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Seven Plays

of the Modern Theater

Seven Plays

HENRIK IBSEN • ANTON CHEKHOV • W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM
NOEL COWARD • EUGENE O'NEILL • MAXWELL ANDERSON
TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

American Book Company *New York*

of the Modern Theater

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Preface

The choice of a group of plays with which to introduce students to a study of the modern drama is dictated by several fairly contradictory needs of both students and faculty. The editors must supply students with plays that are representative of as many types of drama as possible; they wish to give them the best plays available; they wish to spare teachers the necessity of teaching the same plays year after year; and yet they must include some of the plays which in a sense have become modern classics and have a relatively secure place in the contemporary theater.

The editors were aided in the preparation of this text by their colleagues at Wayne University who answered a questionnaire concerning the most desirable plays for an introduction-to-literature course. Forty teachers indicated their preferences and answered detailed questions. As to the nature of the plays, the majority felt it was desirable to include a sampling of Continental drama not only because of its intrinsic merit but also for its influence on the American drama for which it served sometimes as model, sometimes as inspiration. They were almost unanimously agreed that any text should include at least two comedies in order to show the student that the theater was not a place in which man was consistently being overwhelmed by the forces arrayed against him. And they were most generous in suggesting specific plays which they felt would best serve these diversified needs.

As to the supplementary and background material, opinion was somewhat divided as to quantity and kind. Some teachers wished to present the play to the student with only the essential facts regarding play and playwright included. Others wished a fairly comprehensive critical analysis of the author's achievements in the field of the drama. It was generally thought, however, that there should be no detailed analysis of the particular play included in the text. And all were agreed that the introduction should include some discussion

of important theories of the drama in relation to the plays to be studied.

The editors, therefore, attempted to meet these needs by preparing a biographical summary of the author's life which included the dates of publication and production of his most important works as well as some quoted observations of the author concerning the nature of his craft. Each biographical summary is supplemented by a critical essay on the author's development as an artist. At all times it was the wish of the editors to keep the students aware of the rich literature of the modern theater and to convince them that playgoing is an important part of adult life.

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The Uses of the Dramatic Imagination

The drama differs from other forms of storytelling in one important aspect. The dialogue spoken by the characters is always accompanied by some form of action or suggested action. The word drama itself has its origin in the Greek verb *dran* meaning "to do" or "to act," and drama, according to Aristotle, is essentially the "imitation of an action."

To enjoy and understand a play in the library, the reader is required to use a different kind of imagination from that which is active when he encounters any other form of literature. This is because the printed dialogue is but a part of the drama. Frequently the real meaning of the play is expressed in the stage directions in which the dramatist has indicated the kind of movement which must accompany the spoken word, and the reader must pay careful attention to this description of the action. A further difficulty arises because few authors until modern times took the trouble to indicate in great detail the movement which they expected of the actors on the stage. Many authors—Shakespeare and Molière among others—depended on directing the actors at rehearsals personally, and therefore included nothing but the dialogue in the printed text. And even in modern printed plays in which the author's stage directions at times run to whole pages, the entire movement of all the players involved in the scene cannot be indicated but must be visualized by the reader. That is why, when he opens the plays of Ibsen and O'Neill in the library, he must try to think of himself as witnessing them on a stage.

The theater is essentially a social institution, and plays are not written for the solitary reader but for an audience whose group reaction contributes to the success or failure of the drama. A comedy, for instance, may be richly enjoyed in the company of those who are reacting to it with pleasure, whereas the same play may be disliked

by those who witness it when a spontaneous reaction of amusement is absent. The audience is also important in establishing the mood of a serious play. When a spectator senses that other members of the audience are respectfully attentive to the problems which are confronting the characters in the play, he is more likely to respond with the classic reaction to tragedy: "There but for the grace of God, go I."

There is no substitute for this audience reaction, just as it is in itself almost indefinable. Audiences have group personalities which are certainly far more than the sum total of the personalities involved, and no psychologist has ever been able to analyze successfully a particular audience reaction. But subtle differences in response are sensed by the players, and the first one to make an exit is frequently asked by the others, "How are they tonight?" "They" may not have made a distinguishable sound, yet the actor knows intuitively whether "they" are hostile or receptive, and the members of the cast immediately begin to vary their performance to suit the mood of their patrons.

This group reaction is, of course, denied the reader. However, while it is difficult to reconstruct completely what a play would be like if it were what the radio industry calls a live show given before an audience, it is possible to see it in performance in the theater of the mind. A vigorous imagination reinforced by some knowledge of the possibilities, as well as the limitations, of the stage can vitalize the play and give it most of the warmth and feeling which it has when acted on a physical stage.

The reading of a play can be a rewarding and exciting experience if two things are remembered: When reconstructing a play in the theater of the mind, the reader must be aware of certain conventions which the playwright sometimes uses; second, he must be aware of the tremendous possibilities and resources of the modern stage if the production which he is assembling in the theater of his mind is to approximate one that might be given in a real theater.

SOME CONVENTIONS IN THE DRAMA

In several respects the reader of a play is more fortunate than the spectator in a theater. The claim of the realistic dramatists that they have "removed the fourth wall" of the room in which their play

takes place indicates one convention of the theater which the reader may disregard—the orientation of the stage action toward the audience. In almost every realistic play there is some distortion in the arrangement of the furniture which might bother a literal-minded spectator. Because of lack of space a bed may be so small that the actors can hardly take a cat nap on it with any degree of comfort; when a single shutter is opened or a candle lighted, every corner of the stage is illuminated.

It is true that there is a tendency in production today toward simplicity and imagination in settings and costumes. In one of the most popular modern plays, *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder, the stage is completely bare save for kitchen chairs and step ladders. An actor at the beginning of the play walks to the footlights, knocks the ashes from his pipe and tells the audience that the name of the play is *Our Town* and that the town is Grover's Corners. It is one of the eternally recurring miracles of the theater that before he is through telling the audience about the history of Grover's Corners the bare stage contains the churches, the drug store, and the houses he is describing. This is due to the fact that any audience enters a theater with what Samuel Coleridge called "a willing suspension of disbelief." In other words the audience willingly enters a world of make-believe—a world that may be inhabited by chic and attractive ghosts as in Noel Coward's *Blithe Spirit* or a rabbit six feet tall as in *Harvey,* another popular comedy.

The spectator can sometimes enter more readily into the imaginary world of the theater than the reader of a play, if the performers are suited to their parts; the power of gesture, pantomime, and the spoken word must not be underestimated. The reader on the other hand has one great advantage—he is never irritated by poor casting and inadequate costumes, sets, and properties. The theater of the mind is always properly equipped and no production is too lavish, no cast too large.

Two conventions of the drama, nevertheless, must be given particular attention, if the productions to be staged there are to be successful. The first of these is the speed with which certain events transpire, and the occasional violence of these events. In Maxwell Anderson's *Winterset,* for instance, Mio and Miriamne dance together beneath the towering spans of a Manhattan bridge and a few

hours later are ready to die in one another's arms. If they are to fully appreciate the play, playgoers and play-readers alike must be able to accept this accelerated tempo and emotional tension just as they do the fact that all those principally concerned with that almost forgotten trial which condemned Mio's father to death are gathered in the vicinity of this Manhattan bridge. Most readers can do this if they accept the convention that time and space are often condensed in the drama. And they also must expect, if it is a serious play, that the outcome of the action may involve the violent end of some of those concerned, because there is a sharp conflict of wills and interests, and this conflict is reaching a crisis.

The elements of conflict and crisis are present, of course, in most forms of literature. The novel, however, because it uses a narrative rather than a dramatic style, almost always has a more leisurely pace than a play. And the element of crisis is usually not so omnipresent. Few critics of the drama deny that conflict and crisis are omnipresent in almost every serious play. The most important differences of opinion have been over which element (conflict or crisis) is the more important.

SOME THEORIES OF THE DRAMA

Ferdinand Brunetière, the famous French critic, preferred to emphasize the element of conflict. In 1894 he offered his famous definition of drama in *La Loi du Théâtre* as "the will of man in conflict with the mysterious powers or natural forces that belittle us." An analysis of several plays will suggest that conflict can fall into many patterns. The forces may be represented by two human beings; one human being may be in conflict with a particular social group; two groups of human beings may be in conflict with one another; one human being may be in conflict with the laws of nature—or what was once called fate or the will of the gods; and, as frequently is the case in modern drama, a human being may be in conflict with himself. In many plays—*Hedda Gabler* for instance—there is a combination of almost all of these various conflicts.

William Archer, the English critic and playwright, in translating Brunetière, preferred to emphasize crisis (embodying the idea of turn or reversal of fortune) rather than conflict. Archer regards conflict as only one of the most important elements, rather than as the sole

distinguishing element of drama. By his definition, a play is a "more or less rapidly developing crisis in destiny or circumstances, and a dramatic scene is a crisis within a crisis, clearly furthering the ultimate event."

This theory of crisis implies that the plot of a play is merely a sequence of events, each of which has a minor crisis; while the play itself rises to a major crisis called the climax. Occasionally when the emphasis on plot is too great, the play is called "plot-ridden," but in all plays some kinds of events are necessary to reveal character. The personality of the protagonist makes him embark on a particular course of action, and one event leads to another. For a great many years the traditional five-act play caused critics to classify the order of these acts as exposition, complication, development, climax, and conclusion. Today this distinction has broken down, and some playwrights have written full-length plays of only one act. However, every play has some variation of the above division of the progress of the story.

The kind and amount of conflict and crisis in a play shape to a great extent the kind of play it is to be as well as the critical terms applied to it. Another important factor that determines these critical terms is the author's essential view of the outcome of man's struggle with the forces which oppose him. If he feels that his characters cannot cope with these forces and are to be destroyed by them, the play is called a tragedy. If, however, he feels that these forces can be overcome, the play is called a comedy, although the word "comedy" in playbills today frequently describes any play whose outcome is short of lethal.

The kind of plot and the kind of characters also determine the critical terms applied to plays. For instance, a play whose outcome is brought about by the situations and adventures encountered by the characters, rather than by what they themselves are, is called a melodrama rather than a tragedy. Some critics refuse to apply the term tragedy to any but those classic plays wherein a great but imperfect character comes in conflict with the forces of fate or destiny. In these plays the nature of the character's imperfection ("tragic flaw") usually determines his course of action in the play, and the audience (according to Aristotle) achieves a certain exaltation because of the nobility of the hero in the face of adversity. In modern tragedies, the

authors frequently choose to portray average men and women whose downfall is determined by social and economic forces rather than by their own weakness.

The distinction between serious plays in which character is more important than the sequence of events also exists in comedy. In what is called high comedy a comic hero is able to overcome the obstacles which confront him because of his wit and resourceful invention. The audience is more interested in the kind of person he is than in the complications and misunderstandings in which he is involved. In many comedies, however, the characters are less important than the complicating circumstances in which they find themselves. The playwright has interested himself in evolving a ridiculous and exaggerated situation which we must accept as a frame of reference. This kind of comedy is called a farce and whatever happens grows out of the situation rather than out of the character of the comic hero. It can thus be seen that farce differs from high comedy and melodrama differs from tragedy in the same way: in both farce and melodrama plot is more important than character.

In order to enjoy a play it is obviously not necessary to be familiar with all these distinctions in the various types of drama, for they can be multiplied endlessly. But it does help in the critical appreciation of a play to be aware of them, as well as to be aware of another important distinction—that which exists between the romantic drama and the experimental drama.

During the closing years of the nineteenth century when the artificialities of the romantic drama were being discarded, writers in all literary forms were attempting to observe and record life without any apparent selection of characters or events. The naturalistic drama is the logical outgrowth of this expressed literary aim, and naturalistic writers attempt to exhibit life as accurately and dispassionately as a scientist examines the specimens in his laboratory. The naturalistic playwright wishes to make the audience feel that the fourth wall of a room has been removed, in order that they may observe the men and women indulging in the endless trivia of daily life. Hardly had this approach been established and popularized by Émile Zola, Anton Chekhov, and Maxim Gorky than there were many reactions against it. Many writers felt that by presenting a slice of life the naturalists were ignoring the mental activity of their characters.

Therefore some dramatists went to the opposite extreme and concentrated entirely on revealing their characters from within, showing them deliberately distorted on the stage in order to emphasize some aspect of their personality. This completely subjective approach resulted in movements in the drama called variously "futurism," "symbolism," and "expressionism." They corresponded to many similar movements in painting, sculpture, and poetry.

Although it is a critical commonplace to say that these movements as such are no longer of significance, their influence lives on in many ways. Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* is not an expressionistic play, but the portrait of the absent father which lights up whenever he is mentioned is certainly an expressionistic device; similarly, although the same author's *Summer and Smoke* is not a symbolistic play, the statue of the angel in the park representing the spirit, and the anatomy chart in the doctor's office representing the flesh were definitely intended to be interpreted as symbols. In other words, the influence of symbolism and expressionism can be seen in many contemporary plays simply because contemporary authors have felt that the devices of these movements are convenient ways of expressing deeper meanings that lie beyond surface realities.

These reactions against the objective approach of the naturalistic dramatist merely indicate a healthy desire to make the drama a more flexible and vital thing, and now many of these devices are incorporated in[to] what are essentially naturalistic dramas. Modern technology has put many effective means of expression into the hands of the contemporary dramatist. The switchboard of the modern theater with its ability to create light and shadow, and the revolving stage which makes productions so much more fluid in movement are but two. Since it is necessary for the reader to appreciate the resources of the modern theater to produce effects which the dramatist has envisioned, it is well to examine not only some of the possibilities of modern stagecraft but also the function of those artists who assist the dramatist in the theater by bringing his script to life.

THE RESOURCES OF THE THEATER

The drama has frequently been said to be the greatest of the arts because it combines all the arts. Although the student of the drama today finds the characters realized on the printed page primarily by

dialogue, actually the playwright was preceded in the history of the drama by the musician and the dancer. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that since the origin of the drama in western literature was a choral chant performed by dancers in honor of the god Dionysus, the dramatist at that time was a choreographer and musician as well as poet. Modern plays are most frequently written in prose, and the ballet and opera are now only considered sister arts, but the drama has had great achievements in ages when there was a closer fusion of the arts than is true of our departmentalized culture. The chorus was frequently carefully trained by Greek dramatists; Shakespeare often used songs to establish and heighten the mood of his plays. In the realistic play which prevails today the lyric mood is infrequent. The dramatist has turned to prose.

It is perhaps for this reason that when music is used today in the drama it usually exists independently of the dialogue and is the work of an independent artist. Some plays require an instrumental background; in fact Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* has a score written by Paul Bowles, which runs twenty-two minutes—just two and a half minutes short of what the musician's union legally considers a musical play. Indeed the play with musical themes as an integral part of the plot is an increasingly popular form in contemporary drama. However, in most dramatic literature the dialogue and suggested action are all that is presented to us in the printed text.

Although in the library the text supplied by the dramatist for the plays is of primary interest, in the professional theater the critical attention of the audience is usually focused on the players. It is the star's name that appears in lights above the marquee, and among the playgoers there are many who frequently do not know the name of the dramatist! Even in the amateur theater, where much of the most significant work in the drama is being done, the first comments after the performance are usually on the success or failure of the actors in filling their roles. It is the unique satisfaction of the actor who has successfully portrayed a character on the stage that we nearly always recall that character in terms of the actor's physical appearance, no matter how many years later the play is mentally reviewed. To one generation of playgoers, Hedda Gabler will always be Minnie Maddern Fiske, to another Madame Alla Nazimova, to another Eva Le Gallienne.

Another artist whose work frequently commands immediate attention in between-the-acts comment is the designer of the sets. The difficulty of reading a modern play has increased considerably because it most frequently is meant to be presented on a picture stage. The Elizabethan dramatists wrote their plays for a platform stage almost without scenery; hence they supplied lines for the actor to deliver which cloaked the bareness of the platform with the magic of poetry. Many critics deplore the wealth of material and technical skill which it is now possible to use in mounting a production, although many plays require it. Sidney Kingsley's *Dead End,* whose entire meaning depends on the juxtaposition on the stage itself of great wealth and great poverty, taxes the ingenuity of the designer, whose work deserves almost as much critical attention as that of the dramatist and the interpretation of the actors. Fortunately plays of this kind are being consigned more and more to the movies where they rightly belong. The possibilities of the camera in this respect are limitless, and the prevailing tendency in the theater is toward simplification and stylization in settings. Still, even though the set is little more than steps and levels the architect must give it balance and proportion.

Already the roster of contributing artists is large, yet there remain many members whose skill the audience may not recognize. The stage managers, electricians, masters of properties and costumes, the painter who supplies the accents of color which complement the stage picture are all important in a production. For instance, the unseen hand that beats the drum in *The Emperor Jones* provides a very important element of suspense in the play. In the library we are inclined to forget its electrifying presence, and certainly our pulse beat does not increase as the tempo and the sound rise and fall. In the theater it does, and the drum itself suggests the growing terror and desperation of the Emperor Jones. The theater is indeed a synthesis of the arts, and the drummer is but one of the many contributing artists.

Since a performance is the work of many hands whose efforts are sometimes visible, sometimes not, the most important person in any production is he who creates order out of chaos. In the roll call of artists it is the director who is considered the most important by many critics, and what distinguishes the actual performance of any

play is the imagination of the director, because it is he who gives the play its particular interpretation. The reader of a play also constructs in his imagination a unique interpretation, and he might be said to assume the all-important function of the director.

THE READER AS DIRECTOR

Since it is the imagination of the reader-director that gives an interpretation its particular quality, his first job is to determine how a play can best be staged. He must decide whether the production will be naturalistic and performed against completely real sets, or whether it will be stylized, and the costumes, sets, and action simplified and accented to express some particular quality in the play. It is the reader-director also who creates the stage pictures by so grouping the actors that some strikingly significant effect is produced. He devises or controls the stage business that the actors perform. Usually the author has indicated how and when important action is to be performed, but never can he supply all of the details, and frequently the most telling action, the always-remembered gesture is completely the inspiration of the director. Certainly it is he who gives any production its pace, its timing, its lighting; and above all, perhaps, he must see that it is properly cast.

Almost any reader at times feels some identification with the characters portrayed in fiction. Yet in reading a play it is most essential that the reader go beyond mere identification. He must consider carefully the kind of characters with whom he is dealing. He must not only determine their essential nature but what background motivates their action in the play. Some directors make their actors write descriptions of the characters they are to interpret as well as detailed histories of their lives up to the time they make their first entrance and speak their first lines. The reader-director may find this a helpful aid in reconciling what appear to be apparent inconsistencies in a character; for an axiom in the drama is that a well-drawn character must be fairly consistent and at the same time sufficiently complex to be human. This imaginative research is, of course, particularly rewarding in the case of major characters, for we usually see them in detailed relationship to one or more characters. Some of the minor characters, it is true, are almost two dimensional; their function in the play may be of an expository nature. However, even these

minor characters must be clearly visualized in speech, manner, and dress, if the production is to be successful.

When all these minor and major characters are fully realized, the reader-director casts his play. He probably will use characters he has seen in similar roles on the stage, in the movies, or in real life. It should be remembered that the physical qualifications for the part are but the beginning. Regrettably enough, the movies have typed most of their stars, and if this kind of casting and acting is regrettable on the screen, it is doubly so on the stage. In most great plays the characters are interpreted as being real men and women rather than shadows. Perhaps the most easily applied test of greatness for any fiction is: Does it create real and memorable characters? Most successful plays do, and they must be clearly visualized if the play is to be fully appreciated.

Similarly the stage setting should be mentally pictured. This is perhaps the most difficult task of all for a reader-director with limited experience in playgoing. In the theater we take for granted the background of the play without realizing that, if the play has been skillfully produced, the stage has been carefully divided into various areas of interest where the different scenes are enacted. We also tend to forget that for even the simplest and most realistic play the director has evolved a complicated sequence of lighting which follows the rising and falling action.

The reader-director must pay careful attention to that help which the author has given him. Most modern authors describe their sets in some detail. It is frequently of advantage to sketch floor plans to determine where the important pieces of furniture are located and where the various scenes are to be played. In *Hedda Gabler,* for instance, the reader must realize that Ibsen thought of the play as having a kind of inner stage where Tesman and Judge Brack retire to enjoy their punch while Hedda talks to Eilert Lövborg, and where at the play's end Hedda retires to make use of her remaining pistol. Besides ascertaining where and how the specific scenes are to be played the reader-director must notice how the author indicates they are to be lighted. He must be able to visualize the scene in the stokehole of O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* where the men from time to time open the doors of the furnaces whose fires highlight their sweating backs and shoulders. It is in this light that Mildred sees Yank sil-

houetted, and in which, turning, he sees her gleaming "like a white apparition." It is the duty of the director of the theater of the mind to make the most of this startling contrast and chiaroscuro, since this moment determines the subsequent action of the play.

ADVANTAGES OF READING A PLAY

The reader-director needs a vigorous imagination to view a good production in the theater of the mind, but he has certain advantages over the observer of a play who sits in an actual theater. It will always be argued by teachers of the drama whether it is better to refrain from seeing a play which is being indifferently performed, or to see it and to take the will for the deed in respect to acting and staging. If an inadequacy occurs in a major member of the cast the meaning of the play is obviously distorted. Similarly a director or producer may for a personal reason willfully misinterpret the author's meaning: *King Lear* has been given a happy ending with Cordelia and her father rescued and reconciled. In the U.S.S.R. the peasant, Lopakhin, in Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* has been played as a people's hero—able to outwit the decadent aristocrats. In the theater of the mind such perversions of the author's intent need not be tolerated.

Similarly, in the theater of the mind no play is too lavish to be produced; kings do not have to wear pasteboard crowns or shabby cloaks; sumptuous drawing rooms do not have to be furnished with shoddy furniture. No mere matter of salary and prestige can prevent actors from taking part in the play. *Macbeth* may be cast with Katharine Cornell, Judith Anderson, and Blanche Yurka as the three witches. Nothing is impossible on this stage, and the actors never forget their lines or miss their cues.

This theater of the mind also has one of the greatest of all advantages—the reader can linger over a scene, extracting additional meaning from each line, whereas on the stage a scene is never repeated until the next performance. A play superbly interpreted invariably sends an audience forth eager to read and therefore to recapture the great moments. But whether the play has been seen or not, it is always the student's privilege to retire to the library and there reflect, weigh, and perhaps complete the author's meaning.

1. Continental Plays

REALISM

HENRIK IBSEN: *Hedda Gabler*

NATURALISM

ANTON CHEKHOV: *Uncle Vanya*

Henrik Ibsen

Over a hundred years have elapsed since Ibsen began writing plays, yet he is still called by some critics the greatest contemporary dramatist. The reason for this is that his plays are not only modern in spirit but modern in form as well. He was the first modern dramatist to emphasize the conflict between the individual and society rather than that between individual and individual, and he was also the first to break with the artificial form of the plot-ridden romantic play. His plays continue to interest the contemporary reader and playgoer. Year after year they are revived on Broadway and in the repertory of the little theaters. Actors still consider many of his characters prize roles, as they do those of Euripides, Shakespeare, and Molière. And although it may seem quite presumptuous to some to compare Ibsen to these authors, his continued popularity indicates that he is more than a contemporary dramatist and in some sense at least belongs to the world stage.

Ibsen's early plays did not give much indication of his later fame as the pioneer in the field of modern realistic drama. His first plays were in poetry and followed the familiar pattern of romantic drama, *Catilina,* published in 1850, used a classical story to comment on the political unrest and the growing sense of democracy and nationalism of the nineteenth century. His next plays were not only in poetry but dealt with various aspects of Norwegian history. His purpose was to create a national theater that would reflect the glory of his country. The titles themselves suggest the subject: *The Warrior's Barrow, Lady Inger of Östrât, The Vikings at Helgeland.*

But Ibsen was not long content with chauvinistic reveling in Norway's past. More and more during the late fifties he turned to a consideration of what he considered the disgrace of Norway's present—in particular, her continued neutrality in the face of Prussian aggression in Denmark. This gave him the theme which he developed in one sense or another in almost every play he thereafter

wrote: the contrast and conflict between our romantic pretensions and the ugly realities of human behavior. Moreover, he became increasingly irked by the success of his friend and rival poet, Björnstjerne Björnson, when he compared it to his own poverty. Ibsen's plays and poems—it must be remembered that he was still considered a poet and all of his plays up to this time were in verse—frequently aroused a storm of criticism. His appeals for small government subsidies, often granted authors of recognized merit, were denied; while Björnson, the popular liberal leader, was worshiped by his followers and was the recipient of several valuable stipends. Ibsen's attempts to found a national theater in Oslo met with failure, and when he was finally awarded a small travel grant in 1864, he left what he felt to be the stifling and narrow intellectual life of Norway for Rome and never returned save for occasional visits until 1891.

This departure from Norway meant that Ibsen was expanding more than his physical horizons. In the 1860's all Europe was stirred by intellectual revolution. The political ideology of Karl Marx, the religious theories of Sören Kierkegaard and Ernest Renan, the social writings of Auguste Comte and John Stuart Mill, and above all, the implications of Darwin's investigations staggered men's minds. Many writers made a violent break with their cultural traditions and started slowly to find a new meaning for the old world.

Ibsen's first expression of this intellectual revolution in terms of the drama came in the form of an ethical protest against the spiritual poverty of his countrymen. Although he lived abroad, his plays did not become cosmopolitan in setting or in characterization. *Brand,* the first play to bring Ibsen international recognition, presents the conflict between religious compromise and the fanatical pursuit of an ideal—"everything or nothing." Pastor Brand almost approaches the stature of some of the heroes of classic tragedy in his attempts to rouse a moribund generation; like the classic heroes he has a tragic flaw: he has no sympathy or understanding for human weaknesses. The "claims of the ideal" were to be maintained by many other characters of Ibsen and were to be many times misunderstood, for in this play as in others he insists that the ideals maintained so militantly must be constantly examined, must never be permitted to solidify, for convictions that may be true for one point in time may

be most wrong for another. And above all, justice must be tempered with mercy.

If in Brand he presented a character too inflexible in his search for truth, in Peer Gynt he created one almost the reverse. Peer Gynt, the picturesque adventurer, represents what Ibsen felt were equally important aspects of the Norwegian national character: its tendency to rationalize and compromise, as well as its egoism and self-sufficiency. This play is ranked by many as one of Ibsen's greatest, since Peer Gynt, for all his faults, is a believable character; there is in him much that is universal rather than Norwegian; and Peer Gynt's adventures in the halls of the mountain king and later in his search for wealth and power have endlessly intrigued the imagination of readers.

Peer Gynt, however, marks the end of a phase of Ibsen's writing rather than the beginning. It is the last of his plays in verse and has an imaginative grandeur that he never again attained. It is also the last play in which he followed the episodic technique of the romantic plays of Shakespeare and Schiller.

From the time Ibsen became a director in the theaters of Norway, first at Bergen and later at Oslo, he was interested in the problems of playwriting. Even while he was composing the unleashed flights of poetic fancy in *Peer Gynt,* he was growing more and more interested in the possibilities of the neatly compact, well-made play. He realized that if he were to put upon the stage the social problems of his day, he would have to restrain his fancy. Deliberately, therefore, he turned from the wild mountain heights and the deserts of Africa where he revealed Peer Gynt to the confines of cramped European parlors.

In the well-made plays of the French dramatists Scribe and Sardou he recognized the value of a carefully integrated plot that resolved all conflicts and left the audience satisfied that there were no unanswered questions in the story. He wished, however, to get into this style of writing something which had been conspicuously absent. He wanted absolute reality, overwhelming conviction, and a complete concealment of dramatic machinery. Many of Ibsen's best plays are as carefully constructed and are as technically elaborate as anything turned out by these French craftsmen who sacrificed every-

thing for craft. In his first realistic plays he used a closely plotted story, but he made one important addition—real people. Also, for the preoccupation with the sensational aspects of love and concealed identity, he substituted an equally startling revelation of something within the characters' own personalities. This was Ibsen's unique contribution to the dramaturgy of his day.

It has been frequently pointed out that the first two and a half acts of *A Doll's House* are little more than the skillfully contrived intrigue of a woman who is attempting to conceal from her husband the fact that she is being blackmailed. Eventually, however, she is saved by the intervention of a friend, and her husband is magnificently prepared to forgive her for having borrowed without his knowledge the money which was instrumental in saving his life. This first part of the play was given for a time in England independent of that portion of the all-important third act which contained Ibsen's unusual contribution. He would not let the curtain fall on a reconciliation, since Nora Helmer had come to important realizations of some things about herself and about her husband. It is in the last scene that she insists on an honest discussion of their married life and announces that she is going to leave her doll's house. Thus was evolved a new form in modern drama which was to make possible not only the rest of the plays of Ibsen's social theater but which, when transferred to the English stage and pointed by Shaw's wit, was to make possible the most brilliant comedies of the twentieth century.

Similarly, in *Ghosts* Ibsen prepared a carefully plotted and well-made play, but instead of some revelation of mistaken identity or concealed paternity Ibsen substituted Oswald Alving's disclosure that he is suffering from a venereal disease. In the third act his mother tells him what the audience already knows: that his father's early indiscretions have been responsible for his having that disease. Ibsen's contribution here was to introduce a serious social problem into the classical dramatic formula of a situation already ripe with tragedy.

Somerset Maugham, speaking of the limited variety of invention in Ibsen's style of this period, says: "It is not a gross exaggeration to say that his only gambit is the sudden arrival of a stranger who comes into a stuffy room and opens the windows; whereupon the

people who were sitting there catch their death of cold and everything ends unhappily." There is a good deal of truth in Maugham's cruelly pointed remark, but it is only a half-truth. He ignores the fact that although Ibsen was using the form of the well-made play, he was using real people to voice the ideas contained in the play; and it is difficult for Maugham or anyone else writing many years later to estimate the impact of these ideas on the audiences of the seventies.

The performances of *A Doll's House* aroused such criticism of the author that Ibsen wrote *Ghosts* partially to show his critics what might happen if women did not have the courage to leave their doll's houses and assert their independence. But far from silencing his critics, that play brought down upon his head such a storm of abuse from even the liberal press that he wrote in disgust: "Under no condition shall I ever be able to belong to a party which has the majority on its side. . . . I . . . must of necessity say: 'The minority is always right.' . . . I mean that the man is right who is most closely in league with the future."

Ibsen felt himself to be that man who might be thought of by his neighbors as "an enemy of the people" because he dared to face them with uncomfortable truths. That is the fate of Dr. Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People,* the last of the plays of Ibsen's third period, when he was dealing in prose with the social and economic issues of his day. Dr. Stockmann, like Ibsen, had discovered an unpleasant truth: that the water for the municipal baths from which the inhabitants of his town derived their principal income was polluted and therefore the baths would have to be closed until the situation could be remedied. Dr. Stockmann's house was stoned by "the damned, compact, liberal majority" whose incomes and position were threatened, just as Ibsen was criticized even by his open-minded defenders when he pointed out the dangers of venereal disease in *Ghosts.*

An Enemy of the People concludes the list of plays which comprise Ibsen's so-called social theater. This does not mean that many of the ideas and themes with which he had been concerned were to disappear from his plays. Actually what has caused critics to call *The Wild Duck,* written in 1884, the first play of a new period in his writing is a change in style. Just as his third period is indicated by

a change from poetry to prose, his fourth period is indicated by a stylistic change—the introduction of many symbols into his plays.

Symbolism as a movement in the theater need not be discussed here, although *The Wild Duck* is the first play of this kind in modern drama. However, it may be useful to distinguish between the symbols appearing in this play and the dramatic symbols which appear in his early plays and which indeed are present in all plays. The shocking new books by liberal authors that the conservative Pastor Manders finds on Mrs. Alving's table in *Ghosts* are a dramatic symbol, since they are used by the author to indicate a fundamental difference in the attitudes of these two characters. The doll's house which titles that play is in itself a dramatic symbol of the position to which many women were relegated at that time.

In *The Wild Duck,* however, the wild duck itself is used not only as a symbol to advance the meaning of the play but as a poetic symbol or image. In other words, the symbol reappears from time to time, sometimes with added meaning—almost, indeed, with different meaning. In this play Hialmar Ekdal, frustrated in his ambitions, has created an imaginary forest in his attic, wherein his equally frustrated father hunts for imaginary game. In it also his wife's illegitimate daughter, Hedvig, whom Hialmar thinks is his own child, keeps a wild duck which has been wounded by hunters. A narrow-minded and misguided idealist, Gregers Werle, in the interests of what he calls truth, insists not only that Hialmar be told that Hedvig is not his daughter, but that he give up the other illusions with which he has sustained himself. At one point in the play Werle is compared to a dog that seeks out the duck wounded by the hunters and returns it to them. It can easily be seen how the imaginary forest, the wild duck, and the dog all have several meanings in the play.

Nearly all of the plays written by Ibsen after *The Wild Duck* have figures that repeat themselves much as a poet repeats his images. In *The Master Builder* there is a tower which the aging architect must climb in order to prove that his powers are not failing, even if in so doing he falls and is killed. In *The Lady from the Sea* the symbols of the sea reappear again and again since the heroine cannot find happiness in her marriage because of the memory of a former lover who was a sailor. In *Hedda Gabler* the symbols of the pistols,

the portrait of General Gabler, Eilert Lövborg's manuscript all have additional meanings over and above the obvious ones which they have in advancing the action of the play.

In all these plays Ibsen is once again using the devices of the poet, devices which he used in his early dramas. The poet is once again at work, but so also is the social critic of the seventies, as well as the mature and skillful craftsman who once said:

> Before I write down one word I have to have the character in mind through and through, I must penetrate into the last wrinkle of his soul. I always proceed from the individual; the stage setting, the dramatic ensemble, all of that comes naturally and does not cause me any worry, as soon as I am certain of the individual in every aspect of his humanity. But I have to have his exterior in mind also, down to the last button, how he stands and walks, how he conducts himself, what his voice sounds like. Then I do not let him go until his fate is fulfilled.

Among these last plays, *Hedda Gabler* illustrates best, perhaps, all of the qualities of the dramatist—the poet, the social critic, the realist. Symbolism in this play is well integrated with realism. The shallowness and complexity of Hedda's character, along with the psychological insight and dramatic skill of the author, make her one of the most interesting women in the entire literature of the theater. It is this combination of qualities that makes *Hedda Gabler* the most frequently performed Ibsen play of our time.

Although Ibsen went through four distinct phases as a dramatist, in each period he created plays of finished artistry. The dramas of social protest are not better plays than the poetic dramas, nor are the symbolical dramas better than those of social protest. In each period he wrote plays for a different purpose, and he used a different subject matter and a different style to embody the purpose. The critical judgment of any one play depends largely on the mood of the audience that observes it. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the revolutionary spirit was fresh, *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts* were most popular. Today *Hedda Gabler* satisfies our interest in psychology and has enough lyrical passion to meet our growing demand for poetry in the theater.

1828 Born on March 20 in Skien, Norway. His family belonged to the rising middle class that was seeking, as a liberal movement, to replace the old aristocracy.

1836 The bankruptcy of his father's lumber business brought poverty to the family.

1844-50 Apprenticed to an apothecary in Grimstad, where his loneliness helped turn him to the writing of poetry.

1850-61 POETIC DRAMAS OF ROMANTIC NATIONALISM

1850 Catilina, his first play, is written chiefly in blank verse. It reflects the democratic spirit of the revolutions of 1848.[1] *The Warrior's Barrow,* his first production, ran for three days. Ibsen took entrance examinations for the university at Oslo this year, attended some lectures, but never was matriculated. He also became a journalist for radical labor groups.

1851-57 As assistant director and playwright to the Bergen Theater, he tried to turn it into a national theater to counteract the influence of the Danes. He wrote romantic plays on Norwegian history like *Lady Inger of Östråt* (1855). He was not anti-Danish but demanded equality for Norway in the Scandinavian bloc.

1857-62 Finding the Bergen Theater not nationalistic enough (75 of the 145 plays produced while he was director were translations of French plays), he became director of the Norwegian Theater in Oslo until it failed.

1858 Married Susannah Thoresen and had one son, Sigurd. She encouraged him to remain a dramatist, and he continued to write such historical romances as *The Vikings at Helgeland.*

1862-73 POETIC DRAMAS OF SOCIAL PROTEST

1862 Love's Comedy is directed against the conventions of marriage that neglect real love. It was criticized by the conservatives.

1864-91 Ibsen left Norway because of the failure of his country to support Denmark in the Danish-Prussian War of 1863-64 and because of personal differences with the middle-class liberals who evolved far too slowly to suit his passionate convictions. For twenty-seven years he lived in Italy and Germany. His major works were written in his voluntary exile.

1866 Brand, the first play written in his exile in Rome, attacked the superficiality of Norwegian religion. Foreign residence broadened his perceptions, and this play was so popular that it ran into four editions before the end of the year. It was written primarily to be read rather than acted. Ibsen received a lifelong poet's pension from his government in recognition of his reputation as a dramatist.

1867 Peer Gynt, a humorous satire on compromises with love and virtue, reflects his happiness over his re-

[1] The dates given for Ibsen's plays are for the year of publication unless otherwise noted. Unlike later dramatists in this volume, he usually published his work before it was produced on the stage.

cent success. It was set to music by Edvard Grieg.

1869 The League of Youth, his first play in modern prose, is an attack on the leaders of the liberal party. It was criticized by many of his former supporters.

1873 Emperor and Galilean, a long philosophical poem in dramatic form, is marked by a strong ethical element and shows the influence of Mill, Darwin, and evolutionary thought. He was growing beyond the confines of nationalism.

1874-82 PROSE DRAMAS OF SOCIAL CRITICISM

1877 Pillars of Society, which are truth and freedom, gave him his first great stage success. He now began to be acclaimed outside of Norway.

1879 A Doll's House, although influenced by the woman's suffrage movement, is a plea for individual integrity of every person.

1881 Ghosts, a study of the consequences of venereal disease, was "the most bitterly reviled play of all time." It was staged first in America.

1882 An Enemy of the People reflects his concern over the tyranny of a majority. Walter Hampden revived it in New York in 1927 for 127 performances.

1884-99 PERIOD OF SYMBOLICAL DRAMA

1884 The Wild Duck. First allegorical use of symbols in his realistic drama.

1886 Rosmersholm concerns egotistical individualism and the tragedy of idealism. Rebecca West represents modern woman.

1888 The Lady from the Sea symbolizes woman's desire for moral freedom.

1890 Hedda Gabler has been the most popular Ibsen play in America. The principal New York productions of recent years were presented: in 1924 with Dudley Digges and Roland Young; in 1926 with Emily Stevens; in 1928 and through the early thirties with Eva Le Gallienne; in 1929 with Blanche Yurka; and in 1936 with Alla Nazimova.

1891-1906 Ibsen returned to Norway and lived for the rest of his life in Oslo.

1892 The Master Builder pictures the tragedy that follows the worship of success. It was played in New York in 1925, and with Eva Le Gallienne in her Civic Repertory Theatre in 1926 and 1929.

1896 John Gabriel Borkman is on the theme that love is the same as life, and the pursuit of money yields a living death.

1899 When We Dead Awaken "what do we really see then?" Ibsen asks. "We see that we have never lived." This is another study in gross materialism.

1906 Ibsen died in Oslo, May 23, after a series of apoplectic strokes.

Hedda Gabler[1]

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

by HENRIK IBSEN

Translated from the Norwegian by EDMUND GOSSE *and* WILLIAM ARCHER

Characters

GEORGE TESMAN[2]
HEDDA TESMAN, *his wife*
MISS JULIANA TESMAN, *his aunt*
MRS. ELVSTED
JUDGE[3] BRACK
EILERT LÖVBORG
BERTA, *servant at the Tesmans*

The scene of the action is Tesman's villa, in the west end of Christiania.

[1] Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers.

[2] Tesman, whose Christian name in the original is "Jörgen," is described as "stipendiat i kulturhistorie"—that is to say, the holder of a scholarship for purposes of research into the History of Civilisation.

[3] In the original "Assessor."

A spacious, handsome, and tastefully furnished drawing-room, decorated in dark colours. In the back, a wide doorway with curtains drawn back, leading into a smaller room decorated in the same style as the drawing-room. In the right-hand wall of the front room, a folding door leading out to the hall. In the opposite wall, on the left, a glass door, also with curtains drawn back. Through the panes can be seen part of a veranda outside, and trees covered with autumn foliage. An oval table, with a cover on it, and surrounded by chairs, stands well forward. In front, by the wall on the right, a wide stove of dark porcelain, a high-backed arm-chair, a cushioned foot-rest, and two footstools. A settee, with a small round table in front of it, fills the upper right-hand corner. In front, on the left, a little way from the wall, a sofa. Further back than the glass door, a piano. On either side of the doorway at the back, a whatnot with terra-cotta and majolica ornaments.—Against the back wall of the inner room, a sofa with a table, and one or two chairs. Over the sofa hangs the portrait of a handsome elderly man in a general's uniform. Over the table, a hanging lamp with an opal glass shade.—A number of bouquets are arranged about the drawing-room, in vases and glasses. Others lie upon the tables. The floors in both rooms are covered with thick carpets.—Morning light. The sun shines in through the glass door.

MISS JULIANA TESMAN, *with her bonnet on and carrying a parasol, comes in from the hall followed by* BERTA, *who carries a bouquet wrapped in paper.* MISS TESMAN *is a comely and pleasant-looking lady of about sixty-five. She is nicely but simply dressed in a grey walking-costume.* BERTA *is a middle-aged woman of plain and rather countrified appearance.*

MISS TESMAN [*Stops close to the door, listens, and says softly:*] Upon my word, I don't believe they are stirring yet!

BERTA [*Also softly.*] I told you so, Miss. Remember how late the steamboat got in last night. And then, when they got home!—good Lord, what a lot the young mistress had to unpack before she could get to bed.

MISS TESMAN Well, well—let them have their sleep out. But let us see that they get a good breath

of the fresh morning air when they do appear. [*She goes to the glass door and throws it open.*]

BERTA [*Beside the table, at a loss what to do with the bouquet in her hand.*] I declare there isn't a bit of room left. I think I'll put it down here, Miss. [*She places it on the piano.*]

MISS TESMAN So you've got a new mistress now, my dear Berta. Heaven knows it was a wrench to me to part with you.

BERTA [*On the point of weeping.*] And do you think it wasn't hard for me too, Miss? After all the blessed years I've been with you and Miss Rina.[4]

MISS TESMAN We must make the best of it, Berta. There was nothing else to be done. George can't do without you, you see—he absolutely can't. He has had you to look after him ever since he was a little boy.

BERTA Ah but, Miss Julia, I can't help thinking of Miss Rina lying helpless at home there, poor thing. And with only that new girl too! She'll never learn to take proper care of an invalid.

MISS TESMAN Oh, I shall manage to train her. And of course you know, I shall take most of it upon myself. You needn't be uneasy about my poor sister, my dear Berta.

[4] Pronounce *Reena.*

BERTA Well, but there's another thing, Miss. I'm so mortally afraid I shan't be able to suit the young mistress.

MISS TESMAN Oh well—just at first there may be one or two things——

BERTA Most like she'll be terrible grand in her ways.

MISS TESMAN Well, you can't wonder at that—General Gabler's daughter! Think of the sort of life she was accustomed to in her father's time. Don't you remember how we used to see her riding down the road along with the General? In that long black habit—and with feathers in her hat?

BERTA Yes indeed—I remember well enough!—But, good Lord, I should never have dreamt in those days that she and Master George would make a match of it.

MISS TESMAN Nor I.—But by-the-bye, Berta—while I think of it: in future you mustn't say Master George. You must say Dr. Tesman.

BERTA Yes, the young mistress spoke of that too—last night—the moment they set foot in the house. Is it true then, Miss?

MISS TESMAN Yes, indeed it is. Only think, Berta—some foreign university has made him a doctor—while he has been abroad,

you understand. I hadn't heard a word about it, until he told me himself upon the pier.

BERTA Well, well, he's clever enough for anything, he is. But I didn't think he'd have gone in for doctoring people too.

MISS TESMAN No, no, it's not that sort of doctor he is. [*Nods significantly.*] But let me tell you, we may have to call him something still grander before long.

BERTA You don't say so! What can that be, Miss?

MISS TESMAN [*Smiling.*] H'm —wouldn't you like to know! [*With emotion.*] Ah, dear, dear —if my poor brother could only look up from his grave now, and see what his little boy has grown into! [*Looks around.*] But bless me, Berta—why have you done this? Taken the chintz covers off all the furniture?

BERTA The mistress told me to. She can't abide covers on the chairs, she says.

MISS TESMAN Are they going to make this their everyday sitting-room then?

BERTA Yes, that's what I understood—from the mistress. Master George—the doctor—he said nothing.

GEORGE TESMAN *comes from the right into the inner room, humming to himself, and carrying an unstrapped empty portmanteau. He is a middle-sized, young-looking man of thirty-three, rather stout, with a round, open, cheerful face, fair hair and beard. He wears spectacles, and is somewhat carelessly dressed in comfortable indoor clothes.*

MISS TESMAN Good morning, good morning, George.

TESMAN [*In the doorway between the rooms.*] Aunt Julia! Dear Aunt Julia! [*Goes up to her and shakes hands warmly.*] Come all this way—so early! Eh?

MISS TESMAN Why, of course I had to come and see how you were getting on.

TESMAN In spite of your having had no proper night's rest?

MISS TESMAN Oh, that makes no difference to me.

TESMAN Well, I suppose you got home all right from the pier? Eh?

MISS TESMAN Yes, quite safely, thank goodness. Judge Brack was good enough to see me right to my door.

TESMAN We were so sorry we couldn't give you a seat in the carriage. But you saw what a pile of boxes Hedda had to bring with her.

MISS TESMAN Yes, she had certainly plenty of boxes.

BERTA [*To* TESMAN.] Shall I go in and see if there's anything I can do for the mistress?

TESMAN No thank you, Berta —you needn't. She said she would ring if she wanted anything.

BERTA [*Going towards the right.*] Very well.

TESMAN But look here—take this portmanteau with you.

BERTA [*Taking it.*] I'll put it in the attic. [*She goes out by the hall door.*]

TESMAN Fancy, Auntie — I had the whole of that portmanteau chock full of copies of documents. You wouldn't believe how much I have picked up from all the archives I have been examining—curious old details that no one has had any idea of——

MISS TESMAN Yes, you don't seem to have wasted your time on your wedding trip, George.

TESMAN No, that I haven't. But do take off your bonnet, Auntie. Look here! Let me untie the strings—eh?

MISS TESMAN [*While he does so.*] Well, well—this is just as if you were still at home with us.

TESMAN [*With the bonnet in his hand, looks at it from all sides.*] Why, what a gorgeous bonnet you've been investing in!

MISS TESMAN I bought it on Hedda's account.

TESMAN On Hedda's account? Eh?

MISS TESMAN Yes, so that Hedda needn't be ashamed of me if we happened to go out together.

TESMAN [*Patting her cheek.*] You always think of everything, Aunt Julia. [*Lays the bonnet on a chair beside the table.*] And now, look here—suppose we sit comfortably on the sofa and have a little chat, till Hedda comes. [*They seat themselves. She places her parasol in the corner of the sofa.*]

MISS TESMAN [*Takes both his hands and looks at him.*] What a delight it is to have you again, as large as life, before my very eyes, George! My George—my poor brother's own boy!

TESMAN And it's a delight for me, too, to see you again, Aunt Julia! You, who have been father and mother in one to me.

MISS TESMAN Oh yes, I know you will always keep a place in your heart for your old aunts.

TESMAN And what about Aunt Rina? No improvement —eh?

MISS TESMAN Oh no—we can scarcely look for any improvement in her case, poor thing. There she lies, helpless, as she has lain for all these years. But heaven grant I may not lose her yet awhile! For if I did, I don't know what I should make of my

life, George—especially now that I haven't you to look after any more.

TESMAN [*Patting her back.*] There, there, there——!

MISS TESMAN [*Suddenly changing her tone.*] And to think that here are you a married man, George!—And that you should be the one to carry off Hedda Gabler—the beautiful Hedda Gabler! Only think of it—she, that was so beset with admirers!

TESMAN [*Hums a little and smiles complacently.*] Yes, I fancy I have several good friends about town who would like to stand in my shoes—eh?

MISS TESMAN And then this fine long wedding-tour you have had! More than five—nearly six months——

TESMAN Well, for me it has been a sort of tour of research as well. I have had to do so much grubbing among old records—and to read no end of books too, Auntie.

MISS TESMAN Oh yes, I suppose so. [*More confidentially, and lowering her voice a little.*] But listen now, George,—have you nothing—nothing special to tell me?

TESMAN As to our journey?

MISS TESMAN Yes.

TESMAN No, I don't know of anything except what I have told you in my letters. I had a doctor's degree conferred on me—but that I told you yesterday.

MISS TESMAN Yes, yes, you did. But what I mean is—haven't you any—any—expectations——?

TESMAN Expectations?

MISS TESMAN Why you know, George—I'm your old auntie!

TESMAN Why, of course I have expectations.

MISS TESMAN Ah!

TESMAN I have every expectation of being a professor one of these days.

MISS TESMAN Oh yes, a professor——

TESMAN Indeed, I may say I am certain of it. But my dear Auntie—you know all about that already!

MISS TESMAN [*Laughing to herself.*] Yes, of course I do. You are quite right there. [*Changing the subject.*] But we were talking about your journey. It must have cost a great deal of money, George?

TESMAN Well, you see—my handsome travelling-scholarship went a good way.

MISS TESMAN But I can't understand how you can have made it go far enough for two.

TESMAN No, that's not so easy to understand—eh?

MISS TESMAN And especially travelling with a lady—they tell

me that makes it ever so much more expensive.

TESMAN Yes, of course—it makes it a little more expensive. But Hedda had to have this trip, Auntie! She really had to. Nothing else would have done.

MISS TESMAN No, no, I suppose not. A wedding-tour seems to be quite indispensable nowadays.—But tell me now—have you gone thoroughly over the house yet?

TESMAN Yes, you may be sure I have. I have been afoot ever since daylight.

MISS TESMAN And what do you think of it all?

TESMAN I'm delighted! Quite delighted! Only I can't think what we are to do with the two empty rooms between this inner parlour and Hedda's bedroom.

MISS TESMAN [*Laughing.*] Oh my dear George, I daresay you may find some use for them—in the course of time.

TESMAN Why of course you are quite right, Aunt Julia! You mean as my library increases—eh?

MISS TESMAN Yes, quite so, my dear boy. It was your library I was thinking of.

TESMAN I am specially pleased on Hedda's account. Often and often, before we were engaged, she said that she would never care to live anywhere but in Secretary Falk's villa.[5]

MISS TESMAN Yes, it was lucky that this very house should come into the market, just after you had started.

TESMAN Yes, Aunt Julia, the luck was on our side, wasn't it—eh?

MISS TESMAN But the expense, my dear George! You will find it very expensive, all this.

TESMAN [*Looks at her, a little cast down.*] Yes, I suppose I shall, Aunt!

MISS TESMAN Oh, frightfully!

TESMAN How much do you think? In round numbers?—Eh?

MISS TESMAN Oh, I can't even guess until all the accounts come in.

TESMAN Well, fortunately, Judge Brack has secured the most favourable terms for me,—so he said in a letter to Hedda.

MISS TESMAN Yes, don't be uneasy, my dear boy.—Besides, I have given security for the furniture and all the carpets.

TESMAN Security? You? My dear Aunt Julia—what sort of security could you give?

MISS TESMAN I have given a mortgage on our annuity.

TESMAN [*Jumps up.*] What!

[5] In the original, "Statsrådinde Falks villa"—showing that it had belonged to the widow of a cabinet minister.

On your—and Aunt Rina's annuity!

MISS TESMAN Yes, I knew of no other plan, you see.

TESMAN [*Placing himself before her.*] Have you gone out of your senses, Auntie! Your annuity—it's all that you and Aunt Rina have to live upon.

MISS TESMAN Well, well—don't get so excited about it. It's only a matter of form you know—Judge Brack assured me of that. It was he that was kind enough to arrange the whole affair for me. A mere matter of form, he said.

TESMAN Yes, that may be all very well. But nevertheless——

MISS TESMAN You will have your own salary to depend upon now. And, good heavens, even if we did have to pay up a little ——! To eke things out a bit at the start——! Why, it would be nothing but a pleasure to us.

TESMAN Oh Auntie—will you never be tired of making sacrifices for me!

MISS TESMAN [*Rises and lays her hand on his shoulder.*] Have I any other happiness in this world except to smooth your way for you, my dear boy? You, who have had neither father nor mother to depend on. And now we have reached the goal, George! Things have looked black enough for us sometimes; but, thank heaven, now you have nothing to fear.

TESMAN Yes, it is really marvellous how everything has turned out for the best.

MISS TESMAN And the people who opposed you—who wanted to bar the way for you—now you have them at your feet. They have fallen, George. Your most dangerous rival—his fall was the worst.—And now he has to lie on the bed he has made for himself—poor misguided creature.

TESMAN Have you heard anything of Eilert? Since I went away, I mean.

MISS TESMAN Only that he is said to have published a new book.

TESMAN What! Eilert Lövborg! Recently—eh?

MISS TESMAN Yes, so they say. Heaven knows whether it can be worth anything! Ah, when your new book appears—that will be another story, George! What is it to be about?

TESMAN It will deal with the domestic industries of Brabant during the Middle Ages.

MISS TESMAN Fancy—to be able to write on such a subject as that!

TESMAN However, it may be some time before the book is ready. I have all these collec-

tions to arrange first, you see.

MISS TESMAN Yes, collecting and arranging—no one can beat you at that. There you are my poor brother's own son.

TESMAN I am looking forward eagerly to setting to work at it; especially now that I have my own delightful home to work in.

MISS TESMAN And, most of all, now that you have got the wife of your heart, my dear George.

TESMAN [*Embracing her.*] Oh yes, yes, Aunt Julia! Hedda—she is the best part of it all! [*Looks towards the doorway.*] I believe I hear her coming—eh?

HEDDA *enters from the left through the inner room. She is a woman of nine-and-twenty. Her face and figure show refinement and distinction. Her complexion is pale and opaque. Her steel-grey eyes express a cold, unruffled repose. Her hair is of an agreeable medium brown, but not particularly abundant. She is dressed in a tasteful, somewhat loose-fitting morning gown.*

MISS TESMAN [*Going to meet* HEDDA.] Good morning, my dear Hedda! Good morning, and a hearty welcome!

HEDDA [*Holds out her hand.*] Good morning, dear Miss Tesman! So early a call! That is kind of you.

MISS TESMAN [*With some embarrassment.*] Well—has the bride slept well in her new home?

HEDDA Oh yes, thanks. Passably.

TESMAN [*Laughing.*] Passably! Come, that's good, Hedda! You were sleeping like a stone when I got up.

HEDDA Fortunately. Of course one has always to accustom one's self to new surroundings, Miss Tesman—little by little. [*Looking towards the left.*] Oh—there the servant has gone and opened the veranda door, and let in a whole flood of sunshine!

MISS TESMAN [*Going towards the door.*] Well, then we will shut it.

HEDDA No, no, not that! Tesman, please draw the curtains. That will give a softer light.

TESMAN [*At the door.*] All right—all right.—There now, Hedda, now you have both shade and fresh air.

HEDDA Yes, fresh air we certainly must have, with all these stacks of flowers——. But—won't you sit down, Miss Tesman?

MISS TESMAN No, thank you. Now that I have seen that everything is all right here—thank heaven!—I must be getting home again. My sister is lying longing for me, poor thing.

TESMAN Give her my very best love, Auntie; and say I shall look in and see her later in the day.

MISS TESMAN Yes, yes, I'll be sure to tell her. But by-the-bye, George—[*Feeling in her dress pocket.*]—I had almost forgotten —I have something for you here.

TESMAN What is it, Auntie? Eh?

MISS TESMAN [*Produces a flat parcel wrapped in newspaper and hands it to him.*] Look here, my dear boy.

TESMAN [*Opening the parcel.*] Well, I declare!—Have you really saved them for me, Aunt Julia! Hedda! isn't this touching—eh?

HEDDA [*Beside the whatnot on the right.*] Well, what is it?

TESMAN My old morning-shoes! My slippers.

HEDDA Indeed. I remember you often spoke of them while we were abroad.

TESMAN Yes, I missed them terribly. [*Goes up to her.*] Now you shall see them, Hedda!

HEDDA [*Going towards the stove.*] Thanks, I really don't care about it.

TESMAN [*Following her.*] Only think—ill as she was, Aunt Rina embroidered these for me. Oh you can't think how many associations cling to them.

HEDDA [*At the table.*] Scarcely for me.

MISS TESMAN Of course not for Hedda, George.

TESMAN Well, but now that she belongs to the family, I thought——

HEDDA [*Interrupting.*] We shall never get on with this servant, Tesman.

MISS TESMAN Not get on with Berta?

TESMAN Why, dear, what puts that in your head? Eh?

HEDDA [*Pointing.*] Look there! She has left her old bonnet lying about on a chair.

TESMAN [*In consternation, drops the slippers on the floor.*] Why, Hedda——

HEDDA Just fancy, if anyone should come in and see it!

TESMAN But Hedda—that's Aunt Julia's bonnet.

HEDDA Is it!

MISS TESMAN [*Taking up the bonnet.*] Yes, indeed it's mine. And, what's more, it's not old, Madam Hedda.

HEDDA I really did not look closely at it, Miss Tesman.

MISS TESMAN [*Trying on the bonnet.*] Let me tell you it's the first time I have worn it—the very first time.

TESMAN And a very nice bonnet it is too—quite a beauty!

MISS TESMAN Oh, it's no such

great thing, George. [*Looks around her.*] My parasol——? Ah, here. [*Takes it.*] For this is mine too—[*mutters*]—not Berta's.

TESMAN A new bonnet and a new parasol! Only think, Hedda!

HEDDA Very handsome indeed.

TESMAN Yes, isn't it? Eh? But Auntie, take a good look at Hedda before you go! See how handsome she is!

MISS TESMAN Oh, my dear boy, there's nothing new in that. Hedda was always lovely. [*She nods and goes towards the right.*]

TESMAN [*Following.*] Yes, but have you noticed what splendid condition she is in? How she has filled out on the journey?

HEDDA [*Crossing the room.*] Oh, do be quiet——!

MISS TESMAN [*Who has stopped and turned.*] Filled out?

TESMAN Of course you don't notice it so much now that she has that dress on. But I, who can see——

HEDDA [*At the glass door, impatiently.*] Oh, you can't see anything.

TESMAN It must be the mountain air in the Tyrol——

HEDDA [*Curtly, interrupting.*] I am exactly as I was when I started.

TESMAN So you insist; but I'm quite certain you are not. Don't you agree with me, Auntie?

MISS TESMAN [*Who has been gazing at her with folded hands.*] Hedda is lovely—lovely—lovely. [*Goes up to her, takes her head between both hands, draws it downwards, and kisses her hair.*] God bless and preserve Hedda Tesman—for George's sake.

HEDDA [*Gently freeing herself.*] Oh—! Let me go.

MISS TESMAN [*In quiet emotion.*] I shall not let a day pass without coming to see you.

TESMAN No, you won't, will you, Auntie? Eh?

MISS TESMAN Good-bye—good-bye! [*She goes out by the hall door.* TESMAN *accompanies her. The door remains half open.* TESMAN *can be heard repeating his message to Aunt Rina and his thanks for the slippers.—In the meantime,* HEDDA *walks about the room, raising her arms and clenching her hands as if in desperation. Then she flings back the curtains from the glass door, and stands there looking out.—Presently* TESMAN *returns and closes the door behind him.*]

TESMAN [*Picks up the slippers from the floor.*] What are you looking at, Hedda?

HEDDA [*Once more calm and*

mistress of herself.] I am only looking at the leaves. They are so yellow—so withered.

TESMAN [*Wraps up the slippers and lays them on the table.*] Well you see, we are well into September now.

HEDDA [*Again restless.*] Yes, to think of it!—Already in—in September.

TESMAN Don't you think Aunt Julia's manner was strange, dear? Almost solemn? Can you imagine what was the matter with her? Eh?

HEDDA I scarcely know her, you see. Is she not often like that?

TESMAN No, not as she was to-day.

HEDDA [*Leaving the glass door.*] Do you think she was annoyed about the bonnet?

TESMAN Oh, scarcely at all. Perhaps a little, just at the moment——

HEDDA But what an idea, to pitch her bonnet about in the drawing-room! No one does that sort of thing.

TESMAN Well you may be sure Aunt Julia won't do it again.

HEDDA In any case, I shall manage to make my peace with her.

TESMAN Yes, my dear, good Hedda, if you only would.

HEDDA When you call this afternoon, you might invite her to spend the evening here.

TESMAN Yes, that I will. And there's one thing more you could do that would delight her heart.

HEDDA What is it?

TESMAN If you could only prevail on yourself to say *du*[6] to her. For my sake, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA No, no, Tesman—you really mustn't ask that of me. I have told you so already. I shall try to call her "Aunt"; and you must be satisfied with that.

TESMAN Well, well. Only I think now that you belong to the family, you——

HEDDA H'm—I can't in the least see why—— [*She goes up towards the middle doorway.*]

TESMAN [*After a pause.*] Is there anything the matter with you, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA I'm only looking at my old piano. It doesn't go at all well with all the other things.

TESMAN The first time I draw my salary, we'll see about exchanging it.

HEDDA No, no—no exchanging. I don't want to part with it. Suppose we put it there in the inner room, and then get another here in its place. When it's convenient, I mean.

[6] *Du* = thou: Tesman means, "If you could persuade yourself to *tutoyer* her."

TESMAN [*A little taken aback.*] Yes—of course we could do that.

HEDDA [*Takes up the bouquet from the piano.*] These flowers were not here last night when we arrived.

TESMAN Aunt Julia must have brought them for you.

HEDDA [*Examining the bouquet.*] A visiting-card. [*Takes it out and reads:*] "Shall return later in the day." Can you guess whose card it is?

TESMAN No. Whose? Eh?

HEDDA The name is "Mrs. Elvsted."

TESMAN Is it really? Sheriff Elvsted's wife? Miss Rysing that was.

HEDDA Exactly. The girl with the irritating hair, that she was always showing off. An old flame of yours I've been told.

TESMAN [*Laughing.*] Oh, that didn't last long; and it was before I knew you, Hedda. But fancy her being in town!

HEDDA It's odd that she should call upon us. I have scarcely seen her since we left school.

TESMAN I haven't seen her either for—heaven knows how long. I wonder how she can endure to live in such an out-of-the-way hole—eh?

HEDDA [*After a moment's thought, says suddenly.*] Tell me, Tesman—isn't it somewhere near there that he—that—Eilert Lövborg is living?

TESMAN Yes, he is somewhere in that part of the country.

BERTA *enters by the hall door.*

BERTA That lady, ma'am, that brought some flowers a little while ago, is here again. [*Pointing.*] The flowers you have in your hand, ma'am.

HEDDA Ah, is she? Well, please show her in.

BERTA *opens the door for* MRS. ELVSTED, *and goes out herself.*—MRS. ELVSTED *is a woman of fragile figure, with pretty, soft features. Her eyes are light blue, large, round, and somewhat prominent, with a startled, inquiring expression. Her hair is remarkably light, almost flaxen, and unusually abundant and wavy. She is a couple of years younger than* HEDDA. *She wears a dark visiting dress, tasteful, but not quite in the latest fashion.*

HEDDA [*Receives her warmly.*] How do you do, my dear Mrs. Elvsted? It's delightful to see you again.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Nervously, struggling for self-control.*] Yes, it's a very long time since we met.

TESMAN [*Gives her his hand.*] And we too—eh?

HEDDA Thanks for your lovely flowers——

MRS. ELVSTED Oh, not at all —— I would have come straight here yesterday afternoon; but I heard that you were away——

TESMAN Have you just come to town? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED I arrived yesterday, about midday. Oh, I was quite in despair when I heard that you were not at home.

HEDDA In despair! How so?

TESMAN Why, my dear Mrs. Rysing—I mean Mrs. Elvsted——

HEDDA I hope that you are not in any trouble?

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, I am. And I don't know another living creature here that I can turn to.

HEDDA [*Laying the bouquet on the table.*] Come—let us sit here on the sofa——

MRS. ELVSTED Oh, I am too restless to sit down.

HEDDA Oh no, you're not. Come here. [*She draws* MRS. ELVSTED *down upon the sofa and sits at her side.*]

TESMAN Well? What is it, Mrs. Elvsted——?

HEDDA Has anything particular happened to you at home?

MRS. ELVSTED Yes—and no. Oh—I am so anxious you should not misunderstand me——

HEDDA Then your best plan is to tell us the whole story, Mrs. Elvsted.

TESMAN I suppose that's what you have come for—eh?

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, yes—of course it is. Well then, I must tell you—if you don't already know—that Eilert Lövborg is in town, too.

HEDDA Lövborg——!

TESMAN What! Has Eilert Lövborg come back? Fancy that, Hedda!

HEDDA Well, well—I hear it.

MRS. ELVSTED He has been here a week already. Just fancy —a whole week! In this terrible town, alone! With so many temptations on all sides.

HEDDA But, my dear Mrs. Elvsted—how does he concern you so much?

MRS. ELVSTED [*Looks at her with a startled air, and says rapidly.*] He was the children's tutor.

HEDDA Your children's?

MRS. ELVSTED My husband's. I have none.

HEDDA Your step-children's, then?

MRS. ELVSTED Yes.

TESMAN [*Somewhat hesitatingly.*] Then was he—I don't know how to express it—was he —regular enough in his habits to be fit for the post? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED For the last two

years his conduct has been irreproachable.

TESMAN Has it indeed? Fancy that, Hedda!

HEDDA I hear it.

MRS. ELVSTED Perfectly irreproachable, I assure you! In every respect. But all the same —now that I know he is here—in this great town—and with a large sum of money in his hands —I can't help being in mortal fear for him.

TESMAN Why did he not remain where he was? With you and your husband? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED After his book was published he was too restless and unsettled to remain with us.

TESMAN Yes, by-the-bye, Aunt Julia told me he had published a new book.

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, a big book, dealing with the march of civilisation—in broad outline, as it were. It came out about a fortnight ago. And since it has sold so well, and been so much read—and made such a sensation——

TESMAN Has it indeed? It must be something he has had lying by since his better days.

MRS. ELVSTED Long ago, you mean?

TESMAN Yes.

MRS. ELVSTED No, he has written it all since he has been with us—within the last year.

TESMAN Isn't that good news, Hedda? Think of that.

MRS. ELVSTED Ah yes, if only it would last!

HEDDA Have you seen him here in town?

MRS. ELVSTED No, not yet. I have had the greatest difficulty in finding out his address. But this morning I discovered it at last.

HEDDA [*Looks searchingly at her.*] Do you know, it seems to me a little odd of your husband —h'm——

MRS. ELVSTED [*Starting nervously.*] Of my husband! What?

HEDDA That he should send you to town on such an errand—that he does not come himself and look after his friend.

MRS. ELVSTED Oh no, no—my husband has no time. And besides, I—I had some shopping to do.

HEDDA [*With a slight smile.*] Ah, that is a different matter.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Rising quickly and uneasily.*] And now I beg and implore you, Mr. Tesman—receive Eilert Lövborg kindly if he comes to you! And that he is sure to do. You see you were such great friends in the old days. And then you are interested in the same studies—the same branch of science—so far as I can understand.

TESMAN We used to be, at any rate.

MRS. ELVSTED That is why I beg so earnestly that you—you too—will keep a sharp eye upon him. Oh, you will promise me that, Mr. Tesman—won't you?

TESMAN With the greatest of pleasure, Mrs. Rysing——

HEDDA Elvsted.

TESMAN I assure you I shall do all I possibly can for Eilert. You may rely upon me.

MRS. ELVSTED Oh, how very, very kind of you! [*Presses his hands.*] Thanks, thanks, thanks! [*Frightened.*] You see, my husband is so very fond of him!

HEDDA [*Rising.*] You ought to write to him, Tesman. Perhaps he may not care to come to you of his own accord.

TESMAN Well, perhaps it would be the right thing to do, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA And the sooner the better. Why not at once?

MRS. ELVSTED [*Imploringly.*] Oh, if you only would!

TESMAN I'll write this moment. Have you his address, Mrs. —Mrs. Elvsted.

MRS. ELVSTED Yes. [*Takes a slip of paper from her pocket, and hands it to him.*] Here it is.

TESMAN Good, good. Then I'll go in—— [*Looks about him.*] By-the-bye,—my slippers? Oh, here. [*Takes the packet, and is about to go.*]

HEDDA Be sure you write him a cordial, friendly letter. And a good long one too.

TESMAN Yes, I will.

MRS. ELVSTED But please, please don't say a word to show that I have suggested it.

TESMAN No, how could you think I would? Eh? [*He goes out to the right, through the inner room.*]

HEDDA [*Goes up to* MRS. ELVSTED, *smiles, and says in a low voice.*] There! We have killed two birds with one stone.

MRS. ELVSTED What do you mean?

HEDDA Could you not see that I wanted him to go?

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, to write the letter——

HEDDA And that I might speak to you alone.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Confused.*] About the same thing?

HEDDA Precisely.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Apprehensively.*] But there is nothing more, Mrs. Tesman! Absolutely nothing!

HEDDA Oh yes, but there is. There is a great deal more—I can see that. Sit here—and we'll have a cosy, confidential chat. [*She forces* MRS. ELVSTED *to sit in the easy-chair beside the stove,*

and seats herself on one of the footstools.]

MRS. ELVSTED [*Anxiously, looking at her watch.*] But, my dear Mrs. Tesman—I was really on the point of going.

HEDDA Oh, you can't be in such a hurry.—Well? Now tell me something about your life at home.

MRS. ELVSTED Oh, that is just what I care least to speak about.

HEDDA But to me, dear——? Why, weren't we schoolfellows?

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, but you were in the class above me. Oh, how dreadfully afraid of you I was then!

HEDDA Afraid of me?

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, dreadfully. For when we met on the stairs you used always to pull my hair.

HEDDA Did I, really?

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, and once you said you would burn it off my head.

HEDDA Oh that was all nonsense, of course.

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, but I was so silly in those days.—And since then, too—we have drifted so far—far apart from each other. Our circles have been so entirely different.

HEDDA Well then, we must try to drift together again. Now listen! At school we said *du* to each other; and we called each other by our Christian names——

MRS. ELVSTED No, I am sure you must be mistaken.

HEDDA No, not at all! I can remember quite distinctly. So now we are going to renew our old friendship. [*Draws the footstool closer to* MRS. ELVSTED.] There now! [*Kisses her cheek.*] You must say *du* to me and call me Hedda.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Presses and pats her hands.*] Oh, how good and kind you are! I am not used to such kindness.

HEDDA There, there, there! And I shall say *du* to you, as in the old days, and call you my dear Thora.

MRS. ELVSTED My name is Thea.[7]

HEDDA Why, of course! I meant Thea. [*Looks at her compassionately.*] So you are not accustomed to goodness and kindness, Thea? Not in your own home?

MRS. ELVSTED Oh, if I only had a home! But I haven't any; I have never had a home.

HEDDA [*Looks at her for a moment.*] I almost suspected as much.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Gazing helplessly before her.*] Yes—yes—yes.

HEDDA I don't quite remem-

[7] Pronounce *Tora* and *Taya.*

ber—was it not as housekeeper that you first went to Mr. Elvsted's?

MRS. ELVSTED I really went as governess. But his wife—his late wife—was an invalid,—and rarely left her room. So I had to look after the housekeeping as well.

HEDDA And then—at last—you became mistress of the house.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Sadly.*] Yes, I did.

HEDDA Let me see—about how long ago was that?

MRS. ELVSTED My marriage?

HEDDA Yes.

MRS. ELVSTED Five years ago.

HEDDA To be sure; it must be that.

MRS. ELVSTED Oh those five years——! Or at all events the last two or three of them! Oh, if you[8] could only imagine——

HEDDA [*Giving her a little slap on the hand.*] *De?* Fie, Thea!

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, yes, I will try—— Well, if—you could only imagine and understand——

HEDDA [*Lightly.*] Eilert Lövborg has been in your neighbourhood about three years, hasn't he?

MRS. ELVSTED [*Looks at her doubtfully.*] Eilert Lövborg? Yes—he has.

HEDDA Had you known him before, in town here?

MRS. ELVSTED Scarcely at all. I mean—I knew him by name of course.

HEDDA But you saw a good deal of him in the country?

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, he came to us every day. You see, he gave the children lessons; for in the long run I couldn't manage it all myself.

HEDDA No, that's clear.—And your husband——? I suppose he is often away from home?

MRS. ELVSTED Yes. Being sheriff, you know, he has to travel about a good deal in his district.

HEDDA [*Leaning against the arm of the chair.*] Thea—my poor, sweet Thea—now you must tell me everything—exactly as it stands.

MRS. ELVSTED Well then, you must question me.

HEDDA What sort of a man is your husband, Thea? I mean—you know—in everyday life. Is he kind to you?

MRS. ELVSTED [*Evasively.*] I am sure he means well in everything.

HEDDA I should think he must be altogether too old for you. There is at least twenty

[8] Mrs. Elvsted here uses the formal pronoun *De,* whereupon Hedda rebukes her. In her next speech Mrs. Elvsted says *du.*

years' difference between you, is there not?

MRS. ELVSTED [*Irritably.*] Yes, that is true, too. Everything about him is repellent to me! We have not a thought in common. We have no single point of sympathy—he and I.

HEDDA But is he not fond of you all the same? In his own way?

MRS. ELVSTED Oh I really don't know. I think he regards me simply as a useful property. And then it doesn't cost much to keep me. I am not expensive.

HEDDA That is stupid of you.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Shakes her head.*] It cannot be otherwise—not with him. I don't think he really cares for any one but himself—and perhaps a little for the children.

HEDDA And for Eilert Lövborg, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Looking at her.*] For Eilert Lövborg? What puts that into your head?

HEDDA Well, my dear—I should say, when he sends you after him all the way to town —— [*Smiling almost imperceptibly.*] And besides, you said so yourself, to Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED [*With a little nervous twitch.*] Did I? Yes, I suppose I did. [*Vehemently, but not loudly.*] No—I may just as well make a clean breast of it at once! For it must all come out in any case.

HEDDA Why, my dear Thea——?

MRS. ELVSTED Well, to make a long story short: My husband did not know that I was coming.

HEDDA What! Your husband didn't know it!

MRS. ELVSTED No, of course not. For that matter, he was away from home himself—he was travelling. Oh, I could bear it no longer, Hedda! I couldn't indeed—so utterly alone as I should have been in future.

HEDDA Well? And then?

MRS. ELVSTED So I put together some of my things—what I needed most—as quietly as possible. And then I left the house.

HEDDA Without a word?

MRS. ELVSTED Yes—and took the train straight to town.

HEDDA Why, my dear, good Thea—to think of your daring to do it!

MRS. ELVSTED [*Rises and moves about the room.*] What else could I possibly do?

HEDDA But what do you think your husband will say when you go home again?

MRS. ELVSTED [*At the table, looks at her.*] Back to him?

HEDDA Of course.

MRS. ELVSTED I shall never go back to him again.

HEDDA [*Rising and going towards her.*] Then you have left your home—for good and all?

MRS. ELVSTED Yes. There was nothing else to be done.

HEDDA But then—to take flight so openly!

MRS. ELVSTED Oh, it's impossible to keep things of that sort secret.

HEDDA But what do you think people will say of you, Thea?

MRS. ELVSTED They may say what they like, for aught *I* care. [*Seats herself wearily and sadly on the sofa.*] I have done nothing but what I had to do.

HEDDA [*After a short silence.*] And what are your plans now? What do you think of doing?

MRS. ELVSTED I don't know yet. I only know this, that I must live here, where Eilert Lövborg is—if I am to live at all.

HEDDA [*Takes a chair from the table, seats herself beside her, and strokes her hands.*] My dear Thea—how did this—friendship—between you and Eilert Lövborg come about?

MRS. ELVSTED Oh it grew up gradually. I gained a sort of influence over him.

HEDDA Indeed?

MRS. ELVSTED He gave up his old habits. Not because I asked him to, for I never dared do that. But of course he saw how repulsive they were to me; and so he dropped them.

HEDDA [*Concealing an involuntary smile of scorn.*] Then you have reclaimed him—as the saying goes—my little Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED So he says himself, at any rate. And he, on his side, has made a real human being of me—taught me to think, and to understand so many things.

HEDDA Did he give you lessons too, then?

MRS. ELVSTED No, not exactly lessons. But he talked to me—talked about such an infinity of things. And then came the lovely, happy time when I began to share in his work—when he allowed me to help him!

HEDDA Oh he did, did he?

MRS. ELVSTED Yes! He never wrote anything without my assistance.

HEDDA You were two good comrades, in fact?

MRS. ELVSTED [*Eagerly.*] Comrades! Yes, fancy, Hedda—that is the very word he used!—Oh, I ought to feel perfectly happy; and yet I cannot; for I don't know how long it will last.

HEDDA Are you no surer of him than that?

MRS. ELVSTED [*Gloomily.*] A woman's shadow stands between Eilert Lövborg and me.

HEDDA [*Looks at her anxiously.*] Who can that be?

MRS. ELVSTED I don't know. Someone he knew in his—in his past. Someone he has never been able wholly to forget.

HEDDA What has he told you —about this?

MRS. ELVSTED He has only once—quite vaguely—alluded to it.

HEDDA Well! And what did he say?

MRS. ELVSTED He said that when they parted, she threatened to shoot him with a pistol.

HEDDA [*With cold composure.*] Oh nonsense! No one does that sort of thing here.

MRS. ELVSTED No. And that is why I think it must have been that red-haired singing-woman whom he once——

HEDDA Yes, very likely.

MRS. ELVSTED For I remember they used to say of her that she carried loaded firearms.

HEDDA Oh—then of course it must have been she.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Wringing her hands.*] And now just fancy, Hedda—I hear that this singing-woman—that she is in town again! Oh, I don't know what to do——

HEDDA [*Glancing towards the inner room.*] Hush! Here comes Tesman. [*Rises and whispers.*] Thea—all this must remain between you and me.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Springing up.*] Oh yes—yes! For heaven's sake——!

GEORGE TESMAN, *with a letter in his hand, comes from the right through the inner room.*

TESMAN There now—the epistle is finished.

HEDDA That's right. And now Mrs. Elvsted is just going. Wait a moment—I'll go with you to the garden gate.

TESMAN Do you think Berta could post the letter, Hedda dear?

HEDDA [*Takes it.*] I will tell her to.

BERTA *enters from the hall.*

BERTA Judge Brack wishes to know if Mrs. Tesman will receive him.

HEDDA Yes, ask Judge Brack to come in. And look here—put this letter in the post.

BERTA [*Taking the letter.*] Yes, ma'am. [*She opens the door for* JUDGE BRACK *and goes out herself.* BRACK *is a man of forty-five; thickset, but well-built and elastic in his movements. His face is roundish with an aristocratic profile. His hair is short, still almost black, and carefully*

dressed. His eyes are lively and sparkling. His eyebrows thick. His moustaches are also thick, with short-cut ends. He wears a well-cut walking-suit, a little too youthful for his age. He uses an eye-glass, which he now and then lets drop.]

JUDGE BRACK [*With his hat in his hand, bowing.*] May one venture to call so early in the day?

HEDDA Of course one may.

TESMAN [*Presses his hand.*] You are welcome at any time. [*Introducing him.*] Judge Brack —Miss Rysing——

HEDDA Oh——!

BRACK [*Bowing.*] Ah — delighted——

HEDDA [*Looks at him and laughs.*] It's nice to have a look at you by daylight, Judge!

BRACK Do you find me—altered?

HEDDA A little younger, I think.

BRACK Thank you so much.

TESMAN But what do you think of Hedda—eh? Doesn't she look flourishing? She has actually——

HEDDA Oh, do leave me alone. You haven't thanked Judge Brack for all the trouble he has taken——

BRACK Oh, nonsense—it was a pleasure to me——

HEDDA Yes, you are a friend indeed. But here stands Thea all impatience to be off—so *au revoir* Judge. I shall be back again presently. [*Mutual salutations.* MRS. ELVSTED *and* HEDDA *go out by the hall door.*]

BRACK Well,—is your wife tolerably satisfied——

TESMAN Yes, we can't thank you sufficiently. Of course she talks of a little re-arrangement here and there; and one or two things are still wanting. We shall have to buy some additional trifles.

BRACK Indeed!

TESMAN But we won't trouble you about these things. Hedda says she herself will look after what is wanting.—Shan't we sit down? Eh?

BRACK Thanks, for a moment. [*Seats himself beside the table.*] There is something I wanted to speak to you about, my dear Tesman.

TESMAN Indeed? Ah, I understand! [*Seating himself.*] I suppose it's the serious part of the frolic that is coming now. Eh?

BRACK Oh, the money question is not so very pressing; though, for that matter, I wish we had gone a little more economically to work.

