine. I know what you're dreaming of. I'm not standing here blindfolded.

Very well, then. Then *do* it!

But not till there's somebody to take your place.

TOM. What do you mean?

AMANDA. I mean that as soon as Laura has got somebody to take care of her, married, a home of her own, independent—why, then you'll be free to go wherever you please, on land, on sea, whichever way the wind blows you!

But until that time you've got to look out for your sister. I don't

say me because I'm old and don't matter! I say for your sister because she's young and dependent.

I put her in business college—a dismal failure! Frightened her so it made her sick at the stomach.

I took her over to the Young People's League at the church. Another fiasco. She spoke to nobody, nobody spoke to her. Now all she does is fool with those pieces of glass and play those worn-out records. What kind of a life is that for a girl to lead?

TOM. What can I do about it?

AMANDA. Overcome selfishness!

Self, self, self is all that you ever think of!

[TOM *springs up and crosses to get his coat. It is ugly and bulky. He pulls on a cap with earmuffs.*]

Where is your muffler? Put your wool muffler on!

[*He snatches it angrily from the closet and tosses it around his neck and pulls both ends tight.*]

Tom! I haven't said what I had in mind to ask you.

TOM. I'm too late to—

AMANDA [*catching his arm—very importunately. Then shyly*]. Down at the warehouse, aren't there some—nice young men?

TOM. No!

AMANDA. There *must* be—*some* . . .

TOM. Mother—

[*Gesture*]

AMANDA. Find out one that's clean-living—doesn't drink and—ask him out for sister!

TOM. What?

AMANDA. For *sister!* To *meet!* Get *acquainted!*

TOM [*stamping to door*]. Oh, my *go-osh!*

AMANDA. Will you? [*He opens door. Imploringly*] Will you? [*He starts down.*] Will you? *Will* you, dear?

TOM [*calling back*]. Yes!

[AMANDA *closes the door hesitantly and with a troubled but faintly hopeful expression.*]

[SCREEN IMAGE: GLAMOR MAGAZINE COVER]

[*Spot* AMANDA *at phone*]

AMANDA. Ella Cartwright? This is Amanda Wingfield!

How are you, honey?

How is that kidney condition?

[*Count five*]

Horrors!

[*Count five*]

You're a Christian martyr, yes, honey, that's what you are, a Christian martyr!

Well, I just now happened to notice in my little red book that your subscription to the *Companion* has just run out! I knew that you wouldn't want to miss out on the wonderful serial starting in this new issue. It's by Bessie Mae Hopper, the first thing she's written since *Honeymoon for Three.*

Wasn't that a strange and interesting story? Well, this one is even lovelier, I believe. It has a sophisticated, society background. It's all about the horsey set on Long Island!

FADE OUT

scene 5

LEGEND ON SCREEN: "ANNUNCIATION." *Fade with music.*

It is early dusk of a spring evening. Supper has just been finished in the Wingfield apartment. AMANDA *and* LAURA *in light-colored dresses are removing dishes from the table, in the upstage area, which is shadowy, their movements formalized almost as a dance or ritual, their moving forms as pale and silent as moths.*

TOM, *in white shirt and trousers, rises from the table and crosses toward the fire-escape.*

AMANDA [*as he passes her*]. Son, will you do me a favor?

TOM. What?

AMANDA. Comb your hair! You look so pretty when your hair is combed! [TOM *slouches on sofa with evening paper. Enormous caption "Franco Triumphs"*] There is only one respect in which I would like you to emulate your father.

TOM. What respect is that?

AMANDA. The care he always took of his appearance. He never allowed himself to look untidy. [*He throws down the paper and crosses to fire-escape.*] Where are you going?

TOM. I'm going out to smoke.

AMANDA. You smoke too much. A pack a day at fifteen cents a pack. How much would that amount to in a month? Thirty times fifteen is how much, Tom? Figure it out and you will be

astounded at what you could save. Enough to give you a night-school course in accounting at Washington U! Just think what a wonderful thing that would be for you, Son!

[TOM *is unmoved by the thought.*]

TOM. I'd rather smoke. [*He steps out on landing, letting the screen door slam.*]

AMANDA [*sharply*]. I know! That's the tragedy of it. . . . [*Alone, she turns to look at her husband's picture.*]

[DANCE MUSIC: "ALL THE WORLD IS WAITING FOR THE SUNRISE!"]

TOM [*to the audience*]. Across the alley from us was the Paradise Dance Hall. On evenings in spring the windows and doors were open and the music came outdoors. Sometimes the lights were turned out except for a large glass sphere that hung from the ceiling. It would turn slowly about and filter the dusk with delicate rainbow colors. Then the orchestra played a waltz or a tango, something that had a slow and sensuous rhythm. Couples would come outside, to the relative privacy of the alley. You could see them kissing behind ash-pits and telephone poles.

This was the compensation for lives that passed like mine, without any change or adventure.

Adventure and change were imminent in this year. They were waiting around the corner for all these kids.

Suspended in the mist over Berchtesgaden,[1] caught in the folds of Chamberlain's umbrella—[2]

In Spain there was Guernica!

But here there was only hot swing music and liquor, dance halls, bars, and movies, and sex that hung in the gloom like a chandelier and flooded the world with brief, deceptive rainbows. . . .

All the world was waiting for bombardments!

[AMANDA *turns from the picture and comes outside.*]

AMANDA [*sighing*]. A fire-escape landing's a poor excuse for a porch. [*She spreads a newspaper on a step and sits down, gracefully and demurely as if she were settling into a swing on a Mississippi veranda.*] What are you looking at?

[1] ***Berchtesgaden,*** *the mountain retreat of Adolf Hitler, who held the key to Europe's fate at the time.*

[2] ***Chamberlain's umbrella.*** *Arthur Neville Chamberlain, the 70-year-old Conservative prime minister of England in the years leading to the Second World War, habitually carried an umbrella, which became a symbol of his timid and ineffectual policies.*

TOM. The moon.

AMANDA. Is there a moon this evening?

TOM. It's rising over Garfinkel's Delicatessen.

AMANDA. So it is! A little silver slipper of a moon. Have you made a wish on it yet?

TOM. Um-hum.

AMANDA. What did you wish for?

TOM. That's a secret.

AMANDA. A secret, huh? Well, I won't tell mine either. I will be just as mysterious as you.

TOM. I bet I can guess what yours is.

AMANDA. Is my head so transparent?

TOM. You're not a sphinx.

AMANDA. No, I don't have secrets. I'll tell you what I wished for on the moon. Success and happiness for my precious children! I wish for that whenever there's a moon, and when there isn't a moon, I wish for it, too.

TOM. I thought perhaps you wished for a gentleman caller.

AMANDA. Why do you say that?

TOM. Don't you remember asking me to fetch one?

AMANDA. I remember suggesting that it would be nice for your sister if you brought home some nice young man from the warehouse. I think that I've made that suggestion more than once.

TOM. Yes, you have made it repeatedly.

AMANDA. Well?

TOM. We are going to have one.

AMANDA. *What?*

TOM. A gentleman caller!

[THE ANNUNCIATION IS CELEBRATED WITH MUSIC.]

[AMANDA *rises.*]

[IMAGE ON SCREEN: CALLER WITH BOUQUET]

AMANDA. You mean you have asked some nice young man to come over?

TOM. Yep. I've asked him to dinner.

AMANDA. You really did?

TOM. I did!

AMANDA. You did, and did he—*accept?*

TOM. He did!

AMANDA. Well, well—well, well! That's—lovely!

TOM. I thought that you would be pleased.

AMANDA. It's definite, then?

TOM. Very definite.

AMANDA. Soon?

TOM. Very soon.

AMANDA. For heaven's sake, stop putting on and tell me some things, will you?

TOM. What things do you want me to tell you?

AMANDA. *Naturally* I would like to know when he's *coming!*

TOM. He's coming tomorrow.

AMANDA. *Tomorrow?*

TOM. Yep. Tomorrow.

AMANDA. But, Tom!

TOM. Yes, Mother?

AMANDA. Tomorrow gives me no time!

TOM. Time for what?

AMANDA. Preparations! Why didn't you phone me at once, as soon as you asked him, the minute that he accepted? Then, don't you see, I could have been getting ready!

TOM. You don't have to make any fuss.

AMANDA. Oh, Tom, Tom, Tom, of course I have to make a fuss! I want things nice, not sloppy! Not thrown together. I'll certainly have to do some fast thinking, won't I?

TOM. I don't see why you have to think at all.

AMANDA. You just don't know. We can't have a gentleman caller in a pig-sty! All my wedding silver has to be polished, the monogrammed table linen ought to be laundered! The windows have to be washed and fresh curtains put up. And how about clothes? We have to *wear* something, don't we?

TOM. Mother, this boy is no one to make a fuss over!

AMANDA. Do you realize he's the first young man we've introduced to your sister?

It's terrible, dreadful, disgraceful that poor little sister has never received a single gentleman caller! Tom, come inside! [*She opens the screen door.*]

TOM. What for?

AMANDA. I want to ask you some things.

TOM. If you're going to make such a fuss, I'll call it off, I'll tell him not to come!

AMANDA. You certainly won't do anything of the kind. Nothing offends people worse than broken engagements. It simply means I'll have to work like a Turk! We won't be brilliant, but we will pass inspection. Come on inside. [TOM *follows, groaning.*] Sit down.

TOM. Any particular place you would like me to sit?

AMANDA. Thank heavens I've got that new sofa! I'm also making payments on a floor lamp I'll have sent out! And put the chintz covers on, they'll brighten things up! Of course I'd hoped to have these walls re-papered. . . . What is the young man's name?

TOM. His name is O'Connor.

AMANDA. That, of course, means fish—tomorrow is Friday! I'll have that salmon loaf—with Durkee's dressing! What does he do? He works at the warehouse?

TOM. Of course! How else would I—

AMANDA. Tom, he—doesn't drink?

TOM. Why do you ask me that?

AMANDA. Your father *did!*

TOM. Don't get started on that!

AMANDA. He *does* drink, then?

TOM. Not that I know of!

AMANDA. Make sure, be certain! The last thing I want for my daughter's a boy who drinks!

TOM. Aren't you being a little bit premature? Mr. O'Connor has not yet appeared on the scene!

AMANDA. But will tomorrow. To meet your sister, and what do I know about his character? Nothing! Old maids are better off than wives of drunkards!

TOM. Oh, my God!

AMANDA. Be still!

TOM [*leaning forward to whisper*]. Lots of fellows meet girls whom they don't marry!

AMANDA. Oh, talk sensibly, Tom—and don't be sarcastic! [*She has gotten a hairbrush.*]

TOM. What are you doing?

AMANDA. I'm brushing that cow-lick down!

What is this young man's position at the warehouse?

TOM [*submitting grimly to the brush and the interrogation*]. This young man's position is that of a shipping clerk, Mother.

AMANDA. Sounds to me like a fairly responsible job, the sort of a job *you* would be in if you just had more *get-up.*

What is his salary? Have you any idea?

TOM. I would judge it to be approximately eighty-five dollars a month.

AMANDA. Well—not princely, but—

TOM. Twenty more than I make.

AMANDA. Yes, how well I know! But for a family man, eighty-five dollars a month is not much more than you can just get by on. . . .

TOM. Yes, but Mr. O'Connor is not a family man.

AMANDA. He might be, mightn't he? Some time in the future?

TOM. I see. Plans and provisions.

AMANDA. You are the only young man that I know of who ignores the fact that the future becomes the present, the present the past, and the past turns into everlasting regret if you don't plan for it!

TOM. I will think that over and see what I can make of it.

AMANDA. Don't be supercilious with your mother! Tell me some more about this—what do you call him?

TOM. James D. O'Connor. The D. is for Delaney.

AMANDA. Irish on *both* sides! *Gracious!* And doesn't drink?

TOM. Shall I call him up and ask him right this minute?

AMANDA. The only way to find out about those things is to make discreet inquiries at the proper moment. When I was a girl in Blue Mountain and it was suspected that a young man drank, the girl whose attentions he had been receiving, if any girl *was,* would sometimes speak to the minister of his church, or rather her father would if her father was living, and sort of feel him out on the young man's character. That is the way such things are discreetly handled to keep a young woman from making a tragic mistake!

TOM. Then how did you happen to make a tragic mistake?

AMANDA. That innocent look of your father's had everyone fooled!

He *smiled*—the world was *enchanted!*

No girl can do worse than put herself at the mercy of a handsome appearance!

I hope that Mr. O'Connor is not too good-looking.

TOM. No, he's not too good-looking. He's covered with freckles and hasn't too much of a nose.

AMANDA. He's not right-down homely, though?

TOM. Not right-down homely. Just medium homely, I'd say.

AMANDA. Character's what to look for in a man.

TOM. That's what I've always said, Mother.

AMANDA. You've never said anything of the kind and I suspect you would never give it a thought.

TOM. Don't be so suspicious of me.

AMANDA. At least I hope he's the type that's up and coming.

TOM. I think he really goes in for self-improvement.

AMANDA. What reason have you to think so?

TOM. He goes to night school.

AMANDA [*beaming*]. Splendid! What does he do, I mean study?

TOM. Radio engineering and public speaking!

AMANDA. Then he has visions of being advanced in the world! Any young man who studies public speaking is aiming to have an executive job some day!

And radio engineering? A thing for the future!

Both of these facts are very illuminating. Those are the sort of things that a mother should know concerning any young man who comes to call on her daughter. Seriously or—not.

TOM. One little warning. He doesn't know about Laura. I didn't let on that we had dark ulterior motives. I just said, why don't you come and have dinner with us? He said okay and that was the whole conversation.

AMANDA. I bet it was! You're eloquent as an oyster.

However, he'll know about Laura when he gets here. When he sees how lovely and sweet and pretty she is, he'll thank his lucky stars he was asked to dinner.

TOM. Mother, you mustn't expect too much of Laura.

AMANDA. What do you mean?

TOM. Laura seems all those things to you and me because she's ours and we love her. We don't even notice she's crippled any more.

AMANDA. Don't say crippled! You know that I never allow that word to be used!

TOM. But face facts, Mother. She is and—that's not all—

AMANDA. What do you mean "not all"?

TOM. Laura is very different from other girls.

AMANDA. I think the difference is all to her advantage.

TOM. Not quite all—in the eyes of others—strangers—she's terribly shy and lives in a world of her own and those things make her seem a little peculiar to people outside the house.

AMANDA. Don't say peculiar.

TOM. Face the facts. She is.

[THE DANCE-HALL MUSIC CHANGES TO A TANGO THAT HAS A MINOR AND SOMEWHAT OMINOUS TONE.]

AMANDA. In what way is she peculiar—may I ask?

TOM [*gently*]. She lives in a world of her own—a world of—little glass ornaments, Mother. . . . [*Gets up.* AMANDA *remains*

holding brush, looking at him, troubled.] She plays old phonograph records and—that's about all— [*He glances at himself in the mirror and crosses to door.*]

AMANDA [*sharply*]. Where are you going?

TOM. I'm going to the movies. [*Out screen door*]

AMANDA. Not to the movies, every night to the movies! [*Follows quickly to screen door*] I don't believe you always go to the movies! [*He is gone.* AMANDA *looks worriedly after him for a moment. Then vitality and optimism return and she turns from the door. Crossing to portieres*] Laura! Laura! [LAURA *answers from kitchenette.*]

LAURA. Yes, Mother.

AMANDA. Let those dishes go and come in front! [LAURA *appears with dish towel. Gaily*] Laura, come here and make a wish on the moon!

[SCREEN IMAGE: MOON]

LAURA [*entering*]. Moon—moon?

AMANDA. A little silver slipper of a moon.

Look over your left shoulder, Laura, and make a wish!

[LAURA *looks faintly puzzled as if called out of sleep.* AMANDA *seizes her shoulders and turns her at an angle by the door.*]

Now!

Now, darling, *wish!*

LAURA. What shall I wish for, Mother?

AMANDA [*her voice trembling and her eyes suddenly filling with tears*]. Happiness! Good fortune!

[*The violin rises and the stage dims out.*]

CURTAIN

scene 6

IMAGE: HIGH SCHOOL HERO.

And so the following evening I brought Jim home to dinner. I had known Jim slightly in high school. In high school Jim was a hero. He had tremendous Irish good nature and vitality with the scrubbed and polished look of white chinaware. He seemed to move in a continual spotlight. He was a star in basketball, captain of the debating club, president of the senior class and the glee club and he sang the male lead in the annual light operas. He was always

running or bounding, never just walking. He seemed always at the point of defeating the law of gravity. He was shooting with such velocity through his adolescence that you would logically expect him to arrive at nothing short of the White House by the time he was thirty. But Jim apparently ran into more interference after his graduation from Soldan. His speed had definitely slowed. Six years after he left high school he was holding a job that wasn't much better than mine.

[IMAGE: CLERK]

He was the only one at the warehouse with whom I was on friendly terms. I was valuable to him as someone who could remember his former glory, who had seen him win basketball games and the silver cup in debating. He knew of my secret practice of retiring to a cabinet of the wash-room to work on poems when business was slack in the warehouse. He called me Shakespeare. And while the other boys in the warehouse regarded me with suspicious hostility, Jim took a humorous attitude toward me. Gradually his attitude affected the others, their hostility wore off and they also began to smile at me as people smile at an oddly fashioned dog who trots across their path at some distance.

I knew that Jim and Laura had known each other at Soldan, and I had heard Laura speak admiringly of his voice. I didn't know if Jim remembered her or not. In high school Laura had been as unobtrusive as Jim had been astonishing. If he did remember Laura, it was not as my sister, for when I asked him to dinner, he grinned and said, "You know, Shakespeare, I never thought of you as having folks!"

He was about to discover that I did. . . .

[LIGHT UP STAGE.]

[LEGEND ON SCREEN: "THE ACCENT OF A COMING FOOT"]

[*Friday evening. It is about five o'clock of a late spring evening which comes "scattering poems in the sky."*]

[*A delicate lemony light is in the Wingfield apartment.*]

[AMANDA *has worked like a Turk in preparation for the gentleman caller. The results are astonishing. The new floor lamp with its rose-silk shade is in place, a colored paper lantern conceals the broken light fixture in the ceiling, new billowing white curtains are at the windows, chintz covers are on chairs and sofa, a pair of new sofa pillows make their initial appearance.*]

[*Open boxes and tissue paper are scattered on the floor.*]

[LAURA *stands in the middle with lifted arms while* AMANDA *crouches before her, adjusting the hem of the new dress, devout and ritualistic. The dress is colored and designed by memory. The arrangement of* LAURA's *hair is changed; it is softer and more becoming. A fragile, unearthly prettiness has come out in* LAURA: *she is like a piece of translucent glass touched by light, given a momentary radiance, not actual, not lasting.*]

AMANDA [*impatiently*]. Why are you trembling?

LAURA. Mother, you've made me so nervous!

AMANDA. How have I made you nervous?

LAURA. By all this fuss! You make it seem so important!

AMANDA. I don't understand you, Laura. You couldn't be satisfied with just sitting home, and yet whenever I try to arrange something for you, you seem to resist it.

[*She gets up.*]

Now take a look at yourself.

No, wait! Wait just a moment—I have an idea!

LAURA. What is it now?

[AMANDA *produces two powder puffs which she wraps in handkerchiefs and stuffs in* LAURA's *bosom.*]

LAURA. Mother, what are you doing?

AMANDA. They call them "Gay Deceivers"!

LAURA. I won't wear them!

AMANDA. You will!

LAURA. Why should I?

AMANDA. Because, to be painfully honest, your chest is flat.

LAURA. You make it seem like we were setting a trap.

AMANDA. All pretty girls are a trap, a pretty trap, and men expect them to be.

[LEGEND: "A PRETTY TRAP"]

Now look at yourself, young lady. This is the prettiest you will ever be!

I've got to fix myself now! You're going to be surprised by your mother's appearance! [*She crosses through portieres, humming gaily.*]

[LAURA *moves slowly to the long mirror and stares solemnly at herself.*]

[*A wind blows the white curtains inward in a slow, graceful motion and with a faint, sorrowful sighing.*]

AMANDA [*off stage*]. It isn't dark enough yet. [*She turns slowly before the mirror with a troubled look.*]

[LEGEND ON SCREEN: "THIS IS MY SISTER: CELEBRATE HER WITH STRINGS!" MUSIC]

AMANDA [*laughing, off*]. I'm going to show you something. I'm going to make a spectacular appearance!

LAURA. What is it, Mother?

AMANDA. Possess your soul in patience—you will see!

Something I've resurrected from that old trunk! Styles haven't changed so terribly much after all. . . .

[*She parts the portieres.*]

Now just look at your mother!

[*She wears a girlish frock of yellowed voile with a blue silk sash. She carries a bunch of jonquils—the legend of her youth is nearly revived. Feverishly*]

This is the dress in which I led the cotillion. Won the cakewalk twice at Sunset Hill, wore one spring to the Governor's ball in Jackson!

See how I sashayed around the ballroom, Laura?

[*She raises her skirt and does a mincing step around the room.*]

I wore it on Sundays for my gentlemen callers! I had it on the day I met your father—

I had malaria fever all that spring. The change of climate from East Tennessee to the Delta—weakened resistance—I had a little temperature all the time—not enough to be serious—just enough to make me restless and giddy!—Invitations poured in—parties all over the Delta!—"Stay in bed," said Mother, "you have fever!"—but I just wouldn't.—I took quinine but kept on going, going!—Evenings, dances!—Afternoons, long, long rides! Picnics—lovely!—So lovely, that country in May.—All lacy with dogwood, literally flooded with jonquils!—That was the spring I had the craze for jonquils. Jonquils became an absolute obsession. Mother said, "Honey, there's no more room for jonquils." And still I kept on bringing in more jonquils. Whenever, wherever I saw them, I'd say, "Stop! Stop! I see jonquils!" I made the young men help me gather the jonquils! It was a joke, Amanda and her jonquils! Finally there were no more vases to hold them, every available space was filled with jonquils. No vases to hold them? All right, I'll hold them myself! And then I—[*She stops in front of the picture.* MUSIC] met your father!

Malaria fever and jonquils and then—this—boy. . . .

[*She switches on the rose-colored lamp.*]

I hope they get here before it starts to rain.

[*She crosses upstage and places the jonquils in bowl on table.*]

I gave your brother a little extra change so he and Mr. O'Connor could take the service car home.

LAURA [*with altered look*]. What did you say his name was?

AMANDA. O'Connor.

LAURA. What is his first name?

AMANDA. I don't remember. Oh, yes, I do. It was—Jim!

[LAURA *sways slightly and catches hold of a chair.*]

[LEGEND ON SCREEN: "NOT JIM!"]

LAURA [*faintly*]. Not—Jim!

AMANDA. Yes, that was it, it was Jim! I've never known a Jim that wasn't nice!

[MUSIC: OMINOUS]

LAURA. Are you sure his name is Jim O'Connor?

AMANDA. Yes. Why?

LAURA. Is he the one that Tom used to know in high school?

AMANDA. He didn't say so. I think he just got to know him at the warehouse.

LAURA. There was a Jim O'Connor we both knew in high school —[*Then, with effort*] If that is the one that Tom is bringing to dinner—you'll have to excuse me, I won't come to the table.

AMANDA. What sort of nonsense is this?

LAURA. You asked me once if I'd ever liked a boy. Don't you remember I showed you this boy's picture?

AMANDA. You mean the boy you showed me in the year book?

LAURA. Yes, that boy.

AMANDA. Laura, Laura, were you in love with that boy?

LAURA. I don't know, Mother. All I know is I couldn't sit at the table if it was him!

AMANDA. It won't be him! It isn't the least bit likely. But whether it is or not, you will come to the table. You will not be excused.

LAURA. I'll have to be, Mother.

AMANDA. I don't intend to humor your silliness, Laura. I've had too much from you and your brother, both!

So just sit down and compose yourself till they come. Tom has forgotten his key so you'll have to let them in, when they arrive.

LAURA [*panicky*]. Oh, Mother—*you* answer the door!

AMANDA [*lightly*]. I'll be in the kitchen—busy!

LAURA. Oh, Mother, please answer the door, don't make me do it!

AMANDA [*crossing into kitchenette*]. I've got to fix the dressing for the salmon. Fuss, fuss—silliness!—over a gentleman caller!

[*Door swings shut.* LAURA *is left alone.*]

[LEGEND: "TERROR!"]

[*She utters a low moan and turns off the lamp, sits stiffly on the edge of the sofa, knotting her fingers together.*]

[LEGEND ON SCREEN: "THE OPENING OF A DOOR!"]

[TOM *and* JIM *appear on the fire-escape steps and climb to landing. Hearing their approach,* LAURA *rises with a panicky gesture. She retreats to the portieres.*]

[*The doorbell.* LAURA *catches her breath and touches her throat. Low drums*]

AMANDA [*calling*]. Laura, sweetheart! The door!

[LAURA *stares at it without moving.*]

TIM. I think we just beat the rain.

TOM. Uh-huh. [*He rings again, nervously.* JIM *whistles and fishes for a cigarette.*]

AMANDA [*very, very gaily*]. Laura, that is your brother and Mr. O'Connor! Will you let them in, darling?

[LAURA *crosses toward kitchenette door.*]

LAURA [*breathlessly*]. Mother—you go to the door!

[AMANDA *steps out of kitchenette and stares furiously at* LAURA. *She points imperiously at the door.*]

LAURA. Please, please!

AMANDA [*in a fierce whisper*]. What is the matter with you, you silly thing?

LAURA [*desperately*]. Please, you answer it, *please!*

AMANDA. I told you I wasn't going to humor you, Laura. Why have you chosen this moment to lose your mind?

LAURA. Please, please, please, you go!

AMANDA. You'll have to go to the door because I can't!

LAURA [*despairingly*]. I can't either!

AMANDA. *Why?*

LAURA. I'm *sick!*

AMANDA. I'm sick, too—of your nonsense! Why can't you and your brother be normal people? Fantastic whims and behavior!

[TOM *gives a long ring.*]

Preposterous goings on! Can you give me one reason—[*Calls*

out lyrically] COMING! JUST ONE SECOND!—why you should be afraid to open a door? Now you answer it, Laura!

LAURA. Oh, oh, oh . . . [*She returns through the portieres. Darts to the victrola and winds it frantically and turns it on*]

AMANDA. Laura Wingfield, you march right to that door!

LAURA. Yes—yes, Mother!

[*A faraway, scratchy rendition of "Dardanella" softens the air and gives her strength to move through it. She slips to the door and draws it cautiously open.*]

[TOM *enters with the caller,* JIM O'CONNOR.]

TOM. Laura, this is Jim. Jim, this is my sister, Laura.

JIM [*stepping inside*]. I didn't know that Shakespeare had a sister!

LAURA [*retreating stiff and trembling from the door*]. How—how do you do?

JIM [*heartily extending his hand*]. Okay!

[LAURA *touches it hesitantly with hers.*]

JIM. Your hand's *cold,* Laura!

LAURA. Yes, well—I've been playing the victrola. . . .

JIM. Must have been playing classical music on it! You ought to play a little hot swing music to warm you up!

LAURA. Excuse me—I haven't finished playing the victrola. . . . [*She turns awkwardly and hurries into the front room. She pauses a second by the victrola. Then catches her breath and darts through the portieres like a frightened deer*]

JIM [*grinning*]. What was the matter?

TOM. Oh—with Laura? Laura is—terribly shy.

JIM. Shy, huh? It's unusual to meet a shy girl nowadays. I don't believe you ever mentioned you had a sister.

TOM. Well, now you know. I have one. Here is the *Post Dispatch.* You want a piece of it?

JIM. Uh-huh.

TOM. What piece? The comics?

JIM. Sports! [*Glances at it*] Ole Dizzy Dean[1] is on his bad behavior.

TOM [*disinterest*]. Yeah? [*Lights cigarette and crosses back to fire-escape door*]

[1] ***Ole Dizzy Dean,*** *Jerome Hanna "Dizzy" Dean, whose brilliant career as a baseball pitcher for the St. Louis Cardinals was disrupted by a shoulder injury in 1937.*

JIM. Where are *you* going?

TOM. I'm going out on the terrace.

JIM [*goes after him*]. You know, Shakespeare—I'm going to sell you a bill of goods!

TOM. What goods?

JIM. A course I'm taking.

TOM. Huh?

JIM. In public speaking! You and me, we're not the warehouse type.

TOM. Thanks—that's good news.

But what has public speaking got to do with it?

JIM. It fits you for—executive positions!

TOM. Awww.

JIM. I tell you it's done a helluva lot for me.

[IMAGE: EXECUTIVE AT DESK]

TOM. In what respect?

JIM. In every! Ask yourself what is the difference between you an' me and men in the office down front? Brains?—No!—Ability?—No! Then what? Just one little thing—

TOM. What is that one little thing?

JIM. Primarily it amounts to—social poise! Being able to square up to people and hold your own on any social level!

AMANDA [*off stage*]. Tom?

TOM. Yes, Mother?

AMANDA. Is that you and Mr. O'Connor?

TOM. Yes, Mother.

AMANDA. Well, you just make yourselves comfortable in there.

TOM. Yes, Mother.

AMANDA. Ask Mr. O'Connor if he would like to wash his hands.

JIM. Aw, no—no—thank you—I took care of that at the warehouse. Tom—

TOM. Yes?

JIM. Mr. Mendoza was speaking to me about you.

TOM. Favorably?

JIM. What do you think?

TOM. Well—

JIM. You're going to be out of a job if you don't wake up.

TOM. I am waking up—

JIM. You show no signs.

TOM. The signs are interior.

[IMAGE ON SCREEN: THE SAILING VESSEL WITH JOLLY ROGER AGAIN]

TOM. I'm planning to change. [*He leans over the rail speaking with quiet exhilaration. The incandescent marquees and signs of the first-run movie houses light his face from across the alley. He looks like a voyager.*] I'm right at the point of committing myself to a future that doesn't include the warehouse and Mr. Mendoza or even a night-school course in public speaking.

JIM. What are you gassing about?

TOM. I'm tired of the movies.

JIM. Movies!

TOM. Yes, movies! Look at them— [*A wave toward the marvels of Grand Avenue*] All of those glamorous people—having adventures—hogging it all, gobbling the whole thing up! You know what happens? People go to the *movies* instead of *moving!* Hollywood characters are supposed to have all the adventures for everybody in America, while everybody in America sits in a dark room and watches them have them! Yes, until there's a war. That's when adventure becomes available to the masses! *Everyone's* dish, not only Gable's! Then the people in the dark room come out of the dark room to have some adventures themselves—Goody, goody! —It's our turn now, to go to the South Sea Island—to make a safari—to be exotic, far-off!—But I'm not patient. I don't want to wait till then. I'm tired of the *movies* and I am *about* to *move!*

JIM [*incredulously*]. Move?

TOM. Yes.

JIM. When?

TOM. Soon!

JIM. Where? Where?

[THEME THREE MUSIC SEEMS TO ANSWER THE QUESTION, WHILE TOM THINKS IT OVER. HE SEARCHES AMONG HIS POCKETS.]

TOM. I'm starting to boil inside. I know I seem dreamy, but inside—well, I'm boiling!—Whenever I pick up a shoe, I shudder a little thinking how short life is and what I am doing!—Whatever that means, I know it doesn't mean shoes—except as something to wear on a traveler's feet! [*Finds paper*] Look—

JIM. What?

TOM. I'm a member.

JIM [*reading*]. The Union of Merchant Seamen.