TESMAN But that would never have done, you know! Think of Hedda, my dear fellow! You,

who know her so well——. I couldn't possibly ask her to put up with a shabby style of living!

BRACK No, no—that is just the difficulty.

TESMAN And then — fortunately—it can't be long before I receive my appointment.

BRACK Well, you see—such things are often apt to hang fire for a time.

TESMAN Have you heard anything definite? Eh?

BRACK Nothing exactly definite—— [*Interrupting himself.*] But by-the-bye—I have one piece of news for you.

TESMAN Well?

BRACK Your old friend, Eilert Lövborg, has returned to town.

TESMAN I know that already.

BRACK Indeed! How did you learn it?

TESMAN From that lady who went out with Hedda.

BRACK Really? What was her name? I didn't quite catch it.

TESMAN Mrs. Elvsted.

BRACK Aha—Sheriff Elvsted's wife? Of course—he has been living up in their regions.

TESMAN And fancy—I'm delighted to hear that he is quite a reformed character!

BRACK So they say.

TESMAN And then he has published a new book—eh?

BRACK Yes, indeed he has.

TESMAN And I hear it has made some sensation!

BRACK Quite an unusual sensation.

TESMAN Fancy — isn't that good news! A man of such extraordinary talents——. I felt so grieved to think that he had gone irretrievably to ruin.

BRACK That was what everybody thought.

TESMAN But I cannot imagine what he will take to now! How in the world will he be able to make his living? Eh? [*During the last words,* HEDDA *has entered by the hall door.*]

HEDDA [*To* BRACK, *laughing with a touch of scorn.*] Tesman is forever worrying about how people are to make their living.

TESMAN Well you see, dear—we were talking about poor Eilert Lövborg.

HEDDA [*Glancing at him rapidly.*] Oh, indeed? [*Seats herself in the arm-chair beside the stove and asks indifferently:*] What is the matter with him?

TESMAN Well—no doubt he has run through all his property long ago; and he can scarcely write a new book every year—eh? So I really can't see what is to become of him.

BRACK Perhaps I can give you some information on that point.

TESMAN Indeed!

BRACK You must remember that his relations have a good deal of influence.

TESMAN Oh, his relations, unfortunately, have entirely washed their hands of him.

BRACK At one time they called him the hope of the family.

TESMAN At one time, yes! But he has put an end to all that.

HEDDA Who knows? [*With a slight smile.*] I hear they have reclaimed him up at Sheriff Elvsted's——

BRACK And then this book that he has published——

TESMAN Well, well, I hope to goodness they may find something for him to do. I have just written to him. I asked him to come and see us this evening, Hedda dear.

BRACK But my dear fellow, you are booked for my bachelors' party this evening. You promised on the pier last night.

HEDDA Had you forgotten, Tesman?

TESMAN Yes, I had utterly forgotten.

BRACK But it doesn't matter, for you may be sure he won't come.

TESMAN What makes you think that? Eh?

BRACK [*With a little hesitation, rising and resting his hands on the back of his chair.*] My dear Tesman—and you too, Mrs. Tesman—I think I ought not to keep you in the dark about something that—that——

TESMAN That concerns Eilert——?

BRACK Both you and him.

TESMAN Well, my dear Judge, out with it.

BRACK You must be prepared to find your appointment deferred longer than you desired or expected.

TESMAN [*Jumping up uneasily.*] Is there some hitch about it? Eh?

BRACK The nomination may perhaps be made conditional on the result of a competition——

TESMAN Competition! Think of that, Hedda!

HEDDA [*Leans further back in chair.*] Aha—aha!

TESMAN But who can my competitor be? Surely not——?

BRACK Yes, precisely—Eilert Lövborg.

TESMAN [*Clasping his hands.*] No, no—it's quite inconceivable! Quite impossible! Eh?

BRACK H'm—that is what it may come to, all the same.

TESMAN Well but, Judge Brack—it would show the most incredible lack of consideration for me. [*Gesticulates with his arms.*] For—just think—I'm a

married man! We have married on the strength of these prospects, Hedda and I; and run deep into debt; and borrowed money from Aunt Julia too. Good heavens, they had as good as promised me the appointment. Eh?

BRACK Well, well, well—no doubt you will get it in the end; only after a contest.

HEDDA [*Immovable in her arm-chair.*] Fancy, Tesman, there will be a sort of sporting interest in that.

TESMAN Why, my dearest Hedda, how can you be so indifferent about it.

HEDDA [*As before.*] I am not at all indifferent. I am most eager to see who wins.

BRACK In any case, Mrs. Tesman, it is best that you should know how matters stand. I mean —before you set about the little purchases I hear you are threatening.

HEDDA This can make no difference.

BRACK Indeed! Then I have no more to say. Good-bye! [*To* TESMAN.] I shall look in on my way back from my afternoon walk, and take you home with me.

TESMAN Oh yes, yes—your news has quite upset me.

HEDDA [*Reclining, holds out her hand.*] Good-bye, Judge; and be sure you call in the afternoon.

BRACK Many thanks. Good-bye, good-bye!

TESMAN [*Accompanying him to the door.*] Good-bye my dear Judge! You must really excuse me—— [JUDGE BRACK *goes out by the hall door.*]

TESMAN [*Crosses the room.*] Oh Hedda—one should never rush into adventures. Eh?

HEDDA [*Looks at him, smiling.*] Do you do that?

TESMAN Yes, dear—there is no denying—it was adventurous to go and marry and set up house upon mere expectations.

HEDDA Perhaps you are right there.

TESMAN Well—at all events, we have our delightful home, Hedda! Fancy, the home we both dreamed of—the home we were in love with, I may almost say. Eh?

HEDDA [*Rising slowly and wearily.*] It was part of our compact that we were to go into society—to keep open house.

TESMAN Yes, if you only knew how I had been looking forward to it! Fancy—to see you as hostess—in a select circle! Eh? Well, well, well—for the present we shall have to get on without society, Hedda—only to invite Aunt Julia now and then.—Oh, I intended you to lead such an utterly different life, dear——!

HEDDA Of course I cannot have my man in livery just yet.

TESMAN Oh no, unfortunately. It would be out of the question for us to keep a footman, you know.

HEDDA And the saddle-horse I was to have had——

TESMAN [*Aghast.*] The saddle-horse!

HEDDA ——I suppose I must not think of that now.

TESMAN Good heavens, no! —that's as clear as daylight.

HEDDA [*Goes up the room.*] Well, I shall have one thing at least to kill time with in the meanwhile.

TESMAN [*Beaming.*] Oh thank heaven for that! What is it, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA [*In the middle doorway, looks at him with covert scorn.*] My pistols, George.

TESMAN [*In alarm.*] Your pistols!

HEDDA [*With cold eyes.*] General Gabler's pistols. [*She goes out through the inner room, to the left.*]

TESMAN [*Rushes up to the middle doorway and calls after her:*] No, for heaven's sake, Hedda darling—don't touch those dangerous things! For my sake, Hedda! Eh?

Hedda Gabler ACT SECOND

The room at the TESMANS' *as in the first Act, except that the piano has been removed, and an elegant little writing-table with bookshelves put in its place. A smaller table stands near the sofa on the left. Most of the bouquets have been taken away.* MRS. ELVSTED'S *bouquet is upon the large table in front.—It is afternoon.*
HEDDA, *dressed to receive callers, is alone in the room. She stands by the open glass door, loading a revolver. The fellow to it lies in an open pistol-case on the writing-table.*

HEDDA [*Looks down the garden, and calls:*] So you are here again, Judge!

BRACK [*Is heard calling from a distance.*] As you see, Mrs. Tesman!

HEDDA [*Raises the pistol and points.*] Now I'll shoot you, Judge Brack!

BRACK [*Calling unseen.*] No, no, no! Don't stand aiming at me!

HEDDA This is what comes of sneaking in by the back way.[9] [*She fires.*]

BRACK [*Nearer.*] Are you out of your senses——!

HEDDA Dear me—did I happen to hit you?

BRACK [*Still outside.*] I wish you would let these pranks alone!

HEDDA Come in then, Judge.

JUDGE BRACK, *dressed as though for a men's party, enters by the glass door. He carries a light overcoat over his arm.*

BRACK What the deuce—haven't you tired of that sport, yet? What are you shooting at?

HEDDA Oh, I am only firing in the air.

BRACK [*Gently takes the pistol out of her hand.*] Allow me, madam! [*Looks at it.*] Ah—I know this pistol well! [*Looks around.*] Where is the case? Ah, here it is. [*Lays the pistol in it, and shuts it.*] Now we won't play at that game any more to-day.

HEDDA Then what in heaven's name would you have me do with myself?

BRACK Have you had no visitors?

HEDDA [*Closing the glass door.*] Not one. I suppose all our set are still out of town.

[9] "Bagveje" means both "back ways" and "underhand courses."

BRACK And is Tesman not at home either?

HEDDA [*At the writing-table, putting the pistol-case in a drawer which she shuts.*] No. He rushed off to his aunt's directly after lunch; he didn't expect you so early.

BRACK H'm—how stupid of me not to have thought of that!

HEDDA [*Turning her head to look at him.*] Why stupid?

BRACK Because if I had thought of it I should have come a little—earlier.

HEDDA [*Crossing the room.*] Then you would have found no one to receive you; for I have been in my room changing my dress ever since lunch.

BRACK And is there no sort of little chink that we could hold a parley through?

HEDDA You have forgotten to arrange one.

BRACK That was another piece of stupidity.

HEDDA Well, we must just settle down here—and wait. Tesman is not likely to be back for some time yet.

BRACK Never mind; I shall not be impatient.

HEDDA *seats herself in the corner of the sofa.* BRACK *lays his overcoat over the back of the nearest chair, and sits down, but keeps his hat in his hand. A short si-*

lence. They look at each other.

HEDDA Well?

BRACK [*In the same tone.*] Well?

HEDDA I spoke first.

BRACK [*Bending a little forward.*] Come, let us have a cosy little chat, Mrs. Hedda.[10]

HEDDA [*Leaning further back in the sofa.*] Does it not seem like a whole eternity since our last talk? Of course I don't count those few words yesterday evening and this morning.

BRACK You mean since our last confidential talk? Our last *tête-à-tête?*

HEDDA Well yes—since you put it so.

BRACK Not a day has passed but I have wished that you were home again.

HEDDA And I have done nothing but wish the same thing.

BRACK You? Really, Mrs. Hedda? And I thought you had been enjoying your tour so much!

HEDDA Oh yes, you may be sure of that!

BRACK But Tesman's letters spoke of nothing but happiness.

HEDDA Oh, Tesman! You see, he thinks nothing so delightful as grubbing in libraries and making copies of old parchments, or whatever you call them.

BRACK [*With a spice of malice.*] Well, that is his vocation in life—or part of it at any rate.

HEDDA Yes, of course; and no doubt when it's your vocation ——. But *I!* Oh, my dear Mr. Brack, how mortally bored I have been.

BRACK [*Sympathetically.*] Do you really say so? In downright earnest?

HEDDA Yes, you can surely understand it——! To go for six whole months without meeting a soul that knew anything of our circle, or could talk about the things we are interested in.

BRACK Yes, yes—I too should feel that a deprivation.

HEDDA And then, what I found most intolerable of all——

BRACK Well?

HEDDA ——was being everlastingly in the company of—one and the same person——

BRACK [*With a nod of assent.*] Morning, noon, and night, yes—at all possible times and seasons.

HEDDA I said "everlastingly."

BRACK Just so. But I should have thought, with our excellent Tesman, one could——

[10] As this form of address is contrary to English usage, and as the note of familiarity would be lacking in "Mrs. Tesman," Brack may, in stage representation, say "Miss Hedda," thus ignoring her marriage and reverting to the form of address no doubt customary between them of old.

HEDDA Tesman is—a specialist, my dear Judge.

BRACK Undeniably.

HEDDA And specialists are not at all amusing to travel with. Not in the long run at any rate.

BRACK Not even—the specialist one happens to love?

HEDDA Faugh—don't use that sickening word!

BRACK [*Taken aback.*] What do you say, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA [*Half laughing, half irritated.*] You should just try it! To hear of nothing but the history of civilisation, morning, noon, and night——

BRACK Everlastingly.

HEDDA Yes, yes, yes! And then all this about the domestic industry of the middle ages——! That's the most disgusting part of it!

BRACK [*Looks searchingly at her.*] But tell me—in that case, how am I to understand your ——? H'm——

HEDDA My accepting George Tesman, you mean?

BRACK Well, let us put it so.

HEDDA Good heavens, do you see anything so wonderful in that?

BRACK Yes and no — Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA I had positively danced myself tired, my dear Judge. My day was done—— [*With a slight shudder.*] Oh no—I won't say that; nor think it either!

BRACK You have assuredly no reason to.

HEDDA Oh, reasons —— [*Watching him closely.*] And George Tesman—after all, you must admit that he is correctness itself.

BRACK His correctness and respectability are beyond all question.

HEDDA And I don't see anything absolutely ridiculous about him.—Do you?

BRACK Ridiculous? N—no—I shouldn't exactly say so——

HEDDA Well—and his powers of research, at all events, are untiring.—I see no reason why he should not one day come to the front, after all.

BRACK [*Looks at her hesitatingly.*] I thought that you, like every one else, expected him to attain the highest distinction.

HEDDA [*With an expression of fatigue.*] Yes, so I did.—And then, since he was bent, at all hazards, on being allowed to provide for me—I really don't know why I should not have accepted his offer?

BRACK No—if you look at it in that light——

HEDDA It was more than my

other adorers were prepared to do for me, my dear Judge.

BRACK [*Laughing.*] Well, I can't answer for all the rest; but as for myself, you know quite well that I have always entertained a—a certain respect for the marriage tie—for marriage as an institution, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA [*Jestingly.*] Oh, I assure you I have never cherished any hopes with respect to you.

BRACK All I require is a pleasant and intimate interior, where I can make myself useful in every way, and am free to come and go as—as a trusted friend——

HEDDA Of the master of the house, do you mean?

BRACK [*Bowing.*] Frankly—of the mistress first of all; but of course of the master too, in the second place. Such a triangular friendship—if I may call it so—is really a great convenience for all parties, let me tell you.

HEDDA Yes, I have many a time longed for some one to make a third on our travels. Oh—those railway-carriage *tête-à-têtes*——!

BRACK Fortunately your wedding journey is over now.

HEDDA [*Shaking her head.*] Not by a long—long way. I have only arrived at a station on the line.

BRACK Well, then the passengers jump out and move about a little, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA I never jump out.

BRACK Really?

HEDDA No—because there is always some one standing by to——

BRACK [*Laughing.*] To look at your ankles, do you mean?

HEDDA Precisely.

BRACK Well but, dear me——

HEDDA [*With a gesture of repulsion.*] I won't have it. I would rather keep my seat where I happen to be—and continue the *tête-à-tête.*

BRACK But suppose a third person were to jump in and join the couple.

HEDDA Ah—that is quite another matter!

BRACK A trusted, sympathetic friend——

HEDDA ——with a fund of conversation on all sorts of lively topics——

BRACK ——and not the least bit of a specialist!

HEDDA [*With an audible sigh.*] Yes, that would be a relief indeed.

BRACK [*Hears the front door open, and glances in that direction.*] The triangle is completed.

HEDDA [*Half aloud.*] And on goes the train.

GEORGE TESMAN, *in a grey walking-suit, with a soft felt hat, en-*

ters from the hall. He has a number of unbound books under his arm and in his pockets.

TESMAN [*Goes up to the table beside the corner settee.*] Ouf—what a load for a warm day—all these books. [*Lays them on the table.*] I'm positively perspiring, Hedda. Hallo—are you there already, my dear Judge? Eh? Berta didn't tell me.

BRACK [*Rising.*] I came in through the garden.

HEDDA What books have you got there?

TESMAN [*Stands looking them through.*] Some new books on my special subjects—quite indispensable to me.

HEDDA Your special subjects?

BRACK Yes, books on his special subjects, Mrs. Tesman. [BRACK *and* HEDDA *exchange a confidential smile.*]

HEDDA Do you need still more books on your special subjects?

TESMAN Yes, my dear Hedda, one can never have too many of them. Of course one must keep up with all that is written and published.

HEDDA Yes, I suppose one must.

TESMAN [*Searching among his books.*] And look here—I have got hold of Eilert Lövborg's new book too. [*Offering it to her.*] Perhaps you would like to glance through it, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA No, thank you. Or rather—afterwards perhaps.

TESMAN I looked into it a little on the way home.

BRACK Well, what do you think of it—as a specialist?

TESMAN I think it shows quite remarkable soundness of judgement. He never wrote like that before. [*Putting the books together.*] Now I shall take all these into my study. I'm longing to cut the leaves——! And then I must change my clothes. [*To* BRACK.] I suppose we needn't start just yet? Eh?

BRACK Oh, dear no—there is not the slightest hurry.

TESMAN Well then, I will take my time. [*Is going with his books, but stops in the doorway and turns.*] By-the-bye, Hedda—Aunt Julia is not coming this evening.

HEDDA Not coming? Is it that affair of the bonnet that keeps her away?

TESMAN Oh, not at all. How could you think such a thing of Aunt Julia? Just fancy——! The fact is, Aunt Rina is very ill.

HEDDA She always is.

TESMAN Yes, but to-day she is much worse than usual, poor dear.

HEDDA Oh, then it's only nat-

ural that her sister should remain with her. I must bear my disappointment.

TESMAN And you can't imagine, dear, how delighted Aunt Julia seemed to be—because you had come home looking so flourishing!

HEDDA [*Half aloud, rising.*] Oh, those everlasting Aunts!

TESMAN What?

HEDDA [*Going to the glass door.*] Nothing.

TESMAN Oh, all right. [*He goes through the inner room, out to the right.*]

BRACK What bonnet were you talking about?

HEDDA Oh, it was a little episode with Miss Tesman this morning. She had laid down her bonnet on the chair there—[*Looks at him and smiles.*]—and I pretended to think it was the servant's.

BRACK [*Shaking his head.*] Now my dear Mrs. Hedda, how could you do such a thing? To that excellent old lady, too!

HEDDA [*Nervously crossing the room.*] Well, you see—these impulses come over me all of a sudden; and I cannot resist them. [*Throws herself down in the easy-chair by the stove.*] Oh, I don't know how to explain it.

BRACK [*Behind the easy-chair.*] You are not really happy—that is at the bottom of it.

HEDDA [*Looking straight before her.*] I know of no reason why I should be—happy. Perhaps you can give me one?

BRACK Well—amongst other things, because you have got exactly the home you had set your heart on.

HEDDA [*Looks up at him and laughs.*] Do you too believe in that legend?

BRACK Is there nothing in it, then?

HEDDA Oh yes, there is something in it.

BRACK Well?

HEDDA There is this in it, that I made use of Tesman to see me home from evening parties last summer——

BRACK I, unfortunately, had to go quite a different way.

HEDDA That's true. I know you were going a different way last summer.

BRACK [*Laughing.*] Oh fie, Mrs. Hedda! Well, then—you and Tesman——?

HEDDA Well, we happened to pass here one evening; Tesman, poor fellow, was writhing in the agony of having to find conversation; so I took pity on the learned man——

BRACK [*Smiles doubtfully.*] You took pity? H'm——

HEDDA Yes, I really did. And so—to help him out of his torment—I happened to say, in pure thoughtlessness, that I should like to live in this villa.

BRACK No more than that?

HEDDA Not that evening.

BRACK But afterwards?

HEDDA Yes, my thoughtlessness had consequences, my dear Judge.

BRACK Unfortunately that too often happens, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA Thanks! So you see it was this enthusiasm for Secretary Falk's villa that first constituted a bond of sympathy between George Tesman and me. From that came our engagement and our marriage, and our wedding journey, and all the rest of it. Well, well, my dear Judge—as you make your bed so you must lie, I could almost say.

BRACK This is exquisite! And you really cared not a rap about it all the time?

HEDDA No, heaven knows I didn't.

BRACK But now? Now that we have made it so homelike for you?

HEDDA Uh—the rooms all seem to smell of lavender and dried rose-leaves.—But perhaps it's Aunt Julia that has brought that scent with her.

BRACK [*Laughing.*] No, I think it must be a legacy from the late Mrs. Secretary Falk.

HEDDA Yes, there is an odour of mortality about it. It reminds me of a bouquet—the day after the ball. [*Clasps her hands behind her head, leans back in her chair and looks at him.*] Oh, my dear Judge—you cannot imagine how horribly I shall bore myself here.

BRACK Why should not you, too, find some sort of vocation in life, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA A vocation — that should attract me?

BRACK If possible, of course.

HEDDA Heaven knows what sort of a vocation that could be. I often wonder whether—— [*Breaking off.*] But that would never do either.

BRACK Who can tell? Let me hear what it is.

HEDDA Whether I might not get Tesman to go into politics, I mean.

BRACK [*Laughing.*] Tesman? No, really now, political life is not the thing for him—not at all in his line.

HEDDA No, I daresay not.—But if I could get him into it all the same?

BRACK Why—what satisfaction could you find in that? If he is not fitted for that sort of

thing, why should you want to drive him into it?

HEDDA Because I am bored, I tell you! [*After a pause.*] So you think it quite out of the question that Tesman should ever get into the ministry?

BRACK H'm—you see, my dear Mrs. Hedda—to get into the ministry, he would have to be a tolerably rich man.

HEDDA [*Rising impatiently.*] Yes, there we have it! It is this genteel poverty I have managed to drop into——! [*Crosses the room.*] That is what makes life so pitiable! So utterly ludicrous! —For that's what it is.

BRACK Now *I* should say the fault lay elsewhere.

HEDDA Where, then?

BRACK You have never gone through any really stimulating experience.

HEDDA Anything serious, you mean?

BRACK Yes, you may call it so. But now you may perhaps have one in store.

HEDDA [*Tossing her head.*] Oh, you're thinking of the annoyances about this wretched professorship! But that must be Tesman's own affair. I assure you I shall not waste a thought upon it.

BRACK No, no, I daresay not. But suppose now that what people call—in elegant language —a solemn responsibility were to come upon you? [*Smiling.*] A new responsibility, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA [*Angrily.*] Be quiet! Nothing of that sort will ever happen!

BRACK [*Warily.*] We will speak of this again a year hence —at the very outside.

HEDDA [*Curtly.*] I have no turn for anything of the sort, Judge Brack. No responsibilities for me!

BRACK Are you so unlike the generality of women as to have no turn for duties which——?

HEDDA [*Beside the glass door.*] Oh, be quiet, I tell you!— I often think there is only one thing in the world I have any turn for.

BRACK [*Drawing near to her.*] And what is that, if I may ask?

HEDDA [*Stands looking out.*] Boring myself to death. Now you know it. [*Turns, looks towards the inner room, and laughs.*] Yes, as I thought! Here comes the Professor.

BRACK [*Softly, in a tone of warning.*] Come, come, come, Mrs. Hedda!

GEORGE TESMAN, *dressed for the party, with his gloves and hat in his hand, enters from the right through the inner room.*

TESMAN Hedda, has no mes-

sage come from Eilert Lövborg? Eh?

HEDDA No.

TESMAN Then you'll see he'll be here presently.

BRACK Do you really think he will come?

TESMAN Yes, I am almost sure of it. For what you were telling us this morning must have been a mere floating rumour.

BRACK You think so?

TESMAN At any rate, Aunt Julia said she did not believe for a moment that he would ever stand in my way again. Fancy that!

BRACK Well then, that's all right.

TESMAN [*Placing his hat and gloves on a chair on the right.*] Yes, but you must really let me wait for him as long as possible.

BRACK We have plenty of time yet. None of my guests will arrive before seven or half-past.

TESMAN Then meanwhile we can keep Hedda company, and see what happens. Eh?

HEDDA [*Placing* BRACK's *hat and overcoat upon the corner settee.*] And at the worst Mr. Lövborg can remain here with me.

BRACK [*Offering to take his things.*] Oh, allow me, Mrs. Tesman!—What do you mean by "At the worst"?

HEDDA If he won't go with you and Tesman.

TESMAN [*Looks dubiously at her.*] But, Hedda dear—do you think it would quite do for him to remain with you? Eh? Remember, Aunt Julia can't come.

HEDDA No, but Mrs. Elvsted is coming. We three can have a cup of tea together.

TESMAN Oh yes, that will be all right.

BRACK [*Smiling.*] And that would perhaps be the safest plan for him.

HEDDA Why so?

BRACK Well, you know, Mrs. Tesman, how you used to gird at my little bachelor parties. You declared they were adapted only for men of the strictest principles.

HEDDA But no doubt Mr. Lövborg's principles are strict enough now. A converted sinner ——[BERTA *appears at the hall door.*]

BERTA There's a gentleman asking if you are at home, ma'am——

HEDDA Well, show him in.

TESMAN [*Softly.*] I'm sure it is he! Fancy that!

EILERT LÖVBORG *enters from the hall. He is slim and lean; of the same age as* TESMAN, *but looks older and somewhat worn-out. His hair and beard are of a*

blackish brown, his face long and pale, but with patches of colour on the cheekbones. He is dressed in a well-cut black visiting suit, quite new. He has dark gloves and a silk hat. He stops near the door, and makes a rapid bow, seeming somewhat embarrassed.

TESMAN [*Goes up to him and shakes him warmly by the hand.*] Well, my dear Eilert—so at last we meet again!

EILERT LÖVBORG [*Speaks in a subdued voice.*] Thanks for your letter, Tesman. [*Approaching* HEDDA.] Will you too shake hands with me, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA [*Taking his hand.*] I am glad to see you, Mr. Lövborg. [*With a motion of her hand.*] I don't know whether you two gentlemen——?

LÖVBORG [*Bowing slightly.*] Judge Brack, I think.

BRACK [*Doing likewise.*] Oh yes,—in the old days——

TESMAN [*To* LÖVBORG, *with his hands on his shoulders.*] And now you must make yourself entirely at home, Eilert! Mustn't he, Hedda?—For I hear you are going to settle in town again? Eh?

LÖVBORG Yes, I am.

TESMAN Quite right, quite right. Let me tell you, I have got hold of your new book; but I haven't had time to read it yet.

LÖVBORG You may spare yourself the trouble.

TESMAN Why so?

LÖVBORG Because there is very little in it.

TESMAN Just fancy—how can you say so?

BRACK But it has been very much praised, I hear.

LÖVBORG That was what I wanted; so I put nothing into the book but what everyone would agree with.

BRACK Very wise of you.

TESMAN Well but, my dear Eilert——!

LÖVBORG For now I mean to win myself a position again—to make a fresh start.

TESMAN [*A little embarrassed.*] Ah, that is what you wish to do? Eh?

LÖVBORG [*Smiling, lays down his hat, and draws a packet, wrapped in paper, from his coat pocket.*] But when this one appears, George Tesman, you will have to read it. For this is the real book—the book I have put my true self into.

TESMAN Indeed? And what is it?

LÖVBORG It is the continuation.

TESMAN The continuation? Of what?

LÖVBORG Of the book.

TESMAN Of the new book?

LÖVBORG Of course.

TESMAN Why, my dear Eilert—does it not come down to our own days?

LÖVBORG Yes, it does; and this one deals with the future.

TESMAN With the future! But, good heavens, we know nothing of the future!

LÖVBORG No; but there is a thing or two to be said about it all the same. [*Opens the packet.*] Look here——

TESMAN Why, that's not your handwriting.

LÖVBORG I dictated it. [*Turning over the pages.*] It falls into two sections. The first deals with the civilising forces of the future. And here is the second—[*running through the pages towards the end*]—forecasting the probable line of development.

TESMAN How odd now! I should never have thought of writing anything of that sort.

HEDDA [*At the glass door, drumming on the pane.*] H'm——. I daresay not.

LÖVBORG [*Replacing the manuscript in its paper and laying the packet on the table.*] I brought it, thinking I might read you a little of it this evening.

TESMAN That was very good of you, Eilert. But this evening——? [*Looking at* BRACK.] I don't quite see how we can manage it——

LÖVBORG Well then, some other time. There is no hurry.

BRACK I must tell you, Mr. Lövborg—there is a little gathering at my house this evening—mainly in honour of Tesman, you know——

LÖVBORG [*Looking for his hat.*] Oh—then I won't detain you——

BRACK No, but listen—will you not do me the favour of joining us?

LÖVBORG [*Curtly and decidedly.*] No, I can't—thank you very much.

BRACK Oh, nonsense—do! We shall be quite a select little circle. And I assure you we shall have a "lively time," as Mrs. Hed—as Mrs. Tesman says.

LÖVBORG I have no doubt of it. But nevertheless——

BRACK And then you might bring your manuscript with you, and read it to Tesman at my house. I could give you a room to yourselves.

TESMAN Yes, think of that, Eilert,—why shouldn't you? Eh?

HEDDA [*Interposing.*] But, Tesman, if Mr. Lövborg would really rather not! I am sure Mr. Lövborg is much more inclined to remain here and have supper with me.

LÖVBORG [*Looking at her.*] With you, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA And with Mrs. Elvsted.

LÖVBORG Ah—— [*Lightly.*] I saw her for a moment this morning.

HEDDA Did you? Well, she is coming this evening. So you see you are almost bound to remain, Mr. Lövborg, or she will have no one to see her home.

LÖVBORG That's true. Many thanks, Mrs. Tesman—in that case I will remain.

HEDDA Then I have one or two orders to give the servant—— [*She goes to the hall door and rings.* BERTA *enters.* HEDDA *talks to her in a whisper, and points towards the inner room.* BERTA *nods and goes out again.*]

TESMAN [*At the same time, to* LÖVBORG.] Tell me, Eilert—is it this new subject—the future—that you are going to lecture about?

LÖVBORG Yes.

TESMAN They told me at the bookseller's that you are going to deliver a course of lectures this autumn.

LÖVBORG That is my intention. I hope you won't take it ill, Tesman.

TESMAN Oh no, not in the least! But——?

LÖVBORG I can quite understand that it must be disagreeable to you.

TESMAN [*Cast down.*] Oh, I can't expect you, out of consideration for me, to——

LÖVBORG But I shall wait till you have received your appointment.

TESMAN Will you wait? Yes but—yes but—are you not going to compete with me? Eh?

LÖVBORG No; it is only the moral victory I care for.

TESMAN Why, bless me—then Aunt Julia was right after all! Oh yes—I knew it! Hedda! Just fancy—Eilert Lövborg is not going to stand in our way!

HEDDA [*Curtly.*] Our way? Pray leave me out of the question. [*She goes up towards the inner room, where* BERTA *is placing a tray with decanters and glasses on the table.* HEDDA *nods approval, and comes forward again.* BERTA *goes out.*]

TESMAN [*At the same time.*] And you, Judge Brack—what do you say to this? Eh?

BRACK Well, I say that a moral victory—h'm—may be all very fine——

TESMAN Yes, certainly. But all the same——

HEDDA [*Looking at* TESMAN *with a cold smile.*] You stand

there looking as if you were thunderstruck——

TESMAN Yes—so I am—I almost think——

BRACK Don't you see, Mrs. Tesman, a thunderstorm has just passed over?

HEDDA [*Pointing towards the inner room.*] Will you not take a glass of cold punch, gentlemen?

BRACK [*Looking at his watch.*] A stirrup-cup? Yes, it wouldn't come amiss.

TESMAN A capital idea, Hedda! Just the thing! Now that the weight has been taken off my mind——

HEDDA Will you not join them, Mr. Lövborg?

LÖVBORG [*With a gesture of refusal.*] No, thank you. Nothing for me.

BRACK Why bless me—cold punch is surely not poison.

LÖVBORG Perhaps not for everyone.

HEDDA I will keep Mr. Lövborg company in the meantime.

TESMAN Yes, yes, Hedda dear, do. [*He and* BRACK *go into the inner room, seat themselves, drink punch, smoke cigarettes, and carry on a lively conversation during what follows.* EILERT LÖVBORG *remains standing beside the stove.* HEDDA *goes to the writing-table.*]

HEDDA [*Raising her voice a little.*] Do you care to look at some photographs, Mr. Lövborg? You know Tesman and I made a tour in the Tyrol on our way home? [*She takes up an album, and places it on the table beside the sofa, in the further corner of which she seats herself.* EILERT LÖVBORG *approaches, stops, and looks at her. Then he takes a chair and seats himself to her left, with his back towards the inner room.*]

HEDDA [*Opening the album.*] Do you see this range of mountains, Mr. Lövborg? It's the Ortler group. Tesman has written the name underneath. Here it is: "The Ortler group near Meran."

LÖVBORG [*Who has never taken his eyes off her, says softly and slowly:*] Hedda—Gabler!

HEDDA [*Glancing hastily at him.*] Ah! Hush!

LÖVBORG [*Repeats softly.*] Hedda Gabler!

HEDDA [*Looking at the album.*] That was my name in the old days—when we two knew each other.

LÖVBORG And I must teach myself never to say Hedda Gabler again—never, as long as I live.

HEDDA [*Still turning over the pages.*] Yes, you must. And I think you ought to practise in

time. The sooner the better, I should say.

LÖVBORG [*In a tone of indignation.*] Hedda Gabler married? And married to—George Tesman!

HEDDA Yes—so the world goes.

LÖVBORG Oh, Hedda, Hedda—how could you[11] throw yourself away!

HEDDA [*Looks sharply at him.*] What? I can't allow this!

LÖVBORG What do you mean?

[TESMAN *comes into the room and goes towards the sofa.*]

HEDDA [*Hears him coming and says in an indifferent tone.*] And this is a view from the Val d'Ampezzo, Mr. Lövborg. Just look at these peaks! [*Looks affectionately up at* TESMAN.] What's the name of these curious peaks, dear?

TESMAN Let me see. Oh, those are the Dolomites.

HEDDA Yes, that's it!—Those are the Dolomites, Mr. Lövborg.

TESMAN Hedda dear,—I only wanted to ask whether I shouldn't bring you a little punch after all? For yourself at any rate—eh?

HEDDA Yes, do, please; and perhaps a few biscuits.

TESMAN No cigarettes?

HEDDA No.

TESMAN Very well. [*He goes into the inner room and out to the right.* BRACK *sits in the inner room, and keeps an eye from time to time on* HEDDA *and* LÖVBORG.]

LÖVBORG [*Softly, as before.*] Answer me, Hedda—how could you go and do this?

HEDDA [*Apparently absorbed in the album.*] If you continue to say *du* to me I won't talk to you.

LÖVBORG May I not say *du* even when we are alone?

HEDDA No. You may think it; but you mustn't say it.

LÖVBORG Ah, I understand. It is an offence against George Tesman, whom you[12]—love.

HEDDA [*Glances at him and smiles.*] Love? What an idea!

LÖVBORG You don't love him then!

HEDDA But I won't hear of any sort of unfaithfulness! Remember that.

LÖVBORG Hedda—answer me one thing——

HEDDA Hush! [TESMAN *enters with a small tray from the inner room.*]

TESMAN Here you are! Isn't this tempting? [*He puts the tray on the table.*]

HEDDA Why do you bring it yourself?

[11] He uses the familiar *du*.

[12] From this point onward Lövborg uses the formal *De*.

TESMAN [*Filling the glasses.*] Because I think it's such fun to wait upon you, Hedda.

HEDDA But you have poured out two glasses. Mr. Lövborg said he wouldn't have any——

TESMAN No, but Mrs. Elvsted will soon be here, won't she?

HEDDA Yes, by-the-bye—Mrs. Elvsted——

TESMAN Had you forgotten her? Eh?

HEDDA We were so absorbed in these photographs. [*Shows him a picture.*] Do you remember this little village?

TESMAN Oh, it's that one just below the Brenner Pass. It was there we passed the night——

HEDDA ——and met that lively party of tourists.

TESMAN Yes, that was the place. Fancy—if we could only have had you with us, Eilert! Eh? [*He returns to the inner room and sits beside* BRACK.]

LÖVBORG Answer me this one thing, Hedda——

HEDDA Well?

LÖVBORG Was there no love in your friendship for me either? Not a spark—not a tinge of love in it?

HEDDA I wonder if there was? To me it seems as though we were two good comrades—two thoroughly intimate friends. [*Smilingly.*] You especially were frankness itself.

LÖVBORG It was you that made me so.

HEDDA As I look back upon it all, I think there was really something beautiful, something fascinating—something daring—in—in that secret intimacy—that comradeship which no living creature so much as dreamed of.

LÖVBORG Yes, yes, Hedda! Was there not?—When I used to come to your father's in the afternoon—and the General sat over at the window reading his papers—with his back towards us——

HEDDA And we two on the corner sofa——

LÖVBORG Always with the same illustrated paper before us——

HEDDA For want of an album, yes.

LÖVBORG Yes, Hedda, and when I made my confessions to you—told you about myself, things that at that time no one else knew! There I would sit and tell you of my escapades—my days and nights of devilment. Oh, Hedda—what was the power in you that forced me to confess these things?

HEDDA Do you think it was any power in me?

LÖVBORG How else can I explain it? And all those—those

roundabout questions you used to put to me——

HEDDA Which you understood so particularly well——

LÖVBORG How could you sit and question me like that? Question me quite frankly——

HEDDA In roundabout terms, please observe.

LÖVBORG Yes, but frankly nevertheless. Cross-question me about—all that sort of thing?

HEDDA And how could you answer, Mr. Lövborg?

LÖVBORG Yes, that is just what I can't understand—in looking back upon it. But tell me now, Hedda—was there not love at the bottom of our friendship? On your side, did you not feel as though you might purge my stains away—if I made you my confessor? Was it not so?

HEDDA No, not quite.

LÖVBORG What was your motive, then?

HEDDA Do you think it quite incomprehensible that a young girl—when it can be done—without any one knowing——

LÖVBORG Well?

HEDDA ——should be glad to have a peep, now and then, into a world which——

LÖVBORG Which——?

HEDDA ——which she is forbidden to know anything about?

LÖVBORG So that was it?

HEDDA Partly. Partly—I almost think.

LÖVBORG Comradeship in the thirst for life. But why should not that, at any rate, have continued?

HEDDA The fault was yours.

LÖVBORG It was you that broke with me.

HEDDA Yes, when our friendship threatened to develop into something more serious. Shame upon you, Eilert Lövborg! How could you think of wronging your—your frank comrade?

LÖVBORG [*Clenching his hands.*] Oh, why did you not carry out your threat? Why did you not shoot me down?

HEDDA Because I have such a dread of scandal.

LÖVBORG Yes, Hedda, you are a coward at heart.

HEDDA A terrible coward. [*Changing her tone.*] But it was a lucky thing for you. And now you have found ample consolation at the Elvsteds'.

LÖVBORG I know what Thea has confided to you.

HEDDA And perhaps you have confided to her something about us?

LÖVBORG Not a word. She is too stupid to understand anything of that sort.

HEDDA Stupid?

LÖVBORG She is stupid about matters of that sort.

HEDDA And I am cowardly. [*Bends over towards him, without looking him in the face, and says more softly:*] But now I will confide something to you.

LÖVBORG [*Eagerly.*] Well?

HEDDA The fact that I dared not shoot you down——

LÖVBORG Yes!

HEDDA ——that was not my most arrant cowardice—that evening.

LÖVBORG [*Looks at her a moment, understands, and whispers passionately.*] Oh, Hedda! Hedda Gabler! Now I begin to see a hidden reason beneath our comradeship! You[13] and I——! After all, then, it was your craving for life——

HEDDA [*Softly, with a sharp glance.*] Take care! Believe nothing of the sort! [*Twilight has begun to fall. The hall door is opened from without by* BERTA.]

HEDDA [*Closes the album with a bang and calls smilingly:*] Ah, at last! My darling Thea,—come along!

MRS. ELVSTED *enters from the hall. She is in evening dress. The door is closed behind her.*

HEDDA [*On the sofa, stretches out her arms towards her.*] My sweet Thea—you can't think how I have been longing for you! [MRS. ELVSTED, *in passing, exchanges slight salutations with the gentlemen in the inner room, then goes up to the table and gives* HEDDA *her hand.* EILERT LÖVBORG *has risen. He and* MRS. ELVSTED *greet each other with a silent nod.*]

MRS. ELVSTED Ought I to go in and talk to your husband for a moment?

HEDDA Oh, not at all. Leave those two alone. They will soon be going.

MRS. ELVSTED Are they going out?

HEDDA Yes, to a supper-party.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Quickly, to* LÖVBORG.] Not you?

LÖVBORG No.

HEDDA Mr. Lövborg remains with us.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Takes a chair and is about to seat herself at his side.*] Oh, how nice it is here!

HEDDA No, thank you, my little Thea! Not there! You'll be good enough to come over here to me. I will sit between you.

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, just as you please. [*She goes round the table and seats herself on the sofa on* HEDDA'S *right.* LÖVBORG *re-seats himself on his chair.*]

LÖVBORG [*After a short pause,*

[13] In this speech he once more says *du.* Hedda addresses him throughout as *De.*

to HEDDA.] Is not she lovely to look at?

HEDDA [*Lightly stroking her hair.*] Only to look at?

LÖVBORG Yes. For we two—she and I—we are two real comrades. We have absolute faith in each other; so we can sit and talk with perfect frankness——

HEDDA Not round about, Mr. Lövborg?

LÖVBORG Well——

MRS. ELVSTED [*Softly, clinging close to* HEDDA.] Oh, how happy I am, Hedda! For, only think, he says I have inspired him too!

HEDDA [*Looks at her with a smile.*] Ah! Does he say that, dear?

LÖVBORG And then she is so brave, Mrs. Tesman!

MRS. ELVSTED Good heavens—am I brave?

LÖVBORG Exceedingly—where your comrade is concerned.

HEDDA Ah yes—courage! If one only had that!

LÖVBORG What then? What do you mean?

HEDDA Then life would perhaps be liveable, after all. [*With a sudden change of tone.*] But now, my dearest Thea, you really must have a glass of cold punch.

MRS. ELVSTED No, thanks—I never take anything of that kind.

HEDDA Well then, you, Mr. Lövborg.

LÖVBORG Nor I, thank you.

MRS. ELVSTED No, he doesn't either.

HEDDA [*Looks fixedly at him.*] But if I say you shall?

LÖVBORG It would be no use.

HEDDA [*Laughing.*] Then I, poor creature, have no sort of power over you?

LÖVBORG Not in that respect.

HEDDA But seriously, I think you ought to—for your own sake.

MRS. ELVSTED Why, Hedda——!

LÖVBORG How so?

HEDDA Or rather on account of other people.

LÖVBORG Indeed?

HEDDA Otherwise people might be apt to suspect that—in your heart of hearts—you did not feel quite secure—quite confident in yourself.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Softly.*] Oh please, Hedda——:

LÖVBORG People may suspect what they like—for the present.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Joyfully.*] Yes, let them!

HEDDA I saw it plainly in Judge Brack's face a moment ago.

LÖVBORG What did you see?

HEDDA His contemptuous smile, when you dared not go

with them into the inner room.

LÖVBORG Dared not? Of course I preferred to stop here and talk to you.

MRS. ELVSTED What could be more natural, Hedda?

HEDDA But the Judge could not guess that. And I saw, too, the way he smiled and glanced at Tesman when you dared not accept his invitation to this wretched little supper-party of his.

LÖVBORG Dared not! Do you say I dared not?

HEDDA *I* don't say so. But that was how Judge Brack understood it.

LÖVBORG Well, let him.

HEDDA Then you are not going with them?

LÖVBORG I will stay here with you and Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, Hedda—how can you doubt that?

HEDDA [*Smiles and nods approvingly to Lövborg.*] Firm as a rock! Faithful to your principles, now and for ever! Ah, that is how a man should be! [*Turns to* MRS. ELVSTED *and caresses her.*] Well now, what did I tell you, when you came to us this morning in such a state of distraction——

LÖVBORG [*Surprised.*] Distraction!

MRS. ELVSTED [*Terrified.*] Hedda—oh Hedda——!

HEDDA You can see for yourself! You haven't the slightest reason to be in such mortal terror—— [*Interrupting herself.*] There! Now we can all three enjoy ourselves!

LÖVBORG [*Who has given a start.*] Ah—what is all this, Mrs. Tesman?

MRS. ELVSTED Oh my God, Hedda! What are you saying? What are you doing?

HEDDA Don't get excited! That horrid Judge Brack is sitting watching you.

LÖVBORG So she was in mortal terror! On my account!

MRS. ELVSTED [*Softly and piteously.*] Oh, Hedda—now you have ruined everything!

LÖVBORG [*Looks fixedly at her for a moment. His face is distorted.*] So that was my comrade's frank confidence in me?

MRS. ELVSTED [*Imploringly.*] Oh, my dearest friend—only let me tell you——

LÖVBORG [*Takes one of the glasses of punch, raises it to his lips, and says in a low, husky voice.*] Your health, Thea! [*He empties the glass, puts it down, and takes the second.*]

MRS. ELVSTED [*Softly.*] Oh, Hedda, Hedda—how could you do this?

HEDDA *I* do it? *I?* Are you crazy?

LÖVBORG Here's to your health too, Mrs. Tesman. Thanks for the truth. Hurrah for the truth! [*He empties the glass and is about to re-fill it.*]

HEDDA [*Lays her hand on his arm.*] Come, come—no more for the present. Remember you are going out to supper.

MRS. ELVSTED No, no, no!

HEDDA Hush! They are sitting watching you.

LÖVBORG [*Putting down the glass.*] Now, Thea—tell me the truth——

MRS. ELVSTED Yes.

LÖVBORG Did your husband know that you had come after me?

MRS. ELVSTED [*Wringing her hands.*] Oh, Hedda—do you hear what he is asking?

LÖVBORG Was it arranged between you and him that you were to come to town and look after me? Perhaps it was the Sheriff himself that urged you to come? Aha, my dear—no doubt he wanted my help in his office! Or was it at the card-table that he missed me?

MRS. ELVSTED [*Softly, in agony.*] Oh, Lövborg, Lövborg——!

LÖVBORG [*Seizes a glass and is on the point of filling it.*] Here's a glass for the old Sheriff too!

HEDDA [*Preventing him.*] No more just now. Remember, you have to read your manuscript to Tesman.

LÖVBORG [*Calmly, putting down the glass.*] It was stupid of me all this, Thea—to take it in this way, I mean. Don't be angry with me, my dear, dear comrade You shall see—both you and the others—that if I was fallen once —now I have risen again! Thanks to you, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Radiant with joy.*] Oh, heaven be praised——! [BRACK *has in the meantime looked at his watch. He and* TESMAN *rise and come into the drawing room.*]

BRACK [*Takes his hat and overcoat.*] Well, Mrs. Tesman, our time has come.

HEDDA I suppose it has.

LÖVBORG [*Rising.*] Mine too, Judge Brack.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Softly and imploringly.*] Oh, Lövborg, don't do it!

HEDDA [*Pinching her arm.*] They can hear you!

MRS. ELVSTED [*With a suppressed shriek.*] Ow!

LÖVBORG [*To* BRACK.] You were good enough to invite me.

BRACK Well, are you coming after all?

LÖVBORG Yes, many thanks.

BRACK I'm delighted——

LÖVBORG [*To* TESMAN, *putting the parcel of MS. in his pocket.*] I should like to show you one or two things before I send it to the printers.

TESMAN Fancy—that will be delightful. But, Hedda dear, how is Mrs. Elvsted to get home? Eh?

HEDDA Oh, that can be managed somehow.

LÖVBORG [*Looking towards the ladies.*] Mrs. Elvsted? Of course, I'll come again and fetch her. [*Approaching.*] At ten or thereabouts, Mrs. Tesman? Will that do?

HEDDA Certainly. That will do capitally.

TESMAN Well, then, that's all right. But you must not expect me so early, Hedda.

HEDDA Oh, you may stop as long—as long as ever you please.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Trying to conceal her anxiety.*] Well then, Mr. Lövborg—I shall remain here until you come.

LÖVBORG [*With his hat in his hand.*] Pray do, Mrs. Elvsted.

BRACK And now off goes the excursion train, gentlemen! I hope we shall have a lively time, as a certain fair lady puts it.

HEDDA Ah, if only the fair lady could be present unseen——!

BRACK Why unseen?

HEDDA In order to hear a little of your liveliness at first hand, Judge Brack.

BRACK [*Laughing.*] I should not advise the fair lady to try it.

TESMAN [*Also laughing.*] Come, you're a nice one Hedda! Fancy that!

BRACK Well, good-bye, good-bye, ladies.

LÖVBORG [*Bowing.*] About ten o'clock, then. [BRACK, LÖVBORG, *and* TESMAN *go out by the hall door. At the same time,* BERTA *enters from the inner room with a lighted lamp, which she places on the drawing-room table; she goes out by the way she came.*]

MRS. ELVSTED [*Who has risen and is wandering restlessly about the room.*] Hedda—Hedda—what will come of all this?

HEDDA At ten o'clock—he will be here. I can see him already—with vine-leaves in his hair—flushed and fearless——

MRS. ELVSTED Oh, I hope he may.

HEDDA And then, you see—then he will have regained control over himself. Then he will be a free man for all his days.

MRS. ELVSTED Oh God!—if he would only come as you see him now!

HEDDA He will come as I see him—so, and not otherwise!

[*Rises and approaches* THEA.] You may doubt him as long as you please; *I* believe in him. And now we will try——

MRS. ELVSTED You have some hidden motive in this, Hedda!

HEDDA Yes, I have. I want for once in my life to have power to mould a human destiny.

MRS. ELVSTED Have you not the power?

HEDDA I have not—and have never had it.

MRS. ELVSTED Not your husband's?

HEDDA Do you think that is worth the trouble? Oh, if you could only understand how poor I am. And fate has made you so rich! [*Clasps her passionately in her arms.*] I think I must burn your hair off, after all.

MRS. ELVSTED Let me go! Let me go! I am afraid of you, Hedda!

BERTA [*In the middle doorway.*] Tea is laid in the dining-room, ma'am.

HEDDA Very well. We are coming.

MRS. ELVSTED No, no, no! I would rather go home alone! At once!

HEDDA Nonsense! First you shall have a cup of tea, you little stupid. And then—at ten o'clock—Eilert Lövborg will be here—with vine-leaves in his hair. [*She drags* MRS. ELVSTED *almost by force towards the middle doorway.*]

Hedda Gabler ACT THIRD

The room at the TESMANS'. *The curtains are drawn over the middle doorway, and also over the glass door. The lamp, half turned down, and with a shade over it, is burning on the table. In the stove, the door of which stands open, there has been a fire, which is now nearly burnt out.*

MRS. ELVSTED, *wrapped in a large shawl, and with her feet upon a foot-rest, sits close to the stove, sunk back in the arm-chair.* HEDDA, *fully dressed, lies sleeping upon the sofa, with a sofa-blanket over her.*

MRS. ELVSTED [*After a pause, suddenly sits up in her chair, and listens eagerly. Then she sinks back again wearily, moaning to*

herself.] Not yet!—Oh God—oh God—not yet!

BERTA *slips cautiously in by the hall door. She has a letter in her hand.*

MRS. ELVSTED [*Turns and whispers eagerly.*] Well—has any one come?

BERTA [*Softly.*] Yes, a girl has just brought this letter.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Quickly, holding out her hand.*] A letter! Give it to me!

BERTA No, it's for Dr. Tesman, ma'am.

MRS. ELVSTED Oh, indeed.

BERTA It was Miss Tesman's servant that brought it. I'll lay it here on the table.

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, do.

BERTA [*Laying down the letter.*] I think I had better put out the lamp. It's smoking.

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, put it out. It must soon be daylight now.

BERTA [*Putting out the lamp.*] It is daylight already, ma'am.

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, broad day! And no one come back yet——!

BERTA Lord bless you, ma'am —I guessed how it would be.

MRS. ELVSTED You guessed?

BERTA Yes, when I saw that a certain person had come back to town—and that he went off with them. For we've heard enough about that gentleman before now.

MRS. ELVSTED Don't speak so loud. You will waken Mrs. Tesman.

BERTA [*Looks towards the sofa and sighs.*] No, no—let her sleep, poor thing. Shan't I put some wood on the fire?

MRS. ELVSTED Thanks, not for me.

BERTA Oh, very well. [*She goes softly out by the hall door.*]

HEDDA [*Is wakened by the shutting of the door, and looks up.*] What's that——?

MRS. ELVSTED It was only the servant——

HEDDA [*Looking about her.*] Oh, we're here——! Yes, now I remember. [*Sits erect upon the sofa, stretches herself, and rubs her eyes.*] What o'clock is it, Thea?

MRS. ELVSTED [*Looks at her watch.*] It's past seven.

HEDDA When did Tesman come home?

MRS. ELVSTED He has not come.

HEDDA Not come home yet?

MRS. ELVSTED [*Rising.*] No one has come.

HEDDA Think of our watching and waiting here till four in the morning——

MRS. ELVSTED [*Wringing her hands.*] And how I watched and waited for him!

HEDDA [*Yawns, and says with*

her hand before her mouth.] Well, well—we might have spared ourselves the trouble.

MRS. ELVSTED Did you get a little sleep?

HEDDA Oh yes; I believe I have slept pretty well. Have you not?

MRS. ELVSTED Not for a moment. I couldn't, Hedda!—not to save my life.

HEDDA [*Rises and goes towards her.*] There, there, there! There's nothing to be so alarmed about. I understand quite well what has happened.

MRS. ELVSTED Well, what do you think? Won't you tell me?

HEDDA Why, of course it has been a very late affair at Judge Brack's——

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, yes—that is clear enough. But all the same——

HEDDA And then, you see, Tesman hasn't cared to come home and ring us up in the middle of the night. [*Laughing.*] Perhaps he wasn't inclined to show himself either—immediately after a jollification.

MRS. ELVSTED But in that case —where can he have gone?

HEDDA Of course he has gone to his Aunts' and slept there. They have his old room ready for him.

MRS. ELVSTED No, he can't be with them; for a letter has just come for him from Miss Tesman. There it lies.

HEDDA Indeed? [*Looks at the address.*] Why yes, it's addressed in Aunt Julia's own hand. Well then, he has remained at Judge Brack's. And as for Eilert Lövborg—he is sitting, with vine leaves in his hair, reading his manuscript.

MRS. ELVSTED Oh Hedda, you are just saying things you don't believe a bit.

HEDDA You really are a little blockhead, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED Oh yes, I suppose I am.

HEDDA And how mortally tired you look.

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, I am mortally tired.

HEDDA Well then, you must do as I tell you. You must go into my room and lie down for a little while.

MRS. ELVSTED Oh no, no—I shouldn't be able to sleep.

HEDDA I am sure you would.

MRS. ELVSTED Well, but your husband is certain to come soon now; and then I want to know at once——

HEDDA I shall take care to let you know when he comes.

MRS. ELVSTED Do you promise me, Hedda?

HEDDA Yes, rely upon me.

Just you go in and have a sleep in the meantime.

MRS. ELVSTED Thanks; then I'll try to. [*She goes off through the inner room.*]

HEDDA *goes up to the glass door and draws back the curtains. The broad daylight streams into the room. Then she takes a little hand-glass from the writing-table, looks at herself in it, and arranges her hair. Next she goes to the hall door and presses the bell-button.* BERTA *presently appears at the hall door.*

BERTA Did you want anything, ma'am?

HEDDA Yes; you must put some more wood in the stove. I am shivering.

BERTA Bless me—I'll make up the fire at once. [*She rakes the embers together and lays a piece of wood upon them; then stops and listens.*] That was a ring at the front door, ma'am.

HEDDA Then go to the door. I will look after the fire.

BERTA It'll soon burn up. [*She goes out by the hall door.*]

HEDDA *kneels on the foot-rest and lays some more pieces of wood in the stove. After a short pause,* GEORGE TESMAN *enters from the hall. He looks tired and rather serious. He steals on tiptoe towards the middle doorway and is about to slip through the curtains.*

HEDDA [*At the stove, without looking up.*] Good morning.

TESMAN [*Turns.*] Hedda! [*Approaching her.*] Good heavens —are you up so early? Eh?

HEDDA Yes, I am up very early this morning.

TESMAN And I never doubted you were still sound asleep! Fancy that, Hedda!

HEDDA Don't speak so loud. Mrs. Elvsted is resting in my room.

TESMAN Has Mrs. Elvsted been here all night?

HEDDA Yes, since no one came to fetch her.

TESMAN Ah, to be sure.

HEDDA [*Closes the door of the stove and rises.*] Well, did you enjoy yourselves at Judge Brack's?

TESMAN Have you been anxious about me? Eh?

HEDDA No, I should never think of being anxious. But I asked if you had enjoyed yourself.

TESMAN Oh yes,—for once in a way. Especially the beginning of the evening; for then Eilert read me part of his book. We arrived more than an hour too early—fancy that! And Brack had all sorts of arrangements to make—so Eilert read to me.

HEDDA [*Seating herself by the table on the right.*] Well? Tell me, then——

TESMAN [*Sitting on a footstool near the stove.*] Oh Hedda, you can't conceive what a book that is going to be! I believe it is one of the most remarkable things that have ever been written. Fancy that!

HEDDA Yes, yes; I don't care about that——

TESMAN I must make a confession to you, Hedda. When he had finished reading—a horrid feeling came over me.

HEDDA A horrid feeling?

TESMAN I felt jealous of Eilert for having had it in him to write such a book. Only think, Hedda!

HEDDA Yes, yes, I am thinking!

TESMAN And then how pitiful to think that he—with all his gifts—should be irreclaimable, after all.

HEDDA I suppose you mean that he has more courage than the rest?

TESMAN No, not at all—I mean that he is incapable of taking his pleasures in moderation.

HEDDA And what came of it all—in the end?

TESMAN Well, to tell the truth, I think it might best be described as an orgie, Hedda.

HEDDA Had he vine-leaves in his hair?

TESMAN Vine-leaves? No, I saw nothing of the sort. But he made a long, rambling speech in honour of the woman who had inspired him in his work—that was the phrase he used.

HEDDA Did he name her?

TESMAN No, he didn't; but I can't help thinking he meant Mrs. Elvsted. You may be sure he did.

HEDDA Well—where did you part from him?

TESMAN On the way to town. We broke up—the last of us at any rate—all together; and Brack came with us to get a breath of fresh air. And then, you see, we agreed to take Eilert home; for he had had far more than was good for him.

HEDDA I daresay.

TESMAN But now comes the strange part of it, Hedda; or, I should rather say, the melancholy part of it. I declare I am almost ashamed—on Eilert's account—to tell you——

HEDDA Oh, go on——!

TESMAN Well, as we were getting near town, you see, I happened to drop a little behind the others. Only for a minute or two—fancy that!

HEDDA Yes, yes, yes, but——?

TESMAN And then, as I hur-

ried after them—what do you think I found by the wayside? Eh?

HEDDA Oh, how should I know!

TESMAN You mustn't speak of it to a soul, Hedda! Do you hear! Promise me, for Eilert's sake. [*Draws a parcel, wrapped in paper, from his coat pocket.*] Fancy, dear—I found this.

HEDDA Is not that the parcel he had with him yesterday?

TESMAN Yes, it is the whole of his precious, irreplaceable manuscript! And he had gone and lost it, and knew nothing about it. Only fancy, Hedda! So deplorably——

HEDDA But why did you not give him back the parcel at once?

TESMAN I didn't dare to—in the state he was then in——

HEDDA Did you not tell any of the others that you had found it?

TESMAN Oh, far from it! You can surely understand that, for Eilert's sake, I wouldn't do that.

HEDDA So no one knows that Eilert Lövborg's manuscript is in your possession?

TESMAN No. And no one must know it.

HEDDA Then what did you say to him afterwards?

TESMAN I didn't talk to him again at all; for when we got in among the streets, he and two or three of the others gave us the slip and disappeared. Fancy that!

HEDDA Indeed! They must have taken him home then.

TESMAN Yes, so it would appear. And Brack, too, left us.

HEDDA And what have you been doing with yourself since?

TESMAN Well, I and some of the others went home with one of the party, a jolly fellow, and took our morning coffee with him; or perhaps I should rather call it our night coffee—eh? But now, when I have rested a little, and given Eilert, poor fellow, time to have his sleep out, I must take this back to him.

HEDDA [*Holds out her hand for the packet.*] No—don't give it to him! Not in such a hurry, I mean. Let me read it first.

TESMAN No, my dearest Hedda, I mustn't, really mustn't.

HEDDA You must not?

TESMAN No—for you can imagine what a state of despair he will be in when he wakens and misses the manuscript. He has no copy of it, you must know! He told me so.

HEDDA [*Looking searchingly at him.*] Can such a thing not be reproduced? Written over again?

TESMAN No, I don't think that would be possible. For the inspiration, you see—

HEDDA Yes, yes—I suppose it depends on that—— [*Lightly.*] But, by-the-bye—here is a letter for you.

TESMAN Fancy——!

HEDDA [*Handing it to him.*] It came early this morning.

TESMAN It's from Aunt Julia! What can it be? [*He lays the packet on the other footstool, opens the letter, runs his eye through it, and jumps up.*] Oh, Hedda—she says that poor Aunt Rina is dying!

HEDDA Well, we were prepared for that.

TESMAN And that if I want to see her again, I must make haste. I'll run in to them at once.

HEDDA [*Suppressing a smile.*] Will you run?

TESMAN Oh, my dearest Hedda—if you could only make up your mind to come with me! Just think!

HEDDA [*Rises and says wearily, repelling the idea.*] No, no, don't ask me. I will not look upon sickness and death. I loathe all sorts of ugliness.

TESMAN Well, well, then——! [*Bustling around.*] My hat——? My overcoat——? Oh, in the hall——. I do hope I mayn't come too late, Hedda! Eh?

HEDDA Oh, if you run—— [BERTA *appears at the hall door.*]

BERTA Judge Brack is at the door, and wishes to know if he may come in.

TESMAN At this time! No, I can't possibly see him.

HEDDA But I can. [*To* BERTA.] Ask Judge Brack to come in. [BERTA *goes out.*]

HEDDA [*Quickly, whispering.*] The parcel, Tesman! [*She snatches it up from the stool.*]

TESMAN Yes, give it to me!

HEDDA No, no, I will keep it till you come back. [*She goes to the writing-table and places it in the bookcase.* TESMAN *stands in a flurry of haste, and cannot get his gloves on.*]

JUDGE BRACK *enters from the hall.*

HEDDA [*Nodding to him.*] You are an early bird, I must say.

BRACK Yes, don't you think so? [*To* TESMAN.] Are you on the move, too?

TESMAN Yes, I must rush off to my Aunts'. Fancy—the invalid one is lying at death's door, poor creature.

BRACK Dear me, is she indeed? Then on no account let me detain you. At such a critical moment——

TESMAN Yes, I must really rush—— Good-bye! Good-bye! [*He hastens out by the hall door.*]

HEDDA [*Approaching.*] You seem to have made a particularly lively night of it at your rooms, Judge Brack.

BRACK I assure you I have not had my clothes off, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA Not you, either?

BRACK No, as you may see. But what has Tesman been telling you of the night's adventures?

HEDDA Oh, some tiresome story. Only that they went and had coffee somewhere or other.

BRACK I have heard about that coffee-party already. Eilert Lövborg was not with them, I fancy?

HEDDA No, they had taken him home before that.

BRACK Tesman too?

HEDDA No, but some of the others, he said.

BRACK [*Smiling.*] George Tesman is really an ingenuous creature, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA Yes, heaven knows he is. Then is there something behind all this?

BRACK Yes, perhaps there may be.

HEDDA Well then, sit down, my dear Judge, and tell your story in comfort. [*She seats herself to the left of the table.* BRACK *sits near her, at the long side of the table.*]

HEDDA Now then?

BRACK I had special reasons for keeping track of my guests —or rather of some of my guests —last night.

HEDDA Of Eilert Lövborg among the rest, perhaps?

BRACK Frankly—yes.

HEDDA Now you make me really curious——

BRACK Do you know where he and one or two of the others finished the night, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA If it is not quite unmentionable, tell me.

BRACK Oh no, it's not at all unmentionable. Well, they put in an appearance at a particularly animated soirée.

HEDDA Of the lively kind?

BRACK Of the very liveliest——

HEDDA Tell me more of this, Judge Brack——

BRACK Lövborg, as well as the others, had been invited in advance. I knew all about it. But he had declined the invitation; for now, as you know, he has become a new man.

HEDDA Up at the Elvsteds', yes. But he went after all, then?

BRACK Well, you see, Mrs. Hedda—unhappily the spirit moved him at my rooms last evening——

HEDDA Yes, I hear he found inspiration.

BRACK Pretty violent inspiration. Well, I fancy that altered his purpose; for we menfolk are unfortunately not always so firm

in our principles as we ought to be.

HEDDA Oh, I am sure you are an exception, Judge Brack. But as to Lövborg——?

BRACK To make a long story short—he landed at last in Mademoiselle Diana's rooms.

HEDDA Mademoiselle Diana's?

BRACK It was Mademoiselle Diana that was giving the soirée, to a select circle of her admirers and her lady friends.

HEDDA Is she a red-haired woman?

BRACK Precisely.

HEDDA A sort of a—singer?

BRACK Oh yes—in her leisure moments. And moreover a mighty huntress—of men—Mrs. Hedda. You have no doubt heard of her. Eilert Lövborg was one of her most enthusiastic protectors—in the days of his glory.

HEDDA And how did all this end?

BRACK Far from amicably, it appears. After a most tender meeting, they seem to have come to blows——

HEDDA Lövborg and she?

BRACK Yes. He accused her or her friends of having robbed him. He declared that his pocket-book had disappeared — and other things as well. In short, he seems to have made a furious disturbance.

HEDDA And what came of it all?

BRACK It came to a general scrimmage, in which the ladies as well as the gentlemen took part. Fortunately the police at last appeared on the scene.

HEDDA The police too?

BRACK Yes. I fancy it will prove a costly frolic for Eilert Lövborg, crazy being that he is.

HEDDA How so?

BRACK He seems to have made a violent resistance—to have hit one of the constables on the head and torn the coat off his back. So they had to march him off to the police-station with the rest.

HEDDA How have you learnt all this?

BRACK From the police themselves.

HEDDA [*Gazing straight before her.*] So that is what happened. Then he had no vine-leaves in his hair.

BRACK Vine-leaves, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA [*Changing her tone.*] But tell me now, Judge—what is your real reason for tracking out Eilert Lövborg's movements so carefully?

BRACK In the first place, it could not be entirely indifferent to me if it should appear in the police-court that he came straight from my house.

HEDDA Will the matter come into court then?

BRACK Of course. However, I should scarcely have troubled so much about that. But I thought that, as a friend of the family, it was my duty to supply you and Tesman with a full account of his nocturnal exploits.

HEDDA Why so, Judge Brack?

BRACK Why, because I have a shrewd suspicion that he intends to use you as a sort of blind.

HEDDA Oh, how can you think such a thing!

BRACK Good heavens, Mrs. Hedda—we have eyes in our head. Mark my words! This Mrs. Elvsted will be in no hurry to leave town again.

HEDDA Well, even if there should be anything between them, I suppose there are plenty of other places where they could meet.

BRACK Not a single home. Henceforth, as before, every respectable house will be closed against Eilert Lövborg.

HEDDA And so ought mine to be, you mean?

BRACK Yes. I confess it would be more than painful to me if this personage were to be made free of your house. How superfluous, how intrusive, he would be, if he were to force his way into——

HEDDA ——into the triangle?

BRACK Precisely. It would simply mean that I should find myself homeless.

HEDDA [*Looks at him with a smile.*] So you want to be the one cock in the basket[14]—that is your aim.

BRACK [*Nods slowly and lowers his voice.*] Yes, that is my aim. And for that I will fight—with every weapon I can command.

HEDDA [*Her smile vanishing.*] I see you are a dangerous person—when it comes to the point.

BRACK Do you think so?

HEDDA I am beginning to think so. And I am exceedingly glad to think—that you have no sort of hold over me.

BRACK [*Laughing equivocally.*] Well, well, Mrs. Hedda—perhaps you are right there. If I had, who knows what I might be capable of?

HEDDA Come, come now, Judge Brack! That sounds almost like a threat.

BRACK [*Rising.*] Oh, not at all! The triangle, you know, ought, if possible, to be spontaneously constructed.

HEDDA There I agree with you.

[14] "Eneste hane i kurven"—a proverbial saying.

BRACK Well, now I have said all I had to say; and I had better be getting back to town. Goodbye, Mrs. Hedda. [*He goes towards the glass door.*]

HEDDA [*Rising.*] Are you going through the garden?

BRACK Yes, it's a short cut for me.

HEDDA And then it is a back way, too.

BRACK Quite so. I have no objection to back ways. They may be piquant enough at times.

HEDDA When there is ball practice going on, you mean?

BRACK [*In the doorway, laughing to her.*] Oh, people don't shoot their tame poultry, I fancy.

HEDDA [*Also laughing.*] Oh no, when there is only one cock in the basket—— [*They exchange laughing nods of farewell. He goes. She closes the door behind him.*]

HEDDA, *who has become quite serious, stands for a moment looking out. Presently she goes and peeps through the curtain over the middle doorway. Then she goes to the writing-table, takes* LÖVBORG'S *packet out of the bookcase, and is on the point of looking through its contents.* BERTA *is heard speaking loudly in the hall.* HEDDA *turns and listens. Then she hastily locks up the packet in the drawer, and lays the key on the inkstand.*

EILERT LÖVBORG, *with his great-coat on and his hat in his hand, tears open the hall door. He looks somewhat confused and irritated.*

LÖVBORG [*Looking towards the hall.*] And I tell you I must and will come in! There! [*He closes the door, turns, sees* HEDDA, *at once regains his self-control, and bows.*]

HEDDA [*At the writing-table.*] Well, Mr. Lövborg, this is rather a late hour to call for Thea.

LÖVBORG You mean rather an early hour to call on you. Pray pardon me.

HEDDA How do you know that she is still here?

LÖVBORG They told me at her lodgings that she had been out all night.

HEDDA [*Going to the oval table.*] Did you notice anything about the people of the house when they said that?

LÖVBORG [*Looks inquiringly at her.*] Notice anything about them?

HEDDA I mean, did they seem to think it odd?

LÖVBORG [*Suddenly understanding.*] Oh yes, of course! I am dragging her down with me! However, I didn't notice any-

thing.—I suppose Tesman is not up yet?

HEDDA No—I think not——

LÖVBORG When did he come home?

HEDDA Very late.

LÖVBORG Did he tell you anything?

HEDDA Yes, I gathered that you had had an exceedingly jolly evening at Judge Brack's.

LÖVBORG Nothing more?

HEDDA I don't think so. However, I was so dreadfully sleepy——

MRS. ELVSTED *enters through the curtains of the middle doorway.*

MRS. ELVSTED [*Going towards him.*] Ah, Lövborg! At last——!

LÖVBORG Yes, at last. And too late!

MRS. ELVSTED [*Looks anxiously at him.*] What is too late?

LÖVBORG Everything is too late now. It is all over with me.

MRS. ELVSTED Oh no, no—don't say that!

LÖVBORG You will say the same when you hear——

MRS. ELVSTED I won't hear anything!

HEDDA Perhaps you would prefer to talk to her alone? If so, I will leave you.

LÖVBORG No, stay—you too. I beg you to stay.

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, but I won't hear anything, I tell you.

LÖVBORG It is not last night's adventures that I want to talk about.

MRS. ELVSTED What is it then——?

LÖVBORG I want to say that now our ways must part.

MRS. ELVSTED Part!

HEDDA [*Involuntarily.*] I knew it!

LÖVBORG You can be of no more service to me, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED How can you stand there and say that! No more service to you! Am I not to help you now, as before? Are we not to go on working together?

LÖVBORG Henceforward I shall do no work.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Despairingly.*] Then what am I to do with my life?

LÖVBORG You must try to live your life as if you had never known me.

MRS. ELVSTED But you know I cannot do that!

LÖVBORG Try if you cannot, Thea. You must go home again——

MRS. ELVSTED [*In vehement protest.*] Never in this world! Where you are, there will I be also! I will not let myself be driven away like this! I will remain here! I will be with you when the book appears.

HEDDA [*Half aloud, in suspense.*] Ah yes—the book!

LÖVBORG [*Looks at her.*] My book and Thea's; for that is what it is.

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, I feel that it is. And that is why I have a right to be with you when it appears! I will see with my own eyes how respect and honour pour in upon you afresh. And the happiness—the happiness—oh, I must share it with you!

LÖVBORG Thea—our book will never appear.

HEDDA Ah!

MRS. ELVSTED Never appear!

LÖVBORG Can never appear.

MRS. ELVSTED [*In agonised foreboding.*] Lövborg—what have you done with the manuscript?

HEDDA [*Looks anxiously at him.*] Yes, the manuscript——?

MRS. ELVSTED Where is it?

LÖVBORG Oh Thea—don't ask me about it!

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, yes, I will know. I demand to be told at once.

LÖVBORG The manuscript ——. Well then—I have torn the manuscript into a thousand pieces.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Shrieks.*] Oh no, no——!

HEDDA [*Involuntarily.*] But that's not——

LÖVBORG [*Looks at her.*] Not true, you think?

HEDDA [*Collecting herself.*] Oh well, of course—since you say so. But it sounded so improbable——

LÖVBORG It is true, all the same.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Wringing her hands.*] Oh God—oh God, Hedda—torn his own work to pieces!

LÖVBORG I have torn my own life to pieces. So why should I not tear my life-work too——?

MRS. ELVSTED And you did this last night?

LÖVBORG Yes, I tell you! Tore it into a thousand pieces—and scattered them on the fiord—far out. There there is cool sea-water at any rate—let them drift upon it—drift with the current and the wind. And then presently they will sink—deeper and deeper—as I shall, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED Do you know, Lövborg, that what you have done with the book—I shall think of it to my dying day as though you had killed a little child.

LÖVBORG Yes, you are right. It is a sort of child-murder.

MRS. ELVSTED How could you, then——! Did not the child belong to me too?

HEDDA [*Almost inaudibly.*] Ah, the child——

MRS. ELVSTED [*Breathing heavily.*] It is all over then. Well, well, now I will go, Hedda.

HEDDA But you are not going away from town?

MRS. ELVSTED Oh, I don't know what I shall do. I see nothing but darkness before me. [*She goes out by the hall door.*]

HEDDA [*Stands waiting for a moment.*] So you are not going to see her home, Mr. Lövborg?

LÖVBORG I? Through the streets? Would you have people see her walking with me?

HEDDA Of course I don't know what else may have happened last night. But is it so utterly irretrievable?

LÖVBORG It will not end with last night—I know that perfectly well. And the thing is that now I have no taste for that sort of life either. I won't begin it anew. She has broken my courage and my power of braving life out.

HEDDA [*Looking straight before her.*] So that pretty little fool has had her fingers in a man's destiny. [*Looks at him.*] But all the same, how could you treat her so heartlessly.

LÖVBORG Oh, don't say that it was heartless!

HEDDA To go and destroy what has filled her whole soul for months and years! You do not call that heartless!

LÖVBORG To you I can tell the truth, Hedda.

HEDDA The truth?

LÖVBORG First promise me—give me your word—that what I now confide to you Thea shall never know.

HEDDA I give you my word.

LÖVBORG Good. Then let me tell you that what I said just now was untrue.

HEDDA About the manuscript?

LÖVBORG Yes. I have not torn it to pieces—nor thrown it into the fiord.

HEDDA No, no——. But—where is it then?

LÖVBORG I have destroyed it none the less—utterly destroyed it, Hedda!

HEDDA I don't understand.

LÖVBORG Thea said that what I had done seemed to her like a child-murder.

HEDDA Yes, so she said.

LÖVBORG But to kill his child—that is not the worst thing a father can do to it.

HEDDA Not the worst?

LÖVBORG No. I wanted to spare Thea from hearing the worst.

HEDDA Then what is the worst?

LÖVBORG Suppose now,

Hedda, that a man—in the small hours of the morning—came home to his child's mother after a night of riot and debauchery, and said: "Listen—I have been here and there—in this place and in that. And I have taken our child with me—to this place and to that. And I have lost the child—utterly lost it. The devil knows into what hands it may have fallen—who may have had their clutches on it."

HEDDA Well—but when all is said and done, you know—this was only a book——

LÖVBORG Thea's pure soul was in that book.

HEDDA Yes, so I understand.

LÖVBORG And you can understand, too, that for her and me together no future is possible.

HEDDA What path do you mean to take then?

LÖVBORG None. I will only try to make an end of it all—the sooner the better.

HEDDA [*A step nearer him.*] Eilert Lövborg—listen to me.—Will you not try to—to do it beautifully?

LÖVBORG Beautifully? [*Smiling.*] With vine-leaves in my hair, as you used to dream in the old days——?

HEDDA No, no. I have lost my faith in the vine-leaves. But beautifully nevertheless! For once in a way!—Good-bye! You must go now—and do not come here any more.

LÖVBORG Good-bye, Mrs. Tesman. And give George Tesman my love. [*He is on the point of going.*]

HEDDA No, wait! I must give you a memento to take with you. [*She goes to the writing-table and opens the drawer and the pistol-case; then returns to* LÖVBORG *with one of the pistols.*]

LÖVBORG [*Looks at her.*] This? Is this the memento?

HEDDA [*Nodding slowly.*] Do you recognise it? It was aimed at you once.

LÖVBORG You should have used it then.

HEDDA Take it—and do you use it now.

LÖVBORG [*Puts the pistol in his breast pocket.*] Thanks!

HEDDA And beautifully, Eilert Lövborg. Promise me that!

LÖVBORG Good-bye, Hedda Gabler. [*He goes out by the hall door.*]

HEDDA *listens for a moment at the door. Then she goes up to the writing-table, takes out the packet of manuscript, peeps under the cover, draws a few of the sheets half out, and looks at them. Next she goes over and seats herself in the arm-chair be-*

side the stove, with the packet in her lap. Presently she opens the stove door, and then the packet.

HEDDA [*Throws one of the quires into the fire and whispers to herself.*] Now I am burning your child, Thea!—Burning it, curly-locks! [*Throwing one or two more quires into the stove.*] Your child and Eilert Lövborg's. [*Throws the rest in.*] I am burning—I am burning your child.

Hedda Gabler ACT FOURTH

The same rooms at the TESMANS'. *It is evening. The drawing-room is in darkness. The back room is lighted by the hanging lamp over the table. The curtains over the glass door are drawn close.*

HEDDA, *dressed in black, walks to and fro in the dark room. Then she goes into the back room and disappears for a moment to the left. She is heard to strike a few chords on the piano. Presently she comes in sight again, and returns to the drawing-room.*

BERTA *enters from the right, through the inner room, with a lighted lamp, which she places on the table in front of the corner settee in the drawing-room. Her eyes are red with weeping, and she has black ribbons in her cap. She goes quietly and circumspectly out to the right.* HEDDA *goes up to the glass door, lifts the curtain a little aside, and looks out into the darkness.*

Shortly afterwards, MISS TESMAN, *in mourning, with a bonnet and veil on, comes in from the hall.* HEDDA *goes towards her and holds out her hand.*

MISS TESMAN Yes, Hedda, here I am, in mourning and forlorn; for now my poor sister has at last found peace.

HEDDA I have heard the news already, as you see. Tesman sent me a card.

MISS TESMAN Yes, he promised me he would. But nevertheless I thought that to Hedda—here in the house of life—I ought myself to bring the tidings of death.

HEDDA That was very kind of you.

MISS TESMAN Ah, Rina ought not to have left us just now. This is not the time for Hedda's house to be a house of mourning.

HEDDA [*Changing the sub-*

ject.] She died quite peacefully, did she not, Miss Tesman?

MISS TESMAN Oh, her end was so calm, so beautiful. And then she had the unspeakable happiness of seeing George once more—and bidding him good-bye.—Has he not come home yet?

HEDDA No. He wrote that he might be detained. But won't you sit down?

MISS TESMAN No thank you, my dear, dear Hedda. I should like to, but I have so much to do. I must prepare my dear one for her rest as well as I can. She shall go to her grave looking her best.

HEDDA Can I not help you in any way?

MISS TESMAN Oh, you must not think of it! Hedda Tesman must have no hand in such mournful work. Nor let her thoughts dwell on it either—not at this time.

HEDDA One is not always mistress of one's thoughts——

MISS TESMAN [*Continuing.*] Ah yes, it is the way of the world. At home we shall be sewing a shroud; and here there will soon be sewing too, I suppose—but of another sort, thank God!

GEORGE TESMAN *enters by the hall door.*

HEDDA Ah, you have come at last!

TESMAN You here, Aunt Julia? With Hedda? Fancy that!

MISS TESMAN I was just going, my dear boy. Well, have you done all you promised?

TESMAN No; I'm really afraid I have forgotten half of it. I must come to you again to-morrow. To-day my brain is all in a whirl. I can't keep my thoughts together.

MISS TESMAN Why, my dear George, you mustn't take it in this way.

TESMAN Mustn't——? How do you mean?

MISS TESMAN Even in your sorrow you must rejoice, as I do —rejoice that she is at rest.

TESMAN Oh yes, yes—you are thinking of Aunt Rina.