TOM. I paid my dues this month, instead of the light bill.

JIM. You will regret it when they turn the lights off.

TOM. I won't be here.

JIM. How about your mother?

TOM. I'm like my father. The bastard son of a bastard! See how he grins? And he's been absent going on sixteen years!

JIM. You're just talking, you drip. How does your mother feel about it?

TOM. Shhh!—Here comes Mother! Mother is not acquainted with my plans!

AMANDA [*enters portieres*]. Where are you all?

TOM. On the terrace, Mother.

[*They start inside. She advances to them.* TOM *is distinctly shocked at her appearance. Even* JIM *blinks a little. He is making his first contact with girlish Southern vivacity and in spite of the night-school course in public speaking is somewhat thrown off the beam by the unexpected outlay of social charm.*]

[*Certain responses are attempted by* JIM *but are swept aside by* AMANDA'S *gay laughter and chatter.* TOM *is embarrassed but after the first shock* JIM *reacts very warmly. Grins and chuckles, is altogether won over*]

[IMAGE: AMANDA AS A GIRL]

AMANDA [*coyly smiling, shaking her girlish ringlets*]. Well, well, well, so this is Mr. O'Connor. Introductions entirely unnecessary. I've heard so much about you from my boy. I finally said to him, Tom—good gracious!—why don't you bring this paragon to supper? I'd like to meet this nice young man at the warehouse!—Instead of just hearing him sing your praises so much!

I don't know why my son is so stand-offish—that's not Southern behavior!

Let's sit down and—I think we could stand a little more air in here! Tom, leave the door open. I felt a nice fresh breeze a moment ago. Where has it gone to?

Mmm, so warm already! And not quite summer, even. We're going to burn up when summer really gets started.

However, we're having—we're having a very light supper. I think light things are better fo' this time of year. The same as light clothes are. Light clothes an' light food are what warm weather calls fo'. You know our blood gets so thick during th' winter—it takes a while fo' us to *adjust* ou'selves!—when the season changes . . .

It's come so quick this year. I wasn't prepared. All of a sudden—

heavens! Already summer!—I ran to the trunk an' pulled out this light dress— Terribly old! Historical almost! But feels so good —so good an' co-ol, y' know. . . .

TOM. Mother—

AMANDA. Yes, honey?

TOM. How about—supper?

AMANDA. Honey, you go ask Sister if supper is ready! You know that Sister is in full charge of supper!

Tell her you hungry boys are waiting for it.

[*To* JIM]

Have you met Laura?

JIM. She—

AMANDA. Let you in? Oh, good, you've met already! It's rare for a girl as sweet an' pretty as Laura to be domestic! But Laura is, thank heavens, not only pretty but also very domestic. I'm not at all. I never was a bit. I never could make a thing but angel-food cake. Well, in the South we had so many servants. Gone, gone, gone. All vestige of gracious living! Gone completely! I wasn't prepared for what the future brought me. All of my gentlemen callers were sons of planters and so of course I assumed that I would be married to one and raise my family on a large piece of land with plenty of servants. But man proposes—and woman accepts the proposal!—To vary that old, old saying a little bit—I married no planter! I married a man who worked for the telephone company!—That gallantly smiling gentleman over there! [*Points to the picture*] A telephone man who—fell in love with long-distance!—Now he travels and I don't even know where!—But what am I going on for about my—tribulations?

Tell me yours—I hope you don't have any!

Tom?

TOM [*returning*]. Yes, Mother?

AMANDA. Is supper nearly ready?

TOM. It looks to me like supper is on the table.

AMANDA. Let me look— [*She rises prettily and looks through portieres.*] Oh, lovely!—But where is Sister?

TOM. Laura is not feeling well and she says that she thinks she'd better not come to the table.

AMANDA. What?—Nonsense!—Laura? Oh, Laura!

LAURA [*off stage, faintly*]. Yes, Mother.

AMANDA. You really must come to the table. We won't be seated until you come to the table!

Come in, Mr. O'Connor. You sit over there, and I'll—

Laura? Laura Wingfield!

You're keeping us waiting, honey! We can't say grace until you come to the table!

[*The back door is pushed weakly open and* LAURA *comes in. She is obviously quite faint, her lips trembling, her eyes wide and staring. She moves unsteadily toward the table.*]

[LEGEND: "TERROR!"]

[*Outside a summer storm is coming abruptly. The white curtains billow inward at the windows and there is a sorrowful murmur and deep blue dusk.*]

[LAURA *suddenly stumbles—she catches at a chair with a faint moan.*]

TOM. Laura!

AMANDA. Laura!

[*There is a clap of thunder.*]

[LEGEND: "AH!"]

[*Despairingly*]

Why, Laura, you *are* sick, darling! Tom, help your sister into the living room, dear!

Sit in the living room, Laura—rest on the sofa.

Well!

[*To the gentleman caller*]

Standing over the hot stove made her ill!—I told her that it was just too warm this evening, but—

[TOM *comes back in.* LAURA *is on the sofa.*]

Is Laura all right now?

TOM. Yes.

AMANDA. What *is* that? Rain? A nice cool rain has come up!

[*She gives the gentleman caller a frightened look.*]

I think we may—have grace—now . . .

[TOM *looks at her stupidly.*]

Tom, honey—you say grace!

TOM. Oh . . .

"For these and all thy mercies—"

[*They bow their heads,* AMANDA *stealing a nervous glance at* JIM. *In the living room* LAURA, *stretched on the sofa, clenches her hands to her lips, to hold back a shuddering sob.*]

God's Holy Name be praised—

THE SCENE DIMS OUT

scene 7

A Souvenir.

Half an hour later. Dinner is just being finished in the upstage area which is concealed by the drawn portieres.

As the curtain rises LAURA *is still huddled upon the sofa, her feet drawn under her, her head resting on a pale blue pillow, her eyes wide and mysteriously watchful. The new floor lamp with its shade of rose-colored silk gives a soft, becoming light to her face, bringing out the fragile, unearthly prettiness which usually escapes attention. There is a steady murmur of rain, but it is slackening and stops soon after the scene begins; the air outside becomes pale and luminous as the moon breaks out.*

A moment after the curtain rises, the lights in both rooms flicker and go out.

JIM. Hey, there, Mr. Light Bulb!

[AMANDA *laughs nervously.*]

[LEGEND: "SUSPENSION OF A PUBLIC SERVICE"]

AMANDA. Where was Moses when the lights went out? Ha-ha. Do you know the answer to that one, Mr. O'Connor?

JIM. No, Ma'am, what's the answer?

AMANDA. In the dark!

[JIM *laughs appreciatively.*]

Everybody sit still. I'll light the candles. Isn't it lucky we have them on the table? Where's a match? Which of you gentlemen can provide a match?

JIM. Here.

AMANDA. Thank you, sir.

JIM. Not at all, Ma'am!

AMANDA. I guess the fuse has burnt out. Mr. O'Connor, can you tell a burnt-out fuse? I know I can't and Tom is a total loss when it comes to mechanics.

[SOUND: GETTING UP: VOICES RECEDE A LITTLE TO KITCHENETTE]

Oh, be careful you don't bump into something. We don't want our gentleman caller to break his neck. Now wouldn't that be a fine howdy-do?

JIM. Ha-ha!

Where is the fuse-box?

AMANDA. Right here next to the stove. Can you see anything?

JIM. Just a minute.

AMANDA. Isn't electricity a mysterious thing?

Wasn't it Benjamin Franklin who tied a key to a kite?

We live in such a mysterious universe, don't we? Some people say that science clears up all the mysteries for us. In my opinion it only creates more!

Have you found it yet?

JIM. No, Ma'am. All these fuses look okay to me.

AMANDA. Tom!

TOM. Yes, Mother?

AMANDA. That light bill I gave you several days ago. The one I told you we got the notices about?

[LEGEND: "HA!"]

TOM. Oh.—Yeah.

AMANDA. You didn't neglect to pay it by any chance?

TOM. Why, I—

AMANDA. Didn't! I might have known it!

JIM. Shakespeare probably wrote a poem on that light bill, Mrs. Wingfield.

AMANDA. I might have known better than to trust him with it! There's such a high price for negligence in this world!

JIM. Maybe the poem will win a ten-dollar prize.

AMANDA. We'll just have to spend the remainder of the evening in the nineteenth century, before Mr. Edison made the Mazda lamp!

JIM. Candlelight is my favorite kind of light.

AMANDA. That shows you're romantic! But that's no excuse for Tom.

Well, we got through dinner. Very considerate of them to let us get through dinner before they plunged us into everlasting darkness, wasn't it, Mr. O'Connor?

JIM. Ha-ha!

AMANDA. Tom, as a penalty for your carelessness you can help me with the dishes.

JIM. Let me give you a hand.

AMANDA. Indeed you will not!

JIM. I ought to be good for something.

AMANDA. Good for something? [*Her tone is rhapsodic.*]

You? Why, Mr. O'Connor, nobody, *nobody's* given me this much entertainment in years—as you have!

JIM. Aw, now, Mrs. Wingfield!

AMANDA. I'm not exaggerating, not one bit! But Sister is all by her lonesome. You go keep her company in the parlor!

I'll give you this lovely old candelabrum that used to be on the altar at the church of the Heavenly Rest. It was melted a little out of shape when the church burnt down. Lightning struck it one spring. Gypsy Jones was holding a revival at the time and he intimated that the church was destroyed because the Episcopalians gave card parties.

JIM. Ha-ha.

AMANDA. And how about you coaxing Sister to drink a little wine? I think it would be good for her! Can you carry both at once?

JIM. Sure. I'm Superman!

AMANDA. Now, Thomas, get into this apron!

[*The door of kitchenette swings closed on* AMANDA'S *gay laughter; the flickering light approaches the portieres.*]

[LAURA *sits up nervously as he enters. Her speech at first is low and breathless from the almost intolerable strain of being alone with a stranger.*]

[THE LEGEND: "I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU REMEMBER ME AT ALL!"]

[*In her first speeches in this scene, before* JIM'S *warmth overcomes her paralyzing shyness,* LAURA'S *voice is thin and breathless as though she has just run up a steep flight of stairs.*]

[JIM'S *attitude is gently humorous. In playing this scene it should be stressed that while the incident is apparently unimportant, it is to* LAURA *the climax of her secret life.*]

JIM. Hello, there, Laura.

LAURA [*faintly*]. Hello. [*She clears her throat.*]

JIM. How are you feeling now? Better?

LAURA. Yes. Yes, thank you.

JIM. This is for you. A little dandelion wine. [*He extends it toward her with extravagant gallantry.*]

LAURA. Thank you.

JIM. Drink it—but don't get drunk!

[*He laughs heartily.* LAURA *takes the glass uncertainly; laughs shyly.*]

Where shall I set the candles?

LAURA. Oh—oh, anywhere . . .

JIM. How about here on the floor? Any objections?

LAURA. No.

JIM. I'll spread a newspaper under to catch the drippings. I like to sit on the floor. Mind if I do?

LAURA. Oh, no.

JIM. Give me a pillow?

LAURA. What?

JIM. A pillow!

LAURA. Oh . . . [*Hands him one quickly*]

JIM. How about you? Don't you like to sit on the floor?

LAURA. Oh—yes.

JIM. Why don't you, then?

LAURA. I—will.

JIM. Take a pillow! [LAURA *does. Sits on the other side of the candelabrum.* JIM *crosses his legs and smiles engagingly at her.*] I can't hardly see you sitting way over there.

LAURA. I can—see you.

JIM. I know, but that's not fair, I'm in the limelight. [LAURA *moves her pillow closer.*] Good! Now I can see you! Comfortable?

LAURA. Yes.

JIM. So am I. Comfortable as a cow! Will you have some gum?

LAURA. No, thank you.

JIM. I think that I will indulge, with your permission. [*Musingly unwraps it and holds it up*] Think of the fortune made by the guy that invented the first piece of chewing gum. Amazing, huh? The Wrigley Building is one of the sights of Chicago.—I saw it summer before last when I went up to the Century of Progress.[1] Did you take in the Century of Progress?

LAURA. No, I didn't.

JIM. Well, it was quite a wonderful exposition. What impressed me most was the Hall of Science. Gives you an idea of what the future will be in America, even more wonderful than the present time is! [*Pause. Smiling at her*] Your brother tells me you're shy. Is that right, Laura?

LAURA. I—don't know.

JIM. I judge you to be an old-fashioned type of girl. Well, I

[1] *Century of Progress, the world's fair held in Chicago in 1933-1934.*

think that's a pretty good type to be. Hope you don't think I'm being too personal—do you?

LAURA [*hastily, out of embarrassment*]. I believe I *will* take a piece of gum, if you—don't mind. [*Clearing her throat*] Mr. O'Connor, have you—kept up with your singing?

JIM. Singing? Me?

LAURA. Yes. I remember what a beautiful voice you had.

JIM. When did you hear me sing?

[VOICE OFF STAGE IN THE PAUSE]

VOICE [*off stage*].

O blow, ye winds, heigh-ho,
A-roving I will go!
I'm off to my love
With a boxing glove—
Ten thousand miles away!

JIM. You say you've heard me sing?

LAURA. Oh, yes! Yes, very often . . . I—don't suppose—you remember me—at all?

JIM [*smiling doubtfully*]. You know I have an idea I've seen you before. I had that idea soon as you opened the door. It seemed almost like I was about to remember your name. But the name that I started to call you—wasn't a name! And so I stopped myself before I said it.

LAURA. Wasn't it—Blue Roses?

JIM [*springs up. Grinning*]. Blue Roses!—My gosh, yes—Blue Roses!

That's what I had on my tongue when you opened the door!

Isn't it funny what tricks your memory plays? I didn't connect you with high school somehow or other.

But that's where it was; it was high school. I didn't even know you were Shakespeare's sister!

Gosh, I'm sorry.

LAURA. I didn't expect you to. You—barely knew me!

JIM. But we did have a speaking acquaintance, huh?

LAURA. Yes, we—spoke to each other.

JIM. When did you recognize me?

LAURA. Oh, right away!

JIM. Soon as I came in the door?

LAURA. When I heard your name I thought it was probably you. I knew that Tom used to know you a little in high school. So when you came in the door—

Well, then I was—sure.

JIM. Why didn't you *say* something, then?

LAURA [*breathlessly*]. I didn't know what to say, I was—too surprised!

JIM. For goodness' sakes! You know, this sure is funny!

LAURA. Yes! Yes, isn't it, though . . .

JIM. Didn't we have a class in something together?

LAURA. Yes, we did.

JIM. What class was that?

LAURA. It was—singing—Chorus!

JIM. Aw!

LAURA. I sat across the aisle from you in the Aud.

JIM. Aw.

LAURA. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

JIM. Now I remember—you always came in late.

LAURA. Yes, it was so hard for me, getting upstairs. I had that brace on my leg—it clumped so loud!

JIM. I never heard any clumping.

LAURA [*wincing at the recollection*]. To me it sounded like—thunder!

JIM. Well, well, well, I never even noticed.

LAURA. And everybody was seated before I came in. I had to walk in front of all those people. My seat was in the back row. I had to go clumping all the way up the aisle with everyone watching!

JIM. You shouldn't have been self-conscious.

LAURA. I know, but I was. It was always such a relief when the singing started.

JIM. Aw, yes, I've placed *you* now! I used to call you Blue Roses. How was it that I got started calling you that?

LAURA. I was out of school a little while with pleurosis. When I came back you asked me what was the matter. I said I had pleurosis—you thought I said Blue Roses. That's what you always called me after that!

JIM. I hope you didn't mind.

LAURA. Oh, no—I liked it. You see, I wasn't acquainted with many—people. . . .

JIM. As I remember you sort of stuck by yourself.

LAURA. I—I—never have had much luck at—making friends.

JIM. I don't see why you wouldn't.

LAURA. Well, I—started out badly.

JIM. You mean being—

LAURA. Yes, it sort of—stood between me—

JIM. You shouldn't have let it!

LAURA. I know, but it did, and—

JIM. You were shy with people!

LAURA. I tried not to be but never could—

JIM. Overcome it?

LAURA. No, I—I never could!

JIM. I guess being shy is something you have to work out of kind of gradually.

LAURA [*sorrowfully*]. Yes—I guess it—

JIM. Takes time!

LAURA. Yes—

JIM. People are not so dreadful when you know them. That's what you have to remember! And everybody has problems, not just you, but practically everybody has got some problems.

You think of yourself as having the only problems, as being the only one who is disappointed. But just look around you and you will see lots of people as disappointed as you are. For instance, I hoped when I was going to high school that I would be further along at this time, six years later, than I am now— You remember that wonderful write-up I had in *The Torch?*

LAURA. Yes! [*She rises and crosses to table.*]

JIM. It said I was bound to succeed in anything I went into! [LAURA *returns with the annual.*] Holy Jeez! *The Torch!* [*He accepts it reverently. They smile across it with mutual wonder.* LAURA *crouches beside him and they begin to turn through it.* LAURA'S *shyness is dissolving in his warmth.*]

LAURA. Here you are in *The Pirates of Penzance!*

JIM [*wistfully*]. I sang the baritone lead in that operetta.

LAURA [*raptly*]. So—*beautifully!*

JIM [*protesting*]. Aw—

LAURA. Yes, yes—beautifully—beautifully!

JIM. You heard me?

LAURA. All three times!

JIM. No!

LAURA. Yes!

JIM. All three performances?

LAURA [*looking down*]. Yes.

JIM. Why?

LAURA. I—wanted to ask you to—autograph my program.

JIM. Why didn't you ask me to?

LAURA. You were always surrounded by your own friends so much that I never had a chance to.

JIM. You should have just—

LAURA. Well, I—thought you might think I was—

JIM. Thought I might think you was—what?

LAURA. Oh—

JIM [*with reflective relish*]. I was beleaguered by females in those days.

LAURA. You were terribly popular!

JIM. Yeah—

LAURA. You had such a—friendly way—

JIM. I was spoiled in high school.

LAURA. Everybody—liked you!

JIM. Including you?

LAURA. I—yes, I—I did, too— [*She gently closes the book in her lap.*]

JIM. Well, well, well!—Give me that program, Laura. [*She hands it to him. He signs it with a flourish.*] There you are—better late than never!

LAURA. Oh, I—what a—surprise!

JIM. My signature isn't worth very much right now.

But some day—maybe—it will increase in value!

Being disappointed is one thing and being discouraged is something else. I am disappointed but I am not discouraged.

I'm twenty-three years old.

How old are you?

LAURA. I'll be twenty-four in June.

JIM. That's not old age!

LAURA. No, but—

JIM. You finished high school?

LAURA [*with difficulty*]. I didn't go back.

JIM. You mean you dropped out?

LAURA. I made bad grades in my final examinations. [*She rises and replaces the book and the program. Her voice strained.*] How is—Emily Meisenbach getting along?

JIM. Oh, that kraut-head!

LAURA. Why do you call her that?

JIM. That's what she was.

LAURA. You're not still—going with her?

JIM. I never see her.

LAURA. It said in the Personal Section that you were—engaged!

JIM. I know, but I wasn't impressed by that—propaganda!

LAURA. It wasn't—the truth?

JIM. Only in Emily's optimistic opinion!

LAURA. Oh—

[LEGEND: "WHAT HAVE YOU DONE SINCE HIGH SCHOOL?"]

[JIM *lights a cigarette and leans indolently back on his elbows smiling at* LAURA *with a warmth and charm which lights her inwardly with altar candles. She remains by the table and turns in her hands a piece of glass to cover her tumult.*]

JIM [*after several reflective puffs on a cigarette*]. What have you done since high school? [*She seems not to hear him.*] Huh? [LAURA *looks up.*] I said what have you done since high school, Laura?

LAURA. Nothing much.

JIM. You must have been doing something these six long years.

LAURA. Yes.

JIM. Well, then, such as what?

LAURA. I took a business course at business college—

JIM. How did that work out?

LAURA. Well, not very—well—I had to drop out, it gave me—indigestion—

[JIM *laughs gently.*]

JIM. What are you doing now?

LAURA. I don't do anything—much. Oh, please don't think I sit around doing nothing! My glass collection takes up a good deal of time. Glass is something you have to take good care of.

JIM. What did you say—about glass?

LAURA. Collection I said—I have one— [*She clears her throat and turns away again, acutely shy.*]

JIM [*abruptly*]. You know what I judge to be the trouble with you?

Inferiority complex! Know what that is? That's what they call it when someone low-rates himself!

I understand it because I had it, too. Although my case was not so aggravated as yours seems to be. I had it until I took up public speaking, developed my voice, and learned that I had an aptitude for science. Before that time I never thought of myself as being outstanding in any way whatsoever!

Now I've never made a regular study of it, but I have a friend

who says I can analyze people better than doctors that make a profession of it. I don't claim that to be necessarily true, but I can sure guess a person's psychology, Laura! [*Takes out his gum*] Excuse me, Laura. I always take it out when the flavor is gone. I'll use this scrap of paper to wrap it in. I know how it is to get it stuck on a shoe.

Yep—that's what I judge to be your principal trouble. A lack of confidence in yourself as a person. You don't have the proper amount of faith in yourself. I'm basing that fact on a number of your remarks and also on certain observations I've made. For instance that clumping you thought was so awful in high school. You say that you even dreaded to walk into class. You see what you did? You dropped out of school, you gave up an education because of a clump, which as far as I know was practically nonexistent! A little physical defect is what you have. Hardly noticeable even! Magnified thousands of times by imagination!

You know what my strong advice to you is? Think of yourself as *superior* in some way!

LAURA. In what way would I think?

JIM. Why, man alive, Laura! Just look about you a little. What do you see? A world full of common people! All of 'em born and all of 'em going to die!

Which of them has one-tenth of your good points! Or mine! Or anyone else's, as far as that goes—Gosh!

Everybody excels in some one thing. Some in many!

[*Unconsciously glances at himself in the mirror*]

All you've got to do is discover in *what!*

Take me, for instance.

[*He adjusts his tie at the mirror.*]

My interest happens to lie in electro-dynamics. I'm taking a course in radio engineering at night school, Laura, on top of a fairly responsible job at the warehouse. I'm taking that course and studying public speaking.

LAURA. Ohhhh.

JIM. Because I believe in the future of television!

[*Turning back to her*]

I wish to be ready to go up right along with it. Therefore I'm planning to get in on the ground floor. In fact I've already made the right connections and all that remains is for the industry itself to get under way! Full steam—

[*His eyes are starry.*]

Knowledge—Zzzzzp! *Money*—Zzzzzzp!—*Power!*
That's the cycle democracy is built on!

[*His attitude is convincingly dynamic.* LAURA *stares at him, even her shyness eclipsed in her absolute wonder. He suddenly grins.*]

I guess you think I think a lot of myself!

LAURA. No—o-o-o, I—

JIM. Now how about you? Isn't there something you take more interest in than anything else?

LAURA. Well, I do—as I said—have my—glass collection—

[*A peal of girlish laughter from the kitchen*]

JIM. I'm not right sure I know what you're talking about. What kind of glass is it?

LAURA. Little articles of it, they're ornaments mostly! Most of them are little animals made out of glass, the tiniest little animals in the world. Mother calls them a glass menagerie! Here's an example of one, if you'd like to see it! This one is one of the oldest. It's nearly thirteen.

[MUSIC: "THE GLASS MENAGERIE"]

[*He stretches out his hand.*]

Oh, be careful—if you breathe, it breaks!

JIM. I'd better not take it. I'm pretty clumsy with things.

LAURA. Go on, I trust you with him!

[*Places it in his palm*]

There now—you're holding him gently! Hold him over the light, he loves the light! You see how the light shines through him?

JIM. It sure does shine!

LAURA. I shouldn't be partial, but he is my favorite one.

JIM. What kind of a thing is this one supposed to be?

LAURA. Haven't you noticed the single horn on his forehead?

JIM. A unicorn, huh?

LAURA. Mmm-hmmm!

JIM. Unicorns, aren't they extinct in the modern world?

LAURA. I know!

JIM. Poor little fellow, he must feel sort of lonesome.

LAURA [*smiling*]. Well, if he does he doesn't complain about it. He stays on a shelf with some horses that don't have horns and all of them seem to get along nicely together.

JIM. How do you know?

LAURA [*lightly*]. I haven't heard any arguments among them!

JIM [*grinning*]. No arguments, huh? Well, that's a pretty good sign!

Where shall I set him?

LAURA. Put him on the table. They all like a change of scenery once in a while!

JIM [*stretching*]. Well, well, well, well—

Look how big my shadow is when I stretch!

LAURA. Oh, oh, yes—it stretches across the ceiling!

JIM [*crossing to door*]. I think it's stopped raining. [*Opens fire-escape door*] Where does the music come from?

LAURA. From the Paradise Dance Hall across the alley.

JIM. How about cutting the rug a little, Miss Wingfield?

LAURA. Oh, I—

JIM. Or is your program filled up? Let me have a look at it. [*Grasps imaginary card*] Why, every dance is taken! I'll just have to scratch some out. [WALTZ MUSIC: "LA GOLONDRINA"] Ahhh, a waltz! [*He executes some sweeping turns by himself then holds his arms toward* LAURA.]

LAURA [*breathlessly*]. I—can't dance!

JIM. There you go, that inferiority stuff!

LAURA. I've never danced in my life!

JIM. Come on, try!

LAURA. Oh, but I'd step on you!

JIM. I'm not made out of glass.

LAURA. How—how—how do we start?

JIM. Just leave it to me. You hold your arms out a little.

LAURA. Like this?

JIM. A little bit higher. Right. Now don't tighten up, that's the main thing about it—relax.

LAURA [*laughing breathlessly*]. It's hard not to.

JIM. Okay.

LAURA. I'm afraid you can't budge me.

JIM. What do you bet I can't? [*He swings her into motion.*]

LAURA. Goodness, yes, you can!

JIM. Let yourself go, now, Laura, just let yourself go.

LAURA. I'm—

JIM. Come on!

LAURA. Trying!

JIM. Not so stiff-- Easy does it!

LAURA. I know but I'm—

JIM. Loosen th' backbone! There now, that's a lot better.

LAURA. Am I?

JIM. Lots, lots better! [*He moves her about the room in a clumsy waltz.*]

LAURA. Oh, my!

JIM. Ha-ha!

LAURA. Oh, my goodness!

JIM. Ha-ha-ha! [*They suddenly bump into the table.* JIM *stops.*] What did we hit on?

LAURA. Table.

JIM. Did something fall off it? I think—

LAURA. Yes.

JIM. I hope that it wasn't the little glass horse with the horn!

LAURA. Yes.

JIM. Aw, aw, aw. Is it broken?

LAURA. Now it is just like all the other horses.

JIM. It's lost its—

LAURA. Horn![1]

It doesn't matter. Maybe it's a blessing in disguise.

JIM. You'll never forgive me. I bet that that was your favorite piece of glass.

LAURA. I don't have favorites much. It's no tragedy, Freckles. Glass breaks so easily. No matter how careful you are. The traffic jars the shelves and things fall off them.

JIM. Still I'm awfully sorry that I was the cause.

LAURA [*smiling*]. I'll just imagine he had an operation.

The horn was removed to make him feel less—freakish!

[*They both laugh.*]

Now he will feel more at home with the other horses, the ones that don't have horns . . .

JIM. Ha-ha, that's very funny!

[*Suddenly serious*]

I'm glad to see that you have a sense of humor.

You know—you're—well—very different!

Surprisingly different from anyone else I know!

[*His voice becomes soft and hesitant with a genuine feeling.*]

Do you mind me telling you that?

[LAURA *is abashed beyond speech.*]

I mean it in a nice way . . .

[LAURA *nods shyly, looking away.*]

You make me feel sort of—I don't know how to put it!

[1] *Horn! The symbolism is almost too clear.*

I'm usually pretty good at expressing things, but—
This is something that I don't know how to say!
[LAURA *touches her throat and clears it—turns the broken unicorn in her hands.*]
[*Even softer*]
Has anyone ever told you that you were pretty?
[PAUSE: MUSIC]
[LAURA *looks up slowly, with wonder, and shakes her head.*]
Well, you are! In a very different way from anyone else.
And all the nicer because of the difference, too.
[*His voice becomes low and husky.* LAURA *turns away, nearly faint with the novelty of her emotions.*]
I wish that you were my sister. I'd teach you to have some confidence in yourself. The different people are not like other people, but being different is nothing to be ashamed of. Because other people are not such wonderful people. They're one hundred times one thousand. You're one times one! They walk all over the earth. You just stay here. They're common as—weeds, but—you—well, you're—*Blue Roses!*
[IMAGE ON SCREEN: BLUE ROSES]
[MUSIC CHANGES]
LAURA. But blue is wrong for—roses . . .
JIM. It's right for you!—You're—pretty!
LAURA. In what respect am I pretty?
JIM. In all respects—believe me! Your eyes—your hair—are pretty! Your hands are pretty!
[*He catches hold of her hand.*]
You think I'm making this up because I'm invited to dinner and have to be nice. Oh, I could do that! I could put on an act for you, Laura, and say lots of things without being very sincere. But this time I am. I'm talking to you sincerely. I happened to notice you had this inferiority complex that keeps you from feeling comfortable with people. Somebody needs to build your confidence up and make you proud instead of shy and turning away and—blushing—
Somebody—ought to—
Ought to—*kiss* you, Laura!
[*His hand slips slowly up her arm to her shoulder.*]
[MUSIC SWELLS TUMULTUOUSLY.]
[*He suddenly turns her about and kisses her on the lips.*]

[*When he releases her,* LAURA *sinks on the sofa with a bright, dazed look.*]

[JIM *backs away and fishes in his pocket for a cigarette.*]

[LEGEND ON SCREEN: "SOUVENIR"]

Stumble-john!

[*He lights the cigarette, avoiding her look.*]

[*There is a peal of girlish laughter from* AMANDA *in the kitchen.*]

[LAURA *slowly raises and opens her hand. It still contains the little broken glass animal. She looks at it with a tender, bewildered expression.*]

Stumble-john!

I shouldn't have done that— That was way off the beam.

You don't smoke, do you?

[*She looks up, smiling, not hearing the question.*]

[*He sits beside her a little gingerly. She looks at him speechlessly—waiting.*]

[*He coughs decorously and moves a little farther aside as he considers the situation and senses her feelings, dimly, with perturbation.*]

[*Gently*]

Would you—care for a—mint?

[*She doesn't seem to hear him but her look grows brighter even.*]

Peppermint—Life-Saver?

My pocket's a regular drug store—wherever I go . . .

[*He pops a mint in his mouth. Then gulps and decides to make a clean breast of it. He speaks slowly and gingerly.*]

Laura, you know, if I had a sister like you, I'd do the same thing as Tom. I'd bring out fellows and—introduce her to them. The right type of boys of a type to—appreciate her.

Only—well—he made a mistake about me.

Maybe I've got no call to be saying this. That may not have been the idea in having me over. But what if it was?

There's nothing wrong about that. The only trouble is that in my case—I'm not in a situation to—do the right thing.

I can't take down your number and say I'll phone.

I can't call up next week and—ask for a date.

I thought I had better explain the situation in case you—misunderstood it and—hurt your feelings. . . .

[*Pause*]

[*Slowly, very slowly,* LAURA'S *look changes, her eyes returning slowly from his to the ornament in her palm.*]

[AMANDA *utters another gay laugh in the kitchen.*]

LAURA [*faintly*]. You—won't—call again?

JIM. No, Laura, I can't.