HEDDA You will feel lonely now, Miss Tesman.

MISS TESMAN Just at first, yes. But that will not last very long, I hope. I daresay I shall soon find an occupant for poor Rina's little room.

TESMAN Indeed? Who do you think will take it? Eh?

MISS TESMAN Oh, there's always some poor invalid or other in want of nursing, unfortunately.

HEDDA Would you really take such a burden upon you again?

MISS TESMAN A burden!

Heaven forgive you, child—it has been no burden to me.

HEDDA But suppose you had a total stranger on your hands——

MISS TESMAN Oh, one soon makes friends with sick folk; and it's such an absolute necessity for me to have some one to live for. Well, heaven be praised, there may soon be something in this house, too, to keep an old aunt busy.

HEDDA Oh, don't trouble about anything here.

TESMAN Yes, just fancy what a nice time we three might have together, if——?

HEDDA If——?

TESMAN [*Uneasily.*] Oh, nothing. It will all come right. Let us hope so—eh?

MISS TESMAN Well, well, I daresay you two want to talk to each other. [*Smiling.*] And perhaps Hedda may have something to tell you too, George. Good-bye! I must go home to Rina. [*Turning at the door.*] How strange it is to think that now Rina is with me and with my poor brother as well!

TESMAN Yes, fancy that, Aunt Julia! Eh? [MISS TESMAN *goes out by the hall door.*]

HEDDA [*Follows* TESMAN *coldly and searchingly with her eyes.*] I almost believe your Aunt Rina's death affects you more than it does your Aunt Julia.

TESMAN Oh, it's not that alone. It's Eilert I am so terribly uneasy about.

HEDDA [*Quickly.*] Is there anything new about him?

TESMAN I looked in at his rooms this afternoon, intending to tell him the manuscript was in safe-keeping.

HEDDA Well, did you not find him?

TESMAN No. He wasn't at home. But afterwards I met Mrs. Elvsted, and she told me that he had been here early this morning.

HEDDA Yes, directly after you had gone.

TESMAN And he said that he had torn his manuscript to pieces —eh?

HEDDA Yes, so he declared.

TESMAN Why, good heavens, he must have been completely out of his mind! And I suppose you thought it best not to give it back to him, Hedda?

HEDDA No, he did not get it.

TESMAN But of course you told him that we had it?

HEDDA No. [*Quickly.*] Did you tell Mrs. Elvsted?

TESMAN No; I thought I had better not. But you ought to have told him. Fancy, if, in desperation, he should go and do himself

some injury! Let me have the manuscript, Hedda! I will take it to him at once. Where is it?

HEDDA [*Cold and immovable, leaning on the arm-chair.*] I have not got it.

TESMAN Have not got it? What in the world do you mean?

HEDDA I have burnt it—every line of it.

TESMAN [*With a violent movement of terror.*] Burnt! Burnt Eilert's manuscript!

HEDDA Don't scream so. The servant might hear you.

TESMAN Burnt! Why, good God——! No, no, no! It's impossible!

HEDDA It is so, nevertheless.

TESMAN Do you know what you have done, Hedda? It's unlawful appropriation of lost property. Fancy that! Just ask Judge Brack, and he'll tell you what it is.

HEDDA I advise you not to speak of it—either to Judge Brack, or to any one else.

TESMAN But how could you do anything so unheard-of? What put it into your head? What possessed you? Answer me that—eh?

HEDDA [*Suppressing an almost imperceptible smile.*] I did it for your sake, George.

TESMAN For my sake!

HEDDA This morning, when you told me about what he had read to you——

TESMAN Yes, yes—what then?

HEDDA You acknowledged that you envied him his work.

TESMAN Oh, of course I didn't mean it that literally.

HEDDA No matter—I could not bear the idea that any one should throw you into the shade.

TESMAN [*In an outburst of mingled doubt and joy.*] Hedda! Oh, is this true? But—but—I never knew you show your love like that before. Fancy that!

HEDDA Well, I may as well tell you that—just at this time—— [*Impatiently, breaking off.*] No, no; you can ask Aunt Julia. She will tell you, fast enough.

TESMAN Oh, I almost think I understand you, Hedda! [*Clasps his hands together.*] Great heavens! do you really mean it! Eh?

HEDDA Don't shout so. The servant might hear.

TESMAN [*Laughing in irrepressible glee.*] The servant! Why, how absurd you are, Hedda. It's only my old Berta! Why, I'll tell Berta myself.

HEDDA [*Clenching her hands together in desperation.*] Oh, it is killing me,—it is killing me, all this!

TESMAN What is, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA [*Coldly, controlling*

herself.] All this—absurdity—George.

TESMAN Absurdity! Do you see anything absurd in my being overjoyed at the news! But after all—perhaps I had better not say anything to Berta.

HEDDA Oh——why not that too?

TESMAN No, no, not yet! But I must certainly tell Aunt Julia. And then that you have begun to call me George too! Fancy that! Oh, Aunt Julia will be so happy—so happy!

HEDDA When she hears that I have burnt Eilert Lövborg's manuscript—for your sake?

TESMAN No, by-the-bye—that affair of the manuscript — of course nobody must know about that. But that you love me so much,[15] Hedda — Aunt Julia must really share my joy in that! I wonder, now, whether this sort of thing is usual in young wives? Eh?

HEDDA I think you had better ask Aunt Julia that question too.

TESMAN I will indeed, some time or other. [*Looks uneasy and downcast again.*] And yet the manuscript — the manuscript! Good God! it is terrible to think what will become of poor Eilert now.

MRS. ELVSTED, *dressed as in the first Act, with hat and cloak, enters by the hall door.*

MRS. ELVSTED [*Greets them hurriedly, and says in evident agitation.*] Oh, dear Hedda, forgive my coming again.

HEDDA What is the matter with you, Thea?

TESMAN Something about Eilert Lövborg again—eh?

MRS. ELVSTED Yes! I am dreadfully afraid some misfortune has happened to him.

HEDDA [*Seizes her arm.*] Ah, —do you think so?

TESMAN Why, good Lord—what makes you think that, Mrs. Elvsted?

MRS. ELVSTED I heard them talking of him at my boarding-house—just as I came in. Oh, the most incredible rumours are afloat about him to-day.

TESMAN Yes, fancy, so I heard too! And I can bear witness that he went straight home to bed last night. Fancy that!

HEDDA Well, what did they say at the boarding-house?

MRS. ELVSTED Oh, I couldn't make out anything clearly. Either they knew nothing definite, or else——. They stopped talking when they saw me; and I did not dare to ask.

TESMAN [*Moving about uneasily.*] We must hope—we must

[15] Literally, "That you burn for me."

hope that you misunderstood them, Mrs. Elvsted.

MRS. ELVSTED No, no; I am sure it was of him they were talking. And I heard something about the hospital or——

TESMAN The hospital?

HEDDA No—surely that cannot be!

MRS. ELVSTED Oh, I was in such mortal terror! I went to his lodgings and asked for him there.

HEDDA You could make up your mind to that, Thea!

MRS. ELVSTED What else could I do? I really could bear the suspense no longer.

TESMAN But you didn't find him either—eh?

MRS. ELVSTED No. And the people knew nothing about him. He hadn't been home since yesterday afternoon, they said.

TESMAN Yesterday! Fancy, how could they say that?

MRS. ELVSTED Oh, I am sure something terrible must have happened to him.

TESMAN Hedda dear — how would it be if I were to go and make inquiries——?

HEDDA No, no — don't you mix yourself up in this affair.

JUDGE BRACK, *with his hat in his hand, enters by the hall door, which* BERTA *opens, and closes behind him. He looks grave and bows in silence.*

TESMAN Oh, is that you, my dear Judge? Eh?

BRACK Yes. It was imperative I should see you this evening.

TESMAN I can see you have heard the news about Aunt Rina?

BRACK Yes, that among other things.

TESMAN Isn't it sad—eh?

BRACK Well, my dear Tesman, that depends on how you look at it.

TESMAN [*Looks doubtfully at him.*] Has anything else happened?

BRACK Yes.

HEDDA [*In suspense.*] Anything sad, Judge Brack?

BRACK That, too, depends on how you look at it, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Unable to restrain her anxiety.*] Oh! it is something about Eilert Lövborg!

BRACK [*With a glance at her.*] What makes you think that, Madam? Perhaps you had already heard something——?

MRS. ELVSTED [*In confusion.*] No, nothing at all, but——

TESMAN Oh, for heaven's sake, tell us!

BRACK [*Shrugging his shoulders.*] Well, I regret to say Eilert Lövborg has been taken to the hospital. He is lying at the point of death.

MRS. ELVSTED [*Shrieks.*] Oh God! oh God——!

TESMAN To the hospital! And at the point of death!

HEDDA [*Involuntarily.*] So soon then——

MRS. ELVSTED [*Wailing.*] And we parted in anger, Hedda!

HEDDA [*Whispers.*] Thea—Thea—be careful!

MRS. ELVSTED [*Not heeding her.*] I must go to him! I must see him alive!

BRACK It is useless, Madam. No one will be admitted.

MRS. ELVSTED Oh, at least tell me what has happened to him? What is it?

TESMAN You don't mean to say that he has himself——Eh?

HEDDA Yes, I am sure he has.

TESMAN Hedda, how can you——?

BRACK [*Keeping his eyes fixed upon her.*] Unfortunately you have guessed quite correctly, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED Oh, how horrible!

TESMAN Himself, then! Fancy that!

HEDDA Shot himself!

BRACK Rightly guessed again, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED [*With an effort at self-control.*] When did it happen, Mr. Brack?

BRACK This afternoon—between three and four.

TESMAN But, good Lord, where did he do it? Eh?

BRACK [*With some hesitation.*] Where? Well—I suppose at his lodgings.

MRS. ELVSTED No, that cannot be; for I was there between six and seven.

BRACK Well then, somewhere else. I don't know exactly. I only know that he was found——. He had shot himself—in the breast.

MRS. ELVSTED Oh, how terrible! That he should die like that!

HEDDA [*To* BRACK.] Was it in the breast?

BRACK Yes—as I told you.

HEDDA Not in the temple?

BRACK In the breast, Mrs. Tesman.

HEDDA Well, well—the breast is a good place, too.

BRACK How do you mean, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA [*Evasively.*] Oh, nothing—nothing.

TESMAN And the wound is dangerous, you say—eh?

BRACK Absolutely mortal. The end has probably come by this time.

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, yes, I feel it. The end! The end! Oh, Hedda——!

TESMAN But tell me, how have you learnt all this?

BRACK [*Curtly.*] Through one of the police. A man I had some business with.

HEDDA [*In a clear voice.*] At last a deed worth doing!

TESMAN [*Terrified.*] Good heavens, Hedda! what are you saying?

HEDDA I say there is beauty in this.

BRACK H'm, Mrs. Tesman——

TESMAN Beauty! Fancy that!

MRS. ELVSTED Oh, Hedda, how can you talk of beauty in such an act!

HEDDA Eilert Lövborg has himself made up his account with life. He has had the courage to do—the one right thing.

MRS. ELVSTED No, you must never think that was how it happened! It must have been in delirium that he did it.

TESMAN In despair!

HEDDA That he did not. I am certain of that.

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, yes! In delirium! Just as when he tore up our manuscript.

BRACK [*Starting.*] The manuscript? Has he torn that up?

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, last night.

TESMAN [*Whispers softly.*] Oh, Hedda, we shall never get over this.

BRACK H'm, very extraordinary.

TESMAN [*Moving about the room.*] To think of Eilert going out of the world in this way! And not leaving behind him the book that would have immortalised his name——

MRS. ELVSTED Oh, if only it could be put together again!

TESMAN Yes, if it only could! I don't know what I would not give——

MRS. ELVSTED Perhaps it can, Mr. Tesman.

TESMAN What do you mean?

MRS. ELVSTED [*Searches in the pocket of her dress.*] Look here. I have kept all the loose notes he used to dictate from.

HEDDA [*A step forward.*] Ah——!

TESMAN You have kept them, Mrs. Elvsted! Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, I have them here. I put them in my pocket when I left home. Here they still are——

TESMAN Oh, do let me see them!

MRS. ELVSTED [*Hands him a bundle of papers.*] But they are in such disorder—all mixed up.

TESMAN Fancy, if we could make something out of them, after all! Perhaps if we two put our heads together——

MRS. ELVSTED Oh yes, at least let us try——

TESMAN We will manage it! We must! I will dedicate my life to this task.

HEDDA You, George? Your life?

TESMAN Yes, or rather all the time I can spare. My own collections must wait in the meantime. Hedda—you understand, eh? I owe this to Eilert's memory.

HEDDA Perhaps.

TESMAN And so, my dear Mrs. Elvsted, we will give our whole minds to it. There is no use in brooding over what can't be undone—eh? We must try to control our grief as much as possible, and——

MRS. ELVSTED Yes, yes, Mr. Tesman, I will do the best I can.

TESMAN Well then, come here. I can't rest until we have looked through the notes. Where shall we sit? Here? No, in there, in the back room. Excuse me, my dear Judge. Come with me, Mrs. Elvsted.

MRS. ELVSTED Oh, if only it were possible!

TESMAN *and* MRS. ELVSTED *go into the back room. She takes off her hat and cloak. They both sit at the table under the hanging lamp, and are soon deep in an eager examination of the papers.*

HEDDA *crosses to the stove and sits in the arm-chair. Presently* BRACK *goes up to her.*

HEDDA [*In a low voice.*] Oh, what a sense of freedom it gives one, this act of Eilert Lövborg's.

BRACK Freedom, Mrs. Hedda? Well, of course, it is a release for him——

HEDDA I mean for me. It gives me a sense of freedom to know that a deed of deliberate courage is still possible in this world,—a deed of spontaneous beauty.

BRACK [*Smiling.*] H'm — my dear Mrs. Hedda——

HEDDA Oh, I know what you are going to say. For you are a kind of specialist too, like—you know!

BRACK [*Looking hard at her.*] Eilert Lövborg was more to you than perhaps you are willing to admit to yourself. Am I wrong?

HEDDA I don't answer such questions. I only know that Eilert Lövborg has had the courage to live his life after his own fashion. And then—the last great act, with its beauty! Ah! that he should have the will and the strength to turn away from the banquet of life—so early.

BRACK I am sorry, Mrs. Hedda, —but I fear I must dispel an amiable illusion.

HEDDA Illusion?

BRACK Which could not have lasted long in any case.

HEDDA What do you mean?

BRACK Eilert Lövborg did not shoot himself—voluntarily.

HEDDA Not voluntarily?

BRACK No. The thing did not happen exactly as I told it.

HEDDA [*In suspense.*] Have you concealed something? What is it?

BRACK For poor Mrs. Elvsted's sake I idealised the facts a little.

HEDDA What are the facts?

BRACK First, that he is already dead.

HEDDA At the hospital?

BRACK Yes—without regaining consciousness.

HEDDA What more have you concealed?

BRACK This—the event did not happen at his lodgings.

HEDDA Oh, that can make no difference.

BRACK Perhaps it may. For I must tell you—Eilert Lövborg was found shot in—in Mademoiselle Diana's boudoir.

HEDDA [*Makes a motion as if to rise, but sinks back again.*] That is impossible, Judge Brack! He cannot have been there again to-day.

BRACK He was there this afternoon. He went there, he said, to demand the return of something which they had taken from him. Talked wildly about a lost child——

HEDDA Ah — so that was why——

BRACK I thought probably he meant his manuscript; but now I hear he destroyed that himself. So I suppose it must have been his pocket-book.

HEDDA Yes, no doubt. And there—there he was found?

BRACK Yes, there. With a pistol in his breast-pocket, discharged. The ball had lodged in a vital part.

HEDDA In the breast—yes.

BRACK No—in the bowels.

HEDDA [*Looks up at him with an expression of loathing.*] That too! Oh, what curse is it that makes everything I touch turn ludicrous and mean?

BRACK There is one point more, Mrs. Hedda—another disagreeable feature in the affair.

HEDDA And what is that?

BRACK The pistol he carried——

HEDDA [*Breathless.*] Well? What of it?

BRACK He must have stolen it.

HEDDA [*Leaps up.*] Stolen it! That is not true! He did not steal it!

BRACK No other explanation is possible. He must have stolen it——. Hush!

TESMAN *and* MRS. ELVSTED *have risen from the table in the back room, and come into the drawing-room.*

TESMAN [*With papers in both his hands.*] Hedda dear, it is almost impossible to see under that lamp. Think of that!

HEDDA Yes, I am thinking.

TESMAN Would you mind our sitting at your writing-table—eh?

HEDDA If you like. [*Quickly.*] No, wait! Let me clear it first!

TESMAN Oh, you needn't trouble, Hedda. There is plenty of room.

HEDDA No, no, let me clear it, I say! I will take these things in and put them on the piano. There! [*She has drawn out an object, covered with sheet music, from under the bookcase, places several other pieces of music upon it, and carries the whole into the inner room, to the left.* TESMAN *lays the scraps of paper on the writing-table, and moves the lamp there from the corner table. He and* MRS. ELVSTED *sit down and proceed with their work.* HEDDA *returns.*]

HEDDA [*Behind* MRS. ELVSTED'S *chair, gently ruffling her hair.*] Well, my sweet Thea,—how goes it with Eilert Lövborg's monument?

MRS. ELVSTED [*Looks dispiritedly up at her.*] Oh, it will be terribly hard to put in order.

TESMAN We must manage it. I am determined. And arranging other people's papers is just the work for me. [HEDDA *goes over to the stove, and seats herself on one of the footstools.* BRACK *stands over her, leaning on the arm-chair.*]

HEDDA [*Whispers.*] What did you say about the pistol?

BRACK [*Softly.*] That he must have stolen it.

HEDDA Why stolen it?

BRACK Because every other explanation ought to be impossible, Mrs. Hedda.

HEDDA Indeed?

BRACK [*Glances at her.*] Of course Eilert Lövborg was here this morning. Was he not?

HEDDA Yes.

BRACK Were you alone with him?

HEDDA Part of the time.

BRACK Did you not leave the room whilst he was here?

HEDDA No.

BRACK Try to recollect. Were you not out of the room a moment?

HEDDA Yes, perhaps just a moment—out in the hall.

BRACK And where was your pistol-case during that time?

HEDDA I had it locked up in——

BRACK Well, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA The case stood there on the writing-table.

BRACK Have you looked since, to see whether both the pistols are there?

HEDDA No.

BRACK Well, you need not. I saw the pistol found in Lövborg's pocket, and I knew it at once as the one I had seen yesterday—and before, too.

HEDDA Have you it with you?

BRACK No; the police have it.

HEDDA What will the police do with it?

BRACK Search till they find the owner.

HEDDA Do you think they will succeed?

BRACK [*Bends over her and whispers.*] No, Hedda Gabler—not so long as I say nothing.

HEDDA [*Looks frightened at him.*] And if you do not say nothing,—what then?

BRACK [*Shrugs his shoulders.*] There is always the possibility that the pistol was stolen.

HEDDA [*Firmly.*] Death rather than that.

BRACK [*Smiling.*] People say such things—but they don't do them.

HEDDA [*Without replying.*] And supposing the pistol was not stolen, and the owner is discovered? What then?

BRACK Well, Hedda — then comes the scandal.

HEDDA The scandal!

BRACK Yes, the scandal—of which you are so mortally afraid. You will, of course, be brought before the court—both you and Mademoiselle Diana. She will have to explain how the thing happened—whether it was an accidental shot or murder. Did the pistol go off as he was trying to take it out of his pocket, to threaten her with? Or did she tear the pistol out of his hand, shoot him, and push it back into his pocket? That would be quite like her; for she is an able-bodied young person, this same Mademoiselle Diana.

HEDDA But *I* have nothing to do with all this repulsive business.

BRACK No. But you will have to answer the question: Why did you give Eilert Lövborg the pistol? And what conclusions will people draw from the fact that you did give it to him?

HEDDA [*Lets her head sink.*] That is true. I did not think of that.

BRACK Well, fortunately, there is no danger, so long as I say nothing.

HEDDA [*Looks up at him.*] So I am in your power, Judge Brack.

You have me at your beck and call, from this time forward.

BRACK [*Whispers softly.*] Dearest Hedda—believe me—I shall not abuse my advantage.

HEDDA I am in your power none the less. Subject to your will and your demands. A slave, a slave then! [*Rises impetuously.*] No, I cannot endure the thought of that! Never!

BRACK [*Looks half-mockingly at her.*] People generally get used to the inevitable.

HEDDA [*Returns his look.*] Yes, perhaps. [*She crosses to the writing-table. Suppressing an involuntary smile, she imitates* TESMAN'S *intonations.*] Well? Are you getting on, George? Eh?

TESMAN Heaven knows, dear. In any case it will be the work of months.

HEDDA [*As before.*] Fancy that! [*Passes her hands softly through* MRS. ELVSTED'S *hair.*] Doesn't it seem strange to you, Thea? Here are you sitting with Tesman—just as you used to sit with Eilert Lövborg?

MRS. ELVSTED Ah, if I could only inspire your husband in the same way!

HEDDA Oh, that will come too —in time.

TESMAN Yes, do you know, Hedda—I really think I begin to feel something of the sort. But won't you go and sit with Brack again?

HEDDA Is there nothing I can do to help you two?

TESMAN No, nothing in the world. [*Turning his head.*] I trust to you to keep Hedda company, my dear Brack.

BRACK [*With a glance at* HEDDA.] With the very greatest of pleasure.

HEDDA Thanks. But I am tired this evening. I will go in and lie down a little on the sofa.

TESMAN Yes, do dear — eh?

HEDDA *goes into the back room and draws the curtains. A short pause. Suddenly she is heard playing a wild dance on the piano.*

MRS. ELVSTED [*Starts from her chair.*] Oh—what is that?

TESMAN [*Runs to the doorway.*] Why, my dearest Hedda —don't play dance-music tonight! Just think of Aunt Rina! And of Eilert too!

HEDDA [*Puts her head out between the curtains.*] And of Aunt Julia. And of all the rest of them. —After this, I will be quiet. [*Closes the curtains again.*]

TESMAN [*At the writing-table.*] It's not good for her to see us at this distressing work. I'll tell you what, Mrs. Elvsted,—you shall take the empty room at Aunt Julia's, and then I will

come over in the evenings, and we can sit and work there—eh?

HEDDA [*In the inner room.*] I hear what you are saying, Tesman. But how am *I* to get through the evenings out here?

TESMAN [*Turning over the papers.*] Oh, I daresay Judge Brack will be so kind as to look in now and then, even though I am out.

BRACK [*In the arm-chair, calls out gaily.*] Every blessed evening, with all the pleasure in life, Mrs. Tesman! We shall get on capitally together, we two!

HEDDA [*Speaking loud and clear.*] Yes, don't you flatter yourself we will, Judge Brack? Now that you are the one cock in the basket—— [*A shot is heard within.* TESMAN, MRS. ELVSTED, *and* BRACK *leap to their feet.*]

TESMAN Oh, now she is playing with those pistols again. [*He throws back the curtains and runs in, followed by* MRS. ELVSTED. HEDDA *lies stretched on the sofa, lifeless. Confusion and cries.* BERTA *enters in alarm from the right.*]

TESMAN [*Shrieks to* BRACK.] Shot herself! Shot herself in the temple! Fancy that!

BRACK [*Half-fainting in the arm-chair.*] Good God!—people don't do such things!

Anton Chekhov

During his lifetime, Anton Chekhov was first of all a short-story writer, then a medical doctor, and finally, only after years of disappointment in the theater, a successful dramatist. He suffered many moments of indecision in each activity. On one occasion he wrote: "Medicine is my lawful wife and literature is my mistress." In spite of this feeling he did not remain a practising physician long but made a great reputation as a story writer. At the same time he tried to master the art of playwriting. When his failures in the theater discouraged him he declared: "The novel is a lawful wife, but the stage is a noisy, flashy and insolent mistress." Ironically enough, Chekhov is not so much remembered for his fidelity to either of his "wives." As a doctor he was acutely aware of the misery and poverty which he saw around him and engaged in considerable charity practice to alleviate it; as a short-story writer he was acclaimed in his own day as the Russian Maupassant; but it was drama, his "noisy, flashy and insolent mistress," which procured for him his distinguished position in world literature. Chekhov is now considered Russia's greatest playwright.

It is true, to continue the figure, that the favors of this lady were not easily won. His success as a writer of short stories was almost immediate, but he experienced several failures in the theater before he perfected the kind of play for which he is famous. He made his first reputation on the stage with inconsequential farces and vaudeville skits, mostly of peasant and bourgeois life. Such composition came easily to him. He claims to have written *The Swan Song* in an hour and five minutes. But serious drama was the form that took him longest to develop and over which he spent the greatest labor. It was his most closely considered literary expression.

Born at the very beginning of the turbulent 1860's, Chekhov matured too late in the century to experience a romantic period such as Ibsen passed through. As a child he was familiar with the estates

of the landed gentry, but he never forgot that he was descended from serfs. He realized that aristocrats like Tolstoy and Turgenev had cultural security and that this easy acquaintance with a literary tradition "which comes as a natural birthright to the writers of the nobility, the lower middle classes buy with the price of their youth." As a child he also saw the rise of a new middle class from liberated serfs and the beginnings of social reform. And he shared in the religious skepticism that followed the development of the middle class and accepted the scientific materialism of his day.

It is not surprising, then, that when he turned to serious literature he wrote of the problems of the lower and middle classes. He always had a boundless faith in man and in man's potential for progress. Speaking of those writers who saw man only as another animal he wrote: "He who sincerely thinks that higher, transcendental aims are as little necessary to man as to a cow, that in these aims lies our whole misfortune,—for him there is left only to eat, drink, sleep, or, when he grows sick of all that, to go and smash his head on the edge of his trunk." The characters of Chekhov's mature plays were always defeated, but they never lost faith in themselves as human beings. Uncle Vanya declares at the end of his wasted life that he "must get to work at once . . . do something." Irina, in *The Three Sisters,* after her personal tragedy, affirms: "I shall teach in the school, and I will give all my life to those to whom it may be of use."

It was in his short stories that Chekhov first developed his technique of observing a slice of life objectively. When he began to write for the theater, he was already convinced that "The artist should be, not the judge of his characters and their conversation, but only an unbiased witness." And he had worked out his artistic creed. "I am neither a liberal nor an evolutionist," he wrote, "neither a monk nor an indifferentist. I should like to be a free artist and that is all. My holy of holies is the human body, health, intelligence, talent, inspiration, love and the most complete freedom, freedom from despotism and lies."

Chekhov's first full-length play, *Ivanov,* enjoyed a moderate success in St. Petersburg because of the performance of a popular actor, Davidov, in the title role. But the critics called it "bold, cynical, immoral, disgusting." Even Chekhov's great admirer, Vladimir Nemirovitch-Dantchenko, thought it was "merely a rough draft for

an excellent play." This criticism was not unwarranted since the plot is melodramatic and the principal character, Ivanov, becomes tiresome. Chekhov concentrated too much on Ivanov's personal tragedy and failed to produce the kind of play for which he was later to become famous—a play in which the tragedy of an entire social group is revealed rather than that of a single individual. His only other play of significance written during his apprentice days in the theater was *The Forest Spirit,* which also failed because of the author's lack of skill as a playwright.

The failure of his first mature play, *The Sea Gull,* when it was originally produced in St. Petersburg, was due to another reason. Chekhov had not yet found a producing group that could successfully interpret the complexity and completeness of life which he created. Although the Russian theater at that time was becoming increasingly vital, there was no acting group able to produce in a naturalistic manner the play which Chekhov had written. It is difficult to determine now just how much of Chekhov's success was due to his own talent and how much to the creation of the Moscow Art Theatre. After the historic eighteen-hour meeting of Constantin Stanislavsky and Nemirovitch-Dantchenko on June 21, 1897, there was created an acting group capable of doing what Chekhov needed. Certainly Stanislavsky and the other directors of the Moscow Art Theatre were as thoroughly in revolt against the conventions of the well-made play and romantic tragedy as was Chekhov. In his biography, *My Life in Art,* Stanislavsky outlined his theory of using real life as the model for every element in the production of a play. His theory of verism, "Art into life and life into art," was arrived at independently of Chekhov, but it contained the essence of what Chekhov had set himself to do.

Stanislavsky's original contribution was an insistence upon perfection in every aspect of production. Even though the star system was an established method of playing and of attracting an audience by the fame of one actor, he rejected it because of the tendency of one personality to take precedence over what the author had created. He insisted that all the actors, major and minor, study the play at such length that on the stage they could re-create the characters as the playwright conceived them and give the illusion of actually *being* those characters. And he expected the same kind of thorough-

ness and authenticity from every contributing artist. He was willing to work on a play for a year and have a half-dozen dress rehearsals before presenting it to an audience. Here at last was a group that could give the kind of ensemble playing that was required for Chekhov's dramas.

When the Moscow Art Theatre chose to rescue *The Sea Gull* from oblivion, they created a tremendous success. They not only established Chekhov's reputation but their own as well. Thereafter, in recognition of Chekhov's contribution, the symbol of the sea gull ornamented their curtain.

In *The Sea Gull* Chekhov finally established his technique of putting many characters upon the stage and developing all of them instead of concentrating on a single individual. Also, there is more emphasis in this play than in *Ivanov* upon a positive point of view toward life. During the course of the action, the characters become aware of the spiritual poverty of their lives, and they rebel against it. Chekhov said that, in the best realistic literature, "you feel, besides life as it is, the life which ought to be, and that captivates you." His audiences were captivated even though he had turned entirely from the farcial humor of peasant life to a serious consideration of frustrated intellectuals and decadent aristocrats.

The Sea Gull is the story of a young actress, Nina, who is loved by an unsuccessful poet, Treplev. She, however, is attracted to a popular novelist, Trigorin, who is the lover of Treplev's mother, a famous actress. Nina follows Trigorin from the provinces to Moscow, where she dreams of becoming a great actress. After she has borne Trigorin an illegitimate child and has found that she will always be a mediocre actress, she discovers that he is still attracted to the mature charms of Treplev's mother. Out of the tragedy of her life, this "wounded sea gull" learns the lesson that so many of Chekhov's later characters do: that it does not matter whether or not she is a great actress provided she finds satisfaction in her work.

This same attitude toward life is adopted by the characters in *Uncle Vanya.* The original version of this play, *The Forest Spirit,* had been a failure on the stage in 1889. But Chekhov rewrote it as *Uncle Vanya,* and the Moscow Art Theatre scored another major triumph with their production of it ten years later. In this play Chekhov realized his characters as a group so thoroughly that we

feel we know them, and we appreciate the complexity of their lives. He observed them with pity, it is true, and for that reason has been called by John Gassner the Sophocles of the Russian theater. But this pity did not interfere with the objectivity of his scrutiny. Thus he created a new art form, one that has been called modern tragedy. In modern tragedy the people are not heroic figures destroyed in a melodramatic moment by some tragic flaw. They are, instead, convincing men and women—sometimes of great potentiality, sometimes not—whose hopes and ambitions are gradually worn away as life closes in on them little by little. Instead of a sequence of events for suspense, Chekhov used a developing mood. In thus substituting for the carefully worked plot of the well-made play the more aimless action of characters stumbling through life, he created what has been called naturalistic drama.

Stanislavsky's staging of *The Three Sisters* in 1901 gave the Moscow Art Theatre its greatest success in the naturalistic method. The United States, also, had a recent example of this method of staging when Katharine Cornell, abandoning the star system, presented not only herself but two other famous actresses, Judith Anderson and Ruth Gordon, in this play. Chekhov created a setting here which seems to be not of the theater but of life itself. He not only gave Stanislavsky and all subsequent producers a room which was broken into a number of independent parts but a set from which we have glimpses into other rooms. In *The Three Sisters* Stanislavsky attempted the complete illusion of reality by grouping the actors and placing the stage furniture as if the fourth wall were not removed at all, as if there were no audience looking in upon the scene. Instead of directing the action to the audience, he played it around central points on the stage.

This illusion of reality in *The Three Sisters* is aided by the almost bewildering number of characters. It achieves unity, however, because all three sisters as well as all the other characters are facing the same dilemma—the frustration produced by the little provincial environment in which they find themselves. They all struggle against it and wish to escape, either through love affairs or by moving to Moscow, the golden city of dreams. All fail; yet all come, through tragedy, to a realization which expresses Chekhov's fundamental philosophy. The value he placed on work is eloquently expressed

by Baron Tusenbach in words that have a ring of prophecy. Julius West translates the passage: "A new age is dawning, the people are marching on us all, a powerful, health-giving storm is gathering, it is drawing near, soon it will be upon us and it will drive away laziness, indifference, the prejudice against labour, and rotten dullness from our society. I shall work, and in twenty-five or thirty years, every man will have to work. Every one!"

A similar theme was emphasized again in *The Cherry Orchard,* Chekhov's last play and one that many critics consider both his masterpiece and the apogee of naturalistic drama. The orchard itself stands for a way of life then approaching an end; and the tragedy of those who cannot face this fact is one that the playwright himself felt deeply. But Chekhov was not a revolutionary, and it is dangerous to assume that he foresaw the particular form that the Russian Revolution was to take. In his own day he took no active part in politics, and considerable distortion is necessary to make him fit into the communist ideology or any other such category. He himself claimed that *The Cherry Orchard* was not "a drama but a comedy, sometimes even a farce." He was primarily an artist interested in groups of individual human beings, and the success of the play is due to this fact.

Chekhov died of tuberculosis on July 2, 1904, a half-year after the opening of *The Cherry Orchard.* But he had filled his short life with unselfish service to medicine and literature. His dedication to humanity was such that his contemporaries thought of him almost as a saint. Maxim Gorky, the playwright, spoke of "that tender, charming smile of his which attracted one so irresistibly to him." And he summarized the feelings of Chekhov's friends by writing: "I think that in Anton Chekhov's presence every one involuntarily felt in himself a desire to be simpler, more truthful, more one's self. . . . Beautifully simple himself, he loved everything simple, genuine, sincere, and he had a peculiar way of making other people simple."

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

1860 Born January 17 at Taganrod on the Black Sea. His father, a liberated serf, was a grocer. He was a devout man, but his strictness turned Anton from religion. Chekhov said that he never knew a real childhood, and he wrote of his youth: "Long ago I lost my faith; it is with perplexity that I look upon religious people among the intelligentsia."

1876 The grocery store failed, and the family moved to Moscow. Anton remained in Taganrod and supported himself until he finished high school. Poor health, that started at this time, later turned into tuberculosis.

1879 Entered the University of Moscow as a medical student.

1880-87 CHEKHOV AS A HUMORIST

During this period, he published more than four hundred humorous stories of Russian life. "I wrote as a bird sings. . . . I could write an essay, a story, a short play, at any time and without effort. . . . I laughed and made others laugh." For many years the money that his humorous stories earned was his and his family's principal support.

1884 He was awarded an M.D. degree, but writing remained his principal occupation. *Tales of Melpomene,* a collection of his early stories, was published by a humor paper. *On the High Road,* his greatest one-act play, was suppressed by the censor as "gloomy and filthy."

1885 Motley Tales, his first book of short stories.

1886 The Swan Song, a one-act farce.

1887-95 PERIOD OF THE SHORT STORIES

1887 Ivanov, a four-act play, was produced in Moscow. Critics condemned it, but Chekhov wrote: "This play may be bad, yet I have created a type of literary significance." *At Twilight* is a volume of stories. *The Steppe,* a famous long story, was published.

1888 He was awarded the Pushkin prize (500 rubles) for his stories. Many other volumes followed in this period. He became world famous for his slice-of-life style and his emphasis on character instead of plot. Of his own realistic point of view he said: "No literature can in its cynicism surpass actual life. . . . Artistic literature is called so just because it depicts life as it really is. Its aim is truth,—unconditional and honest. . . . To a chemist, nothing on earth is unclean. A writer must be as objective as a chemist; he must abandon the subjective line; he must know that dung-heaps play a very respectable part in the landscape, and that evil passions are as inherent in life as good ones."

1888 The Bear was a popular vaudeville skit.

1889 The Forest Spirit, a play in four acts, was not popular. He later rewrote it as *Uncle Vanya.* It is the first development of his realistic group studies. He declared that plays should be "as complex and as simple as life is. People dine and at the same time their happiness is made or their lives are broken." *The Proposal* was a successful one-act farce.

1890 Chekhov did not have much interest in social theories and never

joined a political group, but he was interested in social problems. He investigated the penal colony on Sakhalin Island to "pay a little of my debt to medicine," and because "Sakhalin is a place of unbearable suffering of which man alone, free or enslaved, is capable."

1892 He went to Novgorod Province to aid in famine relief. Bought a farm at Melikhovo village and moved with his parents from Moscow. He donated his medical services in a cholera epidemic and later built several village schools with his own money.

1896-1904 PERIOD OF THE DRAMAS

1896 The Sea Gull, a serious four-act play, was a failure in St. Petersburg. In his disappointment he said: "Never will I write these plays or try to produce them, not if I live to be 700 years old."

1898 The Sea Gull, produced by the Moscow Art Theatre in the capital, was a tremendous success. This company of actors abandoned the star system and concentrated on perfecting each individual performer. They tried to get away from external realism to the inner psychological realism of life. Since Chekhov had now perfected his technique of group rather than individual tragedies, his audience saw a perfect interpretation.

1899 Uncle Vanya. Chekhov, who had built a house near Yalta this year, was awakened by telephone calls and telegrams reporting the reception of the play. "It's the first time that my own fame has kept me awake," he said.

1901 The Three Sisters. Even though Chekhov felt that "The play turned out dull, verbose, and awkward," the Moscow production was a triumph. When this play was produced in New York in 1942 by Katharine Cornell, it ran for 123 performances and was his only real success on the American commercial stage. He married the actress, Olga Knipper.

1904 The Cherry Orchard. "I am writing about life," he said of this play. "This is a gray everyday life indeed . . . but not an eternal whimpering."

Uncle Vanya[1]

Scenes from Country Life

IN FOUR ACTS

by ANTON CHEKHOV

Translated from the Russian by MARIAN FELL

Characters

ALEXANDER SEREBRAKOFF, *a retired professor*
HELENA, *his wife, twenty-seven years old*
SONIA, *his daughter by a former marriage*
MME. VOITSKAYA, *widow of a privy councillor, and mother of Serebrakoff's first wife*
IVAN (VANYA) VOITSKI, *her son*
MICHAEL ASTROFF, *a doctor*
ILIA (WAFFLES) TELEGIN, *an impoverished landowner*
MARINA, *an old nurse*
A WORKMAN

The scene is laid at SEREBRAKOFF'S *country place.*

[1] Reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

A country house on a terrace. In front of it a garden. In an avenue of trees, under an old poplar, stands a table set for tea, with a samovar, etc. Some benches and chairs stand near the table. On one of them is lying a guitar. A hammock is swung near the table. It is three o'clock in the afternoon of a cloudy day.

MARINA, *a quiet, grey-haired, little old woman, is sitting at the table knitting a stocking.*

ASTROFF *is walking up and down near her.*

MARINA [*Pouring some tea into a glass.*] Take a little tea, my son.

ASTROFF [*Takes the glass from her unwillingly.*] Somehow, I don't seem to want any.

MARINA Then will you have a little vodka instead?

ASTROFF No, I don't drink vodka every day, and besides, it is too hot now. [*A pause.*] Tell me, nurse, how long have we known each other?

MARINA [*Thoughtfully.*] Let me see, how long is it? Lord—help me to remember. You first came here, into our parts—let me think—when was it? Sonia's mother was still alive—it was two winters before she died; that was eleven years ago—[*Thoughtfully.*] perhaps more.

ASTROFF Have I changed much since then?

MARINA Oh, yes. You were handsome and young then, and now you are an old man and not handsome any more. You drink, too.

ASTROFF Yes, ten years have made me another man. And why? Because I am overworked. Nurse, I am on my feet from dawn till dusk. I know no rest; at night I tremble under my blankets for fear of being dragged out to visit some one who is sick; I have toiled without repose or a day's freedom since I have known you; could I help growing old? And then, existence is tedious, anyway; it is a senseless, dirty business, this life, and goes heavily. Every one about here is silly, and after living with them for two or three years one grows silly oneself. It is inevitable. [*Twisting his moustache.*] See what a long moustache I have grown. A foolish, long moustache. Yes, I am as silly as the rest, nurse, but not as stupid; no, I have not grown stupid. Thank God, my brain is not

addled yet, though my feelings have grown numb. I ask nothing, I need nothing, I love no one, unless it is yourself alone. [*He kisses her head.*] I had a nurse just like you when I was a child.

MARINA Don't you want a bite of something to eat?

ASTROFF No. During the third week of Lent I went to the epidemic at Malitskoi. It was eruptive typhoid. The peasants were all lying side by side in their huts, and the calves and pigs were running about the floor among the sick. Such dirt there was, and smoke! Unspeakable! I slaved among those people all day, not a crumb passed my lips, but when I got home there was still no rest for me; a switchman was carried in from the railroad; I laid him on the operating table and he went and died in my arms under chloroform, and then my feelings that should have been deadened awoke again, my conscience tortured me as if I had killed the man. I sat down and closed my eyes—like this—and thought: will our descendants two hundred years from now, for whom we are breaking the road, remember to give us a kind word? No, nurse, they will forget.

MARINA Man is forgetful, but God remembers.

ASTROFF Thank you for that. You have spoken the truth.

Enter VOITSKI *from the house. He has been asleep after dinner and looks rather dishevelled. He sits down on the bench and straightens his collar.*

VOITSKI H'm. Yes. [*A pause.*] Yes.

ASTROFF Have you been asleep?

VOITSKI Yes, very much so. [*He yawns.*] Ever since the professor and his wife have come, our daily life seems to have jumped the track. I sleep at the wrong time, drink wine, and eat all sorts of messes for luncheon and dinner. It isn't wholesome. Sonia and I used to work together and never had an idle moment, but now Sonia works alone and I only eat and drink and sleep. Something is wrong.

MARINA [*Shaking her head.*] Such a confusion in the house! The professor gets up at twelve, the samovar is kept boiling all the morning, and everything has to wait for him. Before they came we used to have dinner at one o'clock, like everybody else, but now we have it at seven. The professor sits up all night writing and reading, and suddenly, at two o'clock, there goes the bell! Heavens, what is that? The professor wants some tea! Wake the

servants, light the samovar! Lord, what disorder!

ASTROFF Will they be here long?

VOITSKI A hundred years! The professor has decided to make his home here.

MARINA Look at this now! The samovar has been on the table for two hours, and they are all out walking!

VOITSKI All right, don't get excited; here they come.

Voices are heard approaching. SEREBRAKOFF, HELENA, SONIA, *and* TELEGIN *come in from the depths of the garden, returning from their walk.*

SEREBRAKOFF Superb! Superb! What beautiful views!

TELEGIN They are wonderful, your Excellency.

SONIA To-morrow we shall go into the woods, shall we, papa?

VOITSKI Ladies and gentlemen, tea is ready.

SEREBRAKOFF Won't you please be good enough to send my tea into the library? I still have some work to finish.

SONIA I am sure you will love the woods.

HELENA, SEREBRAKOFF, *and* SONIA *go into the house.* TELEGIN *sits down at the table beside* MARINA.

VOITSKI There goes our learned scholar on a hot, sultry day like this, in his overcoat and goloshes and carrying an umbrella!

ASTROFF He is trying to take good care of his health.

VOITSKI How lovely she is! How lovely! I have never in my life seen a more beautiful woman.

TELEGIN Do you know, Marina, that as I walk in the fields or in the shady garden, as I look at this table here, my heart swells with unbounded happiness. The weather is enchanting, the birds are singing, we are all living in peace and contentment—what more could the soul desire? [*Takes a glass of tea.*]

VOITSKI [*Dreaming.*] Such eyes—a glorious woman!

ASTROFF Come, Ivan, tell us something.

VOITSKI [*Indolently.*] What shall I tell you?

ASTROFF Haven't you any news for us?

VOITSKI No, it is all stale. I am just the same as usual, or perhaps worse, because I have become lazy. I don't do anything now but croak like an old raven. My mother, the old magpie, is still chattering about the emancipation of woman, with one eye on her grave and the other on her learned books, in which she

is always looking for the dawn of a new life.

ASTROFF And the professor?

VOITSKI The professor sits in his library from morning till night, as usual—

"Straining the mind, wrinkling the brow,
We write, write, write,
Without respite
Or hope of praise in the future or now."

Poor paper! He ought to write his autobiography; he would make a really splendid subject for a book! Imagine it, the life of a retired professor, as stale as a piece of hardtack, tortured by gout, headaches, and rheumatism, his liver bursting with jealousy and envy, living on the estate of his first wife, although he hates it, because he can't afford to live in town. He is everlastingly whining about his hard lot, though, as a matter of fact, he is extraordinarily lucky. He is the son of a common deacon and has attained the professor's chair, become the son-in-law of a senator, is called "your Excellency," and so on. But I'll tell you something; the man has been writing on art for twenty-five years, and he doesn't know the very first thing about it. For twenty-five years he has been chewing on other men's thoughts about realism, naturalism, and all such foolishness; for twenty-five years he has been reading and writing things that clever men have long known and stupid ones are not interested in; for twenty-five years he has been making his imaginary mountains out of molehills. And just think of the man's self-conceit and presumption all this time! For twenty-five years he has been masquerading in false clothes and has now retired, absolutely unknown to any living soul; and yet see him! stalking across the earth like a demi-god!

ASTROFF I believe you envy him.

VOITSKI Yes, I do. Look at the success he has had with women! Don Juan himself was not more favoured. His first wife, who was my sister, was a beautiful, gentle being, as pure as the blue heaven there above us, noble, great-hearted, with more admirers than he has pupils, and she loved him as only beings of angelic purity can love those who are as pure and beautiful as themselves. His mother-in-law, my mother, adores him to this day, and he still inspires a sort of worshipful awe in her. His second wife is, as you see, a brilliant beauty; she married him in his old age and

has surrendered all the glory of her beauty and freedom to him. Why? What for?

ASTROFF Is she faithful to him?

VOITSKI Yes, unfortunately she is.

ASTROFF Why "unfortunately"?

VOITSKI Because such fidelity is false and unnatural, root and branch. It sounds well, but there is no logic in it. It is thought immoral for a woman to deceive an old husband whom she hates, but quite moral for her to strangle her poor youth in her breast and banish every vital desire from her heart.

TELEGIN [*In a tearful voice.*] Vanya, I don't like to hear you talk so. Listen, Vanya; every one who betrays husband or wife is faithless, and could also betray his country.

VOITSKI [*Crossly.*] Turn off the tap, Waffles.

TELEGIN No, allow me, Vanya. My wife ran away with a lover on the day after our wedding, because my exterior was unprepossessing. I have never failed in my duty since then. I love her and am true to her to this day. I help her all I can and have given my fortune to educate the daughter of herself and her lover. I have forfeited my happiness, but I have kept my pride. And she? Her youth has fled, her beauty has faded according to the laws of nature, and her lover is dead. What has she kept?

HELENA *and* SONIA *come in; after them comes* MME. VOITSKAYA *carrying a book. She sits down and begins to read. Some one hands her a glass of tea which she drinks without looking up.*

SONIA [*Hurriedly, to the nurse.*] There are some peasants waiting out there. Go and see what they want. I shall pour the tea. [*Pours out some glasses of tea.*]

MARINA *goes out.* HELENA *takes a glass and sits drinking in the hammock.*

ASTROFF I have come to see your husband. You wrote me that he had rheumatism and I know not what else, and that he was very ill, but he appears to be as lively as a cricket.

HELENA He had a fit of the blues yesterday evening and complained of pains in his legs, but he seems all right again to-day.

ASTROFF And I galloped over here twenty miles at break-neck speed! No matter, though, it is not the first time. Once here, however, I am going to stay until to-morrow, and at any rate sleep *quantum satis.*

SONIA Oh, splendid! You so

seldom spend the night with us. Have you had dinner yet?

ASTROFF No.

SONIA Good. So you will have it with us. We dine at seven now. [*Drinks her tea.*] This tea is cold!

TELEGIN Yes, the samovar has grown cold.

HELENA Don't mind, Monsieur Ivan, we will drink cold tea, then.

TELEGIN I beg your pardon, my name is not Ivan, but Ilia, ma'am—Ilia Telegin, or Waffles, as I am sometimes called on account of my pock-marked face. I am Sonia's godfather, and his Excellency, your husband, knows me very well. I now live with you, ma'am, on this estate, and perhaps you will be so good as to notice that I dine with you every day.

SONIA He is our great help, our right-hand man. [*Tenderly.*] Dear godfather, let me pour you some tea.

MME. VOITSKAYA Oh! Oh!

SONIA What is it, grandmother?

MME. VOITSKAYA I forgot to tell Alexander—I have lost my memory—I received a letter today from Paul Alexevitch in Kharkoff. He has sent me a new pamphlet.

ASTROFF Is it interesting?

MME. VOITSKAYA Yes, but strange. He refutes the very theories which he defended seven years ago. It is appalling!

VOITSKI There is nothing appalling about it. Drink your tea, mamma.

MME. VOITSKAYA It seems you never want to listen to what I have to say. Pardon me, Jean, but you have changed so in the last year that I hardly know you. You used to be a man of settled convictions and had an illuminating personality——

VOITSKI Oh, yes. I had an illuminating personality, which illuminated no one. [*A pause.*] I had an illuminating personality! You couldn't say anything more biting. I am forty-seven years old. Until last year I endeavoured, as you do now, to blind my eyes by your pedantry to the truths of life. But now—Oh, if you only knew! If you knew how I lie awake at night, heartsick and angry, to think how stupidly I have wasted my time when I might have been winning from life everything which my old age now forbids.

SONIA Uncle Vanya, how dreary!

MME. VOITSKAYA [*To her son.*] You speak as if your former convictions were somehow to blame, but you yourself, not they, were at fault. You have for-

gotten that a conviction, in itself, is nothing but a dead letter. You should have done something.

VOITSKI Done something! Not every man is capable of being a writer *perpetuum mobile* like your Herr Professor.

MME. VOITSKAYA What do you mean by that?

SONIA [*Imploringly.*] Mother! Uncle Vanya! I entreat you!

VOITSKI I am silent. I apologise and am silent. [*A pause.*]

HELENA What a fine day! Not too hot. [*A pause.*]

VOITSKI A fine day to hang oneself.

TELEGIN *tunes the guitar.* MARINA *appears near the house, calling the chickens.*

MARINA Chick, chick, chick!

SONIA What did the peasants want, nurse?

MARINA The same old thing, the same old nonsense. Chick, chick, chick!

SONIA Why are you calling the chickens?

MARINA The speckled hen has disappeared with her chicks. I am afraid the crows have got her.

TELEGIN *plays a polka. All listen in silence. Enter* WORKMAN.

WORKMAN Is the doctor here? [*To* ASTROFF.] Excuse me, sir, but I have been sent to fetch you.

ASTROFF Where are you from?

WORKMAN The factory.

ASTROFF [*Annoyed.*] Thank you. There is nothing for it, then, but to go. [*Looking around him for his cap.*] Damn it, this is annoying!

SONIA Yes, it is too bad, really. You must come back to dinner from the factory.

ASTROFF No, I won't be able to do that. It will be too late. Now where, where— [*To the* WORKMAN.] Look here, my man, get me a glass of vodka, will you? [*The* WORKMAN *goes out.*] Where —where— [*Finds his cap.*] One of the characters in Ostroff's plays is a man with a long moustache and short wits, like me. However, let me bid you goodbye, ladies and gentlemen. [*To* HELENA.] I should be really delighted if you would come to see me some day with Miss Sonia. My estate is small, but if you are interested in such things I should like to show you a nursery and seed-bed whose like you will not find within a thousand miles of here. My place is surrounded by government forests. The forester is old and always ailing, so I superintend almost all the work myself.

HELENA I have always heard that you were very fond of the

woods. Of course one can do a great deal of good by helping to preserve them, but does not that work interfere with your real calling?

ASTROFF God alone knows what a man's real calling is.

HELENA And do you find it interesting?

ASTROFF Yes, very.

VOITSKI [*Sarcastically.*] Oh, extremely!

HELENA You are still young, not over thirty-six or seven, I should say, and I suspect that the woods do not interest you as much as you say they do. I should think you would find them monotonous.

SONIA No, the work is thrilling. Dr. Astroff watches over the old woods and sets out new plantations every year, and he has already received a diploma and a bronze medal. If you will listen to what he can tell you, you will agree with him entirely. He says that forests are the ornaments of the earth, that they teach mankind to understand beauty and attune his mind to lofty sentiments. Forests temper a stern climate, and in countries where the climate is milder, less strength is wasted in the battle with nature, and the people are kind and gentle. The inhabitants of such countries are handsome, tractable, sensitive, graceful in speech and gesture. Their philosophy is joyous, art and science blossom among them, their treatment of women is full of exquisite nobility——

VOITSKI [*Laughing.*] Bravo! Bravo! All that is very pretty, but it is also unconvincing. So, my friend [*To* ASTROFF.] you must let me go on burning firewood in my stoves and building my sheds of planks.

ASTROFF You can burn peat in your stoves and build your sheds of stone. Oh, I don't object, of course, to cutting wood from necessity, but why destroy the forests? The woods of Russia are trembling under the blows of the axe. Millions of trees have perished. The homes of the wild animals and birds have been desolated; the rivers are shrinking, and many beautiful landscapes are gone forever. And why? Because men are too lazy and stupid to stoop down and pick up their fuel from the ground. [*To* HELENA.] Am I not right, Madame? Who but a stupid barbarian could burn so much beauty in his stove and destroy that which he cannot make? Man is endowed with reason and the power to create, so that he may increase that which has been given him, but until

now he has not created, but demolished. The forests are disappearing, the rivers are running dry, the game is exterminated, the climate is spoiled, and the earth becomes poorer and uglier every day. [*To* VOITSKI.] I read irony in your eye; you do not take what I am saying seriously, and—and—after all, it may very well be nonsense. But when I pass peasant-forests that I have preserved from the axe, or hear the rustling of the young plantations set out with my own hands, I feel as if I had had some small share in improving the climate, and that if mankind is happy a thousand years from now I will have been a little bit responsible for their happiness. When I plant a little birch tree and then see it budding into young green and swaying in the wind, my heart swells with pride and I—[*Sees the* WORKMAN, *who is bringing him a glass of vodka on a tray.*] however— [*He drinks.*] I must be off. Probably it is all nonsense, anyway. Good-bye.

He goes toward the house. SONIA *takes his arm and goes with him.*

SONIA When are you coming to see us again?

ASTROFF I can't say.

SONIA In a month?

ASTROFF *and* SONIA *go into the house.* HELENA *and* VOITSKI *walk over to the terrace.*

HELENA You have behaved shockingly again. Ivan, what sense was there in teasing your mother and talking about *perpetuum mobile?* And at breakfast you quarrelled with Alexander again. Really, your behaviour is too petty.

VOITSKI But if I hate him?

HELENA You hate Alexander without reason; he is like everyone else, and no worse than you are.

VIOTSKI If you could only see your face, your gestures! Oh, how tedious your life must be.

HELENA It is tedious, yes, and dreary! You all abuse my husband and look on me with compassion; you think, "Poor woman, she is married to an old man." How well I understand your compassion! As Astroff said just now, see how you thoughtlessly destroy the forests, so that there will soon be none left. So you also destroy mankind, and soon fidelity and purity and self-sacrifice will have vanished with the woods. Why cannot you look calmly at a woman unless she is yours? Because, the doctor was right, you are all possessed by a devil of destruction; you have no mercy on the woods or the birds or on women or on one another.

VOITSKI I don't like your philosophy.

HELENA That doctor has a sensitive, weary face—an interesting face. Sonia evidently likes him, and she is in love with him, and I can understand it. This is the third time he has been here since I have come, and I have not had a real talk with him yet or made much of him. He thinks I am disagreeable. Do you know, Ivan, the reason you and I are such friends? I think it is because we are both lonely and unfortunate. Yes, unfortunate. Don't look at me in that way, I don't like it.

VOITSKI How can I look at you otherwise when I love you? You are my joy, my life, and my youth. I know that my chances of being loved in return are infinitely small, do not exist, but I ask nothing of you. Only let me look at you, listen to your voice——

HELENA Hush, some one will overhear you. [*They go toward the house.*]

VOITSKI [*Following her.*] Let me speak to you of my love, do not drive me away, and this alone will be my greatest happiness!

HELENA Ah! This is agony!

TELEGIN *strikes the strings of his guitar and plays a polka.* MME. VOITAKAYA *writes something on the leaves of her pamphlet.*

The curtain falls.

Uncle Vanya ACT II

The dining-room of SEREBRAKOFF'S *house. It is night. The tapping of the* WATCHMAN'S *rattle is heard in the garden.* SEREBRAKOFF *is dozing in an arm-chair by an open window and* HELENA *is sitting beside him, also half asleep.*

SEREBRAKOFF [*Rousing himself.*] Who is here? Is it you, Sonia?

HELENA It is I.

SEREBRAKOFF Oh, it is you, Nelly. This pain is intolerable.

HELENA Your shawl has slipped down. [*She wraps up his legs in the shawl.*] Let me shut the window.

SEREBRAKOFF No, leave it open; I am suffocating. I dreamt

just now that my left leg belonged to some one else, and it hurt so that I woke. I don't believe this is gout, it is more like rheumatism. What time is it?

HELENA Half past twelve. [*A pause.*]

SEREBRAKOFF I want you to look for Batushka's works in the library to-morrow. I think we have him.

HELENA What is that?

SEREBRAKOFF Look for Batushka to-morrow morning; we used to have him, I remember. Why do I find it so hard to breathe?

HELENA You are tired; this is the second night you have had no sleep.

SEREBRAKOFF They say that Turgenieff got angina of the heart from gout. I am afraid I am getting angina too. Oh, damn this horrible, accursed old age! Ever since I have been old I have been hateful to myself, and I am sure, hateful to you all as well.

HELENA You speak as if we were to blame for your being old.

SEREBRAKOFF I am more hateful to you than to any one.

HELENA *gets up and walks away from him, sitting down at a distance.*

SEREBRAKOFF You are quite right, of course. I am not an idiot; I can understand you. You are young and healthy and beautiful, and longing for life, and I am an old dotard, almost a dead man already. Don't I know it? Of course I see that it is foolish for me to live so long, but wait! I shall soon set you all free. My life cannot drag on much longer.

HELENA You are overtaxing my powers of endurance. Be quiet, for God's sake!

SEREBRAKOFF It appears that, thanks to me, everybody's power of endurance is being overtaxed; everybody is miserable, only I am blissfully triumphant. Oh, yes, of course!

HELENA Be quiet! You are torturing me.

SEREBRAKOFF I torture everybody. Of course.

HELENA [*Weeping.*] This is unbearable! Tell me, what is it you want me to do?

SEREBRAKOFF Nothing.

HELENA Then be quiet, please.

SEREBRAKOFF It is funny that everybody listens to Ivan and his old idiot of a mother, but the moment I open my lips you all begin to feel ill-treated. You can't even stand the sound of my voice. Even if I am hateful, even if I am a selfish tyrant, haven't I the right to be one at my age? Haven't I deserved it? Haven't I,

I ask you, the right to be respected now that I am old?

HELENA No one is disputing your rights. [*The window slams in the wind.*] The wind is rising, I must shut the window. [*She shuts it.*] We shall have rain in a moment. Your rights have never been questioned by anybody.

The WATCHMAN *in the garden sounds his rattle.*

SEREBRAKOFF I have spent my life working in the interests of learning. I am used to my library and the lecture hall and to the esteem and admiration of my colleagues. Now I suddenly find myself plunged in this wilderness, condemned to see the same stupid people from morning till night and listen to their futile conversation. I want to live; I long for success and fame and the stir of the world, and here I am in exile! Oh, it is dreadful to spend every moment grieving for the lost past, to see the success of others and sit here with nothing to do but to fear death. I cannot stand it! It is more than I can bear. And you will not even forgive me for being old!

HELENA Wait, have patience; I shall be old myself in four or five years.

SONIA *comes in.*

SONIA Father, you sent for Dr. Astroff, and now when he comes you refuse to see him. It is not nice to give a man so much trouble for nothing.

SEREBRAKOFF What do I care about your Astroff? He understands medicine about as well as I understand astronomy.

SONIA We can't send for the whole medical faculty, can we, to treat your gout?

SEREBRAKOFF I won't talk to that madman!

SONIA Do as you please. It's all the same to me. [*She sits down.*]

SEREBRAKOFF What time is it?

HELENA One o'clock.

SEREBRAKOFF It is stifling in here. Sonia, hand me that bottle on the table.

SONIA Here it is. [*She hands him a bottle of medicine.*]

SEREBRAKOFF [*Crossly.*] No, not that one! Can't you understand me? Can't I ask you to do a thing?

SONIA Please don't be captious with me. Some people may like it, but you must spare me, if you please, because I don't. Besides, I haven't the time; we are cutting the hay to-morrow and I must get up early.

VOITSKI *comes in dressed in a long gown and carrying a candle.*

VOITSKI A thunderstorm is coming up. [*The lightning flashes.*] There it is! Go to bed

Helena and Sonia. I have come to take your place.

SEREBRAKOFF [*Frightened.*] No, no, no! Don't leave me alone with him! Oh, don't. He will begin to lecture me.

VOITSKI But you must give them a little rest. They have not slept for two nights.

SEREBRAKOFF Then let them go to bed, but you go away too! Thank you. I implore you to go. For the sake of our former friendship do not protest against going. We will talk some other time——

VOITSKI Our former friendship! Our former——

SONIA Hush, Uncle Vanya!

SEREBRAKOFF [*To his wife.*] My darling, don't leave me alone with him. He will begin to lecture me.

VOITSKI This is ridiculous.

MARINA *comes in carrying a candle.*

SONIA You must go to bed, nurse, it is late.

MARINA I haven't cleared away the tea things. Can't go to bed yet.

SEREBRAKOFF No one can go to bed. They are all worn out, only I enjoy perfect happiness.

MARINA [*Goes up to* SEREBRAKOFF *and speaks tenderly.*] What's the matter, master? Does it hurt? My own legs are aching too, oh, so badly. [*Arranges his shawl about his legs.*] You have had this illness such a long time. Sonia's dead mother used to stay awake with you too, and wear herself out for you. She loved you dearly. [*A pause.*] Old people want to be pitied as much as young ones, but nobody cares about them somehow. [*She kisses* SEREBRAKOFF'S *shoulder.*] Come, master, let me give you some linden-tea and warm your poor feet for you. I shall pray to God for you.

SEREBRAKOFF [*Touched.*] Let us go, Marina.

MARINA My own feet are aching so badly, oh, so badly! [*She and* SONIA *lead* SEREBRAKOFF *out.*] Sonia's mother used to wear herself out with sorrow and weeping. You were still little and foolish then, Sonia. Come, come, master.

SEREBRAKOFF, SONIA *and* MARINA *go out.*

HELENA I am absolutely exhausted by him, and can hardly stand.

VOITSKI You are exhausted by him, and I am exhausted by my own self. I have not slept for three nights.

HELENA Something is wrong in this house. Your mother hates everything but her pamphlets and the professor; the professor is

vexed, he won't trust me, and fears you; Sonia is angry with her father, and with me, and hasn't spoken to me for two weeks; I am at the end of my strength, and have come near bursting into tears at least twenty times to-day. Something is wrong in this house.

VOITSKI Leave speculating alone.

HELENA You are cultured and intelligent, Ivan, and you surely understand that the world is not destroyed by villains and conflagrations, but by hate and malice and all this spiteful tattling. It is your duty to make peace, and not to growl at everything.

VOITSKI Help me first to make peace with myself. My darling! [*Seizes her hand.*]

HELENA Let go! [*She drags her hand away.*] Go away!

VOITSKI Soon the rain will be over, and all nature will sigh and awake refreshed. Only I am not refreshed by the storm. Day and night the thought haunts me like a fiend, that my life is lost forever. My past does not count, because I frittered it away on trifles, and the present has so terribly miscarried! What shall I do with my life and my love? What is to become of them? This wonderful feeling of mine will be wasted and lost as a ray of sunlight is lost that falls into a dark chasm, and my life will go with it.

HELENA I am as it were benumbed when you speak to me of your love, and I don't know how to answer you. Forgive me, I have nothing to say to you. [*She tries to go out.*] Good night!

VOITSKI [*Barring the way.*] If you only knew how I am tortured by the thought that beside me in this house is another life that is being lost for ever—it is yours! What are you waiting for? What accursed philosophy stands in your way? Oh, understand, understand——

HELENA [*Looking at him intently.*] Ivan, you are drunk!

VOITSKI Perhaps. Perhaps.

HELENA Where is the doctor?

VOITSKI In there, spending the night with me. Perhaps I am drunk, perhaps I am; nothing is impossible.

HELENA Have you just been drinking together? Why do you do that?

VOITSKI Because in that way I get a taste of life. Let me do it, Helena!

HELENA You never used to drink, and you never used to talk so much. Go to bed, I am tired of you.

VOITSKI [*Falling on his knees*

before her.] My sweetheart, my beautiful one——

HELENA [*Angrily.*] Leave me alone! Really, this has become too disagreeable.

HELENA *goes out. A pause.*

VOITSKI [*Alone.*] She is gone! I met her first ten years ago, at her sister's house, when she was seventeen and I was thirty-seven. Why did I not fall in love with her then and propose to her? It would have been so easy! And now she would have been my wife. Yes, we would both have been waked to-night by the thunderstorm, and she would have been frightened, but I would have held her in my arms and whispered: "Don't be afraid! I am here." Oh, enchanting dream, so sweet that I laugh to think of it. [*He laughs.*] But my God! My head reels! Why am I so old? Why won't she understand me? I hate all that rhetoric of hers, that morality of indolence, that absurd talk about the destruction of the world— [*A pause.*] Oh, how I have been deceived! For years I have worshipped that miserable gout-ridden professor. Sonia and I have squeezed this estate dry for his sake. We have bartered our butter and curds and peas like misers, and have never kept a morsel for ourselves, so that we could scrape enough pennies together to send to him. I was proud of him and of his learning; I received all his words and writings as inspired, and now? Now he has retired, and what is the total of his life? A blank! He is absolutely unknown, and his fame has burst like a soap-bubble. I have been deceived; I see that now, basely deceived.

ASTROFF *comes in. He has his coat on, but is without his waistcoat or collar, and is slightly drunk.* TELEGIN *follows him, carrying a guitar.*

ASTROFF Play!

TELEGIN But every one is asleep.

ASTROFF Play!

TELEGIN *begins to play softly.*

ASTROFF Are you alone here? No women about? [*Sings with his arms akimbo.*]

"The hut is cold, the fire is dead;
Where shall the master lay his head?"

The thunderstorm woke me. It was a heavy shower. What time is it?

VOITSKI The devil only knows.

ASTROFF I thought I heard Helena's voice.

VOITSKI She was here a moment ago.

ASTROFF What a beautiful

woman! [*Looking at the medicine bottles on the table.*] Medicine, is it? What a variety we have; prescriptions from Moscow, from Kharkoff, from Tula! Why, he has been pestering all the towns of Russia with his gout! Is he ill, or simply shamming?

VOITSKI He is really ill.

ASTROFF What is the matter with you to-night? You seem sad. Is it because you are sorry for the professor?

VOITSKI Leave me alone.

ASTROFF Or in love with the professor's wife?

VOITSKI She is my friend.

ASTROFF Already?

VOITSKI What do you mean by "already"?

ASTROFF A woman can only become a man's friend after having first been his acquaintance and then his beloved—then she becomes his friend.

VOITSKI What vulgar philosophy!

ASTROFF What do you mean? Yes, I must confess I am getting vulgar, but then, you see, I am drunk. I usually only drink like this once a month. At such times my audacity and temerity know no bounds. I feel capable of anything. I attempt the most difficult operations and do them magnificently. The most brilliant plans for the future take shape in my head. I am no longer a poor fool of a doctor, but mankind's greatest benefactor. I evolve my own system of philosophy and all of you seem to crawl at my feet like so many insects or microbes. [*To* TELEGIN.] Play, Waffles!

TELEGIN My dear boy, I would with all my heart, but do listen to reason; everybody in the house is asleep.

ASTROFF Play!

TELEGIN *plays softly.*

ASTROFF I want a drink. Come, we still have some brandy left. And then, as soon as it is day, you will come home with me. [*He sees* SONIA, *who comes in at that moment.*]

ASTROFF I beg your pardon, I have no collar on. [*He goes out quickly, followed by* TELEGIN.]

SONIA Uncle Vanya, you and the doctor have been drinking! The good fellows have been getting together! It is all very well for him, he has always done it, but why do you follow his example? It looks dreadfully at your age.

VOITSKI Age has nothing to do with it. When real life is wanting one must create an illusion. It is better than nothing.

SONIA Our hay is all cut and rotting in these daily rains, and here you are busy creating illu-

sions! You have given up the farm altogether. I have done all the work alone until I am at the end of my strength— [*Frightened.*] Uncle! Your eyes are full of tears!

VOITSKI Tears? Nonsense, there are no tears in my eyes. You looked at me then just as your dead mother used to, my darling— [*He eagerly kisses her face and hands.*] My sister, my dearest sister, where are you now? Ah, if you only knew, if you only knew!

SONIA If she only knew what, Uncle?

VOITSKI My heart is bursting. It is awful. No matter, though. I must go. [*He goes out.*]

SONIA [*Knocks at the door.*] Dr. Astroff! Are you awake? Please come here for a minute.

ASTROFF [*Behind the door.*] In a moment. [*He appears in a few seconds. He has put on his collar and waistcoat.*]

ASTROFF What do you want?

SONIA Drink as much as you please yourself, if you don't find it revolting, but I implore you not to let my uncle do it. It is bad for him.

ASTROFF Very well; we won't drink any more. I am going home at once. That is settled. It will be dawn by the time the horses are harnessed.

SONIA It is still raining; wait till morning.

ASTROFF The storm is blowing over. This is only the edge of it. I must go. And please don't ask me to come and see your father any more. I tell him he has gout, and he says it is rheumatism. I tell him to lie down, and he sits up. To-day he refused to see me at all.

SONIA He has been spoilt. [*She looks in the sideboard.*] Won't you have a bite to eat?

ASTROFF Yes, please. I believe I will.

SONIA I love to eat at night. I am sure we shall find something in here. They say that he has made a great many conquests in his life, and that the women have spoiled him. Here is some cheese for you. [*They stand eating by the sideboard.*]

ASTROFF I haven't eaten anything to-day. Your father has a very difficult nature. [*He takes a bottle out of the sideboard.*] May I? [*He pours himself a glass of vodka.*] We are alone here, and I can speak frankly. Do you know, I could not stand living in this house for even a month? This atmosphere would stifle me. There is your father, entirely absorbed in his books, and his gout; there is your Uncle Vanya with his hypochondria, your grand-

mother, and finally, your step-mother——

SONIA What about her?

ASTROFF A human being should be entirely beautiful: the face, the clothes, the mind, the thoughts. Your step-mother is, of course, beautiful to look at, but don't you see? She does nothing but sleep and eat and walk and bewitch us, and that is all. She has no responsibilities, everything is done for her—am I not right? And an idle life can never be a pure one. [*A pause.*] However, I may be judging her too severely. Like your Uncle Vanya, I am discontented, and so we are both grumblers.

SONIA Aren't you satisfied with life?

ASTROFF I like life as life, but I hate and despise it in a little Russian country village, and as far as my own personal life goes, by heaven! there is absolutely no redeeming feature about it. Haven't you noticed if you are riding through a dark wood at night and see a little light shining ahead, how you forget your fatigue and the darkness and the sharp twigs that whip your face? I work, that you know—as no one else in the country works. Fate beats me on without rest; at times I suffer unendurably and I see no light ahead. I have no hope; I do not like people. It is long since I have loved any one.

SONIA You love no one?

ASTROFF Not a soul. I only feel a sort of tenderness for your old nurse for old-times' sake. The peasants are all alike; they are stupid and live in dirt, and the educated people are hard to get along with. One gets tired of them. All our good friends are petty and shallow and see no farther than their own noses; in one word, they are dull. Those that have brains are hysterical, devoured with a mania for self-analysis. They whine, they hate, they pick faults everywhere with unhealthy sharpness. They sneak up to me sideways, look at me out of a corner of the eye, and say: "That man is a lunatic," "That man is a wind-bag." Or, if they don't know what else to label me with, they say I am strange. I like the woods; that is strange. I don't eat meat; that is strange, too. Simple, natural relations between man and man or man and nature do not exist. [*He tries to go out;* SONIA *prevents him.*]

SONIA I beg you, I implore you, not to drink any more!

ASTROFF Why not?

SONIA It is so unworthy of you. You are well-bred, your voice is sweet, you are even—

more than any one I know—handsome. Why do you want to resemble the common people that drink and play cards? Oh, don't, I beg you! You always say that people do not create anything, but only destroy what heaven has given them. Why, oh, why, do you destroy yourself? Oh, don't, I implore you not to! I entreat you!

ASTROFF [*Gives her his hand.*] I won't drink any more.

SONIA Promise me.

ASTROFF I give you my word of honour.

SONIA [*Squeezing his hand.*] Thank you.

ASTROFF I have done with it. You see, I am perfectly sober again, and so I shall stay till the end of my life. [*He looks at his watch.*] But, as I was saying, life holds nothing for me; my race is run. I am old, I am tired, I am trivial; my sensibilities are dead. I could never attach myself to any one again. I love no one, and —never shall! Beauty alone has the power to touch me still. I am deeply moved by it. Helena could turn my head in a day if she wanted to, but that is not love, that is not affection—— [*He shudders and covers his face with his hands.*]

SONIA What is it?

ASTROFF Nothing. During Lent one of my patients died under chloroform.

SONIA It is time to forget that. [*A pause.*] Tell me, doctor, if I had a friend or a younger sister, and if you knew that she, well — loved you, what would you do?

ASTROFF [*Shrugging his shoulders.*] I don't know. I don't think I should do anything. I should make her understand that I could not return her love—however, my mind is not bothered about those things now. I must start at once if I am ever to get off. Good-bye, my dear girl. At this rate we shall stand here talking till morning. [*He shakes hands with her.*] I shall go out through the sitting-room, because I am afraid your uncle might detain me. [*He goes out.*]

SONIA [*Alone.*] Not a word! His heart and soul are still locked from me, and yet for some reason I am strangely happy. I wonder why? [*She laughs with pleasure.*] I told him that he was well-bred and handsome and that his voice was sweet. Was that a mistake? I can still feel his voice vibrating in the air; it caresses me. [*Wringing her hands.*] Oh! how terrible it is to be plain! I am plain, I know it. As I came out of church last Sunday I overheard a woman say, "She is a

dear, noble girl, but what a pity she is so ugly!" So ugly!

HELENA *comes in and throws open the window.*

HELENA The storm is over. What delicious air! [*A pause.*] Where is the doctor?

SONIA He has gone. [*A pause.*]

HELENA Sonia!

SONIA Yes?

HELENA How much longer are you going to sulk at me? We have not hurt each other. Why not be friends? We have had enough of this.

SONIA I myself— [*She embraces* HELENA.] Let us make peace.

HELENA With all my heart. [*They are both moved.*]

SONIA Has papa gone to bed?

HELENA No, he is sitting up in the drawing-room. Heaven knows what reason you and I had for not speaking to each other for weeks. [*Sees the open sideboard.*] Who left the sideboard open?

SONIA Dr. Astroff has just had supper.

HELENA There is some wine. Let us seal our friendship.

SONIA Yes, let us.

HELENA Out of one glass. [*She fills a wine-glass.*] So, we are friends, are we?

SONIA Yes. [*They drink and kiss each other.*] I have long wanted to make friends, but somehow, I was ashamed to. [*She weeps.*]

HELENA Why are you crying?

SONIA I don't know. It is nothing.

HELENA There, there, don't cry. [*She weeps.*] Silly! Now I am crying too. [*A pause.*] You are angry with me because I seem to have married your father for his money, but don't believe the gossip you hear. I swear to you I married him for love. I was fascinated by his fame and learning. I know now that it was not real love, but it seemed real at the time. I am innocent, and yet your clever, suspicious eyes have been punishing me for an imaginary crime ever since my marriage.

SONIA Peace, peace! Let us forget the past.

HELENA You must not look so at people. It is not becoming to you. You must trust people, or life becomes impossible.

SONIA Tell me truly, as a friend, are you happy?

HELENA Truly, no.

SONIA I knew it. One more question: do you wish your husband were young?

HELENA What a child you are! Of course I do. Go on, ask something else.

SONIA Do you like the doctor?

HELENA Yes, very much indeed.

SONIA [*Laughing.*] I have a stupid face, haven't I? He has just gone out, and his voice is still in my ears; I hear his step; I see his face in the dark window. Let me say all I have in my heart! But no, I cannot speak of it so loudly. I am ashamed. Come to my room and let me tell you there. I seem foolish to you, don't I? Talk to me of him.

HELENA What can I say?

SONIA He is clever. He can do everything. He can cure the sick, and plant woods.

HELENA It is not a question of medicine and woods, my dear, he is a man of genius. Do you knows what that means? It means he is brave, profound, and of clear insight. He plants a tree and his mind travels a thousand years into the future, and he sees visions of the happiness of the human race. People like him are rare and should be loved. What if he does drink and act roughly at times? A man of genius cannot be a saint in Russia. There he lives, cut off from the world by cold and storm and endless roads of bottomless mud, surrounded by a rough people who are crushed by poverty and disease, his life one continuous struggle, with never a day's respite; how can a man live like that for forty years, and keep himself sober and unspotted? [*Kissing* SONIA.] I wish you happiness with all my heart; you deserve it. [*She gets up.*] As for me, I am a worthless, futile woman. I have always been futile; in music, in love, in my husband's house — in a word, in everything. When you come to think of it, Sonia, I am really very, very unhappy. [*Walks excitedly up and down.*] Happiness can never exist for me in this world. Never. Why do you laugh?

SONIA [*Laughing and covering her face with her hands.*] I am so happy, so happy!

HELENA I want to hear music. I might play a little.

SONIA Oh, do, do! [*She embraces her.*] I could not possibly go to sleep now. Do play!

HELENA Yes, I will. Your father is still awake. Music irritates him when he is ill, but if he says I may, then I shall play a little. Go, Sonia, and ask him.

SONIA. Very well. [*She goes out. The* WATCHMAN'S *rattle is heard in the garden.*]

HELENA It is long since I have heard music. And now, I shall sit and play, and weep like a fool. [*Speaking out of the window.*] Is that you rattling out there, Ephim?

VOICE OF THE WATCHMAN It is I.
HELENA Don't make such a noise. Your master is ill.
VOICE OF THE WATCHMAN I am going away this minute. [*Whistles a tune.*]
SONIA [*Comes back.*] He says, no.

The curtain falls.

Uncle Vanya ACT III

The drawing-room of SEREBRAKOFF'S *house. There are three doors: one to the right, one to the left, and one in the centre of the room.* VOITSKI *and* SONIA *are sitting down.* HELENA *is walking up and down, absorbed in thought.*

VOITSKI We were asked by the professor to be here at one o'clock. [*Looks at his watch.*] It is now a quarter to one. It seems he has some communication to make to the world.
HELENA Probably a matter of business.
VOITSKI He never had any business. He writes twaddle, grumbles, and eats his heart out with jealousy; that's all he does.
SONIA [*Reproachfully.*] Uncle!
VOITSKI All right. I beg your pardon. [*He points to* HELENA.] Look at her. Wandering up and down from sheer idleness. A sweet picture, really.
HELENA I wonder you are not bored, droning on in the same key from morning till night. [*Despairingly.*] I am dying of this tedium. What shall I do?
SONIA [*Shrugging her shoulders.*] There is plenty to do if you would.
HELENA For instance?
SONIA You could help run this place, teach the children, care for the sick—isn't that enough? Before you and papa came, Uncle Vanya and I used to go to market ourselves to deal in flour.
HELENA I don't know anything about such things, and besides, they don't interest me. It is only in novels that women go out and teach and heal the peasants; how can I suddenly begin to do it?
SONIA How can you live here and not do it? Wait awhile, you will get used to it all. [*Embraces her.*] Don't be sad, dearest. [*Laughing.*] You feel miserable

and restless, and can't seem to fit into this life, and your restlessness is catching. Look at Uncle Vanya, he does nothing now but haunt you like a shadow, and I have left my work to-day to come here and talk with you. I am getting lazy, and don't want to go on with it. Dr. Astroff hardly ever used to come here; it was all we could do to persuade him to visit us once a month, and now he has abandoned his forestry and his practice, and comes every day. You must be a witch.

VOITSKI Why should you languish here? Come, my dearest, my beauty, be sensible! The blood of a Nixey runs in your veins. Oh, won't you let yourself be one? Give your nature the reins for once in your life; fall head over ears in love with some other water sprite and plunge down head first into a deep pool, so that the Herr Professor and all of us may have our hands free again.