[*He rises from the sofa.*]

As I was just explaining, I've—got strings on me.

Laura, I've—been going steady!

I go out all of the time with a girl named Betty. She's a home-girl like you, and Catholic, and Irish, and in a great many ways we —get along fine.

I met her last summer on a moonlight boat trip up the river to Alton, on the *Majestic.*

Well—right away from the start it was—love!

[LEGEND: LOVE!]

[LAURA *sways slightly forward and grips the arm of the sofa. He fails to notice, now enrapt in his own comfortable being.*]

Being in love has made a new man of me!

[*Leaning stiffly forward, clutching the arm of the sofa,* LAURA *struggles visibly with her storm. But* JIM *is oblivious, she is a long way off.*]

The power of love is really pretty tremendous!

Love is something that—changes the whole world, Laura!

[*The storm abates a little and* LAURA *leans back. He notices her again.*]

It happened that Betty's aunt took sick, she got a wire and had to go to Centralia. So Tom—when he asked me to dinner—I naturally just accepted the invitation, not knowing that you—that he—that I—

[*He stops awkwardly.*]

Huh—I'm a stumble-john!

[*He flops back on the sofa.*]

[*The holy candles in the altar of* LAURA'S *face have been snuffed out. There is a look of almost infinite desolation.*]

[JIM *glances at her uneasily.*]

I wish that you would—say something. [*She bites her lip which was trembling and then bravely smiles. She opens her hand again on the broken glass ornament. Then she gently takes his hand and raises it level with her own. She carefully places the unicorn in the palm of his hand, then pushes his fingers closed upon it.*] What are

you—doing that for? You want me to have him?—Laura? [*She nods.*] What for?

LAURA. A—souvenir . . .

[*She rises unsteadily and crouches beside the victrola to wind it up.*]

[LEGEND ON SCREEN: "THINGS HAVE A WAY OF TURNING OUT SO BADLY!"

[OR IMAGE: "GENTLEMAN CALLER WAVING GOOD-BYE!—GAILY"]

[*At this moment* AMANDA *rushes brightly back in the front room. She bears a pitcher of fruit punch in an old-fashioned cut-glass pitcher and a plate of macaroons. The plate has a gold border and poppies painted on it.*]

AMANDA. Well, well, well! Isn't the air delightful after the shower?

I've made you children a little liquid refreshment.

[*Turns gaily to the gentleman caller*]

Jim, do you know that song about lemonade?

"Lemonade, lemonade
Made in the shade and stirred with a spade—
Good enough for any old maid!"

JIM [*uneasily*]. Ha ha! No—I never heard it.

AMANDA. Why, Laura! You look so serious!

JIM. We were having a serious conversation.

AMANDA. Good! Now you're better acquainted!

JIM [*uncertainly*]. Ha-ha! Yes.

AMANDA. You modern young people are much more serious-minded than my generation. I was so gay as a girl!

JIM. You haven't changed, Mrs. Wingfield.

AMANDA. Tonight I'm rejuvenated! The gaiety of the occasion, Mr. O'Connor!

[*She tosses her head with a peal of laughter. Spills lemonade*]

Oooo! I'm baptizing myself!

JIM. Here—let me—

AMANDA [*setting the pitcher down*]. There now. I discovered we had some maraschino cherries. I dumped them in, juice and all!

JIM. You shouldn't have gone to that trouble, Mrs. Wingfield.

AMANDA. Trouble, trouble? Why, it was loads of fun!

Didn't you hear me cutting up in the kitchen? I bet your ears were burning! I told Tom how outdone with him I was for keeping

you to himself so long a time! He should have brought you over much, much sooner! Well, now that you've found your way, I want you to be a very frequent caller! Not just occasional but all the time.

Oh, we're going to have a lot of gay times together! I see them coming!

Mmm, just breathe that air! So fresh, and the moon's so pretty!

I'll skip back out—I know where my place is when young folks are having a—serious conversation!

JIM. Oh, don't go out, Mrs. Wingfield. The fact of the matter is I've got to be going.

AMANDA. Going, now? You're joking! Why, it's only the shank of the evening, Mr. O'Connor!

JIM. Well, you know how it is.

AMANDA. You mean you're a young workingman and have to keep workingmen's hours. We'll let you off early tonight. But only on the condition that next time you stay later.

What's the best night for you? Isn't Saturday night the best night for you workingmen?

JIM. I have a couple of time-clocks to punch, Mrs. Wingfield. One at morning, another one at night!

AMANDA. My, but you *are* ambitious! You work at night, too?

JIM. No, Ma'am, not work but—Betty! [*He crosses deliberately to pick up his hat. The band at the Paradise Dance Hall goes into a tender waltz.*]

AMANDA. Betty? Betty? Who's—Betty!

[*There is an ominous cracking sound in the sky.*]

JIM. Oh, just a girl. The girl I go steady with! [*He smiles charmingly. The sky falls.*]

[LEGEND: "THE SKY FALLS."]

AMANDA [*a long-drawn exhalation*]. Ohhhh . . . Is it a serious romance, Mr. O'Connor?

JIM. We're going to be married the second Sunday in June.

AMANDA. Ohhhh—how nice!

Tom didn't mention that you were engaged to be married.

JIM. The cat's not out of the bag at the warehouse yet.

You know how they are. They call you Romeo and stuff like that.

[*He stops at the oval mirror to put on his hat. He carefully shapes the brim and the crown to give a discreetly dashing effect.*]

It's been a wonderful evening, Mrs. Wingfield. I guess this is what they mean by Southern hospitality.

AMANDA. It really wasn't anything at all.

JIM. I hope it don't seem like I'm rushing off. But I promised Betty I'd pick her up at the Wabash depot, an' by the time I get my jalopy down there her train'll be in. Some women are pretty upset if you keep 'em waiting.

AMANDA. Yes, I know— The tyranny of women!

[*Extends her hand*]

Good-bye, Mr. O'Connor.

I wish you luck—and happiness—and success! All three of them, and so does Laura!—Don't you, Laura?

LAURA. Yes!

JIM [*taking her hand*]. Good-bye, Laura. I'm certainly going to treasure that souvenir. And don't you forget the good advice I gave you.

[*Raises his voice to a cheery shout*]

So long, Shakespeare!

Thanks again, ladies— Good night!

[*He grins and ducks jauntily out.*]

[*Still bravely grimacing,* AMANDA *closes the door on the gentleman caller. Then she turns back to the room with a puzzled expression. She and* LAURA *don't dare to face each other.* LAURA *crouches beside the victrola to wind it.*]

AMANDA [*faintly*]. Things have a way of turning out so badly. I don't believe that I would play the victrola.

Well, well—well—

Our gentleman caller was engaged to be married!

Tom!

TOM [*from back*]. Yes, Mother?

AMANDA. Come in here a minute. I want to tell you something awfully funny.

TOM [*enters with macaroon and a glass of the lemonade*]. Has the gentleman caller gotten away already?

AMANDA. The gentleman caller has made an early departure.

What a wonderful joke you played on us!

TOM. How do you mean?

AMANDA. You didn't mention that he was engaged to be married.

TOM. Jim? Engaged?

AMANDA. That's what he just informed us.

TOM. I'll be jiggered! I didn't know about that.

AMANDA. That seems very peculiar.

TOM. What's peculiar about it?

AMANDA. Didn't you call him your best friend down at the warehouse?

TOM. He is, but how did I know?

AMANDA. It seems extremely peculiar that you wouldn't know your best friend was going to be married!

TOM. The warehouse is where I work, not where I know things about people!

AMANDA. You don't know things anywhere! You live in a dream; you manufacture illusions!

[*He crosses to door.*]

Where are you going?

TOM. I'm going to the movies.

AMANDA. That's right, now that you've had us make such fools of ourselves. The effort, the preparations, all the expense! The new floor lamp, the rug, the clothes for Laura! All for what? To entertain some other girl's fiancé!

Go to the movies, go! Don't think about us, a mother deserted, an unmarried sister who's crippled and has no job! Don't let anything interfere with your selfish pleasure!

Just go, go, go—to the movies!

TOM. All right, I will! The more you shout about my selfishness to me the quicker I'll go, and I won't go to the movies!

AMANDA. Go, then! Then go to the moon—you selfish dreamer!

[TOM *smashes his glass on the floor. He plunges out on the fire-escape, slamming the door.* LAURA *screams—cut by door.*]

[*Dance-hall music up.* TOM *goes to the rail and grips it desperately, lifting his face in the chill white moonlight penetrating the narrow abyss of the alley.*]

[LEGEND ON SCREEN: "AND SO GOOD-BYE . . ."]

[TOM'S *closing speech is timed with the interior pantomime. The interior scene is played as though viewed through soundproof glass.* AMANDA *appears to be making a comforting speech to* LAURA *who is huddled upon the sofa. Now that we cannot hear the mother's speech, her silliness is gone and she has dignity and tragic beauty.* LAURA'S *dark hair hides her face until at the end of the speech she lifts it to smile at her mother.* AMANDA'S *gestures are slow and graceful, almost dance-like, as she comforts the daughter. At the end of her*

speech she glances a moment at the father's picture—then withdraws through the portieres. At close of TOM's *speech,* LAURA *blows out the candles, ending the play.*]

TOM. I didn't go to the moon, I went much further—for time is the longest distance between two places—

Not long after that I was fired for writing a poem on the lid of a shoe-box.

I left Saint Louis. I descended the steps of this fire-escape for a last time and followed, from then on, in my father's footsteps, attempting to find in motion what was lost in space—

I traveled around a great deal. The cities swept about me like dead leaves, leaves that were brightly colored but torn away from the branches.

I would have stopped, but I was pursued by something.

It always came upon me unawares, taking me altogether by surprise. Perhaps it was a familiar bit of music. Perhaps it was only a piece of transparent glass—

Perhaps I am walking along a street at night, in some strange city, before I have found companions. I pass the lighted window of a shop where perfume is sold. The window is filled with pieces of colored glass,[1] tiny transparent bottles in delicate colors, like bits of a shattered rainbow.

Then all at once my sister touches my shoulder. I turn around and look into her eyes . . .

Oh, Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be!

I reach for a cigarette, I cross the street, I run into the movies or a bar, I buy a drink, I speak to the nearest stranger—anything that can blow your candles out!

[LAURA *bends over the candles.*]

—for nowadays the world is lit by lightning! Blow out your candles, Laura—and so good-bye. . .

[*She blows the candles out.*]

THE SCENE DISSOLVES

[1] ***pieces of colored glass.*** *The reminiscent spirit of Proust is embodied in this passage.*

ARTHUR MILLER (1916-)

The reputation of the newest of our serious playwrights, Arthur Miller, rests thus far on two somber dramas, each of which won the New York Drama Critics Award for the best play of its season. Since there is a striking similarity in their plots and unmistakable earnestness in their style, we may conclude that he wrote them out of strong convictions and probably out of haunting personal experience as well. His early background was not unlike that of Clifford Odets, with whom he shares political views a good deal left of center. Both have excelled in grim studies of middle-class people in which the struggle for economic security has compromised their personal integrity and led them to humiliation and defeat. Criticism of the American economic system is pointed in both playwrights, but as artists Odets and Miller are far apart.

Miller was another product of New York City who grew to maturity in the depression years. Born into a lower-middle-class Jewish family, he was reared in Brooklyn and educated at the University of Michigan, where his talent for play writing first won him monetary prizes and brought him to the attention of theater people in New York. After his graduation in 1938 he worked with the Federal Theatre Project for a time before becoming a radio script writer for the Columbia Broadcasting System. During the war Miller devoted his writing talents to various patriotic efforts, since he was physically incapacitated for serving in the armed forces. At this time his first play was produced, but failed quickly.

It was his observation of civilian life in wartime that gave him material for his first success, *All My Sons.* This worthy, if overelaborate, play presented the actual case of a small Midwestern manufacturer who sold the government defective airplane parts to save his business and his family from ruin. In the son's awakening to his father's guilt and denunciation of him, Miller embodied his favorite theme: the moral responsibility of the individual to society as a whole, not simply to his family and those he loves. The success of this play was soon overshadowed by the sensational première in 1949 of *Death of a Salesman,* which was widely hailed as one of the finest serious dramas ever written in America.

But Miller has taken his fame modestly. A rather conventional middle-class man himself, he is content to live the life of a suburbanite in Brooklyn with his wife and children. He is mentioned in the newspapers only occasionally, and then as a spokesman for unpopular causes, not as a glamorous personality of the theater. Being a sympathetic critic of the American bourgeoisie, he writes warmly of the class and the life that he knows best.

DEATH OF A SALESMAN

The great success of *Death of a Salesman* on the stage raised a critical controversy about the nature of its power. To have attracted vast audiences with a theme as somber and harrowing as suicide was in itself a remarkable achievement, but some questioned whether the grimness of the hero's defeat was in any sense redeemed by the worth of his character or of the objective for which he died. Some suggested that this play is not so much a tragedy as a powerful social document.

Certainly Miller intended to imply more than a personal defeat in the collapse of Willy Loman. A highly American attitude toward life is dying with him, an outlook as false as the habitual lying that has become an accepted bolster for his ego. It is a by-product of our

economic system, which has complicated the natural distribution of goods from producer to consumer with an artificial intermediary, and has manufactured a national philosophy from his code. The pressure of competition has exalted the rôle of the salesman to the point where he sells not so much his wares as himself. At least this is the basic fiction within the code by which he lives, and his self-respect comes to depend upon his continued ability to sell himself. The time-honored avenues to spiritual fulfillment have been replaced by a specious and vulgar goal which interprets success in purely economic terms and the worth of the individual in terms of his ability to acquire wealth. In pursuing this national dream an essentially decent little man has worn himself out for scant return and now finds himself facing failure, with the affectionate pity of his faithful wife and the contempt of his two sons, whose lives his teachings have ruined.

Yet however false its premise, the salesman's aspiration partakes of the yearning of every man to be not only liked but "well-liked," and to be recognized as worthy and important. It is the loss of that recognition, not the economic plight of Willy, that is his tragedy. He had always dreamed that his prestige and its return were greater than they were, and now the lies grow wearier and more hollow as middle age finds him discredited and unable to maintain the pace. Pride makes it impossible for him to accept a humdrum job from his friend Charley, which would represent a double failure for him. Though we sense the foolishness of such an attitude toward economic necessity, we sympathize with his loyalty to himself and to what he has stood for, however ill-founded it may have been. It is a tribute to the art of Miller that he has composed so devastating a comment on the American economic system and yet read understanding and a kind of heroism into the common middle-class man who embodies it. There is further relief from bleak pessimism in the awakening of Biff from the falsehood of his father's life and teachings, which at the same time revives in a way his devotion to the older man as a human being. So we sense a queer sort of triumph in Willy's suicide, as he dies for his family and to justify his son's respect, rather than simply to confirm his own defeat.

The old question of the fitness of the middle class for tragic treatment in drama, a question at least as old as Lillo's *The London Merchant* (1731), is revived by *Death of a Salesman*. By now it is not a snobbish question of social class, but of the extent to which the materialistic ideals of the bourgeoisie are capable of poetic interpretation. Is heroic stature a question of inner dignity alone or does it





depend also upon the worth and universality of the things for which one sacrifices himself? Admitting objectively the worthlessness of Willy's dream of success, can we still find value in his devotion to it? Or is it his final release from the service of a false god that ennobles his death? Traditional critics armed with Aristotle's conception of tragic flaw and tragic mistake found this play particularly disturbing. All of Willy's life is in a sense at fault, because it is founded upon falsehood, however sincere and intense his delusion.

Although Miller's reputation rests at present on only two plays, they show significant similarities and promising differences. Both study, in part, a father-son relationship in which a conflict of ideals is revealed by an economic crisis in the affairs of the family. Both fathers commit suicide for the sake of their families. Yet *All My Sons,* despite its power, is a conventional realistic drama in three carefully developed acts, with an elaborate and ingenious plot that is resolved by the hoary device of a discovered letter. *Death of a Salesman* breaks with the tradition of the well-made play into a free narrative style that moves naturally from present to past in order to explain the background of the state of things as we find them. Poetic aspiration appears too in the imaginative staging, by which the set barely suggests the house, and lights are brought into play to carry our attention without effort from one focal point to another. Music is used abundantly to provide atmosphere and to accentuate the meaning of the various time levels of the action. This imaginative collaboration of all the resources of the living theater produced the overpowering effect of *Death of a Salesman* on the stage.

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ARTHUR MILLER

DEATH OF A SALESMAN[1]

CHARACTERS

Willy Loman
Linda
Biff
Happy
Bernard
The Woman
Uncle Ben
Howard Wagner
Jenny
Stanley
Miss Forsythe
Letta
Charley

The place

Willy Loman's house and yard and various places he visits in the New York and Boston of today.

Throughout the play, in the stage directions, left and right mean stage left and stage right.

[1] *Copyright 1949 by Arthur Miller. Reprinted by permission of The Viking Press, Inc.*

act 1

A melody is heard, played upon a flute. It is small and fine, telling of grass and trees and the horizon. The curtain rises.

Before us is the Salesman's house. We are aware of towering, angular shapes behind it, surrounding it on all sides. Only the blue light of the sky falls upon the house and forestage; the surrounding area shows an angry glow of orange. As more light appears, we see a solid vault of apartment houses around the small, fragile-seeming home. An air of the dream clings to the place, a dream rising out of reality. The kitchen at center seems actual enough, for there is a kitchen table with three chairs, and a refrigerator. But no other fixtures are seen. At the back of the kitchen there is a draped entrance, which leads to the living-room. To the right of the kitchen, on a level raised two feet, is a bedroom furnished only with a brass bedstead and a straight chair. On a shelf over the bed a silver athletic trophy stands. A window opens onto the apartment house at the side.

Behind the kitchen, on a level raised six and a half feet, is the boys' bedroom, at present barely visible. Two beds are dimly seen, and at the back of the room a dormer window. (This bedroom is above the unseen living-room.) At the left a stairway curves up to it from the kitchen.

The entire setting is wholly or, in some places, partially transparent. The roof-line of the house is one-dimensional; under and over it we see the apartment buildings. Before the house lies an apron, curving beyond the forestage into the orchestra. This forward area serves as the back yard as well as the locale of all WILLY'S *imaginings and of his city scenes. Whenever the action is in the present the actors observe the imaginary wall-lines, entering the house only through its door at the left. But in the scenes of the past these boundaries are broken, and characters enter or leave a room by stepping "through" a wall onto the forestage.*

From the right, WILLY LOMAN, *the Salesman, enters, carrying two large sample cases. The flute plays on. He hears but is not aware of it. He is past sixty years of age, dressed quietly. Even as he crosses the stage to the doorway of the*

house, his exhaustion is apparent. He unlocks the door, comes into the kitchen, and thankfully lets his burden down, feeling the soreness of his palms. A word-sigh escapes his lips—it might be "Oh, boy, oh, boy." He closes the door, then carries his cases out into the living-room, through the draped kitchen doorway.

LINDA, *his wife, has stirred in her bed at the right. She gets out and puts on a robe, listening. Most often jovial, she has developed an iron repression of her exceptions to* WILLY'S *behavior—she more than loves him, she admires him, as though his mercurial nature, his temper, his massive dreams and little cruelties, served her only as sharp reminders of the turbulent longings within him, longings which she shares but lacks the temperament to utter and follow to their end.*

LINDA [*hearing* WILLY *outside the bedroom, calls with some trepidation*]. Willy!

WILLY. It's all right. I came back.

LINDA. Why? What happened? [*Slight pause*] Did something happen, Willy?

WILLY. No, nothing happened.

LINDA. You didn't smash the car, did you?

WILLY [*with casual irritation*]. I said nothing happened. Didn't you hear me?

LINDA. Don't you feel well?

WILLY. I'm tired to the death. [*The flute has faded away. He sits on the bed beside her, a little numb.*] I couldn't make it. I just couldn't make it, Linda.

LINDA [*very carefully, delicately*]. Where were you all day? You look terrible.

WILLY. I got as far as a little above Yonkers. I stopped for a cup of coffee. Maybe it was the coffee.

LINDA. What?

WILLY [*after a pause*]. I suddenly couldn't drive any more. The car kept going off onto the shoulder, y'know?

LINDA [*helpfully*]. Oh. Maybe it was the steering again. I don't think Angelo knows the Studebaker.

WILLY. No, it's me, it's me. Suddenly I realize I'm goin' sixty miles an hour and I don't remember the last five minutes. I'm—I can't seem to—keep my mind to it.

LINDA. Maybe it's your glasses. You never went for your new glasses.

WILLY. No, I see everything. I came back ten miles an hour. It took me nearly four hours from Yonkers.

LINDA [*resigned*]. Well, you'll just have to take a rest, Willy, you can't continue this way.

WILLY. I just got back from Florida.

LINDA. But you didn't rest your mind. Your mind is overactive, and the mind is what counts, dear.

WILLY. I'll start out in the morning. Maybe I'll feel better in the morning. [*She is taking off his shoes.*] These goddam arch supports are killing me.

LINDA. Take an aspirin. Should I get you an aspirin? It'll soothe you.

WILLY [*with wonder*]. I was driving along, you understand? And I was fine. I was even observing the scenery. You can imagine, me looking at scenery, on the road every week of my life. But it's so beautiful up there, Linda, the trees are so thick, and the sun is warm. I opened the windshield and just let the warm air bathe over me. And then all of a sudden I'm goin' off the road! I'm tellin' ya, I absolutely forgot I was driving. If I'd've gone the other way over the white line I might've killed somebody. So I went on again—and five minutes later I'm dreamin' again, and I nearly— [*He presses two fingers against his eyes.*] I have such thoughts, I have such strange thoughts.

LINDA. Willy, dear. Talk to them again. There's no reason why you can't work in New York.

WILLY. They don't need me in New York. I'm the New England man. I'm vital in New England.

LINDA. But you're sixty years old. They can't expect you to keep traveling every week.

WILLY. I'll have to send a wire to Portland. I'm supposed to see Brown and Morrison tomorrow morning at ten o'clock to show the line. Goddammit, I could sell them! [*He starts putting on his jacket.*]

LINDA [*taking the jacket from him*]. Why don't you go down to the place tomorrow and tell Howard you've simply got to work in New York? You're too accommodating, dear.

WILLY. If old man Wagner was alive I'd a been in charge of New York now! That man was a prince, he was a masterful man. But that boy of his, that Howard, he don't appreciate. When I went north the first time, the Wagner Company didn't know where New England was!

LINDA. Why don't you tell those things to Howard, dear?

WILLY [*encouraged*]. I will, I definitely will. Is there any cheese?

LINDA. I'll make you a sandwich.

WILLY. No, go to sleep. I'll take some milk. I'll be up right away. The boys in?

LINDA. They're sleeping. Happy took Biff on a date tonight.

WILLY [*interested*]. That so?

LINDA. It was so nice to see them shaving together, one behind the other, in the bathroom. And going out together. You notice? The whole house smells of shaving lotion.

WILLY. Figure it out. Work a lifetime to pay off a house. You finally own it, and there's nobody to live in it.

LINDA. Well, dear, life is a casting off. It's always that way.

WILLY. No, no, some people—some people accomplish something. Did Biff say anything after I went this morning?

LINDA. You shouldn't have criticized him, Willy, especially after he just got off the train. You mustn't lose your temper with him.

WILLY. When the hell did I lose my temper? I simply asked him if he was making any money. Is that a criticism?

LINDA. But, dear, how could he make any money?

WILLY [*worried and angered*]. There's such an undercurrent in him. He became a moody man. Did he apologize when I left this morning?

LINDA. He was crestfallen, Willy. You know how he admires you. I think if he finds himself, then you'll both be happier and not fight any more.

WILLY. How can he find himself on a farm? Is that a life? A farm-hand? In the beginning, when he was young, I thought, well, a young man, it's good for him to tramp around, take a lot of different jobs. But it's more than ten years now and he has yet to make thirty-five dollars a week!

LINDA. He's finding himself, Willy.

WILLY. Not finding yourself at the age of thirty-four is a disgrace!

LINDA. Shh!

WILLY. The trouble is he's lazy, goddammit!

LINDA. Willy, please!

WILLY. Biff is a lazy bum!

LINDA. They're sleeping. Get something to eat. Go on down.

WILLY. Why did he come home? I would like to know what brought him home.

LINDA. I don't know. I think he's still lost, Willy. I think he's very lost.

WILLY. Biff Loman is lost. In the greatest country in the world a

young man with such—personal attractiveness, gets lost. And such a hard worker. There's one thing about Biff—he's not lazy.

LINDA. Never.

WILLY [*with pity and resolve*]. I'll see him in the morning; I'll have a nice talk with him. I'll get him a job selling. He could be big in no time. My God! Remember how they used to follow him around in high school? When he smiled at one of them their faces lit up. When he walked down the street. . . . [*He loses himself in reminiscences.*]

LINDA [*trying to bring him out of it*]. Willy, dear, I got a new kind of American-type cheese today. It's whipped.

WILLY. Why do you get American when I like Swiss?

LINDA. I just thought you'd like a change—

WILLY. I don't want a change! I want Swiss cheese. Why am I always being contradicted?

LINDA [*with a covering laugh*]. I thought it would be a surprise.

WILLY. Why don't you open a window in here, for God's sake?

LINDA [*with infinite patience*]. They're all open, dear.

WILLY. The way they boxed us in here. Bricks and windows, windows and bricks.

LINDA. We should've bought the land next door.

WILLY. The street is lined with cars. There's not a breath of fresh air in the neighborhood. The grass don't grow any more, you can't raise a carrot in the back yard. They should've had a law against apartment houses. Remember those two beautiful elm trees out there? When I and Biff hung the swing between them?

LINDA. Yeah, like being a million miles from the city.

WILLY. They should've arrested the builder for cutting those down. They massacred the neighborhood. [*Lost*] More and more I think of those days, Linda. This time of year it was lilac and wisteria. And then the peonies would come out, and the daffodils. What fragrance in this room!

LINDA. Well, after all, people had to move somewhere.

WILLY. No, there's more people now.

LINDA. I don't think there's more people. I think—

WILLY. There's more people! That's what's ruining this country! Population is getting out of control. The competition is maddening! Smell the stink from that apartment house! And another one on the other side . . . How can they whip cheese?

[*On* WILLY's *last line,* BIFF *and* HAPPY *raise themselves up in their beds, listening.*]

LINDA. Go down, try it. And be quiet.

WILLY [*turning to* LINDA, *guiltily*]. You're not worried about me, are you, sweetheart?

BIFF. What's the matter?

HAPPY. Listen!

LINDA. You've got too much on the ball to worry about.

WILLY. You're my foundation and my support, Linda.

LINDA. Just try to relax, dear. You make mountains out of molehills.

WILLY. I won't fight with him any more. If he wants to go back to Texas, let him go.

LINDA. He'll find his way.

WILLY. Sure. Certain men just don't get started till later in life. Like Thomas Edison, I think. Or B. F. Goodrich.[1] One of them was deaf. [*He starts for the bedroom doorway.*] I'll put my money on Biff.

LINDA. And Willy—if it's warm Sunday we'll drive in the country. And we'll open the windshield, and take lunch.

WILLY. No, the windshields don't open on the new cars.

LINDA. But you opened it today.

WILLY. Me? I didn't. [*He stops.*] Now isn't that peculiar! Isn't that a remarkable— [*He breaks off in amazement and fright as the flute is heard distantly.*]

LINDA. What, darling?

WILLY. That is the most remarkable thing.

LINDA. What, dear?

WILLY. I was thinking of the Chevvy. [*Slight pause*] Nineteen twenty-eight . . . when I had that red Chevvy— [*Breaks off*] That funny? I coulda sworn I was driving that Chevvy today.

LINDA. Well, that's nothing. Something must've reminded you.

WILLY. Remarkable. Ts. Remember those days? The way Biff used to simonize that car? The dealer refused to believe there was eighty thousand miles on it. [*He shakes his head.*] Heh! [*To* LINDA] Close your eyes, I'll be right up. [*He walks out of the bedroom.*]

HAPPY [*to* BIFF]. Jesus, maybe he smashed up the car again!

LINDA [*calling after* WILLY]. Be careful on the stairs, dear! The cheese is on the middle shelf! [*She turns, goes over to the bed, takes his jacket, and goes out of the bedroom.*]

[*Light has risen on the boys' room. Unseen,* WILLY *is heard talk-*

[1] ***Edison. . . . Goodrich.*** *Thomas A. Edison (1847–1931), the inventor, and B. F. Goodrich (1841–1888), founder of the rubber company, are symbols of American success to Willy. Edison was handicapped by deafness.*

ing to himself, "Eighty thousand miles," and a little laugh. BIFF *gets out of bed, comes downstage a bit, and stands attentively.* BIFF *is two years older than his brother* HAPPY, *well built, but in these days bears a worn air and seems less self-assured. He has succeeded less, and his dreams are stronger and less acceptable than* HAPPY'S. HAPPY *is tall, powerfully made. Sexuality is like a visible color on him, or a scent that many women have discovered. He, like his brother, is lost, but in a different way, for he has never allowed himself to turn his face toward defeat and is thus more confused and hard-skinned, although seemingly more content.*]

HAPPY [*getting out of bed*]. He's going to get his license taken away if he keeps that up. I'm getting nervous about him, y'know, Biff?

BIFF. His eyes are going.

HAPPY. No, I've driven with him. He sees all right. He just doesn't keep his mind on it. I drove into the city with him last week. He stops at a green light and then it turns red and he goes. [*He laughs.*]

BIFF. Maybe he's color-blind.

HAPPY. Pop? Why he's got the finest eye for color in the business. You know that.

BIFF [*sitting down on his bed*]. I'm going to sleep.

HAPPY. You're not still sour on Dad, are you, Biff?

BIFF. He's all right, I guess.

WILLY [*underneath them, in the living-room*]. Yes, sir, eighty thousand miles—eighty-two thousand!

BIFF. You smoking?

HAPPY [*holding out a pack of cigarettes*]. Want one?

BIFF [*taking a cigarette*]. I can never sleep when I smell it.

WILLY. What a simonizing job, heh!

HAPPY [*with deep sentiment*]. Funny, Biff, y'know? Us sleeping in here again? The old beds. [*He pats his bed affectionately.*] All the talk that went across those two beds, huh? Our whole lives.

BIFF. Yeah. Lotta dreams and plans.

HAPPY [*with a deep and masculine laugh*]. About five hundred women would like to know what was said in this room.

[*They share a soft laugh.*]

BIFF. Remember that big Betsy something—what the hell was her name—over on Bushwick Avenue?

HAPPY [*combing his hair*]. With the collie dog!

BIFF. That's the one. I got you in there, remember?

HAPPY. Yeah, that was my first time—I think. Boy, there was a pig!

[*They laugh, almost crudely.*] You taught me everything I know about women. Don't forget that.

BIFF. I bet you forgot how bashful you used to be. Especially with girls.

HAPPY. Oh, I still am, Biff.

BIFF. Oh, go on.

HAPPY. I just control it, that's all. I think I got less bashful and you got more so. What happened, Biff? Where's the old humor, the old confidence? [*He shakes* BIFF's *knee.* BIFF *gets up and moves restlessly about the room.*] What's the matter?

BIFF. Why does Dad mock me all the time?

HAPPY. He's not mocking you, he—

BIFF. Everything I say there's a twist of mockery on his face. I can't get near him.