HELENA [*Angrily.*] Leave me alone! How cruel you are! [*She tries to go out.*]

VOITSKI [*Preventing her.*] There, there, my beauty, I apologise. [*He kisses her hand.*] Forgive me.

HELENA Confess that you would try the patience of an angel.

VOITSKI As a peace-offering I am going to fetch some flowers which I picked for you this morning: some autumn roses, beautiful, sorrowful roses. [*He goes out.*]

SONIA Autumn roses, beautiful, sorrowful roses! [*She and* HELENA *stand looking out of the window.*]

HELENA September already! How shall we live through the long winter here? [*A pause.*] Where is the doctor?

SONIA He is writing in Uncle Vanya's room. I am glad Uncle Vanya has gone out, I want to talk to you about something.

HELENA About what?

SONIA About what? [*She lays her head on* HELENA'S *breast.*]

HELENA [*Stroking her hair.*] There, there, that will do. Don't, Sonia.

SONIA I am ugly!

HELENA You have lovely hair.

SONIA Don't say that! [*She turns to look at herself in the glass.*] No, when a woman is ugly they always say she has beautiful hair or eyes. I have loved him now for six years; I have loved him more than one loves one's mother. I seem to hear him beside me every moment of the day. I feel the pressure of his hand on mine. If I look up, I seem to see him coming, and as you see, I

run to you to talk of him. He is here every day now, but he never looks at me, he does not notice my presence. It is agony. I have absolutely no hope, no, no hope. Oh, my God! Give me strength to endure. I prayed all last night. I often go up to him and speak to him and look into his eyes. My pride is gone. I am not mistress of myself. Yesterday I told Uncle Vanya. I couldn't control myself, and all the servants know it. Every one knows that I love him.

HELENA Does he?

SONIA No, he never notices me.

HELENA [*Thoughtfully.*] He is a strange man. Listen, Sonia, will you allow me to speak to him? I shall be careful, only hint. [*A pause.*] Really, to be in uncertainty all these years! Let me do it!

SONIA *nods an affirmative.*

HELENA Splendid! It will be easy to find out whether he loves you or not. Don't be ashamed, sweetheart, don't worry. I shall be careful; he will not notice a thing. We only want to find out whether it is yes or no, don't we? [*A pause.*] And if it is no, then he must keep away from here, is that so?

SONIA *nods.*

HELENA It will be easier not to see him any more. We won't put off the examination an instant. He said he had a sketch to show me. Go and tell him at once that I want to see him.

SONIA [*In great excitement.*] Will you tell me the whole truth?

HELENA Of course I will. I am sure that no matter what it is, it will be easier for you to bear than this uncertainty. Trust to me, dearest.

SONIA Yes, yes. I shall say that you want to see his sketch. [*She starts out, but stops near the door and looks back.*] No, it is better not to know—and yet—there may be hope.

HELENA What do you say?

SONIA Nothing. [*She goes out.*]

HELENA [*Alone.*] There is no greater sorrow than to know another's secret when you cannot help them. [*In deep thought.*] He is obviously not in love with her, but why shouldn't he marry her? She is not pretty, but she is so clever and pure and good, she would make a splendid wife for a country doctor of his years. [*A pause.*] I can understand how the poor child feels. She lives here in this desperate loneliness with no one around her except these colourless shadows that go mooning about talking nonsense and

knowing nothing except that they eat, drink, and sleep. Among them appears from time to time this Dr. Astroff, so different, so handsome, so interesting, so charming. It is like seeing the moon rise on a dark night. Oh, to surrender oneself to his embrace! To lose oneself in his arms! I am a little in love with him myself! Yes, I am lonely without him, and when I think of him I smile. That Uncle Vanya says I have the blood of a Nixey in my veins: "Give rein to your nature for once in your life!" Perhaps it is right that I should. Oh, to be free as a bird, to fly away from all your sleepy faces and your talk and forget that you have existed at all! But I am a coward, I am afraid; my conscience torments me. He comes here every day now. I can guess why, and feel guilty already; I should like to fall on my knees at Sonia's feet and beg her forgiveness, and weep.

ASTROFF *comes in carrying a portfolio.*

ASTROFF How do you do? [*Shakes hands with her.*] Do you want to see my sketch?

HELENA Yes, you promised to show me what you had been doing. Have you time now?

ASTROFF Of course I have! [*He lays the portfolio on the table, takes out the sketch and fastens it to the table with thumb-tacks.*]

ASTROFF Where were you born?

HELENA [*Helping him.*] In St. Petersburg.

ASTROFF And educated?

HELENA At the Conservatory there.

ASTROFF You don't find this life very interesting, I dare say?

HELENA Oh, why not? It is true I don't know the country very well, but I have read a great deal about it.

ASTROFF I have my own desk there in Ivan's room. When I am absolutely too exhausted to go on I drop everything and rush over here to forget myself in this work for an hour or two. Ivan and Miss Sonia sit rattling at their counting-boards, the cricket chirps, and I sit beside them and paint, feeling warm and peaceful. But I don't permit myself this luxury very often, only once a month. [*Pointing to the picture.*] Look there! That is a map of our country as it was fifty years ago. The green tints, both dark and light, represent forests. Half the map, as you see, is covered with it. Where the green is striped with red the forests were, inhabited by elk and wild goats. Here on this lake, lived great

flocks of swans and geese and ducks; as the old men say, there was a power of birds of every kind. Now they have vanished like a cloud. Beside the hamlets and villages, you see, I have dotted down here and there the various settlements, farms, hermit's caves, and water-mills. This country carried a great many cattle and horses, as you can see by the quantity of blue paint. For instance, see how thickly it lies in this part; there were great herds of them here, an average of three horses to every house. [*A pause.*] Now, look lower down. This is the country as it was twenty-five years ago. Only a third of the map is green now with forests. There are no goats left and no elk. The blue paint is lighter, and so on, and so on. Now we come to the third part; our country as it appears to-day. We still see spots of green, but not much. The elk, the swans, the blackcock have disappeared. It is, on the whole, the picture of a regular and slow decline which it will evidently only take about ten or fifteen more years to complete. You may perhaps object that it is the march of progress, that the old order must give place to the new, and you might be right if roads had been run through these ruined woods, or if factories and schools had taken their place. The people then would have become better educated and healthier and richer, but as it is, we have nothing of the sort. We have the same swamps and mosquitoes; the same disease and want; the typhoid, the diphtheria, the burning villages. We are confronted by the degradation of our country, brought on by the fierce struggle for existence of the human race. It is the consequence of the ignorance and unconsciousness of starving, shivering, sick humanity that, to save its children, instinctively snatches at everything that can warm it and still its hunger. So it destroys everything it can lay its hands on, without a thought for the morrow. And almost everything has gone, and nothing has been created to take its place. [*Coldly.*] But I see by your face that I am not interesting you.

HELENA I know so little about such things!

ASTROFF There is nothing to know. It simply isn't interesting, that's all.

HELENA Frankly, my thoughts were elsewhere. Forgive me! I want to submit you to a little examination, but I am embarrassed and don't know how to begin.

ASTROFF An examination?

HELENA Yes, but quite an innocent one. Sit down. [*They sit down.*] It is about a certain young girl I know. Let us discuss it like honest people, like friends, and then forget what has passed between us, shall we?

ASTROFF Very well.

HELENA It is about my stepdaughter, Sonia. Do you like her?

ASTROFF Yes, I respect her.

HELENA Do you like her—as a woman?

ASTROFF [*Slowly.*] No.

HELENA One more word, and that will be the last. You have not noticed anything?

ASTROFF No, nothing.

HELENA [*Taking his hand.*] You do not love her. I see that in your eyes. She is suffering. You must realise that, and not come here any more.

ASTROFF My sun has set, yes, and then I haven't the time. [*Shrugging his shoulders.*] Where shall I find time for such things? [*He is embarrassed.*]

HELENA Bah! What an unpleasant conversation! I am as out of breath as if I had been running three . miles uphill. Thank heaven, that is over! Now let us forget everything as if nothing had been said. You are sensible. You understand. [*A pause.*] I am actually blushing.

ASTROFF If you had spoken a month ago I might perhaps have considered it, but now— [*He shrugs his shoulders.*] Of course, if she is suffering—but I cannot understand why you had to put me through this examination. [*He searches her face with his eyes, and shakes his finger at her.*] Oho, you are wily!

HELENA What does this mean?

ASTROFF [*Laughing.*] You are a wily one! I admit that Sonia is suffering, but what does this examination of yours mean? [*He prevents her from retorting, and goes on quickly.*] Please don't put on such a look of surprise; you know perfectly well why I come here every day. Yes, you know perfectly why and for whose sake I come! Oh, my sweet tigress! don't look at me in that way; I am an old bird!

HELENA [*Perplexed.*] A tigress? I don't understand you.

ASTROFF Beautiful, sleek tigress, you must have your victims! For a whole month I have done nothing but seek you eagerly. I have thrown over everything for you, and you love to see it. Now then, I am sure you knew all this without putting me through your examination. [*Crossing his arms and bowing*

his head.] I surrender. Here you have me—now, eat me.

HELENA You have gone mad!

ASTROFF You are afraid!

HELENA I am a better and stronger woman than you think me. Good-bye. [*She tries to leave the room.*]

ASTROFF Why good-bye? Don't say good-bye, don't waste words. Oh, how lovely you are—what hands! [*He kisses her hands.*]

HELENA Enough of this! [*She frees her hands.*] Leave the room! You have forgotten yourself.

ASTROFF Tell me, tell me, where can we meet to-morrow? [*He puts his arm around her.*] Don't you see that we must meet, that it is inevitable?

He kisses her. VOITSKI *comes in carrying a bunch of roses, and stops in the doorway.*

HELENA [*Without seeing* VOITSKI.] Have pity! Leave me. [*Lays her head on* ASTROFF'S *shoulder.*] Don't! [*She tries to break away from him.*]

ASTROFF [*Holding her by the waist.*] Be in the forest to-morrow at two o'clock. Will you? Will you?

HELENA [*Sees* VOITSKI.] Let me go! [*Goes to the window deeply embarrassed.*] This is appalling!

VOITSKI [*Throws the flowers on a chair, and speaks in great excitement, wiping his face with his handkerchief.*] Nothing—yes, yes, nothing.

ASTROFF The weather is fine to-day, my dear Ivan; the morning was overcast and looked like rain, but now the sun is shining again. Honestly, we have had a very fine autumn, and the wheat is looking fairly well. [*Puts his map back into the portfolio.*] But the days are growing short.

HELENA [*Goes quickly up to* VOITSKI.] You must do your best; you must use all your power to get my husband and myself away from here to-day! Do you hear? I say, this very day!

VOITSKI [*Wiping his face.*] Oh! Ah! Oh! All right! I—Helena, I saw everything!

HELENA [*In great agitation.*] Do you hear me? I must leave here this very day!

SEREBRAKOFF, SONIA, MARINA, *and* TELEGIN *come in.*

TELEGIN I am not very well myself, your Excellency. I have been limping for two days, and my head——

SEREBRAKOFF Where are the others? I hate this house. It is a regular labyrinth. Every one is always scattered through the twenty-six enormous rooms; one never can find a soul. [*Rings.*]

Ask my wife and Madame Voitskaya to come here!

HELENA I am here already.

SEREBRAKOFF Please, all of you, sit down.

SONIA [*Goes up to* HELENA *and asks anxiously.*] What did he say?

HELENA I'll tell you later.

SONIA You are moved. [*Looking quickly and inquiringly into her face.*] I understand; he said he would not come here any more. [*A pause.*] Tell me, did he?

HELENA *nods.*

SEREBRAKOFF [*To* TELEGIN.] One can, after all, become reconciled to being an invalid, but not to this country life. The ways of it stick in my throat and I feel exactly as if I had been whirled off the earth and landed on a strange planet. Please be seated, ladies and gentlemen. Sonia! [SONIA *does not hear. She is standing with her head bowed sadly forward on her breast.*] Sonia! [*A pause.*] She does not hear me. [*To* MARINA.] Sit down too, nurse. [MARINA *sits down and begins to knit her stocking.*] I crave your indulgence, ladies and gentlemen; hang your ears, if I may say so, on the peg of attention. [*He laughs.*]

VOITSKI [*Agitated.*] Perhaps you do not need me—may I be excused?

SEREBRAKOFF No, you are needed now more than any one.

VOITSKI What is it you want of me?

SEREBRAKOFF You—but what are you angry about? If it is anything I have done, I ask you to forgive me.

VOITSKI Oh, drop that and come to business; what do you want?

MME. VOITSKAYA *comes in.*

SEREBRAKOFF Here is mother. Ladies and gentlemen, I shall begin. I have asked you to assemble here, my friends, in order to discuss a very important matter. I want to ask you for your assistance and advice, and knowing your unfailing amiability I think I can count on both. I am a book-worm and a scholar, and am unfamiliar with practical affairs. I cannot, I find, dispense with the help of well-informed people such as you, Ivan, and you, Telegin, and you, mother. The truth is, *manet omnes una nox,* that is to say, our lives are in the hands of God, and as I am old and ill, I realise that the time has come for me to dispose of my property in regard to the interests of my family. My life is nearly over, and I am not thinking of myself, but I have a young wife and daughter. [*A pause.*] I cannot continue to live in the

country; we were not made for country life, and yet we cannot afford to live in town on the income derived from this estate. We might sell the woods, but that would be an expedient we could not resort to every year. We must find some means of guaranteeing to ourselves a certain more or less fixed yearly income. With this object in view, a plan has occurred to me which I now have the honour of presenting to you for your consideration. I shall only give you a rough outline, avoiding all details. Our estate does not pay on an average more than two per cent on the money invested in it. I propose to sell it. If we then invest our capital in bonds, it will earn us four to five per cent, and we should probably have a surplus over of several thousand roubles, with which we could buy a summer cottage in Finland——

VOITSKI Hold on! Repeat what you just said; I don't think I heard you quite right.

SEREBRAKOFF I said we would invest the money in bonds and buy a cottage in Finland with the surplus.

VOITSKI No, not Finland—you said something else.

SEREBRAKOFF I propose to sell this place.

VOITSKI Aha! That was it! So you are going to sell the place? Splendid. The idea is a rich one. And what do you propose to do with my old mother and me and with Sonia here?

SEREBRAKOFF That will be decided in due time. We can't do everything at once.

VOITSKI Wait! It is clear that until this moment I have never had a grain of sense in my head. I have always been stupid enough to think that the estate belonged to Sonia. My father bought it as a wedding present for my sister, and I foolishly imagined that as our laws were made for Russians and not Turks, my sister's estate would come down to her child.

SEREBRAKOFF Of course it is Sonia's. Has any one denied it? I don't want to sell it without Sonia's consent; on the contrary, what I am doing is for Sonia's good.

VOITSKI This is absolutely incomprehensible. Either I have gone mad or—or——

MME. VOITSKAYA Jean, don't contradict Alexander. Trust to him; he knows better than we do what is right and what is wrong.

VOITSKI I shan't. Give me some water. [*He drinks.*] Go

ahead! Say anything you please —anything!

SEREBRAKOFF I can't imagine why you are so upset. I don't pretend that my scheme is an ideal one, and if you all object to it I shall not insist. [*A pause.*]

TELEGIN [*With embarrassment.*] I not only nourish feelings of respect toward learning, your Excellency, but I am also drawn to it by family ties. My brother Gregory's wife's brother, whom you may know; his name is Constantine Lakedemonoff, and he used to be a magistrate—

VOITSKI Stop, Waffles. This is business; wait a bit, we will talk of that later. [*To* SEREBRAKOFF.] There now, ask him what he thinks; this estate was bought from his uncle.

SEREBRAKOFF Ah! Why should I ask questions? What good would it do?

VOITSKI The price was ninety-five thousand roubles. My father paid seventy and left a debt of twenty-five. Now listen! This place could never have been bought had I not renounced my inheritance in favour of my sister, whom I deeply loved—and what is more, I worked for ten years like an ox, and paid off the debt.

SEREBRAKOFF I regret ever having started this conversation.

VOITSKI Thanks entirely to my own personal efforts, the place is entirely clear of debts, and now, when I have grown old, you want to throw me out, neck and crop!

SEREBRAKOFF I can't imagine what you are driving at.

VOITSKI For twenty-five years I have managed this place, and have sent you the returns from it like the most honest of servants, and you have never given me one single word of thanks for my work, not one—neither in my youth nor now. You allowed me a meagre salary of five hundred roubles a year, a beggar's pittance, and have never even thought of adding a rouble to it.

SEREBRAKOFF What did I know about such things, Ivan? I am not a practical man and don't understand them. You might have helped yourself to all you wanted.

VOITSKI Yes, why did I not steal? Don't you all despise me for not stealing, when it would have been only justice? And I should not now have been a beggar!

MME. VOITSKAYA [*Sternly.*] Jean!

TELEGIN [*Agitated.*] Vanya, old man, don't talk in that way. Why spoil such pleasant rela-

tions? [*He embraces him.*] Do stop!

VOITSKI For twenty-five years I have been sitting here with my mother like a mole in a burrow. Our every thought and hope was yours and yours only. By day we talked with pride of you and your work, and spoke your name with veneration; our nights we wasted reading the books and papers which my soul now loathes.

TELEGIN Don't, Vanya, don't. I can't stand it.

SEREBRAKOFF [*Wrathfully.*] What under heaven do you want, anyway?

VOITSKI We used to think of you as almost superhuman, but now the scales have fallen from my eyes and I see you as you are! You write on art without knowing anything about it. Those books of yours which I used to admire are not worth one copper kopeck. You are a hoax!

SEREBRAKOFF Can't any one make him stop? I am going!

HELENA Ivan, I command you to stop this instant! Do you hear me?

VOITSKI I refuse! [SEREBRAKOFF *tries to get out of the room, but* VOITSKI *bars the door.*] Wait! I have not done yet! You have wrecked my life. I have never lived. My best years have gone for nothing, have been ruined, thanks to you. You are my most bitter enemy!

TELEGIN I can't stand it; I can't stand it. I am going. [*He goes out in great excitement.*]

SEREBRAKOFF But what do you want? What earthly right have you to use such language to me? Ruination! If this estate is yours, then take it, and let me be ruined!

HELENA I am going away out of this hell this minute. [*Shrieks.*] This is too much!

VOITSKI My life has been a failure. I am clever and brave and strong. If I had lived a normal life I might have become another Schopenhauer or Dostoieffski. I am losing my head! I am going crazy! Mother, I am in despair! Oh, mother!

MME. VOITSKAYA [*Sternly.*] Listen, Alexander!

SONIA *falls on her knees beside the nurse and nestles against her.*

SONIA Oh, nurse, nurse!

VOITSKI Mother! What shall I do? But no, don't speak! I know what to do. [*To* SEREBRAKOFF.] And you will understand me!

He goes out through the door in the centre of the room and MME. VOITSKAYA *follows him.*

SEREBRAKOFF Tell me, what on earth is the matter? Take this lunatic out of my sight! I cannot

possibly live under the same roof with him. His room [*He points to the centre door.*] is almost next door to mine. Let him take himself off into the village or into the wing of the house, or I shall leave here at once. I cannot stay in the same house with him.

HELENA [*To her husband.*] We are leaving to-day; we must get ready at once for our departure.

SEREBRAKOFF What a perfectly dreadful man!

SONIA [*On her knees beside the nurse and turning to her father. She speaks with emotion.*] You must be kind to us, papa. Uncle Vanya and I are so unhappy! [*Controlling her despair.*] Have pity on us. Remember how Uncle Vanya and Granny used to copy and translate your books for you every night—every, every night. Uncle Vanya has toiled without rest; he would never spend a penny on us, we sent it all to you. We have not eaten the bread of idleness. I am not saying this as I should like to, but you must understand us, papa, you must be merciful to us.

HELENA [*Very excited, to her husband.*] For heaven's sake, Alexander, go and have a talk with him—explain!

SEREBRAKOFF Very well, I shall have a talk with him, but I won't apologise for a thing. I am not angry with him, but you must confess that his behaviour has been strange, to say the least. Excuse me, I shall go to him. [*He goes out through the centre door.*]

HELENA Be gentle with him; try to quiet him. [*She follows him out.*]

SONIA [*Nestling nearer to* MARINA.] Nurse, oh, nurse!

MARINA It's all right, my baby. When the geese have cackled they will be still again. First they cackle and then they stop.

SONIA Nurse!

MARINA You are trembling all over, as if you were freezing. There, there, little orphan baby, God is merciful. A little linden-tea, and it will all pass away. Don't cry, my sweetest. [*Looking angrily at the door in the centre of the room.*] See, the geese have all gone now. The devil take them!

A shot is heard. HELENA *screams behind the scenes.* SONIA *shudders.*

MARINA Bang! What's that?

SEREBRAKOFF [*Comes in reeling with terror.*] Hold him! hold him! He has gone mad!

HELENA *and* VOITSKI *are seen struggling in the doorway.*

HELENA [*Trying to wrest the*

revolver from him.] Give it to me; give it to me, I tell you!

VOITSKI Let me go, Helena, let me go! [*He frees himself and rushes in, looking everywhere for* SEREBRAKOFF.] Where is he? Ah, there he is! [*He shoots at him. A pause.*] I didn't get him? I missed again? [*Furiously.*] Damnation! Damnation! To hell with him!

He flings the revolver on the floor, and drops helpless into a chair. SEREBRAKOFF *stands as if stupefied.* HELENA *leans against the wall, almost fainting.*

HELENA Take me away! Take me away! I can't stay here—I can't!

VOITSKI [*In despair.*] Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?

SONIA [*Softly.*] Oh, nurse, nurse!

The curtain falls.

Uncle Vanya ACT IV

VOITSKI'S *bedroom, which is also his office. A table stands near the window; on it are ledgers, letter scales, and papers of every description. Near by stands a smaller table belonging to* ASTROFF, *with his paints and drawing materials. On the wall hangs a cage containing a starling. There is also a map of Africa on the wall, obviously of no use to anybody. There is a large sofa covered with buckram. A door to the left leads into an inner room; one to the right leads into the front hall, and before this door lies a mat for the peasants with their muddy boots to stand on. It is an autumn evening. The silence is profound.* TELEGIN *and* MARINA *are sitting facing one another, winding wool.*

TELEGIN Be quick, Marina, or we shall be called away to say good-bye before you have finished. The carriage has already been ordered.

MARINA [*Trying to wind more quickly.*] I am a little tired.

TELEGIN They are going to Kharkoff to live.

MARINA They do well to go.

TELEGIN They have been frightened. The professor's wife won't stay here an hour longer. "If we are going at all, let's be off," says she, "we shall go to Kharkoff and look about us, and then we can send for our things." They are travelling light. It

seems, Marina, that fate has decreed for them not to live here.

MARINA And quite rightly. What a storm they have just raised! It was shameful!

TELEGIN It was indeed. The scene was worthy of the brush of Aibazofski.

MARINA I wish I'd never laid eyes on them. [*A pause.*] Now we shall have things as they were again: tea at eight, dinner at one, and supper in the evening; everything in order as decent folks, as Christians like to have it. [*Sighs.*] It is a long time since I have eaten noodles.

TELEGIN Yes, we haven't had noodles for ages. [*A pause.*] Not for ages. As I was going through the village this morning, Marina, one of the shop-keepers called after me, "Hi! you hanger-on!" I felt it bitterly.

MARINA Don't pay the least attention to them, master; we are all dependents on God. You and Sonia and all of us. Every one must work, no one can sit idle. Where is Sonia?

TELEGIN In the garden with the doctor, looking for Ivan. They fear he may lay violent hands on himself.

MARINA Where is his pistol?

TELEGIN [*Whispers.*] I hid it in the cellar.

VOITSKI *and* ASTROFF *come in.*

VOITSKI Leave me alone! [*To* MARINA *and* TELEGIN.] Go away! Go away and leave me to myself, if but for an hour. I won't have you watching me like this!

TELEGIN Yes, yes, Vanya. [*He goes out on tiptoe.*]

MARINA The gander cackles; ho! ho! ho! [*She gathers up her wool and goes out.*]

VOITSKI Leave me by myself!

ASTROFF I would, with the greatest pleasure. I ought to have gone long ago, but I shan't leave you until you have returned what you took from me.

VOITSKI I took nothing from you.

ASTROFF I am not jesting, don't detain me, I really must go.

VOITSKI I took nothing of yours.

ASTROFF You didn't? Very well, I shall have to wait a little longer, and then you will have to forgive me if I resort to force. We shall have to bind you and search you. I mean what I say.

VOITSKI Do as you please. [*A pause.*] Oh, to make such a fool of myself! To shoot twice and miss him both times! I shall never forgive myself.

ASTROFF When the impulse came to shoot, it would have been as well had you put a bullet through your own head.

VOITSKI [*Shrugging his shoulders.*] Strange! I attempted murder, and am not going to be arrested or brought to trial. That means they think me mad. [*With a bitter laugh.*] Me! I am mad, and those who hide their worthlessness, their dulness, their crying heartlessness behind a professor's mask, are sane! Those who marry old men and then deceive them under the noses of all, are sane! I saw you kiss her; I saw you in each other's arms!

ASTROFF Yes, sir, I did kiss her; so there. [*He puts his thumb to his nose.*]

VOITSKI [*His eyes on the door.*] No, it is the earth that is mad, because she still bears us on her breast.

ASTROFF That is nonsense.

VOITSKI Well? Am I not a madman, and therefore irresponsible? Haven't I the right to talk nonsense?

ASTROFF This is a farce! You are not mad; you are simply a ridiculous fool. I used to think every fool was out of his senses, but now I see that lack of sense is a man's normal state, and you are perfectly normal.

VOITSKI [*Covers his face with his hands.*] Oh! If you knew how ashamed I am! These piercing pangs of shame are like nothing on earth. [*In an agonised voice.*] I can't endure them! [*He leans against the table.*] What can I do? What can I do?

ASTROFF Nothing.

VOITSKI You must tell me something! Oh, my God! I am forty-seven years old. I may live to sixty; I still have thirteen years before me; an eternity! How shall I be able to endure life for thirteen years? What shall I do? How can I fill them? Oh, don't you see? [*He presses* ASTROFF'S *hand convulsively.*] Don't you see, if only I could live the rest of my life in some new way! If I could only wake some still, bright morning and feel that life had begun again; that the past was forgotten and had vanished like smoke. [*He weeps.*] Oh, to begin life anew! Tell me, tell me how to begin.

ASTROFF [*Crossly.*] What nonsense! What sort of a new life can you and I look forward to? We can have no hope.

VOITSKI None?

ASTROFF None. Of that I am convinced.

VOITSKI Tell me what to do. [*He puts his hand to his heart.*] I feel such a burning pain here.

ASTROFF [*Shouts angrily.*] Stop! [*Then, more gently.*] It may be that posterity, which will despise us for our blind and stupid lives, will find some road to

happiness; but we—you and I—have but one hope, the hope that we may be visited by visions, perhaps by pleasant ones, as we lie resting in our graves. [*Sighing.*] Yes, brother, there were only two respectable, intelligent men in this county, you and I. Ten years or so of this life of ours, this miserable life, have sucked us under, and we have become as contemptible and petty as the rest. But don't try to talk me out of my purpose! Give me what you took from me, will you?

VOITSKI I took nothing from you.

ASTROFF You took a little bottle of morphine out of my medicine-case. [*A pause.*] Listen! If you are positively determined to make an end to yourself, go into the woods and shoot yourself there. Give up the morphine, or there will be a lot of talk and guesswork; people will think I gave it to you. I don't fancy having to perform a post-mortem on you. Do you think I should find it interesting?

SONIA *comes in.*

VOITSKI Leave me alone.

ASTROFF [*To* SONIA.] Sonia, your uncle has stolen a bottle of morphine out of my medicine-case and won't give it up. Tell him that his behaviour is—well, unwise. I haven't time, I must be going.

SONIA Uncle Vanya, did you take the morphine?

ASTROFF Yes, he took it. [*A pause.*] I am absolutely sure.

SONIA Give it up! Why do you want to frighten us? [*Tenderly.*] Give it up, Uncle Vanya! My misfortune is perhaps even greater than yours, but I am not plunged in despair. I endure my sorrow, and shall endure it until my life comes to a natural end. You must endure yours, too. [*A pause.*] Give it up! Dear, darling Uncle Vanya. Give it up! [*She weeps.*] You are so good, I am sure you will have pity on us and give it up. You must endure your sorrow, Uncle Vanya; you must endure it.

VOITSKI *takes a bottle from the drawer of the table and hands it to* ASTROFF.

VOITSKI There it is! [*To* SONIA.] And now, we must get to work at once; we must do something, or else I shall not be able to endure it.

SONIA Yes, yes, to work! As soon as we have seen them off we shall go to work. [*She nervously straightens out the papers on the table.*] Everything is in a muddle!

ASTROFF [*Putting the bottle*

in his case, which he straps together.] Now I can be off.

HELENA *comes in.*

HELENA Are you here, Ivan? We are starting in a moment. Go to Alexander, he wants to speak to you.

SONIA Go, Uncle Vanya. [*She takes* VOITSKI'S *arm.*] Come, you and papa must make peace; that is absolutely necessary.

SONIA *and* VOITSKI *go out.*

HELENA I am going away. [*She gives* ASTROFF *her hand.*] Good-bye.

ASTROFF So soon?

HELENA The carriage is waiting.

ASTROFF Good-bye.

HELENA You promised me you would go away yourself to-day.

ASTROFF I have not forgotten. I am going at once. [*A pause.*] Were you frightened? Was it so terrible?

HELENA Yes.

ASTROFF Couldn't you stay? Couldn't you? To-morrow—in the forest——

HELENA No. It is all settled, and that is why I can look you so bravely in the face. Our departure is fixed. One thing I must ask of you: don't think too badly of me; I should like you to respect me.

ASTROFF Ah! [*With an impatient gesture.*] Stay, I implore you! Confess that there is nothing for you to do in this world. You have no object in life; there is nothing to occupy your attention, and sooner or later your feelings must master you. It is inevitable. It would be better if it happened not in Kharkoff or in Kursk, but here, in nature's lap. It would then at least be poetical, even beautiful. Here you have the forests, the houses half in ruins that Turgenieff writes of.

HELENA How comical you are! I am angry with you and yet I shall always remember you with pleasure. You are interesting and original. You and I will never meet again, and so I shall tell you—why should I conceal it?—that I am just a little in love with you. Come, one more last pressure of our hands, and then let us part good friends. Let us not bear each other any ill will.

ASTROFF [*Pressing her hand.*] Yes, go. [*Thoughtfully.*] You seem to be sincere and good, and yet there is something strangely disquieting about all your personality. No sooner did you arrive here with your husband than every one whom you found busy and actively creating something was forced to drop his work and give himself up for

the whole summer to your husband's gout and yourself. You and he have infected us with your idleness. I have been swept off my feet; I have not put my hand to a thing for weeks, during which sickness has been running its course unchecked among the people, and the peasants have been pasturing their cattle in my woods and young plantations. Go where you will, you and your husband will always carry destruction in your train. I am joking of course, and yet I am strangely sure that had you stayed here we should have been overtaken by the most immense desolation. I would have gone to my ruin, and you—you would not have prospered. So go! *E finita la comedia!*

HELENA [*Snatching a pencil off* ASTROFF'S *table, and hiding it with a quick movement.*] I shall take this pencil for memory!

ASTROFF How strange it is. We meet, and then suddenly it seems that we must part forever. That is the way in this world. As long as we are alone, before Uncle Vanya comes in with a bouquet—allow me—to kiss you good-bye—may I? [*He kisses her on the cheek.*] So! Splendid!

HELENA I wish you every happiness. [*She glances about her.*] For once in my life, I shall! and scorn the consequences! [*She kisses him impetuously, and they quickly part.*] I must go.

ASTROFF Yes, go. If the carriage is there, then start at once. [*They stand listening.*]

ASTROFF *E finita!*

VOITSKI, SEREBRAKOFF, MME. VOITSKAYA *with her book,* TELEGIN, *and* SONIA *come in.*

SEREBRAKOFF [*To* VOITSKI.] Shame on him who bears malice for the past. I have gone through so much in the last few hours that I feel capable of writing a whole treatise on the conduct of life for the instruction of posterity. I gladly accept your apology, and myself ask your forgiveness. [*He kisses* VOITSKI *three times.*]

HELENA *embraces* SONIA.

SEREBRAKOFF [*Kissing* MME. VOITSKAYA'S *hand.*] Mother!

MME. VOITSKAYA [*Kissing him.*] Have your picture taken, Alexander, and send me one. You know how dear you are to me.

TELEGIN Good-bye, your Excellency. Don't forget us.

SEREBRAKOFF [*Kissing his daughter.*] Good-bye, good-bye all. [*Shaking hands with* ASTROFF.] Many thanks for your pleasant company. I have a deep regard for your opinions and

your enthusiasm, but let me, as an old man, give one word of advice at parting: do something, my friend! Work! Do something! [*They all bow.*] Good luck to you all. [*He goes out followed by* MME. VOITSKAYA *and* SONIA.]

VOITSKI [*Kissing* HELENA'S *hand fervently.*] Good-bye—forgive me. I shall never see you again!

HELENA [*Touched.*] Good-bye, dear boy. [*She lightly kisses his head as he bends over her hand, and goes out.*]

ASTROFF Tell them to bring my carriage around too, Waffles.

TELEGIN All right, old man.

ASTROFF *and* VOITSKI *are left behind alone.* ASTROFF *collects his paints and drawing materials on the table and packs them away in a box.*

ASTROFF Why don't you go to see them off?

VOITSKI Let them go! I—I can't go out there. I feel too sad. I must go to work on something at once. To work! To work! [*He rummages through his papers on the table. A pause. The tinkling of bells is heard as the horses trot away.*]

ASTROFF They have gone! The professor, I suppose, is glad to go. He couldn't be tempted back now by a fortune.

MARINA *comes in.*

MARINA They have gone. [*She sits down in an arm-chair and knits her stocking.*]

SONIA *comes in wiping her eyes.*

SONIA They have gone. God be with them. [*To her uncle.*] And now, Uncle Vanya, let us do something!

VOITSKI To work! To work!

SONIA It is long, long, since you and I have sat together at this table. [*She lights a lamp on the table.*] No ink! [*She takes the inkstand to the cupboard and fills it from an inkbottle.*] How sad it is to see them go!

MME. VOITSKAYA *comes slowly in.*

MME. VOITSKAYA They have gone. [*She sits down and at once becomes absorbed in her book.*]

SONIA *sits down at the table and looks through an account book.*

SONIA First, Uncle Vanya, let us write up the accounts. They are in a dreadful state. Come, begin. You take one and I will take the other.

VOITSKI In account with ——

[*They sit silently writing.*]

MARINA [*Yawning.*] The sand-man has come.

ASTROFF How still it is. Their pens scratch, the cricket sings; it is so warm and comfortable. I hate to go. [*The tinkling of bells is heard.*]

ASTROFF My carriage has come. There now remains but

to say good-bye to you, my friends, and to my table here, and then—away! [*He puts the map into the portfolio.*]

MARINA Don't hurry away; sit a little longer with us.

ASTROFF Impossible.

VOITSKI [*Writing.*] And carry forward from the old debt two seventy-five——

WORKMAN *comes in.*

WORKMAN Your carriage is waiting, sir.

ASTROFF All right. [*He hands the* WORKMAN *his medicine-case, portfolio, and box.*] Look out, don't crush the portfolio!

WORKMAN Very well, sir.

SONIA When shall we see you again?

ASTROFF Hardly before next summer. Probably not this winter, though, of course, if anything should happen you will let me know. [*He shakes hands with them.*] Thank you for your kindness, for your hospitality, for everything! [*He goes up to* MARINA *and kisses her head.*] Good-bye, old nurse!

MARINA Are you going without your tea?

ASTROFF I don't want any, nurse.

MARINA Won't you have a drop of vodka?

ASTROFF [*Hesitatingly.*] Yes, I might.

MARINA *goes out.*

ASTROFF [*After a pause.*] My off-wheeler has gone lame for some reason. I noticed it yesterday when Peter was taking him to water.

VOITSKI You should have him re-shod.

ASTROFF I shall have to go around by the blacksmith's on my way home. It can't be avoided. [*He stands looking up at the map of Africa hanging on the wall.*] I suppose it is roasting hot in Africa now.

VOITSKI Yes, I suppose it is.

MARINA *comes back carrying a tray on which are a glass of vodka and a piece of bread.*

MARINA Help yourself.

ASTROFF *drinks.*

MARINA To your good health! [*She bows deeply.*] Eat your bread with it.

ASTROFF No, I like it so. And now, good-bye. [*To* MARINA.] You needn't come out to see me off, nurse. [*He goes out.* SONIA *follows him with a candle to light him to the carriage.* MARINA *sits down in her arm-chair.*]

VOITSKI [*Writing.*] On the 2d of February, twenty pounds of butter; on the 16th, twenty pounds of butter again. Buckwheat flour— [*A pause. Bells are heard tinkling.*]

MARINA He has gone. [*A pause.*]

SONIA *comes in and sets the candle-stick on the table.*

SONIA He has gone.

VOITSKI [*Adding and writing.*] Total, fifteen—twenty-five—

SONIA *sits down and begins to write.*

MARINA [*Yawning.*] Oh, ho! The Lord have mercy.

TELEGIN *comes in on tiptoe, sits down near the door, and begins to tune his guitar.*

VOITSKI [*To* SONIA, *stroking her hair.*] Oh, my child, I am so miserable; if you only knew how miserable I am!

SONIA What can we do? We must live our lives. [*A pause.*] Yes, we shall live, Uncle Vanya. We shall live through the long procession of days before us, and through the long evenings; we shall patiently bear the trials that fate imposes on us; we shall work for others without rest, both now and when we are old; and when our last hour comes we shall meet it humbly, and there, beyond the grave, we shall say that we have suffered and wept, that our life was bitter, and God will have pity on us. Ah, then dear, dear Uncle, we shall see that bright and beautiful life; we shall rejoice and look back upon our sorrow here; a tender smile—and—we shall rest. I have faith, Uncle, fervent, passionate faith. [SONIA *kneels down before her uncle and lays her head on his hands. She speaks in a weary voice.*] We shall rest. [TELEGIN *plays softly on the guitar.*] We shall rest. We shall hear the angels. We shall see heaven shining like a jewel. We shall see all evil and all our pain sink away in the great compassion that shall enfold the world. Our life will be as peaceful and tender and sweet as a caress. I have faith; I have faith. [*She wipes away her tears.*] My poor, poor Uncle Vanya, you are crying! [*Weeping.*] You have never known what happiness was, but wait, Uncle Vanya, wait! We shall rest. [*She embraces him.*] We shall rest. [*The* WATCHMAN'S *rattle is heard in the garden;* TELEGIN *plays softly;* MME. VOITSKAYA *writes something on the margin of her pamphlet;* MARINA *knits her stocking.*] We shall rest.

The curtain slowly falls.

2. English Comedy

COMEDY OF MANNERS

W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM: *The Circle*

FARCE COMEDY

NOEL COWARD: *Blithe Spirit*

W. Somerset Maugham

Since the time of Marlowe and Shakespeare, there have been few tragedies comparable to the great comedies produced by Congreve in the Restoration period, by Goldsmith and Sheridan in the eighteenth century, or by Oscar Wilde in the nineteenth century. This is equally true of contemporary English drama. What distinguishes the work of twentieth-century comic playwrights in England is the great variety of their dramatic forms. George Bernard Shaw developed and perfected the comedy of ideas. James M. Barrie and A. A. Milne revived the sentimental comedy of the eighteenth century. W. Somerset Maugham and Noel Coward have carried on the tradition of the comedy of manners of the Restoration period.

The demands made on the writer of the comedy of manners are many. He must have ample opportunity to observe the artificialities in the life of the wealthy and leisure class, he must have a keen eye for the hypocrisies practiced in their drawing rooms, and he must have a sensitive ear for recording the superficialities of their conversation. When they themselves cannot rise to wit and elegance of expression, he must make them do so. Above all, he must be able to maintain a detachment in describing marital complications, the indiscretions and intrigues of a world in which manners come before morals.

Somerset Maugham's cosmopolitan background—his knowledge of Paris and Berlin, as well as London—peculiarly qualified him for high comedy. His medical training taught him to view humanity with a kind of clinical objectivity and precision. And he was able to achieve such a skillful blending of the comedy of intrigue with a sufficiently daring observation on manners as to completely capture his fashionable audiences.

In 1877 Meredith had pointed out in his essay *On the Idea of Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit* that one of the elements necessary for the creator of high comedy is the presence of a sophis-

ticated audience. Goldsmith and Sheridan had written largely for the gentry, who appreciated their wit and satire. In early nineteenth-century England, however, the upper class lost its dominant position in society and was gradually replaced by industrialists, merchants, and professional people. By the time Maugham began to write for the theater, at the end of the century, this middle class was firmly established in power and had secured that degree of cultivation which made it receptive to comedy. The relative failure of his first serious novel and play helped convince Maugham that he should write for this particular audience if he wanted to earn his living with his pen. Therefore he turned deliberately to the creation of comedies of manners.

He studied the history of the English theater and decided that, since comedy had been popular over so many centuries, it "may be supposed to have something in it that peculiarly appeals to the English temper." His reading in the field taught him that serious subjects and attitudes must be kept out of such plays. "Comedy is an artificial thing," he decided, "and so only the appearance, not the reality, of naturalism is in place. The laugh must be sought for its own sake." He concluded that a playwright should not try to represent life as it is, which he felt to be predominantly tragic, but should "comment on it satirically and amusingly."

Indeed, Maugham has always held the drama in some contempt. He maintains that it need not be taken with the seriousness that is cultivated in certain groups. It is his opinion that the purpose of a play is pleasure rather than instruction and that a play is neither more difficult, nor takes more time, to write than a long short story. He is scornful of the effectiveness of the comedy of ideas, partly because of the variety of intelligence in any one audience, partly because of the nature of the theater. He does not claim that ideas should be eliminated from plays, but feels that they should be presented in terms of emotional situations. A man of ideas, a philosopher, is concerned with truth. But the dramatist is concerned only with verisimilitude. "And what, if you please, is the dramatist going to do when truth is on one side and dramatic effect on the other?" Maugham asks. And he answers his own question by saying that a dramatist "will let truth go to the devil. . . . but if he is a

philosopher he will let his play go hang, and that will be the end of his play."

For these reasons, Maugham concentrated on the artificialities of the comedy of manners. His plays have witty dialogue, carelessly studded with epigrams, and carefully contrived plots, usually centering around marriage and the position of women. He seldom took the "new woman" as seriously as did Ibsen and Shaw, but his best comedies concern themselves with her problems. He was well aware that the matinee audience of women was part of his new playgoing public and that they determined the run of his plays. Where Noel Coward uses the comic hero who copes gracefully with the situations he faces, Maugham, in his comedies, usually employs a beautiful and clever woman who deals successfully with the problem. And it is usually the problem of her relation to men and marriage.

In his comedy *The Unattainable,* for instance, he dealt sympathetically with the situation faced by many of the women in his audience—that of approaching middle age. His comic heroine has been separated from her husband for some ten years, and during this time she has had two devoted admirers. When a notice of her husband's death appears in the *Times,* she is faced with the necessity of deciding between these admirers. She suddenly discovers, however, that their attention has become perfunctory, and that, like the heroine of that greatest of all Restoration comedies of manners, Congreve's *The Way of the World,* she herself is reluctant "to dwindle into a wife." She is comforted in this dreadful situation by the advice of a worldly physician. He tells her that she is suffering from an ailment for which there is no cure—middle age. He consoles her, however, with some considered remarks about the pleasures of the middle years and even makes a practical suggestion. Since her husband died in Africa, the doctor undertakes to spread the news that the rumor of his death was false and that she is still a married woman. Once again her devoted admirers appear, protesting that they live only for the day when she will be really free. By this time the heroine has wisely observed that her husband's existence is necessary for her happiness; as long as he lives her attractiveness cannot fade, for she is "unattainable."

Another kind of marital situation is faced by the constant wife in

the play of that name. Constance Middleton is confronted with the problem of preventing her friends from telling her something of which she is well aware—that her husband has fallen in love with another woman. Eventually she is forced to recognize it publicly. Being clever and resourceful, she settles her relationship with her husband as many women might wish, but as few are able, to do. First she makes herself financially independent and then convinces her husband of her desirability by letting him know that an old admirer is still devoted to her. She also makes him aware of the shallowness of his mistress. When he is properly repentant, she informs him that she too is leaving, is taking a little vacation from marriage, but that she will be back in six weeks. Her husband's threat to divorce her has no effect at all. She has repaid all the money he spent to maintain her and owes him no debt of gratitude, and she conducts herself exactly as he had done in the identical circumstances. He is finally reduced to the ignominious position of having to declare that he will not divorce her because he would not risk exposing his worst enemy to the danger of marrying her if she were free.

Solutions like this of marriage difficulties by wise and witty women of the world are obviously unorthodox; yet it can be understood why they are attractive to the women in Maugham's audiences. One of the essential qualities of the comedy of manners is its indifference to —even defiance of—middle-class standards of morality. Its authors insist on an amoral attitude and refrain from making moral judgments about the conduct of the worldlings who appear in their plays. The single standard of morality is being suggested by Maugham, but, at the same time, he is not embarking on any crusade for the single standard. He presents only a solution for a particular problem. He creates the entertainment that is usually associated with the word comedy and yet provokes thoughtful laughter. Thus he appeals to the intellectual sophistication of his audience.

Except in his capacity of comic playwright, Maugham has not been indifferent to moral standards. Frequently he treats a variant of these comedy situations in a novel, where he gives them serious study. *The Moon and Sixpence,* for instance, deals with a marriage problem similar to that of *The Constant Wife,* but the results of such behavior here are tragic. Again, in *Of Human Bondage* he develops

with deep understanding the human relations of courtship and marriage that he later treats with light cynicism in *The Circle.*

In his comedies, however, he seldom departs from his professed objectivity or allows himself to make moral judgments. *The Circle* shows Lady Kitty and Lord Porteous as examples of the suffering that results from a careless defiance of social responsibility, but the emphasis is on the fact that Lady Kitty's eloping daughter-in-law will not profit from her advice or experience. And the curtain descends on the derisive laughter of Lady Kitty and Lord Porteous, who have transgressed moral law, as they observe the discomfiture of the stuffy and respectable who are attempting to uphold it.

What Maugham would have done in the theater if he had had more respect for it is difficult to say. He considers prose drama as one of the lesser arts. He feels that the drama took a wrong turn when the demand for realism caused playwrights to change from poetry to prose. "Verse has a specific dramatic value," he writes in *The Summing Up.* "But more than that: verse forces on the matter a conventional form that heightens the aesthetic effect. It enables the drama to achieve a beauty that is out of question in a prose play." He himself is content to move within the conventional forms of his day. In the drama, as in the novel and the short story, he is always concerned primarily with the well-told story.

When Maugham turned to the drama, he deliberately entered the drawing room and held his characters to the conventions by which their lives were circumscribed by reality and by theatrical tradition. Their urbanity is seldom ruffled, they move with grace and assurance through the most difficult of situations. It is true that there is an element of farce in many of his best plays, but the situations are never so elaborate that they defy probability. For the "ornaments of verse" he substitutes dialogue as clever and witty as any conceived by a dramatist of the period. The language of his characters avoids the labored artificiality of Wilde and the delicate sentimentality of Barrie. His plays have a sense of reality which these authors never created. Maugham, indeed, finds himself quite at home surrounded by the traditions of the comedy of manners; and, like a perfect gentleman of the world, he seldom violates the decorums of this most difficult of all comedy forms.

1874 Born January 25 in Paris, where his father was solicitor to the British Embassy.

1882 His mother died of consumption. He was sent to school to be taught to speak English. His father died of cancer in 1884, and Maugham was raised by an uncle, the vicar of Whitstable, near Canterbury. He attended King's School.

1891 He went to Heidelberg, attended lectures at the university, and gained intellectual independence.

1892-97 Studied medicine at St. Thomas's Hospital, London, and became a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons and a Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians in 1898. Instead of practicing medicine, however, he turned to literature, because "The artist is the only free man."

1897 *Liza of Lambeth,* his first novel, a study of the slums around a medical school. He stated: "we learn resignation not by our own suffering, but by the suffering of others."

1902 *Mrs. Craddock.* He wrote this second novel because he could not get his early plays acted and thought that he could interest producers if he had a reputation as a novelist. *Schiffbrüchig,* a one-act play in German, was produced in Berlin. It was translated as *Marriages Are Made in Heaven.*

1903 *A Man of Honour* was published in the *Fortnightly Review.* It was given only two performances by the London Stage Society.[1]

[1] All dates for the plays of Maugham are for the London production unless otherwise noted.

1907-14 PERIOD OF LIGHT COMEDY

1907 *Lady Frederick* was his first successful play. Maugham wrote later that the purpose of drama "is to give pleasure by telling a story, delineating character, and by stirring the emotions or causing laughter."

1908 *Jack Straw, Mrs. Dot,* and *The Explorer* were all running concurrently with *Lady Frederick.* Maugham was the first playwright to have four plays on the London stage at the same time. Although these and the following plays made him financially independent, and enabled him to live most of his life on the Continent, particularly in France, and to travel extensively, Maugham has said: "It is an error to suppose that the popular playwright writes only to make money . . . you earn most money when you write merely to please yourself."

1914 When World War I broke out, Maugham first drove an ambulance in France, then joined the Intelligence Department of the British Army. He was sent to Russia to "keep Russia in the war and prevent the Bolsheviks, supported by the Central Powers, from seizing power." Then he spent two years in a sanatorium recovering from tuberculosis.

1915 *Of Human Bondage* has become a classic among contemporary novels. Married Syrie Barnardo, widow of Sir Henry S. Wellcome (divorced in 1927). Had a daughter, Lisa.

1916-27 PERIOD OF MATURE COMEDIES

1916 *The Unattainable* introduced his

detached, amoral, comedy-of-manners style. Maugham had learned that "the secret of playwriting can be given in two maxims: stick to the point and whenever you can, cut."

1917 Our Betters is a slightly sentimentalized comedy of manners.

1919 The Moon and Sixpence, a novel based on the life of Gauguin. Maugham wrote: "I have always worked from the living model."

1921 The Circle opened in London on March 3, and on September 12 in New York, where it ran for 175 performances. It was revived in New York in 1938 and had 72 performances with Tallulah Bankhead as Elizabeth. In his early farce comedies and melodramas, Maugham had reacted against the art for art's sake, aesthetic philosophy of the nineties. Now even his comedies of manners began to have a serious social note.

1927 The Constant Wife is a brilliant satire on the double standard in marriage.

1929-33 PERIOD OF SERIOUS DRAMA

1929 The Sacred Flame is a tragedy in which the wife of a crippled aviator philanders with her husband's brother. Maugham was created a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor.

1930 The Breadwinner, a comedy.

1932 For Services Rendered is a serious study of the continuing effect of World War I fifteen years later.

1933 Sheppey. Maugham declared this would be his last play; and, except for an occasional return to the stage, such as when he wrote *Theatre* (1941) in collaboration with Guy Bolton or prepared adaptations of his short stories for the movies, he has maintained his decision. He declared that the talkies, which became established about 1930, had rendered the prose play "powerless to defend itself. The movies could represent action much more effectively, and action is the essence of drama." He stated: "The prose drama to which I have given so much of my life will soon be dead."

1933-ff. PERIOD OF NONDRAMATIC WRITING

1933 Ah King was a successful volume of short stories with characteristic emphasis upon the story or plot at the expense of characterization. "I saw the short story as a narrative of a single event, material or spiritual, to which by the elimination of everything that was not essential to its elucidation a dramatic unity could be given."

1938 The Summing Up is an autobiography of his ideas on life and art.

1939 When World War II broke out, Maugham escaped in a small boat from France and again served in the British Intelligence Department.

1944 The Razor's Edge introduced a new theme into his novels—the compulsive power of religious faith.

1948 Catalina treated the religious theme again, although this time with much of his usual cynicism.

1949 Quartet. An English movie based on four of his short stories. He appears on the screen to introduce and comment on the stories.

The Circle[1]

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

by W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

Persons of the Play

CLIVE CHAMPION-CHENEY
ARNOLD CHAMPION-CHENEY, M.P.
LORD PORTEOUS
EDWARD LUTON
LADY CATHERINE CHAMPION-CHENEY
ELIZABETH
MRS. SHENSTONE

The action takes place at Aston-Adey, Arnold Champion-Cheney's house in Dorset.

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The Scene is a stately drawing-room at Aston-Adey, with fine pictures on the walls and Georgian furniture. Aston-Adey has been described, with many illustrations, in COUNTRY LIFE. *It is not a house, but a place. Its owner takes a great pride in it, and there is nothing in the room which is not of the period. Through the French windows at the back can be seen the beautiful gardens which are one of the features. It is a fine summer morning.* ARNOLD *comes in. He is a man of about thirty-five, tall and good-looking, fair, with a clean-cut, sensitive face. He has a look that is intellectual, but somewhat bloodless. He is very well dressed.*

ARNOLD [*Calling.*] Elizabeth! [*He goes to the window and calls again.*] Elizabeth! [*He rings the bell. While he is waiting he gives a look round the room. He slightly alters the position of one of the chairs. He takes an ornament from the chimney-piece and blows the dust from it. A* FOOTMAN *comes in.*] Oh, George! See if you can find Mrs. Cheney, and ask her if she'd be good enough to come here.

FOOTMAN Very good, sir. [*The* FOOTMAN *turns to go.*]

ARNOLD Who is supposed to look after this room?

FOOTMAN I don't know, sir.

ARNOLD I wish when they dust they'd take care to replace the things exactly as they were before.

FOOTMAN Yes, sir.

ARNOLD [*Dismissing him.*] All right.

The FOOTMAN *goes out.* ARNOLD *goes again to the window and calls.*

ARNOLD Elizabeth! [*He sees* MRS. SHENSTONE.] Oh, Anna, do you know where Elizabeth is?

MRS. SHENSTONE *comes in from the garden. She is a woman of forty, pleasant, and of elegant appearance.*

ANNA Isn't she playing tennis?

ARNOLD No, I've been down to the tennis court. Something very tiresome has happened.

ANNA Oh?

ARNOLD I wonder where the deuce she is.

ANNA When do you expect Lord Porteous and Lady Kitty?

ARNOLD They're motoring down in time for luncheon.

ANNA Are you sure you want me to be here? It's not too late yet, you know. I can have my

things packed and catch a train for somewhere or other.

ARNOLD No, of course we want you. It'll make it so much easier if there are people here. It was exceedingly kind of you to come.

ANNA Oh, nonsense!

ARNOLD And I think it was a good thing to have Teddie Luton down.

ANNA He is so breezy, isn't he?

ARNOLD Yes, that's his great asset. I don't know that he's very intelligent, but, you know, there are occasions when you want a bull in a china shop. I sent one of the servants to find Elizabeth.

ANNA I daresay she's putting on her shoes. She and Teddie were going to have a single.

ARNOLD It can't take all this time to change one's shoes.

ANNA [*With a smile.*] One can't change one's shoes without powdering one's nose, you know.

ELIZABETH *comes in. She is a very pretty creature in the early twenties. She wears a light summer frock.*

ARNOLD My dear, I've been hunting for you everywhere. What *have* you been doing?

ELIZABETH Nothing! I've been standing on my head.

ARNOLD My father's here.

ELIZABETH [*Startled.*] Where?

ARNOLD At the cottage. He arrived last night.

ELIZABETH Damn!

ARNOLD [*Good-humouredly.*] I wish you wouldn't say that, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH If you're not going to say "Damn" when a thing's damnable, when are you going to say "Damn"?

ARNOLD I should have thought you could say, "Oh, bother!" or something like that.

ELIZABETH But that wouldn't express my sentiments. Besides, at that speech day when you were giving away the prizes you said there were no synonyms in the English language.

ANNA [*Smiling.*] Oh, Elizabeth! It's very unfair to expect a politician to live in private up to the statements he makes in public.

ARNOLD I'm always willing to stand by anything I've said. There *are* no synonyms in the English language.

ELIZABETH In that case, I shall be regretfully forced to continue to say "Damn" whenever I feel like it.

EDWARD LUTON *shows himself at the window. He is an attractive youth in flannels.*

TEDDIE I say, what about this tennis?

ELIZABETH Come in. We're having a scene.

TEDDIE [*Entering.*] How splendid! What about?

ELIZABETH The English language.

TEDDIE Don't tell me you've been splitting your infinitives.

ARNOLD [*With the shadow of a frown.*] I wish you'd be serious, Elizabeth. The situation is none too pleasant.

ANNA I think Teddie and I had better make ourselves scarce.

ELIZABETH Nonsense! You're both in it. If there's going to be any unpleasantness we want your moral support. That's why we asked you to come.

TEDDIE And I thought I'd been asked for my blue eyes.

ELIZABETH Vain beast! And they happen to be brown.

TEDDIE Is anything up?

ELIZABETH Arnold's father arrived last night.

TEDDIE Did he, by Jove! I thought he was in Paris.

ARNOLD So did we all. He told me he'd be there for the next month.

ANNA Have you seen him?

ARNOLD No! He rang me up. It's a mercy he had a telephone put in the cottage. It would have been a pretty kettle of fish if he'd just walked in.

ELIZABETH Did you tell him Lady Catherine was coming?

ARNOLD Of course not. I was flabbergasted to know he was here. And then I thought we'd better talk it over first.

ELIZABETH Is he coming along here?

ARNOLD Yes. He suggested it, and I couldn't think of any excuse to prevent him.

TEDDIE Couldn't you put the other people off?

ARNOLD They're coming by car. They may be here any minute. It's too late to do that.

ELIZABETH Besides, it would be beastly.

ARNOLD I knew it was silly to have them here. Elizabeth insisted.

ELIZABETH After all, she *is* your mother, Arnold.

ARNOLD That meant precious little to her when she—went away. You can't imagine it means very much to me now.

ELIZABETH It's thirty years ago. It seems so absurd to bear malice after all that time.

ARNOLD I don't bear malice, but the fact remains that she did me the most irreparable harm. I can find no excuse for her.

ELIZABETH Have you ever tried to?

ARNOLD My dear Elizabeth, it's no good going over all that

again. The facts are lamentably simple. She had a husband who adored her, a wonderful position, all the money she could want, and a child of five. And she ran away with a married man.

ELIZABETH Lady Porteous is not a very attractive woman, Arnold. [*To* ANNA.] Do you know her?

ANNA [*Smiling.*] "Forbidding" is the word, I think.

ARNOLD If you're going to make little jokes about it, I have nothing more to say.

ANNA I'm sorry, Arnold.

ELIZABETH Perhaps your mother couldn't help herself—if she was in love?

ARNOLD And had no sense of honour, duty, or decency? Oh, yes, under those circumstances you can explain a great deal.

ELIZABETH That's not a very pretty way to speak of your mother.

ARNOLD I can't look on her as my mother.

ELIZABETH What you can't get over is that she didn't think of you. Some of us are more mother and some of us more woman. It gives me a little thrill when I think that she loved that man so much. She sacrificed her name, her position, and her child to him.

ARNOLD You really can't expect the said child to have any great affection for the mother who treated him like that.

ELIZABETH No, I don't think I do. But I think it's a pity after all these years that you shouldn't be friends.

ARNOLD I wonder if you realize what it was to grow up under the shadow of that horrible scandal. Everywhere, at school, and at Oxford, and afterwards in London, I was always the son of Lady Kitty Cheney. Oh, it was cruel, cruel!

ELIZABETH Yes, I know, Arnold. It was beastly for you.

ARNOLD It would have been bad enough if it had been an ordinary case, but the position of the people made it ten times worse. My father was in the House then, and Porteous—he hadn't succeeded to the title—was in the House too; he was Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and he was very much in the public eye.

ANNA My father always used to say he was the ablest man in the party. Every one was expecting him to be Prime Minister.

ARNOLD You can imagine what a boon it was to the British public. They hadn't had such a treat for a generation. The most popular song of the day was

about my mother. Did you ever hear it? "Naughty Lady Kitty. Thought it such a pity . . ."

ELIZABETH [*Interrupting.*] Oh, Arnold, don't!

ARNOLD And then they never let people forget them. If they'd lived quietly in Florence and not made a fuss the scandal would have died down. But those constant actions between Lord and Lady Porteous kept on reminding every one.

TEDDIE What were they having actions about?

ARNOLD Of course my father divorced his wife, but Lady Porteous refused to divorce Porteous. He tried to force her by refusing to support her and turning her out of her house, and heaven knows what. They were constantly wrangling in the law courts.

ANNA I think it was monstrous of Lady Porteous.

ARNOLD She knew he wanted to marry my mother, and she hated my mother. You can't blame her.

ANNA It must have been very difficult for them.

ARNOLD That's why they've lived in Florence. Porteous has money. They found people there who were willing to accept the situation.

ELIZABETH This is the first time they've ever come to England.

ARNOLD My father will have to be told, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH Yes.

ANNA [*To* ELIZABETH.] Has he ever spoken to you about Lady Kitty?

ELIZABETH Never.

ARNOLD I don't think her name has passed his lips since she ran away from this house thirty years ago.

TEDDIE Oh, they lived here?

ARNOLD Naturally. There was a house-party, and one evening neither Porteous nor my mother came down to dinner. The rest of them waited. They couldn't make it out. My father sent up to my mother's room, and a note was found on the pincushion.

ELIZABETH [*With a faint smile.*] That's what they did in the Dark Ages.

ARNOLD I think he took a dislike to this house from that horrible night. He never lived here again, and when I married he handed the place over to me. He just has a cottage now on the estate that he comes to when he feels inclined.

ELIZABETH It's been very nice for us.

ARNOLD I owe everything to my father. I don't think he'll

ever forgive me for asking these people to come here.

ELIZABETH I'm going to take all the blame on myself, Arnold.

ARNOLD [*Irritably.*] The situation was embarrassing enough anyhow. I don't know how I ought to treat them.

ELIZABETH Don't you think that'll settle itself when you see them?

ARNOLD After all, they're my guests. I shall try and behave like a gentleman.

ELIZABETH I wouldn't. We haven't got central heating.

ARNOLD [*Taking no notice.*] Will she expect me to kiss her?

ELIZABETH [*With a smile.*] Surely.

ARNOLD It always makes me uncomfortable when people are effusive.

ANNA But I can't understand why you never saw her before.

ARNOLD I believe she tried to see me when I was little, but my father thought it better she shouldn't.

ANNA Yes, but when you were grown up?

ARNOLD She was always in Italy. I never went to Italy.

ELIZABETH It seems to me so pathetic that if you saw one another in the street you wouldn't recognize each other.

ARNOLD Is it my fault?

ELIZABETH You've promised to be very gentle with her and very kind.

ARNOLD The mistake was asking Porteous to come too. It looks as though we condoned the whole thing. And how am I to treat him? Am I to shake him by the hand and slap him on the back? He absolutely ruined my father's life.

ELIZABETH [*Smiling.*] How much would you give for a nice motor accident that prevented them from coming?

ARNOLD I let you persuade me against my better judgment, and I've regretted it ever since.

ELIZABETH [*Good-humouredly.*] I think it's very lucky that Anna and Teddie are here. I don't foresee a very successful party.

ARNOLD I'm going to do my best. I gave you my promise and I shall keep it. But I can't answer for my father.

ANNA Here is your father.

MR. CHAMPION-CHENEY *shows himself at one of the French windows.*

C.-C. May I come in through the window, or shall I have myself announced by a supercilious flunkey?

ELIZABETH Come in. We've been expecting you.

C.-C. Impatiently, I hope, my dear child.

MR. CHAMPION-CHENEY *is a tall man in the early sixties, spare, with a fine head of gray hair and an intelligent, somewhat ascetic face. He is very carefully dressed. He is a man who makes the most of himself. He bears his years jauntily. He kisses* ELIZABETH *and then holds out his hand to* ARNOLD.

ELIZABETH We thought you'd be in Paris for another month.

C.-C. How are you, Arnold? I always reserve to myself the privilege of changing my mind. It's the only one elderly gentlemen share with pretty women.

ELIZABETH You know Anna.

C.-C. [*Shaking hands with her.*] Of course I do. How very nice to see you here! Are you staying long?

ANNA As long as I'm welcome.

ELIZABETH And this is Mr. Luton.

C.-C. How do you do? Do you play bridge?

LUTON I do.

C.-C. Capital. Do you declare without top honours?

LUTON Never.

C.-C. Of such is the kingdom of heaven. I see that you are a good young man.

LUTON But, like the good in general, I am poor.

C.-C. Never mind; if your principles are right, you can play ten shillings a hundred without danger. I never play less, and I never play more.

ARNOLD And you—are going to stay long, Father?

C.-C. To luncheon, if you'll have me.

ARNOLD *gives* ELIZABETH *a harassed look.*

ELIZABETH That'll be jolly.

ARNOLD I didn't mean that. Of course you're going to stay for luncheon. I meant, how long are you going to stay down here?

C.-C. A week.

There is a moment's pause. Every one but CHAMPION-CHENEY *is slightly embarrassed.*

TEDDIE I think we'd better chuck our tennis.

ELIZABETH Yes. I want my father-in-law to tell me what they're wearing in Paris this week.

TEDDIE I'll go and put the rackets away. [TEDDIE *goes out.*]

ARNOLD It's nearly one o'clock, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH I didn't know it was so late.

ANNA [*To* ARNOLD.] I wonder if I can persuade you to take a turn in the garden before luncheon.

ARNOLD [*Jumping at the idea.*] I'd love it. [ANNA *goes out of the window, and as he follows her he stops irresolutely.*] I want you to look at this chair I've just got. I think it's rather good.

C.-C. Charming.

ARNOLD About 1750, I should say. Good design, isn't it? It hasn't been restored or anything.

C.-C. Very pretty.

ARNOLD I think it was a good buy, don't you?

C.-C. Oh, my dear boy! You know I'm entirely ignorant about these things.

ARNOLD It's exactly my period . . . I shall see you at luncheon, then. [*He follows* ANNA *through the window.*]

C.-C. Who is that young man?

ELIZABETH Mr. Luton. He's only just been demobilized. He's the manager of a rubber estate in the F.M.S.

C.-C. And what are the F.M.S. when they're at home?

ELIZABETH The Federated Malay States. He joined up at the beginning of the war. He's just going back there.

C.-C. And why have we been left alone in this very marked manner?

ELIZABETH Have we? I didn't notice it.

C.-C. I suppose it's difficult for the young to realize that one may be old without being a fool.

ELIZABETH I never thought you that. Every one knows you're very intelligent.

C.-C. They certainly ought to by now. I've told them often enough. Are you a little nervous?

ELIZABETH Let me feel my pulse. [*She puts her finger on her wrist.*] It's perfectly regular.

C.-C. When I suggested staying to luncheon Arnold looked exactly like a dose of castor oil.

ELIZABETH I wish you'd sit down.

C.-C. Will it make it easier for you? [*He takes a chair.*] You have evidently something very disagreeable to say to me.

ELIZABETH You won't be cross with me?

C.-C. How old are you?

ELIZABETH Twenty-five.

C.-C. I'm never cross with a woman under thirty.

ELIZABETH Oh, then I've got ten years.

C.-C. Mathematics?

ELIZABETH No. Paint.

C.-C. Well?

ELIZABETH [*Reflectively.*] I think it would be easier if I sat on your knees.

C.-C. That is a pleasing taste of yours, but you must take care not to put on weight. [*She sits down on his knees.*]

ELIZABETH Am I bony?

C.-C. On the contrary. . . . I'm listening.

ELIZABETH Lady Catherine's coming here.

C.-C. Who's Lady Catherine?

ELIZABETH Your — Arnold's mother.

C.-C. Is she? [*He withdraws himself a little and* ELIZABETH *gets up.*]

ELIZABETH You mustn't blame Arnold. It's my fault. I insisted. He was against it. I nagged him till he gave way. And then I wrote and asked her to come.

C.-C. I didn't know you knew her.

ELIZABETH I don't. But I heard she was in London. She's staying at Claridge's. It seemed so heartless not to take the smallest notice of her.

C.-C. When is she coming?

ELIZABETH We're expecting her in time for luncheon.

C.-C. As soon as that? I understand the embarrassment.

ELIZABETH You see, we never expected you to be here. You said you'd be in Paris for another month.

C.-C. My dear child, this is your house. There's no reason why you shouldn't ask whom you please to stay with you.

ELIZABETH After all, whatever her faults, she's Arnold's mother. It seemed so unnatural that they should never see one another. My heart ached for that poor lonely woman.

C.-C. I never heard that she was lonely, and she certainly isn't poor.

ELIZABETH And there's something else. I couldn't ask her by herself. It would have been so— so insulting. I asked Lord Porteous, too.

C.-C. I see.

ELIZABETH I daresay you'd rather not meet them.

C.-C. I daresay they'd rather not meet me. I shall get a capital luncheon at the cottage. I've noticed you always get the best food if you come in unexpectedly and have the same as they're having in the servants' hall.

ELIZABETH No one's ever talked to me about Lady Kitty. It's always been a subject that every one has avoided. I've never even seen a photograph of her.

C.-C. The house was full of them when she left. I think I told the butler to throw them in the dust-bin. She was very much photographed.

ELIZABETH Won't you tell me what she was like?

C.-C. She was very like you, Elizabeth, only she had dark hair instead of red.

ELIZABETH Poor dear! It must be quite white now.

C.-C. I daresay. She was a pretty little thing.

ELIZABETH But she was one of the great beauties of her day. They say she was lovely.

C.-C. She had the most adorable little nose, like yours. . . .

ELIZABETH D'you like my nose?

C.-C. And she was very dainty, with a beautiful little figure; very light on her feet. She was like a *marquise* in an old French comedy. Yes, she was lovely.

ELIZABETH And I'm sure she's lovely still.

C.-C. She's no chicken, you know.

ELIZABETH You can't expect me to look at it as you and Arnold do. When you've loved as she's loved you may grow old, but you grow old beautifully.

C.-C. You're very romantic.

ELIZABETH If every one hadn't made such a mystery of it I daresay I shouldn't feel as I do. I know she did a great wrong to you and a great wrong to Arnold. I'm willing to acknowledge that.

C.-C. I'm sure it's very kind of you.

ELIZABETH But she loved and she dared. Romance is such an elusive thing. You read of it in books, but it's seldom you see it face to face. I can't help it if it thrills me.

C.-C. I am painfully aware that the husband in these cases is not a romantic object.

ELIZABETH She had the world at her feet. You were rich. She was a figure in society. And she gave up everything for love.

C.-C. [*Dryly.*] I'm beginning to suspect it wasn't only for her sake and for Arnold's that you asked her to come here.

ELIZABETH I seem to know her already. I think her face is a little sad, for a love like that doesn't leave you gay, it leaves you grave, but I think her pale face is unlined. It's like a child's.

C.-C. My dear, how you let your imagination run away with you!

ELIZABETH I imagine her slight and frail.

C.-C. Frail, certainly.

ELIZABETH With beautiful thin hands and white hair. I've pictured her so often in that Renaissance Palace that they live in, with old Masters on the walls and lovely carved things all round, sitting in a black silk dress with old lace round her neck and old-fashioned diamonds. You see, I never knew my mother; she died when I was a baby. You can't confide in aunts

with huge families of their own. I want Arnold's mother to be a mother to me. I've got so much to say to her.

C.-C. Are you happy with Arnold?

ELIZABETH Why shouldn't I be?

C.-C. Why haven't you got any babies?

ELIZABETH Give us a little time. We've only been married three years.

C.-C. I wonder what Hughie is like now!

ELIZABETH Lord Porteous?

C.-C. He wore his clothes better than any man in London. You know he'd have been Prime Minister if he'd remained in politics.

ELIZABETH What was he like then?

C.-C. He was a nice-looking fellow. Fine horseman. I suppose there was something very fascinating about him. Yellow hair and blue eyes, you know. He had a very good figure. I liked him. I was his parliamentary secretary. He was Arnold's godfather.

ELIZABETH I know.

C.-C. I wonder if he ever regrets!

ELIZABETH I wouldn't.

C.-C. Well, I must be strolling back to my cottage.

ELIZABETH You're not angry with me?

C.-C. Not a bit.

She puts up her face for him to kiss. He kisses her on both cheeks and then goes out. In a moment TEDDIE *is seen at the window.*

TEDDIE I saw the old blighter go.

ELIZABETH Come in.

TEDDIE Everything all right?

ELIZABETH Oh, quite, as far as he's concerned. He's going to keep out of the way.

TEDDIE Was it beastly?

ELIZABETH No, he made it very easy for me. He's a nice old thing.

TEDDIE You were rather scared.

ELIZABETH A little. I am still. I don't know why.

TEDDIE I guessed you were. I thought I'd come and give you a little moral support. It's ripping here, isn't it?

ELIZABETH It is rather nice.

TEDDIE It'll be jolly to think of it when I'm back in the F.M.S.

ELIZABETH Aren't you homesick sometimes?

TEDDIE Oh, every one is now and then, you know.

ELIZABETH You could have got a job in England if you'd wanted to, couldn't you?

TEDDIE Oh, but I love it out there. England's ripping to come

back to, but I couldn't live here now. It's like a woman you're desperately in love with as long as you don't see her, but when you're with her she maddens you so that you can't bear her.

ELIZABETH [*Smiling.*] What's wrong with England?

TEDDIE I don't think anything's wrong with England. I expect something's wrong with me. I've been away too long. England seems to me full of people doing things they don't want to because other people expect it of them.

ELIZABETH Isn't that what you call a high degree of civilisation?

TEDDIE People seem to me so insincere. When you go to parties in London they're all babbling about art, and you feel that in their hearts they don't care twopence about it. They read the books that everybody is talking about because they don't want to be out of it. In the F.M.S. we don't get very many books, and we read those we have over and over again. They mean so much to us. I don't think the people over there are half so clever as the people at home, but one gets to know them better. You see, there are so few of us that we have to make the best of one another.

ELIZABETH I imagine that frills are not much worn in the F.M.S. It must be a comfort.

TEDDIE It's not much good being pretentious where every one knows exactly who you are and what your income is.

ELIZABETH I don't think you want too much sincerity in society. It would be like an iron girder in a house of cards.

TEDDIE And then, you know, the place is ripping. You get used to a blue sky and you miss it in England.

ELIZABETH What do you do with yourself all the time?

TEDDIE Oh, one works like blazes. You have to be a pretty hefty fellow to be a planter. And then there's ripping bathing. You know, it's lovely, with palm trees all along the beach. And there's shooting. And now and then we have a little dance to a gramophone.

ELIZABETH [*Pretending to tease him.*] I think you've got a young woman out there, Teddie.

TEDDIE [*Vehemently.*] Oh, no! *She is a little taken aback by the earnestness of his disclaimer. There is a moment's silence, then she recovers herself.*

ELIZABETH But you'll have to marry and settle down one of these days, you know.

TEDDIE I want to, but it's not a thing you can do lightly.

ELIZABETH I don't know why there more than elsewhere.

TEDDIE In England if people don't get on they go their own ways and jog along after a fashion. In a place like that you're thrown a great deal on your own resources.

ELIZABETH Of course.

TEDDIE Lots of girls come out because they think they're going to have a good time. But if they're empty-headed, then they're just faced with their own emptiness and they're done. If their husbands can afford it they go home and settle down as grass-widows.

ELIZABETH I've met them. They seem to find it a very pleasant occupation.

TEDDIE It's rotten for their husbands, though.

ELIZABETH And if the husbands can't afford it?

TEDDIE Oh, then they tipple.

ELIZABETH It's not a very alluring prospect.

TEDDIE But if the woman's the right sort she wouldn't exchange it for any life. in the world. When all's said and done it's we who've made the Empire.

ELIZABETH What sort is the right sort?

TEDDIE A woman of courage and endurance and sincerity. Of course, it's hopeless unless she's in love with her husband.

He is looking at her earnestly and she, raising her eyes, gives him a long look. There is silence between them.

TEDDIE My house stands on the side of a hill, and the cocoanut trees wind down to the shore. Azaleas grow in my garden, and camellias, and all sorts of ripping flowers. And in front of me is the winding coast line, and then the blue sea. [*A pause.*] Do you know that I'm awfully in love with you?

ELIZABETH [*Gravely.*] I wasn't quite sure. I wondered.

TEDDIE And you? [*She nods slowly.*] I've never kissed you.

ELIZABETH I don't want you to.

They look at one another steadily. They are both grave. ARNOLD *comes in hurriedly.*

ARNOLD They're coming, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH [*As though returning from a distant world.*] Who?

ARNOLD [*Impatiently.*] My dear! My mother, of course. The car is just coming up the drive.

TEDDIE Would you like me to clear out?

ARNOLD No, no! For goodness' sake stay.

ELIZABETH We'd better go and meet them, Arnold.

ARNOLD No, no; I think they'd much better be shown in. I feel simply sick with nervousness.

ANNA *comes in from the garden.*

ANNA Your guests have arrived.

ELIZABETH Yes, I know.

ARNOLD I've given orders that luncheon should be served at once.

ELIZABETH Why? It's not half-past one already, is it?

ARNOLD I thought it would help. When you don't know exactly what to say you can always eat.

The BUTLER *comes in and announces.*

BUTLER Lady Catherine Champion-Cheney! Lord Porteous!

LADY KITTY *comes in followed by* PORTEOUS, *and the* BUTLER *goes out.* LADY KITTY *is a gay little lady, with dyed red hair and painted cheeks. She is somewhat outrageously dressed. She never forgets that she has been a pretty woman and she still behaves as if she were twenty-five.* LORD PORTEOUS *is a very bald, elderly gentleman in loose, rather eccentric clothes. He is snappy and gruff. This is not at all the couple that* ELIZABETH *expected, and for a moment she stares at them with round, startled eyes.* LADY KITTY *goes up to her with outstretched hands.*

LADY KITTY Elizabeth! Elizabeth! [*She kisses her effusively.*] What an adorable creature! [*Turning to* PORTEOUS.] Hughie, isn't she adorable?

PORTEOUS [*With a grunt.*] Ugh!

ELIZABETH, *smiling now, turns to him and gives him her hand.*

ELIZABETH How d'you do?

PORTEOUS Damnable road you've got down here. How d'you do, my dear? Why d'you have such damnable roads in England?

LADY KITTY'S *eyes fall on* TEDDIE *and she goes up to him with her arms thrown back, prepared to throw them around him.*

LADY KITTY My boy, my boy! I should have known you anywhere!

ELIZABETH [*Hastily.*] That's Arnold.

LADY KITTY [*Without a moment's hesitation.*] The image of his father! I should have known him anywhere! [*She throws her arms round his neck.*] My boy, my boy!

PORTEOUS [*With a grunt.*] Ugh!

LADY KITTY Tell me, would

you have known me again? Have I changed?

ARNOLD I was only five, you know, when—when you . . .

LADY KITTY [*Emotionally.*] I remember as if it was yesterday. I went up into your room. [*With a sudden change of manner.*] By the way, I always thought that nurse drank. Did you ever find out if she really did?

PORTEOUS How the devil can you expect him to know that, Kitty?

LADY KITTY You've never had a child, Hughie; how can you tell what they know and what they don't?

ELIZABETH [*Coming to the rescue.*] This is Arnold, Lord Porteous.

PORTEOUS [*Shaking hands with him.*] How d'you do? I knew your father.

ARNOLD Yes.

PORTEOUS Alive still?

ARNOLD Yes.

PORTEOUS He must be getting on. Is he well?

ARNOLD Very.

PORTEOUS Ugh! Takes care of himself, I suppose. I'm not at all well. This damned climate doesn't agree with me.

ELIZABETH [*To* LADY KITTY.] This is Mrs. Shenstone. And this is Mr. Luton. I hope you don't mind a very small party.

LADY KITTY [*Shaking hands with* ANNA *and* TEDDIE.] Oh, no, I shall enjoy it. I used to give enormous parties here. Political, you know. How nice you've made this room!

ELIZABETH Oh, that's Arnold.

ARNOLD [*Nervously.*] D'you like this chair? I've just bought it. It's exactly my period.

PORTEOUS [*Bluntly.*] It's a fake.

ARNOLD [*Indignantly.*] I don't think it is for a minute.

PORTEOUS The legs are not right.

ARNOLD I don't know how you can say that. If there is anything right about it, it's the legs.

LADY KITTY I'm sure they're right.

PORTEOUS You know nothing whatever about it, Kitty.

LADY KITTY That's what you think. *I* think it's a beautiful chair. Hepplewhite?

ARNOLD No, Sheraton.

LADY KITTY Oh, I know. "The School for Scandal."

PORTEOUS Sheraton, my dear. Sheraton.

LADY KITTY Yes, that's what I say. I acted the screen scene at some amateur theatricals in Florence, and Ermeto Novelli, the great Italian tragedian, told me he'd never seen a Lady Teazle like me.

PORTEOUS Ugh!

LADY KITTY [*To* ELIZABETH.] Do you act?

ELIZABETH Oh, I couldn't. I should be too nervous.