HAPPY. He just wants you to make good, that's all. I wanted to talk to you about Dad for a long time, Biff. Something's—happening to him. He—talks to himself.

BIFF. I noticed that this morning. But he always mumbled.

HAPPY. But not so noticeable. It got so embarrassing I sent him to Florida. And you know something? Most of the time he's talking to you.

BIFF. What's he say about me?

HAPPY. I can't make it out.

BIFF. What's he say about me?

HAPPY. I think the fact that you're not settled, that you're still kind of up in the air . . .

BIFF. There's one or two other things depressing him, Happy.

HAPPY. What do you mean?

BIFF. Never mind. Just don't lay it all to me.

HAPPY. But I think if you just got started—I mean—is there any future for you out there?

BIFF. I tell ya, Hap, I don't know what the future is. I don't know —what I'm supposed to want.

HAPPY. What do you mean?

BIFF. Well, I spent six or seven years after high school trying to work myself up. Shipping clerk, salesman, business of one kind or another. And it's a measly manner of existence. To get on that subway on the hot mornings in summer. To devote your whole life to keeping stock, or making phone calls, or selling or buying. To suffer fifty weeks of the year for the sake of a two-week vacation, when all you really desire is to be outdoors, with your shirt off. And always

to have to get ahead of the next fella. And still—that's how you build a future.

HAPPY. Well, you really enjoy it on a farm? Are you content out there?

BIFF [*with rising agitation*]. Hap, I've had twenty or thirty different kinds of jobs since I left home before the war, and it always turns out the same. I just realized it lately. In Nebraska when I herded cattle, and the Dakotas, and Arizona, and now in Texas. It's why I came home now, I guess, because I realized it. This farm I work on, it's spring there now, see? And they've got about fifteen new colts. There's nothing more inspiring or—beautiful than the sight of a mare and a new colt. And it's cool there now, see? Texas is cool now, and it's spring. And whenever spring comes to where I am, I suddenly get the feeling, my God, I'm not gettin' anywhere! What the hell am I doing, playing around with horses, twenty-eight dollars a week! I'm thirty-four years old, I oughta be makin' my future. That's when I come running home. And now, I get here, and I don't know what to do with myself. [*After a pause*] I've always made a point of not wasting my life, and everytime I come back here I know that all I've done is to waste my life.

HAPPY. You're a poet, you know that, Biff? You're a—you're an idealist!

BIFF. No, I'm mixed up very bad. Maybe I oughta get married. Maybe I oughta get stuck into something. Maybe that's my trouble. I'm like a boy. I'm not married, I'm not in business, I just—I'm like a boy. Are you content, Hap? You're a success, aren't you? Are you content?

HAPPY. Hell, no!

BIFF. Why? You're making money, aren't you?

HAPPY [*moving about with energy, expressiveness*]. All I can do now is wait for the merchandise manager to die. And suppose I get to be merchandise manager? He's a good friend of mine, and he just built a terrific estate on Long Island. And he lived there about two months and sold it, and now he's building another one. He can't enjoy it once it's finished. And I know that's just what I would do. I don't know what the hell I'm workin' for. Sometimes I sit in my apartment—all alone. And I think of the rent I'm paying. And it's crazy. But then, it's what I always wanted. My own apartment, a car, and plenty of women. And still, goddammit, I'm lonely.

BIFF [*with enthusiasm*]. Listen, why don't you come out West with me?

HAPPY. You and I, heh?

BIFF. Sure, maybe we could buy a ranch. Raise cattle, use our muscles. Men built like we are should be working out in the open.

HAPPY [*avidly*]. The Loman Brothers, heh?

BIFF [*with vast affection*]. Sure, we'd be known all over the counties!

HAPPY [*enthralled*]. That's what I dream about, Biff. Sometimes I want to just rip my clothes off in the middle of the store and outbox that goddam merchandise manager. I mean I can outbox, outrun, and outlift anybody in that store, and I have to take orders from those common, petty sons-of-bitches till I can't stand it any more.

BIFF. I'm tellin' you, kid, if you were with me I'd be happy out there.

HAPPY [*enthused*]. See, Biff, everybody around me is so false that I'm constantly lowering my ideals. . . .

BIFF. Baby, together we'd stand up for one another, we'd have someone to trust.

HAPPY. If I were around you—

BIFF. Hap, the trouble is we weren't brought up to grub for money. I don't know how to do it.

HAPPY. Neither can I!

BIFF. Then let's go!

HAPPY. The only thing is—what can you make out there?

BIFF. But look at your friend. Builds an estate and then hasn't the peace of mind to live in it.

HAPPY. Yeah, but when he walks into the store the waves part in front of him. That's fifty-two thousand dollars a year coming through the revolving door, and I got more in my pinky finger than he's got in his head.

BIFF. Yeah, but you just said—

HAPPY. I gotta show some of those pompous, self-important executives over there that Hap Loman can make the grade. I want to walk into the store the way he walks in. Then I'll go with you, Biff. We'll be together yet, I swear. But take those two we had tonight. Now weren't they gorgeous creatures?

BIFF. Yeah, yeah, most gorgeous I've had in years.

HAPPY. I get that any time I want, Biff. Whenever I feel disgusted. The only trouble is, it gets like bowling or something. I just keep knockin' them over and it doesn't mean anything. You still run around a lot?

BIFF. Naa. I'd like to find a girl—steady, somebody with substance.

HAPPY. That's what I long for.

BIFF. Go on! You'd never come home.

HAPPY. I would! Somebody with character, with resistance! Like Mom, y'know? You're gonna call me a bastard when I tell you this. That girl Charlotte I was with tonight is engaged to be married in five weeks. [*He tries on his new hat.*]

BIFF. No kiddin'!

HAPPY. Sure, the guy's in line for the vice-presidency of the store. I don't know what gets into me, maybe I just have an overdeveloped sense of competition or something, but I went and ruined her, and furthermore I can't get rid of her. And he's the third executive I've done that to. Isn't that a crummy characteristic? And to top it all, I go to their weddings! [*Indignantly, but laughing*] Like I'm not supposed to take bribes. Manufacturers offer me a hundred-dollar bill now and then to throw an order their way. You know how honest

[redacted]

arm on my shoulder, and he said, "Bill, if you ever need anything, come to me."

HAPPY. I remember that. That sounds good.

BIFF. I think I'll go to see him. If I could get ten thousand or even seven or eight thousand dollars I could buy a beautiful ranch.

HAPPY. I bet he'd back you. 'Cause he thought highly of you, Biff. I mean, they all do. You're well liked, Biff. That's why I say to come back here, and we both have the apartment. And I'm tellin' you, Biff, any babe you want. . . .

BIFF. No, with a ranch I could do the work I like and still be something. I just wonder though. I wonder if Oliver still thinks I stole that carton of basketballs.

HAPPY. Oh, he probably forgot that long ago. It's almost ten years. You're too sensitive. Anyway, he didn't really fire you.

BIFF. Well, I think he was going to. I think that's why I quit. I was never sure whether he knew or not. I know he thought the world of me, though. I was the only one he'd let lock up the place.

WILLY [*below*]. You gonna wash the engine, Biff?

HAPPY. Shh!

[BIFF *looks at* HAPPY, *who is gazing down, listening.* WILLY *is mumbling in the parlor.*]

HAPPY. You hear that?

[*They listen.* WILLY *laughs warmly.*]

BIFF [*growing angry*]. Doesn't he know Mom can hear that?

WILLY. Don't get your sweater dirty, Biff!

[*A look of pain crosses* BIFF's *face.*]

HAPPY. Isn't that terrible? Don't leave again, will you? You'll find a job here. You gotta stick around. I don't know what to do about him, it's getting embarrassing.

WILLY. What a simonizing job!

BIFF. Mom's hearing that!

WILLY. No kiddin', Biff, you got a date? Wonderful!

HAPPY. Go on to sleep. But talk to him in the morning, will you?

BIFF [*reluctantly getting into bed*]. With her in the house. Brother!

HAPPY [*getting into bed*]. I wish you'd have a good talk with him.

[*The light on their room begins to fade.*]

BIFF [*to himself in bed*]. That selfish, stupid . . .

HAPPY. Sh . . . Sleep, Biff.

[*Their light is out. Well before they have finished speaking,* WILLY's *form is dimly seen below in the darkened kitchen. He opens the refrigerator, searches in there, and takes out a bottle of milk. The apartment houses are fading out, and the entire house and surroundings become covered with leaves. Music insinuates itself as the leaves appear.*]

WILLY. Just wanna be careful with those girls, Biff, that's all. Don't make any promises. No promises of any kind. Because a girl, y'know, they always believe what you tell 'em, and you're very young, Biff, you're too young to be talking seriously to girls.

[*Light rises on the kitchen.* WILLY, *talking, shuts the refrigerator door and comes downstage to the kitchen table. He pours milk into a glass. He is totally immersed in himself, smiling faintly.*]

WILLY. Too young entirely, Biff. You want to watch your schooling first. Then when you're all set, there'll be plenty of girls for a boy like you. [*He smiles broadly at a kitchen chair.*] That so? The girls pay for you? [*He laughs.*] Boy, you must really be makin' a hit.

[WILLY *is gradually addressing—physically—a point offstage, speaking through the wall of the kitchen, and his voice has been rising in volume to that of a normal conversation.*]

WILLY. I been wondering why you polish the car so careful. Ha! Don't leave the hubcaps, boys. Get the chamois to the hubcaps. Happy, use newspaper on the windows, it's the easiest thing. Show him how to do it, Biff! You see, Happy? Pad it up, use it like a pad. That's it, that's it, good work. You're doin' all right, Hap. [*He pauses, then nods in approbation for a few seconds, then looks upward.*] Biff, first thing we gotta do when we get time is clip that big branch over the house. Afraid it's gonna fall in a storm and hit the roof. Tell you what. We get a rope and sling her around, and then we climb up there with a couple of saws and take her down. Soon as you finish the car, boys, I wanna see ya. I got a surprise for you, boys.

BIFF [*offstage*]. Whatta ya got, Dad?

WILLY. No, you finish first. Never leave a job till you're finished—remember that. [*Looking toward the "big trees"*] Biff, up in Albany I saw a beautiful hammock. I think I'll buy it next trip, and we'll hang it right between those two elms. Wouldn't that be something? Just swingin' there under those branches. Boy, that would be. . . .

[YOUNG BIFF *and* YOUNG HAPPY *appear from the direction* WILLY *was addressing.* HAPPY *carries rags and a pail of water.* BIFF, *wearing a sweater with a block "S," carries a football.*]

BIFF [*pointing in the direction of the car offstage*]. How's that, Pop, professional?

WILLY. Terrific. Terrific job, boys. Good work, Biff.

HAPPY. Where's the surprise, Pop?

WILLY. In the back seat of the car.

HAPPY. Boy! [*He runs off.*]

BIFF. What is it, Dad? Tell me, what'd you buy?

WILLY [*laughing, cuffs him*]. Never mind, something I want you to have.

BIFF [*turns and starts off*]. What is it, Hap?

HAPPY [*offstage*]. It's a punching bag!

BIFF. Oh, Pop!

WILLY. It's got Gene Tunney's[1] signature on it!

[HAPPY *runs onstage with a punching bag.*]

BIFF. Gee, how'd you know we wanted a punching bag?

WILLY. Well, it's the finest thing for the timing.

[1] ***Gene Tunney,*** *heavyweight champion of the world between 1926 and 1928.*

HAPPY [*lies down on his back and pedals with his feet*]. I'm losing weight, you notice, Pop?

WILLY [*to* HAPPY]. Jumping rope is good too.

BIFF. Did you see the new football I got?

WILLY. [*examining the ball*]. Where'd you get a new ball?

BIFF. The coach told me to practice my passing.

WILLY. That so? And he gave you the ball, heh?

BIFF. Well, I borrowed it from the locker room. [*He laughs confidentially.*]

WILLY [*laughing with him at the theft*]. I want you to return that.

HAPPY. I told you he wouldn't like it!

BIFF [*angrily*]. Well, I'm bringing it back!

WILLY [*stopping the incipent argument, to* HAPPY]. Sure, he's gotta practice with a regulation ball, doesn't he? [*To* BIFF] Coach'll probably congratulate you on your initiative!

BIFF. Oh, he keeps congratulating my initiative all the time, Pop.

WILLY. That's because he likes you. If somebody else took that ball there'd be an uproar. So what's the report, boys, what's the report?

BIFF. Where'd you go this time, Dad? Gee we were lonesome for you.

WILLY [*pleased, puts an arm around each boy and they come down to the apron*]. Lonesome, heh?

BIFF. Missed you every minute.

WILLY. Don't say? Tell you a secret, boys. Don't breathe it to a soul. Someday I'll have my own business, and I'll never have to leave home any more.

HAPPY. Like Uncle Charley, heh?

WILLY. Bigger than Uncle Charley! Because Charley is not—liked. He's liked, but he's not—well liked.

BIFF. Where'd you go this time, Dad?

WILLY. Well, I got on the road, and I went north to Providence. Met the Mayor.

BIFF. The Mayor of Providence!

WILLY. He was sitting in the hotel lobby.

BIFF. What'd he say?

WILLY. He said, "Morning!" And I said, "You got a fine city here, Mayor." And then he had coffee with me. And then I went to Waterbury. Waterbury is a fine city. Big clock city, the famous Waterbury clock. Sold a nice bill there. And then Boston—Boston is the cradle of

the Revolution. A fine city. And a couple of other towns in Mass., and on to Portland and Bangor and straight home!

BIFF. Gee, I'd love to go with you sometime, Dad.

WILLY. Soon as summer comes.

HAPPY. Promise?

WILLY. You and Hap and I, and I'll show you all the towns. America is full of beautiful towns and fine, upstanding people. And they know me, boys, they know me up and down New England. The finest people. And when I bring you fellas up, there'll be open sesame for all of us, 'cause one thing, boys: I have friends. I can park my car in any street in New England, and the cops protect it like their own. This summer, heh?

BIFF AND HAPPY [*together*]. Yeah! You bet!

WILLY. We'll take our bathing suits.

HAPPY. We'll carry your bags, Pop!

WILLY. Oh, won't that be something! Me comin' into the Boston stores with you boys carryin' my bags. What a sensation!

[BIFF *is prancing around, practicing passing the ball.*]

WILLY. You nervous, Biff, about the game?

BIFF. Not if you're gonna be there.

WILLY. What do they say about you in school, now that they made you captain?

HAPPY. There's a crowd of girls behind him everytime the classes change.

BIFF [*taking* WILLY's *hand*]. This Saturday, Pop, this Saturday—just for you, I'm going to break through for a touchdown.

HAPPY. You're supposed to pass.

BIFF. I'm takin' one play for Pop. You watch me, Pop, and when I take off my helmet, that means I'm breakin' out. Then you watch me crash through that line!

WILLY [*kisses* BIFF]. Oh, wait'll I tell this in Boston!

[BERNARD *enters in knickers. He is younger than* BIFF, *earnest and loyal, a worried boy.*]

BERNARD. Biff, where are you? You're supposed to study with me today.

WILLY. Hey, looka Bernard. What're you lookin' so anemic about, Bernard?

BERNARD. He's gotta study, Uncle Willy. He's got Regents next week.

HAPPY [*tauntingly, spinning* BERNARD *around*]. Let's box, Bernard!

BERNARD. Biff! [*He gets away from* HAPPY.] Listen, Biff, I heard Mr. Birnbaum say that if you don't start studyin' math he's gonna flunk you, and you won't graduate. I heard him!

WILLY. You better study with him, Biff. Go ahead now.

BERNARD. I heard him!

BIFF. Oh, Pop, you didn't see my sneakers! [*He holds up a foot for* WILLY *to look at.*]

WILLY. Hey, that's a beautiful job of printing!

BERNARD [*wiping his glasses*]. Just because he printed University of Virginia on his sneakers doesn't mean they've got to graduate him, Uncle Willy!

WILLY [*angrily*]. What're you talking about? With scholarships to three universities they're gonna flunk him?

BERNARD. But I heard Mr. Birnbaum say—

WILLY. Don't be a pest, Bernard! [*To his boys*] What an anemic!

BERNARD. Okay, I'm waiting for you in my house, Biff.

[BERNARD *goes off.* THE LOMANS *laugh.*]

WILLY. Bernard is not well liked, is he?

BIFF. He's liked, but he's not well liked.

HAPPY. That's right, Pop.

WILLY. That's just what I mean. Bernard can get the best marks in school, y'understand, but when he gets out in the business world, y'understand, you are going to be five times ahead of him. That's why I thank Almighty God you're both built like Adonises. Because the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want. You take me, for instance. I never have to wait in line to see a buyer. "Willy Loman is here!" That's all they have to know, and I go right through.

BIFF. Did you knock them dead, Pop?

WILLY. Knocked 'em cold in Providence, slaughtered 'em in Boston.

HAPPY [*on his back, pedaling again*]. I'm losing weight, you notice, Pop?

[LINDA *enters, as of old, a ribbon in her hair, carrying a basket of washing.*]

LINDA [*with youthful energy*]. Hello, dear!

WILLY. Sweetheart!

LINDA. How'd the Chevvy run?

WILLY. Chevrolet, Linda, is the greatest car ever built. [*To the boys*] Since when do you let your mother carry wash up the stairs?

BIFF. Grab hold there, boy!

HAPPY. Where to, Mom?

LINDA. Hang them up on the line. And you better go down to your friends, Biff. The cellar is full of boys. They don't know what to do with themselves.

BIFF. Ah, when Pop comes home they can wait!

WILLY [*laughs appreciatively*]. You better go down and tell them what to do, Biff.

BIFF. I think I'll have them sweep out the furnace room.

WILLY. Good work, Biff.

BIFF [*goes through wall-line of kitchen to doorway at back and calls down*]. Fellas! Everybody sweep out the furnace room! I'll be right down!

VOICES. All right! Okay, Biff.

BIFF. George and Sam and Frank, come out back! We're hangin' up the wash! Come on, Hap, on the double! [*He and* HAPPY *carry out the basket.*]

LINDA. The way they obey him!

WILLY. Well, that's training, the training. I'm tellin' you, I was sellin' thousands and thousands, but I had to come home.

LINDA. Oh, the whole block'll be at that game. Did you sell anything?

WILLY. I did five hundred gross in Providence and seven hundred gross in Boston.

LINDA. No! Wait a minute, I've got a pencil. [*She pulls pencil and paper out of her apron pocket.*] That makes your commission. . . . Two hundred—my God! Two hundred and twelve dollars!

WILLY. Well, I didn't figure it yet, but. . . .

LINDA. How much did you do?

WILLY. Well, I—I did—about a hundred and eighty gross in Providence. Well, no—it came to—roughly two hundred gross on the whole trip.

LINDA [*without hesitation*]. Two hundred gross. That's. . . . [*She figures.*]

WILLY. The trouble was that three of the stores were half closed for inventory in Boston. Otherwise I woulda broke records.

LINDA. Well, it makes seventy dollars and some pennies. That's very good.

WILLY. What do we owe?

LINDA. Well, on the first there's sixteen dollars on the refrigerator—

WILLY. Why sixteen?

LINDA. Well, the fan belt broke, so it was a dollar eighty.

WILLY. But it's brand new.

LINDA. Well, the man said that's the way it is. Till they work themselves in, y'know.

[*They move through the wall-line into the kitchen.*]

WILLY. I hope we didn't get stuck on that machine.

LINDA. They got the biggest ads of any of them!

WILLY. I know, it's a fine machine. What else?

LINDA. Well, there's nine-sixty for the washing machine. And for the vacuum cleaner there's three and a half due on the fifteenth. Then the roof, you got twenty-one dollars remaining.

WILLY. It don't leak, does it?

LINDA. No, they did a wonderful job. Then you owe Frank for the carburetor.

WILLY. I'm not going to pay that man! That goddam Chevrolet, they ought to prohibit the manufacture of that car!

LINDA. Well, you owe him three and a half. And odds and ends, comes to around a hundred and twenty dollars by the fifteenth.

WILLY. A hundred and twenty dollars! My God, if business don't pick up I don't know what I'm gonna do!

LINDA. Well, next week you'll do better.

WILLY. Oh, I'll knock 'em dead next week. I'll go to Hartford. I'm very well liked in Hartford. You know, the trouble is, Linda, people don't seem to take to me.

[*They move onto the forestage.*]

LINDA. Oh, don't be foolish.

WILLY. I know it when I walk in. They seem to laugh at me.

LINDA. Why? Why would they laugh at you? Don't talk that way, Willy.

[WILLY *moves to the edge of the stage.* LINDA *goes into the kitchen and starts to darn stockings.*]

WILLY. I don't know the reason for it, but they just pass me by. I'm not noticed.

LINDA. But you're doing wonderful, dear. You're making seventy to a hundred dollars a week.

WILLY. But I gotta be at it ten, twelve hours a day. Other men—I don't know—they do it easier. I don't know why—I can't stop myself—I talk too much. A man oughta come in with a few words. One thing about Charley. He's a man of few words, and they respect him.

LINDA. You don't talk too much, you're just lively.

WILLY [*smiling*]. Well, I figure, what the hell, life is short, a couple of jokes. [*To himself*] I joke too much! [*The smile goes.*]

LINDA. Why? You're—

WILLY. I'm fat. I'm very—foolish to look at, Linda. I didn't tell you, but Christmas time I happened to be calling on F. H. Stewarts, and a salesman I know, as I was going in to see the buyer I heard him say something about—walrus. And I—I cracked him right across the face. I won't take that. I simply will not take that. But they do laugh at me. I know that.

LINDA. Darling. . . .

WILLY. I gotta overcome it. I know I gotta overcome it. I'm not dressing to advantage, maybe.

LINDA. Willy, darling, you're the handsomest man in the world—

WILLY. Oh, no, Linda.

LINDA. To me you are. [*Slight pause*] The handsomest.

[*From the darkness is heard the laughter of a woman.* WILLY *doesn't turn to it, but it continues through* LINDA's *lines.*]

LINDA. And the boys, Willy. Few men are idolized by their children the way you are.

[*Music is heard as behind a scrim, to the left of the house,* THE WOMAN, *dimly seen, is dressing.*]

WILLY [*with great feeling*]. You're the best there is, Linda, you're a pal, you know that? On the road—on the road I want to grab you sometimes and just kiss the life outa you.

[*The laughter is loud now, and he moves into a brightening area at the left, where* THE WOMAN *has come from behind the scrim and is standing, putting on her hat, looking into a "mirror" and laughing.*]

WILLY. 'Cause I get so lonely—especially when business is bad and there's nobody to talk to. I get the feeling that I'll never sell anything again, that I won't make a living for you, or a business, a business for the boys. [*He talks through* THE WOMAN's *subsiding laughter;* THE WOMAN *primps at the "mirror."*] There's so much I want to make for—

THE WOMAN. Me? You didn't make me, Willy. I picked you.

WILLY [*pleased*]. You picked me?

THE WOMAN [*who is quite proper-looking,* WILLY's *age*]. I did. I've been sitting at that desk watching all the salesmen go by, day in, day out. But you've got such a sense of humor, and we do have such a good time together, don't we?

WILLY. Sure, sure. [*He takes her in his arms.*] Why do you have to go now?

THE WOMAN. It's two o'clock. . . .

WILLY. No, come on in! [*He pulls her.*]

THE WOMAN. . . . my sisters'll be scandalized. When'll you be back?

WILLY. Oh, two weeks about. Will you come up again?

THE WOMAN. Sure thing. You do make me laugh. It's good for me. [*She squeezes his arm, kisses him.*] And I think you're a wonderful man.

WILLY. You picked me, heh?

THE WOMAN. Sure. Because you're so sweet. And such a kidder.

WILLY. Well, I'll see you next time I'm in Boston.

THE WOMAN. I'll put you right through to the buyers.

WILLY [*slapping her bottom*]. Right. Well, bottoms up!

THE WOMAN [*slaps him gently and laughs*]. You just kill me, Willy. [*He suddenly grabs her and kisses her roughly.*] You kill me. And thanks for the stockings. I love a lot of stockings. Well, good night.

WILLY. Good night. And keep your pores open!

THE WOMAN. Oh, Willy!

[THE WOMAN *bursts out laughing, and* LINDA'S *laughter blends in.* THE WOMAN *disappears into the dark. Now the area at the kitchen table brightens.* LINDA *is sitting where she was at the kitchen table, but now is mending a pair of her silk stockings.*]

LINDA. You are, Willy. The handsomest man. You've got no reason to feel that—

WILLY [*coming out of* THE WOMAN'S *dimming area and going over to* LINDA]. I'll make it all up to you, Linda, I'll—

LINDA. There's nothing to make up, dear. You're doing fine, better than—

WILLY [*noticing her mending*]. What's that?

LINDA. Just mending my stockings. They're so expensive—

WILLY [*angrily, taking them from her*]. I won't have you mending stockings in this house! Now throw them out!

[LINDA *puts the stockings in her pocket.*]

BERNARD [*entering on the run*]. Where is he? If he doesn't study!

WILLY [*moving to the forestage, with great agitation*]. You'll give him the answers!

BERNARD. I do, but I can't on a Regents! That's a state exam! They're liable to arrest me!

WILLY. Where is he? I'll whip him, I'll whip him!

LINDA. And he'd better give back that football, Willy, it's not nice.

WILLY. Biff! Where is he? Why is he taking everything?

LINDA. He's too rough with the girls, Willy. All the mothers are afraid of him!

WILLY. I'll whip him!

BERNARD. He's driving the car without a license!

[THE WOMAN'S *laugh is heard.*]

WILLY. Shut up!

LINDA. All the mothers—

WILLY. Shut up!

BERNARD [*backing quietly away and out*]. Mr. Birnbaum says he's stuck up.

WILLY. Get outa here!

BERNARD. If he doesn't buckle down he'll flunk math! [*He goes off.*]

LINDA. He's right, Willy, you've gotta—

WILLY [*exploding at her*]. There's nothing the matter with him! You want him to be a worm like Bernard? He's got spirit, personality. . . .

[*As he speaks,* LINDA, *almost in tears, exits into the living-room.* WILLY *is alone in the kitchen, wilting and staring. The leaves are gone. It is night again, and the apartment houses look down from behind.*]

WILLY. Loaded with it. Loaded! What is he stealing? He's giving it back, isn't he? Why is he stealing? What did I tell him? I never in my life told him anything but decent things.

[HAPPY *in pajamas has come down the stairs;* WILLY *suddenly becomes aware of* HAPPY'S *presence.*]

HAPPY. Let's go now, come on.

WILLY [*sitting down at the kitchen table*]. Huh! Why did she have to wax the floors herself? Everytime she waxes the floors she keels over. She knows that!

HAPPY. Shh! Take it easy. What brought you back tonight?

WILLY. I got an awful scare. Nearly hit a kid in Yonkers. God! Why didn't I go to Alaska with my brother Ben that time! Ben! That man was a genius, that man was success incarnate! What a mistake! He begged me to go.

HAPPY. Well, there's no use in—

WILLY. You guys! There was a man started with the clothes on his back and ended up with diamond mines!

HAPPY. Boy, someday I'd like to know how he did it.

WILLY. What's the mystery? The man knew what he wanted and went out and got it! Walked into a jungle, and comes out, the age

of twenty-one, and he's rich! The world is an oyster, but you don't crack it open on a mattress!

HAPPY. Pop, I told you I'm gonna retire you for life.

WILLY. You'll retire me for life on seventy goddam dollars a week? And your women and your car and your apartment, and you'll retire me for life! Christ's sake, I couldn't get past Yonkers today! Where are you guys, where are you? The woods are burning! I can't drive a car!

[CHARLEY *has appeared in the doorway. He is a large man, slow of speech, laconic, immovable. In all he says, despite what he says, there is pity, and, now, trepidation. He has a robe over pajamas, slippers on his feet. He enters the kitchen.*]

CHARLEY. Everything all right?

HAPPY. Yeah, Charley, everything's . . .

WILLY. What's the matter?

CHARLEY. I heard some noise. I thought something happened. Can't we do something about the walls? You sneeze in here, and in my house hats blow off.

HAPPY. Let's go to bed, Dad. Come on.

[CHARLEY *signals to* HAPPY *to go.*]

WILLY. You go ahead, I'm not tired at the moment.

HAPPY [*to* WILLY]. Take it easy, huh? [*He exits.*]

WILLY. What're you doin' up?

CHARLEY [*sitting down at the kitchen table opposite* WILLY]. Couldn't sleep good. I had a heartburn.

WILLY. Well, you don't know how to eat.

CHARLEY. I eat with my mouth.

WILLY. No, you're ignorant. You gotta know about vitamins and things like that.

CHARLEY. Come on, let's shoot. Tire you out a little.

WILLY [*hesitantly*]. All right. You got cards?

CHARLEY [*taking a deck from his pocket*]. Yeah, I got them. Someplace. What is it with those vitamins?

WILLY [*dealing*]. They build up your bones. Chemistry.

CHARLEY. Yeah, but there's no bones in a heartburn.

WILLY. What are you talkin' about? Do you know the first thing about it?

CHARLEY. Don't get insulted.

WILLY. Don't talk about something you don't know anything about.

[*They are playing. Pause*]

CHARLEY. What're you doin' home?

WILLY. A little trouble with the car.

CHARLEY. Oh. [*Pause*] I'd like to take a trip to California.

WILLY. Don't say.

CHARLEY. You want a job?

WILLY. I got a job, I told you that. [*After a slight pause*] What the hell are you offering me a job for?

CHARLEY. Don't get insulted.

WILLY. Don't insult me.

CHARLEY. I don't see no sense in it. You don't have to go on this way.

WILLY. I got a good job. [*Slight pause*] What do you keep comin' in here for?

CHARLEY. You want me to go?

WILLY [*after a pause, withering*]. I can't understand it. He's going back to Texas again. What the hell is that?

CHARLEY. Let him go.

WILLY. I got nothin' to give him, Charley, I'm clean, I'm clean.

CHARLEY. He won't starve. None a them starve. Forget about him.

WILLY. Then what have I got to remember?

CHARLEY. You take it too hard. To hell with it. When a deposit bottle is broken you don't get your nickel back.

WILLY. That's easy enough for you to say.

CHARLEY. That ain't easy for me to say.

WILLY. Did you see the ceiling I put up in the living-room?

CHARLEY. Yeah, that's a piece of work. To put up a ceiling is a mystery to me. How do you do it?

WILLY. What's the difference?

CHARLEY. Well, talk about it.

WILLY. You gonna put up a ceiling?

CHARLEY. How could I put up a ceiling?

WILLY. Then what the hell are you bothering me for?

CHARLEY. You're insulted again.

WILLY. A man who can't handle tools is not a man. You're disgusting.

CHARLEY. Don't call me disgusting, Willy.

[UNCLE BEN, *carrying a valise and an umbrella, enters the forestage from around the right corner of the house. He is a stolid man, in his sixties, with a mustache and an authoritative air. He is utterly certain of his destiny, and there is an aura of far places about him. He enters exactly as* WILLY *speaks.*]

WILLY. I'm getting awfully tired, Ben.

[BEN'S *music is heard.* BEN *looks around at everything.*]

CHARLEY. Good, keep playing; you'll sleep better. Did you call me Ben?

[BEN *looks at his watch.*]

WILLY. That's funny. For a second there you reminded me of my brother Ben.

BEN. I only have a few minutes. [*He strolls, inspecting the place.* WILLY *and* CHARLEY *continue playing.*]

CHARLEY. You never heard from him again, heh? Since that time?