LADY KITTY I'm never nervous. I'm a born actress. Of course, if I had my time over again I'd go on the stage. You know, it's extraordinary how they keep young. Actresses, I mean. I think it's because they're always playing different parts. Hughie, do you think Arnold takes after me or after his father? Of course I think he's the very image of me. Arnold, I think I ought to tell you that I was received into the Catholic Church last winter. I'd been thinking about it for years, and last time we were at Monte Carlo I met such a nice monsignore. I told him what my difficulties were and he was too wonderful. I knew Hughie wouldn't approve, so I kept it a secret. [*To* ELIZABETH.] Are you interested in religion? I think it's too wonderful. We must have a long talk about it one of these days. [*Pointing to her frock.*] Callot?

ELIZABETH No, Worth.

LADY KITTY I knew it was either Worth or Callot. Of course, it's line that's the important thing. I go to Worth myself, and I always say to him, "Line, my dear Worth, line." What *is* the matter, Hughie?

PORTEOUS These new teeth of mine are so damned uncomfortable.

LADY KITTY Men are extraordinary. They can't stand the smallest discomfort. Why, a woman's life is uncomfortable from the moment she gets up in the morning till the moment she goes to bed at night. And d'you think it's comfortable to sleep with a mask on your face?

PORTEOUS They don't seem to hold up properly.

LADY KITTY Well, that's not the fault of your teeth. That's the fault of your gums.

PORTEOUS Damned rotten dentist. That's what's the matter.

LADY KITTY I thought he was a very nice dentist. He told me *my* teeth would last till I was fifty. He has a Chinese room. It's so interesting; while he scrapes your teeth he tells you all about the dear Empress Dowager. Are you interested in China? I think it's too wonderful. You know they've cut off their pigtails. I think it's such a pity. They were so picturesque.

The BUTLER *comes in.*

BUTLER Luncheon is served, sir.

ELIZABETH Would you like to see your rooms?

PORTEOUS We can see our rooms after luncheon.

LADY KITTY I must powder my nose, Hughie.

PORTEOUS Powder it down here.

LADY KITTY I never saw any one so inconsiderate.

PORTEOUS You'll keep us all waiting half an hour. I know you.

LADY KITTY [*Fumbling in her bag.*] Oh, well, peace at any price, as Lord Beaconsfield said.

PORTEOUS He said a lot of damned silly things, Kitty, but he never said that.

LADY KITTY'S *face changes. Perplexity is followed by dismay, and dismay by consternation.*

LADY KITTY Oh!

ELIZABETH What is the matter?

LADY KITTY [*With anguish.*] My lip-stick!

ELIZABETH Can't you find it?

LADY KITTY I had it in the car. Hughie, you remember that I had it in the car.

PORTEOUS I don't remember anything about it.

LADY KITTY Don't be so stupid, Hughie. Why, when we came through the gates I said: "My home, my home!" and I took it out and put some on my lips.

ELIZABETH Perhaps you dropped it in the car.

LADY KITTY For heaven's sake send some one to look for it.

ARNOLD I'll ring.

LADY KITTY I'm absolutely lost without my lip-stick. Lend me yours, darling, will you?

ELIZABETH I'm awfully sorry. I'm afraid I haven't got one.

LADY KITTY Do you mean to say you don't use a lip-stick?

ELIZABETH Never.

PORTEOUS Look at her lips. What the devil d'you think she wants muck like that for?

LADY KITTY Oh, my dear, what a mistake you make! You *must* use a lip-stick. It's so good for the lips. Men like it, you know. I couldn't *live* without a lip-stick.

CHAMPION-CHENEY *appears at the window holding in his upstretched hand a little gold case.*

C.-C. [*As he comes in.*] Has any one here lost a diminutive utensil containing, unless I am mistaken, a favourite preparation for the toilet?

ARNOLD *and* ELIZABETH *are thunderstruck at his appearance and even* TEDDIE *and* ANNA *are taken aback. But* LADY KITTY *is overjoyed.*

LADY KITTY My lip-stick!

C.-C. I found it in the drive and I ventured to bring it in.

LADY KITTY It's Saint Antony.

I said a little prayer to him when I was hunting in my bag.

PORTEOUS Saint Antony be blowed! It's Clive, by God!

LADY KITTY [*Startled, her attention suddenly turning from the lip-stick.*] Clive!

C.-C. You didn't recognize me. It's many years since we met.

LADY KITTY My poor Clive, your hair has gone quite white!

C.-C. [*Holding out his hand.*] I hope you had a pleasant journey down from London.

LADY KITTY [*Offering him her cheek.*] You may kiss me, Clive.

C.-C. [*Kissing her.*] You don't mind, Hughie?

PORTEOUS [*With a grunt.*] Ugh!

C.-C. [*Going up to him cordially.*] And how are you, my dear Hughie?

PORTEOUS Damned rheumatic if you want to know. Filthy climate you have in this country.

C.-C. Aren't you going to shake hands with me, Hughie?

PORTEOUS I have no objection to shaking hands with you.

C.-C. You've aged, my poor Hughie.

PORTEOUS Some one was asking me how old you were the other day.

C.-C. Were they surprised when you told them?

PORTEOUS Surprised! They wondered you weren't dead.

The BUTLER *comes in.*

BUTLER Did you ring, sir?

ARNOLD No. Oh, yes, I did. It doesn't matter now.

C.-C. [*As the* BUTLER *is going.*] One moment. My dear Elizabeth, I've come to throw myself on your mercy. My servants are busy with their own affairs. There's not a thing for me to eat in my cottage.

ELIZABETH Oh, but we shall be delighted if you'll lunch with us.

C.-C. It either means that or my immediate death from starvation. You don't mind, Arnold?

ARNOLD My dear father!

ELIZABETH [*To the* BUTLER.] Mr. Cheney will lunch here.

BUTLER Very good, ma'am.

C.-C. [*To* LADY KITTY.] And what do you think of Arnold?

LADY KITTY I adore him.

C.-C. He's grown, hasn't he? But then you'd expect him to do that in thirty years.

ARNOLD For God's sake let's go in to lunch, Elizabeth!

Curtain.

The Circle THE SECOND ACT

The Scene is the same as in the preceding Act.
It is afternoon. When the curtain rises PORTEOUS *and* LADY KITTY, ANNA *and* TEDDIE *are playing bridge.* ELIZABETH *and* CHAMPION-CHENEY *are watching.* PORTEOUS *and* LADY KITTY *are partners.*

C.-C. When will Arnold be back, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH Soon, I think.

C.-C. Is he addressing a meeting?

ELIZABETH No, it's only a conference with his agent and one or two constituents.

PORTEOUS [*Irritably.*] How any one can be expected to play bridge when people are shouting at the top of their voices all round them, I for one cannot understand.

ELIZABETH [*Smiling.*] I'm so sorry.

ANNA I can see your hand, Lord Porteous.

PORTEOUS It may help you.

LADY KITTY I've told you over and over again to hold your cards up. It ruins one's game when one can't help seeing one's opponent's hand.

PORTEOUS One isn't obliged to look.

LADY KITTY What was Arnold's majority at the last election?

ELIZABETH Seven hundred and something.

C.-C. He'll have to fight for it if he wants to keep his seat next time.

PORTEOUS Are we playing bridge, or talking politics?

LADY KITTY I never find that conversation interferes with my game.

PORTEOUS You certainly play no worse when you talk than when you hold your tongue.

LADY KITTY I think that's a very offensive thing to say, Hughie. Just because I don't play the same game as you do you think I can't play.

PORTEOUS I'm glad you acknowledge it's not the same game as I play. But why in God's name do you call it bridge?

C.-C. I agree with Kitty. I hate people who play bridge as though they were at a funeral

and knew their feet were getting wet.

PORTEOUS Of course you take Kitty's part.

LADY KITTY That's the least he can do.

C.-C. I have a naturally cheerful disposition.

PORTEOUS You've never had anything to sour it.

LADY KITTY I don't know what you mean by that, Hughie.

PORTEOUS [*Trying to contain himself.*] Must you trump my ace?

LADY KITTY [*Innocently.*] Oh, was that your ace, darling?

PORTEOUS [*Furiously.*] Yes, it was my ace.

LADY KITTY Oh, well, it was the only trump I had. I shouldn't have made it anyway.

PORTEOUS You needn't have told them that. Now she knows exactly what I've got.

LADY KITTY She knew before.

PORTEOUS How could she know?

LADY KITTY She said she'd seen your hand.

ANNA Oh, I didn't. I said I could see it.

LADY KITTY Well, I naturally supposed that if she could see it she did.

PORTEOUS Really, Kitty, you have the most extraordinary ideas.

C.-C. Not at all. If any one is such a fool as to show me his hand, of course I look at it.

PORTEOUS [*Fuming.*] If you study the etiquette of bridge, you'll discover that onlookers are expected not to interfere with the game.

C.-C. My dear Hughie, this is a matter of ethics, not of bridge.

ANNA Anyhow, I get the game. And rubber.

TEDDIE I claim a revoke.

PORTEOUS Who revoked?

TEDDIE You did.

PORTEOUS Nonsense. I've never revoked in my life.

TEDDIE I'll show you. [*He turns over the tricks to show the faces of the cards.*] You threw away a club on the third heart trick and you had another heart.

PORTEOUS I never had more than two hearts.

TEDDIE Oh, yes, you had. Look here. That's the card you played on the last trick but one.

LADY KITTY [*Delighted to catch him out.*] There's no doubt about it, Hughie. You revoked.

PORTEOUS I tell you I did not revoke. I never revoke.

C.-C. You did, Hughie. I wondered what on earth you were doing.

PORTEOUS I don't know how any one can be expected not to revoke when there's this con-

founded chatter going on all the time.

TEDDIE Well, that's another hundred to us.

PORTEOUS [*To* CHAMPION-CHENEY.] I wish you wouldn't breathe down my neck. I never can play bridge when there's somebody breathing down my neck.

The party have risen from the bridge-table, and they scatter about the room.

ANNA Well, I'm going to take a book and lie down in the hammock till it's time to dress.

TEDDIE [*Who has been adding up.*] I'll put it down in the book, shall I?

PORTEOUS [*Who has not moved, setting out the cards for a patience.*] Yes, yes, put it down. I never revoke.

ANNA *goes out.*

LADY KITTY Would you like to come for a little stroll, Hughie?

PORTEOUS What for?

LADY KITTY Exercise.

PORTEOUS I hate exercise.

C.-C. [*Looking at the patience.*] The seven goes on the eight.

PORTEOUS *takes no notice.*

LADY KITTY The seven goes on the eight, Hughie.

PORTEOUS I don't choose to put the seven on the eight.

C.-C. That knave goes on the queen.

PORTEOUS I'm not blind, thank you.

LADY KITTY The three goes on the four.

C.-C. All these go over.

PORTEOUS [*Furiously.*] Am I playing this patience, or are you playing it?

LADY KITTY But you're missing everything.

PORTEOUS That's my business.

C.-C. It's no good losing your temper over it, Hughie.

PORTEOUS Go away, both of you. You irritate me.

LADY KITTY We were only trying to help you, Hughie.

PORTEOUS I don't want to be helped. I want to do it by myself.

LADY KITTY I think your manners are perfectly deplorable, Hughie.

PORTEOUS It's simply maddening when you're playing patience and people won't leave you alone.

C.-C. We won't say another word.

PORTEOUS That three goes. I believe it's coming out. If I'd been such a fool as to put that seven up I shouldn't have been able to bring these down. [*He puts down several cards while they watch him silently.*]

LADY KITTY AND C.-C. [*Together.*] The four goes on the five.

PORTEOUS [*Throwing down*

the cards violently.] Damn you! Why don't you leave me alone? It's intolerable.

C.-C. It was coming out, my dear fellow.

PORTEOUS I know it was coming out. Confound you!

LADY KITTY How petty you are, Hughie!

PORTEOUS Petty, be damned! I've told you over and over again that I will not be interfered with when I'm playing patience.

LADY KITTY Don't talk to me like that, Hughie.

PORTEOUS I shall talk to you as I please.

LADY KITTY [*Beginning to cry.*] Oh, you brute! You brute! [*She flings out of the room.*]

PORTEOUS Oh, damn! Now she's going to cry. [*He shambles out into the garden.*]

CHAMPION-CHENEY, ELIZABETH *and* TEDDIE *are left alone. There is a moment's pause.* CHAMPION-CHENEY *looks from* TEDDIE *to* ELIZABETH, *with an ironical smile.*

C.-C. Upon my soul, they might be married. They frip so much.

ELIZABETH [*Frigidly.*] It's been nice of you to come here so often since they arrived. It's helped to make things easy.

C.-C. Irony? It's a rhetorical form not much favoured in this blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.

ELIZABETH What exactly are you getting at?

C.-C. How slangy the young women of the present day are! I suppose the fact that Arnold is a purist leads you to the contrary extravagance.

ELIZABETH Anyhow you know what I mean.

C.-C. [*With a smile.*] I have a dim, groping suspicion.

ELIZABETH You promised to keep away. Why did you come back the moment they arrived?

C.-C. Curiosity, my dear child. A surely pardonable curiosity.

ELIZABETH And since then you've been here all the time. You don't generally favour us with so much of your company when you're down at your cottage.

C.-C. I've been excessively amused.

ELIZABETH It has struck me that whenever they started fripping you took a malicious pleasure in goading them on.

C.-C. I don't think there's much love lost between them now, do you?

TEDDIE *is making as though to leave the room.*

ELIZABETH Don't go, Teddie.

C.-C. No, please don't. I'm only staying a minute. We were

talking about Lady Kitty just before she arrived. [*To* ELIZABETH.] Do you remember? The pale, frail lady in black satin and old lace.

ELIZABETH [*With a chuckle.*] You are a devil, you know.

C.-C. Ah, well, he's always had the reputation of being a humourist and a gentleman.

ELIZABETH Did *you* expect her to be like that, poor dear?

C.-C. My dear child, I hadn't the vaguest idea. You were asking me the other day what she was like when she ran away. I didn't tell you half. She was so gay and so natural. Who would have thought that animation would turn into such frivolity, and that charming impulsiveness lead to such a ridiculous affectation?

ELIZABETH It rather sets my nerves on edge to hear the way you talk of her.

C.-C. It's the truth that sets your nerves on edge, not I.

ELIZABETH You loved her once. Have you no feeling for her at all?

C.-C. None. Why should I?

ELIZABETH She's the mother of your son.

C.-C. My dear child, you have a charming nature, as simple, frank, and artless as hers was. Don't let pure humbug obscure your common sense.

ELIZABETH We have no right to judge. She's only been here two days. We know nothing about her.

C.-C. My dear, her soul is as thickly rouged as her face. She hasn't an emotion that's sincere. She's tinsel. You think I'm a cruel, cynical old man. Why, when I think of what she was, if I didn't laugh at what she has become I should cry.

ELIZABETH How do you know she wouldn't be just the same now if she'd remained your wife? Do you think your influence would have had such a salutary effect on her?

C.-C. [*Good-humouredly.*] I like you when you're bitter and rather insolent.

ELIZABETH D'you like me enough to answer my question?

C.-C. She was only twenty-seven when she went away. She might have become anything. She might have become the woman you expected her to be. There are very few of us who are strong enough to make circumstances serve us. We are the creatures of our environment. She's a silly, worthless woman because she's led a silly, worthless life.

ELIZABETH [*Disturbed.*] You're horrible to-day.

C.-C. I don't say it's I who could have prevented her from becoming this ridiculous caricature of a pretty woman grown old. But life could. Here she would have had the friends fit to her station, and a decent activity, and worthy interests. Ask her what her life has been all these years among divorced women and kept women and the men who consort with them. There is no more lamentable pursuit than a life of pleasure.

ELIZABETH At all events she loved and she loved greatly. I have only pity and affection for her.

C.-C. And if she loved what d'you think she felt when she saw that she had ruined Hughie? Look at him. He was tight last night after dinner and tight the night before.

ELIZABETH I know.

C.-C. And she took it as a matter of course. How long do you suppose he's been getting tight every night? Do you think he was like that thirty years ago? Can you imagine that that was a brilliant young man, whom every one expected to be Prime Minister? Look at him now. A grumpy sodden old fellow with false teeth.

ELIZABETH You have false teeth, too.

C.-C. Yes, but damn it all, they fit. She's ruined him and she knows she's ruined him.

ELIZABETH [*Looking at him suspiciously.*] Why are you saying all this to me?

C.-C. Am I hurting your feelings?

ELIZABETH I think I've had enough for the present.

C.-C. I'll go and have a look at the gold-fish. I want to see Arnold when he comes in. [*Politely.*] I'm afraid we've been boring Mr. Luton.

TEDDIE Not at all.

C.-C. When are you going back to the F.M.S.?

TEDDIE In about a month.

C.-C. I see. [*He goes out.*]

ELIZABETH I wonder what he has at the back of his head.

TEDDIE D'you think he was talking at you?

ELIZABETH He's as clever as a bagful of monkeys.

There is a moment's pause. TEDDIE *hesitates a little and when he speaks it is in a different tone. He is grave and somewhat nervous.*

TEDDIE It seems very difficult to get a few minutes alone with you. I wonder if you've been making it difficult?

ELIZABETH I wanted to think.

TEDDIE I've made up my mind to go away to-morrow.

ELIZABETH Why?

TEDDIE I want you altogether or not at all.

ELIZABETH You're so arbitrary.

TEDDIE You said you—you said you cared for me.

ELIZABETH I do.

TEDDIE Do you mind if we talk it over now?

ELIZABETH No.

TEDDIE [*Frowning.*] It makes me feel rather shy and awkward. I've repeated to myself over and over again exactly what I want to say to you, and now all I'd prepared seems rather footling.

ELIZABETH I'm so afraid I'm going to cry.

TEDDIE I feel it's all so tremendously serious and I think we ought to keep emotion out of it. You're rather emotional, aren't you?

ELIZABETH [*Half smiling and half in tears.*] So are you for the matter of that.

TEDDIE That's why I wanted to have everything I meant to say to you cut and dried. I think it would be awfully unfair if I made love to you and all that sort of thing, and you were carried away. I wrote it all down and thought I'd send it you as a letter.

ELIZABETH Why didn't you?

TEDDIE I got the wind up. A letter seems so—so cold. You see, I love you so awfully.

ELIZABETH For goodness' sake don't say that.

TEDDIE You mustn't cry. Please don't, or I shall go all to pieces.

ELIZABETH [*Trying to smile.*] I'm sorry. It doesn't mean anything really. It's only tears running out of my eyes.

TEDDIE Our only chance is to be awfully matter-of-fact. [*He stops for a moment. He finds it quite difficult to control himself. He clears his throat. He frowns with annoyance at himself.*]

ELIZABETH What's the matter?

TEDDIE I've got a sort of lump in my throat. It is idiotic. I think I'll have a cigarette. [*She watches him in silence while he lights a cigarette.*] You see, I've never been in love with any one before, not really. It's knocked me endways. I don't know how I can live without you now. . . . Does that old fool know I'm in love with you?

ELIZABETH I think so.

TEDDIE When he was talking about Lady Kitty smashing up Lord Porteous' career I thought there was something at the back of it.

ELIZABETH I think he was try-

ing to persuade me not to smash up yours.

TEDDIE I'm sure that's very considerate of him, but I don't happen to have one to smash. I wish I had. It's the only time in my life I've wished I were a hell of a swell so that I could chuck it all and show you how much more you are to me than anything else in the world.

ELIZABETH [*Affectionately.*] You're a dear old thing, Teddie.

TEDDIE You know, I don't really know how to make love, but if I did I couldn't do it now because I just want to be absolutely practical.

ELIZABETH [*Chaffing him.*] I'm glad you don't know how to make love. It would be almost more than I could bear.

TEDDIE You see, I'm not at all romantic and that sort of thing. I'm just a common or garden business man. All this is so dreadfully serious and I think we ought to be sensible.

ELIZABETH [*With a break in her voice.*] You owl!

TEDDIE No, Elizabeth, don't say things like that to me. I want you to consider all the *pros* and *cons,* and my heart's thumping against my chest, and you know I love you, I love you, I love you.

ELIZABETH [*In a sigh of passion.*] Oh, my precious!

TEDDIE [*Impatiently, but with himself, rather than with* ELIZABETH.] Don't be idiotic, Elizabeth. I'm not going to tell you that I can't live without you and a lot of muck like that. You know that you mean everything in the world to me. [*Almost giving it up as a bad job.*] Oh, my God!

ELIZABETH [*Her voice faltering.*] D'you think there's anything you can say to me that I don't know already?

TEDDIE [*Desperately.*] But I haven't said a single thing I wanted to. I'm a business man and I want to put it all in a business way, if you understand what I mean.

ELIZABETH [*Smiling.*] I don't believe you're a very good business man.

TEDDIE [*Sharply.*] You don't know what you're talking about. I'm a first-rate business man, but somehow this is different. [*Hopelessly.*] I don't know why it won't go right.

ELIZABETH What are we going to do about it?

TEDDIE You see, it's not just because you're awfully pretty that I love you. I'd love you just as much if you were old and ugly. It's you I love, not what you look like. And it's not only love; love be blowed! It's that I

like you so tremendously. I think you're such a ripping good sort. I just want to be with you. I feel so jolly and happy just to think you're there. I'm so awfully *fond* of you.

ELIZABETH [*Laughing through her tears.*] I don't know if this is your idea of introducing a business proposition.

TEDDIE Damn you, you won't let me.

ELIZABETH You said "Damn you."

TEDDIE I meant it.

ELIZABETH Your voice sounded as if you meant it, you perfect duck!

TEDDIE Really, Elizabeth, you're intolerable.

ELIZABETH I'm doing nothing.

TEDDIE Yes, you are, you're putting me off my blow. What I want to say is perfectly simple. I'm a very ordinary business man.

ELIZABETH You've said that before.

TEDDIE [*Angrily.*] Shut up. I haven't got a bob besides what I earn. I've got no position. I'm nothing. You're rich and you're a big pot and you've got everything that any one can want. It's awful cheek my saying anything to you at all. But after all there's only one thing that really matters in the world, and that's love. I love you. Chuck all this, Elizabeth, and come to me.

ELIZABETH Are you cross with me?

TEDDIE Furious.

ELIZABETH Darling!

TEDDIE If you don't want me tell me so at once and let me get out quickly.

ELIZABETH Teddie, nothing in the world matters anything to me but you. I'll go wherever you take me. I love you.

TEDDIE [*All to pieces.*] Oh, my God!

ELIZABETH Does it mean as much to you as that? Oh, Teddie!

TEDDIE [*Trying to control himself.*] Don't be a fool, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH It's you're the fool. You're making me cry.

TEDDIE You're so damned emotional.

ELIZABETH Damned emotional yourself. I'm sure you're a rotten business man.

TEDDIE I don't care what you think. You've made me so awfully happy. I say, what a lark life's going to be!

ELIZABETH Teddie, you are an angel.

TEDDIE Let's get out quick. It's no good wasting time. Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH What?

TEDDIE Nothing. I just like to say Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH You fool!

TEDDIE I say, can you shoot?

ELIZABETH No.

TEDDIE I'll teach you. You don't know how ripping it is to start out from your camp at dawn and travel through the jungle. And you're so tired at night and the sky's all starry. It's a fair treat. Of course I didn't want to say anything about all that till you'd decided. I'd made up my mind to be absolutely practical.

ELIZABETH [*Chaffing him.*] The only practical thing you said was that love is the only thing that really matters.

TEDDIE [*Happily.*] Pull the other leg next time, will you? I should have to have one longer than the other.

ELIZABETH Isn't it fun being in love with some one who's in love with you?

TEDDIE I say, I think I'd better clear out at once, don't you? It seems rather rotten to stay on in—in this house.

ELIZABETH You can't go to-night. There's no train.

TEDDIE I'll go to-morrow. I'll wait in London till you're ready to join me.

ELIZABETH I'm not going to leave a note on the pincushion like Lady Kitty, you know. I'm going to tell Arnold.

TEDDIE Are you? Don't you think there'll be an awful bother?

ELIZABETH I must face it. I should hate to be sly and deceitful.

TEDDIE Well, then, let's face it together.

ELIZABETH No, I'll talk to Arnold by myself.

TEDDIE You won't let any one influence you?

ELIZABETH No.

He holds out his hand and she takes it. They look into one another's eyes with grave, almost solemn affection. There is the sound outside of a car driving up.

ELIZABETH There's the car. Arnold's come back. I must go and bathe my eyes. I don't want them to see I've been crying.

TEDDIE All right. [*As she is going.*] Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH [*Stopping.*] What?

TEDDIE Bless you.

ELIZABETH [*Affectionately.*] Idiot!

She goes out of the door and TEDDIE *through the French window into the garden. For an instant the room is empty.* ARNOLD *comes in. He sits down and takes some papers out of his despatch-case.* LADY KITTY *enters. He gets up.*

LADY KITTY I saw you come in. Oh, my dear, don't get up. There's no reason why you should be so dreadfully polite to me.

ARNOLD I've just rung for a cup of tea.

LADY KITTY Perhaps we shall have the chance of a little talk. We don't seem to have had five minutes by ourselves. I want to make your acquaintance, you know.

ARNOLD I should like you to know that it's not by my wish that my father is here.

LADY KITTY But I'm so interested to see him.

ARNOLD I was afraid that you and Lord Porteous must find it embarrassing.

LADY KITTY Oh, no. Hughie was his greatest friend. They were at Eton and Oxford together. I think your father has improved so much since I saw him last. He wasn't good-looking as a young man, but now he's quite handsome.

The FOOTMAN *brings in a tray on which are tea-things.*

LADY KITTY Shall I pour it out for you?

ARNOLD Thank you very much.

LADY KITTY Do you take sugar?

ARNOLD No. I gave it up during the war.

LADY KITTY So wise of you. It's so bad for the figure. Besides being patriotic, of course. Isn't it absurd that I should ask my son if he takes sugar or not? Life is really very quaint. Sad, of course, but oh, so quaint! Often I lie in bed at night and have a good laugh to myself as I think how quaint life is.

ARNOLD I'm afraid I'm a very serious person.

LADY KITTY How old are you now, Arnold?

ARNOLD Thirty-five.

LADY KITTY Are you really? Of course, I was a child when I married your father.

ARNOLD Really. He always told me you were twenty-two.

LADY KITTY Oh, what nonsense! Why, I was married out of the nursery. I put my hair up for the first time on my wedding-day.

ARNOLD Where is Lord Porteous?

LADY KITTY My dear, it sounds too absurd to hear you call him Lord Porteous. Why don't you call him—Uncle Hughie?

ARNOLD He doesn't happen to be my uncle.

LADY KITTY No, but he's your godfather. You know, I'm sure

you'll like him when you know him better. I'm so hoping that you and Elizabeth will come and stay with us in Florence. I simply adore Elizabeth. She's too beautiful.

ARNOLD Her hair is very pretty.

LADY KITTY It's not touched up, is it?

ARNOLD Oh, no.

LADY KITTY I just wondered. It's rather a coincidence that her hair should be the same colour as mine. I suppose it shows that your father and you are attracted by just the same thing. So interesting, heredity, isn't it?

ARNOLD Very.

LADY KITTY Of course, since I joined the Catholic Church I don't believe in it any more. Darwin and all that sort of thing. Too dreadful. Wicked, you know. Besides, it's not very good form, is it?

CHAMPION-CHENEY *comes in from the garden.*

C.-C. Do I intrude?

LADY KITTY Come in, Clive. Arnold and I have been having such a wonderful heart-to-heart talk.

C.-C. Very nice.

ARNOLD Father, I stepped in for a moment at the Harvey's on my way back. It's simply criminal what they're doing with that house.

C.-C. What are they doing?

ARNOLD It's an almost perfect Georgian house and they've got a lot of dreadful Victorian furniture. I gave them my ideas on the subject, but it's quite hopeless. They said they were attached to their furniture.

C.-C. Arnold should have been an interior decorator.

LADY KITTY He has wonderful taste. He gets that from me.

ARNOLD I suppose I have a certain *flair*. I have a passion for decorating houses.

LADY KITTY You've made this one charming.

C.-C. D'you remember, we just had chintzes and comfortable chairs when we lived here, Kitty.

LADY KITTY Perfectly hideous, wasn't it?

C.-C. In those days gentlemen and ladies were not expected to have taste.

ARNOLD You know, I've been looking at this chair again. Since Lord Porteous said the legs weren't right I've been very uneasy.

LADY KITTY He only said that because he was in a bad temper.

C.-C. His temper seems to me very short these days, Kitty.

LADY KITTY Oh, it is.

ARNOLD You feel he knows what he's talking about. I gave seventy-five pounds for that chair. I'm very seldom taken in. I always think if a thing's right you feel it.

C.-C. Well, don't let it disturb your night's rest.

ARNOLD But, my dear father, that's just what it does. I had a most horrible dream about it last night.

LADY KITTY Here is Hughie.

ARNOLD I'm going to fetch a book I have on Old English furniture. There's an illustration of a chair which is almost identical with this one.

PORTEOUS *comes in.*

PORTEOUS Quite a family gathering, by George!

C.-C. I was thinking just now we'd make a very pleasing picture of a typical English home.

ARNOLD I'll be back in five minutes. There's something I want to show you, Lord Porteous. [*He goes out.*]

C.-C. Would you like to play piquet with me, Hughie?

PORTEOUS Not particularly.

C.-C. You were never much of a piquet player, were you?

PORTEOUS My dear Clive, you people don't know what piquet is in England.

C.-C. Let's have a game then. You may make money.

PORTEOUS I don't want to play with you.

LADY KITTY I don't know why not, Hughie.

PORTEOUS Let me tell you that I don't like your manner.

C.-C. I'm sorry for that. I'm afraid I can't offer to change it at my age.

PORTEOUS I don't know what you want to be hanging around here for.

C.-C. A natural attachment to my home.

PORTEOUS If you'd had any tact you'd have kept out of the way while we were here.

C.-C. My dear Hughie, I don't understand your attitude at all. If I'm willing to let bygones be bygones why should you object?

PORTEOUS Damn it all, they're not bygones.

C.-C. After all, I am the injured party.

PORTEOUS How the devil are you the injured party?

C.-C. Well, you did run away with my wife, didn't you?

LADY KITTY Now, don't let's go into ancient history. I can't see why we shouldn't all be friends.

PORTEOUS I beg you not to interfere, Kitty.

LADY KITTY I'm very fond of Clive.

PORTEOUS You never cared

two straws for Clive. You only say that to irritate me.

LADY KITTY Not at all. I don't see why he shouldn't come and stay with us.

C.-C. I'd love to. I think Florence in spring-time is delightful. Have you central heating?

PORTEOUS I never liked you, I don't like you now, and I never shall like you.

C.-C. How very unfortunate! Because I liked you, I like you now, and I shall continue to like you.

LADY KITTY There's something very nice about you, Clive.

PORTEOUS If you think that, why the devil did you leave him?

LADY KITTY Are you going to reproach me because I loved you? How utterly, utterly, utterly detestable you are!

C.-C. Now, now, don't quarrel with one another.

LADY KITTY It's all his fault. I'm the easiest person in the world to live with. But really he'd try the patience of a saint.

C.-C. Come, comé, don't get upset, Kitty. When two people live together there must be a certain amount of give and take.

PORTEOUS I don't know what the devil you're talking about.

C.-C. It hasn't escaped my observation that you are a little inclined to frip. Many couples are. I think it's a pity.

PORTEOUS Would you have the very great kindness to mind your own business?

LADY KITTY It is his business. He naturally wants me to be happy.

C.-C. I have the very greatest affection for Kitty.

PORTEOUS Then why the devil didn't you look after her properly?

C.-C. My dear Hughie, you were my greatest friend. I trusted you. It may have been rash.

PORTEOUS It was inexcusable.

LADY KITTY I don't know what you mean by that, Hughie.

PORTEOUS Don't, don't, don't try and bully me, Kitty.

LADY KITTY Oh, I know what you mean.

PORTEOUS Then why the devil did you say you didn't?

LADY KITTY When I think that I sacrificed everything for that man! And for thirty years I've had to live in a filthy marble palace with no sanitary conveniences.

C.-C. D'you mean to say you haven't got a bathroom?

LADY KITTY I've had to wash in a tub.

C.-C. My poor Kitty, how you've suffered!

PORTEOUS Really, Kitty, I'm

sick of hearing of the sacrifices you made. I suppose you think I sacrificed nothing. I should have been Prime Minister by now if it hadn't been for you.

LADY KITTY Nonsense!

PORTEOUS What do you mean by that? Every one said I should be Prime Minister. Shouldn't I have been Prime Minister, Clive?

C.-C. It was certainly the general expectation.

PORTEOUS I was the most promising young man of my day. I was bound to get a seat in the Cabinet at the next election.

LADY KITTY They'd have found you out just as I've found you out. I'm sick of hearing that I ruined your career. You never had a career to ruin. Prime Minister! You haven't the brain. You haven't the character.

C.-C. Cheek, push, and a gift of the gab will serve very well instead, you know.

LADY KITTY Besides, in politics it's not the men that matter. It's the women at the back of them. I could have made Clive a Cabinet Minister if I'd wanted to.

PORTEOUS Clive?

LADY KITTY With my beauty, my charm, my force of character, my wit, I could have done anything.

PORTEOUS Clive was nothing but my political secretary. When I was Prime Minister I might have made him Governor of some Colony or other. Western Australia, say. Out of pure kindliness.

LADY KITTY [*With flashing eyes.*] D'you think I would have buried myself in Western Australia? With my beauty? My charm?

PORTEOUS Or Barbadoes, perhaps.

LADY KITTY [*Furiously.*] Barbadoes! Barbadoes can go to— Barbadoes.

PORTEOUS That's all you'd have got.

LADY KITTY Nonsense! I'd have India.

PORTEOUS I would never have given you India.

LADY KITTY You would have given me India.

PORTEOUS I tell you I wouldn't.

LADY KITTY The King would have given me India. The nation would have insisted on my having India. I would have been a vice-reine or nothing.

PORTEOUS I tell you that as long as the interests of the British Empire— Damn it all, my teeth are coming out! [*He hurries from the room.*]

LADY KITTY It's too much. I can't bear it any more. I've put

up with him for thirty years and now I'm at the end of my tether.

C.-C. Calm yourself, my dear Kitty.

LADY KITTY I won't listen to a word. I've quite made up my mind. It's finished, finished, finished. [*With a change of tone.*] I was so touched when I heard that you never lived in this house again after I left it.

C.-C. The cuckoos have always been very plentiful. Their note has a personal application which, I must say, I have found extremely offensive.

LADY KITTY When I saw that you didn't marry again I couldn't help thinking that you still loved me.

C.-C. I am one of the few men I know who is able to profit by experience.

LADY KITTY In the eyes of the Church I am still your wife. The Church is so wise. It knows that in the end a woman always comes back to her first love. Clive, I am willing to return to you.

C.-C. My dear Kitty, I couldn't take advantage of your momentary vexation with Hughie to let you take a step which I know you would bitterly regret.

LADY KITTY You've waited for me a long time. For Arnold's sake.

C.-C. Do you think we really need bother about Arnold? In the last thirty years he's had time to grow used to the situation.

LADY KITTY [*With a little smile.*] I think I've sown my wild oats, Clive.

C.-C. I haven't. I was a good young man, Kitty.

LADY KITTY I know.

C.-C. And I'm very glad, because it has enabled me to be a wicked old one.

LADY KITTY I beg your pardon.

ARNOLD *comes in with a large book in his hand.*

ARNOLD I say, I've found the book I was hunting for. Oh! Isn't Lord Porteous here?

LADY KITTY One moment, Arnold. Your father and I are busy.

ARNOLD I'm so sorry. [*He goes out into the garden.*]

LADY KITTY Explain yourself, Clive.

C.-C. When you ran away from me, Kitty, I was sore and angry and miserable. But above all I felt a fool.

LADY KITTY Men are so vain.

C.-C. But I was a student of history, and presently I reflected that I shared my misfortune with

very nearly all the greatest men.

LADY KITTY I'm a great reader myself. It has always struck me as peculiar.

C.-C. The explanation is very simple. Women dislike intelligence, and when they find it in their husbands they revenge themselves on them in the only way they can, by making them—well, what you made me.

LADY KITTY It's ingenious. It may be true.

C.-C. I felt I had done my duty by society and I determined to devote the rest of my life to my own entertainment. The House of Commons had always bored me excessively and the scandal of our divorce gave me an opportunity to resign my seat. I have been relieved to find that the country got on perfectly well without me.

LADY KITTY But has love never entered your life?

C.-C. Tell me frankly, Kitty, don't you think people make a lot of unnecessary fuss about love?

LADY KITTY It's the most wonderful thing in the world.

C.-C. You're incorrigible. Do you really think it was worth sacrificing so much for?

LADY KITTY My dear Clive, I don't mind telling you that if I had my time over again I should be unfaithful to you, but I should not leave you.

C.-C. For some years I was notoriously the prey of a secret sorrow. But I found so many charming creatures who were anxious to console that in the end it grew rather fatiguing. Out of regard to my health I ceased to frequent the drawing-rooms of Mayfair.

LADY KITTY And since then?

C.-C. Since then I have allowed myself the luxury of assisting financially a succession of dear little things, in a somewhat humble sphere, between the ages of twenty and twenty-five.

LADY KITTY I cannot understand the infatuation of men for young girls. I think they're so dull.

C.-C. It's a matter of taste. I love old wine, old friends, and old books, but I like young women. On their twenty-fifth birthday I give them a diamond ring and tell them they must no longer waste their youth and beauty on an old fogey like me. We have a most affecting scene, my technique on these occasions is perfect, and then I start all over again.

LADY KITTY You're a wicked old man, Clive.

C.-C. That's what I told you

But, by George! I'm a happy one.

LADY KITTY There's only one course open to me now.

C.-C. What is that?

LADY KITTY [*With a flashing smile.*] To go and dress for dinner.

C.-C. Capital. I will follow your example.

As LADY KITTY *goes out* ELIZABETH *comes in.*

ELIZABETH Where is Arnold?

C.-C. He's on the terrace. I'll call him.

ELIZABETH Don't bother.

C.-C. I was just strolling along to my cottage to put on a dinner jacket. [*As he goes out.*] Arnold. [*Exit* C.-C.]

ARNOLD Hulloa! [*He comes in.*] Oh, Elizabeth, I've found an illustration here of a chair which is almost identical with mine. It's dated 1750. Look!

ELIZABETH That's very interesting.

ARNOLD I want to show it to Porteous. [*Moving a chair which has been misplaced.*] You know, it does exasperate me the way people will not leave things alone. I no sooner put a thing in its place than somebody moves it.

ELIZABETH It must be maddening for you.

ARNOLD It is. You are the worst offender. I can't think why you don't take the pride that I do in the house. After all, it's one of the show places in the country.

ELIZABETH I'm afraid you find me very unsatisfactory.

ARNOLD [*Good-humouredly.*] I don't know about that. But my two subjects are politics and decoration. I should be a perfect fool if I didn't see that you don't care two straws about either.

ELIZABETH We haven't very much in common, Arnold, have we?

ARNOLD I don't think you can blame me for that.

ELIZABETH I don't. I blame you for nothing. I have no fault to find with you.

ARNOLD [*Surprised at her significant tone.*] Good gracious me! What's the meaning of all this?

ELIZABETH Well, I don't think there's any object in beating about the bush. I want you to let me go.

ARNOLD Go where?

ELIZABETH Away. For always.

ARNOLD My dear child, what *are* you talking about?

ELIZABETH I want to be free.

ARNOLD [*Amused rather than disconcerted.*] Don't be ridiculous, darling. I daresay you're run down and want a change. I'll

take you over to Paris for a fortnight if you like.

ELIZABETH I shouldn't have spoken to you if I hadn't quite made up my mind. We've been married for three years and I don't think it's been a great success. I'm frankly bored by the life you want me to lead.

ARNOLD Well, if you'll allow me to say so, the fault is yours. We lead a very distinguished, useful life. We know a lot of extremely nice people.

ELIZABETH I'm quite willing to allow that the fault is mine. But how does that make it any better? I'm only twenty-five. If I've made a mistake I have time to correct it.

ARNOLD I can't bring myself to take you very seriously.

ELIZABETH You see, I don't love you.

ARNOLD Well, I'm awfully sorry. But you weren't obliged to marry me. You've made your bed and I'm afraid you must lie on it.

ELIZABETH That's one of the falsest proverbs in the English language. Why should you lie on the bed you've made if you don't want to? There's always the floor.

ARNOLD For goodness' sake, don't be funny, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH I've quite made up my mind to leave you, Arnold.

ARNOLD Come, come, Elizabeth, you must be sensible. You haven't any reason to leave me.

ELIZABETH Why should you wish to keep a woman tied to you who wants to be free?

ARNOLD I happen to be in love with you.

ELIZABETH You might have said that before.

ARNOLD I thought you'd take it for granted. You can't expect a man to go on making love to his wife after three years. I'm very busy. I'm awfully keen on politics and I've worked like a dog to make this house a thing of beauty. After all, a man marries to have a home, but also because he doesn't want to be bothered with sex and all that sort of thing. I fell in love with you the first time I saw you and I've been in love ever since.

ELIZABETH I'm sorry, but if you're not in love with a man his love doesn't mean very much to you.

ARNOLD It's so ungrateful. I've done everything in the world for you.

ELIZABETH You've been very kind to me. But you've asked me to lead a life I don't like and that I'm not suited for. I'm aw-

fully sorry to cause you pain, but now you must let me go.

ARNOLD Nonsense! I'm a good deal older than you are and I think I have a little more sense. In your interests as well as in mine I'm not going to do anything of the sort.

ELIZABETH [*With a smile.*] How can you prevent me? You can't keep me under lock and key.

ARNOLD Please don't talk to me as if I were a foolish child. You're my wife and you're going to remain my wife.

ELIZABETH What sort of a life do you think we should lead? Do you think there'd be any more happiness for you than for me?

ARNOLD But what is it precisely that you suggest?

ELIZABETH Well, I want you to let me divorce you.

ARNOLD [*Astounded.*] Me? Thank you very much. Are you under the impression I'm going to sacrifice my career for a whim of yours?

ELIZABETH How will it do that?

ARNOLD My seat's wobbly enough as it is. Do you think I'd be able to hold it if I were in a divorce case? Even if it were a put-up job, as most divorces are nowadays, it would damn me.

ELIZABETH It's rather hard on a woman to be divorced.

ARNOLD [*With sudden suspicion.*] What do you mean by that? Are you in love with some one?

ELIZABETH Yes.

ARNOLD Who?

ELIZABETH Teddie Luton. [*He is astonished for a moment, then bursts into a laugh.*]

ARNOLD My poor child, how can you be so ridiculous? Why, he hasn't a bob. He's a perfectly commonplace young man. It's so absurd I can't even be angry with you.

ELIZABETH I've fallen desperately in love with him, Arnold.

ARNOLD Well, you'd better fall desperately out.

ELIZABETH He wants to marry me.

ARNOLD I daresay he does. He can go to hell.

ELIZABETH It's no good talking like that.

ARNOLD Is he your lover?

ELIZABETH No, certainly not.

ARNOLD It shows that he's a mean skunk to take advantage of my hospitality to make love to you.

ELIZABETH He's never even kissed me.

ARNOLD I'd try telling that to the horse marines if I were you.

ELIZABETH It's because I

wanted to do nothing shabby that I told you straight out how things were.

ARNOLD How long have you been thinking of this?

ELIZABETH I've been in love with Teddie ever since I knew him.

ARNOLD And you never thought of me at all, I suppose.

ELIZABETH Oh, yes, I did. I was miserable. But I can't help myself. I wish I loved you, but I don't.

ARNOLD I recommend you to think very carefully before you do anything foolish.

ELIZABETH I have thought very carefully.

ARNOLD By God! I don't know why I don't give you a sound hiding. I'm not sure if that wouldn't be the best thing to bring you to your senses.

ELIZABETH Oh, Arnold, don't take it like that.

ARNOLD How do you expect me to take it? You come to me quite calmly and say: "I've had enough of you. We've been married three years and I think I'd like to marry somebody else now. Shall I break up your home? What a bore for you! Do you mind my divorcing you? It'll smash up your career, will it? What a pity!" Oh, no, my girl, I may be a fool, but I'm not a damned fool.

ELIZABETH Teddie is leaving here by the first train to-morrow. I warn you that I mean to join him as soon as he can make the necessary arrangements.

ARNOLD Where is he?

ELIZABETH I don't know. I suppose he's in his room.

ARNOLD *goes to the door and calls.*

ARNOLD George!

For a moment he walks up and down the room impatiently.

ELIZABETH *watches him. The* FOOTMAN *comes in.*

FOOTMAN Yes, sir.

ARNOLD Tell Mr. Luton to come here at once.

ELIZABETH Ask Mr. Luton if he wouldn't mind coming here for a moment.

FOOTMAN Very good, madam. [*Exit* FOOTMAN.]

ELIZABETH What are you going to say to him?

ARNOLD That's my business.

ELIZABETH I wouldn't make a scene if I were you.

ARNOLD I'm not going to make a scene. [*They wait in silence.*] Why did you insist on my mother coming here?

ELIZABETH It seemed to me rather absurd to take up the attitude that I should be contaminated by her when . . .

ARNOLD [*Interrupting.*] When you were proposing to do exactly the same thing. Well, now you've seen her what do you think of her? Do you think it's been a success? Is that the sort of woman a man would like his mother to be?

ELIZABETH I've been ashamed. I've been so sorry. It all seemed dreadful and horrible. This morning I happened to notice a rose in the garden. It was all over-blown and bedraggled. It looked like a painted old woman. And I remembered that I'd looked at it a day or two ago. It was lovely then, fresh and blooming and fragrant. It may be hideous now, but that doesn't take away from the beauty it had once. That was real.

ARNOLD Poetry, by God! As if this were the moment for poetry!

TEDDIE *comes in. He has changed into a dinner jacket.*

TEDDIE [*To* ELIZABETH.] Did you want me?

ARNOLD *I* sent for you. [TEDDIE *looks from* ARNOLD *to* ELIZABETH. *He sees that something has happened.*] When would it be convenient for you to leave this house?

TEDDIE I was proposing to go to-morrow morning. But I can very well go at once if you like.

ARNOLD I do like.

TEDDIE Very well. Is there anything else you wish to say to me?

ARNOLD Do you think it was a very honourable thing to come down here and make love to my wife?

TEDDIE No, I don't. I haven't been very happy about it. That's why I wanted to go away.

ARNOLD Upon my word, you're cool.

TEDDIE I'm afraid it's no good saying I'm sorry and that sort of thing. You know what the situation is.

ARNOLD Is it true that you want to marry Elizabeth?

TEDDIE Yes. I should like to marry her as soon as ever I can.

ARNOLD Have you thought of me at all? Has it struck you that you're destroying my home and breaking up my happiness?

TEDDIE I don't see how there could be much happiness for you if Elizabeth doesn't care for you.

ARNOLD Let me tell you that I refuse to have my home broken up by a twopenny-halfpenny adventurer who takes advantage of a foolish woman. I refuse to allow myself to be divorced. I can't prevent my wife from going off with you if she's determined to make a damned fool of herself, but this I tell you: nothing will induce me to divorce her.

ELIZABETH Arnold, that would be monstrous.

TEDDIE We could force you.

ARNOLD How?

TEDDIE If we went away together openly you'd have to bring an action.

ARNOLD Twenty-four hours after you leave this house I shall go down to Brighton with a chorus-girl. And neither you nor I will be able to get a divorce. We've had enough divorces in our family. And now get out, get out, get out!

TEDDIE *looks uncertainly at* ELIZABETH.

ELIZABETH [*With a little smile.*] Don't bother about me. I shall be all right.

ARNOLD Get out! Get out!

Curtain.

The Circle THE THIRD ACT

The Scene is the same as in the preceding Acts.
It is the night of the same day as that on which takes place the action of the second Act.

CHAMPION-CHENEY *and* ARNOLD, *both in dinner jackets, are discovered.* CHAMPION-CHENEY *is seated.* ARNOLD *walks restlessly up and down the room.*

C.-C. I think, if you'll follow my advice to the letter, you'll probably work the trick.

ARNOLD I don't like it, you know. It's against all my principles.

C.-C. My dear Arnold, we all hope that you have before you a distinguished political career. You can't learn too soon that the most useful thing about a principle is that it can always be sacrificed to expediency.

ARNOLD But supposing it doesn't come off? Women are incalculable.

C.-C. Nonsense! Men are romantic. A woman will always sacrifice herself if you give her the opportunity. It is her favourite form of self-indulgence.

ARNOLD I never know whether you're a humourist or a cynic, Father.

C.-C. I'm neither, my dear boy; I'm merely a very truthful

man. But people are so unused to the truth that they're apt to mistake it for a joke or a sneer.

ARNOLD [*Irritably.*] It seems so unfair that this should happen to me.

C.-C. Keep your head, my boy, and do what I tell you.

LADY KITTY *and* ELIZABETH *come in.* LADY KITTY *is in a gorgeous evening gown.*

ELIZABETH Where is Lord Porteous?

C.-C. He's on the terrace. He's smoking a cigar. [*Going to window.*] Hughie!

PORTEOUS *comes in.*

PORTEOUS [*With a grunt.*] Yes? Where's Mrs. Shenstone?

ELIZABETH Oh, she had a headache. She's gone to bed.

When PORTEOUS *comes in* LADY KITTY *with a very haughty air purses her lips and takes up an illustrated paper.* PORTEOUS *gives her an irritated look, takes another illustrated paper and sits himself down at the other end of the room. They are not on speaking terms.*

C.-C. Arnold and I have just been down to my cottage.

ELIZABETH I wondered where you'd gone.

C.-C. I came across an old photograph album this afternoon. I meant to bring it along before dinner, but I forgot, so we went and fetched it.

ELIZABETH Oh, do let me see it! I love old photographs.

He gives her the album, and she, sitting down, puts it on her knees and begins to turn over the pages. He stands over her. LADY KITTY *and* PORTEOUS *take surreptitious glances at one another.*

C.-C. I thought it might amuse you to see what pretty women looked like five-and-thirty years ago. That was the day of beautiful women.

ELIZABETH Do you think they were more beautiful then than they are now?

C.-C. Oh, much. Now you see lots of pretty little things, but very few beautiful women.

ELIZABETH Aren't their clothes funny?

C.-C. [*Pointing to a photograph.*] That's Mrs. Langtry.

ELIZABETH She has a lovely nose.

C.-C. She was the most wonderful thing you ever saw. Dowagers used to jump on chairs in order to get a good look at her when she came into a drawing-room. I was riding with her once, and we had to have the gates of the livery stable closed when she was getting on her horse because the crowd was so great.

ELIZABETH And who's that?

C.-C. Lady Lonsdale. That's Lady Dudley.

ELIZABETH This is an actress, isn't it?

C.-C. It is, indeed. Ellen Terry. By George! How I loved that woman!

ELIZABETH [*With a smile.*] Dear Ellen Terry!

C.-C. That's Bwabs. I never saw a smarter man in my life. And Oliver Montagu. Henry Manners with his eye-glass.

ELIZABETH Nice-looking, isn't he? And this?

C.-C. That's Mary Anderson. I wish you could have seen her in "A Winter's Tale." Her beauty just took your breath away. And look! There's Lady Randolph. Bernal Osborne—the wittiest man I ever knew.

ELIZABETH I think it's too sweet. I love their absurd bustles and those tight sleeves.

C.-C. What figures they had! In those days a woman wasn't supposed to be as thin as a rail and as flat as a pancake.

ELIZABETH Oh, but aren't they laced in? How could they bear it?

C.-C. They didn't play golf then, and nonsense like that, you know. They hunted, in a tall hat and a long black habit, and they were very gracious and charitable to the poor in the village.

ELIZABETH Did the poor like it?

C.-C. They had a very thin time if they didn't. When they were in London they drove in the Park every afternoon, and they went to ten-course dinners, where they never met anybody they didn't know. And they had their box at the opera when Patti was singing or Madame Albani.

ELIZABETH Oh, what a lovely little thing! Who on earth is that?

C.-C. That?

ELIZABETH She looks so fragile, like a piece of exquisite china, with all those furs on and her face up against her muff, and the snow falling.

C.-C. Yes, there was quite a rage at that time for being taken in an artificial snowstorm.

ELIZABETH What a sweet smile, so roguish and frank, and debonair! Oh, I wish I looked like that! Do tell me who it is!

C.-C. Don't you know?

ELIZABETH No.

C.-C. Why—it's Kitty.

ELIZABETH Lady Kitty. [*To* LADY KITTY.] Oh, my dear, do look! It's too ravishing. [*She takes the album over to her impulsively.*] Why didn't you tell me you looked like that? Every-

body must have been in love with you.

LADY KITTY *takes the album and looks at it. Then she lets it slip from her hands and covers her face with her hands. She is crying.*

ELIZABETH [*In consternation.*] My dear, what's the matter? Oh, what have I done? I'm so sorry.

LADY KITTY Don't, don't talk to me. Leave me alone. It's stupid of me.

ELIZABETH *looks at her for a moment perplexed, then, turning round, slips her arm in* CHAMPION-CHENEY'S *and leads him out on to the terrace.*

ELIZABETH [*As they are going, in a whisper.*] Did you do that on purpose?

PORTEOUS *gets up and goes over to* LADY KITTY. *He puts his hand on her shoulder. They remain thus for a little while.*

PORTEOUS I'm afraid I was very rude to you before dinner, Kitty.

LADY KITTY [*Taking his hand which is on her shoulder.*] It doesn't matter. I'm sure I was very exasperating.

PORTEOUS I didn't mean what I said, you know.

LADY KITTY Neither did I.

PORTEOUS Of course I know that I'd never have been Prime Minister.

LADY KITTY How can you talk such nonsense, Hughie? No one would have had a chance if you'd remained in politics.

PORTEOUS I haven't the character.

LADY KITTY You have more character than any one I've ever met.

PORTEOUS Besides, I don't know that I much wanted to be Prime Minister.

LADY KITTY Oh, but I should have been so proud of you. Of course you'd have been Prime Minister.

PORTEOUS I'd have given you India, you know. I think it would have been a very popular appointment.

LADY KITTY I don't care twopence about India. I'd have been quite content with Western Australia.

PORTEOUS My dear, you don't think I'd have let you bury yourself in Western Australia?

LADY KITTY Or Barbadoes.

PORTEOUS Never. It sounds like a cure for flat feet. I'd have kept you in London. [*He picks up the album and is about to look at the photograph of* LADY KITTY. *She puts her hands over it.*]

LADY KITTY No, don't look. [*He takes her hand away.*]

PORTEOUS Don't be so silly.

LADY KITTY Isn't it hateful to grow old?

PORTEOUS You know, you haven't changed much.

LADY KITTY [*Enchanted.*] Oh, Hughie, how can you talk such nonsense?

PORTEOUS Of course you're a little more mature, but that's all. A woman's all the better for being rather mature.

LADY KITTY Do you really think that?

PORTEOUS Upon my soul I do.

LADY KITTY You're not saying it just to please me?

PORTEOUS No, no.

LADY KITTY Let me look at the photograph again. [*She takes the album and looks at the photograph complacently.*] The fact is, if your bones are good, age doesn't really matter. You'll always be beautiful.

PORTEOUS [*With a little smile, almost as if he were talking to a child.*] It was silly of you to cry.

LADY KITTY It hasn't made my eyelashes run, has it?

PORTEOUS Not a bit.

LADY KITTY It's very good stuff I use now. They don't stick together either.

PORTEOUS Look here, Kitty, how much longer do you want to stay here?

LADY KITTY Oh, I'm quite ready to go whenever you like.

PORTEOUS Clive gets on my nerves. I don't like the way he keeps hanging about you.

LADY KITTY [*Surprised, rather amused, and delighted.*] Hughie, you don't mean to say you're jealous of poor Clive?

PORTEOUS Of course I'm not jealous of him, but he does look at you in a way that I can't help thinking rather objectionable.

LADY KITTY Hughie, you may throw me downstairs like Amy Robsart; you may drag me about the floor by the hair of my head; I don't care, you're jealous. I shall never grow old.

PORTEOUS Damn it all, the man was your husband.

LADY KITTY My dear Hughie, he never had your style. Why, the moment you come into a room every one looks and says: "Who the devil is that?"

PORTEOUS What? You think that, do you? Well, I daresay there's something in what you say. These damned Radicals can say what they like, but, by God, Kitty! When a man's a gentleman—well, damn it all, you know what I mean.

LADY KITTY I think Clive has degenerated dreadfully since we left him.

PORTEOUS What do you say to

making a bee-line for Italy and going to San Michele?

LADY KITTY Oh, Hughie! It's years since we were there.

PORTEOUS Wouldn't you like to see it again—just once more?

LADY KITTY Do you remember the first time we went? It was the most heavenly place I'd ever seen. We'd only left England a month, and I said I'd like to spend all my life there.

PORTEOUS Of course I remember. And in a fortnight it was yours, lock, stock, and barrel.

LADY KITTY We were very happy there, Hughie.

PORTEOUS Let's go back once more.

LADY KITTY I daren't. It must be all peopled with the ghosts of our past. One should never go again to a place where one has been happy. It would break my heart.

PORTEOUS Do you remember how we used to sit on the terrace of the old castle and look at the Adriatic? We might have been the only people in the world, you and I, Kitty.

LADY KITTY [*Tragically.*] And we thought our love would last forever.

Enter CHAMPION-CHENEY.

PORTEOUS Is there any chance of bridge this evening?

C.-C. I don't think we can make up a four.

PORTEOUS What a nuisance that boy went away like that! He wasn't a bad player.

C.-C. Teddie Luton?

LADY KITTY I think it was very funny his going without saying good-bye to any one.

C.-C. The young men of the present day are very casual.

PORTEOUS I thought there was no train in the evening.

C.-C. There isn't. The last train leaves at 5:45.

PORTEOUS How did he go then?

C.-C. He went.

PORTEOUS Damned selfish I call it.

LADY KITTY [*Intrigued.*] Why did he go, Clive?

CHAMPION-CHENEY *looks at her for a moment reflectively.*

C.-C. I have something very grave to say to you. Elizabeth wants to leave Arnold.

LADY KITTY Clive! What on earth for?

C.-C. She's in love with Teddie Luton. That's why he went. The men of my family are really very unfortunate.

PORTEOUS Does she want to run away with him?

LADY KITTY [*With consternation.*] My dear, what's to be done?

C.-C. I think you can do a great deal.

LADY KITTY I? What?

C.-C. Tell her, tell her what it means. [*He looks at her fixedly. She stares at him.*]

LADY KITTY Oh, no, no!

C.-C. She's a child. Not for Arnold's sake. For her sake. You must.

LADY KITTY You don't know what you're asking.

C.-C. Yes, I do.

LADY KITTY Hughie, what shall I do?

PORTEOUS Do what you like. I shall never blame you for anything.

The FOOTMAN *comes in with a letter on a salver. He hesitates on seeing that* ELIZABETH *is not in the room.*

C.-C. What is it?

FOOTMAN I was looking for Mrs Champion-Cheney, sir.

C.-C. She's not here. Is that a letter?

FOOTMAN Yes, sir. It's just been sent up from the "Champion Arms."

C.-C. Leave it. I'll give it to Mrs. Cheney.

FOOTMAN Very good, sir. [*He brings the tray to* CLIVE, *who takes the letter. The* FOOTMAN *goes out.*]

PORTEOUS Is the "Champion Arms" the local pub?

C.-C. [*Looking at the letter.*] It's by way of being a hotel, but I never heard of any one staying there.

LADY KITTY If there was no train I suppose he had to go there.

C.-C. Great minds. I wonder what he has to write about! [*He goes to the door leading on to the garden.*] Elizabeth!

ELIZABETH [*Outside.*] Yes.

C.-C. Here's a note for you.

There is silence. They wait for ELIZABETH *to come. She enters.*

ELIZABETH It's lovely in the garden to-night.

C.-C. They've just sent this up from the "Champion Arms."

ELIZABETH Thank you. [*Without embarrassment she opens the letter. They watch her while she reads it. It covers three pages. She puts it away in her bag.*]

LADY KITTY Hughie, I wish you'd fetch me a cloak. I'd like to take a little stroll in the garden, but after thirty years in Italy I find these English summers rather chilly. [*Without a word* PORTEOUS *goes out.* ELIZABETH *is lost in thought.*] I want to talk to Elizabeth, Clive.

C.-C. I'll leave you. [*He goes out.*]

LADY KITTY What does he say?

ELIZABETH Who?

LADY KITTY Mr. Luton.

ELIZABETH [*Gives a little start. Then she looks at* LADY KITTY.] They've told you?

LADY KITTY Yes. And now they have, I think I knew it all along.

ELIZABETH I don't expect you to have much sympathy for me. Arnold is your son.

LADY KITTY So pitifully little.

ELIZABETH I'm not suited for this sort of existence. Arnold wants me to take what he calls my place in Society. Oh, I get so bored with those parties in London. All those middle-aged painted women, in beautiful clothes, lolloping round ballrooms with rather old young men. And the endless luncheons where they gossip about so-and-so's love affairs.

LADY KITTY Are you very much in love with Mr. Luton?

ELIZABETH I love him with all my heart.

LADY KITTY And he?

ELIZABETH He's never cared for any one but me. He never will.

LADY KITTY Will Arnold let you divorce him?

ELIZABETH No, he won't hear of it. He refuses even to divorce me.

LADY KITTY Why?

ELIZABETH He thinks a scandal will revive all the old gossip.

LADY KITTY Oh, my poor child!

ELIZABETH It can't be helped. I'm quite willing to accept the consequences.

LADY KITTY You don't know what it is to have a man tied to you only by his honour. When married people don't get on they can separate, but if they're not married it's impossible. It's a tie that only death can sever.

ELIZABETH If Teddie stopped caring for me I shouldn't want him to stay with me for five minutes.

LADY KITTY One says that when one's sure of a man's love, but when one isn't any more—oh, it's so different. In those circumstances one's got to keep a man's love. It's the only thing one has.

ELIZABETH I'm a human being. I can stand on my own feet.

LADY KITTY Have you any money of your own?

ELIZABETH None.

LADY KITTY Then how can you stand on your own feet? You think I'm a silly, frivolous woman, but I've learned something in a bitter school. They can make what laws they like, they can give us the suffrage, but when you come down to bedrock it's the man who pays the piper

who calls the tune. Woman will only be the equal of man when she earns her living in the same way that he does.

ELIZABETH [*Smiling.*] It sounds rather funny to hear you talk like that.

LADY KITTY A cook who marries a butler can snap her fingers in his face because she can earn just as much as he can. But a woman in your position and a woman in mine will always be dependent on the men who keep them.

ELIZABETH I don't want luxury. You don't know how sick I am of all this beautiful furniture. These overdecorated houses are like a prison in which I can't breathe. When I drive about in a Callot frock and a Rolls-Royce I envy the shop-girl in a coat and skirt whom I see jumping on the tailboard of a bus.

LADY KITTY You mean that if need be you could earn your own living?

ELIZABETH Yes.

LADY KITTY What could you be? A nurse or a typist. It's nonsense. Luxury saps a woman's nerve. And when she's known it once it becomes a necessity.

ELIZABETH That depends on the woman.

LADY KITTY When we're young we think we're different from every one else, but when we grow a little older we discover we're all very much of a muchness.

ELIZABETH You're very kind to take so much trouble about me.

LADY KITTY It breaks my heart to think that you're going to make the same pitiful mistake that I made.

ELIZABETH Oh, don't say it was that, don't, don't.

LADY KITTY Look at me, Elizabeth, and look at Hughie. Do you think it's been a success? If I had my time over again do you think I'd do it again? Do you think he would?

ELIZABETH You see, you don't know how much I love Teddie.

LADY KITTY And do you think I didn't love Hughie? Do you think he didn't love me?

ELIZABETH I'm sure he did.

LADY KITTY Oh, of course in the beginning it was heavenly. We felt so brave and adventurous and we were so much in love. The first two years were wonderful. People cut me, you know, but I didn't mind. I thought love was everything. It *is* a little uncomfortable when you come upon an old friend and go towards her eagerly, so glad to see her, and are met with an icy stare.

ELIZABETH Do you think friends like that are worth having?

LADY KITTY Perhaps they're not very sure of themselves. Perhaps they're honestly shocked. It's a test one had better not put one's friends to if one can help it. It's rather bitter to find how few one has.

ELIZABETH But one has some.

LADY KITTY Yes, they ask you to come and see them when they're quite certain no one will be there who might object to meeting you. Or else they say to you: "My dear, you know I'm devoted to you, and I wouldn't mind at all, but my girl's growing up—I'm sure you understand; you won't think it unkind of me if I don't ask you to the house?"

ELIZABETH [*Smiling.*] That doesn't seem to me very serious.

LADY KITTY At first I thought it rather a relief, because it threw Hughie and me together more. But you know, men are very funny. Even when they are in love they're not in love all day long. They want change and recreation.

ELIZABETH I'm not inclined to blame them for that, poor dears.

LADY KITTY Then we settled in Florence. And because we couldn't get the society we'd been used to we became used to the society we could get. Loose women and vicious men. Snobs who liked to patronize people with a handle to their names. Vague Italian princes who were glad to borrow a few francs from Hughie and seedy countesses who liked to drive with me in the Cascine. And then Hughie began to hanker after his old life. He wanted to go big game shooting, but I dared not let him go. I was afraid he'd never come back.

ELIZABETH But you knew he loved you.

LADY KITTY Oh, my dear, what a blessed institution marriage is—for women, and what fools they are to meddle with it! The Church is so wise to take its stand on the indi—indi——

ELIZABETH Solu——

LADY KITTY Bility of marriage. Believe me, it's no joke when you have to rely only on yourself to keep a man. I could never afford to grow old. My dear, I'll tell you a secret that I've never told a living soul.

ELIZABETH What is that?

LADY KITTY My hair is not naturally this colour.

ELIZABETH Really.

LADY KITTY I touch it up. You would never have guessed, would you?

ELIZABETH Never.

LADY KITTY Nobody does. My dear, it's white, premature of course, but white. I always think it's a symbol of my life. Are you interested in symbolism? I think it's too wonderful.

ELIZABETH I don't think I know very much about it.

LADY KITTY However tired I've been I've had to be brilliant and gay. I've never let Hughie see the aching heart behind my smiling eyes.

ELIZABETH [*Amused and touched.*] You poor dear.

LADY KITTY And when I saw he was attracted by some one else the fear and the jealousy that seized me! You see, I didn't dare make a scene as I should have done if I'd been married—I had to pretend not to notice.

ELIZABETH [*Taken aback.*] But do you mean to say he fell in love with any one else?

LADY KITTY Of course he did eventually.

ELIZABETH [*Hardly knowing what to say.*] You must have been very unhappy.

LADY KITTY Oh, I was, dreadfully. Night after night I sobbed my heart out when Hughie told me he was going to play cards at the club and I knew he was with that odious woman. Of course, it wasn't as if there weren't plenty of men who were only too anxious to console me. Men have always been attracted by me, you know.

ELIZABETH Oh, of course, I can quite understand it.

LADY KITTY But I had my self-respect to think of. I felt that whatever Hughie did I would do nothing that I should regret.

ELIZABETH You must be very glad now.

LADY KITTY Oh, yes. Notwithstanding all my temptations I've been absolutely faithful to Hughie in spirit.

ELIZABETH I don't think I quite understand what you mean.

LADY KITTY Well, there was a poor Italian boy, young Count Castel Giovanni, who was so desperately in love with me that his mother begged me not to be too cruel. She was afraid he'd go into a consumption. What could I do? And then, oh, years later, there was Antonio Melita. He said he'd shoot himself unless I — well, you understand I couldn't let the poor boy shoot himself.

ELIZABETH D'you think he really would have shot himself?

LADY KITTY Oh, one never knows, you know. Those Italians are so passionate. He was really

rather a lamb. He had such beautiful eyes.

ELIZABETH *looks at her for a long time and a certain horror seizes her of this dissolute, painted old woman.*

ELIZABETH [*Hoarsely.*] Oh, but I think that's—dreadful.

LADY KITTY Are you shocked? One sacrifices one's life for love and then one finds that love doesn't last. The tragedy of love isn't death or separation. One gets over them. The tragedy of love is indifference.

ARNOLD *comes in.*

ARNOLD Can I have a little talk with you, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH Of course.

ARNOLD Shall we go for a stroll in the garden?

ELIZABETH If you like.

LADY KITTY No, stay here. I'm going out anyway. [*Exit* LADY KITTY.]

ARNOLD I want you to listen to me for a few minutes, Elizabeth. I was so taken aback by what you told me just now that I lost my head. I was rather absurd and I beg your pardon. I said things I regret.

ELIZABETH Oh, don't blame yourself. I'm sorry that I should have given you occasion to say them.

ARNOLD I want to ask you if you've quite made up your mind to go.

ELIZABETH Quite.

ARNOLD Just now I seem to have said all that I didn't want to say and nothing that I did. I'm stupid and tongue-tied. I never told you how deeply I loved you.

ELIZABETH Oh, Arnold!

ARNOLD Please let me speak now. It's so very difficult. If I seemed absorbed in politics and the house, and so on, to the exclusion of my interest in you, I'm dreadfully sorry. I suppose it was absurd of me to think you would take my great love for granted.

ELIZABETH But, Arnold, I'm not reproaching you.

ARNOLD I'm reproaching myself. I've been tactless and neglectful. But I do ask you to believe that it hasn't been because I didn't love you. Can you forgive me?

ELIZABETH I don't think that there's anything to forgive.

ARNOLD It wasn't till to-day when you talked of leaving me that I realized how desperately in love with you I was.

ELIZABETH After three years?

ARNOLD I'm so proud of you. I admire you so much. When I see you at a party, so fresh and lovely, and everybody wondering at you, I have a sort of little

thrill because you're mine, and afterwards I shall take you home.

ELIZABETH Oh, Arnold, you're exaggerating.

ARNOLD I can't imagine this house without you. Life seems on a sudden all empty and meaningless. Oh, Elizabeth, don't you love me at all?

ELIZABETH It's much better to be honest. No.

ARNOLD Doesn't my love mean anything to you?

ELIZABETH I'm very grateful to you. I'm sorry to cause you pain. What would be the good of my staying with you when I should be wretched all the time?

ARNOLD Do you love that man as much as all that? Does my unhappiness mean nothing to you?

ELIZABETH Of course it does. It breaks my heart. You see, I never knew I meant so much to you. I'm so touched. And I'm so sorry, Arnold, really sorry. But I can't help myself.

ARNOLD Poor child, it's cruel of me to torture you.

ELIZABETH Oh, Arnold, believe me, I have tried to make the best of it. I've tried to love you, but I can't. After all, one either loves or one doesn't. Trying is no help. And now I'm at the end of my tether. I can't help the consequences—I must do what my whole self yearns for.

ARNOLD My poor child, I'm so afraid you'll be unhappy. I'm so afraid you'll regret.

ELIZABETH You must leave me to my fate. I hope you'll forget me and all the unhappiness I've caused you.

ARNOLD [*There is a pause.* ARNOLD *walks up and down the room reflectively. He stops and faces her.*] If you love this man and want to go to him I'll do nothing to prevent you. My only wish is to do what is best for you.

ELIZABETH Arnold, that's awfully kind of you. If I'm treating you badly at least I want you to know that I'm grateful for all your kindness to me.

ARNOLD But there's one favour I should like you to do me. Will you?

ELIZABETH Oh, Arnold, of course I'll do anything I can.

ARNOLD Teddie hasn't very much money. You've been used to a certain amount of luxury, and I can't bear to think that you should do without anything you've had. It would kill me to think that you were suffering any hardship or privation.

ELIZABETH Oh, but Teddie can earn enough for our needs. After all, we don't want much money.

ARNOLD I'm afraid my

mother's life hasn't been very easy, but it's obvious that the only thing that's made it possible is that Porteous was rich. I want you to let me make you an allowance of two thousand a year.

ELIZABETH Oh, no, I couldn't think of it. It's absurd.

ARNOLD I beg you to accept it. You don't know what a difference it will make.

ELIZABETH It's awfully kind of you, Arnold. It humiliates me to speak about it. Nothing would induce me to take a penny from you.

ARNOLD Well, you can't prevent me from opening an account at my bank in your name. The money shall be paid in every quarter whether you touch it or not, and if you happen to want it, it will be there waiting for you.

ELIZABETH You overwhelm me, Arnold. There's only one thing I want you to do for me. I should be very grateful if you would divorce me as soon as you possibly can.

ARNOLD No, I won't do that. But I'll give you cause to divorce me.

ELIZABETH You!

ARNOLD Yes. But of course you'll have to be very careful for a bit. I'll put it through as quickly as possible, but I'm afraid you can't hope to be free for over six months.

ELIZABETH But, Arnold, your seat and your political career!

ARNOLD Oh, well, my father gave up his seat under similar circumstances. He's got along very comfortably without politics.

ELIZABETH But they're your whole life.

ARNOLD After all one can't have it both ways. You can't serve God and Mammon. If you want to do the decent thing you have to be prepared to suffer for it.

ELIZABETH But I don't want you to suffer for it.

ARNOLD At first I rather hesitated at the scandal. But I daresay that was only weakness on my part. Under the circumstances I should have liked to keep out of the divorce court if I could.

ELIZABETH Arnold, you're making me absolutely miserable.

ARNOLD What you said before dinner was quite right. It's nothing for a man, but it makes so much difference to a woman. Naturally I must think of you first.

ELIZABETH That's absurd. It's out of the question. Whatever there's to pay I must pay it.

ARNOLD It's not very much I'm asking you, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH I'm taking everything from you.

ARNOLD It's the only condition I make. My mind is absolutely made up. I will never divorce you, but I will enable you to divorce me.

ELIZABETH Oh, Arnold, it's cruel to be so generous.

ARNOLD It's not generous at all. It's the only way I have of showing you how deep and passionate and sincere my love is for you. [*There is a silence. He holds out his hand.*] Good-night. I have a great deal of work to do before I go to bed.

ELIZABETH Good-night.

ARNOLD Do you mind if I kiss you?

ELIZABETH [*With agony.*] Oh, Arnold!

He gravely kisses her on the forehead and then goes out. ELIZABETH *stands lost in thought. She is shattered.* LADY KITTY *and* PORTEOUS *come in.* LADY KITTY *wears a cloak.*

LADY KITTY You're alone, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH That note you asked me about, Lady Kitty, from Teddie . . .

LADY KITTY Yes?

ELIZABETH He wanted to have a talk with me before he went away. He's waiting for me in the summer house by the tennis court. Would Lord Porteous mind going down and asking him to come here?

PORTEOUS Certainly. Certainly.

ELIZABETH Forgive me for troubling you. But it's very important.

PORTEOUS No trouble at all. [*He goes out.*]

LADY KITTY Hughie and I will leave you alone.

ELIZABETH But I don't want to be left alone. I want you to stay.

LADY KITTY What are you going to say to him?

ELIZABETH [*Desperately.*] Please don't ask me questions. I'm so frightfully unhappy.

LADY KITTY My poor child!

ELIZABETH Oh, isn't life rotten? Why can't one be happy without making other people unhappy?

LADY KITTY I wish I knew how to help you. I'm simply devoted to you. [*She hunts about in her mind for something to do or say.*] Would you like my lip-stick?

ELIZABETH [*Smiling through her tears.*] Thanks. I never use one.

LADY KITTY Oh, but just try. It's such a comfort when you're in trouble.

Enter PORTEOUS *and* TEDDIE.

PORTEOUS I brought him. He said he'd be damned if he'd come.

LADY KITTY When a lady sent for him? Are these the manners of the young men of to-day?

TEDDIE When you've been solemnly kicked out of a house once I think it seems rather pushing to come back again as though nothing had happened.

ELIZABETH Teddie, I want you to be serious.

TEDDIE Darling, I had such a rotten dinner at that pub. If you ask me to be serious on the top of that I shall cry.

ELIZABETH Don't be idiotic, Teddie. [*Her voice faltering.*] I'm so utterly wretched.

He looks at her for a moment gravely.

TEDDIE What is it?

ELIZABETH I can't come away with you, Teddie.

TEDDIE Why not?

ELIZABETH [*Looking away in embarrassment.*] I don't love you enough.

TEDDIE Fiddle!

ELIZABETH [*With a flash of anger.*] Don't say "Fiddle" to me.

TEDDIE I shall say exactly what I like to you.

ELIZABETH I won't be bullied.

TEDDIE Now look here, Elizabeth, you know perfectly well that I'm in love with you, and I know perfectly well that you're in love with me. So what are you talking nonsense for?

ELIZABETH [*Her voice breaking.*] I can't say it if you're cross with me.

TEDDIE [*Smiling very tenderly.*] I'm not cross with you, silly.

ELIZABETH It's harder still when you're being rather an owl.

TEDDIE [*With a chuckle.*] Am I mistaken in thinking you're not very easy to please?

ELIZABETH Oh, its monstrous. I was all wrought up and ready to do anything, and now you've thoroughly put me out. I feel like a great big fat balloon that some one has put a long pin into. [*With a sudden look at him.*] Have you done it on purpose?

TEDDIE Upon my soul I don't know what you're talking about.

ELIZABETH I wonder if you're really much cleverer than I think you are.

TEDDIE [*Taking her hands and making her sit down.*] Now tell me exactly what you want to say. By the way, do you want Lady Kitty and Lord Porteous to be here?

ELIZABETH Yes.

LADY KITTY Elizabeth asked us to stay.

TEDDIE Oh, I don't mind,

bless you. I only thought you might feel rather in the way.

LADY KITTY [*Frigidly.*] A gentlewoman never feels in the way, Mr. Luton.

TEDDIE Won't you call me Teddie? Everybody does, you know.

LADY KITTY *tries to give him a withering look, but she finds it very difficult to prevent herself from smiling.* TEDDIE *strokes* ELIZABETH'S *hands. She draws them away.*

ELIZABETH No, don't do that. Teddie, it wasn't true when I said I didn't love you. Of course I love you. But Arnold loves me, too. I didn't know how much.

TEDDIE What has he been saying to you?

ELIZABETH He's been very good to me, and so kind. I didn't know he could be so kind. He offered to let me divorce him.

TEDDIE That's very decent of him.

ELIZABETH But don't you see, it ties my hands. How can I accept such a sacrifice? I should never forgive myself if I profited by his generosity.

TEDDIE If another man and I were devilish hungry and there was only one mutton chop between us, and he said, "You eat it," I wouldn't waste a lot of time arguing. I'd wolf it before he changed his mind.

ELIZABETH Don't talk like that. It maddens me. I'm trying to do the right thing.

TEDDIE You're not in love with Arnold; you're in love with me. It's idiotic to sacrifice your life for a slushy sentiment.

ELIZABETH After all, I did marry him.

TEDDIE Well, you made a mistake. A marriage without love is no marriage at all.

ELIZABETH *I* made the mistake. Why should he suffer for it? If any one has to suffer it's only right that I should.

TEDDIE What sort of a life do you think it would be with him? When two people are married it's very difficult for one of them to be unhappy without making the other unhappy too.

ELIZABETH I can't take advantage of his generosity.

TEDDIE I daresay he'll get a lot of satisfaction out of it.

ELIZABETH You're being beastly, Teddie. He was simply wonderful. I never knew he had it in him. He was really noble.

TEDDIE You are talking rot, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH I wonder if you'd be capable of acting like that.

TEDDIE Acting like what?

ELIZABETH What would you

do if I were married to you and came and told you I loved somebody else and wanted to leave you?

TEDDIE You have very pretty blue eyes, Elizabeth. I'd black first one and then the other. And after that we'd see.

ELIZABETH You damned brute!

TEDDIE I've often thought I wasn't quite a gentleman. Had it ever struck you? [*They look at one another for a while.*]

ELIZABETH You know, you are taking an unfair advantage of me. I feel as if I came to you quite unsuspectingly and when I wasn't looking you kicked me on the shins.

TEDDIE Don't you think we'd get on rather well together?

PORTEOUS Elizabeth's a fool if she don't stick to her husband. It's bad enough for the man, but for the woman—it's damnable. I hold no brief for Arnold. He plays bridge like a foot. Saving your presence, Kitty, I think he's a prig.

LADY KITTY Poor dear, his father was at his age. I daresay he'll grow out of it.

PORTEOUS But you stick to him, Elizabeth, stick to him. Man is a gregarious animal. We're members of a herd. If we break the herd's laws we suffer for it. And we suffer damnably.

LADY KITTY Oh, Elizabeth, my dear child, don't go. It's not worth it. It's not worth it. I tell you that, and I've sacrificed everything to love. [*A pause.*]

ELIZABETH I'm afraid.

TEDDIE [*In a whisper.*] Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH I can't face it. It's asking too much of me. Let's say good-bye to one another, Teddie. It's the only thing to do. And have pity on me. I'm giving up all my hope of happiness.

He goes up to her and looks into her eyes.

TEDDIE But I wasn't offering you happiness. I don't think my sort of love tends to happiness. I'm jealous. I'm not a very easy man to get on with. I'm often out of temper and irritable. I should be fed to the teeth with you sometimes, and so would you be with me. I daresay we'd fight like cat and dog, and sometimes we'd hate each other. Often you'd be wretched and bored stiff and lonely, and often you'd be frightfully homesick, and then you'd regret all you'd lost. Stupid women would be rude to you because we'd run away together. And some of them would cut you. I don't offer you peace and quietness. I offer you unrest and anxiety. I don't offer you happiness. I offer you love.

ELIZABETH [*Stretching out her arms.*] You hateful creature, I absolutely adore you!

He throws his arms round her and kisses her passionately on the lips.

LADY KITTY Of course the moment he said he'd give her a black eye I knew it was finished.

PORTEOUS [*Good-humouredly.*] You are a fool, Kitty.

LADY KITTY I know I am, but I can't help it.

TEDDIE Let's make a bolt for it now.

ELIZABETH Shall we?

TEDDIE This minute.

PORTEOUS You're damned fools, both of you, damned fools! If you like you can have my car.

TEDDIE That's awfully kind of you. As a matter of fact I got it out of the garage. It's just along the drive.

PORTEOUS [*Indignantly.*] How do you mean, you got it out of the garage?

TEDDIE Well, I thought there'd be a lot of bother, and it seemed to me the best thing would be for Elizabeth and me not to stand upon the order of our going, you know. Do it now. An excellent motto for a business man.

PORTEOUS Do you mean to say you were going to steal my car?

TEDDIE Not exactly. I was only going to bolshevise it, so to speak.

PORTEOUS I'm speechless. I'm absolutely speechless.

TEDDIE Hang it all, I couldn't carry Elizabeth all the way to London. She's so damned plump.

ELIZABETH You dirty dog!

PORTEOUS [*Spluttering.*] Well, well, well! . . . [*Helplessly.*] I like him, Kitty, it's no good pretending I don't. I like him.

TEDDIE The moon's shining, Elizabeth. We'll drive all through the night.

PORTEOUS They'd better go to San Michele. I'll wire to have it got ready for them.

LADY KITTY That's where we went when Hughie and I . . . [*Faltering.*] Oh, you dear things, how I envy you!

PORTEOUS [*Mopping his eyes.*] Now don't cry, Kitty. Confound you, don't cry.

TEDDIE Come, darling.

ELIZABETH But I can't go like this.

TEDDIE Nonsense! Lady Kitty will lend you her cloak. Won't you?

LADY KITTY [*Taking it off.*] You're capable of tearing it off my back if I don't.

TEDDIE [*Putting the cloak on* ELIZABETH.] And we'll buy you

a tooth-brush in London in the morning.

LADY KITTY She must write a note for Arnold. I'll put it on her pincushion.

TEDDIE Pincushion be blowed! Come, darling. We'll drive through the dawn and through the sunrise.

ELIZABETH [*Kissing* LADY KITTY *and* PORTEOUS.] Good-bye. Good-bye. [TEDDIE *stretches out his hand and she takes it. Hand in hand they go out into the night.*]

LADY KITTY Oh, Hughie, how it all comes back to me! Will they suffer all we suffered? And have we suffered all in vain?

PORTEOUS My dear, I don't know that in life it matters so much what you do as what you are. No one can learn by the experience of another because no circumstances are quite the same. If we made rather a hash of things perhaps it was because we were rather trivial people. You can do anything in this world if you're prepared to take the consequences, and consequences depend on character.

Enter CHAMPION-CHENEY, *rubbing his hands. He is as pleased as Punch.*

C.-C. Well, I think I've settled the hash of that young man.

LADY KITTY Oh!

C.-C. You have to get up very early in the morning to get the better of your humble servant. *There is the sound of a car starting.*

LADY KITTY What is that?

C.-C. It sounds like a car. I expect it's your chauffeur taking one of the maids for a joy-ride.

PORTEOUS Whose hash are you talking about?

C.-C. Mr. Edward Luton's, my dear Hughie. I told Arnold exactly what to do and he's done it. What makes a prison? Why, bars and bolts. Remove them and a prisoner won't want to escape. Clever, I flatter myself.

PORTEOUS You were always that, Clive, but at the moment you're obscure.

C.-C. I told Arnold to go to Elizabeth and tell her she could have her freedom. I told him to sacrifice himself all along the line. I know what women are. The moment every obstacle was removed to her marriage with Teddie Luton, half the allurement was gone.

LADY KITTY Arnold did that?

C.-C. He followed my instructions to the letter. I've just seen him. She's shaken. I'm willing to bet five hundred pounds to a penny that she won't bolt. A downy old bird, eh? Downy's the

word. Downy. [*He begins to laugh. They laugh, too. Presently they are all three in fits of laughter.*]

The curtain falls.

Noel Coward

The only adjective that describes Noel Coward's career in the theater, and the one that he himself would heartily approve of, is "phenomenal." After three decades of frenzied activity, he has amassed a fortune and can claim respectable achievement in almost every aspect of theatrical enterprise as actor, author, director, producer, and songwriter. He has written a musical play, *Bitter Sweet,* which served as a model and helped to bring this musical form to maturity. The pungent wit of his patter songs and the nostalgia of his waltzes in musical comedies have given him a recognized place in musical literature. His historical pageant, *Cavalcade,* was a success on both stage and screen. He was the author, composer, director, producer, and star of one movie, *In Which We Serve.* Another movie which he wrote, *Brief Encounter,* has won several cinema awards. Like a number of the great dramatists of the world, including Molière and Shakespeare, he has brought financial success to almost every venture in which he has engaged. Unlike these dramatists, however, he has written only four plays which promise to be enduring.

Coward entered show business at the age of twelve as a child actor and has never left it at any time for more than short vacations. Although he once said that he considered himself "a writer first and an actor second," it is evident that most of his plays were conceived not so much as great dramas as to provide himself with adequate roles. In these roles he has shown great talent, and he is accepted as one of the leading comic actors of the modern stage. As a writer, he has been content to pattern his plays for the most part upon formulas that have already produced stage triumphs. His first comedy, *The Young Idea,* was admittedly inspired by George Bernard Shaw's *You Never Can Tell.* Coward realized immediately, however, that his talent did not lie with the comedy of ideas so much as with the comedy of manners, particularly in its farcial aspect. Oscar Wilde and W. Somerset Maugham were better masters for him than Shaw.

Coward's limitations and abilities are well illustrated by his first two successes, *The Vortex* and *Hay Fever,* produced in 1924 and 1925. The former established him as both an actor and a playwright. Under the influence of Michael Arlen's popular play *The Green Hat,* he attempted a serious study of the plight of the lost generation. Lacking Maugham's icy detachment in viewing the hysterical gaiety of postwar sophisticates, Coward shrewdly created a drama that sentimentalizes the tragedy of a beautiful woman desperately amusing herself in an effort to conceal the fact that she is facing middle age. *The Vortex* had an enthusiastic reception, and producers immediately became interested in what he had previously written. Within the year, Coward had four plays all running at the same time. He has recalled: "Everyone but Somerset Maugham said that I was a second Somerset Maugham."

How much Coward's professional attitude toward acting has influenced him as a dramatist is revealed by his own estimation of the comedy *Hay Fever,* which he has never greatly admired. But he has always fancied *The Vortex* because it gave him what he wanted, a star role. "My original motive in *The Vortex,*" he said, "was to write a good play with a whacking good part in it for myself, and I am thankful to say, with a few modest reservations, that I succeeded." *Hay Fever,* on the other hand, depends on the expert technique of the entire cast. Here, instead of tailoring the play for his own personality, Coward created a succession of characterizations which give talented comedians the utmost scope for their artistry.

In *Hay Fever,* moreover, Coward first discovered one of the essential elements in the comedy of manners—the conflict between socially acceptable and socially unacceptable behavior. He contrasted the actions of the unconventional Bliss family with those of their respectable house guests. With magnificent assurance, the frivolous mother and the rest of the family, all inhabitants of the lunatic fringe of the world of art and artists, expect their guests to accommodate themselves to lunacy. As a result, bourgeois respectability is continually discomfited.

After his first successful season in 1925, Coward did not write another good comedy for six years. In *Private Lives,* however, he returned to the *Hay Fever* situation with another satire on smugness and respectability.

Private Lives is in some respects the most amazing tour de force in the history of the comic theater. Coward began with a slender farcial situation in which a recently divorced couple find themselves and their second spouses occupying adjacent hotel suites. They have both been guilty of the utmost folly in selecting for their new partners representatives of the dull and stable middle class. Realizing that their attraction for one another still persists as strongly as it ever did, they elope at the end of the first act.

The second act is unique in the theater. In it Coward utilized only the talents of himself and his leading lady, Gertrude Lawrence. For forty minutes they were alone on the stage without exits, entrances, or interruptions. Coward has noted the difficulties of playing this kind of act, wherein the performers must vary their pace to suit a different audience each night. It requires actors who not only have unusual stage ability, but also a fine sensitivity to the reactions of the listeners beyond the footlights. This means, he says, keeping "a constant ear cocked in the direction of the stalls, listening for that first sinister cough of boredom, and, when it comes, a swiftly exchanged glance of warning and an immediate and, it is to be hoped, imperceptible speeding up of the scene until the next sure-fire laugh breaks."

This second act is also important because in it Coward gives his apology for these twentieth-century wits, when the comic hero, Elyot, announces their philosophy. They must be consistently and dogmatically superficial, he announces. "Let's blow trumpets and squeakers, and enjoy the party as much as we can, like very small, quite idiotic school-children. Let's savour the delight of the moment. Come and kiss me, darling, before your body rots, and worms pop in and out of your eye sockets." Amanda's wit is momentarily on the side of sense when she replies that worms do not pop, and that, if he even looks at another woman, she will kill him. But the scene quickly returns to an idiotic party.

This deliberate defense of the cult of superficiality is important to the comedy of manners as it opposes common-sense Philistinism. In addition Coward successfully added a second comic element to this play—the battle of the sexes. His lovers are a modern counterpart of Congreve's Mirabell and Millamant, who engage in continu-

ous warfare between themselves except when they become momentary allies against the common enemy to their Bohemianism.

In his second comedy of the thirties, *Design for Living,* Coward again showed the influence of the acting profession by choosing himself and his friends Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt for his characters. They were presented under easily penetrated disguises. He and Lunt were, respectively, a writer and an artist rather than actors; and Lynn Fontanne was the sometime mistress of both. As such, however, she is a little disturbed by her situation and at times wishes she were "a nice-minded British matron, with a husband, a cook, and a baby. I wish I believed in God and in the *Daily Mail* and 'Mother India'!" Eventually she acts upon this conviction by marrying a wealthy and respectable friend. It is only when the writer and the artist appear two years later to confront her with the dullness and stuffiness of this respectability, that she realizes how empty her life is and has the courage to rejoin their "erotic hotch-potch."

This play was severely criticized when it was produced in 1933, especially for its concluding scene, wherein the three principal characters dissolve in laughter, as the heroine's husband upbraids them for their irresponsibility. Coward here used only a variant of the elements of comedy he had learned in earlier plays. The two conflicts consist of the war between conventional and unconventional ways of life on the one hand and the battle of the sexes on the other. But many critics felt that this time Coward had written too vigorous an apology for superficiality. He has claimed, however, in his own defense that the title, *Design for Living,* was ironic rather than dogmatic: "I never intended for a moment that the design for living suggested in the play should apply to anyone outside its three principal characters, Gilda, Otto, and Leo. These glib, overarticulate, and amoral creatures force their lives into fantastic shapes and problems because they cannot help themselves." And he explained that, in the final laughter, the three were not mocking the husband or accepted morality but rather "were laughing at themselves."

The criticism the play received, however, points up important differences between the plays of Coward and of Maugham. Coward obviously supports his Bohemians in their struggle with the Philistines. He does not have Maugham's balanced objectivity when viewing society. In *The Circle,* by Maugham, both sides are satirized equally.

The audience realizes that Champion-Cheney and his son are trapped by their own smugness, but also realizes that the headstrong young lovers may repeat the identical folly of Lord Porteous and Lady Kitty and thus complete the circle. Coward's plays, as a natural accompaniment to their one-sidedness, have a large amount of sentimentality. This is particularly noticeable in *Bitter Sweet.* He said of this play that its "mood of seminostalgic sentiment, when well done, invariably affects me very pleasantly." But even his most brilliant comedies of manners show traces of sentimentality. Furthermore, Coward favors his male leading roles, usually played by himself, and does not often create feminine characters of superior wit as Maugham does. Finally, Coward relies on farcial situations that have an air of being unusual even within the strange world of the comedy of manners, whereas Maugham's situations appear customary and probable within that world.

In *Blithe Spirit* these qualities are blended into the richest mixture that Coward has yet produced. It combines high comedy with farce, and even with fantasy, to produce the rarest of all comedy types—the comedy of pure fun. The play is all the more remarkable because it was written during the blitz on London. Realizing that his bomb-shocked audience would not be interested in any of the familiar variants of the triangle of intrigue, Coward conceived the idea of materializing upon the stage the departed wife of his comic hero, who is now happily domesticated with her successor. And instead of placing emphasis on characters that are interesting because of the personality of a particular actor, he emphasized a brilliantly conceived situation.

The author of any farce comedy must always ask his audience to believe in something which, if examined with a rational mind, is essentially unbelievable. One of the most difficult things in farce comedy is to establish a situation which is familiar enough to win the assent of an audience who, at the same time, know it is not true. With a stroke of genius, Coward accomplished this in *Blithe Spirit* merely by taking a frame of reference already established. It is one of the delightful conventions of the theater that we can accept the appearance on the stage of the comic hero's first wife, and later his second, as astral spirits; but, if we really believed in spiritualism, this play would offend rather than entertain us. What made it pos-

sible for Coward to amuse war-weary audiences on two continents with this play was the fact that, except in the theater, they did not have to believe in spirits, particularly in a blithe one that was as willful and capricious as she had been in the flesh.

What is true of *Blithe Spirit* is true of all of Coward's best comedies. The amusement does not arise entirely from the dialogue. It is achieved principally by the comic hero's attempt to extricate himself from a difficult and unusual situation. The solution of the problem of having two wives is quite realistic if the audience is willing to accept the frame of reference. But, in addition to astral bigamy, the hero also has to solve his relation to women in general. We are told in the exposition that he has been hag-ridden by his mother and dominated by several mistresses. Now, since spirits cannot cross water because of something unexplainable in the nature of their cosmic existence, he can escape them simply by traveling abroad and, at the same time, can emancipate himself from the tyranny of all the women in his life.

One of the characters in Coward's most successful musical play, *Bitter Sweet,* sings two lines:

> The most I've had is just
> A talent to amuse.

Coward should not be ashamed of the fact that he too possesses this rare gift. It is certainly by his four best comedies of manners, *Hay Fever, Private Lives, Design for Living,* and *Blithe Spirit,* that he will be remembered rather than for the chauvinistic *Cavalcade* or his serious plays. That he has not completely lost his touch is indicated by the relative success of *Present Laughter,* a slightly autobiographical comedy. Here again an actor-playwright has created parts full of dramatic possibilities. Whether or not Coward can continue to write comedies of manners about a class of people and a way of life that are fast disappearing, it is difficult to say. But the success of a play like *Blithe Spirit* suggests that the potentialities of the comedy of manners are still limitless, even in the face of changing values.

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

1899 Born December 16 at Teddington, a suburb of London. His father worked for a music publisher, and the family was interested in music and amateur theatricals. Noel learned singing and dancing but had little formal education.

1911-17 First appeared on the stage as Prince Mussel in a children's play called *The Goldfish* on January 27, 1911. He immediately became a professional actor, haunting the casting offices, and his schooling practically ceased. In these years he played parts in *Peter Pan, Charley's Aunt, The Saving Grace,* and other plays. In 1917 he appeared in the D. W. Griffith film *Hearts of the World.*

1918 He was drafted into the army, received a medical discharge, and returned to acting.

1919-24 PERIOD OF APPRENTICESHIP

1919 The Last Trick, a melodrama in four acts. He sold the option for it, but it was not produced. *The Rat Trap,* a serious psychological play, was not staged until 1926, when it failed.

1920 I'll Leave It to You, his first production, had only a short run. He acted the leading role.[1]

1923 The Young Idea. Coward called it his "best effort" of this early period. He acted the lead. *London Calling,* his first musical comedy. He was part-author and composer of the music, and he acted the leading role.

1924-30 PERIOD OF EXPERIMENT

1924 The Vortex, a serious play about a selfish mother and a drug-addict son, was a smash hit in London and New York. He played the part of Nicky Lancaster and appeared the following year in New York in the same part.

1925 Hay Fever was produced in New York. Coward was unimpressed with it because he was "passing through a transition stage as a writer; my dialogue was becoming more natural and less elaborate, and I was beginning to concentrate more on the comedy values of situation rather than the comedy values of actual lines." *On With the Dance.* He wrote the book, the lyrics, and most of the music. *Fallen Angels.* The last four plays were all running during this year.

1927 Home Chat was a failure. *Sirocco* was also a failure, and his audience hissed him when he tried to take an author's bow from the stage.

1929 Bitter Sweet, a very successful musical play. He was the author, composer, and director. In 1933 he said that it had given him "more complete satisfaction than anything else I have ever written up till now."

1930 Post Mortem, which he later described as an "angry little vilification of war," contained some of his best writing as well as some of his worst. "I passionately believed in the truth of what I was writing; too passionately."

1930-41 PERIOD OF MATURE COMEDIES

During this period, Coward emphasized that he was writing pro-

[1] All dates for the plays of Coward are for the London production unless otherwise noted.

fessionally and not for the purpose of creating literature. "It seems to me that a professional writer should be animated by no other motive than the desire to write, and, by so doing, to earn his living."

1930 Private Lives was a successful comedy of manners. Coward acted the lead in London and the following year in New York.

1931 Cavalcade, an historical pageant, was a smash hit, but he was accused of writing nationalistic propaganda and of contributing to the defeat of the British Labour government. He has insisted, however, that his original motive was "to write a big play on a big scale." And he described himself as being at this time "as usual, so bleakly uninterested in politics that I had not the remotest idea . . . that there was going to be a general election at all."

1932 Words and Music. He was the author, composer, producer, and —on the opening night—the conductor.

1933 Design for Living. This play, though successful, was widely criticized as immoral. Coward played the part of Leo, while Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne were the other principals.

1936 Tonight at 8:30 is a series of nine one-act plays that satirize contemporary English life. Coward played the lead in several acts. He did not appear again on the London stage until *Blithe Spirit* was produced.

1937 Present Indicative, his flippant autobiography, was published.

1939 To Step Aside, his first novel, was published.

1941 Blithe Spirit was written in London during the blitz. It ran continuously for 1,997 performances—ending in March, 1946—which is the longest run on record for a nonmusical play in England. It ran for 657 performances in New York, won the Drama Critics' Circle award in 1942, and in 1945 was made into a movie. Coward played the lead in New York and later, for a short time, in London.

1942-ff. THE EFFECT OF WORLD WAR II

1943 Present Laughter continued his comedy-of-manners style. He played Garry Essendine. *This Happy Breed* is a sentimental pageant on the sterling virtues of the English middle classes.

1944 In Which We Serve, a movie on the subject of England at war. Coward was the author, producer, director, composer, and star. *Middle East Diary,* a record of part of his war effort. He entertained soldiers in the Mediterranean theater, appearing frequently in the front-line combat areas as well as in hospitals and rest camps. The book's assumption of English superiority, its imperial spirit, and its view of the United States and the Dominions as colonies reflect his conservatism and it was criticized by many reviewers.

1947 Peace in Our Time deals with a hypothetical occupation of England in 1940.

Blithe Spirit[1]

AN IMPROBABLE FARCE IN THREE ACTS

by NOEL COWARD

Characters

EDITH, *a maid*
RUTH
CHARLES
DR. BRADMAN
MRS. BRADMAN
MADAME ARCATI
ELVIRA

The action of the play takes place in the living-room of Charles Condomine's house in Kent.

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ACT ONE

Scene 1. *Before dinner on a summer evening.*

Scene 2. *After dinner.*

ACT TWO

Scene 1. *The next morning.*

Scene 2. *Late the following afternoon.*

Scene 3. *Early evening. A few days later.*

ACT THREE

Scene 1. *After dinner. A few days later.*

Scene 2. *Several hours later.*

The scene is the living-room of the Condomines' house in Kent. The room is light, attractive and comfortably furnished. The arrangement of it may be left to the discretion of the producer. On the right there are French windows opening on to the garden. On the left there is an open fireplace. At the back, on the left, there are double doors leading into the dining-room. Up left, on an angle, there are double doors leading to the hall, the stairs, and the servants' quarters.

When the curtain rises it is about eight o'clock on a summer evening. There is a wood fire burning because it is an English summer evening.

EDITH *comes to table with tray of drinks.*

RUTH *comes in. She is a smart-looking woman in the middle thirties. She is dressed for dinner but not elaborately.*

RUTH That's right, Edith.

EDITH Yes'm.

RUTH Now you'd better fetch me the ice bucket.

EDITH Yes'm.

RUTH Did you manage to get the ice out of those little tin trays?

EDITH Yes'm—I'ad a bit of a struggle though—but it's all right.

RUTH And you filled the little trays up again with water?

EDITH Yes'm.

RUTH Very good, Edith—you're making giant strides.

EDITH Yes'm.

RUTH Madame Arcati, Mrs. Bradman and I will have our coffee in here after dinner and Mr. Condomine and Dr. Bradman will have theirs in the dining-room—is that quite clear?

EDITH Yes'm.

RUTH And when you're serving dinner, Edith, try to remember to do it calmly and methodically.

EDITH Yes'm.

RUTH As you are not in the Navy it is unnecessary to do everything at the double.

EDITH Very good, 'm.

RUTH Now go and get the ice.

EDITH [*Straining at the leash.*] Yes'm. [*She starts off at full speed.*]

RUTH *Not* at a run, Edith.

EDITH [*Slowing down.*] Yes'm. [EDITH *goes.*]

CHARLES *comes in. He is a nice-looking man of about forty wear-*

ing a loose-fitting velvet smoking jacket.

CHARLES No sign of the advancing hordes?

RUTH Not yet.

CHARLES [*Going to the cocktail tray.*] No ice.

RUTH It's coming. I've been trying to discourage Edith from being quite so fleet of foot. You mustn't mind if everything is a little slow motion to-night.

CHARLES I shall welcome it. The last few days have been extremely agitating. What do you suppose induced Agnes to leave us and go and get married?

RUTH The reason was becoming increasingly obvious, dear.

CHARLES Yes, but in these days nobody thinks anything of that sort of thing—she could have popped into the cottage hospital, had it, and popped out again.

RUTH Her social life would have been seriously undermined.

CHARLES We must keep Edith in the house more.

EDITH *comes in slowly with the ice bucket.*

RUTH That's right, Edith—put it down on the table.

EDITH Yes'm. [*She does so.*]

CHARLES I left my cigarette case on my dressing-table, Edith—would you get it for me?

EDITH Yes, sir. [*She runs out of the room.*]

CHARLES There now!

RUTH You took her by surprise.

CHARLES [*At the cocktail table.*] A dry Martini I think, don't you?

RUTH Yes, darling—I expect Madame Arcati will want something sweeter.

CHARLES We'll have this one for ourselves anyhow.

RUTH [*Taking a cigarette and sitting down.*] Oh dear!

CHARLES What's the matter?

RUTH I have a feeling that this evening's going to be awful.

CHARLES It'll probably be funny, but not awful.

RUTH You must promise not to catch my eye—if I giggle—and I'm very likely to—it will ruin everything.

CHARLES You mustn't—you must be dead serious and if possible a little intense. We can't hurt the old girl's feelings however funny she is.

RUTH But why the Bradmans, darling? He's as skeptical as we are—he'll probably say the most dreadful things.

CHARLES I've warned him. There must be more than three people and we couldn't have the Vicar and his wife because (a) they're dreary, and (b) they

probably wouldn't have approved at all. It had to be the Bradmans.

EDITH *rushes into the room with* CHARLES' *cigarette case.*

CHARLES [*Taking it.*] Thank you, Edith. Steady does it.

EDITH [*Breathlessly.*] Yes, sir.

EDITH, *with an obvious effort, goes out slowly.*

CHARLES We might make her walk about with a book on her head like they do in deportment lessons. [CHARLES *gives* RUTH *cocktail.*] Here, try this.

RUTH [*Sipping it.*] Lovely—dry as a bone.

CHARLES [*Raising his glass to her.*] To *The Unseen!*

RUTH I must say that's a wonderful title.

CHARLES If this evening's a success I shall start on the first draft to-morrow.

RUTH How extraordinary it is.

CHARLES What?

RUTH Oh, I don't know—being in right at the beginning of something—it gives one an odd feeling.

CHARLES Do you remember how I got the idea for "The Light Goes Out"?

RUTH Suddenly seeing that haggard, raddled woman in the hotel at Biarritz—of course I remember—we sat up half the night talking about it——

CHARLES She certainly came in very handy—I wonder who she was.

RUTH And if she ever knew, I mean ever recognized, that description of herself—poor thing . . . here's to her, anyhow . . . [*She finishes her drink.*]

CHARLES [*Takes her glass and goes to drinks table.*] Have another.

RUTH Darling—it's most awfully strong.

CHARLES [*Pouring it.*] Never mind.

RUTH Used Elvira to be a help to you—when you were thinking something out, I mean?

CHARLES [*Pouring out another cocktail for himself.*] Every now and then—when she concentrated—but she didn't concentrate very often.

RUTH I do wish I'd known her.

CHARLES I wonder if you'd have liked her.

RUTH I'm sure I should—as you talk of her she sounds enchanting—yes, I'm sure I should have liked her because you know I have never for an instant felt in the least jealous of her—that's a good sign.

CHARLES Poor Elvira.

RUTH Does it still hurt—when you think of her?

CHARLES No, not really—sometimes I almost wish it did—I feel rather guilty——

RUTH I wonder if I died before you'd grown tired of me if you'd forget me so soon?

CHARLES What a horrible thing to say . . .

RUTH No—I think it's interesting.

CHARLES Well to begin with I *haven't* forgotten Elvira—I *remember* her very distinctly indeed—I remember how fascinating she was, and how maddening—— [*Sits.*] I remember how badly she played all games and how cross she got when she didn't win—I remember her gay charm when she had achieved her own way over something and her extreme acidity when she didn't—I remember her physical attractiveness, which was tremendous—and her spiritual integrity which was nil . . .

RUTH You can't remember something that was nil.

CHARLES I remember how morally untidy she was . . .

RUTH Was she more physically attractive than I am?

CHARLES That was a very tiresome question, dear, and fully deserves the wrong answer.

RUTH You really are very sweet.

CHARLES Thank you.

RUTH And a little naïve, too.

CHARLES Why?

RUTH Because you imagine that I mind about Elvira being more physically attractive than I am.

CHARLES I should have thought any woman would mind—if it were true. Or perhaps I'm old-fashioned in my views of female psychology. . . .

RUTH Not exactly old-fashioned, darling, just a bit didactic.

CHARLES How do you mean?

RUTH It's didactic to attribute to one type the defects of another type—for instance, because you know perfectly well that Elvira would mind terribly if you found another woman more attractive physically than she was, it doesn't necessarily follow that I should. Elvira was a more physical person than I—I'm certain of that—it's all a question of degree.

CHARLES [*Smiling.*] I love you, my love.

RUTH I know you do—but not the wildest stretch of imagination could describe it as the first fine careless rapture.

CHARLES Would you like it to be?

RUTH Good God, no!

CHARLES Wasn't that a shade too vehement?

RUTH We're neither of us adolescent, Charles, we've neither of us led exactly prim lives, have we? And we've both been married before—careless rapture at this stage would be incongruous and embarrassing.

CHARLES I hope I haven't been in any way a disappointment, dear.

RUTH Don't be so idiotic.

CHARLES After all your first husband was a great deal older than you, wasn't he? I shouldn't like to think that you'd missed out all along the line.

RUTH There are moments, Charles, when you go too far.

CHARLES Sorry, darling.

RUTH As far as waspish female psychology goes, there's a strong vein of it in you.

CHARLES I've heard that said about Julius Caesar.

RUTH Julius Caesar is neither here nor there.

CHARLES He may be for all we know—we'll ask Madame Arcati.

RUTH You're awfully irritating when you're determined to be witty at all costs—almost supercilious.

CHARLES That's exactly what Elvira used to say.

RUTH I'm not at all surprised —I never imagined—physically triumphant as she was—that she was entirely lacking in perception.

CHARLES Darling Ruth!

RUTH There you go again . . .

CHARLES [*Kissing her lightly.*] As I think I mentioned before—I love you, my love.

RUTH Poor Elvira.

CHARLES Didn't that light, comradely kiss mollify you at all?

RUTH You're very annoying, you know you are—when I said "Poor Elvira" it came from the heart—you must have bewildered her so horribly.

CHARLES Don't I ever bewilder you at all?

RUTH Never for an instant—I know every trick.

CHARLES Well, all I can say is that we'd better get a divorce immediately . . .

RUTH Put my glass down, there's a darling.

CHARLES [*Taking it.*] She certainly had a great talent for living—it was a pity that she died so young.

RUTH Poor Elvira.

CHARLES That remark is getting monotonous.

RUTH Poor Charles, then.

CHARLES That's better.

RUTH And later on, poor Ruth, I expect.

CHARLES You have no faith,

Ruth. I really do think you should try to have a little faith.

RUTH I shall strain every nerve.

CHARLES Life without faith is an arid business.

RUTH How beautifully you put things, dear.

CHARLES I *aim* to please.

RUTH If I died, I wonder how long it would be before you married again?

CHARLES You won't die—you're not the dying sort.

RUTH Neither was Elvira.

CHARLES Oh yes, she was, now that I look back on it—she had a certain ethereal, not quite of this world quality—nobody could call you even remotely ethereal.

RUTH Nonsense—she was of the earth earthy.

CHARLES Well, she is now, anyhow.

RUTH You know that's the kind of observation that shocks people.

CHARLES It's discouraging to think how many people are shocked by honesty and how few by deceit.

RUTH Write that down, you might forget it.

CHARLES You underrate me.

RUTH Anyhow it was a question of bad taste more than honesty.

CHARLES I was devoted to Elvira. We were married for five years. She died. I missed her very much. That was seven years ago. I have now, with your help, my love, risen above the whole thing.

RUTH Admirable. But if tragedy should darken our lives, I still say—with prophetic foreboding—poor Ruth! [*Bell.*]

CHARLES That's probably the Bradmans.

RUTH It might be Madame Arcati.

CHARLES No, she'll come on her bicycle—she always goes everywhere on her bicycle.

RUTH It really is very spirited of the old girl.

CHARLES Shall I go, or shall we let Edith have her fling?

RUTH Wait a minute and see what happens. [*There is a slight pause.*]

CHARLES Perhaps she didn't hear.

RUTH She's probably on one knee in a pre-sprinting position waiting for cook to open the kitchen door. [*There is the sound of a door banging and* EDITH *is seen scampering across the hall.*]

CHARLES Steady, Edith.

EDITH [*Dropping to a walk.*] Yes, sir.

MRS. BRADMAN *comes to* RUTH

—shakes hands. DR. BRADMAN *shakes hands with* CHARLES. DR. BRADMAN *is a pleasant-looking middle-aged man.* MRS. BRADMAN *is fair and rather faded.*

EDITH Dr. and Mrs. Bradman.

DR. BRADMAN We're not late, are we? I only got back from the hospital about half an hour ago.

CHARLES Of course not—Madame Arcati isn't here yet.

MRS. BRADMAN That must have been her we passed coming down the hill—I said I thought it was.

RUTH Then she won't be long. I'm so glad you were able to come.

MRS. BRADMAN We've been looking forward to it—I feel really quite excited . . .

DR. BRADMAN [*Shaking hands with* RUTH.] I guarantee that Violet will be good—I made her promise.

MRS. BRADMAN There wasn't any need — I'm absolutely thrilled. I've only seen Madame Arcati two or three times in the village—I mean I've never seen her do anything at all peculiar, if you know what I mean.

CHARLES Dry Martini?

DR. BRADMAN By all means.

CHARLES She certainly is a strange woman. It was only a chance remark of the Vicar's about seeing her up on the Knoll on Midsummer Eve dressed in sort of Indian robes that made me realize that she was psychic at all. Then I began to make inquiries—apparently she's been a professional in London for years.

MRS. BRADMAN It is funny, isn't it? I mean anybody doing it as a profession.

DR. BRADMAN I believe it's very lucrative.

MRS. BRADMAN Do you believe in it, Mrs. Condomine—do you think there's anything really genuine about it at all?

RUTH I'm afraid not—but I do think it's interesting how easily people allow themselves to be deceived . . .

MRS. BRADMAN But she must believe in herself, mustn't she—or is the whole business a fake?

CHARLES I suspect the worst. A real professional charlatan. That's what I am hoping for anyhow—the character I am planning for my book must be a complete impostor, that's one of the most important factors of the whole story.

DR. BRADMAN What exactly are you hoping to get from her?

CHARLES [*Handing* DR. *and* MRS. BRADMAN *cocktails.*] Jargon, principally—a few of the tricks of the trade—it's many years since I went to a séance. I want to refresh my memory.

DR. BRADMAN Then it's not entirely new to you?

CHARLES Oh no—when I was a little boy an aunt of mine used to come and stay with us—she imagined that she was a medium and used to go off into the most elaborate trances after dinner. My mother was fascinated by it.

MRS. BRADMAN Was she convinced?

CHARLES [*Gets cocktail for himself.*] Good heavens, no—she just naturally disliked my aunt and loved making a fool of her.

DR. BRADMAN [*Laughing.*] I gather that there were never any tangible results?

CHARLES Oh sometimes she didn't do so badly. On one occasion when we were all sitting round in the pitch dark with my mother groping her way through Chaminade at the piano, my aunt suddenly gave a shrill scream and said that she saw a small black dog by my chair, then someone switched on the lights and sure enough there was.

MRS. BRADMAN But how extraordinary.

CHARLES It was obviously a stray that had come in from the street. But I must say I took off my hat to Auntie for producing it, or rather for utilizing—even Mother was a bit shaken.

MRS. BRADMAN What happened to it?

CHARLES It lived with us for years.

RUTH I sincerely hope Madame Arcati won't produce any livestock—we have so very little room in this house.

MRS. BRADMAN Do you think she tells fortunes? I love having my fortune told.

CHARLES I expect so——

RUTH I was told once on the pier at Southsea that I was surrounded by lilies and a golden seven—it worried me for days. [ALL *laugh.*]

CHARLES We really must all be serious, you know, and pretend that we believe implicitly, otherwise she won't play.

RUTH Also, she might really mind—it would be cruel to upset her.

DR. BRADMAN I shall be as good as gold.

RUTH Have you ever attended her, Doctor—professionally, I mean?

DR. BRADMAN Yes—she had influenza in January—she's only been here just over a year, you know. I must say she was singularly unpsychic then—I always understood that she was an authoress.

CHARLES Oh yes, we originally met as colleagues at one of

Mrs. Wilmot's Sunday evenings in Sandgate . . .

MRS. BRADMAN What sort of books does she write?

CHARLES Two sorts. Rather whimsical children's stories about enchanted woods filled with highly conversational flora and fauna, and enthusiastic biographies of minor royalties. Very sentimental, reverent and extremely funny.

There is the sound of the front door bell.

RUTH Here she is.

DR. BRADMAN She knows, doesn't she, about to-night? You're not going to spring it on her.

CHARLES Of course—it was all arranged last week—I told her how profoundly interested I was in anything to do with the occult, and she blossomed like a rose.

RUTH I really feel quite nervous—as though I were going to make a speech.

EDITH *is seen sedately going towards the door.*

CHARLES You go and meet her, darling.

EDITH *has opened the door, and* MADAME ARCATI*'s voice, very high and clear, is heard.*

MADAME ARCATI I've leant my bike up against that little bush, it will be *perfectly* all right if no one touches it.

EDITH Madame Arcati.

RUTH How nice of you to have come all this way.

RUTH *and* CHARLES *greet her simultaneously.* MADAME ARCATI *enters. She is a striking woman, dressed not too extravagantly but with a decided bias towards the barbaric. She might be any age between forty-five and sixty-five.* RUTH *ushers her in.*

CHARLES [*Advancing.*] My dear Madame Arcati!

MADAME ARCATI I'm afraid I'm rather late, but I had a sudden presentiment that I was going to have a puncture so I went back to fetch my pump, and then of course I didn't have a puncture at all. [MADAME ARCATI *takes off cloak and hands it to* RUTH.]

CHARLES Perhaps you will on the way home.

MADAME ARCATI Doctor Bradman—the man with the gentle hands!

DR. BRADMAN I'm delighted to see you looking so well. This is my wife.

MADAME ARCATI We are old friends—— [*Shakes hands with* MRS. BRADMAN.] We meet coming out of shops.

CHARLES Would you like a cocktail?

MADAME ARCATI [*Peeling off*

some rather strange-looking gloves.] If it's a dry Martini, yes —if it's a concoction, no. Experience has taught me to be very wary of concoctions.

CHARLES It is a dry Martini.

MADAME ARCATI How delicious. It was wonderful cycling through the woods this evening —I was deafened with bird-song.

RUTH It's been lovely all day.

MADAME ARCATI But the evening's the time—mark my words. [*She takes the cocktail* CHARLES *gives her.*] [*To others.*] Thank you. Cheers! Cheers!

RUTH Don't you find it very tiring bicycling everywhere?

MADAME ARCATI On the contrary—it stimulates me—I was getting far too sedentary in London, that horrid little flat with the dim lights—they had to be dim, you know, the clients expect it.

MRS. BRADMAN I must say I find bicycling very exhausting.

MADAME ARCATI Steady rhythm—that's what counts. Once you get the knack of it you need never look back—on you get and away you go.

MRS. BRADMAN But the hills, Madame Arcati—pushing up those awful hills——

MADAME ARCATI Just knack again—down with your head, up with your heart, and you're over the top like a flash and skimming down the other side like a dragon-fly. This is the best dry Martini I've had for years.

CHARLES Will you have another?

MADAME ARCATI [*Holding out her glass.*] Certainly. [CHARLES *takes her glass and refills it at drinks table.*] You're a very clever man. Anybody can write books, but it takes an artist to make a dry Martini that's dry enough.

RUTH Are you writing anything nowadays, Madame Arcati?

MADAME ARCATI Every morning regular as clockwork, seven till one.

CHARLES [*Gives* MADAME ARCATI *cocktail.*] Is it a novel or a memoir?

MADAME ARCATI It's a children's book—I have to finish it by the end of October to catch the Christmas sales. It's mostly about very small animals, the hero is a moss beetle. [MRS. BRADMAN *laughs nervously.*] I had to give up my memoir of Princess Palliatini because she died in April—I talked to her about it the other day and she implored me to go on with it, but I really hadn't the heart.

MRS. BRADMAN [*Incredu-*

lously.] You *talked* to her about it the other day?

MADAME ARCATI Yes, through my control, of course. She sounded very irritable.

MRS. BRADMAN It's funny to think of people in the spirit world being irritable, isn't it? I mean, one can hardly imagine it, can one?

CHARLES We have no reliable guarantee that the after life will be any less exasperating than this one, have we?

MRS. BRADMAN [*Laughing.*] Oh, Mr. Condomine, how *can* you!

RUTH I expect it's dreadfully ignorant of me not to know—but who was Princess Palliatini?

MADAME ARCATI She was originally a Jewess from Odessa of quite remarkable beauty. It was an accepted fact that people used to stand on the seats of railway stations to watch her whizz by.

CHARLES She was a keen traveler?

MADAME ARCATI In her younger days, yes—later on she married a Mr. Clarke in the Consular Service and settled down for a while . . .

RUTH How did she become Princess Palliatini?

MADAME ARCATI That was years later. Mr. Clarke passed over and left her penniless with two strapping girls——

RUTH How unpleasant.

MADAME ARCATI And so there was nothing for it but to obey the beckoning finger of adventure and take to the road again—so off she went, bag and baggage, to Vladivostok.

CHARLES What an extraordinary place to go!

MADAME ARCATI She had cousins there. Some years later she met old Palliatini who was returning from a secret mission in Japan. He was immediately staggered by her beauty and very shortly afterwards married her. From then on her life became really interesting.

DR. BRADMAN I should hardly have described it as dull before.

RUTH What happened to the girls?

MADAME ARCATI She neither saw them nor spoke to them for twenty-three years.

MRS. BRADMAN How extraordinary.

MADAME ARCATI Not at all. She was always very erratic emotionally.

The double doors of the dining-room open and EDITH *comes in.*

EDITH [*Nervously.*] Dinner is served, mum.

RUTH Thank you, Edith.

Shall we? [EDITH *retires backwards into the dining-room.*]

MADAME ARCATI No red meat, I hope?

RUTH There's meat, but I don't think it will be very red—would you rather have an egg or something?

MADAME ARCATI [*She and* RUTH *rise.*] No, thank you—it's just that I make it a rule never to eat red meat before I work—it sometimes has an odd effect . . .

CHARLES What sort of effect?

MADAME ARCATI Oh, nothing of the least importance—if it isn't very red it won't matter much—anyhow, we'll risk it.

RUTH [MRS. BRADMAN *rises.* MADAME ARCATI *goes out first with* RUTH *followed by* MRS. BRADMAN, DR. BRADMAN *and* CHARLES.] Come along, then—Mrs. Bradman—Madame Arcati—you're on Charles's right . . .

THEY *all move into the dining-room as the lights fade on the scene.*

Scene 2

When the lights go up again, dinner is over, and RUTH, MRS. BRADMAN *and* MADAME ARCATI *are sitting having their coffee.*

MADAME ARCATI . . . on her mother's side she went right back to the Borgias which I think accounted for a lot one way and another—even as a child she was given to the most violent destructive tempers—very inbred, you know.

MRS. BRADMAN Yes, she must have been.

MADAME ARCATI My control was quite scared the other day when we were talking—I could hear it in her voice—after all, she's only a child . . .

RUTH Do you always have a child as a control?

MADAME ARCATI Yes, they're generally the best—some mediums prefer Indians, of course, but personally I've always found them unreliable.

RUTH In what way unreliable?

MADAME ARCATI Well, for one thing they're frightfully lazy and also, when faced with any sort of difficulty, they're rather apt to go off into their own tribal language which is

naturally unintelligible — that generally spoils everything and wastes a great deal of time. No, children are undoubtedly more satisfactory, particularly when they get to know you and understand your ways. Daphne has worked for me for years.

MRS. BRADMAN And she still goes on being a child—I mean, she doesn't show signs of growing any older?

MADAME ARCATI [*Patiently.*] Time values on the "Other Side" are utterly different from ours.

MRS. BRADMAN Do you feel funny when you go off into a trance?

MADAME ARCATI In what way funny?

RUTH [*Hastily.*] Mrs. Bradman doesn't mean funny in its comic implication, I think she meant odd or strange——

MADAME ARCATI The word was an unfortunate choice.

MRS. BRADMAN I'm sure I'm very sorry.

MADAME ARCATI It doesn't matter in the least—please don't apologize.

RUTH When did you first discover that you had these extraordinary powers?

MADAME ARCATI When I was quite tiny. My mother was a medium before me, you know, and so I had every opportunity of starting on the ground floor as you might say. I had my first trance when I was four years old and my first protoplasmic manifestation when I was five and a half—what an exciting day that was, I shall never forget it—of course the manifestation itself was quite small and of very short duration, but, for a child of my tender years, it was most gratifying.

MRS. BRADMAN Your mother must have been so pleased.

MADAME ARCATI [*Modestly.*] She was.

MRS. BRADMAN Can you foretell the future?

MADAME ARCATI Certainly not. I disapprove of fortune-tellers most strongly.

MRS. BRADMAN [*Disappointed.*] Oh really—why?

MADAME ARCATI Too much guesswork and fake mixed up with it—even when the gift is genuine—and it only very occasionally is—you can't count on it.

RUTH Why not?

MADAME ARCATI Time again—time is the reef upon which all our frail mystic ships are wrecked.

RUTH You mean because it has never yet been proved that the past and the present and the

future are not one and the same thing.

MADAME ARCATI I long ago came to the conclusion that nothing has ever been definitely proved about anything.

RUTH How very wise.

EDITH *comes in with a tray of drinks. This she brings over to the table by* RUTH. RUTH *moves a coffee cup and a vase to make room for it.*

RUTH Edith, we don't want to be disturbed for the next hour or so for any reason whatsoever —is that clear?

EDITH Yes'm.

RUTH And if anyone should telephone, just say we are out and take a message.

MRS. BRADMAN Unless it's an urgent call for George.

RUTH Unless it's an urgent call for Dr. Bradman.

EDITH Yes'm. [EDITH *goes out swiftly.*]

RUTH There's not likely to be one, is there?

MRS. BRADMAN No, I don't think so.

MADAME ARCATI Once I am off it won't matter, but an interruption during the preliminary stages might be disastrous.

MRS. BRADMAN I wish the men would hurry up—I'm terribly excited.

MADAME ARCATI Please don't be—it makes everything very much more difficult.

CHARLES *and* DR. BRADMAN *come out of the dining-room. They are smoking cigars.*

CHARLES [*Cheerfully.*] Well, Madame Arcati—the time is drawing near.

MADAME ARCATI Who knows? It may be receding!

CHARLES How very true.

DR. BRADMAN I hope you feel in the mood, Madame Arcati.

MADAME ARCATI It isn't a question of mood—it's a question of concentration.

RUTH You must forgive us being impatient. We can perfectly easily wait though, if you're not quite ready to start . . .

MADAME ARCATI Nonsense, my dear, I'm absolutely ready —— [*She rises.*] Heigho, heigho, to work we go!

CHARLES Is there anything you'd like us to do?

MADAME ARCATI Do?

CHARLES Yes—hold hands or anything?

MADAME ARCATI All that will come later—— [*She goes to the window.*] First a few deep, deep breaths of fresh air—— [*Over her shoulder.*] You may talk if you wish, it will not disturb me in the least. [*She flings open the windows wide and inhales deeply and a trifle noisily.*]

RUTH [*With a quizzical glance at* CHARLES.] Oh dear!

CHARLES [*Putting his finger to his lips warningly.*] An excellent dinner, darling—I congratulate you.

RUTH The mousse wasn't quite right.

CHARLES It looked a bit hysterical but it tasted delicious.

MADAME ARCATI That cuckoo is very angry.

CHARLES I beg your pardon?

MADAME ARCATI I said that cuckoo is very angry . . . listen . . . [*They all listen obediently.*]

CHARLES How can you tell?

MADAME ARCATI Timbre . . . No moon—that's as well, I think —there's mist rising from the marshes—— [*A thought strikes her.*] There's no need for me to light my bicycle lamp, is there? I mean, nobody is likely to fall over it?

RUTH No, we're not expecting anybody else.

MADAME ARCATI Good-night, you foolish bird. You have a table?

CHARLES Yes. We thought that one would do.

MADAME ARCATI . [*Closing the window.*] [*She comes over to the table and touches it lightly with her finger.*] I think the one that has the drinks on it would be better.

DR. BRADMAN [*Lifting off the tray.*] Change over.

CHARLES [*To* RUTH.] You told Edith we didn't want to be disturbed?

RUTH Yes, darling.

MADAME ARCATI [*Walking about the room — twisting and untwisting her hands.*] This is a moment I always hate.

RUTH Are you nervous?

MADAME ARCATI Yes. When I was a girl I always used to be sick.

DR. BRADMAN How fortunate that you grew out of it.

RUTH [*Hurriedly.*] Children are always much more prone to be sick than grownups, though, aren't they? I know I could never travel in a train with any degree of safety until I was fourteen.

MADAME ARCATI [*Still walking.*] Little Tommy Tucker sings for his supper, what shall he have but brown bread and butter? I despise that because it doesn't rhyme at all — but Daphne loves it.

DR. BRADMAN Who's Daphne?

RUTH Daphne is Madame Arcati's control—she's a little girl.

DR. BRADMAN Oh, I see—yes, of course.

CHARLES How old is she?

MADAME ARCATI Rising seven when she died.

MRS. BRADMAN And when was that?

MADAME ARCATI February the sixth, 1884.

MRS. BRADMAN Poor little thing.

DR. BRADMAN She must be a bit long in the tooth by now, I should think.

MADAME ARCATI You should think, Dr. Bradman, but I fear you don't—at least, not profoundly enough.

MRS. BRADMAN Do be quiet, George — you'll put Madame Arcati off.

MADAME ARCATI [*Charles brings piano chair down to table.*] Don't worry, my dear—I am quite used to skeptics—they generally turn out to be the most vulnerable and receptive in the long run.

RUTH You'd better take that warning to heart, Dr. Bradman.

DR. BRADMAN Please forgive me, Madame Arcati — I assure you I am most deeply interested.

MADAME ARCATI It is of no consequence—will you all sit round the table please and place your hands downwards on it?

RUTH, MRS. BRADMAN *and* DR. BRADMAN *are seated at table.*

CHARLES What about the lights?

MADAME ARCATI All in good time, Mr. Condomine. [*The four of them sit down at each side of a small square table.* MADAME ARCATI *surveys them critically, her head on one side. She is whistling a little tune.*] The fingers should be touching . . . that's right . . . I presume that that is the gramophone, Mr. Condomine?

CHARLES Yes—would you like me to start it? It's an electric one.

MADAME ARCATI Please stay where you are—I can manage—— [*She goes over to the gramophone and looks over the records.*] Now let me see—what have we here—Brahms—oh dear me, no — Rachmaninoff — too florid — where is the dance music?

RUTH They're the loose ones on the left.

MADAME ARCATI I see. [*She stoops down and produces a pile of dance records—these she sorts rapidly on the piano.*]

CHARLES I'm afraid they're none of them very new.

MADAME ARCATI Daphne is really more attached to Irving Berlin than anybody else—she likes a tune she can hum—ah, here's one—"Always"——

CHARLES [*Half jumping up again.*] "Always"!

RUTH Do sit down, Charles—what is the matter?

CHARLES [*Subsiding.*] Nothing—nothing at all.

MADAME ARCATI The light switch is by the door?

RUTH Yes, all except the small one on the desk, and the gramophone.

MADAME ARCATI Very well—I understand.

RUTH Charles, do keep still.

MRS. BRADMAN Fingers touching, George — remember what Madame Arcati said.

MADAME ARCATI Now there are one or two things I should like to explain, so will you all listen attentively?

RUTH Of course.

MADAME ARCATI Presently, when the music begins, I am going to switch out the lights. I may then either walk about the room for a little or lie down flat —in due course I shall draw up this dear little stool and join you at the table—I shall place myself between you and your wife, Mr. Condomine, and rest my hands lightly upon yours—I must ask you not to address me or move or do anything in the least distracting—is that quite, quite clear?

CHARLES Perfectly.

MADAME ARCATI Of course I cannot guarantee that anything will happen at all—Daphne may be unavailable—she had a head cold very recently, and was rather under the weather, poor child. On the other hand, a great many things might occur—one of you might have an emanation, for instance, or we might contact a poltergeist which would be extremely destructive and noisy . . .

RUTH [*Anxiously.*] In what way destructive?

MADAME ARCATI They throw things, you know.

RUTH No—I didn't know.

MADAME ARCATI But we must cross that bridge when we come to it, mustn't we?

CHARLES Certainly — by all means.

MADAME ARCATI Fortunately an Elemental at this time of the year is most unlikely . . .

RUTH What do Elementals do?

MADAME ARCATI Oh, my dear, one can never tell — they're dreadfully unpredictable—usually they take the form of a very cold wind . . .

MRS. BRADMAN I don't think I shall like that——

MADAME ARCATI Occasionally reaching almost hurricane velocity——

RUTH You don't think it would be a good idea to take the more breakable ornaments off the mantelpiece before we start?

MADAME ARCATI [*Indulgently.*] That really is not necessary, Mrs. Condomine—I assure you I have my own methods of dealing with Elementals.

RUTH I'm so glad.

MADAME ARCATI Now then—are you ready to empty your minds?

DR. BRADMAN Do you mean we're to try to think of nothing?

MADAME ARCATI Absolutely nothing, Dr. Bradman. Concentrate on a space or a nondescript colour that's really the best way . . .

DR. BRADMAN I'll do my damnedest.

MADAME ARCATI Good work! —I will now start the music. [*She goes to the gramophone, puts on the record of "Always", and begins to walk about the room; occasionally she moves into an abortive little dance step, and once, on passing a mirror on the mantelpiece, she surveys herself critically for a moment and adjusts her hair. Then, with sudden speed, she runs across the room and switches off the lights.*]

MRS. BRADMAN Oh dear!

MADAME ARCATI Quiet — please . . . [*Presently in the gloom* MADAME ARCATI, *after wandering about a little, draws up a stool and sits at the table between* CHARLES *and* RUTH. *The gramophone record comes to an end. There is dead silence.*] Is there anyone there? . . . [*A long pause.*] Is there anyone there? [*Another long pause.*] One rap for yes—two raps for no—now then—is there anyone there? . . . [*After a shorter pause the table gives a little bump.*]

MRS. BRADMAN [*Involuntarily.*] Oh!

MADAME ARCATI Shhhh! . . . Is that you, Daphne? [*The table gives a louder bump.*] Is your cold better, dear? [*The table gives two loud bumps very quickly.*] Oh, I'm so sorry—are you doing anything for it? [*The table bumps several times.*] I'm afraid she's rather fretful . . . [*There is a silence.*] Is there anyone there who wishes to speak to anyone here? [*After a pause the table gives one bump.*] Ah! Now we're getting somewhere. No, Daphne, don't do that, dear, you're hurting me . . . Daphne, dear, please . . . Oh, oh, oh! . . . be good, there's a dear child . . . You say there is someone there who wishes to speak to someone here? [*One bump.*] Is it I? [*Two bumps.*] Is it. Dr. Bradman? [*Two bumps.*] Is it Mrs. Bradman? [*Two bumps.*] Is it Mrs. Condomine? [*Several very loud bumps, which continue until* MADAME ARCATI *shouts it down.*]

Stop it! Behave yourself! Is it Mr. Condomine? [*There is a dead silence for a moment, and then a very loud single bump.*] There's someone who wishes to speak to you, Mr. Condomine . . .

CHARLES Tell them to leave a message. [*The table bangs about loudly.*]

MADAME ARCATI I really must ask you not to be flippant, Mr. Condomine . . .

RUTH Charles, how can you be so idiotic? You'll spoil everything.

CHARLES I'm sorry — it slipped out.

MADAME ARCATI Do you know anybody who has passed over recently?

CHARLES Not recently, except my cousin in the Civil Service, and he wouldn't be likely to want to communicate with me—we haven't spoken for years.

MADAME ARCATI [*Mystically.*] Are you Mr. Condomine's cousin in the Civil Service? [*The table bumps violently several times.*] I'm afraid we've drawn a blank . . . Can't you think of anyone else? Rack your brains . . .

RUTH [*Helpfully.*] It might be old Mrs. Plummet, you know—she died on Whit Monday . . .

CHARLES I can't imagine why old Mrs. Plummet should wish to talk to me—we had very little in common.

RUTH It's worth trying, anyhow.

MADAME ARCATI Are you old Mrs. Plummet? [*The table remains still.*]

RUTH She was very deaf—perhaps you'd better shout——

MADAME ARCATI [*Shouting.*] Are you old Mrs. Plummet? [*Nothing happens.*] There's nobody there at all.

MRS. BRADMAN How disappointing—just as we were getting on so nicely.

DR. BRADMAN Violet, be quiet.

MADAME ARCATI [*Rising.*] Well, I'm afraid there's nothing for it but for me to go into a trance. I had hoped to avoid it because it's so exhausting—however, what must be must be. Excuse me a moment while I start the gramophone again.

CHARLES [*In a strained voice.*] Not "Always"—don't play "Always"——

RUTH Why ever not, Charles? Don't be absurd.

MADAME ARCATI [*Gently.*] I'm afraid I must—it would be unwise to change horses in midstream if you know what I mean . . . [*She restarts the gramophone.*]

CHARLES Have it your own way.

MADAME ARCATI *comes slowly back toward the table and sits down again. After a few moments she begins to moan—then in the darkness a child's voice is heard reciting rather breathily "Little Tommy Tucker."*

DR. BRADMAN That would be Daphne—she ought to have had her adenoids out.

MRS. BRADMAN George—please—

MADAME ARCATI *suddenly gives a loud scream and falls off the stool on to the floor.*

CHARLES Good God!

RUTH Keep still, Charles . . . [CHARLES *subsides. Everyone sits in silence for a moment, then the table starts bouncing about.*]

MRS. BRADMAN It's trying to get away . . . I can't hold it . . .

RUTH Press down hard. [*The table falls over with a crash.*]

RUTH There now!

MRS. BRADMAN Ought we to pick it up or leave it where it is?

DR. BRADMAN How the hell do I know?

MRS. BRADMAN There's no need to snap at me.

A perfectly strange and very charming voice says, "Leave it where it is!"

CHARLES Who said that?

RUTH Who said what?

CHARLES Somebody said, "Leave it where it is."

RUTH Nonsense, dear.

CHARLES I heard it distinctly.

RUTH Well, nobody else did—did they?

MRS. BRADMAN I never heard a sound.

CHARLES It was you, Ruth—you're playing tricks.

RUTH I'm not doing anything of the sort. I haven't uttered.

There is another pause, and then the voice says, "Good evening, Charles."

CHARLES [*Very agitated.*] Ventriloquism—that's what it is—ventriloquism . . .

RUTH [*Irritably.*] What is the matter with you?

CHARLES You must have heard *that*—one of you must have heard *that!*

RUTH Heard *what?*

CHARLES You mean to sit there solemnly and tell me that none of you heard anything at all?

DR. BRADMAN I certainly didn't.

MRS. BRADMAN Neither did I—I wish I had. I should love to hear something.

RUTH It's you who are playing the tricks, Charles—you're acting to try to frighten us . . .

CHARLES [*Breathlessly.*] I'm not—I swear I'm not.

The voice speaks again. It says, "It's difficult to think of what

to say after seven years, but I suppose good evening is as good as anything else."

CHARLES [*Intensely.*] Who are you? [*The voice says, "Elvira, of course—don't be so silly."*] I can't bear this for another minute . . . [*He rises violently.*] Get up, everybody — the entertainment's over . . .

RUTH Oh, Charles, how tiresome you are — just as we were beginning to enjoy ourselves. What on earth is the matter with you?

CHARLES Nothing's the matter with me—I'm just sick of the whole business, that's all.

DR. BRADMAN Did you hear anything that we didn't hear really?

CHARLES [*With a forced laugh.*] Of course not—I was only pretending . . .

RUTH I knew you were . . .

MRS. BRADMAN Oh dear . . . look at Madame Arcati!

MADAME ARCATI *is lying on the floor with her feet up on the stool from which she fell. She is obviously quite unconscious.*

RUTH What are we to do with her?

CHARLES Bring her round—bring her round as soon as possible.

DR. BRADMAN [*Going over and kneeling down beside her.*] I think we'd better leave her alone.

RUTH But she might stay like that for hours.

DR. BRADMAN [*After feeling her pulse and examining her eye.*] She's out all right.

CHARLES [*Almost hysterically.*] Bring her round! It's dangerous to leave her like that . . .

RUTH Really, Charles, you are behaving most peculiarly.

CHARLES [*Going to* MADAME ARCATI *and shaking her violently.*] Wake up, Madame Arcati—wake up—it's time to go home!

DR. BRADMAN Here—go easy, old man . . .

CHARLES Get some brandy—give her some brandy—lift her into the chair—help me, Bradman . . . [RUTH *pours out some brandy while* CHARLES *and* DR. BRADMAN *lift* MADAME ARCATI *laboriously into an arm-chair.*] [*Leaning over her.*] Wake up, Madame Arcati—Little Tommy Tucker, Madame Arcati!

RUTH Here's the brandy.

MADAME ARCATI *gives a slight moan and a shiver.*

CHARLES [*Forcing some brandy between her lips.*] Wake up!——

MADAME ARCATI *gives a prolonged shiver and chokes slightly over the brandy.*

MRS. BRADMAN She's coming round.

RUTH Be careful, Charles—you're spilling it all down her dress.

MADAME ARCATI [*Opening her eyes.*] Well, that's that.

RUTH [*Solicitously.*] Are you all right?

MADAME ARCATI Certainly I am—never felt better in my life.

CHARLES Would you like some more brandy?

MADAME ARCATI So that's the funny taste in my mouth—well, really! Fancy allowing them to give me brandy! Doctor Bradman, you ought to have known better—brandy on top of trance might have been catastrophic. Take it away, please—I probably shan't sleep a wink to-night as it is.

CHARLES I know I shan't.

RUTH Why on earth not?

CHARLES The whole experience has unhinged me.

MADAME ARCATI Well, what happened—was it satisfactory?

RUTH Nothing much happened, Madame Arcati, after you went off.

MADAME ARCATI Something happened all right. I can feel it. [*She rises and sniffs.*] No poltergeist, at any rate—that's a good thing. Any apparitions?

DR. BRADMAN Not a thing.

MADAME ARCATI No protoplasm?

RUTH I'm not quite sure what it is, but I don't think so.

MADAME ARCATI Very curious. I feel as though something tremendous had taken place.

RUTH Charles pretended he heard a voice in order to frighten us.

CHARLES It was only a joke.

MADAME ARCATI A very poor one, if I may say so—— [*She walks about a little more.*] Nevertheless, I am prepared to swear that there is someone else psychic in this room apart from myself.

RUTH I don't see how there can be really, Madame Arcati.

MADAME ARCATI I do hope I haven't gone and released something—however, we are bound to find out within a day or two—if any manifestation should occur or you hear any unexpected noises—you might let me know at once.

RUTH Of course we will—we'll telephone immediately.

MADAME ARCATI I think I really must be on my way now.

RUTH Wouldn't you like anything before you go?

MADAME ARCATI No, thank you—I have some Ovaltine all ready in a saucepan at home—it only needs hotting up.

DR. BRADMAN Wouldn't you like to leave your bicycle here and let us drive you?

MRS. BRADMAN I honestly do think you should, Madame Arcati, after that trance and everything—you can't be feeling quite yourself.

MADAME ARCATI Nonsense, my dear, I'm as fit as a fiddle—always feel capital after a trance—rejuvenates me. Good night, Mrs. Condomine.

RUTH It was awfully sweet of you to take so much trouble.

MADAME ARCATI I'm sorry so little occurred—it's that cold of Daphne's, I expect—you know what children are when they have anything wrong with them. We must try again some other evening.

RUTH That would be lovely.

MADAME ARCATI Good night, Mrs. Bradman——

MRS. BRADMAN It was thrilling, it really was—I felt the table absolutely shaking under my hands.

MADAME ARCATI Good night, Doctor.

DR. BRADMAN Congratulations, Madame Arcati.

MADAME ARCATI I am fully aware of the irony in your voice, Doctor Bradman. As a matter of fact you'd be an admirable subject for telepathic hypnosis—a great chum of mine is an expert—I should like her to look you over.

DR. BRADMAN I'm sure I should be charmed.

MADAME ARCATI Good night, everyone—next time we must really put our backs into it! [*With a comprehensive smile and a wave of the hand, she goes out followed by* CHARLES. RUTH *sinks down into a chair, laughing helplessly.*]

RUTH Oh dear! . . . Oh dear! . . .

MRS. BRADMAN [*Beginning to laugh too.*] Be careful, Mrs. Condomine—she might hear you.

RUTH I can't help it—I really can't—I've been holding this in for ages.

MRS. BRADMAN She certainly put you in your place, George, and serves you right.

RUTH She's raving mad, of course—mad as a hatter.

MRS. BRADMAN But do you really think she *believes?*

DR. BRADMAN Of course not—the whole thing's a put-up job—I must say, though, she shoots a more original line than they generally do.

RUTH I should think that she's probably half convinced herself by now.

DR. BRADMAN Possibly—the trance was genuine enough—but that, of course, is easily accounted for.

RUTH Hysteria?

DR. BRADMAN Yes—a form of hysteria, I should imagine.

MRS. BRADMAN I do hope Mr. Condomine got all the atmosphere he wanted for his book.

RUTH He might have got a great deal more if he hadn't spoiled everything by showing off . . . I'm really very cross with him. [*At this moment* ELVIRA *comes in through the closed French windows. She is charmingly dressed in a sort of negligee. Everything about her is grey: hair, skin, dress, hands, so we must accept the fact that she is not quite of this world. She passes between* DR. *and* MRS. BRADMAN *and* RUTH *while they are talking. None of them sees her. She goes upstage and sits soundlessly on a chair. She regards them with interest, a slight smile on her face.*] I suddenly felt a draught—there must be a window open.

DR. BRADMAN [*Looking.*] No—they're shut.

MRS. BRADMAN [*Laughing.*] Perhaps it was one of those what you may call 'ems that Madame Arcati was talking about.

DR. BRADMAN Elementals.

RUTH [*Also laughing again.*] Oh no, it couldn't be—she distinctly said that it was the wrong time of the year for Elementals.

CHARLES *comes in again.*

CHARLES Well, the old girl's gone pedalling off down the drive at the hell of a speed—we had a bit of trouble lighting her lamp.

MRS. BRADMAN Poor thing.

CHARLES I've got a theory about her, you know—I believe she is completely sincere.

RUTH Charles! How could she be?

CHARLES Wouldn't it be possible, Doctor? Some form of self-hypnotism?

DR. BRADMAN It might be . . . as I was explaining to your wife just now, there are certain types of hysterical subjects . . .

MRS. BRADMAN George dear—it's getting terribly late, we really must go home—you have to get up so early in the morning.

DR. BRADMAN You see? The moment I begin to talk about anything that really interests me, my wife interrupts me . . .

MRS. BRADMAN You know I'm right, darling—it's past eleven.

DR. BRADMAN [*To* CHARLES.] I'll do a little reading up on the whole business—just for the fun of it.

CHARLES You must have a drink before you go.

DR. BRADMAN No, really, thank you—Violet's quite right, I'm afraid. I have got to get up abominably early to-morrow—I

have a patient being operated on in Canterbury.

MRS. BRADMAN [*To* RUTH.] It has been a thrilling evening—I shall never forget—it was sweet of you to include us.

DR. BRADMAN Good night, Mrs. Condomine—thank you so much.

CHARLES You're sure about the drink?

DR. BRADMAN Quite sure, thanks.

RUTH We'll let you know if we find any poltergeists whirling about.

DR. BRADMAN I should never forgive you if you didn't.

MRS. BRADMAN Come along, darling . . .

CHARLES *leads the* BRADMANS *out into the hall.* RUTH, *passing close to* ELVIRA, *goes over to the fire and turns over a log with her foot. Then she takes a cigarette and is lighing it as* CHARLES *comes back into the room.*

RUTH Well, darling?

CHARLES [*Absently.*] Well?

RUTH Would you say the evening had been profitable?

CHARLES Yes—I suppose so.

RUTH I must say it was extremely funny at moments.

CHARLES Yes—it certainly was.

RUTH What's the matter?

CHARLES The matter?

RUTH Yes—you seem odd somehow—do you feel quite well?

CHARLES Perfectly. I think I'll have a drink. Do you want one?

RUTH No, thank you, dear.

CHARLES [*Pouring himself out a drink.*] It's rather chilly in this room.

RUTH Come over by the fire.

CHARLES I don't think I'll make any notes to-night—I'll start fresh in the morning. [*He is bringing his drink over to the fire when he sees* ELVIRA.] My God! [*He drops the drink on the floor.* RUTH *jumps up.*]

RUTH Charles!

ELVIRA That was very clumsy, Charles dear.

CHARLES Elvira!—then it's true—it was you!

ELVIRA Of course it was.

RUTH [*Coming to him.*] Charles—darling Charles—what are you talking about?

CHARLES [*To* ELVIRA.] Are you a ghost?

ELVIRA I suppose I must be—it's all very confusing.

RUTH [*Becoming agitated.*] Charles—what do you keep looking over there for? Look at me—what's happened?

CHARLES Don't you see?

RUTH See what?

CHARLES Elvira.

RUTH [*Staring at him incredulously.*] Elvira! !

CHARLES [*With an effort at social grace.*] Yes—Elvira dear, this is Ruth—Ruth, this is Elvira.

RUTH [*With forced calmness.*] Come and sit down, darling.

CHARLES Do you mean to say you can't see her?

RUTH Listen, Charles—you just sit down quietly by the fire and I'll mix you another drink. Don't worry about the mess on the carpet—Edith can clean it up in the morning. [*She takes him by the arm.*]

CHARLES [*Breaking away.*] But you must be able to see her—she's there—look—right in front of you—there——

RUTH Are you mad? What's happened to you?

CHARLES You can't see her?

RUTH If this is a joke, dear, it's gone quite far enough. Sit down for God's sake and don't be idiotic.

CHARLES [*Clutching his head.*] What am I to do—what the hell am I to do!

ELVIRA I think you might at least be a little more pleased to see me—after all, you conjured me up.

CHARLES I didn't do any such thing. I did nothing of the sort.

ELVIRA Nonsense, of course you did. That awful child with the cold came and told me you wanted to see me urgently.

CHARLES It was all a mistake —a horrible mistake.

RUTH Stop talking like that, Charles—as I told you before, the *joke's* gone far enough.

CHARLES [*Aside.*] I've gone mad, that's what it is—I've just gone raving mad.

RUTH [*Going to the table and quickly pouring him out some neat brandy.*] Here—let me get you a drink.

CHARLES [*Mechanically—taking it.*] This is appalling!

RUTH Relax.

CHARLES How can I relax? I shall never be able to relax again as long as I live.

RUTH Drink some brandy.

CHARLES [*Drinking it at a gulp.*] There now—are you satisfied?

RUTH Now sit down.

CHARLES Why are you so anxious for me to sit down—what good will that do?

RUTH I want you to relax—you can't relax standing up.

ELVIRA African natives can—they can stand on one leg for hours.

CHARLES I don't happen to be an African native.

RUTH You don't happen to be a *what?*

CHARLES [*Savagely.*] An African native!

RUTH What's that got to do with it?

CHARLES It doesn't matter, Ruth—really it doesn't matter—we'll say no more about it. [*He sits down.*] See, I've sat down.

RUTH Would you like some more brandy?

CHARLES Yes, please.

ELVIRA Very unwise—you always had a weak head.

CHARLES I could drink you under the table.

RUTH There's no need to be aggressive, Charles—I'm doing my best to help you.

CHARLES I'm sorry.

RUTH [*Bringing him some more brandy.*] Here—drink this—and then we'll go to bed.

ELVIRA Get rid of her, Charles—then we can talk in peace.

CHARLES That's a thoroughly immoral suggestion, you ought to be ashamed of yourself.

RUTH What is there immoral in that?

CHARLES I wasn't talking to you.

RUTH Who were you talking to, then?

CHARLES Elvira, of course.

RUTH To hell with Elvira!

ELVIRA There now—she's getting cross.

CHARLES I don't blame her.

RUTH What don't you blame her for?

CHARLES Oh, God!

RUTH Now look here, Charles—I gather you've got some sort of plan behind all this. I'm not quite a fool. I suspected you when we were doing that idiotic séance.

CHARLES Don't be so silly—what plan could I have?

RUTH I don't know—it's probably something to do with the characters in your book—how they, or one of them would react to a certain situation—I refuse to be used as a guinea pig unless I'm warned beforehand what it's all about.

CHARLES [*Patiently.*] Ruth, Elvira is here—she's standing a few yards away from you.

RUTH [*Sarcastically.*] Yes, dear, I can see her distinctly—under the piano with a horse.

CHARLES But, Ruth . . .

RUTH I am not going to stay here arguing any longer . . .

ELVIRA Hurray!

CHARLES Shut up.

RUTH [*Incensed.*] How dare you speak to me like that!

CHARLES Listen, Ruth—please listen——

RUTH I will not listen to any more of this nonsense—I am going up to bed now. I'll leave you to turn out the lights. I shan't be

asleep—I'm too upset. So you can come in and say good night to me if you feel like it.

ELVIRA That's big of her, I must say.

CHARLES Be quiet—you're behaving like a guttersnipe.

RUTH [*Icily—at door.*] That is all I have to say. Good night, Charles. [RUTH *walks swiftly out of the room without looking at him again.*]

CHARLES Ruth . . .

ELVIRA That was one of the most enjoyable half-hours I have ever spent.

CHARLES Oh, Elvira—how could you!

ELVIRA Poor Ruth.

CHARLES [*Staring at her.*] This is obviously a hallucination, isn't it?

ELVIRA I'm afraid I don't know the technical term for it.

CHARLES [*Rising and walking about the room.*] What am I to do?

ELVIRA What Ruth suggested—relax.

CHARLES Where have you come from?

ELVIRA Do you know, it's very peculiar, but I've sort of forgotten.

CHARLES Are you here to stay indefinitely?

ELVIRA I don't know that either.

CHARLES Oh, my God!

ELVIRA Why, would you hate it so much if I did?

CHARLES Well, you must admit it would be embarrassing.

ELVIRA I don't see why, really—it's all a question of adjusting yourself—anyhow I think it's horrid of you to be so unwelcoming and disagreeable.

CHARLES Now look here, Elvira . . .

ELVIRA [*Near tears.*] I do—I think you're mean.

CHARLES Try to see my point, dear—I've been married to Ruth for five years, and you've been dead for seven . . .

ELVIRA Not dead, Charles—"passed over." It's considered vulgar to say "dead" where I come from.

CHARLES Passed over, then.

ELVIRA At any rate, now that I'm here, the least you can do is to make a pretense of being amiable about it . . .

CHARLES Of course, my dear, I'm delighted in one way . . .

ELVIRA I don't believe you love me any more.

CHARLES I shall always love the memory of you.

ELVIRA [*Rising and walking about.*] You mustn't think me unreasonable, but I really am a little hurt. You called me back—and at great inconvenience I

came—and you've been thoroughly churlish ever since I arrived.

CHARLES [*Gently.*] Believe me, Elvira, I most emphatically did not send for you—there's been some mistake.

ELVIRA [*Irritably.*] Well, somebody did—and that child said it was you—I remember I was playing backgammon with a very sweet old Oriental gentleman—I think his name was Genghis Khan—and I'd just thrown double sixes, and then that child paged me and the next thing I knew I was in this room . . . perhaps it was your subconscious.

CHARLES Well, you must find out whether you are going to stay or not, and we can make arrangements accordingly.

ELVIRA I don't see how I can.

CHARLES Well, try to think—isn't there anyone that you know, that you can get in touch with over there—on the other side, or whatever it's called—who could advise you?

ELVIRA I can't think—it seems so far away—as though I'd dreamed it . . .

CHARLES You must know somebody else beside Genghis Khan.

ELVIRA Oh, Charles . . .

CHARLES What is it?

ELVIRA I want to cry, but I don't think I'm able to . . .

CHARLES What do you want to cry for?

ELVIRA It's seeing you again—and you being so irascible like you always used to be . . .

CHARLES I don't mean to be irascible, Elvira . . .

ELVIRA Darling—I don't mind really—I never did.

CHARLES Is it cold—being a ghost?

ELVIRA No—I don't think so.

CHARLES What happens if I touch you?

ELVIRA I doubt if you can. Do you want to?

CHARLES Oh, Elvira . . . [*He buries his face in his hands.*]

ELVIRA What is it, darling?

CHARLES I really do feel strange, seeing you again . . .

ELVIRA That's better.

CHARLES [*Looking up.*] What's better?

ELVIRA Your voice was kinder.

CHARLES Was I ever unkind to you when you were alive?

ELVIRA Often . . .

CHARLES Oh, how can you! I'm sure that's an exaggeration.

ELVIRA Not at all—you were an absolute pig that time we went to Cornwall and stayed in that awful hotel—you hit me with a billiard cue.

CHARLES Only very, very gently . . .

ELVIRA I loved you very much.

CHARLES I loved you too . . . [*He puts out his hand to her and then draws it away.*] No, I can't touch you—isn't that horrible?

ELVIRA Perhaps it's as well if I'm going to stay for any length of time . . .

CHARLES I feel strangely peaceful—I suppose I shall wake up eventually . . .

ELVIRA Put your head back.

CHARLES [*Doing so.*] Like that?

ELVIRA [*Stroking his hair.*] Can you feel anything . . . ?

CHARLES Only a very little breeze through my hair. . . .

ELVIRA Well, that's better than nothing.

CHARLES [*Drowsily.*] I suppose if I'm really out of my mind they'll put me in an asylum.

ELVIRA Don't worry about that—just relax——

CHARLES [*Very drowsily indeed.*] Poor Ruth . . .

ELVIRA [*Gently and sweetly.*] To hell with Ruth.

The curtain falls.

Blithe Spirit ACT TWO Scene 1

It is about nine-thirty the next morning. The sun is pouring in through the open French windows.

RUTH *is sitting at the breakfast table, drinking coffee and reading the* Times. *After a few moments* CHARLES *comes in. He kisses her.*

CHARLES Good morning, darling.

RUTH [*With a certain stiffness.*] Good morning, Charles.

CHARLES [*Going to the open window and taking a deep breath.*] It certainly is.

RUTH What certainly is what?

CHARLES A good morning—a tremendously good morning—there isn't a cloud in the sky and everything looks newly washed.

RUTH [*Turning a page of the* Times.] Edith's keeping your breakfast hot—you'd better ring.

CHARLES [*Pressing the bell by the fireplace.*] Anything interesting in the *Times*?

RUTH Don't be silly, Charles.

CHARLES [*Coming to the table.*] I intend to work all day.

RUTH Good.

CHARLES It's extraordinary about daylight, isn't it?

RUTH How do you mean?

CHARLES The way it reduces everything to normal.

RUTH Does it?

CHARLES [*Sits. Firmly.*] Yes—it does.

RUTH I'm sure I'm very glad to hear it.

CHARLES You're very glacial this morning.

RUTH Are you surprised?

CHARLES Frankly—yes. I expected more of *you.*

RUTH Well, really!

CHARLES I've always looked upon you as a woman of perception and understanding.

RUTH Perhaps this is one of my off days.

EDITH *comes in with some bacon and eggs and toast.*

CHARLES [*Cheerfully.*] Good morning, Edith.

EDITH Good morning, sir.

CHARLES Feeling fit?

EDITH Yes, sir—thank you, sir.

CHARLES How's cook?

EDITH I don't know, sir—I haven't asked her.

CHARLES You should. You should begin every day by asking everyone how they are—it oils the wheels.

EDITH Yes, sir.

CHARLES Greet her for me, will you?

EDITH Yes, sir.

RUTH That will be all for the moment, Edith.

EDITH Yes'm. [EDITH *goes out.*]

RUTH I wish you wouldn't be facetious with the servants, Charles—it confuses them and undermines their morale.

CHARLES I consider that point of view retrogressive, if not downright feudal.

RUTH I don't care what you consider it, I have to run the house and you don't.

CHARLES Are you implying that I couldn't?

RUTH You're at liberty to try.

CHARLES I take back what I said about it being a good morning—it's a dreadful morning.

RUTH You'd better eat your breakfast while it's hot.

CHARLES It isn't.

RUTH [*Putting down the* Times.] Now look here, Charles—in your younger days this display of roguish flippancy might have been alluring—in a middle-aged novelist it's nauseating.

CHARLES Would you like me to writhe at your feet in a frenzy of self-abasement?

RUTH That would be equally nauseating but certainly more appropriate.

CHARLES I really don't see

what I've done that's so awful.

RUTH You behaved abominably last night. You wounded me and insulted me.

CHARLES I was the victim of an aberration.

RUTH Nonsense—you were drunk.

CHARLES Drunk?

RUTH You had four strong dry Martinis before dinner—a great deal too much burgundy at dinner—heaven knows how much port and kümmel with Doctor Bradman while I was doing my best to entertain that madwoman—and then two double brandies later—I gave them to you myself—of course you were drunk.

CHARLES So that's your story, is it?

RUTH You refused to come to bed and finally when I came down at three in the morning to see what had happened to you I found you in an alcoholic coma on the sofa with the fire out and your hair all over your face.

CHARLES I was not in the least drunk, Ruth. Something happened to me—you really must believe that—something very peculiar happened to me.

RUTH Nonsense.

CHARLES It isn't nonsense—I know it looks like nonsense now in the clear, remorseless light of day, but last night it was far from being nonsense—I honestly had some sort of hallucination——

RUTH I would really rather not discuss it any further.

CHARLES But you must discuss it—it's very disturbing.

RUTH There I agree with you. It showed you up in a most unpleasant light—I find that extremely disturbing.

CHARLES I swear to you that during the séance I was convinced that I heard Elvira's voice——

RUTH Nobody else did.

CHARLES I can't help that—I did.

RUTH You couldn't have.

CHARLES And later on I was equally convinced that she was in this room—I saw her distinctly and talked to her. After you'd gone up to bed we had quite a cosy little chat.