WILLY. Didn't Linda tell you? Couple of weeks ago we got a letter from his wife in Africa. He died.

CHARLEY. That so.

BEN [*chuckling*]. So this is Brooklyn, eh?

CHARLEY. Maybe you're in for some of his money.

WILLY. Naa, he had seven sons. There's just one opportunity I had with that man. . . .

BEN. I must make a train, William. There are several properties I'm looking at in Alaska.

WILLY. Sure, sure! If I'd gone with him to Alaska that time, everything would've been totally different.

CHARLEY. Go on, you'd froze to death up there.

WILLY. What're you talking about?

BEN. Opportunity is tremendous in Alaska, William. Surprised you're not up there.

WILLY. Sure, tremendous.

CHARLEY. Heh?

WILLY. There was the only man I ever met who knew the answers.

CHARLEY. Who?

BEN. How are you all?

WILLY [*taking a pot, smiling*]. Fine, fine.

CHARLEY. Pretty sharp tonight.

BEN. Is Mother living with you?

WILLY. No, she died a long time ago.

CHARLEY. Who?

BEN. That's too bad. Fine specimen of a lady, Mother.

WILLY [*to* CHARLEY]. Heh?

BEN. I'd hoped to see the old girl.

CHARLEY. Who died?

BEN. Heard anything from Father, have you?

WILLY [*unnerved*]. What do you mean, who died?

CHARLEY [*taking a pot*]. What're you talkin' about?

BEN [*looking at his watch*]. William, it's half-past eight!

WILLY [*as though to dispel his confusion he angrily stops* CHARLEY'S *hand*]. That's my build!

CHARLEY. I put the ace—

WILLY. If you don't know how to play the game I'm not gonna throw my money away on you!

CHARLEY [*rising*]. It was my ace, for God's sake!

WILLY. I'm through, I'm through!

BEN. When did Mother die?

WILLY. Long ago. Since the beginning you never knew how to play cards.

CHARLEY [*picks up the cards and goes to the door*]. All right! Next time I'll bring a deck with five aces.

WILLY. I don't play that kind of game!

CHARLEY [*turning to him*]. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!

WILLY. Yeah?

CHARLEY. Yeah! [*He goes out.*]

WILLY [*slamming the door after him*]. Ignoramus!

BEN [*as* WILLY *comes toward him through the wall-line of the kitchen*]. So you're William.

WILLY [*shaking* BEN'S *hand*]. Ben! I've been waiting for you so long! What's the answer? How did you do it?

BEN. Oh, there's a story in that.

[LINDA *enters the forestage, as of old, carrying the wash basket.*]

LINDA. Is this Ben?

BEN [*gallantly*]. How do you do, my dear.

LINDA. Where've you been all these years? Willy's always wondered why you—

WILLY [*pulling* BEN *away from her impatiently*]. Where is Dad? Didn't you follow him? How did you get started?

BEN. Well, I don't know how much you remember.

WILLY. Well, I was just a baby, of course, only three or four years old—

BEN. Three years and eleven months.

WILLY. What a memory, Ben!

BEN. I have many enterprises, William, and I have never kept books.

WILLY. I remember I was sitting under the wagon in—was it Nebraska?

BEN. It was South Dakota, and I gave you a bunch of wild flowers.

WILLY. I remember you walking away down some open road.

BEN [*laughing*]. I was going to find Father in Alaska.

WILLY. Where is he?

BEN. At that age I had a very faulty view of geography, William. I discovered after a few days that I was heading due south, so instead of Alaska, I ended up in Africa.

LINDA. Africa!

WILLY. The Gold Coast!

BEN. Principally diamond mines.

LINDA. Diamond mines!

BEN. Yes, my dear. But I've only a few minutes—

WILLY. No! Boys! Boys! [YOUNG BIFF *and* HAPPY *appear.*] Listen to this. This is your Uncle Ben, a great man! Tell my boys, Ben!

BEN. Why, boys, when I was seventeen I walked into the jungle, and when I was twenty-one I walked out. [*He laughs.*] And by God I was rich.

WILLY [*to the boys*]. You see what I been talking about? The greatest things can happen!

BEN [*glancing at his watch*]. I have an appointment in Ketchikan Tuesday week.

WILLY. No, Ben! Please tell about Dad. I want my boys to hear. I want them to know the kind of stock they spring from. All I remember is a man with a big beard, and I was in Mamma's lap, sitting around a fire, and some kind of high music.

BEN. His flute. He played the flute.

WILLY. Sure, the flute, that's right!

[*New music is heard, a high, rollicking tune.*]

BEN. Father was a very great and a very wild-hearted man. We would start in Boston, and he'd toss the whole family into the wagon, and then he'd drive the team right across the country; through Ohio, and Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, and all the Western states. And we'd stop in the towns and sell the flutes that he'd made on the way. Great inventor, Father. With one gadget he made more in a week than a man like you could make in a lifetime.

WILLY. That's just the way I'm bringing them up, Ben—rugged, well liked, all around.

BEN. Yeah? [*To* BIFF] Hit that, boy—hard as you can. [*He pounds his stomach.*]

BIFF. Oh, no, sir!

BEN [*taking boxing stance*]. Come on, get to me! [*He laughs.*]

WILLY. Go to it, Biff! Go ahead, show him!

BIFF. Okay! [*He cocks his fists and starts in.*]

LINDA [*to* WILLY]. Why must he fight, dear?

BEN [*sparring with* BIFF]. Good boy! Good boy!

WILLY. How's that, Ben, heh?

HAPPY. Give him the left, Biff!

LINDA. Why are you fighting?

BEN. Good boy! [*Suddenly comes in, trips* BIFF, *and stands over him, the point of his umbrella poised over* BIFF's *eye*]

LINDA. Look out, Biff!

BIFF. Gee!

BEN [*patting* BIFF's *knee*]. Never fight fair with a stranger, boy. You'll never get out of the jungle that way. [*Taking* LINDA's *hand and bowing*] It was an honor and a pleasure to meet you, Linda.

LINDA [*withdrawing her hand coldly, frightened*]. Have a nice—trip.

BEN [*to* WILLY]. And good luck with your—what do you do?

WILLY. Selling.

BEN. Yes. Well . . . [*He raises his hand in farewell to all.*]

WILLY. No, Ben, I don't want you to think . . . [*He takes* BEN's *arm to show him.*] It's Brooklyn, I know, but we hunt too.

BEN. Really, now.

WILLY. Oh, sure, there's snakes and rabbits and—that's why I moved out here. Why, Biff can fell any one of these trees in no time! Boys! Go right over to where they're building the apartment house and get some sand. We're gonna rebuild the entire front stoop right now! Watch this, Ben!

BIFF. Yes, sir! On the double, Hap!

HAPPY [*as he and* BIFF *run off*]. I lost weight, Pop, you notice?

[CHARLEY *enters in knickers, even before the boys are gone.*]

CHARLEY. Listen, if they steal any more from that building the watchman'll put the cops on them!

LINDA [*to* WILLY]. Don't let Biff . . .

[BEN *laughs lustily.*]

WILLY. You shoulda seen the lumber they brought home last week. At least a dozen six-by-tens worth all kinds a money.

CHARLEY. Listen, if that watchman—

WILLY. I gave them hell, understand. But I got a couple of fearless characters there.

CHARLEY. Willy, the jails are full of fearless characters.

BEN [*clapping* WILLY *on the back, with a laugh at* CHARLEY]. And the stock exchange, friend!

WILLY [*joining in* BEN'S *laughter*]. Where are the rest of your pants?

CHARLEY. My wife bought them.

WILLY. Now all you need is a golf club and you can go upstairs and go to sleep. [*To* BEN] Great athlete! Between him and his son Bernard they can't hammer a nail!

BERNARD [*rushing in*]. The watchman's chasing Biff!

WILLY [*angrily*]. Shut up! He's not stealing anything!

LINDA [*alarmed, hurrying off left*]. Where is he? Biff, dear! [*She exits.*]

WILLY [*moving toward the left, away from* BEN]. There's nothing wrong. What's the matter with you?

BEN. Nervy boy. Good!

WILLY [*laughing*]. Oh, nerves of iron, that Biff!

CHARLEY. Don't know what it is. My New England man comes back and he's bleedin', they murdered him up there.

WILLY. It's contacts, Charley, I got important contacts!

CHARLEY [*sarcastically*]. Glad to hear it, Willy. Come in later, we'll shoot a little casino. I'll take some of your Portland money. [*He laughs at* WILLY *and exits.*]

WILLY [*turning to* BEN]. Business is bad, it's murderous. But not for me, of course.

BEN. I'll stop by on my way back to Africa.

WILLY [*longingly*]. Can't you stay a few days? You're just what I need, Ben, because I—I have a fine position here, but I—well, Dad left when I was such a baby and I never had a chance to talk to him and I still feel—kind of temporary about myself.

BEN. I'll be late for my train.

[*They are at opposite ends of the stage.*]

WILLY. Ben, my boys—can't we talk? They'd go into the jaws of hell for me, see, but I—

BEN. William, you're being first-rate with your boys. Outstanding, manly chaps!

WILLY [*hanging on to his words*]. Oh, Ben, that's good to hear! Because sometimes I'm afraid that I'm not teaching them the right kind of— Ben, how should I teach them?

BEN [*giving great weight to each word, and with a certain vicious audacity*]. William, when I walked into the jungle, I was seventeen.

When I walked out I was twenty-one. And, by God, I was rich! [*He goes off into darkness around the right corner of the house.*]

WILLY. . . . was rich! That's just the spirit I want to imbue them with! To walk into a jungle! I was right! I was right! I was right!

[BEN *is gone, but* WILLY *is still speaking to him as* LINDA, *in nightgown and robe, enters the kitchen, glances around for* WILLY, *then goes to the door of the house, looks out and sees him. Comes down to his left. He looks at her.*]

LINDA. Willy, dear? Willy?

WILLY. I was right!

LINDA. Did you have some cheese? [*He can't answer.*] It's very late, darling. Come to bed, heh?

WILLY [*looking straight up*]. Gotta break your neck to see a star in this yard.

LINDA. You coming in?

WILLY. Whatever happened to that diamond watch fob? Remember? When Ben came from Africa that time? Didn't he give me a watch fob with a diamond in it?

LINDA. You pawned it, dear. Twelve, thirteen years ago. For Biff's radio correspondence course.

WILLY. Gee, that was a beautiful thing. I'll take a walk.

LINDA. But you're in your slippers.

WILLY [*starting to go around the house at the left*]. I was right! I was! [*Half to* LINDA, *as he goes, shaking his head*] What a man! There was a man worth talking to. I was right!

LINDA [*calling after* WILLY]. But in your slippers, Willy!

[WILLY *is almost gone when* BIFF, *in his pajamas, comes down the stairs and enters the kitchen.*]

BIFF. What is he doing out there?

LINDA. Sh!

BIFF. God Almighty, Mom, how long has he been doing this?

LINDA. Don't, he'll hear you.

BIFF. What the hell is the matter with him?

LINDA. It'll pass by morning.

BIFF. Shouldn't we do anything?

LINDA. Oh, my dear, you should do a lot of things, but there's nothing to do, so go to sleep.

[HAPPY *comes down the stair and sits on the steps.*]

HAPPY. I never heard him so loud, Mom.

LINDA. Well, come around more often; you'll hear him. [*She sits down at the table and mends the lining of* WILLY's *jacket.*]

BIFF. Why didn't you ever write me about this, Mom?

LINDA. How would I write to you? For over three months you had no address.

BIFF. I was on the move. But you know I thought of you all the time. You know that, don't you, pal?

LINDA. I know, dear, I know. But he likes to have a letter. Just to know that there's still a possibility for better things.

BIFF. He's not like this all the time, is he?

LINDA. It's when you come home he's always the worst.

BIFF. When I come home?

LINDA. When you write you're coming, he's all smiles, and talks about the future, and—he's just wonderful. And then the closer you seem to come, the more shaky he gets, and then, by the time you get here, he's arguing, and he seems angry at you. I think it's just that maybe he can't bring himself to—to open up to you. Why are you so hateful to each other? Why is that?

BIFF [*evasively*]. I'm not hateful, Mom.

LINDA. But you no sooner come in the door than you're fighting!

BIFF. I don't know why. I mean to change. I'm tryin', Mom, you understand?

LINDA. Are you home to stay now?

BIFF. I don't know. I want to look around, see what's doin'.

LINDA. Biff, you can't look around all your life, can you?

BIFF. I just can't take hold, Mom. I can't take hold of some kind of a life.

LINDA. Biff, a man is not a bird, to come and go with the springtime.

BIFF. Your hair. . . . [*He touches her hair.*] Your hair got so gray.

LINDA. Oh, it's been gray since you were in high school. I just stopped dyeing it, that's all.

BIFF. Dye it again, will ya? I don't want my pal looking old. [*He smiles.*]

LINDA. You're such a boy! You think you can go away for a year and . . . You've got to get it into your head now that one day you'll knock on this door and there'll be strange people here—

BIFF. What are you talking about? You're not even sixty, Mom.

LINDA. But what about your father?

BIFF [*lamely*]. Well, I meant him too.

HAPPY. He admires Pop.

LINDA. Biff, dear, if you don't have any feeling for him, then you can't have any feeling for me.

BIFF. Sure I can, Mom.

LINDA. No. You can't just come to see me, because I love him. [*With a threat, but only a threat, of tears*] He's the dearest man in the world to me, and I won't have anyone making him feel unwanted and low and blue. You've got to make up your mind now, darling, there's no leeway any more. Either he's your father and you pay him that respect, or else you're not to come here. I know he's not easy to get along with—nobody knows that better than me—but. . . .

WILLY [*from the left, with a laugh*]. Hey, hey, Biffo!

BIFF [*starting to go out after* WILLY]. What the hell is the matter with him?

[HAPPY *stops him.*]

LINDA. Don't—don't go near him!

BIFF. Stop making excuses for him! He always, always wiped the floor with you. Never had an ounce of respect for you.

HAPPY. He's always had respect for—

BIFF. What the hell do you know about it?

HAPPY [*surlily*]. Just don't call him crazy!

BIFF. He's got no character— Charley wouldn't do this. Not in his own house—spewing out that vomit from his mind.

HAPPY. Charley never had to cope with what he's got to.

BIFF. People are worse off than Willy Loman. Believe me, I've seen them.

LINDA. Then make Charley your father, Biff. You can't do that, can you? I don't say he's a great man. Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He's not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person. You called him crazy—

BIFF. I didn't mean—

LINDA. No, a lot of people think he's lost his—balance. But you don't have to be very smart to know what his trouble is. The man is exhausted.

HAPPY. Sure!

LINDA. A small man can be just as exhausted as a great man. He works for a company thirty-six years this March, opens up unheard-of territories to their trademark, and now in his old age they take his salary away.

HAPPY [*indignantly*]. I didn't know that, Mom.

LINDA. You never asked, my dear! Now that you get your spending money someplace else you don't trouble your mind with him.

HAPPY. But I gave you money last—

LINDA. Christmas time, fifty dollars! To fix the hot water it cost ninety-seven fifty! For five weeks he's been on straight commission, like a beginner, an unknown!

BIFF. Those ungrateful bastards!

LINDA. Are they any worse than his sons? When he brought them business, when he was young, they were glad to see him. But now his old friends, the old buyers that loved him so and always found some order to hand him in a pinch—they're all dead, retired. He used to be able to make six, seven calls a day in Boston. Now he takes his valises out of the car and puts them back and takes them out again and he's exhausted. Instead of walking he talks now. He drives seven hundred miles, and when he gets there no one knows him any more, no one welcomes him. And what goes through a man's mind, driving seven hundred miles home without having earned a cent? Why shouldn't he talk to himself? Why? When he has to go to Charley and borrow fifty dollars a week and pretend to me that it's his pay? How long can that go on? How long? You see what I'm sitting here and waiting for? And you tell me he has no character? The man who never worked a day but for your benefit? When does he get the medal for that? Is this his reward—to turn around at the age of sixty-three and find his sons, who he loved better than his life, one a philandering bum—

HAPPY. Mom!

LINDA. That's all you are, my baby! [*To* BIFF] And you! What happened to the love you had for him? You were such pals! How you used to talk to him on the phone every night! How lonely he was till he could come home to you!

BIFF. All right, Mom. I'll live here in my room, and I'll get a job. I'll keep away from him, that's all.

LINDA. No, Biff. You can't stay here and fight all the time.

BIFF. He threw me out of this house, remember that.

LINDA. Why did he do that? I never knew why.

BIFF. Because I know he's a fake and he doesn't like anybody around who knows!

LINDA. Why a fake? In what way? What do you mean?

BIFF. Just don't lay it all at my feet. It's between me and him—that's all I have to say. I'll chip in from now on. He'll settle for half

my pay check. He'll be all right. I'm going to bed. [*He starts for the stairs.*]

LINDA. He won't be all right.

BIFF [*turning on the stairs, furiously*]. I hate this city and I'll stay here. Now what do you want?

LINDA. He's dying, Biff.

[HAPPY *turns quickly to her, shocked.*]

BIFF [*after a pause*]. Why is he dying?

LINDA. He's been trying to kill himself.

BIFF [*with great horror*]. How?

LINDA. I live from day to day.

BIFF. What're you talking about?

LINDA. Remember I wrote you that he smashed up the car again? In February?

BIFF. Well?

LINDA. The insurance inspector came. He said that they have evidence. That all these accidents in the last year—weren't—weren't—accidents.

HAPPY. How can they tell that? That's a lie.

LINDA. It seems there's a woman. . . . [*She takes a breath as*]

BIFF [*sharply but contained*]. What woman?

LINDA [*simultaneously*]. . . . and this woman . . .

LINDA. What?

BIFF. Nothing. Go ahead.

LINDA. What did you say?

BIFF. Nothing. I just said what woman?

HAPPY. What about her?

LINDA. Well, it seems she was walking down the road and saw his car. She says that he wasn't driving fast at all, and that he didn't skid. She says he came to that little bridge, and then deliberately smashed into the railing, and it was only the shallowness of the water that saved him.

BIFF. Oh, no, he probably just fell asleep again.

LINDA. I don't think he fell asleep.

BIFF. Why not?

LINDA. Last month. . . . [*With great difficulty*] Oh, boys, it's so hard to say a thing like this! He's just a big stupid man to you, but I tell you there's more good in him than in many other people. [*She chokes, wipes her eyes.*] I was looking for a fuse. The lights blew out, and I went down the cellar. And behind the fuse box—it happened to fall out—was a length of rubber pipe—just short.

HAPPY. No kidding?

LINDA. There's a little attachment on the end of it. I knew right away. And sure enough, on the bottom of the water heater there's a new little nipple on the gas pipe.

HAPPY [*angrily*]. That—jerk.

BIFF. Did you have it taken off?

LINDA. I'm—I'm ashamed to. How can I mention it to him? Every day I go down and take away that little rubber pipe. But, when he comes home, I put it back where it was. How can I insult him that way? I don't know what to do. I live from day to day, boys. I tell you, I know every thought in his mind. It sounds so old-fashioned and silly, but I tell you he put his whole life into you and you've turned your backs on him. [*She is bent over in the chair, weeping, her face in her hands.*] Biff, I swear to God! Biff, his life is in your hands!

HAPPY [*to* BIFF]. How do you like that damned fool!

BIFF [*kissing her*]. All right, pal, all right. It's all settled now. I've been remiss. I know that, Mom. But now I'll stay, and I swear to you, I'll apply myself. [*Kneeling in front of her, in a fever of self-reproach*] It's just—you see, Mom, I don't fit in business. Not that I won't try. I'll try, and I'll make good.

HAPPY. Sure you will. The trouble with you in business was you never tried to please people.

BIFF. I know, I—

HAPPY. Like when you worked for Harrison's. Bob Harrison said you were tops, and then you go and do some damn fool thing like whistling whole songs in the elevator like a comedian.

BIFF [*against* HAPPY]. So what? I like to whistle sometimes.

HAPPY. You don't raise a guy to a responsible job who whistles in the elevator!

LINDA. Well, don't argue about it now.

HAPPY. Like when you'd go off and swim in the middle of the day instead of taking the line around.

BIFF [*his resentment rising*]. Well, don't you run off? You take off sometimes, don't you? On a nice summer day?

HAPPY. Yeah, but I cover myself!

LINDA. Boys!

HAPPY. If I'm going to take a fade the boss can call any number where I'm supposed to be and they'll swear to him that I just left. I'll tell you something that I hate to say, Biff, but in the business world some of them think you're crazy.

BIFF [*angered*]. Screw the business world!

HAPPY. All right, screw it! Great, but cover yourself!

LINDA. Hap, Hap!

BIFF. I don't care what they think! They've laughed at Dad for years, and you know why? Because we don't belong in this nuthouse of a city! We should be mixing cement on some open plain, or—or carpenters. A carpenter is allowed to whistle!

[WILLY *walks in from the entrance of the house, at left.*]

WILLY. Even your grandfather was better than a carpenter. [*Pause. They watch him.*] You never grew up. Bernard does not whistle in the elevator, I assure you.

BIFF [*as though to laugh* WILLY *out of it*]. Yeah, but you do, Pop.

WILLY. I never in my life whistled in an elevator! And who in the business world thinks I'm crazy?

BIFF. I didn't mean it like that, Pop. Now don't make a whole thing out of it, will ya?

WILLY. Go back to the West! Be a carpenter, a cowboy, enjoy yourself!

LINDA. Willy, he was just saying—

WILLY. I heard what he said!

HAPPY [*trying to quiet* WILLY]. Hey, Pop, come on now . . . .

WILLY [*continuing over* HAPPY's *line*]. They laugh at me, heh? Go to Filene's, go to the Hub, go to Slattery's, Boston. Call out the name Willy Loman and see what happens! Big shot!

BIFF. All right, Pop.

WILLY. Big!

BIFF. All right!

WILLY. Why do you always insult me?

BIFF. I didn't say a word. [*To* LINDA] Did I say a word?

LINDA. He didn't say anything, Willy.

WILLY [*going to the doorway of the living-room*]. All right, good night, good night.

LINDA. Willy, dear, he just decided. . . .

WILLY [*to* BIFF]. If you get tired hanging around tomorrow, paint the ceiling I put up in the living-room.

BIFF. I'm leaving early tomorrow.

HAPPY. He's going to see Bill Oliver, Pop.

WILLY [*interestedly*]. Oliver? For what?

BIFF [*with reserve, but trying, trying*]. He always said he'd stake me. I'd like to go into business, so maybe I can take him up on it.

LINDA. Isn't that wonderful?

WILLY. Don't interrupt. What's wonderful about it? There's fifty

men in the City of New York who'd stake him. [*To* BIFF] Sporting goods?

BIFF. I guess so. I know something about it and—

WILLY. He knows something about it! You know sporting goods better than Spalding, for God's sake! How much is he giving you?

BIFF. I don't know, I didn't even see him yet, but—

WILLY. Then what're you talkin' about?

BIFF [*getting angry*]. Well, all I said was I'm gonna see him, that's all!

WILLY [*turning away*]. Ah, you're counting your chickens again.

BIFF [*starting left for the stairs*]. Oh, Jesus, I'm going to sleep!

WILLY [*calling after him*]. Don't curse in this house!

BIFF [*turning*]. Since when did you get so clean?

HAPPY [*trying to stop them*]. Wait a . . . .

WILLY. Don't use that language to me! I won't have it!

HAPPY [*grabbing* BIFF, *shouts*]. Wait a minute! I got an idea. I got a feasible idea. Come here, Biff, let's talk this over now, let's talk some sense here. When I was down in Florida last time, I thought of a great idea to sell sporting goods. It just came back to me. You and I, Biff—we have a line, the Loman Line. We train a couple of weeks, and put on a couple of exhibitions, see?

WILLY. That's an idea!

HAPPY. Wait! We form two basketball teams, see? Two water-polo teams. We play each other. It's a million dollars' worth of publicity. Two brothers, see? The Loman Brothers. Displays in the Royal Palms—all the hotels. And banners over the ring and the basketball court: "Loman Brothers." Baby, we could sell sporting goods!

WILLY. That is a one-million-dollar idea!

LINDA. Marvelous!

BIFF. I'm in great shape as far as that's concerned.

HAPPY. And the beauty of it is, Biff, it wouldn't be like a business. We'd be out playin' ball again. . . .

BIFF [*enthused*]. Yeah, that's. . . .

WILLY. Million-dollar. . . .

HAPPY. And you wouldn't get fed up with it, Biff. It'd be the family again. There'd be the old honor, and comradeship, and if you wanted to go off for a swim or somethin'—well, you'd do it! Without some smart cooky gettin' up ahead of you!

WILLY. Lick the world! You guys together could absolutely lick the civilized world.

BIFF. I'll see Oliver tomorrow. Hap, if we could work that out. . . .

LINDA. Maybe things are beginning to—

WILLY [*wildly enthused, to* LINDA]. Stop interrupting! [*To* BIFF] But don't wear sport jacket and slacks when you see Oliver.

BIFF. No, I'll—

WILLY. A business suit, and talk as little as possible, and don't crack any jokes.

BIFF. He did like me. Always liked me.

LINDA. He loved you!

WILLY [*to* LINDA]. Will you stop! [*To* BIFF] Walk in very serious. You are not applying for a boy's job. Money is to pass. Be quiet, fine, and serious. Everybody likes a kidder, but nobody lends him money.

HAPPY. I'll try to get some myself, Biff. I'm sure I can.

WILLY. I see great things for you kids, I think your troubles are over. But remember, start big and you'll end big. Ask for fifteen. How much you gonna ask for?

BIFF. Gee, I don't know—

WILLY. And don't say "Gee." "Gee" is a boy's word. A man walking in for fifteen thousand dollars does not say "Gee!"

BIFF. Ten, I think, would be top though.

WILLY. Don't be so modest. You always started too low. Walk in with a big laugh. Don't look worried. Start off with a couple of your good stories to lighten things up. It's not what you say, it's how you say it—because personality always wins the day.

LINDA. Oliver always thought the highest of him—

WILLY. Will you let me talk?

BIFF. Don't yell at her, Pop, will ya?

WILLY [*angrily*]. I was talking, wasn't I?

BIFF. I don't like you yelling at her all the time, and I'm tellin' you, that's all.

WILLY. What're you, takin' over this house?

LINDA. Willy—

WILLY [*turning on her*]. Don't take his side all the time, goddammit!

BIFF [*furiously*]. Stop yelling at her!

WILLY [*suddenly pulling on his cheek, beaten down, guilt ridden*]. Give my best to Bill Oliver—he may remember me. [*He exits through the living-room doorway.*]

LINDA [*her voice subdued*]. What'd you have to start that for?

[BIFF *turns away.*] You see how sweet he was as soon as you talked hopefully? [*She goes over to* BIFF.] Come up and say good night to him. Don't let him go to bed that way.

HAPPY. Come on, Biff, let's buck him up.

LINDA. Please, dear. Just say good night. It takes so little to make him happy. Come. [*She goes through the living-room doorway, calling upstairs from within the living-room.*] Your pajamas are hanging in the bathroom, Willy!

HAPPY [*looking toward where* LINDA *went out*]. What a woman! They broke the mold when they made her. You know that, Biff?

BIFF. He's off salary. My God, working on commission!

HAPPY. Well, let's face it: he's no hot-shot selling man. Except that sometimes, you have to admit, he's a sweet personality.

BIFF [*deciding*]. Lend me ten bucks, will ya? I want to buy some new ties.

HAPPY. I'll take you to a place I know. Beautiful stuff. Wear one of my striped shirts tomorrow.

BIFF. She got gray. Mom got awful old. Gee, I'm gonna go in to Oliver tomorrow and knock him for a—

HAPPY. Come on up. Tell that to Dad. Let's give him a whirl. Come on.

BIFF [*steamed up*]. You know, with ten thousand bucks, boy!

HAPPY [*as they go into the living-room*]. That's the talk, Biff, that's the first time I've heard the old confidence out of you! [*From within the living-room, fading off*] You're gonna live with me, kid, and any babe you want just say the word. . . . [*The last lines are hardly heard. They are mounting the stairs to their parents' bedroom.*]

LINDA [*entering her bedroom and addressing* WILLY, *who is in the bathroom. She is straightening the bed for him*]. Can you do anything about the shower? It drips.

WILLY [*from the bathroom*]. All of a sudden everything falls to pieces! Goddam plumbing, oughta be sued, those people. I hardly finished putting it in and the thing. . . . [*His words rumble off.*]

LINDA. I'm just wondering if Oliver will remember him. You think he might?

WILLY [*coming out of the bathroom in his pajamas*]. Remember him? What's the matter with you, you crazy? If he'd've stayed with Oliver he'd be on top by now! Wait'll Oliver gets a look at him. You don't know the average caliber any more. The average young

man today—[*he is getting into bed*]—is got a caliber of zero. Greatest thing in the world for him was to bum around.

[BIFF *and* HAPPY *enter the bedroom. Slight pause*]

WILLY [*stops short, looking at* BIFF]. Glad to hear it, boy.

HAPPY. He wanted to say good night to you, sport.

WILLY [*to* BIFF]. Yeah. Knock him dead, boy. What'd you want to tell me?

BIFF. Just take it easy, Pop. Good night. [*He turns to go.*]

WILLY [*unable to resist*]. And if anything falls off the desk while you're talking to him—like a package or something—don't you pick it up. They have office boys for that.

LINDA. I'll make a big breakfast—

WILLY. Will you let me finish? [*To* BIFF] Tell him you were in the business in the West. Not farm work.

BIFF. All right, Dad.

LINDA. I think everything—

WILLY [*going right through her speech*]. And don't undersell yourself. No less than fifteen thousand dollars.

BIFF [*unable to bear him*]. Okay. Good night, Mom. [*He starts moving.*]

WILLY. Because you got a greatness in you, Biff, remember that. You got all kinds a greatness. . . . [*He lies back, exhausted.* BIFF *walks out.*]

LINDA [*calling after* BIFF]. Sleep well, darling!

HAPPY. I'm gonna get married, Mom. I wanted to tell you.

LINDA. Go to sleep, dear.

HAPPY [*going*]. I just wanted to tell you.

WILLY. Keep up the good work. [HAPPY *exits.*] God. . . . remember that Ebbets Field game? The championship of the city?

LINDA. Just rest. Should I sing to you?

WILLY. Yeah. Sing to me. [LINDA *hums a soft lullaby.*] When that team came out—he was the tallest, remember?

LINDA. Oh, yes. And in gold.

[BIFF *enters the darkened kitchen, takes a cigarette, and leaves the house. He comes downstage into a golden pool of light. He smokes, staring at the night.*]

WILLY. Like a young god. Hercules—something like that. And the sun, the sun all around him. Remember how he waved to me? Right up from the field, with the representatives of three colleges standing by? And the buyers I brought, and the cheers when he came out—

Loman, Loman, Loman! God Almighty, he'll be great yet. A star like that, magnificent, can never really fade away!

[*The light on* WILLY *is fading. The gas heater begins to glow through the kitchen wall, near the stairs, a blue flame beneath red coils.*]

LINDA [*timidly*]. Willy dear, what has he got against you?

WILLY. I'm so tired. Don't talk any more.

[BIFF *slowly returns to the kitchen. He stops, stares toward the heater.*]

LINDA. Will you ask Howard to let you work in New York?

WILLY. First thing in the morning. Everything'll be all right.