RUTH And you seriously expect me to believe that you weren't drunk?

CHARLES I *know* I wasn't drunk. If I'd been all that drunk I should have a dreadful hangover now, shouldn't I?

RUTH I'm not at all sure that you haven't.

CHARLES I haven't got a trace of a headache—my tongue's not

coated—look at it. [*He puts out his tongue.*]

RUTH I've not the least desire to look at your tongue; kindly put it in again.

CHARLES I know what it is—you're frightened.

RUTH Frightened? Rubbish! What is there to be frightened of?

CHARLES Elvira. You wouldn't have minded all that much even if I had been drunk—it's only because it was all mixed up with Elvira.

RUTH I seem to remember last night before dinner telling you that your views of female psychology were rather didactic. I was right. I should have added that they were puerile.

CHARLES That was when it all began.

RUTH When what all began?

CHARLES We were talking too much about Elvira—it's dangerous to have somebody very strongly in your mind when you start dabbling with the occult.

RUTH She certainly wasn't strongly in my mind.

CHARLES She was in mine.

RUTH Oh, she was, was she?

CHARLES You tried to make me say that she was more physically attractive than you, so that you could hold it over me.

RUTH I did not. I don't give a hoot how physically attractive she was.

CHARLES Oh yes, you do—your whole being is devoured with jealousy.

RUTH [*Rises and starts to clear table.*] This is *too* much!

CHARLES Women! My God, what I think of women!

RUTH Your view of women is academic to say the least of it—just because you've always been dominated by them it doesn't necessarily follow that you know anything about them.

CHARLES I've never been dominated by anyone.

RUTH You were hag-ridden by your mother until you were twenty-three—then you got into the clutches of that awful Mrs. Whatever-her-name-was——

CHARLES Mrs. Winthrop-Lewellyn.

RUTH I'm not interested. Then there was Elvira—she ruled you with a rod of iron.

CHARLES Elvira never ruled anyone, she was much too elusive—that was one of her greatest charms. [*Sits.*]

RUTH Then there was Maud Charteris——

CHARLES My affair with Maud Charteris lasted exactly seven and a half weeks and she cried all the time.

RUTH The tyranny of tears! Then there was——

CHARLES If you wish to make an inventory of my sex life, dear, I think it only fair to tell you that you've missed out several episodes— I'll consult my diary and give you the complete list after lunch.

RUTH It's no use trying to impress me with your routine amorous exploits——

CHARLES The only woman in my whole life who's ever attempted to dominate me is you— you've been at it for years.

RUTH That is completely untrue.

CHARLES Oh no, it isn't. You boss me and bully me and order me about—you won't even allow me to have an hallucination if I want to.

RUTH Alcohol will ruin your whole life if you allow it to get a hold on you, you know.

CHARLES Once and for all, Ruth, I would like you to understand that what happened last night was nothing whatever to do with alcohol. You've very adroitly rationalized the whole affair to your own satisfaction, but your deductions are based on complete fallacy. I am willing to grant you that it was an aberration, some sort of odd psychic delusion brought on by suggestion or hypnosis. I was stone cold sober from first to last and extremely upset into the bargain.

RUTH *You* were upset indeed! What about me?

CHARLES You behaved with a stolid, obtuse lack of comprehension that frankly shocked me!

RUTH I consider that I was remarkably patient. I shall know better next time.

CHARLES Instead of putting out a gentle, comradely hand to guide me you shouted staccato orders at me like a sergeant-major.

RUTH You seem to forget that you gratuitously insulted me.

CHARLES I did not.

RUTH You called me a gutter-snipe—you told me to shut up—and when I quietly suggested that we should go up to bed you said, with the most disgusting leer, that it was an immoral suggestion.

CHARLES [*Exasperated.*] I was talking to Elvira!

RUTH If you were I can only say that it conjures up a fragrant picture of your first marriage.

CHARLES My first marriage was perfectly charming and I think it's in the worst possible taste for you to sneer at it.

RUTH I am not nearly so interested in your first marriage as you think I am. It's your second

marriage that is absorbing me at the moment—it seems to me to be on the rocks.

CHARLES Only because you persist in taking up this ridiculous attitude.

RUTH My attitude is that of any normal woman whose husband gets drunk and hurls abuse at her.

CHARLES [*Shouting.*] I was not drunk!

RUTH Be quiet, they'll hear you in the kitchen.

CHARLES I don't care if they hear me in the Folkestone Town Hall—I was not drunk!

RUTH Control yourself, Charles.

CHARLES How can I control myself in the face of your idiotic damned stubbornness? It's giving me claustrophobia.

RUTH [*Quietly.*] You'd better ring up Doctor Bradman.

EDITH *comes in with a tray to clear away the breakfast things.*

EDITH Can I clear, please'm?

RUTH Yes, Edith.

EDITH Cook wants to know about lunch, mum.

RUTH [*Coldly.*] Will you be in to lunch, Charles?

CHARLES Please don't worry about me—I shall be perfectly happy with a bottle of gin in my bedroom.

RUTH Don't be silly, dear. [*To* EDITH.] Tell cook we shall both be in.

EDITH Yes'm.

RUTH [*Conversationally—after a long pause.*] I'm going into Hythe this morning—is there anything you want?

CHARLES Yes—a great deal—but I doubt if you could get it in Hythe.

RUTH Tell cook to put Alka-Seltzer down on my list, will you, Edith?

EDITH Yes'm.

RUTH [*At the window—after another long pause.*] It's clouding over.

CHARLES You have a genius for understatement. [*In silence, but breathing heavily,* EDITH *staggers out with the tray.*]

RUTH [*As she goes.*] Don't worry about the table, Edith—I'll put it away.

EDITH Yes'm.

When EDITH *has gone* CHARLES *goes over to* RUTH.

CHARLES Please, Ruth—be reasonable.

RUTH I'm perfectly reasonable.

CHARLES I wasn't pretending—I really did believe that I saw Elvira and when I heard her voice I was appalled.

RUTH You put up with it for five years. [*Puts chair by gramophone.*]

CHARLES [*Puts table in hall.*] Naturally when I saw her I had the shock of my life—that's why I dropped the glass.

RUTH But you *couldn't* have seen her.

CHARLES I know I couldn't have but I *did!*

RUTH I'm willing to concede then that you imagined you did.

CHARLES That's what I've been trying to explain to you for hours.

RUTH Well, then, there's obviously something wrong with you.

CHARLES Exactly—there is something wrong with me—something fundamentally wrong with me—that's why I've been imploring your sympathy and all I got was a sterile temperance lecture.

RUTH You had been drinking, Charles—there's no denying that.

CHARLES No more than usual.

RUTH Well, how do you account for it then?

CHARLES [*Frantically.*] I can't account for it—that's what's so awful.

RUTH [*Practically.*] Did you feel quite well yesterday—during the day, I mean?

CHARLES Of course I did.

RUTH What did you have for lunch?

CHARLES You ought to know, you had it with me.

RUTH [*Thinking.*] Let me see now, there was lemon sole and that cheese thing——

CHARLES Why should having a cheese thing for lunch make me see my deceased wife after dinner?

RUTH You never know—it was rather rich.

CHARLES Why didn't you see your dead husband then? You had just as much of it as I did.

RUTH This is not getting us anywhere at all.

CHARLES Of course it isn't, and it won't as long as you insist on ascribing supernatural phenomena to colonic irritation.

RUTH Supernatural grandmother!

CHARLES I admit she'd have been much less agitating.

RUTH [*Sits.*] Perhaps you ought to see a nerve specialist.

CHARLES I am not in the least neurotic and never have been.

RUTH A psychoanalyst then.

CHARLES I refuse to endure months of expensive humiliation only to be told at the end of it that at the age of four I was in love with my rocking horse.

RUTH What do you suggest then?

CHARLES I don't suggest anything—I'm profoundly uneasy.

RUTH Perhaps there's something pressing on your brain.

CHARLES If there were something pressing on my brain I should have violent headaches, shouldn't I?

RUTH Not necessarily. An uncle of mine had a lump the size of a cricket ball pressing on his brain for years and he never felt a thing.

CHARLES [*Rises.*] I know I should know if I had anything like that.

RUTH He didn't.

CHARLES What happened to him?

RUTH He had it taken out and he's been as bright as a button ever since.

CHARLES Did he have any sort of delusions—did he think he saw things that weren't there?

RUTH No, I don't think so.

CHARLES Well, what the hell are we talking about him for then? It's sheer waste of valuable time.

RUTH I only brought him up as an example.

CHARLES I think I'm going mad.

RUTH How do you feel now?

CHARLES Physically do you mean?

RUTH Altogether.

CHARLES [*After due reflection.*] Apart from being worried I feel quite normal.

RUTH Good. You're not hearing or seeing anything in the least unusual?

CHARLES Not a thing.

At this moment ELVIRA *comes in from the garden, carrying an armful of roses. The roses are as grey as the rest of her.*

ELVIRA You've absolutely ruined that border by the sundial—it looks like a mixed salad.

CHARLES O my God!

RUTH What's the matter now?

CHARLES She's here again!

RUTH What do you mean? Who's here again?

CHARLES Elvira.

RUTH Pull yourself together and don't be absurd.

ELVIRA It's all those nasturtiums—they're so vulgar.

CHARLES I like nasturtiums.

RUTH You like what?

ELVIRA [*Putting her grey roses into a vase.*] They're all right in moderation but in a mass like that they look beastly.

CHARLES Help me, Ruth—you've got to help me——

RUTH [*Rises.*] What did you mean about nasturtiums?

CHARLES Never mind about that now—I tell you she's here again.

ELVIRA You have been having

a nice scene, haven't you? I could hear you right down the garden.

CHARLES Please mind your own business.

RUTH If your behaving like a lunatic isn't my business nothing is.

ELVIRA I expect it was about me, wasn't it? I know I ought to feel sorry but I'm not—I'm delighted.

CHARLES How can you be so inconsiderate?

RUTH [*Shrilly.*] Inconsiderate! —I like that, I must say——

CHARLES Ruth—darling—please . . .

RUTH I've done everything I can to help—I've controlled myself admirably—and I should like to say here and now that I don't believe a word about your damned hallucinations—you're up to something, Charles—there's been a certain furtiveness in your manner for weeks—— Why don't you be honest and tell me what it is?

CHARLES You're wrong—you're dead wrong—I haven't been in the least furtive—I——

RUTH You're trying to upset me—for some obscure reason you're trying to goad me into doing something that I might regret—I won't stand for it any more—— You're making me utterly miserable—— [*She bursts into tears and collapses on sofa.*]

CHARLES Ruth—please—— [*Sits on sofa beside* RUTH.]

RUTH Don't come near me——

ELVIRA Let her have a nice cry—it'll do her good.

CHARLES You're utterly heartless!

RUTH Heartless!

CHARLES [*Wildly.*] I was not talking to you—I was talking to Elvira.

RUTH Go on talking to her then, talk to her until you're blue in the face but don't talk to me——

CHARLES Help me, Elvira——

ELVIRA How?

CHARLES Make her see you or something.

ELVIRA I'm afraid I couldn't manage that—it's technically the most difficult business—frightfully complicated, you know—it takes years of study——

CHARLES You are here, aren't you? You're not an illusion?

ELVIRA I may be an illusion but I'm most definitely here.

CHARLES How did you get here?

ELVIRA I told you last night —I don't exactly know——

CHARLES Well, you must make me a promise that in fu-

ture you only come and talk to me when I'm alone——

ELVIRA [*Pouting.*] How unkind you are—making me feel so unwanted—I've never been treated so rudely——

CHARLES I don't mean to be rude, but you must see——

ELVIRA It's all your own fault for having married a woman who is incapable of seeing beyond the nose on her face—if she had a grain of real sympathy or affection for you she'd believe what you tell her.

CHARLES How could you expect anybody to believe this?

ELVIRA You'd be surprised how gullible people are—we often laugh about it on the other side.

RUTH, *who has stopped crying and been staring at* CHARLES *in horror, suddenly gets up.*

RUTH [*Gently.*] Charles——

CHARLES [*Surprised at her tone.*] Yes, dear——

RUTH I'm awfully sorry I was cross——

CHARLES But, my dear——

RUTH I understand everything now, I do really——

CHARLES You do?

RUTH [*Patting his arm reassuringly.*] Of course I do.

ELVIRA Look out—she's up to something——

CHARLES Will you please be quiet?

RUTH Of course, darling—we'll all be quiet, won't we? We'll be as quiet as little mice.

CHARLES Ruth dear, listen——

RUTH I want you to come upstairs with me and go to bed——

ELVIRA The way that woman harps on bed is nothing short of erotic.

CHARLES I'll deal with you later——

RUTH Whenever you like, darling. Come along.

CHARLES Ruth dear—I'd really rather not go to bed in the middle of the morning——

ELVIRA How you've changed, darling!

CHARLES Don't be disgusting.

RUTH [*Sweetly.*] I'm sorry, dear—I didn't mean to be.

CHARLES What are you up to?

RUTH I'm not up to anything—I just want you to go quietly to bed and wait there until Doctor Bradman comes——

CHARLES No, Ruth—you're wrong——

RUTH [*Firmly.*] Come, dear——

ELVIRA She'll have you in a strait jacket before you know where you are.

CHARLES [*Frantically.*] Help me—you must help me——

ELVIRA [*Enjoying herself.*] My dear, I would with pleasure, but I can't think how——

CHARLES I can—listen, Ruth——

RUTH Yes, dear?

CHARLES If I promise to go to bed will you let me stay here for five minutes longer?

RUTH I really think it would be better——

CHARLES Bear with me—however mad it may seem—bear with me for just five minutes longer——

RUTH [*Letting go of him.*] Very well—what is it?

CHARLES Sit down then.

RUTH [*Sitting down.*] All right—there.

CHARLES Now listen—listen carefully——

ELVIRA Have a cigarette, it will soothe your nerves.

CHARLES I don't want a cigarette.

RUTH [*Indulgently.*] Then you shan't have one, darling.

CHARLES Ruth, I want to explain to you clearly and without emotion that beyond any shadow of doubt the ghost or shade or whatever you like to call it of my first wife Elvira is in this room now.

RUTH Yes, dear.

CHARLES I know you don't believe it and are trying valiantly to humour me but I intend to prove it to you.

RUTH Why not lie down and have a nice rest and you can prove anything you want to later on?

CHARLES She may not be here later on.

ELVIRA Don't worry—she will!

CHARLES O God!

RUTH Hush, dear.

CHARLES [*To* ELVIRA.] Promise you'll do what I ask?

ELVIRA That all depends what it is.

CHARLES Ruth—you see that bowl of flowers on the piano?

RUTH Yes, dear—I did it myself this morning.

ELVIRA Very untidily if I may say so.

CHARLES You may not.

RUTH Very well—I never will again—I promise.

CHARLES Elvira will now carry that bowl of flowers to the mantelpiece and back again. You will, Elvira, won't you—just to please me?

ELVIRA I don't really see why I should—you've been quite insufferable to me ever since I materialized.

CHARLES Please.

ELVIRA All right, I will just

this once—not that I approve of all these Herman The Great carryings on. [*She goes over to the piano.*]

CHARLES Now, Ruth—watch carefully.

RUTH [*Patiently.*] Very well, dear.

CHARLES Go on, Elvira—bring it to the mantelpiece and back again.

ELVIRA *does so, taking obvious pleasure in doing it in a very roundabout way. At one moment she brings it up to within an inch of* RUTH'S *face.* RUTH *shrinks back with a scream and then jumps to her feet.*

RUTH [*Furiously.*] How dare you, Charles! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!

CHARLES What on earth for?

RUTH [*Hysterically.*] It's a trick—I know perfectly well it's a trick—you've been working up to this—it's all part of some horrible plan——

CHARLES It isn't—I swear it isn't—Elvira—do something else for God's sake——

ELVIRA Certainly—anything to oblige.

RUTH [*Becoming really frightened.*] You want to get rid of me—you're trying to drive me out of my mind——

CHARLES Don't be so silly.

RUTH You're cruel and sadistic and I'll never forgive you—— [ELVIRA *lifts up a light chair and waltzes solemnly round the room with it, then she puts it down with a bang. Making a dive for the door.*] I'm not going to put up with this any more.

CHARLES [*Holding her.*] You must believe it—you must——

RUTH Let me go immediately——

CHARLES That was Elvira—I swear it was——

RUTH [*Struggling.*] Let me go——

CHARLES Ruth—please——

RUTH *breaks away from him and runs towards the windows.* ELVIRA *gets there just before her and shuts them in her face.* RUTH *starts back, appalled.*

RUTH [*Looking at* CHARLES *with eyes of horror.*] Charles—this is madness—sheer madness! It's some sort of auto-suggestion, isn't it—some form of hypnotism, swear to me it's only that? Swear to me it's only that.

ELVIRA [*Taking an expensive vase from the mantelpiece and crashing it into the grate.*] Hypnotism my foot!

RUTH *gives a scream and goes into violent hysterics as the curtain falls.*

CHARLES [*Frantically.*] Help me—you must help me——

ELVIRA [*Enjoying herself.*] My dear, I would with pleasure, but I can't think how——

CHARLES I can—listen, Ruth——

RUTH Yes, dear?

CHARLES If I promise to go to bed will you let me stay here for five minutes longer?

RUTH I really think it would be better——

CHARLES Bear with me—however mad it may seem—bear with me for just five minutes longer——

RUTH [*Letting go of him.*] Very well—what is it?

CHARLES Sit down then.

RUTH [*Sitting down.*] All right—there.

CHARLES Now listen—listen carefully——

ELVIRA Have a cigarette, it will soothe your nerves.

CHARLES I don't want a cigarette.

RUTH [*Indulgently.*] Then you shan't have one, darling.

CHARLES Ruth, I want to explain to you clearly and without emotion that beyond any shadow of doubt the ghost or shade or whatever you like to call it of my first wife Elvira is in this room now.

RUTH Yes, dear.

CHARLES I know you don't believe it and are trying valiantly to humour me but I intend to prove it to you.

RUTH Why not lie down and have a nice rest and you can prove anything you want to later on?

CHARLES She may not be here later on.

ELVIRA Don't worry—she will!

CHARLES O God!

RUTH Hush, dear.

CHARLES [*To* ELVIRA.] Promise you'll do what I ask?

ELVIRA That all depends what it is.

CHARLES Ruth—you see that bowl of flowers on the piano?

RUTH Yes, dear—I did it myself this morning.

ELVIRA Very untidily if I may say so.

CHARLES You may not.

RUTH Very well—I never will again—I promise.

CHARLES Elvira will now carry that bowl of flowers to the mantelpiece and back again. You will, Elvira, won't you—just to please me?

ELVIRA I don't really see why I should—you've been quite insufferable to me ever since I materialized.

CHARLES Please.

ELVIRA All right, I will just

this once—not that I approve of all these Herman The Great carryings on. [*She goes over to the piano.*]

CHARLES Now, Ruth—watch carefully.

RUTH [*Patiently.*] Very well, dear.

CHARLES Go on, Elvira—bring it to the mantelpiece and back again.

ELVIRA *does so, taking obvious pleasure in doing it in a very roundabout way. At one moment she brings it up to within an inch of* RUTH'S *face.* RUTH *shrinks back with a scream and then jumps to her feet.*

RUTH [*Furiously.*] How dare you, Charles! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!

CHARLES What on earth for?

RUTH [*Hysterically.*] It's a trick—I know perfectly well it's a trick—you've been working up to this—it's all part of some horrible plan——

CHARLES It isn't—I swear it isn't—Elvira—do something else for God's sake——

ELVIRA Certainly—anything to oblige.

RUTH [*Becoming really frightened.*] You want to get rid of me—you're trying to drive me out of my mind——

CHARLES Don't be so silly.

RUTH You're cruel and sadistic and I'll never forgive you—— [ELVIRA *lifts up a light chair and waltzes solemnly round the room with it, then she puts it down with a bang. Making a dive for the door.*] I'm not going to put up with this any more.

CHARLES [*Holding her.*] You must believe it—you must——

RUTH Let me go immediately——

CHARLES That was Elvira—I swear it was——

RUTH [*Struggling.*] Let me go——

CHARLES Ruth—please——

RUTH *breaks away from him and runs towards the windows.* ELVIRA *gets there just before her and shuts them in her face.* RUTH *starts back, appalled.*

RUTH [*Looking at* CHARLES *with eyes of horror.*] Charles—this is madness—sheer madness! It's some sort of auto-suggestion, isn't it—some form of hypnotism, swear to me it's only that? Swear to me it's only that.

ELVIRA [*Taking an expensive vase from the mantelpiece and crashing it into the grate.*] Hypnotism my foot!

RUTH *gives a scream and goes into violent hysterics as the curtain falls.*

Scene 2

The time is late on the following afternoon.
When the curtain rises RUTH *is sitting alone at the tea table, which is set in front of the fire. After a moment or two she gets up and, frowning thoughtfully, goes over to the piano and takes a cigarette out of a box. As she returns to the table the front doorbell rings. She hears it and straightens herself as though preparing for a difficult interview.*
EDITH *enters.*

EDITH Madame Arcati.
EDITH *steps aside and* MADAME ARCATI *comes in.* EDITH *goes out.* MADAME ARCATI *is wearing a tweed coat and skirt and a great many amber beads and, possibly, a beret.*
MADAME ARCATI My dear Mrs. Condomine, I came directly I got your message.
RUTH That was very kind of you.
MADAME ARCATI [*Briskly.*] Kind? Nonsense! Nothing kind about it—I look upon it as an outing.
RUTH I'm so glad—will you have some tea?
MADAME ARCATI China or Indian?
RUTH China.
MADAME ARCATI Good. I never touch Indian, it upsets my vibrations.
RUTH Do sit down.
MADAME ARCATI [*Turning her head and sniffing.*] I find this room very interesting—very interesting indeed. I noticed it the other night.
RUTH I'm not entirely surprised. [*She proceeds to pour out tea.*]
MADAME ARCATI [*Sitting down and pulling off her gloves.*] Have you ever been to Cowden Manor?
RUTH No, I'm afraid I haven't.
MADAME ARCATI That's very interesting too—strikes you like a blow between the eyes the moment you walk into the drawing-room. Two lumps of sugar, please, and no milk at all.
RUTH I am profoundly disturbed, Madame Arcati, and I want your help.

MADAME ARCATI Aha! I thought as much. What's in these sandwiches?

RUTH Cucumber.

MADAME ARCATI Couldn't be better. [*She takes one.*] Fire away.

RUTH It's most awfully difficult to explain.

MADAME ARCATI Facts first—explanations afterwards.

RUTH It's the facts that are difficult to explain—they're so fantastic.

MADAME ARCATI Facts very often are. Take creative talent for instance, how do you account for that? Look at Shakespeare and Michaelangelo! Try to explain Mozart snatching sounds out of the air and putting them down on paper when he was practically a baby—facts—plain facts. I know it's the fashion nowadays to ascribe it all to glands but my reply to that is fiddlededee.

RUTH Yes, I'm sure you're quite right.

MADAME ARCATI There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Mrs. Condomine.

RUTH There certainly are.

MADAME ARCATI Come now—take the plunge—out with it. You've heard strange noises in the night no doubt—boards creaking—doors slamming—subdued moaning in the passages—is that it?

RUTH No—I'm afraid it isn't.

MADAME ARCATI No sudden gusts of cold wind, I hope?

RUTH No, it's worse than that.

MADAME ARCATI I'm all attention.

RUTH [*With an effort.*] I know it sounds idiotic but the other night—during the séance—something happened——

MADAME ARCATI I knew it! Probably a poltergeist, they're enormously cunning, you know, they sometimes lie doggo for days——

RUTH You know that my husband was married before?

MADAME ARCATI Yes—I have heard it mentioned.

RUTH His first wife, Elvira, died comparatively young——

MADAME ARCATI [*Sharply.*] Where?

RUTH Here—in this house—in this very room.

MADAME ARCATI [*Whistling.*] Whew! I'm beginning to see daylight!

RUTH She was convalescing after pneumonia and one evening she started to laugh helplessly at one of the B.B.C. musical programmes and died of a heart attack.

MADAME ARCATI And she materialized the other evening—after I had gone?

RUTH Not to me, but to my husband.

MADAME ARCATI [*Rising impulsively.*] Capital—capital! Oh, but that's splendid!

RUTH [*Coldly.*] From your own professional standpoint I can see that it might be regarded as a major achievement!

MADAME ARCATI [*Delighted.*] A triumph, my dear! Nothing more nor less than a triumph!

RUTH But from my own personal point of view you must see that, to say the least of it, it's embarrassing.

MADAME ARCATI [*Walking about the room.*] At last—at last—a genuine materialization!

RUTH Please sit down again, Madame Arcati.

MADAME ARCATI How could anyone sit down at a moment like this? It's tremendous! I haven't had such a success since the Sudbury case.

RUTH [*Sharply.*] Nevertheless I must insist upon you sitting down and controlling your natural exuberance. I appreciate fully your pride in your achievement but I would like to point out that it has made my position in this house untenable and that I hold you entirely responsible.

MADAME ARCATI [*Contrite.*] Forgive me, Mrs. Condomine—I am being abominably selfish—— [*She sits down.*] How can I help you?

RUTH How? By sending her back immediately to where she came from, of course.

MADAME ARCATI I'm afraid that that is easier said than done.

RUTH Do you mean to tell me that she is liable to stay here indefinitely?

MADAME ARCATI It's difficult to say—I fear it depends largely on her.

RUTH But my dear Madame Arcati——

MADAME ARCATI Where is she now?

RUTH My husband has driven her into Folkestone—apparently she was anxious to see an old friend of hers who is staying at the Grand.

MADAME ARCATI [*Producing a notebook.*] Forgive this formality, but I shall have to make a report to the Psychical Research people——

RUTH I would be very much obliged if there were no names mentioned.

MADAME ARCATI The report will be confidential.

RUTH This is a small village you know and gossip would be most undesirable.

MADAME ARCATI I quite understand. You say she is visible only to your husband?

RUTH Yes.

MADAME ARCATI "Visible only to husband." Audible too I presume?

RUTH Extremely audible.

MADAME ARCATI "Extremely audible." Your husband was devoted to her?

RUTH [*With slight irritation.*] I believe so——

MADAME ARCATI "Husband devoted."

RUTH It was apparently a reasonably happy marriage——

MADAME ARCATI Tut, tut, Mrs. Condomine.

RUTH I beg your pardon?

MADAME ARCATI When did she pass over?

RUTH Seven years ago.

MADAME ARCATI Aha! That means she must have been on the waiting list.

RUTH Waiting list?

MADAME ARCATI Yes, otherwise she would have got beyond the materialization stage by now. She must have marked herself down for a return visit and she'd never have been able to manage it unless there were a strong influence at work.

RUTH Do you mean that Charles—my husband—wanted her back all that much?

MADAME ARCATI Possibly, or it might have been her own determination——

RUTH That sounds much more likely.

MADAME ARCATI Would you say that she was a woman of strong character?

RUTH [*With rising annoyance.*] I really don't know, Madame Arcati. I never met her. Nor am I particularly interested in how and why she got here. I am solely concerned with the question of how to get her away again as soon as possible.

MADAME ARCATI I fully sympathize with you, Mrs. Condomine, and I assure you I will do anything in my power to help—but at the moment I fear I cannot offer any great hopes.

RUTH But I always understood that there was a way of exorcising ghosts—some sort of ritual?

MADAME ARCATI You mean the old Bell and Book method?

RUTH Yes—I suppose I do.

MADAME ARCATI Poppycock, Mrs. Condomine. It was quite effective in the days of genuine religious belief but that's all changed now. I believe the decline of faith in the Spirit World has been causing grave concern.

RUTH [*Impatiently.*] Has it indeed?

MADAME ARCATI There was a time of course when a drop of holy water could send even a poltergeist scampering for cover, but not any more—*"Où sont les neiges d'Antan?"*

RUTH Be that as it may, Madame Arcati, I must beg of you to do your utmost to dematerialize my husband's first wife as soon as possible.

MADAME ARCATI The time has come for me to admit to you frankly, Mrs. Condomine, that I haven't the faintest idea how to set about it.

RUTH [*Rises.*] Do you mean to sit there and tell me that having mischievously conjured up this ghost or spirit or whatever she is and placed me in a hideous position you are unable to do anything about it at all?

MADAME ARCATI Honesty is the best policy.

RUTH But it's outrageous! I ought to hand you over to the police.

MADAME ARCATI [*Rising.*] You go too far, Mrs. Condomine.

RUTH [*Furiously.*] I go too far indeed? Do you realize what your insane amateur muddling has done?

MADAME ARCATI I have been a professional since I was a child, Mrs. Condomine—"Amateur" is a word I cannot tolerate.

RUTH It seems to me to be the height of amateurishness to evoke malignant spirits and not be able to get rid of them again.

MADAME ARCATI [*With dignity.*] I was in a trance. Anything might happen when I am in a trance.

RUTH Well, all I can suggest is that you go into another one immediately and get this damned woman out of my house.

MADAME ARCATI I can't go into trances at a moment's notice —it takes hours of preparation— in addition to which I have to be extremely careful of my diet for days beforehand. To-day, for instance, I happened to lunch with friends and had pigeon pie which, plus these cucumber sandwiches, would make a trance out of the question.

RUTH Well, you'll have to do something.

MADAME ARCATI I will report the whole matter to the Society for Psychical Research at the earliest possible moment.

RUTH Will they be able to do anything?

MADAME ARCATI I doubt it. They'd send an investigating committee, I expect, and do a lot of questioning and wall tapping and mumbo jumbo and then they'd have a conference and you

would probably have to go up to London to testify——

RUTH [*Near tears.*] It's too humiliating—it really is.

MADAME ARCATI Please try not to upset yourself—nothing can be achieved by upsetting yourself.

RUTH It's all very fine for you to talk like that, Madame Arcati —you don't seem to have the faintest realization of my position.

MADAME ARCATI Try to look on the bright side.

RUTH Bright side indeed! If your husband's first wife suddenly appeared from the grave and came to live in the house with you, do you suppose you'd be able to look on the bright side?

MADAME ARCATI I resent your tone, Mrs. Condomine, I really do.

RUTH You most decidedly have no right to—you are entirely to blame for the whole horrible situation.

MADAME ARCATI Kindly remember that I came here the other night on your own invitation.

RUTH On my husband's invitation.

MADAME ARCATI I did what I was requested to do, which was to give a séance and establish contact with the other side—I had no idea that there was any ulterior motive mixed up with it.

RUTH Ulterior motive?

MADAME ARCATI Your husband was obviously eager to get in touch with his former wife. If I had been aware of that at the time I should naturally have consulted you beforehand—after all *"Noblesse oblige"!*

RUTH He had no intention of trying to get in touch with anyone—the whole thing was planned in order for him to get material for a mystery story he is writing about a homicidal medium.

MADAME ARCATI [*Drawing herself up.*] Am I to understand that I was only invited in a spirit of mockery?

RUTH Not at all—he merely wanted to make notes of some of the tricks of the trade.

MADAME ARCATI [*Incensed.*] Tricks of the trade! Insufferable! I've never been so insulted in my life. I feel we have nothing more to say to one another, Mrs. Condomine. Good-bye—— [*She goes towards the door.*]

RUTH Please don't go—please——

MADAME ARCATI Your attitude from the outset has been most unpleasant, Mrs. Condomine. Some

of your remarks have been discourteous in the extreme and I should like to say without umbrage that if you and your husband were foolish enough to tamper with the unseen for paltry motives and in a spirit of ribaldry, whatever has happened to you is your own fault, and, to coin a phrase, as far as I'm concerned you can stew in your own juice! [MADAME ARCATI *goes majestically from the room.*]

RUTH [*Left alone, walks about the room.*] Damn—damn—damn!

After a moment or two CHARLES *comes in with* ELVIRA.

CHARLES What on earth was Madame Arcati doing here?

RUTH She came to tea.

CHARLES Did you ask her?

RUTH Of course I did.

CHARLES You never told me you were going to.

RUTH You never told me you were going to ask Elvira to live with us.

CHARLES I didn't.

ELVIRA [*Sauntering over to the tea table.*] Oh, yes, you did, darling—it was your subconscious.

CHARLES What was the old girl so cross about?—she practically cut me dead.

RUTH I told her the truth about why we invited her the other night.

CHARLES That was quite unnecessary and most unkind.

RUTH She needed taking down a bit, she was blowing herself out like a pouter pigeon.

CHARLES Why did you ask her to tea?

ELVIRA To get me exorcised, of course. Oh dear, I wish I could have a cucumber sandwich —I did love them so.

CHARLES Is that true, Ruth?

RUTH Is what true?

CHARLES What Elvira said.

RUTH You know perfectly well I can't hear what Elvira says.

CHARLES She said that you got Madame Arcati here to try to get her exorcised. Is that true?

RUTH We discussed the possibilities.

ELVIRA There's a snake in the grass for you.

CHARLES You had no right to do such a thing without consulting me.

RUTH I have every right—this situation is absolutely impossible and you know it.

CHARLES If only you'd make an effort and try to be a little more friendly to Elvira we might all have quite a jolly time.

RUTH I have no wish to have a jolly time with Elvira.

ELVIRA She's certainly very

bad tempered, isn't she? I can't think why you married her.

CHARLES She's naturally a bit upset—we must make allowances.

ELVIRA I was never bad tempered though, was I, darling? Not even when you were beastly to me——

CHARLES I was never beastly to you.

RUTH [*Exasperated.*] Where is Elvira at the moment?

CHARLES In the chair, by the table.

RUTH Now look here, Elvira—I shall have to call you Elvira, shan't I? I can't very well go on saying Mrs. Condomine all the time, it would sound too silly——

ELVIRA I don't see why not.

RUTH Did she say anything?

CHARLES She said she'd like nothing better.

ELVIRA [*Giggling.*] You really are sweet, Charles darling—I worship you.

RUTH I wish to be absolutely honest with you, Elvira——

ELVIRA Hold on to your hats, boys!

RUTH I admit I did ask Madame Arcati here with a view to getting you exorcised and I think that if you were in my position you'd have done exactly the same thing—wouldn't you?

ELVIRA I shouldn't have done it so obviously.

RUTH What did she say?

CHARLES Nothing—she just nodded and smiled.

RUTH [*With a forced smile.*] Thank you, Elvira—that's generous of you. I really would so much rather that there were no misunderstandings between us——

CHARLES That's very sensible, Ruth—I agree entirely.

RUTH [*To* ELVIRA.] I want, before we go any further, to ask you a frank question. Why did you really come here? I don't see that you could have hoped to have achieved anything by it beyond the immediate joke of making Charles into a sort of astral bigamist.

ELVIRA I came because the power of Charles's love tugged and tugged and tugged at me. Didn't it, my sweet?

RUTH What did she say?

CHARLES She said that she came because she wanted to see me again.

RUTH Well, she's done that now, hasn't she?

CHARLES We can't be inhospitable, Ruth.

RUTH I have no wish to be inhospitable, but I should like to have just an idea of how long you intend to stay, Elvira?

ELVIRA I don't know — I really don't know! [*She giggles.*] Isn't it awful?

CHARLES She says she doesn't know.

RUTH Surely that's a little inconsiderate?

ELVIRA Didn't the old spiritualist have any constructive ideas about getting rid of me?

CHARLES What did Madame Arcati say?

RUTH She said she couldn't do a thing.

ELVIRA [*Moving gaily over to the window.*] Hurray!

CHARLES Don't be upset, Ruth dear—we shall soon adjust ourselves, you know—you must admit it's a unique experience—I can see no valid reason why we shouldn't get a great deal of fun out of it.

RUTH Fun? Charles, how can you—you must be out of your mind!

CHARLES Not at all — I thought I was at first—but now I must say I'm beginning to enjoy myself.

RUTH [*Bursting into tears.*] Oh, Charles—Charles——

ELVIRA She's off again.

CHARLES You really must not be so callous, Elvira—try to see her point a little——

RUTH I suppose she said something insulting——

CHARLES No, dear, she didn't do anything of the sort.

RUTH Now look here, Elvira——

CHARLES She's over by the window now.

RUTH Why the hell can't she stay in the same place!

ELVIRA Temper again — my poor Charles, what a terrible life you must lead.

CHARLES Do shut up, darling, you'll only make everything worse.

RUTH Who was that "darling" addressed to—her or me?

CHARLES Both of you.

RUTH [*Rises. Stamping her foot.*] This is intolerable!

CHARLES For heaven's sake don't get into another state——

RUTH [*Furiously.*] I've been doing my level best to control myself ever since yesterday morning and I'm damned if I'm going to try any more, the strain is too much. She has the advantage of being able to say whatever she pleases without me being able to hear her, but she can hear me all right, can't she, without any modified interpreting?

CHARLES Modified interpreting? I don't know what you mean.

RUTH Oh yes, you do—you haven't told me once what she really said—you wouldn't dare.

Judging from her photograph she's the type who would use most unpleasant language——

CHARLES Ruth—you're not to talk like that.

RUTH I've been making polite conversation all through dinner last night and breakfast and lunch to-day—and it's been a nightmare—and I am not going to do it any more. I don't like Elvira any more than she likes me and what's more I'm certain that I never could have, dead or alive. If, since her untimely arrival here the other evening, she had shown the slightest sign of good manners, the slightest sign of breeding, I might have felt differently towards her, but all she has done is try to make mischief between us and have private jokes with you against me. I am now going up to my room and I shall have my dinner on a tray. You and she can have the house to yourselves and joke and gossip with each other to your heart's content. The first thing in the morning I am going up to London to interview the Psychical Research Society and if they fail me I shall go straight to the Archbishop of Canterbury—— [*She goes out.*]

CHARLES [*Making a movement to follow her.*] Ruth——

ELVIRA Let her go — she'll calm down later on.

CHARLES It's unlike her to behave like this—she's generally so equable.

ELVIRA No, she isn't, not really, her mouth gives her away —it's a hard mouth, Charles.

CHARLES Her mouth's got nothing to do with it—I resent you discussing Ruth as though she were a horse.

ELVIRA Do you love her?

CHARLES Of course I do.

ELVIRA As much as you loved me?

CHARLES Don't be silly—it's all entirely different.

ELVIRA I'm so glad. Nothing could ever have been quite the same, could it?

CHARLES You always behaved very badly.

ELVIRA Oh, Charles!

CHARLES I'm grieved to see that your sojourn in the other world hasn't improved you in the least.

ELVIRA [*Curling up in sofa.*] Go on, darling—I love it when you pretend to be cross with me——

CHARLES I'm now going up to talk to Ruth.

ELVIRA Cowardly custard.

CHARLES Don't be so idiotic. I can't let her go like that—I

must be a little nice and sympathetic to her.

ELVIRA I don't see why! If she's set on being disagreeable I should just let her get on with it.

CHARLES The whole business is very difficult for her—we must be fair.

ELVIRA She should learn to be more adaptable.

CHARLES She probably will in time—it's been a shock——

ELVIRA Has it been a shock for you too, darling?

CHARLES Of course — what did you expect?

ELVIRA A nice shock?

CHARLES What do you want, Elvira?

ELVIRA Want? I don't know what you mean.

CHARLES I remember that whenever you were overpoweringly demure like that it usually meant that you wanted something.

ELVIRA It's horrid of you to be so suspicious. All I want is to be with you.

CHARLES Well, you are.

ELVIRA I mean alone, darling. If you go and pamper Ruth and smalm her over, she'll probably come flouncing down again and our lovely quiet evening together will be spoilt.

CHARLES You're incorrigibly selfish.

ELVIRA Well, I haven't seen you for seven years—it's only natural that I should want a little time alone with you—to talk over old times. I'll let you go up just for a little while if you really think it's your duty.

CHARLES Of course it is.

ELVIRA [*Smiling.*] Then I don't mind.

CHARLES [*Rises.*] You're disgraceful, Elvira.

ELVIRA You won't be long, will you? You'll come down again very soon?

CHARLES I shall most likely dress for dinner while I'm upstairs—you can read the *Tatler* or something.

ELVIRA Darling, you don't have to dress—for me.

CHARLES I always dress for dinner.

ELVIRA What are you going to have? I should like to watch you eat something really delicious——

CHARLES [*Smiling and kissing his hand to her.*] Be a good girl now—you can play the gramophone if you like.

ELVIRA [*Demurely.*] Thank you, Charles. [CHARLES *goes out.*] ELVIRA *gets up, looks in the gramophone cupboard, finds the record of "Always" and puts it on. She starts to waltz lightly round the room to it.*

EDITH *comes in to fetch the tea tray. She sees the gramophone playing by itself so she turns it off and puts the record back in the cupboard. While she is picking up the tray* ELVIRA *takes the record out and puts it on again.* EDITH *gives a shriek, drops the tray and rushes out of the room.* ELVIRA *continues to waltz gaily.*

Curtain.

Scene 3

The time is evening several days later.
When the curtain rises MRS. BRADMAN *is sitting in an arm-chair.* RUTH *is standing by the window drumming on the pane with her fingers.*

MRS. BRADMAN [*In arm-chair.*] Does it show any signs of clearing?

RUTH [*At window — looking out.*] No, it's still pouring.

MRS. BRADMAN I do sympathize with you, really I do—it's really been quite a chapter of accidents, hasn't it?

RUTH It certainly has.

MRS. BRADMAN That happens sometimes, you know — everything seems to go wrong at once —exactly as though there were some evil forces at work. I remember once when George and I went away for a fortnight's holiday not long after we were married—we were dogged by bad luck from beginning to end —the weather was vile—George sprained his ankle—I caught a terrible cold and had to stay in bed for two days—and to crown everything the lamp fell over in the sitting-room and set fire to the treatise George had written on hyperplasia of the abdominal glands.

RUTH [*Absently.*] How dreadful.

MRS. BRADMAN He had to write it all over again—every single word.

RUTH You're sure you wouldn't like a cocktail or some sherry or anything?

MRS. BRADMAN No, thank you —really not—George will be down in a minute and we've got to go like lightning—we were supposed to be at the Wilmots' at seven and it's nearly that now.

RUTH I think I'll have a little

sherry—I feel I need it. [*She goes to the side table and pours herself some sherry.*]

MRS. BRADMAN Don't worry about your husband's arm, Mrs. Condomine—I'm sure it's only a sprain.

RUTH It's not his arm I'm worried about.

MRS. BRADMAN And I'm sure Edith will be up and about again in a few days——

RUTH My cook gave notice this morning.

MRS. BRADMAN Well, really! Servants are awful, aren't they? Not a shred of gratitude—at the first sign of trouble they run out on you—like rats leaving a sinking ship.

RUTH I can't feel that your simile was entirely fortunate, Mrs. Bradman.

MRS. BRADMAN [*Flustered.*] Oh, I didn't mean that, really I didn't!

DR. BRADMAN *comes in.*

DR. BRADMAN Nothing to worry about, Mrs. Condomine—it's only a slight strain——

RUTH I'm so relieved.

DR. BRADMAN He made a good deal of fuss when I examined it—men are much worse patients than women, you know—particularly highly strung men like your husband.

RUTH Is he so highly strung, do you think?

DR. BRADMAN Yes, as a matter of fact I wanted to talk to you about that. I'm afraid he's been overworking lately.

RUTH [*Frowning.*] Overworking?

DR. BRADMAN He's in rather a nervous condition — nothing serious, you understand——

RUTH What makes you think so?

DR. BRADMAN I know the symptoms. Of course the shock of his fall might have something to do with it, but I certainly should advise a complete rest for a couple of weeks——

RUTH You mean he ought to go away?

DR. BRADMAN I do. In cases like that a change of atmosphere can work wonders.

RUTH What symptoms did you notice?

DR. BRADMAN Oh, nothing to be unduly alarmed about—a certain air of strain—an inability to focus his eyes on the person he is talking to—a few rather marked irrelevancies in his conversation.

RUTH I see. Can you remember any specific example?

DR. BRADMAN Oh, he suddenly shouted "What are you doing in the bathroom?" and then, a little

later, while I was writing him a prescription, he suddenly said "For God's sake behave yourself!"

MRS. BRADMAN How extraordinary.

RUTH [*Nervously.*] He often goes on like that—particularly when he's immersed in writing a book——

DR. BRADMAN Oh, I am not in the least perturbed about it really—but I do think a rest and a change would be a good idea.

RUTH Thank you so much, Doctor. Would you like some sherry?

DR. BRADMAN No, thank you —we really must be off.

RUTH How is poor Edith?

DR. BRADMAN She'll be all right in a few days—she's still recovering from the concussion.

MRS. BRADMAN It's funny, isn't it, that both your housemaid and you husband should fall down on the same day, isn't it?

RUTH Yes, if that sort of thing amuses you.

MRS. BRADMAN [*Giggling nervously.*] Of course I didn't mean it like that, Mrs. Condomine——

DR. BRADMAN Come along, my dear — you're talking too much as usual.

MRS. BRADMAN You are horrid, George. Good-bye, Mrs. Condomine—— [*Rises.*]

RUTH [*Shaking hands.*] Good-bye.

DR. BRADMAN [*Also shaking hands.*] I'll pop in and have a look at both patients sometime to-morrow morning.

RUTH Thank you so much.

CHARLES *comes in. His left arm is in a sling.* ELVIRA *follows him and sits down by the fire.*

DR. BRADMAN Well — how does it feel?

CHARLES All right.

DR. BRADMAN It's only a slight sprain, you know.

CHARLES Is this damned sling really essential?

DR. BRADMAN It's a wise precaution—it will prevent you using your left hand except when it's really necessary.

CHARLES I had intended to drive into Folkestone this evening——

DR. BRADMAN It would be much better if you didn't.

CHARLES It's extremely inconvenient——

RUTH You can easily wait and go to-morrow, Charles——

ELVIRA I can't stand another of those dreary evenings at home. Charles—it'll drive me dotty—and I haven't seen a movie for seven years——

CHARLES Let me be the first to congratulate you.

DR. BRADMAN [*Kindly.*] What's that, old man?

RUTH [*With intense meaning.*] Charles dear — try to be sensible, I implore you.

CHARLES Sorry—I forgot.

DR. BRADMAN You can drive the car if you promise to go very slowly and carefully. Your gear shift is on the right, isn't it?

CHARLES Yes.

DR. BRADMAN Well, use your left hand as little as possible.

CHARLES All right.

RUTH You'd much better stay at home.

DR. BRADMAN Couldn't you drive him in?

RUTH [*Stiffly.*] I'm afraid not —I have lots to do in the house and there's Edith to be attended to.

DR. BRADMAN Well, I'll leave you to fight it out among yourselves—— [*To Charles.*] But remember if you do insist on going —carefully does it—the roads are very slippery anyhow. Come along, Violet.

MRS. BRADMAN Good-bye again—— Good-bye, Mr. Condomine.

CHARLES Good-bye. [*He goes into the hall with the* BRADMANS.]

RUTH, *left alone, puts her sherry glass down on the table irritably.*

RUTH You really are infuriating, Elvira—surely you could wait and go to the movies another night—— [ELVIRA *gives a little laugh and, taking a rose out of a vase, throws it at* RUTH *and vanishes through the French windows. Picking up the rose and putting it back in the vase.*] And stop behaving like a schoolgirl—you're old enough to know better.

CHARLES [*Coming in.*] What?

RUTH I was talking to Elvira.

CHARLES She isn't here.

RUTH She was a moment ago —she threw a rose at me.

CHARLES She's been very high-spirited all day. I know this mood of old. It usually meant that she was up to something.

RUTH You're sure she isn't here?

CHARLES Quite sure.

RUTH I want to talk to you.

CHARLES O God!

RUTH I must—it's important.

CHARLES You've behaved very well for the last few days, Ruth —you're not going to start making scenes again, are you?

RUTH I resent that air of patronage, Charles. I have behaved well, as you call it, because there was nothing else to do, but I think it only fair to warn you that I offer no guarantee for the future. My patience is being stretched to its uttermost.

CHARLES As far as I can see

the position is just as difficult for Elvira as it is for you—if not more so. The poor little thing comes back trustingly after all those years in the other world and what is she faced with? Nothing but brawling and hostility.

RUTH What did she expect?

CHARLES Surely even a protoplasmic manifestation has the right to expect a little of the milk of human kindness?

RUTH Milk of human fiddlesticks.

CHARLES That just doesn't make sense, dear.

RUTH Elvira is about as trusting as a puff adder.

CHARLES You're granite, Ruth —sheer, unyielding granite.

RUTH And a good deal more dangerous into the bargain.

CHARLES Dangerous? I never heard anything so ridiculous. How could a poor lonely, wistful little spirit like Elvira be dangerous?

RUTH Quite easily—and she is. She's beginning to show her hand.

CHARLES How do you mean —in what way?

RUTH [*Sits on sofa.*] This is a fight, Charles—a bloody battle—a duel to the death between Elvira and me. Don't you realize that?

CHARLES Melodramatic hysteria.

RUTH It isn't melodramatic hysteria—it's true. Can't you see?

CHARLES No, I can't. You're imagining things — jealousy causes people to have the most curious delusions.

RUTH I am making every effort not to lose my temper with you, Charles, but I must say you are making it increasingly difficult for me.

CHARLES All this talk of battles and duels——

RUTH She came here with one purpose and one purpose only—and if you can't see it you're a bigger fool than I thought you.

CHARLES What purpose could she have had beyond a natural desire to see me again? After all, you must remember that she was extremely attached to me, poor child.

RUTH Her purpose is perfectly obvious. It is to get you to herself forever.

CHARLES That's absurd — how could she?

RUTH By killing you off of course.

CHARLES Killing me off? You're mad!

RUTH Why do you suppose Edith fell down the stairs and nearly cracked her skull?

CHARLES What's Edith got to do with it?

RUTH Because the whole of the top stair was covered with axle grease. Cook discovered it afterwards.

CHARLES You're making this up, Ruth——

RUTH I'm not. I swear I'm not. Why do you suppose when you were lopping that dead branch off the pear tree that the ladder broke? Because it had been practically sawn through on both sides.

CHARLES But why should she want to kill me? I could understand her wanting to kill you, but why me?

RUTH If you were dead it would be her final triumph over me. She'd have you with her forever on her damned astral plane and I'd be left high and dry. She's probably planning a sort of spiritual remarriage. I wouldn't put anything past her.

CHARLES [*Rises. Really shocked.*] Ruth!

RUTH Don't you see now?

CHARLES [*Walking about the room.*] She couldn't be so sly, so wicked—she couldn't.

RUTH Couldn't she just!

CHARLES I grant you that as a character she was always rather light and irresponsible but I would never have believed her capable of low cunning——

RUTH Perhaps the spirit world has deteriorated her.

CHARLES Oh, Ruth!

RUTH For heaven's sake stop looking like a wounded spaniel and concentrate—this is serious.

CHARLES What are we to do?

RUTH You're not to let her know that we suspect a thing—behave perfectly ordinarily—as though nothing had happened. I'm going to Madame Arcati immediately—I don't care how cross she is, she's got to help us —even if she can't get rid of Elvira she must know some technical method of rendering her harmless. If a trance is necessary she shall go into a trance if I have to beat her into it. I'll be back in a half an hour—tell Elvira I've gone to see the Vicar——

CHARLES This is appalling——

RUTH Never mind about that—remember now, don't give yourself away by so much as a flick of an eyelid——

ELVIRA *comes in from the garden.*

CHARLES Look out——

RUTH What?

CHARLES I merely said it's a nice lookout.

ELVIRA What's a nice lookout?

CHARLES The weather, Elvira —the glass is going down and down and down—it's positively macabre.

ELVIRA I find it difficult to believe that you and Ruth, at this particular moment, can't think of anything more interesting to talk about than the weather.

RUTH [*Rises.*] I can't stand this any more. I really can't.

CHARLES Ruth dear—please——

ELVIRA Has she broken out again?

RUTH What did she say?

CHARLES She asked if you had broken out again.

RUTH How dare you talk like that, Elvira!

CHARLES Now then, Ruth——

RUTH [*With dignity.*] Charles and I were not talking about the weather, Elvira, as you so very shrewdly suspected. I should loathe you to think *that we had any secrets from you* and so I will explain exactly what we were talking about. I was trying to persuade him *not* to drive you into Folkestone this evening. It will be bad for his arm and you can perfectly easily wait until to-morrow. However, as he seems to be determined to place your wishes before mine in everything, I have nothing further to say. I'm sure I hope you both enjoy yourselves. [*She goes out and slams the door.*]

CHARLES There now.

ELVIRA Oh, Charles—have you been beastly to her?

CHARLES No—Ruth doesn't like being thwarted any more than you do.

ELVIRA She's a woman of sterling character. It's a pity she's so unforgiving.

CHARLES As I told you before —I would rather not discuss Ruth with you—it makes me uncomfortable.

ELVIRA I won't mention her again. Are you ready?

CHARLES What for?

ELVIRA To go to Folkestone of course.

CHARLES [*Rises from pouffe.*] I want a glass of sherry first.

ELVIRA I don't believe you want to take me at all.

CHARLES Of course I want to take you, but I still think it would be more sensible to wait until to-morrow — it's a filthy night.

ELVIRA [*Crossly.*] How familiar this is.

CHARLES In what way familiar?

ELVIRA All through our married life I only had to suggest something for you immediately to start hedging me off——

CHARLES I'm not hedging you off, I merely said——

ELVIRA All right—all right—we'll spend another cosy, intimate evening at home with Ruth sewing away at that hideous table centre and snapping at us like a terrier.

CHARLES Ruth is perfectly aware that the table centre is hideous. It happens to be a birthday present for her mother——

ELVIRA It's no use trying to defend Ruth's taste to me—it's thoroughly artsy craftsy and you know it.

CHARLES It is not artsy craftsy.

ELVIRA She's ruined this room—look at those curtains and that awful shawl on the piano——

CHARLES Lady Mackinley sent it to us from Burma.

ELVIRA Obviously because it had been sent to her from Birmingham.

CHARLES If you don't behave yourself I shan't take you into Folkestone ever.

ELVIRA [*Coaxingly.*] Please, Charles—don't be elderly and grand with me! Please let's go now.

CHARLES Not until I've had my sherry.

ELVIRA You are tiresome, darling—I've been waiting about for hours——

CHARLES A few more minutes won't make any difference then. [*He pours himself out some sherry.*]

ELVIRA [*Petulantly, flinging herself into a chair.*] Oh, very well.

CHARLES Besides, the car won't be back for a half an hour at least.

ELVIRA [*Sharply.*] What do you mean?

CHARLES [*Sipping his sherry nonchalantly.*] Ruth's taken it—she had to go and see the Vicar——

ELVIRA [*Jumping up—in extreme agitation.*] What!!

CHARLES What on earth's the matter?

ELVIRA You say *Ruth's* taken the car?

CHARLES Yes—to go and see the Vicar—but she won't be long.

ELVIRA [*Wildly.*] O, my God! O, my God!

CHARLES Elvira!——

ELVIRA Stop her! You must stop her at once——

CHARLES Why—what for?——

ELVIRA [*Jumping up and down.*] Stop her—go out and stop her immediately!

CHARLES It's too late now—she's gone already.

ELVIRA [*Backs away towards window.*] Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!!!

CHARLES What are you going on like this for? What have you done?

ELVIRA [*Frightened.*] Done? —I haven't done anything——

CHARLES Elvira—you're lying——

ELVIRA [*Backing away from him.*] I'm not lying. What is there to lie about?

CHARLES What are you in such a state for?

ELVIRA [*Almost hysterical.*] I'm not in a state—I don't know what you mean——

CHARLES You've done something dreadful——

ELVIRA [*Backs away.*] Don't look at me like that, Charles—I haven't—I swear I haven't——

CHARLES [*Striking his forehead.*] My God, the car!

ELVIRA No, Charles—no——

CHARLES Ruth was right—you did want to kill me—you've done something to the car——

ELVIRA [*Howling like a banshee.*] Oh—oh—oh—oh!——

CHARLES What did you do—answer me? [*At this moment the telephone rings.* CHARLES *stops dead; then with slow steps goes to it.*]

CHARLES [*At telephone.*] Hallo—hallo—yes, speaking—I see—the bridge at the bottom of the hill—thank you. No, I'll come at once—— [*He slowly puts back the receiver. As he does so the door bursts open.*]

ELVIRA [*Obviously retreating from someone.*] Well, of all the filthy, low-down tricks—— [*She shields her head with her hands and screams.*] Ow—stop it—Ruth—let go——[*She runs out of the room and slams the door. It opens again immediately and slams again.*]

CHARLES *stares, aghast.*

Curtain.

Blithe Spirit ACT THREE Scene 1

The time is evening a few days later.

CHARLES *is standing before the fire drinking his after-dinner coffee. He is in deep mourning. He finishes his coffee, puts the cup down on the mantlepiece, lights a cigarette and settles himself comfortably in an arm-chair. He adjusts a reading lamp and with a sigh of well-being opens a novel and begins to read it.*

There is a ring at the front doorbell. With an exclamation of an-

noyance he puts down the book, gets up and goes out into the hall. After a moment or so MADAME ARCATI *comes in.* CHARLES *follows her and shuts the door.* MADAME ARCATI *is wearing the strange, rather barbaric evening clothes that she wore in Act One.*

MADAME ARCATI I hope you will not consider this an intrusion, Mr. Condomine.

CHARLES Not at all—please sit down, won't you?

MADAME ARCATI Thank you. [*She does so.*]

CHARLES Would you like some coffee—or a liqueur?

MADAME ARCATI No, thank you. I had to come, Mr. Condomine.

CHARLES [*Politely.*] Yes?

MADAME ARCATI I felt a tremendous urge—like a rushing wind, and so I hopped on my bike and here I am.

CHARLES It was very kind of you.

MADAME ARCATI No, no, no—not kind at all—it was my duty—I know it strongly.

CHARLES Duty?

MADAME ARCATI I reproach myself bitterly, you know.

CHARLES Please don't—there is no necessity for that. [*Sits in arm-chair.*]

MADAME ARCATI I allowed myself to get into a huff the other day with your late wife. I rode all the way home in the grip of temper, Mr. Condomine. —I have regretted it ever since.

CHARLES My dear Madame Arcati . . .

MADAME ARCATI [*Holding up her hand.*] Please let me go on. Mine is the shame, mine is the blame—I shall never forgive myself. Had I not been so impetuous—had I listened to the cool voice of reason—much might have been averted. . . .

CHARLES You told my wife distinctly that you were unable to help her—you were perfectly honest. Over and above the original unfortunate mistake I see no reason for you to reproach yourself.

MADAME ARCATI I threw up the sponge—in a moment of crisis I threw up the sponge instead of throwing down the gauntlet . . .

CHARLES Whatever you threw, Madame Arcati, I very much fear nothing could have been done — it seems that circumstances have been a little too strong for all of us.

MADAME ARCATI I cannot bring myself to admit defeat so

easily—it is gall and wormwood to me—I could have at least concentrated—made an effort.

CHARLES Never mind.

MADAME ARCATI I do mind. I cannot help it. I mind with every fibre of my being. I have been thinking very carefully, I have also been reading up a good deal during the last few dreadful days . . . I gather that we are alone?

CHARLES [*Looking round.*] My first wife is not in the room, she is upstairs lying down, the funeral exhausted her. I imagine that my second wife is with her but of course I have no way of knowing for certain.

MADAME ARCATI You have remarked no difference in the texture of your first wife since the accident?

CHARLES No, she seems much as usual, a little under the weather perhaps, a trifle low-spirited, but that's all.

MADAME ARCATI Well, that washes that out.

CHARLES I'm afraid I don't understand.

MADAME ARCATI Just a little theory I had. In the nineteenth century there was a pretty widespread belief that a ghost who participated in the death of a human being disintegrated automatically——

CHARLES How do you know that Elvira was in any way responsible for Ruth's death?

MADAME ARCATI Elvira—such a pretty name—it has a definite lilt to it, hasn't it? [*She hums for a moment.*] [*Singing the Elvi-i-ira.*] Elvira—Elvi-ira . . .

CHARLES [*Rather agitated.*] You haven't answered my question. How did you know?

MADAME ARCATI It came to me last night, Mr. Condomine—it came to me in a blinding flash—I had just finished my Ovaltine and turned the light out when I suddenly started up in bed with a loud cry—"Great Scott. I've got it!" I said—after that I began to put two and two together. At three in the morning—with my brain fairly seething—I went to work on my crystal for a little but it wasn't very satisfactory—cloudy, you know——

CHARLES [*Moving about uneasily.*] I would be very much obliged if you would keep any theories you have regarding my wife's death to yourself, Madame Arcati . . .

MADAME ARCATI My one desire is to help you. I feel I have been dreadfully remiss over the whole affair—not only remiss but untidy.

CHARLES I am afraid there is nothing whatever to be done.

MADAME ARCATI [*Triumphantly.*] But there is—there is! [*She produces a piece of paper from her bag and brandishes it.*] I have found a formula—here it is! I copied it out of Edmondson's *Witchcraft and Its Byways.*

CHARLES [*Irritably.*] What the hell are you talking about?

MADAME ARCATI [*Rises.*] Pluck up your heart, Mr. Condomine . . . all is not lost!

CHARLES [*Rises.*] Now look here, Madame Arcati——

MADAME ARCATI You are still anxious to dematerialize your first wife, I suppose?

CHARLES [*In a lower voice, with a cautious look towards the door.*] Of course I am—I'm perfectly furious with her, but——

MADAME ARCATI But what?

CHARLES Well—she's been very upset for the last few days—you see apart from me being angry with her which she always hated even when she was alive, Ruth, my second wife, has hardly left her side for a moment—you must see that she's been having a pretty bad time what with one thing and another . . .

MADAME ARCATI Your delicacy of feeling does you credit but I must say, if you will forgive my bluntness, that you are a damned fool, Mr. Condomine.

CHARLES [*Stiffly.*] You are at liberty to think whatever you please.

MADAME ARCATI Now, now, now—don't get on your high horse—there's no sense in that, is there? I have a formula here that I think will be able to get rid of her without hurting her feelings in the least. It's extremely simple and requires nothing more than complete concentration from you and minor trance from me—I may even be able to manage it without lying down.

CHARLES Honestly I would rather——

At this moment the door opens and ELVIRA *enters, coming quickly into the room. She is obviously very upset.*

ELVIRA Charles——

CHARLES What on earth's the matter?

ELVIRA [*Seeing* MADAME ARCATI.] Oh! What's she doing here?

CHARLES She came to offer me her condolences.

ELVIRA They should have been congratulations.

CHARLES Please don't say things like that, Elvira—it is in the worst possible taste. Madame Arcati—allow me to introduce my first wife Elvira——

MADAME ARCATI How do you do?

ELVIRA What does she want, Charles? Send her away—— [*She walks about the room.*]

MADAME ARCATI In what part of the room is she at the moment?

CHARLES She's moving about rather rapidly. I'll tell you when and where she settles.

ELVIRA She's the one who got me here in the first place, isn't she?

CHARLES Yes.

ELVIRA Well, please tell her to get me away again as soon as possible—I can't stand this house another minute.

CHARLES Really, Elvira—I'm surprised at you.

ELVIRA [*Nearly in tears.*] I don't care how surprised you are —I want to go home—I'm sick of the whole thing.

CHARLES Don't be childish, Elvira.

ELVIRA I'm not being childish—I mean it.

MADAME ARCATI [*Sniffing.*] Very interesting—very interesting—I smell protoplasm strongly!

ELVIRA What a disgusting thing to say.

MADAME ARCATI [*Very excited.*] Where is she now?

CHARLES Here—close to me.

MADAME ARCATI [*Mystically —stretching out her hands.*] Are you happy, my dear——?

ELVIRA [*Stamping her foot.*] Tell the silly old bitch to mind her own business.

MADAME ARCATI [*In a singsong voice.*] Was the journey difficult? Are you weary?

ELVIRA She's dotty.

CHARLES Just a moment, Madame Arcati . . .

MADAME ARCATI [*With her eyes shut.*] This is wonderful—wonderful——

ELVIRA For God's sake tell her to go into the other room, Charles. I've got to talk to you.

CHARLES Madame Arcati . . .

MADAME ARCATI Just a moment. I almost have contact—I can sense the vibrations—this is magnificent . . .

CHARLES Go on, Elvira—don't be a spoilsport—give her a bit of encouragement.

ELVIRA If you'll promise to get her into the other room.

CHARLES All right.

ELVIRA *goes up to* MADAME ARCATI *and blows gently into her ear.*

MADAME ARCATI [*Jumping.*] Yes, yes—again—again——

ELVIRA [*Blowing in the other ear behind* MADAME ARCATI.] How's that?

MADAME ARCATI [*Clasping and unclasping her hands in a frenzy of excitement.*] This is

first rate—it really is first rate. Absolutely stunning!

CHARLES I'm so glad you're pleased.

ELVIRA Please get rid of her. Ruth will be in in a minute.

CHARLES Madame Arcati, would you think it most frightfully rude if I asked you to go into the dining-room for a moment? My first wife wishes to speak to me alone.

MADAME ARCATI Oh, must I? It's so lovely being actually in the room with her.

CHARLES Only for a few minutes—I promise she'll be here when you come back.

MADAME ARCATI Very well. Hand me my bag, will you?—it's on the sofa.

ELVIRA [*Picking it up and handing it to her.*] Here you are.

MADAME ARCATI [*Taking it and blowing her a kiss.*] Oh, you darling—you little darling. [MADAME ARCATI, *humming ecstatically, goes into the dining-room and shuts the door.*]

ELVIRA How good is she really?

CHARLES I don't know.

ELVIRA Do you think she really could get me back again?

CHARLES But my dear child . . .

ELVIRA And don't call me your dear child—it's smug and supercilious.

CHARLES There's no need to be rude.

ELVIRA [*Turning away.*] The whole thing's been a failure—a miserable, dreary failure—and oh! what *high hopes* I started out with.

CHARLES You can't expect much sympathy from me, you know. I am perfectly aware that your highest hope was to murder me.

ELVIRA Don't put it like that, it sounds so beastly.

CHARLES It is beastly. It's one of the beastliest ideas I've ever heard.

ELVIRA There was a time when you'd have welcomed the chance of being with me forever.

CHARLES Your behaviour has shocked me immeasurably, Elvira, I had no idea you were so unscrupulous.

ELVIRA [*Bursting into tears.*] Oh, Charles.

CHARLES Stop crying.

ELVIRA They're only ghost tears—they don't mean anything really—but they're very painful.

CHARLES You've brought all this on yourself, you know. [*Sits on sofa.*]

ELVIRA That's right—rub it in. Anyhow, it was only because I loved you—the silliest thing I

ever did in my whole life was to love you—you were always unworthy of me.

CHARLES That remark comes perilously near impertinence, Elvira.

ELVIRA I sat there, on the other side, just longing for you day after day. I did really—all through your affair with that brassy-looking woman in the South of France I went on loving you and thinking truly of you—then you married Ruth and even then I forgave you and tried to understand because all the time I believed deep inside that you really loved me best . . . that's why I put myself down for a return visit and had to fill in all those forms and wait about in draughty passages for hours—if only you'd died before you met Ruth everything might have been all right—she's absolutely ruined you—I hadn't been in the house a day before I realized that. Your books aren't a quarter as good as they used to be either.

CHARLES [*Incensed. Rises.*] That is entirely untrue . . . Ruth helped me and encouraged me with my work which is a damned sight more than you ever did.

ELVIRA That's probably what's wrong with it.

CHARLES All you ever thought of was going to parties and enjoying yourself.

ELVIRA Why shouldn't I have fun? I died young, didn't I?

CHARLES You needn't have died at all if you hadn't been idiotic enough to go out on the river with Guy Henderson and get soaked to the skin——

ELVIRA So we're back at Guy Henderson again, are we?

CHARLES You behaved abominably over Guy Henderson and it's no use pretending that you didn't.

ELVIRA [*Sits on arm of chair.*] Guy adored me—and anyhow he was very attractive.

CHARLES You told me distinctly that he didn't attract you in the least.

ELVIRA You'd have gone through the roof if I'd told you that he did.

CHARLES Did you have an affair with Guy Henderson?

ELVIRA I would rather not discuss it if you don't mind.

CHARLES Answer me—did you or didn't you?

ELVIRA Of course I didn't.

CHARLES You let him kiss you though, didn't you?

ELVIRA How could I stop him? He was bigger than I was.

CHARLES [*Furiously.*] And you swore to me——

ELVIRA Of course I did. You were always making scenes over nothing at all.

CHARLES Nothing at all.

ELVIRA You never loved me a bit really—it was only your beastly vanity.

CHARLES You seriously believe that it was only vanity that upset me when you went out in the punt with Guy Henderson?

ELVIRA It was not a punt—it was a little launch.

CHARLES I don't care if it was a three-masted schooner you had no right to go!

ELVIRA You seem to forget *why* I went! You seem to forget that you had spent the entire evening making sheep's eyes at that overblown looking harridan with the false pearls.

CHARLES A woman in Cynthia Cheviot's position would hardly wear false pearls.

ELVIRA They were practically all she was wearing.

CHARLES I am pained to observe that seven years in the echoing vaults of eternity have in no way impaired your native vulgarity.

ELVIRA That was the remark of a pompous ass.

CHARLES There is nothing to be gained by continuing this discussion.

ELVIRA You always used to say that when you were thoroughly worsted.

CHARLES On looking back on our married years, Elvira, I see now, with horrid clarity, that they were nothing but a mockery.

ELVIRA You invite mockery, Charles—it's something to do with your personality I think, a certain seedy grandeur.

CHARLES Once and for all, Elvira——

ELVIRA You never suspected it but I laughed at you steadily from the altar to the grave—all your ridiculous petty jealousies and your fussings and fumings——

CHARLES You were feckless and irresponsible and morally unstable—I realized that before we left Budleigh Salterton.

ELVIRA Nobody but a monumental bore would have thought of having a honeymoon at Budleigh Salterton.

CHARLES What's the matter with Budleigh Salterton?

ELVIRA I was an eager young bride, Charles—I wanted glamour and music and romance—all I got was potted palms, seven hours of every day on a damp golf course and a three-piece orchestra playing "Merrie England."

CHARLES It's a pity you didn't tell me so at the time.

ELVIRA I did—but you wouldn't listen—that's why I went out on the moors that day with Captain Bracegirdle. I was desperate.

CHARLES You swore to me that you'd gone over to see your aunt in Exmouth!

ELVIRA It was the moors.

CHARLES With Captain Bracegirdle?

ELVIRA With Captain Bracegirdle.

CHARLES [*Furiously.*] I might have known it—what a fool I was—what a blind fool! Did he make love to you?

ELVIRA [*Sucking her finger and regarding it thoughtfully.*] Of course.

CHARLES Oh, Elvira!

ELVIRA Only very discreetly—he was in the cavalry, you know——

CHARLES Well, all I can say is that I'm well rid of you.

ELVIRA Unfortunately you're not.

CHARLES Oh yes, I am—you're dead and Ruth's dead—I shall sell this house lock, stock, and barrel and go away.

ELVIRA I shall follow you.

CHARLES I shall go a long way away—I shall go to South America—you'll hate that, you were always a bad traveller.

ELVIRA [*At piano.*] That can't be helped—I shall have to follow you—you called me back.

CHARLES I did *not* call you back!

ELVIRA Well somebody did—and it's hardly likely to have been Ruth.

CHARLES Nothing in the world was further from my thoughts.

ELVIRA You were talking about me before dinner that evening.

CHARLES I might just as easily have been talking about Joan of Arc but that wouldn't necessarily mean that I wanted her to come and live with me.

ELVIRA As a matter of fact she's rather fun.

CHARLES Stick to the point.

ELVIRA When I think of what might have happened if I'd succeeded in getting you to the other world after all—it makes me shudder, it does honestly . . . it would be nothing but bickering and squabbling forever and ever and ever . . . I swear I'll be better off with Ruth—at least she'll find her own set and not get in my way.

CHARLES So I get in your way, do I?

ELVIRA Only because I was

idiotic enough to imagine that you loved me, and I sort of felt sorry for you.

CHARLES I'm sick of these insults—please go away.

ELVIRA There's nothing I should like better—I've always believed in cutting my losses. That's why I died.

CHARLES [*Rises.*] Of all the brazen sophistry——

ELVIRA Call that old girl in again—set her to work—I won't tolerate this any longer—I want to go home. [*She starts to cry.*]

CHARLES For heaven's sake don't snivel.

ELVIRA [*Stamping her foot.*] Call her in—she's got to get me out of this.

CHARLES [*Going to the dining-room door.*] I quite agree—and the sooner the better. [*He opens the door.*] Madame Arcati—would you please come in now? [MADAME ARCATI *comes in eagerly.*]

MADAME ARCATI Is the darling still here?

CHARLES [*Grimly.*] Yes, she is.

MADAME ARCATI Where—tell me where?

CHARLES Over by the piano—blowing her nose.

MADAME ARCATI [*Approaching the piano.*] My dear—oh, my dear——

ELVIRA Stop her fawning on me, Charles, or I shall break something.

CHARLES Elvira and I have discussed the whole situation, Madame Arcati, and she wishes to go home immediately.

MADAME ARCATI Home?

CHARLES Wherever she came from.

MADAME ARCATI You don't think she would like to stay a few days longer—while I try to get things a little more organized?

ELVIRA No—no—I want to go now.

MADAME ARCATI I could come and be here with her—I could bring my crystal——

ELVIRA God forbid!

CHARLES We are both agreed that she must go as soon as possible. Please strain every nerve, Madame Arcati—make every effort—you said something about a formula—what is it?

MADAME ARCATI [*Reluctantly.*] Well—if you insist.

CHARLES I most emphatically do insist.

ELVIRA [*Wailing.*] Oh, Charles. . . .

CHARLES Shut up.

MADAME ARCATI I can't guarantee anything, you know—I'll do my best but it may not work.

CHARLES What is the formula?

MADAME ARCATI Nothing more than a little verse really—it fell into disuse after the seventeenth century—I shall need some pepper and salt——

CHARLES There's some pepper and salt in the dining-room —I'll get it. [*He goes.*]

MADAME ARCATI We ought of course to have some Shepherd's Wort and a frog or two but I think I can manage without. You won't be frightened, dear, will you? It's absolutely painless.

CHARLES [*Coming back with the cruet.*] Will this be enough?

MADAME ARCATI Oh yes—I only need a little—put it on the table please. Now then, let me see—— [*She fumbles in her bag for the paper and her glasses.*] Ah yes—— [*To* CHARLES.] Sprinkle it, will you—just a soupçon —there, right in the middle—— [CHARLES *does so.*]

ELVIRA This is going to be a flop—I can tell you that here and now.

MADAME ARCATI Now a few snapdragons out of that vase, there's a good chap.

ELVIRA [*Contemptuously.*] Merlin does all this sort of thing at parties and bores us all stiff with it, only he always uses blackthorn and a great deal of whimsy!

CHARLES Here you are.

MADAME ARCATI Now then—the gramophone—in the old days of course they used a zither or reed pipes—— [*She goes to the gramophone.*] We'd better have the same record we had before, I think.

ELVIRA I'll get it. [*She takes out the record and puts it on the gramophone.*]

MADAME ARCATI [*Watching, fascinated.*] Oh, if only that Mr. Emsworth of the Psychical Research Society could see this—he'd have a fit, he would really! Don't start it yet, dear. Now then —— [CHARLES *gets piano chair and brings it down to table.*] Sit down, please, Mr. Condomine, rest your hands on the table but don't put your fingers in the pepper—I shall turn out the lights myself. Oh, shucks, I'd nearly forgotten—— [*She goes to the table and makes designs in the sprinkled pepper and salt with her forefinger.*] One triangle—— [*She consults the paper.*] One half circle and one little dot—there!

ELVIRA This is waste of time —she's a complete fake.

CHARLES Anything's worth trying.

ELVIRA I'm as eager for it to

succeed as you are—don't make any mistake about that. But I'll lay you ten to one it's a dead failure.

MADAME ARCATI Now, if your wife would be kind enough to lie down on the sofa——

CHARLES Go on, Elvira.

ELVIRA [*Lies down on sofa.*] This is sheer nonsense—don't blame me if I get the giggles.

CHARLES Concentrate—think of nothing.

MADAME ARCATI That's right—quite right—hands at the sides—legs extended—breathe steadily—one two—one two—one two—is she comfortable?

CHARLES Are you comfortable, Elvira?

ELVIRA No.

CHARLES She's quite comfortable.

MADAME ARCATI I shall join you in a moment, Mr. Condomine—I may have to go into a slight trance but if I do pay no attention—— Now first the music and away we go!

MADAME ARCATI *turns on the gramophone and stands quite still by the side of it with her hands behind her head for a little—then suddenly, with great swiftness, she runs to the door and switches out the lights. Her form can dimly be discerned moving about in the darkness.* CHARLES *gives a loud sneeze.*

ELVIRA [*Giggling.*] Oh, dear—it's the pepper.

CHARLES Damn!

MADAME ARCATI Hold on to yourself—concentrate—— [MADAME ARCATI *recites in a singsong voice:*]

"Ghostly spectre—ghoul or fiend
Never more be thou convened
Shepherd's Wort and Holy Rite
Banish thee into the night."

ELVIRA What a disagreeable little verse.

CHARLES Be quiet, Elvira.

MADAME ARCATI Shhh! [*There is silence.*] Is there anyone there? . . . Is there anyone there?—one rap for yes—two raps for no. Is there anyone there? . . . [*The table gives a loud bump.*] Aha! Good stuff! Is it Daphne? . . . [*The table gives another bump.*] I'm sorry to bother you, dear, but Mrs. Condomine wants to return. [*The table bumps several times very quickly.*] Now then, Daphne . . . Did you hear what I said? [*After a pause the table gives one bump.*] Can you help us? . . . [*There is another pause, then the table begins to bump violently without stopping.*] Hold tight, Mr. Condomine—it's trying to break away. Oh! Oh!

Oh—— [*The table falls over with a crash.*]

CHARLES What's the matter, Madame Arcati? Are you hurt?

MADAME ARCATI [*Wailing.*] Oh! Oh! Oh——

CHARLES [*Turns on lights.*] What on earth's happening? [MADAME ARCATI *is lying on the floor with the table upside down on her back.* CHARLES *hurriedly lifts it off. Shaking her.*] Are you hurt, Madame Arcati?

ELVIRA She's in one of her damned trances again and I'm here as much as ever I was.

CHARLES [*Shaking* MADAME ARCATI.] For God's sake wake up.

MADAME ARCATI [*Moaning.*] Oh! Oh! Oh——

ELVIRA Leave her alone—she's having a whale of a time. If I ever do get back I'll strangle that bloody little Daphne . . .

CHARLES Wake up!

MADAME ARCATI [*Sitting up suddenly.*] What happened?

CHARLES Nothing—nothing at all.

MADAME ARCATI [*Rising and dusting herself.*] Oh yes, it did—I know something happened.

CHARLES You fell over—that's all that happened.

MADAME ARCATI Is she still here?

CHARLES Of course she is.

MADAME ARCATI Something must have gone wrong.

ELVIRA Make her do it properly. I'm sick of being messed about like this.

CHARLES She's doing her best. Be quiet, Elvira.

MADAME ARCATI Something happened—I sensed it in my trance—I felt it—it shivered through me.

Suddenly the window curtains blow out almost straight and RUTH *walks into the room. She is still wearing the brightly coloured clothes in which we last saw her but now they are entirely grey. So is her hair and her skin.*

RUTH Once and for all, Charles, what the hell does this mean?

The lights fade.

Scene 2

When the lights go up again several hours have elapsed. The whole room is in slight disarray. There are birch branches and evergreens laid on the floor in front of the doors and crossed birch branches

pinned rather untidily onto the curtains. The furniture has been moved about a bit. On the bridge table there is a pile of playing cards, MADAME ARCATI'S *crystal and a Ouija board. Also a plate of sandwiches and two empty beer mugs.*

MADAME ARCATI *is stretched out on the sofa with her eyes shut.* ELVIRA *is seated at the bridge table looking despondently at the debris.* RUTH *is by the fireplace.* CHARLES *is walking irritably about the room.*

RUTH Well—we've done all we can—I must say I couldn't be more exhausted.

ELVIRA It will be daylight soon.

The clock strikes five, very slowly.

RUTH That clock's always irritated me—it strikes far too slowly.

CHARLES It was a wedding present from Uncle Walter.

RUTH Whose Uncle Walter?

CHARLES Elvira's.

RUTH Well, all I can say is he might have chosen something a little more decorative.

ELVIRA If that really were all you could say, Ruth, I'm sure it would be a great comfort to us all.

RUTH [*Grandly.*] You can be as rude as you like, Elvira, I don't mind a bit—as a matter of fact I should be extremely surprised if you weren't.

ELVIRA [*Truculently.*] Why?

RUTH The reply to that is really too obvious.

CHARLES I wish you two would stop bickering for one minute.

RUTH This is quite definitely one of the most frustrating nights I have ever spent.

ELVIRA The reply to that is pretty obvious too.

RUTH I'm sure I don't know what you mean.

ELVIRA Skip it.