[BIFF *reaches behind the heater and draws out a length of rubber tubing. He is horrified and turns his head toward* WILLY'S *room, still dimly lit, from which the strains of* LINDA'S *desperate but monotonous humming rise.*]

WILLY [*staring through the window into the moonlight*]. Gee, look at the moon moving between the buildings!

[BIFF *wraps the tubing around his hand and quickly goes up the stairs.*]

CURTAIN

act 2

Music is heard, gay and bright. The curtain rises as the music fades away. WILLY, *in shirt sleeves, is sitting at the kitchen table, sipping coffee, his hat in his lap.* LINDA *is filling his cup when she can.*

WILLY. Wonderful coffee. Meal in itself.

LINDA. Can I make you some eggs?

WILLY. No. Take a breath.

LINDA. You look so rested, dear.

WILLY. I slept like a dead one. First time in months. Imagine, sleeping till ten on a Tuesday morning. Boys left nice and early, heh?

LINDA. They were out of here by eight o'clock.

WILLY. Good work!

LINDA. It was so thrilling to see them leaving together. I can't get over the shaving lotion in this house!

WILLY [*smiling*]. Mmm—

LINDA. Biff was very changed this morning. His whole attitude seemed to be hopeful. He couldn't wait to get downtown to see Oliver.

WILLY. He's heading for a change. There's no question, there simply are certain men that take longer to get—solidified. How did he dress?

LINDA. His blue suit. He's so handsome in that suit. He could be a—anything in that suit!

[WILLY *gets up from the table.* LINDA *holds his jacket for him.*]

WILLY. There's no question, no question at all. Gee, on the way home tonight I'd like to buy some seeds.

LINDA [*laughing*]. That'd be wonderful. But not enough sun gets back there. Nothing'll grow any more.

WILLY. You wait, kid, before it's all over we're gonna get a little place out in the country, and I'll raise some vegetables, a couple of chickens. . . .

LINDA. You'll do it yet, dear.

[WILLY *walks out of his jacket.* LINDA *follows him.*]

WILLY. And they'll get married, and come for a weekend. I'd build a little guest house. 'Cause I got so many fine tools, all I'd need would be a little lumber and some peace of mind.

LINDA [*joyfully*]. I sewed the lining. . . .

WILLY. I could build two guest houses, so they'd both come. Did he decide how much he's going to ask Oliver for?

LINDA [*getting him into the jacket*]. He didn't mention it, but I imagine ten or fifteen thousand. You going to talk to Howard today?

WILLY. Yeah. I'll put it to him straight and simple. He'll just have to take me off the road.

LINDA. And Willy, don't forget to ask for a little advance, because we've got the insurance premium. It's the grace period now.

WILLY. That's a hundred . . . ?

LINDA. A hundred and eight, sixty-eight. Because we're a little short again.

WILLY. Why are we short?

LINDA. Well, you had the motor job on the car . . .

WILLY. That goddam Studebaker!

LINDA. And you got one more payment on the refrigerator . . .

WILLY. But it just broke again!

LINDA. Well, it's old, dear.

WILLY. I told you we should've bought a well-advertised machine. Charley bought a General Electric and it's twenty years old and it's still good, that son-of-a-bitch.

LINDA. But, Willy—

WILLY. Whoever heard of a Hastings refrigerator? Once in my life I would like to own something outright before it's broken! I'm always in a race with the junkyard! I just finished paying for the car and it's on its last legs. The refrigerator consumes belts like a goddam maniac. They time those things. They time them so when you finally paid for them, they're used up.

LINDA [*buttoning up his jacket as he unbuttons it*]. All told, about two hundred dollars would carry us, dear. But that includes the last payment on the mortgage. After this payment, Willy, the house belongs to us.

WILLY. It's twenty-five years!

LINDA. Biff was nine years old when we bought it.

WILLY. Well, that's a great thing. To weather a twenty-five year mortgage is—

LINDA. It's an accomplishment.

WILLY. All the cement, the lumber, the reconstruction I put in this house! There ain't a crack to be found in it any more.

LINDA. Well, it served its purpose.

WILLY. What purpose? Some stranger'll come along, move in, and that's that. If only Biff would take this house, and raise a family. . . . [*He starts to go.*] Good-by, I'm late.

LINDA [*suddenly remembering*]. Oh, I forgot! You're supposed to meet them for dinner.

WILLY. Me?

LINDA. At Frank's Chop House on Forty-eighth near Sixth Avenue.

WILLY. Is that so! How about you?

LINDA. No, just the three of you. They're gonna blow you to a big meal!

WILLY. Don't say! Who thought of that?

LINDA. Biff came to me this morning, Willy, and he said, "Tell Dad, we want to blow him to a big meal." Be there six o'clock. You and your two boys are going to have dinner.

WILLY. Gee whiz! That's really somethin'. I'm gonna knock Howard for a loop, kid. I'll get an advance, and I'll come home with a New York job. Goddammit, now I'm gonna do it!

LINDA. Oh, that's the spirit, Willy!

WILLY. I will never get behind a wheel the rest of my life!

LINDA. It's changing, Willy, I can feel it changing!

WILLY. Beyond a question. G'by, I'm late. [*He starts to go again.*]

LINDA [*calling after him as she runs to the kitchen table for a handkerchief*]. You got your glasses?

WILLY [*feels for them, then comes back in*]. Yeah, yeah, got my glasses.

LINDA [*giving him the handkerchief*]. And a handkerchief.

WILLY. Yeah, handkerchief.

LINDA. And your saccharine?

WILLY. Yeah, my saccharine.

LINDA. Be careful on the subway stairs.

[*She kisses him, and a silk stocking is seen hanging from her hand.* WILLY *notices it.*]

WILLY. Will you stop mending stockings? At least while I'm in the house. It gets me nervous. I can't tell you. Please.

[LINDA *hides the stocking in her hand as she follows* WILLY *across the forestage in front of the house.*]

LINDA. Remember, Frank's Chop House.

WILLY [*passing the apron*]. Maybe beets would grow out there.

LINDA [*laughing*]. But you tried so many times.

WILLY. Yeah. Well, don't work hard today. [*He disappears around the right corner of the house.*]

LINDA. Be careful!

[*As* WILLY *vanishes,* LINDA *waves to him. Suddenly the phone rings. She runs across the stage and into the kitchen and lifts it.*]

LINDA. Hello? Oh, Biff! I'm so glad you called, I just. . . . Yes, sure, I just told him. Yes, he'll be there for dinner at six o'clock, I didn't forget. Listen, I was just dying to tell you. You know that little rubber pipe I told you about? That he connected to the gas heater? I finally decided to go down the cellar this morning and take it away and destroy it. But it's gone! Imagine? He took it away himself, it isn't there! [*She listens.*] When? Oh, then you took it. Oh—nothing, it's just that I'd hoped he'd taken it away himself. Oh, I'm not worried, darling, because this morning he left in such high spirits, it was like the old days! I'm not afraid any more. Did Mr. Oliver see you? . . . Well, you wait there then. And make a nice impression on him, darling. Just don't perspire too much before you see him. And have a nice time with Dad. He may have big news too! . . . That's right, a New York job. And be sweet to him tonight, dear. Be loving to him. Because he's only a little boat looking for a harbor. [*She is trembling with sorrow and joy.*] Oh, that's wonderful, Biff,

you'll save his life. Thanks, darling. Just put your arm around him when he comes into the restaurant. Give him a smile. That's the boy. . . . Good-by, dear. . . . You got your comb? . . . That's fine. Good-by, Biff dear.

[*In the middle of her speech,* HOWARD WAGNER, *thirty-six, wheels on a small typewriter table on which is a wire-recording machine and proceeds to plug it in. This is on the left forestage. Light slowly fades on* LINDA *as it rises on* HOWARD. HOWARD *is intent on threading the machine and only glances over his shoulder as* WILLY *appears.*]

WILLY. Pst! Pst!

HOWARD. Hello, Willy, come in.

WILLY. Like to have a little talk with you, Howard.

HOWARD. Sorry to keep you waiting. I'll be with you in a minute.

WILLY. What's that, Howard?

HOWARD. Didn't you ever see one of these? Wire recorder.

WILLY. Oh. Can we talk a minute?

HOWARD. Records things. Just got delivery yesterday. Been driving me crazy, the most terrific machine I ever saw in my life. I was up all night with it.

WILLY. What do you do with it?

HOWARD. I bought it for dictation, but you can do anything with it. Listen to this. I had it home last night. Listen to what I picked up. The first one is my daughter. Get this. [*He flicks the switch and "Roll out the Barrel" is heard being whistled.*] Listen to that kid whistle.

WILLY. That is lifelike, isn't it?

HOWARD. Seven years old. Get that tone.

WILLY. Ts, ts. Like to ask a little favor if you . . .

[*The whistling breaks off, and the voice of* HOWARD'S *daughter is heard.*]

HIS DAUGHTER. "Now you, Daddy."

HOWARD. She's crazy for me! [*Again the same song is whistled.*] That's me! Ha! [*He winks.*]

WILLY. You're very good!

[*The whistling breaks off again. The machine runs silent for a moment.*]

HOWARD. Sh! Get this now, this is my son.

HIS SON. "The capital of Alabama is Montgomery; the capital of Arizona is Phoenix; the capital of Arkansas is Little Rock; the capital of California is Sacramento . . ." [*and on, and on.*]

HOWARD [*holding up five fingers*]. Five years old, Willy!

WILLY. He'll make an announcer some day!

HIS SON [*continuing*]. "The capital . . ."

HOWARD. Get that—alphabetical order! [*The machine breaks off suddenly.*] Wait a minute. The maid kicked the plug out.

WILLY. It certainly is a—

HOWARD. Sh, for God's sake!

HIS SON. "It's nine o'clock, Bulova watch time. So I have to go to sleep."

WILLY. That really is—

HOWARD. Wait a minute! The next is my wife.

[*They wait.*]

HOWARD'S VOICE. "Go on, say something." [*Pause*] "Well, you gonna talk?"

HIS WIFE. "I can't think of anything."

HOWARD'S VOICE. "Well, talk—it's turning."

HIS WIFE [*shyly, beaten*]. "Hello." [*Silence*] "Oh, Howard, I can't talk into this . . ."

HOWARD [*snapping the machine off*]. That was my wife.

WILLY. That is a wonderful machine. Can we—

HOWARD. I tell you, Willy, I'm gonna take my camera, and my bandsaw, and all my hobbies, and out they go. This is the most fascinating relaxation I ever found.

WILLY. I think I'll get one myself.

HOWARD. Sure, they're only a hundred and a half. You can't do without it. Supposing you wanna hear Jack Benny, see? But you can't be at home at that hour. So you tell the maid to turn the radio on when Jack Benny comes on, and this automatically goes on with the radio . . . .

WILLY. And when you come home you. . . .

HOWARD. You can come home twelve o'clock, one o'clock, any time you like, and you get yourself a Coke and sit yourself down, throw the switch, and there's Jack Benny's program in the middle of the night!

WILLY. I'm definitely going to get one. Because lots of time I'm on the road, and I think to myself, what I must be missing on the radio!

HOWARD. Don't you have a radio in the car?

WILLY. Well, yeah, but who ever thinks of turning it on?

HOWARD. Say, aren't you supposed to be in Boston?

WILLY. That's what I want to talk to you about, Howard. You got a minute? [*He draws a chair in from the wing.*]

HOWARD. What happened? What're you doing here?

WILLY. Well . . . .

HOWARD. You didn't crack up again, did you?

WILLY. Oh, no. No . . . .

HOWARD. Geez, you had me worried there for a minute. What's the trouble?

WILLY. Well, tell you the truth, Howard. I've come to the decision that I'd rather not travel any more.

HOWARD. Not travel! Well, what'll you do?

WILLY. Remember, Christmas time, when you had the party here? You said you'd try to think of some spot for me here in town.

HOWARD. With us?

WILLY. Well, sure.

HOWARD. Oh, yeah, yeah. I remember. Well, I couldn't think of anything for you, Willy.

WILLY. I tell ya, Howard. The kids are all grown up, y'know. I don't need much any more. If I could take home—well, sixty-five dollars a week, I could swing it.

HOWARD. Yeah, but Willy, see I—

WILLY. I tell ya why, Howard. Speaking frankly and between the two of us, y'know—I'm just a little tired.

HOWARD. Oh, I could understand that, Willy. But you're a road man, Willy, and we do a road business. We've only got a half-dozen salesmen on the floor here.

WILLY. God knows, Howard, I never asked a favor of any man. But I was with the firm when your father used to carry you in here in his arms.

HOWARD. I know that, Willy, but—

WILLY. Your father came to me the day you were born and asked me what I thought of the name of Howard, may he rest in peace.

HOWARD. I appreciate that, Willy, but there just is no spot here for you. If I had a spot I'd slam you right in, but I just don't have a single solitary spot.

[*He looks for his lighter.* WILLY *has picked it up and gives it to him. Pause.*]

WILLY [*with increasing anger*]. Howard, all I need to set my table is fifty dollars a week.

HOWARD. But where am I going to put you, kid?

WILLY. Look, it isn't a question of whether I can sell merchandise, is it?

HOWARD. No, but it's a business, kid, and everybody's gotta pull his own weight.

WILLY [*desperately*]. Just let me tell you a story, Howard—

HOWARD. 'Cause you gotta admit, business is business.

WILLY [*angrily*]. Business is definitely business, but just listen for a minute. You don't understand this. When I was a boy—eighteen, nineteen—I was already on the road. And there was a question in my mind as to whether selling had a future for me. Because in those days I had a yearning to go to Alaska. See, there were three gold strikes in one month in Alaska, and I felt like going out. Just for the ride, you might say.

HOWARD [*barely interested*]. Don't say.

WILLY. Oh, yeah, my father lived many years in Alaska. He was an adventurous man. We've got quite a little streak of self-reliance in our family. I thought I'd go out with my older brother and try to locate him, and maybe settle in the North with the old man. And I was almost decided to go, when I met a salesman in the Parker House. His name was Dave Singleman. And he was eighty-four years old, and he'd drummed merchandise in thirty-one states. And old Dave, he'd go up to his room, y'understand, put on his green velvet slippers—I'll never forget—and pick up his phone and call the buyers, and without ever leaving his room, at the age of eighty-four, he made his living. And when I saw that, I realized that selling was the greatest career a man could want. 'Cause what could be more satisfying than to be able to go, at the age of eighty-four, into twenty or thirty different cities, and pick up a phone, and be remembered and loved and helped by so many different people? Do you know? when he died—and by the way he died the death of a salesman, in his green velvet slippers in the smoker of the New York, New Haven and Hartford, going into Boston—when he died, hundreds of salesmen and buyers were at his funeral. Things were sad on a lotta trains for months after that. [*He stands up.* HOWARD *has not looked at him.*] In those days there was personality in it, Howard. There was respect, and comradeship, and gratitude in it. Today, it's all cut and dried, and there's no chance for bringing friendship to bear—or personality. You see what I mean? They don't know me any more.

HOWARD [*moving away, to the right*]. That's just the thing, Willy.

WILLY. If I had forty dollars a week—that's all I'd need. Forty dollars, Howard.

HOWARD. Kid, I can't take blood from a stone, I—

WILLY [*desperation is on him now*]. Howard, the year Al Smith was nominated, your father came to me and—

HOWARD [*starting to go off*]. I've got to see some people, kid.

WILLY [*stopping him*]. I'm talking about your father! There were promises made across this desk! You mustn't tell me you've got people to see—I put thirty-four years into this firm, Howard, and now I can't pay my insurance! You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away—a man is not a piece of fruit! [*After a pause*] Now pay attention. Your father—in 1928 I had a big year. I averaged a hundred and seventy dollars a week in commissions.

HOWARD [*impatiently*]. Now, Willy, you never averaged—

WILLY [*banging his hand on the desk*]. I averaged a hundred and seventy dollars a week in the year of 1928! And your father came to me—or rather, I was in the office here—it was right over this desk—and he put his hand on my shoulder—

HOWARD [*getting up*]. You'll have to excuse me, Willy, I gotta see some people. Pull yourself together. [*Going out*] I'll be back in a little while.

[*On* HOWARD'S *exit, the light on his chair grows very bright and strange.*]

WILLY. Pull myself together! What the hell did I say to him? My God, I was yelling at him! How could I! [WILLY *breaks off, staring at the light, which occupies the chair, animating it. He approaches this chair, standing across the desk from it* | Frank, Frank, don't you remember what you told me that time? How you put your hand on my shoulder, and Frank . . . [*He leans on the desk and as he speaks the dead man's name he accidentally switches on the recorder, and instantly*]

HOWARD'S SON. ". . . of New York is Albany. The capital of Ohio is Cincinnati, the capital of Rhode Island is . . ." [*The recitation continues.*]

WILLY [*leaping away with fright, shouting*]. Ha! Howard! Howard! Howard!

HOWARD [*rushing in*]. What happened?

WILLY [*pointing at the machine, which continues nasally, childishly, with the capital cities*]. Shut it off! Shut it off!

HOWARD [*pulling the plug out*]. Look, Willy . . .

WILLY [*pressing his hands to his eyes*]. I gotta get myself some coffee. I'll get some coffee . . .

[WILLY *starts to walk out.* HOWARD *stops him.*]

HOWARD [*rolling up the cord*]. Willy, look . . .

WILLY. I'll go to Boston.

HOWARD. Willy, you can't go to Boston for us.

WILLY. Why can't I go?

HOWARD. I don't want you to represent us. I've been meaning to tell you for a long time now.

WILLY. Howard, are you firing me?

HOWARD. I think you need a good long rest, Willy.

WILLY. Howard—

HOWARD. And when you feel better, come back, and we'll see if we can work something out.

WILLY. But I gotta earn money, Howard. I'm in no position to—

HOWARD. Where are your sons? Why don't your sons give you a hand?

WILLY. They're working on a very big deal.

HOWARD. This is no time for false pride, Willy. You go to your sons and you tell them that you're tired. You've got two great boys, haven't you?

WILLY. Oh, no question, no question, but in the meantime . . .

HOWARD. Then that's that, heh?

WILLY. All right, I'll go to Boston tomorrow.

HOWARD. No, no.

WILLY. I can't throw myself on my sons. I'm not a cripple!

HOWARD. Look, kid, I'm busy this morning.

WILLY [*grasping* HOWARD'S *arm*]. Howard, you've got to let me go to Boston!

HOWARD [*hard, keeping himself under control*]. I've got a line of people to see this morning. Sit down, take five minutes, and pull yourself together, and then go home, will ya? I need the office, Willy. [*He starts to go, turns, remembering the recorder, starts to push off the table holding the recorder.*] Oh, yeah. Whenever you can this week, stop by and drop off the samples. You'll feel better, Willy, and then come back and we'll talk. Pull yourself together, kid, there's people outside.

[HOWARD *exits, pushing the table off left.* WILLY *stares into space, exhausted. Now the music is heard*—BEN'S *music*—*first distantly, then closer, closer. As* WILLY *speaks,* BEN *enters from the right. He carries valise and umbrella.*]

WILLY. Oh, Ben, how did you do it? What is the answer? Did you wind up the Alaska deal already?

BEN. Doesn't take much time if you know what you're doing. Just a short business trip. Boarding ship in an hour. Wanted to say goodby.

WILLY. Ben, I've got to talk to you.

BEN [*glancing at his watch*]. Haven't the time, William.

WILLY [*crossing the apron to* BEN]. Ben, nothing's working out. I don't know what to do.

BEN. Now, look here, William. I've bought timberland in Alaska and I need a man to look after things for me.

WILLY. God, timberland! Me and my boys in those grand outdoors!

BEN. You've a new continent at your doorstep, William. Get out of these cities, they're full of talk and time payments and courts of law. Screw on your fists and you can fight for a fortune up there.

WILLY. Yes, yes! Linda, Linda!

[LINDA *enters as of old, with the wash.*]

LINDA. Oh, you're back?

BEN. I haven't much time.

WILLY. No, wait! Linda, he's got a proposition for me in Alaska.

LINDA. But you've got—[*To* BEN] He's got a beautiful job here.

WILLY. But in Alaska, kid, I could—

LINDA. You're doing well enough, Willy!

BEN [*to* LINDA]. Enough for what, my dear?

LINDA [*frightened of* BEN *and angry at him*]. Don't say those things to him! Enough to be happy right here, right now. [*To* WILLY, *while* BEN *laughs*] Why must everybody conquer the world? 'You're well liked, and the boys love you, and someday—[*to* BEN]—why, old man Wagner told him just the other day that if he keeps it up he'll be a member of the firm, didn't he, Willy?

WILLY. Sure, sure. I am building something with this firm, Ben, and if a man is building something he must be on the right track, mustn't he?

BEN. What are you building? Lay your hand on it. Where is it?

WILLY [*hesitantly*]. That's true, Linda, there's nothing.

LINDA. Why? [*To* BEN] There's a man eighty-four years old—

WILLY. That's right, Ben, that's right. When I look at that man I say, what is there to worry about?

BEN. Bah!

WILLY. It's true, Ben. All he has to do is go into any city, pick up the phone, and he's making his living and you know why?

BEN [*picking up his valise*]. I've got to go.

WILLY [*holding* BEN *back*]. Look at this boy!

[BIFF, *in his high school sweater, enters carrying suitcase.* HAPPY *carries* BIFF'S *shoulder guards, gold helmet, and football pants.*]

WILLY. Without a penny to his name, three great universities are begging for him, and from there the sky's the limit, because it's not what you do, Ben. It's who you know and the smile on your face! It's contacts, Ben, contacts! The whole wealth of Alaska passes over the lunch table at the Commodore Hotel, and that's the wonder, the wonder of this country, that a man can end with diamonds here on the basis of being liked! [*He turns to* BIFF.] And that's why when you get out on that field today it's important. Because thousands of people will be rooting for you and loving you. [*To* BEN, *who has again begun to leave*.] And Ben! when he walks into a business office his name will sound out like a bell and all the doors will open to him! I've seen it, Ben, I've seen it a thousand times! You can't feel it with your hand like timber, but it's there!

BEN. Good-by, William.

WILLY. Ben, am I right? Don't you think I'm right? I value your advice.

BEN. There's a new continent at your doorstep, William. You could walk out rich. Rich! [*He is gone.*]

WILLY. We'll do it here, Ben! You hear me? We're gonna do it here!

[*Young* BERNARD *rushes in. The gay music of* THE BOYS *is heard.*]

BERNARD. Oh, gee, I was afraid you left already!

WILLY. Why? What time is it?

BERNARD. It's half-past one!

WILLY. Well, come on, everybody! Ebbets Field[1] next stop! Where's the pennants? [*He rushes through the wall-line of the kitchen and out into the living-room.*]

LINDA [*to* BIFF]. Did you pack fresh underwear?

BIFF [*who has been limbering up*]. I want to go!

BERNARD. Biff, I'm carrying your helmet, ain't I?

HAPPY. No, I'm carrying the helmet.

BERNARD. Oh, Biff, you promised me.

HAPPY. I'm carrying the helmet.

BERNARD. How am I going to get in the locker room?

[1] ***Ebbets Field,*** *home grounds of the Brooklyn Dodgers.*

LINDA. Let him carry the shoulder guards. [*She puts her coat and hat on in the kitchen.*]

BERNARD. Can I, Biff? 'Cause I told everybody I'm going to be in the locker room.

HAPPY. In Ebbets Field it's the clubhouse.

BERNARD. I meant the clubhouse, Biff!

HAPPY. Biff!

BIFF [*grandly, after a slight pause*]. Let him carry the shoulder guards.

HAPPY [*as he gives* BERNARD *the shoulder guards*]. Stay close to us now.

[WILLY *rushes in with the pennants.*]

WILLY [*handing them out*]. Everybody wave when Biff comes out on the field. [HAPPY *and* BERNARD *run off.*] You set now, boy?

[*The music has died away.*]

BIFF. Ready to go, Pop. Every muscle is ready.

WILLY [*at the edge of the apron*]. You realize what this means?

BIFF. That's right, Pop.

WILLY [*feeling* BIFF'S *muscles*]. You're comin' home this afternoon captain of the All-Scholastic Championship Team of the City of New York.

BIFF. I got it, Pop. And remember, pal, when I take off my helmet, that touchdown is for you.

WILLY. Let's go! [*He is starting out, with his arm around* BIFF, *when* CHARLEY *enters, as of old, in knickers.*] I got no room for you, Charley.

CHARLEY. Room? For what?

WILLY. In the car.

CHARLEY. You goin' for a ride? I wanted to shoot some casino.

WILLY [*furiously*]. Casino! [*Incredulously*] Don't you realize what today is?

LINDA. Oh, he knows, Willy. He's just kidding you.

WILLY. That's nothing to kid about!

CHARLEY. No, Linda, what's goin' on?

LINDA. He's playing in Ebbets Field.

CHARLEY. Baseball in this weather?

WILLY. Don't talk to him. Come on, come on! [*He is pushing them out.*]

CHARLEY. Wait a minute, didn't you hear the news?

WILLY. What?

CHARLEY. Don't you listen to the radio? Ebbets Field just blew up.

WILLY. You go to hell! [CHARLEY *laughs. Pushing them out*] Come on, come on! We're late.

CHARLEY [*as they go*]. Knock a homer, Biff, knock a homer!

WILLY [*the last to leave, turning to* CHARLEY]. I don't think that was funny, Charley. This is the greatest day of his life.

CHARLEY. Willy, when are you going to grow up?

WILLY. Yeah, heh? When this game is over, Charley, you'll be laughing out of the other side of your face. They'll be calling him another Red Grange. Twenty-five thousand a year.

CHARLEY [*kidding*]. Is that so?

WILLY. Yeah, that's so.

CHARLEY. Well, then, I'm sorry, Willy. But tell me something.

WILLY. What?

CHARLEY. Who is Red Grange?

WILLY. Put up your hands. Goddam you, put up your hands!

[CHARLEY, *chuckling, shakes his head and walks away, around the left corner of the stage.* WILLY *follows him. The music rises to a mocking frenzy.*]

WILLY. Who the hell do you think you are, better than everybody else? You don't know everything, you big, ignorant, stupid . . . Put up your hands!

[*Light rises, on the right side of the forestage, on a small table in the reception room of* CHARLEY'S *office. Traffic sounds are heard.* BERNARD, *now mature, sits whistling to himself. A pair of tennis rackets and an overnight bag are on the floor beside him.*]

WILLY [*offstage*]. What are you walking away for? Don't walk away! If you're going to say something say it to my face! I know you laugh at me behind my back. You'll laugh out of the other side of your goddam face after this game. Touchdown! Touchdown! Eighty thousand people! Touchdown! Right between the goal posts.

[BERNARD *is a quiet, earnest, but self-assured young man.* WILLY'S *voice is coming from right upstage now.* BERNARD *lowers his feet off the table and listens.* JENNY, *his father's secretary, enters.*]

JENNY [*distressed*]. Say, Bernard, will you go out in the hall?

BERNARD. What is that noise? Who is it?

JENNY. Mr. Loman. He just got off the elevator.

BERNARD [*getting up*]. Who's he arguing with?

JENNY. Nobody. There's nobody with him. I can't deal with him

any more, and your father gets all upset everytime he comes. I've got a lot of typing to do, and your father's waiting to sign it. Will you see him?

WILLY [*entering*]. Touchdown! Touch— [*He sees* JENNY.] Jenny, Jenny, good to see you. How're ya? Workin'? Or still honest?

JENNY. Fine. How've you been feeling?

WILLY. Not much any more, Jenny. Ha, Ha! [*He is surprised to see the rackets.*]

BERNARD. Hello, Uncle Willy.

WILLY [*almost shocked*]. Bernard! Well, look who's here! [*He comes quickly, guiltily, to* BERNARD *and warmly shakes his hand.*]

BERNARD. How are you? Good to see you.

WILLY. What are you doing here?

BERNARD. Oh, just stopped by to see Pop. Get off my feet till my train leaves. I'm going to Washington in a few minutes.

WILLY. Is he in?

BERNARD. Yes, he's in his office with the accountant. Sit down.

WILLY [*sitting down*]. What're you going to do in Washington?

BERNARD. Oh, just a case I've got there, Willy.

WILLY. That so? [*Indicating the rackets*] You going to play tennis there?

BERNARD. I'm staying with a friend who's got a court.

WILLY. Don't say. His own tennis court. Must be fine people, I bet.

BERNARD. They are, very nice. Dad tells me Biff's in town.

WILLY [*with a big smile*]. Yeah, Biff's in. Working on a very big deal, Bernard.

BERNARD. What's Biff doing?

WILLY. Well, he's been doing very big things in the West. But he decided to establish himself here. Very big. We're having dinner. Did I hear your wife had a boy?

BERNARD. That's right. Our second.

WILLY. Two boys! What do you know!

BERNARD. What kind of a deal has Biff got?

WILLY. Well, Bill Oliver—very big sporting goods man—he wants Biff very badly. Called him in from the West. Long distance, carte blanche, special deliveries. Your friends have their own private tennis court?

BERNARD. You still with the old firm, Willy?

WILLY [*after a pause*]. I'm—I'm overjoyed to see how you made the grade, Bernard, overjoyed. It's an encouraging thing to see a young man really—really—Looks very good for Biff—very—[*He*

breaks off, then] Bernard—[*He is so full of emotion, he breaks off again.*]

BERNARD. What is it, Willy?

WILLY [*small and alone*]. What—what's the secret?

BERNARD. What secret?

WILLY. How—how did you? Why didn't he ever catch on?

BERNARD. I wouldn't know that, Willy.

WILLY [*confidentially, desperately*]. You were his friend, his boyhood friend. There's something I don't understand about it. His life ended after that Ebbets Field game. From the age of seventeen nothing good ever happened to him.

BERNARD. He never trained himself for anything.

WILLY. But he did, he did. After high school he took so many correspondence courses. Radio mechanics; television; God knows what, and never made the slightest mark.

BERNARD [*taking off his glasses*]. Willy, do you want to talk candidly?

WILLY [*rising, faces* BERNARD]. I regard you as a very brilliant man, Bernard. I value your advice.

BERNARD. Oh, the hell with the advice, Willy. I couldn't advise you. There's just one thing I've always wanted to ask you. When he was supposed to graduate, and the math teacher flunked him—

WILLY. Oh, that son-of-a-bitch ruined his life.

BERNARD. Yeah, but, Willy, all he had to do was go to summer school and make up that subject.

WILLY. That's right, that's right.

BERNARD. Did you tell him not to go to summer school?

WILLY. Me? I begged him to go. I ordered him to go!

BERNARD. Then why wouldn't he go?

WILLY. Why? Why! Bernard, that question has been trailing me like a ghost for the last fifteen years. He flunked the subject, and laid down and died like a hammer hit him!

BERNARD. Take it easy, kid.

WILLY. Let me talk to you—I got nobody to talk to. Bernard, Bernard, was it my fault? Y'see? It keeps going around in my mind, maybe I did something to him. I got nothing to give him.

BERNARD. Don't take it so hard.

WILLY. Why did he lay down? What is the story there? You were his friend!

BERNARD. Willy, I remember, it was June, and our grades came out. And he'd flunked math.

WILLY. That son-of-a-bitch!

BERNARD. No, it wasn't right then. Biff just got very angry, I remember, and he was ready to enroll in summer school.

WILLY [*surprised*]. He was?

BERNARD. He wasn't beaten by it at all. But then, Willy, he disappeared from the block for almost a month. And I got the idea that he'd gone up to New England to see you. Did he have a talk with you then?

[WILLY *stares in silence.*]

BERNARD. Willy?

WILLY [*with a strong edge of resentment in his voice*]. Yeah, he came to Boston. What about it?

BERNARD. Well, just that when he came back—I'll never forget this, it always mystifies me. Because I thought so well of Biff, even though he'd always taken advantage of me. I loved him, Willy, y'know? And he came back after that month and took his sneakers—remember those sneakers with "University of Virginia" printed on them? He was so proud of those, wore them every day. And he took them down in the cellar, and burned them up in the furnace. We had a fist fight. It lasted at least half an hour. Just the two of us, punching each other down the cellar, and crying right through it. I've often thought of how strange it was that I knew he'd given up his life. What happened in Boston, Willy?

[WILLY *looks at him as at an intruder.*]

BERNARD. I just bring it up because you asked me.

WILLY [*angrily*]. Nothing. What do you mean, "What happened?" What's that got to do with anything?

BERNARD. Well, don't get sore.

WILLY. What are you trying to do, blame it on me? If a boy lays down is that my fault?

BERNARD. Now, Willy, don't get—

WILLY. Well, don't—don't talk to me that way! What does that mean, "What happened?"

[CHARLEY *enters. He is in his vest, and he carries a bottle of bourbon.*]

CHARLEY. Hey, you're going to miss that train. [*He waves the bottle.*]

BERNARD. Yeah, I'm going. [*He takes the bottle.*] Thanks, Pop. [*He picks up his rackets and bag.*] Good-by, Willy, and don't worry about it. You know, "If at first you don't succeed . . ."

WILLY. Yes, I believe in that.

BERNARD. But sometimes, Willy, it's better for a man just to walk away.

WILLY. Walk away?

BERNARD. That's right.

WILLY. But if you can't walk away?

BERNARD [*after a slight pause*]. I guess that's when it's tough. [*Extending his hand*] Good-by, Willy.

WILLY [*shaking* BERNARD'S *hand*]. Good-by, boy.

CHARLEY [*an arm on* BERNARD'S *shoulder*]. How do you like this kid? Gonna argue a case in front of the Supreme Court.

BERNARD [*protesting*]. Pop!

WILLY [*genuinely shocked, pained, and happy*]. No! The Supreme Court!

BERNARD. I gotta run. 'By, Dad!

CHARLEY. Knock 'em dead, Bernard!

[BERNARD *goes off.*]

WILLY [*as* CHARLEY *takes out his wallet*]. The Supreme Court! And he didn't even mention it!

CHARLEY [*counting out money on the desk*]. He don't have to—he's gonna do it.

WILLY. And you never told him what to do, did you? You never took any interest in him.

CHARLEY. My salvation is that I never took any interest in anything. There's some money—fifty dollars. I got an accountant inside.

WILLY. Charley, look . . . [*With difficulty*] I got my insurance to pay. If you can manage it—I need a hundred and ten dollars.

[CHARLEY *doesn't reply for a moment; merely stops moving.*]

WILLY. I'd draw it from my bank but Linda would know, and I. . . .

CHARLEY. Sit down, Willy.

WILLY [*moving toward the chair*]. I'm keeping an account of everything, remember. I'll pay every penny back. [*He sits.*]

CHARLEY. Now listen to me, Willy.

WILLY. I want you to know I appreciate . . .

CHARLEY [*sitting down on the table*]. Willy, what're you doin'? What the hell is goin' on in your head?

WILLY. Why? I'm simply. . . .

CHARLEY. I offered you a job. You can make fifty dollars a week. And I won't send you on the road.

WILLY. I've got a job.

CHARLEY. Without pay? What kind of a job is a job without pay?

[*He rises.*] Now, look, kid, enough is enough. I'm no genius but I know when I'm being insulted.

WILLY. Insulted!

CHARLEY. Why don't you want to work for me?

WILLY. What's the matter with you? I've got a job.

CHARLEY. Then what're you walkin' in here every week for?

WILLY [*getting up*]. Well, if you don't want me to walk in here—

CHARLEY. I am offering you a job.

WILLY. I don't want your goddam job!

CHARLEY. When the hell are you going to grow up?

WILLY [*furiously*]. You big ignoramus, if you say that to me again I'll rap you one! I don't care how big you are! [*He's ready to fight.*]

[*Pause*]

CHARLEY [*kindly, going to him*]. How much do you need, Willy?

WILLY. Charley, I'm strapped. I'm strapped. I don't know what to do. I was just fired.

CHARLEY. Howard fired you?

WILLY. That snotnose. Imagine that? I named him. I named him Howard.

CHARLLY. Willy, when're you gonna realize that them things don't mean anything? You named him Howard, but you can't sell that. The only thing you got in this world is what you can sell. And the funny thing is that you're a salesman, and you don't know that.

WILLY. I've always tried to think otherwise, I guess. I always felt that if a man was impressive, and well liked, that nothing—

CHARLLY. Why must everybody like you? Who liked J. P. Morgan? Was he impressive? In a Turkish bath he'd look like a butcher. But with his pockets on he was very well liked. Now listen, Willy, I know you don't like me, and nobody can say I'm in love with you, but I'll give you a job because—just for the hell of it, put it that way. Now what do you say?

WILLY. I—I just can't work for you, Charley.

CHARLEY. What're you, jealous of me?

WILLY. I can't work for you, that's all, don't ask me why.

CHARLEY [*angered, takes out more bills*]. You been jealous of me all your life, you damned fool! Here, pay your insurance. [*He puts the money in* WILLY's *hand.*]

WILLY. I'm keeping strict accounts.

CHARLEY. I've got some work to do. Take care of yourself. And pay your insurance.

WILLY [*moving to the right*]. Funny, y'know? After all the high-

ways, and the trains, and the appointments, and the years, you end up worth more dead than alive.

CHARLEY. Willy, nobody's worth nothin' dead. [*After a slight pause*] Did you hear what I said?

[WILLY *stands still, dreaming.*]

CHARLEY. Willy!

WILLY. Apologize to Bernard for me when you see him. I didn't mean to argue with him. He's a fine boy. They're all fine boys, and they'll end up big—all of them. Someday they'll all play tennis together. Wish me luck, Charley. He saw Bill Oliver today.

CHARLEY. Good luck.

WILLY [*on the verge of tears*]. Charley, you're the only friend I got. Isn't that a remarkable thing? [*He goes out.*]

CHARLEY. Jesus!

[CHARLEY *stares after him a moment and follows. All light blacks out. Suddenly raucous music is heard, and a red glow rises behind the screen at right.* STANLEY, *a young waiter, appears, carrying a table, followed by* HAPPY, *who is carrying two chairs.*]

STANLEY [*putting the table down*]. That's all right, Mr. Loman, I can handle it myself. [*He turns and takes the chairs from* HAPPY *and places them at the table.*]

HAPPY [*glancing around*]. Oh, this is better.

STANLEY. Sure, in the front there you're in the middle of all kinds a noise. Whenever you got a party, Mr. Loman, you just tell me and I'll put you back here. Y'know, there's a lotta people they don't like it private, because when they go out they like to see a lotta action around them because they're sick and tired to stay in the house by theirself. But I know you, you ain't from Hackensack. You know what I mean?

HAPPY [*sitting down*]. So how's it coming, Stanley?

STANLEY. Ah, it's a dog's life. I only wish during the war they'd a took me in the Army. I coulda been dead by now.

HAPPY. My brother's back, Stanley.

STANLEY. Oh, he come back, heh? From the Far West.

HAPPY. Yeah, big cattle man, my brother, so treat him right. And my father's coming too.

STANLEY. Oh, your father too!

HAPPY. You got a couple of nice lobsters?

STANLEY. Hundred per cent, big.

HAPPY. I want them with the claws.

STANLEY. Don't worry, I don't give you no mice. [HAPPY *laughs.*] How about some wine? It'll put a head on the meal.

HAPPY. No. You remember, Stanley, that recipe I brought you from overseas? With the champagne in it?

STANLEY. Oh, yeah, sure. I still got it tacked up yet in the kitchen. But that'll have to cost a buck apiece anyways.

HAPPY. That's all right.

STANLEY. What'd you, hit a number or somethin'?

HAPPY. No, it's a little celebration. My brother is—I think he pulled off a big deal today. I think we're going into business together.

STANLEY. Great! That's the best for you. Because a family business, you know what I mean?—that's the best.

HAPPY. That's what I think.

STANLEY. 'Cause what's the difference? Somebody steals? It's in the family. Know what I mean? [*Sotto voce*] Like this bartender here. The boss is goin' crazy what kinda leak he's got in the cash register. You put it in but it don't come out.

HAPPY [*raising his head*]. Sh!

STANLEY. What?

HAPPY. You notice I wasn't lookin' right or left, was I?

STANLEY. No.

HAPPY. And my eyes are closed.

STANLEY. So what's the—?

HAPPY. Strudel's comin'.

STANLEY [*catching on, looks around*]. Ah, no, there's no—

[*He breaks off as a furred, lavishly dressed girl enters and sits at the next table. Both follow her with their eyes.*]

STANLEY. Geez, how'd ya know?

HAPPY. I got radar or something. [*Staring directly at her profile*] Oooooooo . . . Stanley.

STANLEY. I think that's for you, Mr. Loman.

HAPPY. Look at that mouth. Oh, God. And the binoculars.

STANLEY. Geez, you got a life, Mr. Loman.

HAPPY. Wait on her.

STANLEY [*going to the girl's table*]. Would you like a menu, ma'am?

GIRL. I'm expecting someone, but I'd like a—

HAPPY. Why don't you bring her—excuse me, miss, do you mind? I sell champagne, and I'd like you to try my brand. Bring her a champagne, Stanley.

GIRL. That's awfully nice of you.

HAPPY. Don't mention it. It's all company money. [*He laughs.*]

GIRL. That's a charming product to be selling, isn't it?

HAPPY. Oh, gets to be like everything else. Selling is selling, y'know.

GIRL. I suppose.

HAPPY. You don't happen to sell, do you?

GIRL. No, I don't sell.

HAPPY. Would you object to a compliment from a stranger? You ought to be on a magazine cover.

GIRL [*looking at him a little archly*]. I have been.

[STANLEY *comes in with a glass of champagne.*]

HAPPY. What'd I say before, Stanley? You see? She's a cover girl.

STANLEY. Oh, I could see, I could see.

HAPPY [*to the* GIRL]. What magazine?

GIRL. Oh, a lot of them. [*She takes the drink.*] Thank you.

HAPPY. You know what they say in France, don't you? "Champagne is the drink of the complexion"—Hya, Biff!

[BIFF *has entered and sits with* HAPPY.]

BIFF. Hello, kid. Sorry I'm late.

HAPPY. I just got here. Uh, Miss—?

GIRL. Forsythe.

HAPPY. Miss Forsythe, this is my brother.

BIFF. Is Dad here?

HAPPY. His name is Biff. You might've heard of him. Great football player.

GIRL. Really? What team?

HAPPY. Are you familiar with football?

GIRL. No, I'm afraid I'm not.

HAPPY. Biff is quarterback with the New York Giants.

GIRL. Well, that is nice, isn't it? [*She drinks.*]

HAPPY. Good health.

GIRL. I'm happy to meet you.

HAPPY. That's my name. Hap. It's really Harold, but at West Point they called me Happy.

GIRL [*now really impressed*]. Oh, I see. How do you do? [*She turns her profile.*]

BIFF. Isn't Dad coming?

HAPPY. You want her?

BIFF. Oh, I could never make that.

HAPPY. I remember the time that idea would never come into your head. Where's the old confidence, Biff?

BIFF. I just saw Oliver—

HAPPY. Wait a minute. I've got to see that old confidence again. Do you want her? She's on call.

BIFF. Oh, no. [*He turns to look at the* GIRL.]

HAPPY. I'm telling you. Watch this. [*Turning to the* GIRL.] Honey? [*She turns to him.*] Are you busy?

GIRL. Well, I am . . . but I could make a phone call.

HAPPY. Do that, will you, honey? And see if you can get a friend. We'll be here for a while. Biff is one of the greatest football players in the country.

GIRL [*standing up*]. Well, I'm certainly happy to meet you.

HAPPY. Come back soon.

GIRL. I'll try.

HAPPY. Don't try, honey, try hard.

[*The* GIRL *exits.* STANLEY *follows, shaking his head in bewildered admiration.*]

HAPPY. Isn't that a shame now? A beautiful girl like that? That's why I can't get married. There's not a good woman in a thousand. New York is loaded with them, kid!

BIFF. Hap, look—

HAPPY. I told you she was on call!

BIFF [*strangely unnerved*]. Cut it out, will ya? I want to say something to you.

HAPPY. Did you see Oliver?

BIFF. I saw him all right. Now look, I want to tell Dad a couple of things and I want you to help me.

HAPPY. What? Is he going to back you?

BIFF. Are you crazy? You're out of your goddam head, you know that?

HAPPY. Why? What happened?

BIFF [*breathlessly*]. I did a terrible thing today, Hap. It's been the strangest day I ever went through. I'm all numb, I swear.

HAPPY. You mean he wouldn't see you?

BIFF. Well, I waited six hours for him, see? All day. Kept sending my name in. Even tried to date his secretary so she'd get me to him, but no soap.

HAPPY. Because you're not showin' the old confidence, Biff. He remembered you, didn't he?

BIFF [*stopping* HAPPY *with a gesture*]. Finally, about five o'clock,

e comes out. Didn't remember who I was or anything. I felt like ich an idiot, Hap.

HAPPY. Did you tell him my Florida idea?

BIFF. He walked away. I saw him for one minute. I got so mad I ould've torn the walls down! How the hell did I ever get the idea I as a salesman there? I even believed myself that I'd been a sales- an for him! And then he gave me one look and—I realized what a diculous lie my whole life has been! We've been talking in a dream r fifteen years. I was a shipping clerk.

HAPPY. What'd you do?

BIFF [*with great tension and wonder*]. Well, he left, see. And the cretary went out. I was all alone in the waiting-room. I don't know hat came over me, Hap. The next thing I know I'm in his office -paneled walls, everything. I can't explain it. I—Hap, I took his ountain pen.

HAPPY. Geez, did he catch you?

BIFF. I ran out. I ran down all eleven flights. I ran and ran and an.

HAPPY. That was an awful dumb—what'd you do that for?

BIFF [*agonized*]. I don't know, I just—wanted to take something, don't know. You gotta help me, Hap, I'm gonna tell Pop.

HAPPY. You crazy? What for?

BIFF. Hap, he's got to understand that I'm not the man somebody nds that kind of money to. He thinks I've been spiting him all ese years and it's eating him up.

HAPPY. That's just it. You tell him something nice.

BIFF. I can't.

HAPPY. Say you got a lunch date with Oliver tomorrow.

BIFF. So what do I do tomorrow?

HAPPY. You leave the house tomorrow and come back at night nd say Oliver is thinking it over. And he thinks it over for a couple f weeks, and gradually it fades away and nobody's the worse.

BIFF. But it'll go on forever!

HAPPY. Dad is never so happy as when he's looking forward to omething!

[WILLY *enters.*]

HAPPY. Hello, scout!

WILLY. Gee, I haven't been here in years!

[STANLEY *has followed* WILLY *in and sets a chair for him.* STANLEY *starts off but* HAPPY *stops him.*]

HAPPY. Stanley!

[STANLEY *stands by, waiting for an order.*]

BIFF [*going to* WILLY *with guilt, as to an invalid*]. Sit down, Pop. You want a drink?

WILLY. Sure, I don't mind.

BIFF. Let's get a load on.

WILLY. You look worried.

BIFF. N-no. [*To* STANLEY] Scotch all around. Make it doubles.

STANLEY. Doubles, right. [*He goes.*]

WILLY. You had a couple already, didn't you?

BIFF. Just a couple, yeah.

WILLY. Well, what happened, boy? [*Nodding affirmatively, with a smile*] Everything go all right?

BIFF [*takes a breath, then reaches out and grasps* WILLY's *hand*]. Pal . . . [*He is smiling bravely, and* WILLY *is smiling too.*] I had an experience today.

HAPPY. Terrific, Pop.

WILLY. That so? What happened?

BIFF [*high, slightly alcoholic, above the earth*]. I'm going to tell you everything from first to last. It's been a strange day. [*Silence. He looks around, composes himself as best he can, but his breath keeps breaking the rhythm of his voice.*] I had to wait quite a while for him, and—

WILLY. Oliver?

BIFF. Yeah, Oliver. All day, as a matter of cold fact. And a lot of —instances—facts, Pop, facts about my life came back to me. Who was it, Pop? Who ever said I was a salesman with Oliver?

WILLY. Well, you were.

BIFF. No, Dad, I was a shipping clerk.

WILLY. But you were practically—

BIFF [*with determination*]. Dad, I don't know who said it first, but I was never a salesman for Bill Oliver.

WILLY. What're you talking about?

BIFF. Let's hold on to the facts tonight, Pop. We're not going to get anywhere bullin' around. I was a shipping clerk.

WILLY [*angrily*]. All right, now listen to me—

BIFF. Why don't you let me finish?

WILLY. I'm not interested in stories about the past or any crap of that kind because the woods are burning, boys, you understand? There's a big blaze going on all around. I was fired today.

BIFF [*shocked*]. How could you be?

WILLY. I was fired, and I'm looking for a little good news to tell

your mother, because the woman has waited and the woman has suffered. The gist of it is that I haven't got a story left in my head, Biff. So don't give me a lecture about facts and aspects. I am not interested. Now what've you got to say to me?

[STANLEY *enters with three drinks. They wait until he leaves.*]

WILLY. Did you see Oliver?

BIFF. Jesus, Dad!

WILLY. You mean you didn't go up there?

HAPPY. Sure he went up there.

BIFF. I did. I—saw him. How could they fire you?

WILLY [*on the edge of his chair*]. What kind of a welcome did he give you?

BIFF. He won't even let you work on commission?

WILLY. I'm out! [*Driving*] So tell me, he gave you a warm welcome?

HAPPY. Sure, Pop, sure!

BIFF [*driven*]. Well, it was kind of—

WILLY. I was wondering if he'd remember you. [*To* HAPPY] Imagine, man doesn't see him for ten, twelve years and gives him that kind of a welcome!

HAPPY. Damn right!

BIFF [*trying to return to the offensive*]. Pop, look—

WILLY. You know why he remembered you, don't you? Because you impressed him in those days.

BIFF. Let's talk quietly and get this down to the facts, huh?

WILLY [*as though* BIFF *had been interrupting*]. Well, what happened? It's great news, Biff. Did he take you into his office or'd you talk in the waiting-room?

BIFF. Well, he came in, see, and—

WILLY [*with a big smile*]. What'd he say? Betcha he threw his arm around you.

BIFF. Well, he kinda—

WILLY. He's a fine man. [*To* HAPPY] Very hard man to see, y'know.

HAPPY [*agreeing*]. Oh, I know.

WILLY [*to* BIFF]. Is that where you had the drinks?

BIFF. Yeah, he gave me a couple of—no, no!

HAPPY [*cutting in*]. He told him my Florida idea.

WILLY. Don't interrupt. [*To* BIFF] How'd he react to the Florida idea?

BIFF. Dad, will you give me a minute to explain?

WILLY. I've been waiting for you to explain since I sat down here! What happened? He took you into his office and what?

BIFF. Well—I talked. And—and he listened, see.

WILLY. Famous for the way he listens, y'know. What was his answer?

BIFF. His answer was—[*He breaks off, suddenly angry.*] Dad, you're not letting me tell you what I want to tell you!

WILLY [*accusing, angered*]. You didn't see him, did you?

BIFF. I did see him!

WILLY. What'd you insult him or something? You insulted him, didn't you?

BIFF. Listen, will you let me out of it, will you just let me out of it!

HAPPY. What the hell!

WILLY. Tell me what happened!

BIFF [*to* HAPPY]. I can't talk to him!

[*A single trumpet note jars the ear. The light of green leaves stains the house, which holds the air of night and a dream.* YOUNG BERNARD *enters and knocks on the door of the house.*]

YOUNG BERNARD [*frantically*]. Mrs. Loman, Mrs. Loman!

HAPPY. Tell him what happened!

BIFF [*to* HAPPY]. Shut up and leave me alone!

WILLY. No, No! You had to go and flunk math!

BIFF. What math? What're you talking about?

YOUNG BERNARD. Mrs. Loman, Mrs. Loman!

[LINDA *appears in the house, as of old.*]

WILLY [*wildly*]. Math, math, math!

BIFF. Take it easy, Pop!

YOUNG BERNARD. Mrs. Loman!

WILLY [*furiously*]. If you hadn't flunked you'd've been set by now!

BIFF. Now, look, I'm gonna tell you what happened, and you're going to listen to me.

YOUNG BERNARD. Mrs. Loman!

BIFF. I waited six hours—

HAPPY. What the hell are you saying?

BIFF. I kept sending in my name but he wouldn't see me. So finally he . . . [*He continues unheard as light fades low on the restaurant.*]

YOUNG BERNARD. Biff flunked math!

LINDA. No!

YOUNG BERNARD. Birnbaum flunked him! They won't graduate ıim!

LINDA. But they have to. He's gotta go to the university. Where is ıe? Biff! Biff!

YOUNG BERNARD. No, he left. He went to Grand Central.

LINDA. Grand—You mean he went to Boston!

YOUNG BERNARD. Is Uncle Willy in Boston?

LINDA. Oh, maybe Willy can talk to the teacher. Oh, the poor, ıoor boy!

[*Light on house area snaps out*]

BIFF [*at the table, now audible, holding up a gold fountain pen*]. . . so I'm washed up with Oliver, you understand? Are you listening to me?

WILLY [*at a loss*]. Yeah, sure. If you hadn't flunked—

BIFF. Flunked what? What're you talking about?

WILLY. Don't blame everything on me! I didn't flunk math—you lid! What pen?

HAPPY. That was awful dumb, Biff, a pen like that is worth—

WILLY [*seeing the pen for the first time*]. You took Oliver's pen?

BIFF [*weakening*]. Dad, I just explained it to you.

WILLY. You stole Bill Oliver's fountain pen!

BIFF. I didn't exactly steal it! That's just what I've been explaining to you!

HAPPY. He had it in his hand and just then Oliver walked in, so ıe got nervous and stuck it in his pocket!

WILLY. My God, Biff!

BIFF. I never intended to do it, Dad!

OPERATOR'S VOICE. Standish Arms, good evening!

WILLY [*shouting*]. I'm not in my room!

BIFF [*frightened*]. Dad, what's the matter? [*He and* HAPPY *stand ıp.*]

OPERATOR. Ringing Mr. Loman for you!

WILLY. I'm not there, stop it!

BIFF [*horrified, gets down on one knee before* WILLY]. Dad, I'll nake good, I'll make good. [WILLY *tries to get to his feet.* BIFF *holds ıim down.*] Sit down now.

WILLY. No, you're no good, you're no good for anything.

BIFF. I am, Dad, I'll find something else, you understand? Now lon't worry about anything. [*He holds up* WILLY's *face.*] Talk to ne, Dad.

OPERATOR. Mr. Loman does not answer. Shall I page him?

WILLY [*attempting to stand, as though to rush and silence the* OPERATOR]. No, no, no!

HAPPY. He'll strike something, Pop.

WILLY. No, no . . .

BIFF [*desperately, standing over* WILLY]. Pop, listen! Listen to me! I'm telling you something good. Oliver talked to his partner about the Florida idea. You listening? He—he talked to his partner, and he came to me . . . I'm going to be all right, you hear? Dad, listen to me, he said it was just a question of the amount!

WILLY. Then you . . . got it?

HAPPY. He's gonna be terrific, Pop!

WILLY [*trying to stand*]. Then you got it, haven't you? You got it! You got it!

BIFF [*agonized, holds* WILLY *down*]. No, no. Look, Pop. I'm supposed to have lunch with them tomorrow. I'm just telling you this so you'll know that I can still make an impression, Pop. And I'll make good somewhere, but I can't go tomorrow, see?

WILLY. Why not? You simply—

BIFF. But the pen, Pop!

WILLY. You give it to him and tell him it was an oversight!

HAPPY. Sure, have lunch tomorrow!

BIFF. I can't say that—

WILLY. You were doing a crossword puzzle and accidentally used his pen!

BIFF. Listen, kid, I took those balls years ago, now I walk in with his fountain pen? That clinches it, don't you see? I can't face him like that! I'll try elsewhere.

PAGE'S VOICE. Paging Mr. Loman!

WILLY. Don't you want to be anything?

BIFF. Pop, how can I go back?

WILLY. You don't want to be anything, is that what's behind it?

BIFF [*now angry at* WILLY *for not crediting his sympathy*]. Don't take it that way! You think it was easy walking into that office after what I'd done to him? A team of horses couldn't have dragged me back to Bill Oliver!

WILLY. Then why'd you go?

BIFF. Why did I go? Why did I go! Look at you! Look at what's become of you!

[*Off left,* THE WOMAN *laughs.*]

WILLY. Biff, you're going to go to that lunch tomorrow, or—

BIFF. I can't go. I've got no appointment!

HAPPY. Biff, for . . . !

WILLY. Are you spiting me?

BIFF. Don't take it that way! Goddammit!

WILLY [*strikes* BIFF *and falters away from the table*]. You rotten little louse! Are you spiting me?

THE WOMAN. Someone's at the door, Willy!

BIFF. I'm no good, can't you see what I am?

HAPPY [*separating them*]. Hey, you're in a restaurant! Now cut it out, both of you! [*The girls enter.*] Hello, girls, sit down.

[THE WOMAN *laughs, off left.*]

MISS FORSYTHE. I guess we might as well. This is Letta.

THE WOMAN. Willy, are you going to wake up?

BIFF [*ignoring* WILLY]. How're ya, miss, sit down. What do you drink?

MISS FORSYTHE. Letta might not be able to stay long.

LETTA. I gotta get up very early tomorrow. I got jury duty. I'm so excited! Were you fellows ever on a jury?

BIFF. No, but I been in front of them! [*The girls laugh.*] This is my father.

LETTA. Isn't he cute? Sit down with us, Pop.

HAPPY. Sit him down, Biff!

BIFF [*going to him*]. Come on, slugger, drink us under the table. To hell with it! Come on, sit down, pal.

[*On* BIFF's *last insistence,* WILLY *is about to sit.*]

THE WOMAN [*now urgently*]. Willy, are you going to answer the door!

[THE WOMAN's *call pulls* WILLY *back. He starts right, befuddled.*]

BIFF. Hey, where are you going?

WILLY. Open the door.

BIFF. The door?

WILLY. The washroom . . . the door . . . where's the door?

BIFF [*leading* WILLY *to the left*]. Just go straight down.

[WILLY *moves left.*]

THE WOMAN. Willy, Willy, are you going to get up, get up, get up, get up?

[WILLY *exits left.*]

LETTA. I think it's sweet you bring your daddy along.

MISS FORSYTHE. Oh, he isn't really your father!

BIFF [*at left, turning to her resentfully*]. Miss Forsythe, you've just seen a prince walk by. A fine, troubled prince. A hard-working,

unappreciated prince. A pal, you understand? A good companion. Always for his boys.

LETTA. That's so sweet.

HAPPY. Well, girls, what's the program? We're wasting time. Come on, Biff. Gather round. Where would you like to go?

BIFF. Why don't you do something for him?

HAPPY. Me!

BIFF. Don't you give a damn for him, Hap?

HAPPY. What're you talking about? I'm the one who—

BIFF. I sense it, you don't give a good goddam about him. [*He takes the rolled-up hose from his pocket and puts it on the table in front of* HAPPY.] Look what I found in the cellar, for Christ's sake. How can you bear to let it go on?

HAPPY. Me? Who goes away? Who runs off and—

BIFF. Yeah, but he doesn't mean anything to you. You could help him—I can't! Don't you understand what I'm talking about? He's going to kill himself, don't you know that?

HAPPY. Don't I know it! Me!

BIFF. Hap, help him! Jesus . . . help him . . . Help me, help me, I can't bear to look at his face! [*Ready to weep, he hurries out, up right.*]

HAPPY [*starting after him*]. Where are you going?

MISS FORSYTHE. What's he so mad about?

HAPPY. Come on, girls, we'll catch up with him.

MISS FORSYTHE [*as* HAPPY *pushes her out*]. Say, I don't like that temper of his!

HAPPY. He's just a little overstrung, he'll be all right!

WILLY [*off left, as* THE WOMAN *laughs*]. Don't answer! Don't answer!

LETTA. Don't you want to tell your father—

HAPPY. No, that's not my father. He's just a guy. Come on, we'll catch Biff, and, honey, we're going to paint this town! Stanley, where's the check! Hey, Stanley!

[*They exit.* STANLEY *looks toward left.*]

STANLEY [*calling to* HAPPY *indignantly*]. Mr. Loman! Mr. Loman!

[STANLEY *picks up a chair and follows them off. Knocking is heard off left.* THE WOMAN *enters, laughing.* WILLY *follows her. She is in a black slip; he is buttoning his shirt. Raw, sensuous music accompanies their speech.*]

WILLY. Will you stop laughing? Will you stop?

THE WOMAN. Aren't you going to answer the door? He'll wake the whole hotel.

WILLY. I'm not expecting anybody.

THE WOMAN. Whyn't you have another drink, honey, and stop being so damn self-centered?

WILLY. I'm so lonely.

THE WOMAN. You know you ruined me, Willy? From now on, whenever you come to the office, I'll see that you go right through to the buyers. No waiting at my desk any more, Willy. You ruined me.

WILLY. That's nice of you to say that.

THE WOMAN. Gee, you are self-centered! Why so sad? You are the saddest, self-centeredest soul I ever did see-saw. [*She laughs. He kisses her.*] Come on inside, drummer boy. It's silly to be dressing in the middle of the night. [*As knocking is heard*] Aren't you going to answer the door?

WILLY. They're knocking on the wrong door.

THE WOMAN. But I felt the knocking. And he heard us talking in here. Maybe the hotel's on fire!

WILLY [*his terror rising*]. It's a mistake.

THE WOMAN. Then tell him to go away!

WILLY. There's nobody there.

THE WOMAN. It's getting on my nerves, Willy. There's somebody standing out there and it's getting on my nerves!

WILLY [*pushing her away from him*]. All right, stay in the bathroom here, and don't come out. I think there's a law in Massachusetts about it, so don't come out. It may be that new room clerk. He looked very mean. So don't come out. It's a mistake, there's no fire.

[*The knocking is heard again. He takes a few steps away from her, and she vanishes into the wing. The light follows him, and now he is facing* YOUNG BIFF, *who carries a suitcase.* BIFF *steps toward him. The music is gone.*]

BIFF. Why didn't you answer?

WILLY. Biff! What are you doing in Boston?

BIFF. Why didn't you answer? I've been knocking for five minutes, I called you on the phone—

WILLY. I just heard you. I was in the bathroom and had the door shut. Did anything happen home?

BIFF. Dad—I let you down.

WILLY. What do you mean?

BIFF. Dad . . .

WILLY. Biffo, what's this about? [*Putting his arm around* BIFF] Come on, let's go downstairs and get you a malted.

BIFF. Dad, I flunked math.

WILLY. Not for the term?

BIFF. The term. I haven't got enough credits to graduate.

WILLY. You mean to say Bernard wouldn't give you the answers?

BIFF. He did, he tried, but I only got a sixty-one.

WILLY. And they wouldn't give you four points?

BIFF. Birnbaum refused absolutely. I begged him, Pop, but he won't give me those points. You gotta talk to him before they close the school. Because if he saw the kind of man you are, and you just talked to him in your way, I'm sure he'd come through for me. The class came right before practice, see, and I didn't go enough. Would you talk to him? He'd like you, Pop. You know the way you could talk.

WILLY. You're on. We'll drive right back.

BIFF. Oh, Dad, good work! I'm sure he'll change it for you!

WILLY. Go downstairs and tell the clerk I'm checkin' out. Go right down.

BIFF. Yes, sir! See, the reason he hates me, Pop—one day he was late for class so I got up at the blackboard and imitated him. I crossed my eyes and talked with a lithp.

WILLY [*laughing*]. You did? The kids like it?

BIFF. They nearly died laughing!

WILLY. Yeah? What'd you do?

BIFF. The thquare root of thixthy twee is . . . [WILLY *bursts out laughing;* BIFF *joins him.*] And in the middle of it he walked in!

[WILLY *laughs and* THE WOMAN *joins in offstage.*]

WILLY [*without hesitation*]. Hurry downstairs and—

BIFF. Somebody in there?

WILLY. No, that was next door.

[THE WOMAN *laughs offstage.*]

BIFF. Somebody got in your bathroom!

WILLY. No, it's the next room, there's a party—

THE WOMAN [*enters, laughing. She lisps this*]. Can I come in? There's something in the bathtub, Willy, and it's moving!

[WILLY *looks at* BIFF, *who is staring open-mouthed and horrified at* THE WOMAN.]

WILLY. Ah—you better go back to your room. They must be fin-

ished painting by now. They're painting her room so I let her take a shower here. Go back, go back . . . [*He pushes her.*]

THE WOMAN [*resisting*]. But I've got to get dressed, Willy, I can't—

WILLY. Get out of here! Go back, go back . . . [*Suddenly striving for the ordinary.*] This is Miss Francis, Biff, she's a buyer. They're painting her room. Go back, Miss Francis, go back . . .

THE WOMAN. But my clothes, I can't go out naked in the hall!

WILLY [*pushing her offstage*]. Get outa here! Go back, go back!

[BIFF *slowly sits down on his suitcase as the argument continues offstage.*]

THE WOMAN. Where's my stockings? You promised me stockings, Willy!

WILLY. I have no stockings here!

THE WOMAN. You had two boxes of size nine sheers for me, and I want them!

WILLY. Here, for God's sake, will you get outa here!

THE WOMAN [*enters holding a box of stockings*]. I just hope there's nobody in the hall. That's all I hope. [*To* BIFF] Are you football or baseball?

BIFF. Football.

THE WOMAN [*angry, humiliated*]. That's me too. G'night. [*She snatches her clothes from* WILLY *and walks out.*]

WILLY [*after a pause*]. Well, better get going. I want to get to the school first thing in the morning. Get my suits out of the closet. I'll get my valise. [BIFF *doesn't move.*] What's the matter? [BIFF *remains motionless, tears falling.*] She's a buyer. Buys for J. H. Simmons. She lives down the hall—they're painting. You don't imagine—[*He breaks off. After a pause*] Now listen, pal, she's just a buyer. She sees merchandise in her room and they have to keep it looking just so . . . [*Pause. Assuming command*] All right, get my suits. [BIFF *doesn't move.*] Now stop crying and do as I say. I gave you an order. Biff, I gave you an order! Is that what you do when I give you an order? How dare you cry! [*Putting his arm around* BIFF] Now look, Biff, when you grow up you'll understand about these things. You mustn't—you mustn't overemphasize a thing like this. I'll see Birnbaum first thing in the morning.

BIFF. Never mind.

WILLY [*getting down beside* BIFF]. Never mind! He's going to give you those points. I'll see to it.

BIFF. He wouldn't listen to you.

WILLY. He certainly will listen to me. You need those points for the U. of Virginia.

BIFF. I'm not going there.

WILLY. Heh? If I can't get him to change that mark you'll make it up in summer school. You've got all summer to—

BIFF [*his weeping breaking from him*]. Dad . . .

WILLY [*infected by it*]. Oh, my boy . . .

BIFF. Dad . . .

WILLY. She's nothing to me, Biff. I was lonely, I was terribly lonely.

BIFF. You—you gave her Mama's stockings! [*His tears break through and he rises to go.*]

WILLY [*grabbing for* BIFF]. I gave you an order!

BIFF. Don't touch me, you—liar!

WILLY. Apologize for that!

BIFF. You fake! You phony little fake! You fake! [*Overcome, he turns quickly and weeping fully goes out with his suitcase.* WILLY *is left on the floor on his knees.*]

WILLY. I gave you an order! Biff, come back here or I'll beat you! Come back here! I'll whip you!

[STANLEY *comes quickly in from the right and stands in front of* WILLY.]

WILLY [*shouts at* STANLEY]. I gave you an order . . .

STANLEY. Hey, let's pick it up, pick it up, Mr. Loman. [*He helps* WILLY *to his feet.*] Your boys left with the chippies. They said they'll see you home.

[*A second waiter watches some distance away.*]

WILLY. But we were supposed to have dinner together.

[*Music is heard,* WILLY's *theme.*]

STANLEY. Can you make it?

WILLY. I'll—sure, I can make it. [*Suddenly concerned about his clothes*] Do I—I look all right?

STANLEY. Sure, you look all right. [*He flicks a speck off* WILLY's *lapel.*]

WILLY. Here—here's a dollar.

STANLEY. Oh, your son paid me. It's all right.

WILLY [*putting it in* STANLEY's *hand*]. No, take it. You're a good boy.

STANLEY. Oh, no, you don't have to . . .

WILLY. Here—here's some more, I don't need it any more.

[*After a slight pause*] Tell me—is there a seed store in the neighborhood?

STANLEY. Seeds? You mean like to plant?

[*As* WILLY *turns,* STANLEY *slips the money back into his jacket pocket.*]

WILLY. Yes. Carrots, peas . . .

STANLEY. Well, there's hardware stores on Sixth Avenue, but it may be too late now.

WILLY [*anxiously*]. Oh, I'd better hurry. I've got to get some seeds. [*He starts off to the right.*] I've got to get some seeds, right away. Nothing's planted. I don't have a thing in the ground.

[WILLY *hurries out as the light goes down.* STANLEY *moves over to the right after him, watches him off. The other waiter has been staring at* WILLY.]

STANLEY [*to the waiter*]. Well, whatta you looking at?

[*The waiter picks up the chairs and moves off right.* STANLEY *takes the table and follows him. The light fades on this area. There is a long pause, the sound of the flute coming over. The light gradually rises on the kitchen, which is empty.* HAPPY *appears at the door of the house, followed by* BIFF. HAPPY *is carrying a large bunch of long-stemmed roses. He enters the kitchen, looks around for* LINDA. *Not seeing her, he turns to* BIFF, *who is just outside the house door, and makes a gesture with his hands, indicating "Not here, I guess." He looks into the living-room and freezes. Inside,* LINDA, *unseen, is seated,* WILLY'S *coat on her lap. She rises ominously and quietly and moves toward* HAPPY, *who backs up into the kitchen, afraid.*]

HAPPY. Hey, what're you doing up? [LINDA *says nothing but moves toward him implacably.*] Where's Pop? [*He keeps backing to the right, and now* LINDA *is in full view in the doorway to the living-room.*] Is he sleeping?

LINDA. Where were you?

HAPPY [*trying to laugh it off*]. We met two girls, Mom, very fine types. Here, we brought you some flowers. [*Offering them to her*] Put them in your room, Ma.

[*She knocks them to the floor at* BIFF'S *feet. He has now come inside and closed the door behind him. She stares at* BIFF, *silent.*]

HAPPY. Now what'd you do that for? Mom, I want you to have some flowers—

LINDA [*cutting* HAPPY *off, violently to* BIFF]. Don't you care whether he lives or dies?

HAPPY [*going to the stairs*]. Come upstairs, Biff.

BIFF [*with a flare of disgust, to* HAPPY]. Go away from me! [*To* LINDA] What do you mean, lives or dies? Nobody's dying around here, pal.

LINDA. Get out of my sight! Get out of here!

BIFF. I wanna see the boss.

LINDA. You're not going near him!

BIFF. Where is he? [*He moves into the living-room and* LINDA *follows.*]

LINDA [*shouting after* BIFF]. You invite him for dinner. He looks forward to it all day—[BIFF *appears in his parents' bedroom, looks around, and exits*]—and then you desert him there. There's no stranger you'd do that to!

HAPPY. Why? He had a swell time with us. Listen, when I—[LINDA *comes back into the kitchen*]—desert him I hope I don't outlive the day!

LINDA. Get out of here!

HAPPY. Now look, Mom . . .

LINDA. Did you have to go to women tonight? You and your lousy rotten whores!

[BIFF *re-enters the kitchen.*]

HAPPY. Mom, all we did was follow Biff around trying to cheer him up! [*To* BIFF] Boy, what a night you gave me!

LINDA. Get out of here, both of you, and don't come back! I don't want you tormenting him any more. Go on now, get your things together! [*To* BIFF] You can sleep in his apartment. [*She starts to pick up the flowers and stops herself.*] Pick up this stuff, I'm not your maid any more. Pick it up, you bum, you!

[HAPPY *turns his back to her in refusal.* BIFF *slowly moves over and gets down on his knees, picking up the flowers.*]

LINDA. You're a pair of animals! Not one, not another living soul would have had the cruelty to walk out on that man in a restaurant!

BIFF [*not looking at her*]. Is that what he said?

LINDA. He didn't have to say anything. He was so humiliated he nearly limped when he came in.

HAPPY. But, Mom, he had a great time with us—

BIFF [*cutting him off violently*]. Shut up!

[*Without another word,* HAPPY *goes upstairs.*]

LINDA. You! You didn't even go in to see if he was all right!

BIFF [*still on the floor in front of* LINDA, *the flowers in his hand; with self-loathing*]. No. Didn't. Didn't do a damned thing. How do you like that, heh? Left him babbling in a toilet.

LINDA. You louse. You . . .

BIFF. Now you hit it on the nose! [*He gets up, throws the flowers in the wastebasket.*] The scum of the earth, and you're looking at him!

LINDA. Get out of here!

BIFF. I gotta talk to the boss, Mom. Where is he?

LINDA. You're not going near him. Get out of this house!

BIFF [*with absolute assurance, determination*]. No. We're gonna have an abrupt conversation, him and me.

LINDA. You're not talking to him!

[*Hammering is heard from outside the house, off right.* BIFF *turns toward the noise.*]

LINDA [*suddenly pleading*]. Will you please leave him alone?

BIFF. What's he doing out there?

LINDA. He's planting the garden!

BIFF [*quietly*]. Now? Oh, my God!

[BIFF *moves outside,* LINDA *following. The light dies down on them and comes up on the center of the apron as* WILLY *walks into it. He is carrying a flashlight, a hoe, and a handful of seed packets. He raps the top of the hoe sharply to fix it firmly, and then moves to the left, measuring off the distance with his foot. He holds the flashlight to look at the seed packets, reading off the instructions. He is in the blue of night.*]

WILLY. Carrots . . . quarter-inch apart. Rows . . . one-foot rows. [*He measures it off.*] One foot. [*He puts down a package and measures off.*] Beets. [*He puts down another package and measures again.*] Lettuce. [*He reads the package, puts it down.*] One foot—[*He breaks off as* BEN *appears at the right and moves slowly down to him.*] What a proposition, ts, ts. Terrific, terrific. 'Cause she's suffered, Ben, the woman has suffered. You understand me? A man can't go out the way he came in, Ben, a man has got to add up to something. You can't, you can't—[BEN *moves toward him as though to interrupt.*] You gotta consider, now. Don't answer so quick. Remember, it's a guaranteed twenty-thousand-dollar proposition. Now look, Ben, I want you to go through the ins and outs of this thing with me. I've got nobody to talk to, Ben, and the woman has suffered, you hear me?

BEN [*standing still, considering*]. What's the proposition?

WILLY. It's twenty thousand dollars on the barrelhead. Guaranteed, gilt-edged, you understand?

BEN. You don't want to make a fool of yourself. They might not honor the policy.

WILLY. How can they dare refuse? Didn't I work like a coolie to meet every premium on the nose? And now they don't pay off? Impossible!

BEN. It's called a cowardly thing, William.

WILLY. Why? Does it take more guts to stand here the rest of my life ringing up a zero?

BEN [*yielding*]. That's a point, William. [*He moves, thinking, turns.*] And twenty thousand—that *is* something one can feel with the hand, it is there.

WILLY [*now assured, with rising power*]. Oh, Ben, that's the whole beauty of it! I see it like a diamond, shining in the dark, hard and rough, that I can pick up and touch in my hand. Not like—like an appointment! This would not be another damned-fool appointment, Ben, and it changes all the aspects. Because he thinks I'm nothing, see, and so he spites me. But the funeral—[*Straightening up*] Ben, that funeral will be massive! They'll come from Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire! All the old-timers with the strange license plates—that boy will be thunder-struck, Ben, because he never realized—I am known! Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey—I am known, Ben, and he'll see it with his eyes once and for all. He'll see what I am, Ben! He's in for a shock, that boy!

BEN [*coming down to the edge of the garden*]. He'll call you a coward.

WILLY [*suddenly fearful*]. No, that would be terrible.

BEN. Yes. And a damned fool.

WILLY. No, no, he mustn't, I won't have that! [*He is broken and desperate.*]

BEN. He'll hate you, William.

[*The gay music of* THE BOYS *is heard.*]

WILLY. Oh, Ben, how do we get back to all the great times? Used to be so full of light, and comradeship, the sleigh-riding in winter and the ruddiness on his cheeks. And always some kind of good news coming up, always something nice coming up ahead. And never even let me carry the valises in the house, and simonizing, simonizing that little red car! Why, why can't I give him something and not have him hate me?

BEN. Let me think about it. [*He glances at his watch.*] I still have

a little time. Remarkable proposition, but you've got to be sure you're not making a fool of yourself.

[*Ben drifts off upstage and goes out of sight.* BIFF *comes down from the left.*]

WILLY [*suddenly conscious of* BIFF, *turns and looks up at him, then begins picking up the packages of seeds in confusion*]. Where the hell is that seed? [*Indignantly*] You can't see nothing out here! They boxed in the whole goddam neighborhood!

BIFF. There are people all around here. Don't you realize that?

WILLY. I'm busy. Don't bother me.

BIFF [*taking the hoe from* WILLY]. I'm saying good-by to you, Pop. [WILLY *looks at him, silent, unable to move.*] I'm not coming back any more.

WILLY. You're not going to see Oliver tomorrow?

BIFF. I've got no appointment, Dad.

WILLY. He put his arm around you, and you've got no appointment?

BIFF. Pop, get this now, will you? Everytime I've left it's been a fight that sent me out of here. Today I realized something about myself and I tried to explain it to you and I—I think I'm just not smart enough to make any sense out of it for you. To hell with whose fault it is or anything like that. [*He takes* WILLY's *arm.*] Let's just wrap it up, heh? Come on in, we'll tell Mom. [*He gently tries to pull* WILLY *to left.*]

WILLY [*frozen, immobile, with guilt in his voice*]. No, I don't want to see her.

BIFF. Come on! [*He pulls again, and* WILLY *tries to pull away.*]

WILLY [*highly nervous*]. No, no, I don't want to see her.

BIFF [*tries to look into* WILLY's *face, as if to find the answer there.*] Why don't you want to see her?

WILLY [*more harshly now*]. Don't bother me, will you?

BIFF. What do you mean, you don't want to see her? You don't want them calling you yellow, do you? This isn't your fault; it's me. I'm a bum. Now come inside! [WILLY *strains to get away.*] Did you hear what I said to you?

[WILLY *pulls away and quickly goes by himself into the house.* BIFF *follows.*]

LINDA [*to* WILLY]. Did you plant, dear?

BIFF [*at the door, to* LINDA]. All right, we had it out. I'm going and I'm not writing any more.

LINDA [*going to* WILLY *in the kitchen*]. I think that's the best way.

dear. 'Cause there's no use drawing it out, you'll just never get along.

[WILLY *doesn't respond.*]

BIFF. People ask where I am and what I'm doing, you don't know, and you don't care. That way it'll be off your mind and you can start brightening up again. All right? That clears it, doesn't it? [WILLY *is silent, and* BIFF *goes to him.*] You gonna wish me luck, scout? [*He extends his hand.*] What do you say?

LINDA. Shake his hand, Willy.

WILLY [*turning to her, seething with hurt*]. There's no necessity to mention the pen at all, y'know.

BIFF [*gently*]. I've got no appointment, Dad.

WILLY [*erupting fiercely*]. He put his arm around . . . ?

BIFF. Dad, you're never going to see what I am, so what's the use of arguing? If I strike oil I'll send you a check. Meantime forget I'm alive.

WILLY [*to* LINDA]. Spite, see?

BIFF. Shake hands, Dad.

WILLY. Not my hand.

BIFF. I was hoping not to go this way.

WILLY. Well, this is the way you're going. Good-by.

[BIFF *looks at him a moment, then turns sharply and goes to the stairs.*]

WILLY [*stops him with*]. May you rot in hell if you leave this house!

BIFF [*turning*]. Exactly what is it that you want from me?

WILLY. I want you to know, on the train, in the mountains, in the valleys, wherever you go, that you cut down your life for spite!

BIFF. No, no.

WILLY. Spite, spite, is the word of your undoing! And when you're down and out, remember what did it. When you're rotting some where beside the railroad tracks, remember, and don't you dare blame it on me!

BIFF. I'm not blaming it on you!

WILLY. I won't take the rap for this, you hear?

[HAPPY *comes down the stairs and stands on the bottom step, watching.*]

BIFF. That's just what I'm telling you!

WILLY [*sinking into a chair at the table, with full accusation*]. You're trying to put a knife in me—don't think I don't know what you're doing!

BIFF. All right, phony! Then let's lay it on the line. [*He whips the rubber tube out of his pocket and puts it on the table.*]

HAPPY. You crazy—

LINDA. Biff! [*She moves to grab the hose, but* BIFF *holds it down with his hand.*]

BIFF. Leave it there! Don't move it!

WILLY [*not looking at it*]. What is that?

BIFF. You know goddam well what that is.

WILLY [*caged, wanting to escape*]. I never saw that.

BIFF. You saw it. The mice didn't bring it into the cellar! What is this supposed to do, make a hero out of you? This supposed to make me sorry for you?

WILLY. Never heard of it.

BIFF. There'll be no pity for you, you hear it? No pity!

WILLY [*to* LINDA]. You hear the spite!

BIFF. No, you're going to hear the truth—what you are and what I am!

LINDA. Stop it!

WILLY. Spite!

HAPPY [*coming down toward* BIFF]. You cut it now!

BIFF [*to* HAPPY]. The man don't know who we are! The man is gonna know! [*To* WILLY] We never told the truth for ten minutes in this house!

HAPPY. We always told the truth!

BIFF [*turning on him*]. You big blow, are you the assistant buyer? You're one of the two assistants to the assistant, aren't you?

HAPPY. Well, I'm practically—

BIFF. You're practically full of it! We all are! And I'm through with it. [*To* WILLY.] Now hear this, Willy, this is me.

WILLY. I know you!

BIFF. You know why I had no address for three months? I stole a suit in Kansas City and I was in jail. [*To* LINDA, *who is sobbing*] Stop crying. I'm through with it.

[LINDA *turns away from them, her hands covering her face.*]

WILLY. I suppose that's my fault!

BIFF. I stole myself out of every good job since high school!

WILLY. And whose fault is that?

BIFF. And I never got anywhere because you blew me so full of hot air I could never stand taking orders from anybody! That's whose fault it is!

WILLY. I hear that!

LINDA. Don't, Biff!

BIFF. It's goddam time you heard that! I had to be boss big shot in two weeks, and I'm through with it!

WILLY. Then hang yourself! For spite, hang yourself!

BIFF. No! Nobody's hanging himself, Willy! I ran down eleven flights with a pen in my hand today. And suddenly I stopped, you hear me? And in the middle of that office building, do you hear this? I stopped in the middle of that building and I saw—the sky. I saw the things that I love in this world. The work and the food and time to sit and smoke. And I looked at the pen and said to myself, what the hell am I grabbing this for? Why am I trying to become what I don't want to be? What am I doing in an office, making a contemptuous, begging fool of myself, when all I want is out there, waiting for me the minute I say I know who I am! Why can't I say that, Willy? [*He tries to make* WILLY *face him, but* WILLY *pulls away and moves to the left.*]

WILLY [*with hatred, threateningly*]. The door of your life is wide open!

BIFF. Pop! I'm a dime a dozen, and so are you!

WILLY [*turning on him now in an uncontrolled outburst*]. I am not a dime a dozen! I am Willy Loman, and you are Biff Loman!

[BIFF *starts for* WILLY, *but is blocked by* HAPPY. *In his fury,* BIFF *seems on the verge of attacking his father.*]

BIFF. I am not a leader of men, Willy, and neither are you. You were never anything but a hard-working drummer who landed in the ash can like all the rest of them! I'm one dollar an hour, Willy! I tried seven states and couldn't raise it. A buck an hour! Do you gather my meaning? I'm not bringing home any prizes any more, and you're going to stop waiting for me to bring them home!

WILLY [*directly to* BIFF]. You vengeful, spiteful mutt!

[BIFF *breaks from* HAPPY. WILLY, *in fright, starts up the stairs.* BIFF *grabs him.*]

BIFF [*at the peak of his fury*]. Pop, I'm nothing! I'm nothing, Pop. Can't you understand that? There's no spite in it any more. I'm just what I am, that's all.

[BIFF's *fury has spent itself, and he breaks down, sobbing, holding on to* WILLY, *who dumbly fumbles for* BIFF's *face.*]

WILLY [*astonished*]. What're you doing? What're you doing? [*To* LINDA] Why is he crying?

BIFF [*crying, broken*]. Will you let me go, for Christ's sake? Will

you take that phony dream and burn it before something happens? [*Struggling to contain himself, he pulls away and moves to the stairs.*] I'll go in the morning. Put him—put him to bed. [*Exhausted,* BIFF *moves up the stairs to his room.*]

WILLY [*after a long pause, astonished, elevated*]. Isn't that—isn't that remarkable? Biff—he likes me!

LINDA. He loves you, Willy!

HAPPY [*deeply moved*]. Always did, Pop.

WILLY. Oh, Biff! [*Staring wildly*] He cried! Cried to me. [*He is choking with his love, and now cries out his promise.*] That boy—that boy is going to be magnificent!

[BEN *appears in the light just outside the kitchen.*]

BEN. Yes, outstanding, with twenty thousand behind him.

LINDA [*sensing the racing of his mind, fearfully, carefully*]. Now come to bed, Willy. It's all settled now.

WILLY [*finding it difficult not to rush out of the house*]. Yes, we'll sleep. Come on. Go to sleep, Hap.

BEN. And it does take a great kind of a man to crack the jungle.

[*In accents of dread,* BEN's *idyllic music starts up.*]

HAPPY [*his arm around* LINDA]. I'm getting married, Pop, don't forget it. I'm changing everything. I'm gonna run that department before the year is up. You'll see, Mom. [*He kisses her.*]

BEN. The jungle is dark but full of diamonds, Willy.

[WILLY *turns, moves, listening to* BEN.]

LINDA. Be good. You're both good boys, just act that way, that's all.

HAPPY. 'Night, Pop. [*He goes upstairs.*]

LINDA [*to* WILLY]. Come, dear.

BEN [*with greater force*]. One must go in to fetch a diamond out.

WILLY [*to* LINDA, *as he moves slowly along the edge of the kitchen, toward the door*]. I just want to get settled down, Linda. Let me sit alone for a little.

LINDA [*almost uttering her fear*]. I want you upstairs.

WILLY [*taking her in his arms*]. In a few minutes, Linda. I couldn't sleep right now. Go on, you look awful tired. [*He kisses her.*]

BEN. Not like an appointment at all. A diamond is rough and hard to the touch.

WILLY. Go on now. I'll be right up.

LINDA. I think this is the only way, Willy.

WILLY. Sure, it's the best thing.

BEN. Best thing!

WILLY. The only way. Everything is gonna be—go on, kid, get to bed. You look so tired.

LINDA. Come right up.

WILLY. Two minutes.

[LINDA *goes into the living-room, then reappears in her bedroom.* WILLY *moves just outside the kitchen door.*]

WILLY. Loves me. [*Wonderingly*] Always loved me. Isn't that a remarkable thing? Ben, he'll worship me for it!

BEN [*with promise*]. It's dark there, but full of diamonds.

WILLY. Can you imagine that magnificence with twenty thousand dollars in his pocket?

LINDA [*calling from her room*]. Willy! Come up!

WILLY [*calling into the kitchen*]. Yes! Yes. Coming! It's very smart, you realize that, don't you, sweetheart? Even Ben sees it. I gotta go, baby. 'By! 'By! [*Going over to* BEN, *almost dancing*] Imagine? When the mail comes he'll be ahead of Bernard again!

BEN. A perfect proposition all around.

WILLY. Did you see how he cried to me? Oh, if I could kiss him, Ben!

BEN. Time, William, time!

WILLY. Oh, Ben, I always knew one way or another we were gonna make it, Biff and I!

BEN [*looking at his watch*]. The boat. We'll be late. [*He moves slowly off into the darkness.*]

WILLY [*elegiacally, turning to the house*]. Now when you kick off, boy, I want a seventy-yard boot, and get right down the field under the ball, and when you hit, hit low and hit hard, because it's important, boy. [*He swings around and faces the audience.*] There's all kinds of important people in the stands, and the first thing you know . . . [*Suddenly realizing he is alone*] Ben! Ben, where do I . . . ? [*He makes a sudden movement of search.*] Ben, how do I . . . ?

LINDA [*calling*]. Willy, you coming up?

WILLY [*uttering a gasp of fear, whirling about as if to quiet her*]. Sh! [*He turns around as if to find his way; sounds, faces, voices, seem to be swarming in upon him and he flicks at them, crying*] Sh! Sh! [*Suddenly music, faint and high, stops him. It rises in intensity, almost to an unbearable scream. He goes up and down on his toes, and rushes off around the house.*] Shhh!

LINDA. Willy?

[*There is no answer.* LINDA *waits.* BIFF *gets up off his bed. He is still in his clothes.* HAPPY *sits up.* BIFF *stands listening.*]

LINDA [*with real fear*]. Willy, answer me! Willy!

[*There is the sound of a car starting and moving away at full speed.*]

LINDA. No!

BIFF [*rushing down the stairs*]. Pop!

[*As the car speeds off, the music crashes down in a frenzy of sound, which becomes the soft pulsation of a single cello string.* BIFF *slowly returns to his bedroom. He and* HAPPY *gravely don their jackets.* LINDA *slowly walks out of her room. The music has developed into a dead march. The leaves of day are appearing over everything.* CHARLEY *and* BERNARD, *somberly dressed, appear and knock on the kitchen door.* BIFF *and* HAPPY *slowly descend the stairs to the kitchen as* CHARLEY *and* BERNARD *enter. All stop a moment when* LINDA, *in clothes of mourning, bearing a little bunch of roses, comes through the draped doorway into the kitchen. She goes to* CHARLEY *and takes his arm. Now all move toward the audience, through the wall-line of the kitchen. At the limit of the apron,* LINDA *lays down the flowers, kneels, and sits back on her heels. All stare down at the grave.*]

requiem

CHARLEY. It's getting dark, Linda.

[LINDA *doesn't react. She stares at the grave.*]

BIFF. How about it, Mom? Better get some rest, heh? They'll be closing the gate soon.

[LINDA *makes no move. Pause*]

HAPPY [*deeply angered*]. He had no right to do that. There was no necessity for it. We would've helped him.

CHARLEY [*grunting*]. Hmmm.

BIFF. Come along, Mom.

LINDA. Why didn't anybody come?

CHARLEY. It was a very nice funeral.

LINDA. But where are all the people he knew? Maybe they blame him.

CHARLEY. Naa. It's a rough world, Linda. They wouldn't blame him.

LINDA. I can't understand it. At this time especially. First time in thirty-five years we were just about free and clear. He only needed a little salary. He was even finished with the dentist.

CHARLEY. No man only needs a little salary.

LINDA. I can't understand it.

BIFF. There were a lot of nice days. When he'd come home from a trip; or on Sundays, making the stoop; finishing the cellar; putting on the new porch; when he built the extra bathroom; and put up the garage. You know something, Charley, there's more of him in that front stoop than in all the sales he ever made.

CHARLEY. Yeah. He was a happy man with a batch of cement.

LINDA. He was so wonderful with his hands.

BIFF. He had the wrong dreams. All, all, wrong.

HAPPY [*almost ready to fight* BIFF]. Don't say that!

BIFF. He never knew who he was.

CHARLEY [*stopping* HAPPY's *movement and reply. To* BIFF]. Nobody dast blame this man. You don't understand: Willy was a salesman. And for a salesman, there is no rock bottom to the life. He don't put a bolt to a nut, he don't tell you the law or give you medicine. He's a man way out there in the blue, riding on a smile and a shoeshine. And when they start not smiling back—that's an earthquake. And then you get yourself a couple of spots on your hat, and you're finished. Nobody dast blame this man. A salesman is got to dream, boy. It comes with the territory.

BIFF. Charley, the man didn't know who he was.

HAPPY [*infuriated*]. Don't say that!

BIFF. Why don't you come with me, Happy?

HAPPY. I'm not licked that easily. I'm staying right in this city, and I'm gonna beat this racket! [*He looks at* BIFF, *his chin set.*] The Loman Brothers!

BIFF. I know who I am, kid.

HAPPY. All right, boy. I'm gonna show you and everybody else that Willy Loman did not die in vain. He had a good dream. It's the only dream you can have—to come out number-one man. He fought it out here, and this is where I'm gonna win it for him.

BIFF [*with a hopeless glance at* HAPPY, *bends toward his mother*]. Let's go, Mom.

LINDA. I'll be with you in a minute. Go on, Charley. [*He hesi-*

tates.] I want to, just for a minute. I never had a chance to say good-by.

[CHARLEY *moves away, followed by* HAPPY. BIFF *remains a slight distance up and left of* LINDA. *She sits there, summoning herself. The flute begins, not far away, playing behind her speech.*]

LINDA. Forgive me, dear. I can't cry. I don't know what it is, but I can't cry. I don't understand it. Why did you ever do that? Help me, Willy, I can't cry. It seems to me that you're just on another trip. I keep expecting you. Willy, dear, I can't cry. Why did you do it? I search and search and I search, and I can't understand it, Willy. I made the last payment on the house today. Today, dear. And there'll be nobody home. [*A sob rises in her throat.*] We're free and clear. [*Sobbing more fully, released*] We're free. [BIFF *comes slowly toward her.*] We're free . . . We're free . . .

[BIFF *lifts her to her feet and moves out up right with her in his arms.* LINDA *sobs quietly.* BERNARD *and* CHARLEY *come together and follow them, followed by* HAPPY. *Only the music of the flute is left on the darkening stage as over the house the hard towers of the apartment buildings rise into sharp focus, and*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

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1921 *Dulcy*
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1923 *Helen of Troy, N.Y.* Musical
1923 *The Deep Tangled Wildwood*
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1927 *The Royal Family*
1932 *Dinner at Eight*
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1948 *Bravo!*
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