RUTH Now listen to me, Elvira. If you and I have got to stay together indefinitely in this house—and it looks unpleasantly—[*Turns to* MADAME ARCATI.]—likely—we had better come to some sort of an arrangement.

ELVIRA What sort of an arrangement?

CHARLES You're *not* going to stay indefinitely in this house.

RUTH With you then—we shall have to be with you.

CHARLES I don't see why—why don't you take a cottage somewhere?

RUTH You called us back.

CHARLES I've already explained until I'm black in the face that I did nothing of the sort.

RUTH Madame Arcati said you did.

CHARLES Madame Arcati's a muddling old fool.

ELVIRA I could have told you that in the first place.

RUTH I think you're behaving very shabbily, Charles.

CHARLES I don't see what I've done.

RUTH We have all agreed that as Elvira and I are dead that it would be both right and proper for us to dematerialize again as soon as possible. That, I admit. We have allowed ourselves to be subjected to the most humiliating hocus-pocus for hours and hours without complaining——

CHARLES Without complaining?

RUTH We've stood up—we've lain down—we've concentrated. We've sat interminably while that tiresome old woman recited extremely unflattering verses at us. We've endured five séances—we've watched her fling herself in and out of trances until we're dizzy and at the end of it all we find ourselves exactly where we were at the beginning. . . .

CHARLES Well, it's not my fault.

RUTH Be that as it may, the least you could do is to admit failure gracefully and try and make the best of it—your manners are boorish to a degree.

CHARLES I'm just as exhausted as you are. I've had to do all the damned table tapping, remember.

RUTH If she can't get us back, she can't and that's that. We shall have to think of something else.

CHARLES She *must* get you back—anything else is unthinkable.

ELVIRA There's gratitude for you!

CHARLES Gratitude?

ELVIRA Yes, for all the years we've both devoted to you—you ought to be ashamed.

CHARLES What about all the years I've devoted to you?

ELVIRA Nonsense—we've waited on you hand and foot—haven't we, Ruth? You're exceedingly selfish and always were.

CHARLES In that case I fail to see why you were both so anxious to get back to me.

RUTH You called us back. And you've done nothing but try to get rid of us ever since we came—hasn't he, Elvira?

ELVIRA He certainly has.

RUTH And now, owing to your idiotic inefficiency, we find ourselves in the most mortifying position—we're neither fish, flesh, nor fowl, nor whatever it is.

ELVIRA Good red herring.

RUTH It can't be.

CHARLES Well, why don't you do something about it? Why don't you go back on your own?

RUTH We can't—you know perfectly well we can't.

CHARLES Isn't there anybody on the other side who can help?

RUTH How do I know? I've only been there a few days . . . ask Elvira.

ELVIRA I've already told you that's no good—if we got Cagliostro, Mesmer, Merlin, Gil de Retz, and the Black Douglas in a row they couldn't do a thing—the impetus has got to come from here. . . . Perhaps darling Charles doesn't want us to go quite enough.

CHARLES I certainly do.

ELVIRA Well, you must have a very weak will then. I always suspected it.

RUTH It's no use arguing any more—wake up Madame Arcati.

ELVIRA Oh, not another séance—please, not another séance!

CHARLES [*Loudly—bending over* MADAME ARCATI.] Please wake up, Madame Arcati . . .

RUTH Shake her.

CHARLES It might upset her.

RUTH I don't care if it kills her.

CHARLES Please wake up, Madame Arcati. . . .

MADAME ARCATI [*Waking.*] What time is it?

CHARLES Ten past five!

MADAME ARCATI What time did I go off? [*She sits up.*]

CHARLES Over an hour ago.

MADAME ARCATI [*Reaching for her bag.*] Curious . . . very curious. Forgive me for a moment, I must just make a note of that for my diary. [*She takes a book out of her bag and scribbles in it.*] Are they still here?

CHARLES Yes.

MADAME ARCATI How disappointing.

CHARLES Have you any suggestions?

MADAME ARCATI [*Rising briskly.*] We mustn't give up hope. Chin up—never give in—that's my motto.

RUTH This schoolgirl phraseology's driving me mad.

MADAME ARCATI Now then . . .

CHARLES Now then what?

MADAME ARCATI What do you say we have another séance and really put our shoulders to

the wheel?—Make it a real rouser!

ELVIRA For God's sake not another séance.

MADAME ARCATI I might be able to materialize a trumpet if I tried hard enough—better than nothing, you know—I feel as fit as a fiddle after my rest.

ELVIRA I don't care if she materializes a whole symphony orchestra—I implore you not to let her have another séance.

CHARLES Don't you think, Madame Arcati, that perhaps we've had enough séances? After all they haven't achieved much, have they?

MADAME ARCATI Rome wasn't built in a day, you know.

CHARLES I know it wasn't, but. . . .

MADAME ARCATI Well then—cheer up — away with melancholy.

CHARLES Now listen, Madame Arcati . . . before you go off into any further trances I really think we ought to discuss the situation a little.

MADAME ARCATI Good — an excellent idea—and while we're doing it I shall have another of these delicious sandwiches—I'm as hungry as a hunter.

CHARLES Would you like some more beer?

MADAME ARCATI No, thank you—better not.

CHARLES Very well—I think I'll have a small whisky and soda.

MADAME ARCATI Make it a double and enjoy yourself. [CHARLES *goes to the drinks table and mixes himself a whisky and soda.*]

RUTH One day I intend to give myself the pleasure of telling Madame Arcati exactly what I think of her.

CHARLES She's been doing her best.

MADAME ARCATI Are the girls getting despondent?

CHARLES I'm afraid they are *rather.*

MADAME ARCATI We'll win through yet—don't be downhearted.

RUTH If we're not very careful she'll materialize a hockey team.

MADAME ARCATI Now then, Mr. Condomine—the discussion —fire away.

CHARLES Well, my wives and I have been talking it over and they are both absolutely convinced that I somehow or other called them back.

MADAME ARCATI Very natural.

CHARLES I am equally convinced that I did not.

MADAME ARCATI Love is a

strong psychic force, Mr. Condomine—it can work untold miracles. A true love call can encompass the universe——

CHARLES [*Hastily.*] I'm sure it can, but I must confess to you frankly that although my affection for both Elvira and Ruth is of the warmest I cannot truthfully feel that it would come under the heading that you describe.

ELVIRA I should just think not indeed.

MADAME ARCATI You may not know your own strength, Mr. Condomine.

CHARLES [*Firmly.*] I did *not* call them back—either consciously or subconsciously.

MADAME ARCATI But, Mr. Condomine . . .

CHARLES That is my final word on the subject.

MADAME ARCATI Neither of them could have appeared unless there had been somebody—a psychic subject—in the house, who wished for them . . .

CHARLES Well, it wasn't me.

ELVIRA Perhaps it was Doctor Bradman—I never knew he cared.

MADAME ARCATI Are you sure?—Are you really sure?

CHARLES Absolutely positive.

MADAME ARCATI [*Snapping her fingers.*] Great Scott, I believe we've been barking up the wrong tree!

CHARLES How do you mean?

MADAME ARCATI The Sudbury case!

CHARLES I don't understand.

MADAME ARCATI There's no reason why you should—it was before your day—I wonder—oh, I wonder. . . .

CHARLES What was the Sudbury case? I wish you'd explain.

MADAME ARCATI It was the case that made me famous, Mr. Condomine—it was what you might describe in theatrical parlance as my first smash hit! I had letters from all over the world about it—especially India.

CHARLES What did you do?

MADAME ARCATI I dematerialized old Lady Sudbury after she'd been firmly entrenched in the private chapel for over seventeen years.

CHARLES [*Rises.*] How? —Can't you remember how?

MADAME ARCATI Chance—a fluke—I happened on it by the merest coincidence.

CHARLES What fluke—what was it?

MADAME ARCATI Wait—all in good time. [*She begins to walk about the room.*] Now let me see—who was in the house during our first séance?

CHARLES Only the Bradmans, Ruth, and me and yourself.

MADAME ARCATI Ah, yes—yes—to be sure—but the Bradmans weren't here last night, were they?

CHARLES No.

MADAME ARCATI Quickly . . . my crystal——

CHARLES [*Handing it to her.*] Here. . . .

MADAME ARCATI [*Shaking it crossly.*] Damn the thing, it's cloudy again—— [*She looks again.*] Ah!—that's better—it's there again—it's there again—— I'm beginning to understand.

CHARLES I wish I was. What's there again?

MADAME ARCATI A bandage—a white bandage—hold on to a white bandage. . . .

CHARLES I haven't got a white bandage.

MADAME ARCATI Shhh! [*She puts the crystal down and stands silent for a moment.*]

ELVIRA She's too good,' you know—she ought to be in a circus.

MADAME ARCATI *advances to the middle of the room and raises her arms slowly—she begins to intone.*

MADAME ARCATI

Be you in nook or cranny answer me
Do you in Still-room or closet answer me
Do you behind the panel, above the stairs
Beneath the eaves—waking or sleeping
Answer me!
That ought to do it or I'm a Dutchman.

CHARLES Do what?

MADAME ARCATI Hush—wait—— [*She picks up one of the birch branches and waves it solemnly to and fro.*]

RUTH For God's sake don't let her throw any more of that garlic about. It nearly made me sick last time.

CHARLES Would you like the gramophone on or the lights out or anything?

MADAME ARCATI No, no—it's near—it's very near——

ELVIRA If it's a ghost I shall scream.

RUTH I hope it's nobody we know—I shall feel so silly.

Suddenly the door opens and EDITH *comes into the room. She is wearing a pink flannel dressing gown and bedroom slippers. Her head is bandaged.*

EDITH Did you ring, sir?

MADAME ARCATI The bandage! The white bandage!

CHARLES No, Edith.

EDITH I'm sorry, sir—I could have sworn I heard the bell—or

somebody calling—I was asleep —I don't rightly know which it was. . . .

MADAME ARCATI Come here, child.

EDITH Oh! [*She looks anxiously at* CHARLES.]

CHARLES Go on—go to Madame Arcati—it's quite all right.

MADAME ARCATI Who do you see in this room, child?

EDITH Oh, dear. . . .

MADAME ARCATI Answer please.

EDITH [*Falteringly.*] You, madame—— [*She stops.*]

MADAME ARCATI Go on.

EDITH The Master.

MADAME ARCATI Anyone else?

EDITH Oh no, madame. . . .

MADAME ARCATI [*Inflexibly.*] Look again.

EDITH [*Imploringly, to* CHARLES.] I don't understand, sir —I——

MADAME ARCATI Come, child —don't beat about the bush—look again.

ELVIRA *begins to move about the room almost as though she were being pulled.* EDITH *follows with her eyes.*

RUTH Do concentrate, Elvira, and keep still.

ELVIRA I can't. . . .

MADAME ARCATI Do you see anyone else now?

EDITH [*Slyly.*] Oh no, madame.

MADAME ARCATI She's lying.

EDITH Oh, madame!

MADAME ARCATI They always do.

CHARLES They?

MADAME ARCATI [*Sharply.*] Where are they now?

EDITH By the fireplace. Oh!

CHARLES She can see them—do you mean she can see them?

MADAME ARCATI Probably not very clearly—but enough——

EDITH [*Bursting into tears.*] Let me go—I haven't done nothing nor seen nobody—let me go back to bed.

MADAME ARCATI Give her a sandwich.

EDITH [*Drawing away.*] I don't want a sandwich. I want to go back to bed. . . .

CHARLES [*Handing* EDITH *the plate.*] Here, Edith.

MADAME ARCATI Nonsense—a big healthy girl like you saying no to a delicious sandwich—I never heard of such a thing—sit down.

EDITH [*To* CHARLES.] Please, sir, I . . .

CHARLES Please do as Madame Arcati says, Edith.

EDITH [*Sitting down and sniffling.*] I haven't done nothing wrong.

CHARLES It's all right—nobody said you had.

RUTH If she's been the cause of all this unpleasantness I'll give her a week's notice to-morrow.

ELVIRA You may not be here to-morrow——

MADAME ARCATI Look at me, Edith. [EDITH *obediently does so.*] Cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo——

EDITH [*Jumping.*] Oh, dear—what's the matter with her? Is she barmy?

MADAME ARCATI Here, Edith—this is my finger—look—— [*She waggles it.*] Have you ever seen such a long, long, long finger? Look now it's on the right—now it's on the left—backwards and forwards it goes—see—very quietly backwards and forwards—tic-toc—tic—toc—tic-toc.

ELVIRA The mouse ran up the clock.

RUTH Be *quiet*—you'll ruin everything.

MADAME ARCATI *whistles a little tune close to* EDITH'S *face—then she snaps her fingers.* EDITH *looks stolidly in front of her without flinching.* MADAME ARCATI *stands back.*

MADAME ARCATI Well—so far so good—she's off all right.

CHARLES Off?

MADAME ARCATI She's a Natural—just the same as the Sudbury case—it really is the most amusing coincidence. Now then—would you ask your wives to stand close together please?

CHARLES Where?

MADAME ARCATI Over there by you.

CHARLES Elvira—Ruth——

RUTH I resent being ordered about like this.

ELVIRA I don't like this at all—I don't like any of it—I feel peculiar.

CHARLES I'm afraid I must insist.

ELVIRA It would serve you right if we flatly refused to do anything at all.

MADAME ARCATI Are you sorry for having been so mischievous, Edith?

EDITH [*Cheerfully.*] Oh yes, madame.

MADAME ARCATI You know what you have to do now, don't you, Edith?

EDITH Oh yes, madame.

RUTH I believe it's going to work whatever it is. Oh, Charles.

CHARLES Shhh!

RUTH This is good-bye, Charles.

ELVIRA Tell her to stop for a minute—there's something I want to say before I go.

CHARLES You should have thought of that before—it's too late now.

ELVIRA Of all the mean, ungracious——

RUTH Charles, listen a moment . . .

MADAME ARCATI [*In a shrill voice.*] Lights!

MADAME ARCATI *rushes to the door and switches off the lights. In the dark* EDITH *is singing "Always" in a very high cockney voice.*

ELVIRA [*In the dark.*] I saw Captain Bracegirdle again, Charles—several times—I went to the Four Hundred with him twice when you were in Nottingham. And I must say I couldn't have enjoyed it more.

RUTH Don't think you're getting rid of us quite so easily, my dear—you may not be able to see us but we shall be here all right—I consider that you have behaved atrociously over the whole miserable business. And I should like to say here and now—— [*Her voice fades into a whisper and then disappears altogether.*]

MADAME ARCATI [*Exultantly.*] Splendid! Hurrah! We've done it! That's quite enough singing for the moment, Edith.

CHARLES [*After a pause.*] Shall I put on the lights?

MADAME ARCATI No—I will.

CHARLES *pulls the curtains and daylight floods into the room.* RUTH *and* ELVIRA *have disappeared.* EDITH *is still sitting on the chair.*

CHARLES They've gone — they've really gone.

MADAME ARCATI Yes—I think we've really pulled it off this time.

CHARLES You'd better wake her up, hadn't you? She might bring them back again.

MADAME ARCATI [*Clapping her hands in* EDITH's *face.*] Wake up, child!

EDITH [*Nearly jumping out of the chair.*] Good 'eavens! Where am I?

CHARLES It's all right, Edith —you can go back to bed now.

EDITH Why, it's morning.

CHARLES Yes—I know it is.

EDITH But I *was* in bed—how did I get down 'ere?

CHARLES I rang, Edith — I rang the bell and you answered it—didn't I, Madame Arcati?

EDITH Did I drop off? Do you think it's my concussion again? Oh, dear!

CHARLES Off you go, Edith, and thank you very much. [*He presses a pound note into her hand.*] Thank you very much indeed.

EDITH Oh, sir, whatever for? [*She looks at him in sudden horror.*] Oh, sir!! [*She bolts from the room.*]

CHARLES [*Surprised.*] What on earth did she mean by that?

MADAME ARCATI Golly, what a night! I'm ready to drop in my tracks.

CHARLES Would you like to stay here? — there's the spare room, you know.

MADAME ARCATI No, thank you—each to his own nest—I'll pedal home in a jiffy—it's only seven miles.

CHARLES I'm deeply grateful to you, Madame Arcati. I don't know what arrangements you generally make but I trust you will send in your account in due course.

MADAME ARCATI Good heavens, Mr. Condomine—it was a pleasure—I wouldn't dream of such a thing.

CHARLES But really I feel that all those trances. . . .

MADAME ARCATI I enjoy them, Mr. Condomine, thoroughly. I always have since a child.

CHARLES Perhaps you'd give me the pleasure of lunching with me one day soon?

MADAME ARCATI When you come back—I should be delighted.

CHARLES Come back?

MADAME ARCATI [*Lowering her voice.*] Take my advice, Mr. Condomine, and go away immediately.

CHARLES But, Madame Arcati! You don't mean that . . . ?

MADAME ARCATI [*Clearing her stuff from table.*] This must be an unhappy house for you—there must be memories both grave and gay in every corner of it—also—— [*She pauses.*]

CHARLES Also what?

MADAME ARCATI [*Thinking better of it.*] There are more things in heaven and earth, Mr. Condomine. [*She places her finger to her lips.*] Just go—pack your traps and go as soon as possible.

CHARLES [*Also in lowered tones.*] Do you mean that they may still be here?

MADAME ARCATI [*She nods and then nonchalantly whistles a little tune.*] *Quien sabe,* as the Spanish say. [*She collects her bag and her crystal.*]

CHARLES [*Looking furtively round the room.*] I wonder—I wonder. I'll follow your advice, Madame Arcati. Thank you again.

MADAME ARCATI Well, goodbye, Mr. Condomine—it's been fascinating—from first to last—fascinating. Do you mind if I take just one more sandwich to munch on my way home? [*Comes down to table for sandwich.*]

CHARLES By all means.

MADAME ARCATI *goes to the door.* CHARLES *follows her to see her safely out.*

MADAME ARCATI [*As they go.*] Don't trouble—I can find my way. Cheerio once more and good hunting!

CHARLES *watches her into the hall and then comes back into the room. He prowls about for a moment as though he were not sure that he was alone.*

CHARLES [*Softly.*] Ruth — Elvira—are you there? [*A pause.*] Ruth — Elvira — I know damn well you're there—— [*Another pause.*] I just want to tell you that I'm going away so there's no point in your hanging about any longer—I'm going a long way away—somewhere where I don't believe you'll be able to follow me. In spite of what Elvira said I don't think spirits can travel over water. Is that quite clear, my darlings? You said in one of your more acid moments, Ruth, that I had been hag-ridden all my life! How right you were—but now I'm free, Ruth dear, not only of Mother and Elvira and Mrs. Winthrop-Lewellen, but free of you too, and I should like to take this farewell opportunity of saying I'm enjoying it immensely—— [*A vase crashes into the fireplace.*] Aha—I thought so—you were very silly, Elvira, to imagine that I didn't know all about you and Captain Bracegirdle—I did. But what you didn't know was that I was extremely attached to Paula Westlake at the time! [*The clock strikes sixteen viciously and very quickly.*] I was reasonably faithful to you, Ruth, but I doubt if it would have lasted much longer —you were becoming increasingly domineering, you know, and there's nothing more off putting than that, is there? [*A large picture falls down with a crash.*] Good-bye for the moment, my dears. I expect we are bound to meet again one day, but until we do I'm going to enjoy myself as I've never enjoyed myself before. You can break up the house as much as you like—I'm leaving it anyhow. Think kindly of me and send out good thoughts—— [*The overmantel begins to shake and tremble as though someone were tugging at it.*] Nice work, Elvira — persevere. Good-bye again—parting is such *sweet* sorrow! [*He goes out of the room just as the overmantel crashes to the floor and the curtain pole comes tumbling down.*]

Curtain.

3. American Plays

EXPRESSIONISM

EUGENE O'NEILL: *The Hairy Ape*

POETIC TRAGEDY

MAXWELL ANDERSON: *Winterset*

DOMESTIC DRAMA

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS: *The Glass Menagerie*

Eugene O'Neill

Eugene O'Neill is the only American dramatist whose plays have been successfully produced in almost every country in the world. Max Reinhardt's production of *The Hairy Ape* in Paris became famous. For many years that play had a permanent place in the repertory of the Moscow Art Theatre. It has even been given in South Africa by Zulu actors in Bantu. Furthermore, O'Neill is the only American dramatist who has received the Nobel prize for literary achievement. And there are many critics who consider that the American theater came to maturity with the appearance of his plays.

There are two principal reasons that account for O'Neill's international and national reputation. Like any important dramatist, he has created unforgettable characters. In addition to this, however, he has extended the confines of the stage more than any other American playwright. It is frequently said that the measure of his greatness, like that of Marlowe and Shakespeare, is his continual search for new and original forms through which new and original ideas are expressed. Unlike many playwrights, he has never been content to develop one successful formula and thereafter to vary it but slightly in play after play.

A glance at the list of early O'Neill plays indicates that their power rests principally in strong characterizations. He was disgusted with such romantic plays as the *Count of Monte Cristo,* in which he had seen his father, the popular actor James O'Neill. He disdained the artificialities of their situations involving concealed identities, their use of the soliloquy and the aside, and the frequent appearance of such conventional stock characters as the conniving villain and the rescuing hero. But the many years spent in the dressing rooms of his parents and his occasional experiences as a stagehand or a spear-bearer in those plays taught him the advantages of the theater as a medium of expression. When later years of vagabondage intro-

duced him to sailors, thieves, and drunkards, whose lives had never been interpreted on the stage with perception and insight, he was ready to put them into the theater provided by his new friends, the Provincetown Players. He transferred into the lives of these characters of his early plays all the sordid bitterness and the small portion of beauty that he had observed in his sea experiences. In their limited way his men and women were admirable, or lovable, or disgusting, or bestial; but they were always vital human beings. The impact of their reality shocked his audiences into respectful attention. Without sentimentality or moralizing, he re-created on the stage the life that he himself had witnessed.

Despite the success of his early plays O'Neill soon became dissatisfied with the violent lives of ordinary sailors and water-front bums who were untroubled by social or ethical ideas. This is in part explained by his association with socially conscious *avant-garde* artists in Greenwich Village. But it is also largely explained by his own natural maturing processes. He now became interested in human beings whose intellectual and emotional relationships with themselves and the world were complex. In place of Yank in *Bound East for Cardiff,* or Driscoll in *The Long Voyage Home,* or even Anna and Chris in *Anna Christie,* he began to characterize the Negro emperor, Jones, who had a mind capable of disintegrating under fear. In *The Great God Brown* Dion Anthony embodied aspects of two entire cultures. And in *Strange Interlude* O'Neill created in Nina Leeds an example of a modern woman whose deep-seated maladjustments with the men in her life are shown in nine long acts. He turned, in brief, from simple people whom he had observed to those who were more largely the product of his subtle imagination.

He also became dissatisfied with the straightforward storytelling style of his early plays. He declared at this time that the "old 'naturalism'—or 'realism,' if you prefer . . . no longer applies," and that "we have taken too many snapshots of each other in every graceless position. We have endured too much from the banality of surfaces." His interest in his narratives became subordinated to psychological analysis and ethical concepts. Furthermore, during the early twenties, when he was spending his time in close association with men like

Robert Edmond Jones, who designed many of the sets of the plays of his second period, and with Kenneth MacGowan, who directed a number of them, he came in contact with many fresh ideas for staging plays.

One of the most original departures from, and the most complete reaction to, mere surface realism was a movement known as expressionism, which attempted to do for the drama what the stream-of-consciousness technique developed by James Joyce and others had done for the novel. Instead of creating people engaged in recognizable human behavior, many European dramatists like Georg Kaiser and Ernst Toller were trying to interpret character through deliberately distorted settings, costumes, and properties. They attempted to make the entire stage and everything on it reveal aspects of human personality impossible to represent directly in the techniques of the realistic drama.

The production of *The Emperor Jones* in 1920 established O'Neill as a dramatist attempting to make similar use of the resources of the theater. He has never considered any of his plays to be expressionistic; and, indeed, it is as difficult to define the limits of expressionism as it is to define any of the many other isms of the period. O'Neill has asserted that the first expressionistic play he ever encountered was Kaiser's *From Morn to Midnight* and that he read it after the production of *The Emperor Jones.* He had, however, no doubt heard this play, as well as Kaiser's famous *Gas* trilogy, discussed in the Greenwich Village bars and studios that he then frequented. Certainly *The Emperor Jones* and *The Hairy Ape* inaugurated a new period in O'Neill's development as a craftsman, a period wherein he was to use many of the favorite devices of the expressionistic dramatists.

In the experimental plays written during the next fifteen years he revived a special form of the long soliloquy and the aside, both of which had been discarded by the realistic dramatists. He used masks and exaggerated settings to symbolize mental conflicts. Characters were introduced as types, sometimes even as abstractions, like the "little formless fears" in *The Emperor Jones.* Music and sound effects were used to express his characters' inner consciousness. Occasionally he felt that his dramatic ideas could not be confined to the two and

one-half hours traditionally allowed a play. *Strange Interlude* and *Mourning Becomes Electra* ran from late in the afternoon until long past the usual final curtain. Although O'Neill returned occasionally to the completely naturalistic interpretation of scenes and characters, as in *Ah, Wilderness!,* he has always searched for original and startling ways of using the theater.

While he experimented with intricate styles to dramatize his complex characters, O'Neill also developed new themes that went beyond his early ideas of man against the sea. His people began to speculate on man's fate in the modern world and on spiritual conceptions of man's relation with unseen forces in the world. In his plays beginning with *The Great God Brown* and continuing through *Days Without End*—the last play written before his temporary retirement in 1935—he became more and more preoccupied with the ultimate meaning of man's existence.

To say that this spiritual element appeared in O'Neill's plays only in the late twenties would be, of course, an exaggeration. It was implicit, though undeveloped, in his early dramas. Man's spiritual relation to the sea is one of the most recurrent themes in O'Neill's writings, and even in his first plays he sometimes suggested that the sea was the embodiment of malevolent force. Chris Christopherson, in *Anna Christie,* shakes his fist at "dat ol' davil sea," which he blames for all the misfortunes that afflict him. The irony in *The Long Voyage Home* is that the sea is never brought under man's control and the voyagers never reach home, which is undoubtedly the reason that this title was chosen to represent four of these plays when John Ford combined *The Moon of the Caribees, Bound East for Cardiff, In the Zone,* and *The Long Voyage Home* in his prize-winning cinema version.

In later plays, however, the theme of the sea as a spiritual force was developed more completely. O'Neill is still mysteriously silent about a play called *The Long Day's Voyage into Night* that is now locked in a safe and may not be published for twenty-five years. He has permitted one significant passage from this manuscript, a speech by one of the leading characters, to be printed in *Life* magazine. This character asserts that all of his most important memories are connected with the sea. He recalls a moment when he lay on the bow-

sprit of a square-rigger bound for Buenos Aires, the rhythm of the water and the beauty of the masts and sails in the moonlight making him lose his sense of individuality. He felt himself dissolve in the sea and become the rhythm and the sails and the starred sky above. Then he was more than a man living in the present and belonged to life itself. He remembers other occasions when he experienced the same mystical sense of fusion with nature, times when he was swimming far out from shore or lying alone on a beach. The ecstasy was like that felt by a saint in a religious vision.

O'Neill himself has been a strong swimmer and has enjoyed venturing far into the ocean. He has also had residences beside some famous beaches, including a home at Sea Island, Georgia. The identification of a character with the forces of nature, such as is depicted in *The Long Day's Voyage into Night,* appears again and again in O'Neill's plays. It can be said that the reason for the tragic end met by many of his characters is their failure to preserve this identification. *The Hairy Ape* is an example of this theme; so is *The Great God Brown,* wherein Dion Anthony has a boy's spontaneous joy in life which he tries to reveal to Margaret, his beloved. But Margaret refuses to recognize him without the bitter, mocking mask behind which this sensitive young artist hides. When he comes to her without the mask, she screams in terror and will not accept him until he has resumed it.

Another theme of O'Neill's mature dramas was modern man's search for new beliefs and certainties to replace those which science has destroyed. In *Dynamo* he traced the growing skepticism of Reuben Light, the son of a bigoted fundamentalist minister. Reuben's search for a faith to replace the one he has lost leads him to the dynamo of a hydroelectric plant, a dynamo "huge and black, with something of a massive female idol about it, the exciter set on the main structure like a head with blank, oblong eyes above a gross, rounded torso." This dynamo becomes symbolically the great mother and has a human counterpart in the mother of the young girl with whom he is in love. Reuben acknowledges his new-found belief in the goddess, dynamo, as well as in the sea, which he thinks of as the living force that drives her mighty turbines. He finds some consolation in his new faith, but his fatal obsession causes him to electrocute

himself. Concerning this play, O'Neill later said that at the roots of the sickness of today is "the death of the old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfying new one for the surviving primitive religious instinct to find a meaning for life in, and to comfort its fears of death with."

The mother-image is an insistent theme in many of O'Neill's plays. The Freudian theory that human behavior is determined by unrecognized emotions as intense as they are primitive was seized upon during the twenties by many writers as the only true interpretation of human conduct. O'Neill has denied that he was seriously influenced by this psychology. "In short," he wrote, "I think I know enough about men and women to have written *Mourning Becomes Electra* almost exactly as it is if I had never heard of Freud or Jung or the others. Authors were psychologists, you know, and profound ones, before psychology was invented." He did, however, treat abnormal relations in modern terms when he retold the tragic story of the house of Atreus in *Mourning Becomes Electra.*

Between 1935 and 1946 O'Neill went into seclusion to work on a cycle of plays which was the most ambitious project ever attempted by a modern American dramatist. It was to consist of nine full-length plays entitled *A Tale of Possessors Self-Dispossessed.* Three plays were finished, three were almost completed, and copious notations were made for two more when he became dissatisfied with the whole arrangement. He destroyed all the plays except the third one, *A Touch of the Poet.* This action indicates O'Neill's insistence on perfection and his critical insight into his own shortcomings. Many times, dramatic ideas that were incompletely presented in a one-act form were later developed in a full-length play. Thus he has always experimented and rewritten.

Despite passages of bombast when his language was not equal to the intensity of his imagination, despite some interpretations of character in terms of already dated psychological jargon, despite occasional bursts of melodrama and violence, O'Neill has created a half-dozen plays which seem to be permanently established in the repertory of world literature. And he has created a dozen more that demand respectful attention. He is one of the theater's most dedicated craftsmen. A keen sense of the tragic in his observation of the

dilemmas of Western man, and the inventive skill of an imaginative technician, have secured his distinguished position. He has worked tirelessly, and with deep critical insight, to extend the confines of the theater further than has any other American dramatist.

1888 Born October 16 at Broadway and Forty-third Street, New York City. His father, James, was a romantic actor, famous in *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Until he was seven years old Eugene toured with his family. Then he was placed in a succession of boarding schools.

1906 Matriculated at Princeton; was suspended during first year for what he called "general hell-raising."

1909-11 Married Kathleen Jenkins and had a son, Eugene, Jr. (Divorced in 1912.) He traveled to Honduras, Argentina, South Africa, and England, and lived as a social derelict along the water fronts in such dives as Jimmy the Priests. His favorite authors, London and Kipling, stimulated an interest in violent physical action and the he-man sailor. Conrad shaped his interest in the sea. Back in the United States he traveled with the *Monte Cristo* company and later was a reporter in New London, Connecticut.

1912-13 A physical breakdown and tuberculosis followed these years of hard living. He rested in a sanatorium and began to read seriously the plays of Strindberg and Wedekind, and the philosophy of Nietzsche, Marx, and Kropotkin.

1913-20 REALISTIC DRAMAS

1913 The Web, his earliest surviving play.

1914 Spent a year at Harvard in the 47 Workshop playwriting course. Wrote two plays for George Pierce Baker. *Thirst and Other One-Act Plays* was published.

1916-24 Provincetown Players were his chief producers. *Bound East for Cardiff,* his first production, was staged in the summer theater at Provincetown, Massachusetts.

1917 Wintered with the Provincetown Players in Greenwich Village, where he met professional radicals. He became very conscious of social criticism and the underdog. *The Long Voyage Home* was produced in New York City.[1]

1918 Married Agnes Boulton and had a son, Shane, and a daughter, Oona. (Divorced in 1929.) *The Moon of the Caribees,* his own favorite of the early one-act sea plays.

1920 Beyond the Horizon, introducing a favorite theme—the need for illusions—was his first successful full-length play, his first Broadway production, and it won him his first Pulitzer prize.

1920-34 EXPRESSIONISTIC AND EXPERIMENTAL DRAMA

O'Neill wrote of the techniques of the experimental drama: "I've tried to make myself a melting pot for all these methods, seeing some virtues for my ends in each of them, and thereby, if there is enough real fire in me, boil down to my own technique."

1920 The Emperor Jones shows the collapse of a mind under fear by the projecting of mental action on the stage.

1921 Anna Christie won O'Neill's second Pulitzer Prize.

1922 The Hairy Ape, of which he wrote that it "was propaganda in

[1] All dates for O'Neill's plays are for the New York production unless otherwise noted.

the sense that it was a symbol of man, who has lost his old harmony with nature, the harmony which he used to have as an animal and has not yet acquired in a spiritual way. . . . The subject here . . . is man and his struggle with his own fate. The struggle used to be with the gods, but is now with himself, his own past, his attempt 'to belong.'"

1924 Desire Under the Elms depicts, in a realistic style, the conflict between materialism and love.

1926 The Great God Brown deals with "the visionless demi-god of our new materialistic myth—a Success." His first use of masks.

1928-ff. The Theatre Guild became his chief producer.

1928 Strange Interlude ran for 112 performances and won him a third Pulitzer prize. It contains nine full acts. The performance started at 5:15 P.M. and ran until after eleven except for a ninety minute intermission for supper. This play revived the aside.

1929 Married Carlotta Monterey.
Dynamo uses electricity as a symbol of the failure of science to produce a satisfactory faith.

1931 Mourning Becomes Electra ran for 150 performances, although its playing time was six hours. Critics generally acknowledged O'Neill as America's greatest dramatist and declared that the American theater had now matured to stand beside the English and Continental stage.

1932 Ah, Wilderness! was O'Neill's most popular play. A serious comedy with George M. Cohan in the leading role, it ran for 289 performances. He said that his "purpose was to write a play true to the spirit of the American large small-town at the turn of the century. To me . . . . the real America found its unique expression in such middle-class families as the Millers."

1934 Days Without End was his last production before his ten-year retirement from the stage.

1935-46 PERIOD OF RETIREMENT
O'Neill left New York and lived chiefly in California. He began work on a cycle of nine plays that would reflect the rise of materialism and its conflict with spiritual values in 150 years of American history. Bad health and the war changed his conception from time to time and have prevented him from finishing it. None of the cycle has yet been produced. O'Neill said in summary of the theme of his cycle: Americans "are the greatest example of 'For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'"

1936 He received the Nobel prize for literature in recognition of his position in world drama.

1946-ff. LAST PLAYS

1946 The Iceman Cometh is another study of the need of illusions.

1947 The Moon of the Misbegotten, which opened in Columbus, Ohio, was not successful. These latest plays are realistic rather than experimental.

The Hairy Ape[1]

A COMEDY OF ANCIENT AND MODERN LIFE
IN EIGHT SCENES

by EUGENE O'NEILL

Characters

ROBERT SMITH, "YANK"
PADDY
LONG
MILDRED DOUGLAS
HER AUNT
SECOND ENGINEER
A GUARD
A SECRETARY OF AN ORGANIZATION
Stokers, Ladies, Gentlemen, etc.

[1] Copyright, 1922, by Eugene O'Neill, reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

Scenes

Scene 1: *The firemen's forecastle of an ocean liner—an hour after sailing from New York.*
Scene 2: *Section of promenade deck, two days out—morning.*
Scene 3: *The stokehole. A few minutes later.*
Scene 4: *Same as Scene One. Half an hour later.*
Scene 5: *Fifth Avenue, New York. Three weeks later.*
Scene 6: *An island near the city. The next night.*
Scene 7: *In the city. About a month later.*
Scene 8: *In the city. Twilight of the next day.*

The firemen's forecastle of a transatlantic liner an hour after sailing from New York for the voyage across. Tiers of narrow, steel bunks, three deep, on all sides. An entrance in rear. Benches on the floor before the bunks. The room is crowded with men, shouting, cursing, laughing, singing—a confused, inchoate uproar swelling into a sort of unity, a meaning—the bewildered, furious, baffled defiance of a beast in a cage. Nearly all the men are drunk. Many bottles are passed from hand to hand. All are dressed in dungaree pants, heavy ugly shoes. Some wear singlets, but the majority are stripped to the waist.

The treatment of this scene, or of any other scene in the play, should by no means be naturalistic. The effect sought after is a cramped space in the bowels of a ship, imprisoned by white steel. The lines of bunks, the uprights supporting them, cross each other like the steel framework of a cage. The ceiling crushes down upon the men's heads. They cannot stand upright. This accentuates the natural stooping posture which shoveling coal and the resultant over-development of back and shoulder muscles have given them. The men themselves should resemble those pictures in which the appearance of Neanderthal Man is guessed at. All are hairy-chested, with long arms of tremendous power, and low, receding brows above their small, fierce, resentful eyes. All the civilized white races are represented, but except for the slight differentiation in color of hair, skin, eyes, all these men are alike.

The curtain rises on a tumult of sound. YANK *is seated in the foreground. He seems broader, fiercer, more truculent, more powerful, more sure of himself than the rest. They respect his superior strength —the grudging respect of fear. Then, too, he represents to them a self-expression, the very last word in what they are, their most highly developed individual.*

VOICES Gif me trink dere, you!
'Ave a wet!
Salute!
Gesundheit!
Skoal!
Drunk as a lord, God stiffen you!
Here's how!
Luck!

Pass back that bottle, damn you!
Pourin' it down his neck!
Ho, Froggy! Where the devil have you been?
La Touraine.
I hit him smash in yaw, py Gott!
Jenkins — the First —he's a rotten swine—
And the coppers nabbed him—and I run—
I like peer better. It don't pig head gif you.
A slut, I'm sayin'! She robbed me aslape—
To hell with 'em all!
You're a bloody liar!
Say dot again! [*Commotion. Two men about to fight are pulled apart.*]
No scrappin' now!
Tonight—
See who's the best man!
Bloody Dutchman!
Tonight on the for-'ard square.
I'll bet on Dutchy.
He packa da wallop, I tella you!
Shut up, Wop!
No fightin', maties. We're all chums, ain't we?
[*A voice starts bawling a song.*]

"Beer, beer, glorious beer!
Fill yourselves right up to here."

YANK [*For the first time seeming to take notice of the uproar about him, turns around threateningly—in a tone of contemptuous authority.*] Choke off dat noise! Where d'yuh get dat beer stuff? Beer, hell! Beer's for goils —and Dutchmen. Me for some-p'n wit a kick to it! Gimme a drink, one of youse guys. [*Several bottles are eagerly offered. He takes a tremendous gulp at one of them; then, keeping the bottle in his hand, glares belligerently at the owner, who hastens to acquiesce in this robbery by saying:*] All righto, Yank. Keep it and have another. [YANK *contemptuously turns his back on the crowd again. For a second there is an embarrassed silence. Then—*]

VOICES We must be passing the Hook.
She's beginning to roll to it.
Six days in hell—and then Southampton.
Py Yesus, I vish some-

pody take my first vatch for me!

Gittin' seasick, Square-head?

Drink up and forget it!

What's in your bottle?

Gin.

Dot's nigger trink.

Absinthe? It's doped. You'll go off your chump, Froggy!

Cochon!

Whisky, that's the ticket!

Where's Paddy?

Going asleep.

Sing us that whisky song, Paddy. [*They all turn to an old wizened Irishman who is dozing, very drunk, on the benches forward. His face is extremely monkey-like with all the sad, patient pathos of that animal in his small eyes.*]

Singa da song, Caruso Pat!

He's gettin' old. The drink is too much for him.

He's too drunk.

PADDY [*Blinking about him, starts to his feet resentfully, swaying, holding on to the edge of a bunk.*] I'm never too drunk to sing. 'Tis only when I'm dead to the world I'd be wishful to sing at all. [*With a sort of sad contempt.*] "Whisky Johnny," ye want? A chanty, ye want? Now that's a queer wish from the ugly like of you, God help you. But no matther. [*He starts to sing in a thin, nasal, doleful tone:*]

"Oh, whisky is the life of man!
Whisky! O Johnny! [They all join in on this.]
Oh, whisky is the life of man!
Whisky for my Johnny!
[Again chorus.]

"Oh, whisky drove my old man mad!
Whisky! O Johnny!
Oh, whisky drove my old man mad!
Whisky for my Johnny!"

YANK [*Again turning around scornfully.*] Aw hell! Nix on dat old sailing-ship stuff! All dat bull's dead, see? And you're dead, too, yuh damned old Harp, on'y yuh don't know it. Take it easy, see. Give us a rest. Nix on de loud noise. [*With a cynical grin.*] Can't youse see I'm tryin' to t'ink?

ALL [*Repeating the word after him as one with the*

same cynical amused mockery.] Think! [*The chorused word has a brazen metallic quality as if their throats were phonograph horns. It is followed by a general uproar of hard, barking laughter.*]

VOICES Don't be cracking your head wit ut, Yank.

You gat headache, py yingo!

One thing about it—it rhymes with drink!

Ha, ha, ha!

Drink, don't think!

Drink, don't think!

Drink, don't think! [*A whole chorus of voices has taken up this refrain, stamping on the floor, pounding on the benches with fists.*]

YANK [*Taking a gulp from his bottle—good-naturedly.*] Aw right. Can de noise. I got yuh de foist time. [*The uproar subsides. A very drunken sentimental tenor begins to sing:*]

"Far away in Canada,
Far across the sea,
There's a lass who fondly waits
Making a home for me—"

YANK [*Fiercely contemptuous.*] Shut up, yuh lousy boob! Where d'yuh get dat tripe? Home? Home, hell! I'll make a home for yuh! I'll knock yuh dead. Home! T'hell wit home! Where d'yuh get dat tripe? Dis is home, see? What d'yuh want wit home? [*Proudly.*] I runned away from mine when I was a kid. On'y too glad to beat it, dat was me. Home was lickings for me, dat's all. But yuh can bet your shoit no one ain't never licked me since! Wanter try it, any of youse? Huh! I guess not. [*In a more placated but still contemptuous tone.*] Goils waitin' for yuh, huh? Aw, hell! Dat's all tripe. Dey don't wait for no one. Dey'd double-cross yuh for a nickel. Dey're all tarts, get me? Treat 'em rough, dat's me. To hell wit 'em. Tarts, dat's what, de whole bunch of 'em.

LONG [*Very drunk, jumps on a bench excitedly, gesticulating with a bottle in his hand.*] Listen 'ere, Comrades! Yank 'ere is right. 'E says this 'ere stinkin' ship is our 'ome. And 'e says as 'ome is 'ell. And 'e's right! This is 'ell. We lives in 'ell, Comrades—and right enough we'll die in it. [*Raging.*] And who's ter blame, I arsks yer? We ain't. We wasn't born this rotten way. All men is born free and ekal. That's in the bleedin' Bible, maties. But what d'they care for the Bible—

them lazy, bloated swine what travels first cabin? Them's the ones. They dragged us down 'til we're on'y wage slaves in the bowels of a bloody ship, sweatin', burnin' up, eatin' coal dust! Hit's them's ter blame—the damned Capitalist clarss! [*There had been a gradual murmur of contemptuous resentment rising among the men until now he is interrupted by a storm of catcalls, hisses, boos, hard laughter.*]

VOICES Turn it off!
Shut up!
Sit down!
Closa da face!
Tamn fool! [*Etc.*]

YANK [*Standing up and glaring at* LONG.] Sit down before I knock yuh down! [LONG *makes haste to efface himself.* YANK *goes on contemptuously.*] De Bible, huh? De Cap'tlist class, huh? Aw nix on dat Salvation Army-Socialist bull. Git a soapbox! Hire a hall! Come and be saved, huh? Jerk us to Jesus, huh? Aw g'wan! I've listened to lots of guys like you, see. Yuh're all wrong. Wanter know what I t'ink? Yuh ain't no good for no one. Yuh're de bunk. Yuh ain't got no noive, get me? Yuh're yellow, dat's what. Yellow, dat's you. Say! What's dem slobs in de foist cabin got to do wit us? We're better men dan dey are, ain't we? Sure! One of us guys could clean up de whole mob wit one mit. Put one of 'em down here for one watch in de stokehole, what'd happen? Dey'd carry him off on a stretcher. Dem boids don't amount to nothin'. Dey're just baggage. Who makes dis old tub run? Ain't it us guys? Well den, we belong, don't we? We belong and dey don't. Dat's all. [*A loud chorus of approval.* YANK *goes on.*] As for dis bein' hell—aw, nuts! Yuh lost your noive, dat's what. Dis is a man's job, get me? It belongs. It runs dis tub. No stiffs need apply. But yuh're a stiff, see? Yuh're yellow, dat's you.

VOICES [*With a great hard pride in them.*]
Righto!
A man's job!
Talk is cheap, Long.
He never could hold up his end.
Divil take him!
Yank's right. We make it go.
Py Gott, Yank say right ting!
We don't need no one cryin' over us.
Makin' speeches.
Throw him out!
Yellow!
Chuck him overboard!

I'll break his jaw for him!

[*They crowd around* LONG *threateningly.*]

YANK [*Half good-natured again—contemptuously.*] Aw, take it easy. Leave him alone. He ain't woith a punch. Drink up. Here's how, whoever owns dis. [*He takes a long swallow from his bottle. All drink with him. In a flash all is hilarious amiability again, back-slapping, loud talk, etc.*]

PADDY [*Who has been sitting in a blinking, melancholy daze—suddenly cries out in a voice full of old sorrow.*] We belong to this, you're saying? We make the ship to go, you're saying? Yerra then, that Almighty God have pity on us! [*His voice runs into the wail of a keen, he rocks back and forth on his bench. The men stare at him, startled and impressed in spite of themselves.*] Oh, to be back in the fine days of my youth, ochone! Oh, there was fine beautiful ships them days—clippers wid tall masts touching the sky—fine strong men in them—men that was sons of the sea as if 'twas the mother that bore them. Oh, the clean skins of them, and the clear eyes, the straight backs and full chests of them! Brave men they was, and bold men surely! We'd be sailing out, bound down round the Horn maybe. We'd be making sail in the dawn, with a fair breeze, singing a chanty song wid no care to it. And astern the land would be sinking low and dying out, but we'd give it no heed but a laugh, and never a look behind. For the day that was, was enough, for we was free men—and I'm thinking 'tis only slaves do be giving heed to the day that's gone or the day to come—until they're old like me. [*With a sort of religious exaltation.*] Oh, to be scudding south again wid the power of the Trade Wind driving her on steady through the nights and the days! Full sail on her! Nights and days! Nights when the foam of the wake would be flaming wid fire, when the sky'd be blazing and winking wid stars. Or the full of the moon maybe. Then you'd see her driving through the gray night, her sails stretching aloft all silver and white, not a sound on the deck, the lot of us dreaming dreams, till you'd believe 'twas no real ship at all you was on but a ghost ship like the *Flying Dutchman* they say does be roaming the seas forevermore widout touching a port. And there was the days, too. A warm sun on

the clean decks. Sun warming the blood of you, and wind over the miles of shiny green ocean like strong drink to your lungs. Work —aye, hard work—but who'd mind that at all? Sure, you worked under the sky and 'twas work wid skill and daring to it. And wid the day done, in the dog watch, smoking me pipe at ease, the lookout would be raising land maybe, and we'd see the mountains of South Americy wid the red fire of the setting sun painting their white tops and the clouds floating by them! [*His tone of exaltation ceases. He goes on mournfully.*] Yerra, what's the use of talking? 'Tis a dead man's whisper. [*To* YANK *resentfully:*] 'Twas them days men belonged to ships, not now. 'Twas them days a ship was part of the sea, and a man was part of a ship, and the sea joined all together and made it one. [*Scornfully.*] Is it one wid this you'd be, Yank—black smoke from the funnels smudging the sea, smudging the decks—the bloody engines pounding and throbbing and shaking—wid divil a sight of sun or a breath of clean air—choking our lungs wid coal dust —breaking our backs and hearts in the hell of the stokehole—feeding the bloody furnace—feeding our lives along wid the coal, I'm thinking—caged in by steel from a sight of the sky like bloody apes in the Zoo! [*With a harsh laugh.*] Ho-ho, divil mend you! Is it to belong to that you're wishing? Is it a flesh and blood wheel of the engines you'd be?

YANK [*Who has been listening with a contemptuous sneer, barks out the answer.*] Sure ting! Dat's me. What about it?

PADDY [*As if to himself—with great sorrow.*] Me time is past due. That a great wave wid sun in the heart of it may sweep me over the side sometime I'd be dreaming of the days that's gone!

YANK Aw, yuh crazy Mick! [*He springs to his feet and advances on* PADDY *threateningly—then stops, fighting some queer struggle within himself—lets his hands fall to his sides—contemptuously.*] Aw, take it easy. Yuh're aw right, at dat. Yuh're bugs, dat's all—nutty as a cuckoo. All dat tripe yuh been pullin'—Aw, dat's all right. On'y it's dead, get me? Yuh don't belong no more, see. Yuh don't get de stuff. Yuh're too old. [*Disgustedly.*] But aw say, come up for air onct in a while, can't yuh? See what's happened since yuh croaked. [*He suddenly bursts forth vehemently, growing more and more excited.*] Say! Sure! I meant it! What de hell— Say, lemme talk!

Hey! Hey, you old Harp! Hey, youse guys! Say, listen to me—wait a moment—I gotter talk, see. I belong and he don't. He's dead but I'm livin'. Listen to me! Sure I'm part of de engines! Why de hell not! Dey move, don't dey? Dey're speed, ain't dey? Dey smash trou, don't dey? Twenty-five knots a hour! Dat's goin' some! Dat's new stuff! Dat belongs! But him, he's too old. He gets dizzy. Say, listen. All dat crazy tripe about nights and days; all dat crazy tripe about stars and moons; all dat crazy tripe about suns and winds, fresh air and de rest of it— Aw hell, dat's all a dope dream! Hittin' de pipe of de past, dat's what he's doin'. He's old and don't belong no more. But me, I'm young! I'm in de pink! I move wit it. It, get me! I mean de ting dat's de guts of all dis. It ploughs trou all de tripe he's been sayin'. It blows dat up! It knocks dat dead! It slams dat offen de face of de oith! It, get me! De engines and de coal and de smoke and all de rest of it! He can't breathe and swallow coal dust, but I kin, see? Dat's fresh air for me! Dat's food for me! I'm new, get me? Hell in de stokehole? Sure! It takes a man to work in hell. Hell, sure, dat's my fav'rite climate. I eat it up! I git fat on it! It's me makes it hot! It's me makes it roar! It's me makes it move! Sure, on'y for me everyting stops. It all goes dead, get me? De noise and smoke and all de engines movin' de woild, dey stop. Dere ain't nothin' no more! Dat's what I'm sayin'. Everyting else dat makes de woild move, somep'n makes it move. It can't move witout somep'n else, see? Den yuh get down to me. I'm at de bottom, get me! Dere ain't nothin' foither. I'm de end! I'm de start! I start somep'n and de woild moves! It—dat's me!—de new dat's moiderin' de old! I'm de ting in coal dat makes it boin; I'm steam and oil for de engines; I'm de ting in noise dat makes yuh hear it; I'm smoke and express trains and steamers and factory whistles; I'm de ting in gold dat makes it money! And I'm what makes iron into steel! Steel, dat stands for de whole ting! And I'm steel—steel—steel! I'm de muscles in steel, de punch behind it! [*As he says this he pounds with his fist against the steel bunks. All the men, roused to a pitch of frenzied self-glorification by his speech, do likewise. There is a deafening metallic roar, through which* YANK's *voice can be heard bellowing.*] Slaves, hell! We run de whole woiks. All de rich guys dat tink

dey're somep'n, dey ain't nothin'! Dey don't belong. But us guys, we're in de move, we're at de bottom, de whole ting is us! [PADDY *from the start of* YANK'S *speech has been taking one gulp after another from his bottle, at first frightenedly, as if he were afraid to listen, then desperately, as if to drown his senses, but finally has achieved complete indifferent, even amused, drunkenness.* YANK *sees his lips moving. He quells the uproar with a shout.*] Hey, youse guys, take it easy! Wait a moment! De nutty Harp is sayin' somep'n.

PADDY [*Is heard now—throws his head back with a mocking burst of laughter.*] Ho-ho-ho-ho-ho—

YANK [*Drawing back his fist, with a snarl.*] Aw! Look out who yuh're givin' the bark!

PADDY [*Begins to sing the "Miller of Dee" with enormous good nature.*]

"I care for nobody, no, not I,
And nobody cares for me."

YANK [*Good-natured himself in a flash, interrupts* PADDY *with a slap on the bare back like a report.*] Dat's de stuff! Now yuh're gettin' wise to somep'n. Care for nobody, dat's de dope! To hell with 'em all! And nix on nobody else carin'. I kin care for myself, get me! [*Eight bells sound, muffled, vibrating through the steel walls as if some enormous brazen gong were imbedded in the heart of the ship. All the men jump up mechanically, file through the door silently close upon each other's heels in what is very like a prisoner's lockstep.* YANK *slaps* PADDY *on the back.*] Our watch, yuh old Harp! [*Mockingly.*] Come on down in hell. Eat up de coal dust. Drink in de heat. It's it, see! Act like yuh liked it, yuh better—or croak yuhself.

PADDY [*With jovial defiance.*] To the divil wid it! I'll not report this watch. Let thim log me and be damned. I'm no slave the like of you. I'll be sittin' here at me ease, and drinking, and thinking, and dreaming dreams.

YANK [*Contemptuously.*] Tinkin' and dreamin', what'll that get yuh? What's tinkin' got to do wit it? We move, don't we? Speed, ain't it? Fog, dat's all you stand for. But we drive trou dat, don't we? We split dat up and smash trou—twenty-five knots a hour! [*Turns his back on* PADDY *scornfully.*] Aw, yuh make me sick! Yuh don't belong! [*He strides out the door in rear.* PADDY *hums to himself, blinking drowsily.*]

Curtain.

Scene 2

Two days out. A section of the promenade deck. MILDRED DOUGLAS *and her aunt are discovered reclining in deck chairs. The former is a girl of twenty, slender, delicate, with a pale, pretty face marred by a self-conscious expression of disdainful superiority. She looks fretful, nervous, and discontented, bored by her own anemia. Her aunt is a pompous and proud—and fat—old lady. She is a type even to the point of a double chin and lorgnettes. She is dressed pretentiously, as if afraid her face alone would never indicate her position in life.* MILDRED *is dressed all in white.*

The impression to be conveyed by this scene is one of the beautiful, vivid life of the sea all about—sunshine on the deck in a great flood, the fresh sea wind blowing across it. In the midst of this, these two incongruous, artificial figures, inert and disharmonious, the elder like a gray lump of dough touched up with rouge, the younger looking as if the vitality of her stock had been sapped before she was conceived, so that she is the expression not of its life energy but merely of the artificialities that energy had won for itself in the spending.

MILDRED [*Looking up with affected dreaminess.*] How the black smoke swirls back against the sky! Is it not beautiful?

AUNT [*Without looking up.*] I dislike smoke of any kind.

MILDRED My great-grandmother smoked a pipe—a clay pipe.

AUNT [*Ruffling.*] Vulgar!

MILDRED She was too distant a relative to be vulgar. Time mellows pipes.

AUNT [*Pretending boredom but irritated.*] Did the sociology you took up at college teach you that—to play the ghoul on every possible occasion, excavating old bones? Why not let your great-grandmother rest in her grave?

MILDRED [*Dreamily.*] With her pipe beside her—puffing in Paradise.

AUNT [*With spite.*] Yes, you are a natural born ghoul. You are even getting to look like one, my dear.

MILDRED [*In a passionless*

tone.] I detest you, Aunt. [*Looking at her critically.*] Do you know what you remind me of? Of a cold pork pudding against a background of linoleum tablecloth in the kitchen of a—but the possibilities are wearisome. [*She closes her eyes.*]

AUNT [*With a bitter laugh.*] *Merci* for your candor. But since I am and must be your chaperon —in appearance, at least—let us patch up some sort of armed truce. For my part you are quite free to indulge any pose of eccentricity that beguiles you—as long as you observe the amenities—

MILDRED [*Drawling.*] The inanities?

AUNT [*Going on as if she hadn't heard.*] After exhausting the morbid thrills of social-service work on New York's East Side—how they must have hated you, by the way, the poor that you made so much poorer in their own eyes!—you are now bent on making your slumming international. Well, I hope Whitechapel will provide the needed nerve tonic. Do not ask me to chaperon you there, however. I told your father I would not. I loathe deformity. We will hire an army of detectives and you may investigate everything—they allow you to see.

MILDRED [*Protesting with a trace of genuine earnestness.*] Please do not mock my attempts to discover how the other half lives. Give me credit for some sort of groping sincerity in that at least. I would like to help them. I would like to be some use in the world. Is it my fault I don't know how? I would like to be sincere, to touch life somewhere. [*With weary bitterness.*] But I'm afraid I have neither the vitality nor integrity. All that was burnt out in our stock before I was born. Grandfather's blast furnaces, flaming to the sky, melting steel, making millions—then father keeping those home fires burning, making more millions—and little me at the tail-end of it all. I'm a waste product in the Bessemer process—like the millions. Or rather, I inherit the acquired trait of the by-product, wealth, but none of the energy, none of the strength of the steel that made it. I am sired by gold and damned by it, as they say at the race track—damned in more ways than one. [*She laughs mirthlessly.*]

AUNT [*Unimpressed—superciliously.*] You seem to be going in for sincerity today. It isn't becoming to you, really—except as an obvious pose. Be as artificial as you are, I advise. There's a sort of sincerity in that, you

know. And, after all, you must confess you like that better.

MILDRED [*Again affected and bored.*] Yes, I suppose I do. Pardon me for my outburst. When a leopard complains of its spots, it must sound rather grotesque. [*In a mocking tone.*] Purr, little leopard. Purr, scratch, tear, kill, gorge yourself and be happy—only stay in the jungle where your spots are camouflage. In a cage they make you conspicuous.

AUNT I don't know what you are talking about.

MILDRED It would be rude to talk about anything to you. Let's just talk. [*She looks at her wrist watch.*] Well, thank goodness, it's about time for them to come for me. That ought to give me a new thrill, Aunt.

AUNT [*Affectedly troubled.*] You don't mean to say you're really going? The dirt—the heat must be frightful—

MILDRED Grandfather started as a puddler. I should have inherited an immunity to heat that would make a salamander shiver. It will be fun to put it to the test.

AUNT But don't you have to have the captain's—or someone's—permission to visit the stokehole?

MILDRED [*With a triumphant smile.*] I have it—both his and the chief engineer's. Oh, they didn't want to at first, in spite of my social service credentials. They didn't seem a bit anxious that I should investigate how the other half lives and works on a ship. So I had to tell them that my father, the president of Nazareth Steel, chairman of the board of directors of this line, had told me it would be all right.

AUNT He didn't.

MILDRED How naïve age makes one! But I said he did, Aunt. I even said he had given me a letter to them—which I had lost. And they were afraid to take the chance that I might be lying. [*Excitedly.*] So it's ho! for the stokehole. The second engineer is to escort me. [*Looking at her watch again.*] It's time. And here he comes, I think.

The SECOND ENGINEER *enters. He is a husky, fine-looking man of thirty-five or so. He stops before the two and tips his cap, visibly embarrassed and ill-at-ease.*

SECOND ENGINEER Miss Douglas?

MILDRED Yes. [*Throwing off her rugs and getting to her feet.*] Are we all ready to start?

SECOND ENGINEER In just a second, ma'am. I'm waiting for the Fourth. He's coming along.

MILDRED [*With a scornful smile.*] You don't care to shoul-

der this responsibility alone, is that it?

SECOND ENGINEER [*Forcing a smile.*] Two are better than one. [*Disturbed by her eyes, glances out to sea—blurts out.*] A fine day we're having.

MILDRED Is it?

SECOND ENGINEER A nice warm breeze—

MILDRED It feels cold to me.

SECOND ENGINEER But it's hot enough in the sun—

MILDRED Not hot enough for me. I don't like Nature. I was never athletic.

SECOND ENGINEER [*Forcing a smile.*] Well, you'll find it hot enough where you're going.

MILDRED Do you mean hell?

SECOND ENGINEER [*Flabbergasted, decides to laugh.*] Ho-ho! No, I mean the stokehole.

MILDRED My grandfather was a puddler. He played with boiling steel.

SECOND ENGINEER [*All at sea —uneasily.*] Is that so? Hum, you'll excuse me, ma'am, but are you intending to wear that dress?

MILDRED Why not?

SECOND ENGINEER You'll likely rub against oil and dirt. It can't be helped.

MILDRED It doesn't matter. I have lots of white dresses.

SECOND ENGINEER I have an old coat you might throw over—

MILDRED I have fifty dresses like this. I will throw this one into the sea when I come back. That ought to wash it clean, don't you think?

SECOND ENGINEER [*Doggedly.*] There's ladders to climb down that are none too clean—and dark alleyways—

MILDRED I will wear this very dress and none other.

SECOND ENGINEER No offense meant. It's none of my business. I was only warning you—

MILDRED Warning? That sounds thrilling.

SECOND ENGINEER [*Looking down the deck—with a sigh of relief.*] There's the Fourth now. He's waiting for us. If you'll come—

MILDRED Go on. I'll follow you. [*He goes.* MILDRED *turns a mocking smile on her aunt.*] An oaf—but a handsome, virile oaf.

AUNT [*Scornfully.*] Poser!

MILDRED Take care. He said there were dark alleyways—

AUNT [*In the same tone.*] Poser!

MILDRED [*Biting her lips angrily.*] You are right. But would that my millions were not so anemically chaste!

AUNT Yes, for a fresh pose I have no doubt you would drag the name of Douglas in the gutter!

MILDRED From which it sprang. Good-by, Aunt. Don't pray too hard that I may fall into the fiery furnace.

AUNT Poser!

MILDRED [*Viciously.*] Old hag! [*She slaps her aunt insultingly across the face and walks off, laughing gaily.*]

AUNT [*Screams after her.*] I said poser!

Curtain.

Scene 3

The stokehole. In the rear, the dimly outlined bulks of the furnaces and boilers. High overhead one hanging electric bulb sheds just enough light through the murky air laden with coal dust to pile up masses of shadows everywhere. A line of men, stripped to the waist, is before the furnace doors. They bend over, looking neither to right nor left, handling their shovels as if they were part of their bodies, with a strange, awkward, swinging rhythm. They use the shovels to throw open the furnace doors. Then from these fiery round holes in the black a flood of terrific light and heat pours full upon the men who are outlined in silhouette in the crouching, inhuman attitudes of chained gorillas. The men shovel with a rhythmic motion, swinging as on a pivot from the coal which lies in heaps on the floor behind to hurl it into the flaming mouths before them. There is a tumult of noise—the brazen clang of the furnace doors as they are flung open or slammed shut, the grating, teeth-gritting grind of steel against steel, of crunching coal. This clash of sounds stuns one's ears with its rending dissonance. But there is order in it, rhythm, a mechanical regulated recurrence, a tempo. And rising above all, making the air hum with the quiver of liberated energy, the roar of leaping flames in the furnaces, the monotonous throbbing beat of the engines.

As the curtain rises, the furnace doors are shut. The men are taking a breathing spell. One or two are arranging the coal behind them, pulling it into more accessible heaps. The others can be dimly made out leaning on their shovels in relaxed attitudes of exhaustion.

PADDY [*From somewhere in the line—plaintively.*] Yerra, will this divil's own watch nivir end? Me back is broke. I'm destroyed entirely.

YANK [*From the center of the line—with exuberant scorn.*] Aw, yuh make me sick! Lie down and croak, why don't yuh? Always beefin', dat's you! Say, dis is a cinch! Dis was made for me! It's my meat, get me! [*A whistle is blown—a thin, shrill note from somewhere overhead in the darkness.* YANK *curses without resentment.*] Dere's de damn engineer crackin' de whip. He tinks we're loafin'.

PADDY [*Vindictively.*] God stiffen him!

YANK [*In an exultant tone of command.*] Come on, youse guys! Git into de game! She's gittin' hungry! Pile some grub in her. Trow it into her belly! Come on now, all of youse! Open her up! [*At this last all the men, who have followed his movements of getting into position, throw open their furnace doors with a deafening clang. The fiery light floods over their shoulders as they bend round for the coal. Rivulets of sooty sweat have traced maps on their backs. The enlarged muscles form bunches of high light and shadow.*]

YANK [*Chanting a count as he shovels without seeming effort.*] One—two—tree— [*His voice rising exultantly in the joy of battle.*] Dat's de stuff! Let her have it! All togedder now! Sling it into her! Let her ride! Shoot de piece now! Call de toin on her! Drive her into it! Feel her move! Watch her smoke! Speed, dat's her middle name! Give her coal, youse guys! Coal, dat's her booze! Drink it up, baby! Let's see yuh sprint! Dig in and gain a lap! Dere she go-o-es. [*This last in the chanting formula of the gallery gods at the six-day bike race. He slams his furnace door shut. The others do likewise with as much unison as their wearied bodies will permit. The effect is of one fiery eye after another being blotted out with a series of accompanying bangs.*]

PADDY [*Groaning.*] Me back is broke. I'm bate out—bate— [*There is a pause. Then the inexorable whistle sounds again from the dim regions above the electric light. There is a growl of cursing rage from all sides.*]

YANK [*Shaking his fist upward—contemptuously.*] Take it easy dere, you! Who d'yuh tink's runnin' dis game, me or you? When I git ready, we move. Not before! When I git ready, get me!

VOICES [*Approvingly.*] That's the stuff!

Yank tal him, py golly!
Yank ain't affeerd.
Goot poy, Yank!
Give him hell!
Tell 'im 'e's a bloody swine!
Bloody slave-driver!

YANK [*Contemptuously.*] He ain't got no noive. He's yellow, get me? All de engineers is yellow. Dey got streaks a mile wide. Aw, to hell wit him! Let's move, youse guys. We had a rest. Come on, she needs it! Give her pep! It ain't for him. Him and his whistle, dey don't belong. But we belong, see! We gotter feed de baby! Come on! [*He turns and flings his furnace door open. They all follow his lead. At this instant the* SECOND *and* FOURTH ENGINEERS *enter from the darkness on the left with* MILDRED *between them. She starts, turns paler, her pose is crumbling, she shivers with fright in spite of the blazing heat, but forces herself to leave the* ENGINEERS *and take a few steps nearer the men. She is right behind* YANK. *All this happens quickly while the men have their backs turned.*]

YANK Come on, youse guys! [*He is turning to get coal when the whistle sounds again in a peremptory, irritating note. This drives* YANK *into a sudden fury. While the other men have turned full around and stopped dumfounded by the spectacle of* MILDRED *standing there in her white dress,* YANK *does not turn far enough to see her. Besides, his head is thrown back, he blinks upward through the murk trying to find the owner of the whistle, he brandishes his shovel murderously over his head in one hand, pounding on his chest, gorilla-like, with the other, shouting.*] Toin off dat whistle! Come down outa dere, yuh yellow, brass-buttoned, Belfast bum, yuh! Come down and I'll knock yer brains out! Yuh lousy, stinkin', yellow mut of a Catholic-moiderin' bastard! Come down and I'll moider yuh! Pullin' dat whistle on me, huh? I'll show yuh! I'll crash yer skull in! I'll drive yer teet' down yer troat! I'll slam yer nose trou de back of yer head! I'll cut yer guts out for a nickle, yuh lousy boob, yuh dirty, crummy, muck-eatin' son of a— [*Suddenly he becomes conscious of all the other men staring at something directly behind his back. He whirls defensively with a snarling, murderous growl, crouching to spring, his lips drawn back over his teeth, his small eyes gleaming ferociously. He sees* MILDRED, *like a white apparition in the full light*

from the open furnace doors. He glares into her eyes, turned to stone. As for her, during his speech she has listened, paralyzed with horror, terror, her whole personality crushed, beaten in, collapsed, by the terrific impact of this unknown, abysmal brutality, naked and shameless. As she looks at his gorilla face, as his eyes bore into hers, she utters a low, choking cry and shrinks away from him, putting both hands up before her eyes to shut out the sight of his face, to protect her own. This startles YANK *to a reaction. His mouth falls open, his eyes grow bewildered.*]

MILDRED [*About to faint—to the* ENGINEERS, *who now have her one by each arm—whimperingly.*] Take me away! Oh, the filthy beast! [*She faints. They carry her quickly back, disappearing in the darkness at the left, rear. An iron door clangs shut. Rage and bewildered fury rush back on* YANK. *He feels himself insulted in some unknown fashion in the very heart of his pride. He roars* "God damn yuh!" *and hurls his shovel after them at the door which has just closed. It hits the steel bulkhead with a clang and falls clattering on the steel floor. From overhead the whistle sounds again in a long, angry, insistent command.*]

Curtain.

Scene 4

The firemen's forecastle. YANK'S *watch has just come off duty and had dinner. Their faces and bodies shine from a soap-and-water scrubbing but around their eyes, where a hasty dousing does not touch, the coal dust sticks like black make-up, giving them a queer, sinister expression.* YANK *has not washed either face or body. He stands out in contrast to them, a blackened, brooding figure. He is seated foward on a bench in the exact attitude of Rodin's "The Thinker." The others, most of them smoking pipes, are staring at* YANK *half-apprehensively, as if fearing an outburst; half-amusedly, as if they saw a joke somewhere that tickled them.*

VOICES He ain't ate nothin'.
Py golly, a fallar gat
to gat grub in him.
Divil a lie.
Yank feeda da fire, no
feeda da face.

Ha-ha.
He ain't even washed hisself.
He's forgot.
Hey, Yank, you forgot to wash.

YANK [*Sullenly.*] Forgot nothin'! To hell wit washin'.

VOICES It'll stick to you.
It'll get under your skin.
Give yer the bleedin' itch, that's wot.
It makes spots on you —like a leopard.
Like a piebald nigger, you mean.
Better wash up, Yank.
You sleep better.
Wash up, Yank!
Wash up! Wash up!

YANK [*Resentfully.*] Aw say, youse guys. Lemme alone. Can't youse see I'm tryin' to tink?

ALL [*Repeating the word after him as one with cynical mockery.*] Think! [*The word has a brazen, metallic quality as if their throats were phonograph horns. It is followed by a chorus of hard, barking laughter.*]

YANK [*Springing to his feet and glaring at them belligerently.*] Yes, tink! Tink, dat's what I said! What about it? [*They are silent, puzzled by his sudden resentment at what used to be one of his jokes.* YANK *sits down again in the same attitude of "The Thinker."*]

VOICES Leave him alone.
He's got a grouch on.
Why wouldn't he?

PADDY [*With a wink at the others.*] Sure I know what's the matther. 'Tis aisy to see. He's fallen in love, I'm telling you.

ALL [*Repeating the word after him as one with cynical mockery.*] Love! [*The word has a brazen, metallic quality as if their throats were phonograph horns. It is followed by a chorus of hard, barking laughter.*]

YANK [*With a contemptuous snort.*] Love, Hell! Hate, dat's what. I've fallen in hate, get me?

PADDY [*Philosophically.*] 'Twould take a wise man to tell one from the other. [*With a bitter, ironical scorn, increasing as he goes on.*] But I'm telling you it's love that's in it. Sure what else but love for us poor bastes in the stokehole would be bringing a fine lady, dressed like a white quane, down a mile of ladders and steps to be havin' a look at us? [*A growl of anger goes up from all sides.*]

LONG [*Jumping on a bench—hectically.*] Hinsultin' us! Hinsultin' us, the bloody cow! And them bloody engineers! What right 'as they got to be exhibitin' us 's if we was bleedin' monkeys

in a menagerie? Did we sign for hinsults to our dignity as 'onest workers? Is that in the ship's articles? You kin bloody well bet it ain't! But I knows why they done it. I arsked a deck steward 'o she was and 'e told me. 'Er old man's a bleedin' millionaire, a bloody Capitalist! 'E's got enuf bloody gold to sink this bleedin' ship! 'E makes arf the bloody steel in the world! 'E owns this bloody boat! And you and me, Comrades, we're 'is slaves! And the skipper and mates and engineers, they're 'is slaves! And she's 'is bloody daughter and we're all 'er slaves, too! And she gives 'er orders as 'ow she wants to see the bloody animals below decks and down they takes 'er! [*There is a roar of rage from all sides.*]

YANK [*Blinking at him bewilderedly.*] Say! Wait a moment! Is all dat straight goods?

LONG Straight as string! The bleedin' steward as waits on 'em, 'e told me about 'er. And what're we goin' ter do, I arsks yer? 'Ave we got ter swaller 'er hinsults like dogs? It ain't in the ship's articles. I tell yer we got a case. We kin go to law—

YANK [*With abysmal contempt.*] Hell! Law!

ALL [*Repeating the word after him as one with cynical mockery.*] Law! [*The word has a brazen metallic quality as if their throats were phonograph horns. It is followed by a chorus of hard, barking laughter.*]

LONG [*Feeling the ground slipping from under his feet—desperately.*] As voters and citizens we kin force the bloody governments—

YANK [*With abysmal contempt.*] Hell! Governments!

ALL [*Repeating the word after him as one with cynical mockery.*] Governments! [*The word has a brazen metallic quality as if their throats were phonograph horns. It is followed by a chorus of hard, barking laughter.*]

LONG [*Hysterically.*] We're free and equal in the sight of God—

YANK [*With abysmal contempt.*] Hell! God!

ALL [*Repeating the word after him as one with cynical mockery.*] God! [*The word has a brazen metallic quality as if their throats were phonograph horns. It is followed by a chorus of hard, barking laughter.*]

YANK [*Witheringly.*] Aw, join de Salvation Army!

ALL Sit down! Shut up! Damn fool! Sea-lawyer! [LONG *slinks back out of sight.*]

PADDY [*Continuing the trend*

of his thoughts as if he had never been interrupted—bitterly.] And there she was standing behind us, and the Second pointing at us like a man you'd hear in a circus would be saying: In this cage is a queerer kind of baboon than ever you'd find in darkest Africy. We roast them in their own sweat—and be damned if you won't hear some of thim saying they like it! [*He glances scornfully at* YANK.]

YANK [*With a bewildered uncertain growl.*] Aw!

PADDY And there was Yank roarin' curses and turning round wid his shovel to brain her—and she looked at him, and him at her—

YANK [*Slowly.*] She was all white. I tought she was a ghost. Sure.

PADDY [*With heavy, biting sarcasm.*] 'Twas love at first sight, divil a doubt of it! If you'd seen the endearin' look on her pale mug when she shriveled away with her hands over her eyes to shut out the sight of him! Sure, 'twas as if she'd seen a great hairy ape escaped from the Zoo!

YANK [*Stung—with a growl of rage.*] Aw!

PADDY And the loving way Yank heaved his shovel at the skull of her, only she was out the door! [*A grin breaking over his face.*] 'Twas touching, I'm telling you! It put the touch of home, swate home in the stokehole. [*There is a roar of laughter from all.*]

YANK [*Glaring at* PADDY *menacingly.*] Aw, choke dat off, see!

PADDY [*Not heeding him—to the others.*] And her grabbin' at the Second's arm for protection. [*With a grotesque imitation of a woman's voice.*] Kiss me, Engineer dear, for it's dark down here and me old man's in Wall Street making money! Hug me tight, darlin', for I'm afeerd in the dark and me mother's on deck makin' eyes at the skipper! [*Another roar of laughter.*]

YANK [*Threateningly.*] Say! What yuh tryin' to do, kid me, yuh old Harp?

PADDY Divil a bit! Ain't I wishin' myself you'd brained her?

YANK [*Fiercely.*] I'll brain her! I'll brain her yet, wait 'n' see! [*Coming over to* PADDY—*slowly.*] Say, is dat what she called me—a hairy ape?

PADDY She looked it at you if she didn't say the word itself.

YANK [*Grinning horribly.*] Hairy ape, huh? Sure! Dat's de way she looked at me, aw right. Hairy Ape! So dat's me, huh? [*Bursting into rage—as if she*

were still in front of him.] Yuh skinny tart! Yuh white-faced bum, yuh! I'll show yuh who's a ape! [*Turning to the others, bewilderment seizing him again.*] Say, youse guys. I was bawlin' him out for pullin' de whistle on us. You heard me. And den I seen youse lookin' at somep'n and I tought he'd sneaked down to come up in back of me, and I hopped round to knock him dead wit de shovel. And dere she was wit de light on her! Christ, yuh coulda pushed me over with a finger! I was scared, get me? Sure! I tought she was a ghost, see? She was all in white like dey wrap around stiffs. You seen her. Kin yuh blame me? She didn't belong, dat's what. And den when I come to and seen it was a real skoit and seen de way she was lookin' at me—like Paddy said—Christ, I was sore, get me? I don't stand for dat stuff from nobody. And I flung de shovel—on'y she'd beat it. [*Furiously.*] I wished it'd banged her! I wished it'd knocked her block off!

LONG And be 'anged for murder or 'lectrocuted? She ain't bleedin' well worth it.

YANK I don't give a damn what! I'd be square wit her, wouldn't I? Tink I wanter let her put somep'n over on me? Tink I'm goin' to let her git away wit dat stuff? Yuh don't know me! No one ain't never put nothin' over on me and got away wit it, see!—not dat kind of stuff—no guy and no skoit neither! I'll fix her! Maybe she'll come down again—

VOICE No chance, Yank. You scared her out of a year's growth.

YANK I scared her? Why de hell should I scare her? Who de hell is she? Ain't she de same as me? Hairy ape, huh? [*With his old confident bravado.*] I'll show her I'm better'n her, if she on'y knew it. I belong and she don't, see! I move and she's dead! Twenty-five knots a hour, dat's me! Dat carries her but I make dat. She's on'y baggage. Sure! [*Again bewilderedly.*] But, Christ, she was funny lookin'! Did yuh pipe her hands? White and skinny. Yuh could see de bones through 'em. And her mush, dat was dead white, too. And her eyes, dey was like dey'd seen a ghost. Me, dat was! Sure! Hairy ape! Ghost, huh? Look at dat arm! [*He extends his right arm, swelling out of the great muscles.*] I coulda took her wit dat, wit just my little finger even, and broke her in two. [*Again bewilderedly.*] Say, who is dat skoit, huh? What is she?

What's she come from? Who made her? Who give her de noive to look at me like dat? Dis ting's got my goat right. I don't get her. She's new to me. What does a skoit like her mean, huh? She don't belong, get me! I can't see her. [*With growing anger.*] But one ting I'm wise to, aw right, aw right! Youse all kin bet your shoits I'll git even wit her. I'll show her if she tinks she— She grinds de organ and I'm on de string, huh? I'll fix her! Let her come down again and I'll fling her in de furnace! She'll move den. She won't shiver at nothin', den! Speed, dat'll be her! She'll belong den! [*He grins horribly.*]

PADDY She'll never come. She's had her belly-full, I'm telling you. She'll be in bed now, I'm thinking, wid ten doctors and nurses feedin' her salts to clean the fear out of her.

YANK [*Enraged.*] Yuh tink I made her sick, too, do yuh? Just lookin' at me, huh? Hairy ape, huh? [*In a frenzy of rage.*] I'll fix her! I'll tell her where to git off! She'll git down on her knees and take it back or I'll bust de face offen her! [*Shaking one fist upward and beating on his chest with the other.*] I'll find yuh! I'm comin', d'yuh hear? I'll fix yuh, God damn yuh! [*He makes a rush for the door.*]

VOICES Stop him!
He'll get shot!
He'll murder her!
Trip him up!
Hold him!
He's gone crazy!
Gott, he's strong!
Hold him down!
Look out for a kick!
Pin his arms!

[*They have all piled on him and, after a fierce struggle, by sheer weight of numbers have borne him to the floor just inside the door.*]

PADDY [*Who has remained detached.*] Kape him down till he's cooled off. [*Scornfully.*] Yerra, Yank, you're a great fool. Is it payin' attention at all you are to the like of that skinny sow widout one drop of rale blood in her?

YANK [*Frenziedly, from the bottom of the heap.*] She done me doit! She done me doit, didn't she? I'll git square wit her! I'll get her some way! Git offen me, youse guys! Lemme up! I'll show her who's a ape!

Curtain.

Scene 5

Three weeks later. A corner of Fifth Avenue in the Fifties on a fine Sunday morning. A general atmosphere of clean, well-tidied, wide street; a flood of mellow, tempered sunshine; gentle, genteel breezes. In the rear, the show windows of two shops, a jewelry establishment on the corner, a furrier's next to it. Here the adornments of extreme wealth are tantalizingly displayed. The jeweler's window is gaudy with glittering diamonds, emeralds, rubies, pearls, etc., fashioned in ornate tiaras, crowns, necklaces, collars, etc. From each piece hangs an enormous tag from which a dollar sign and numerals in intermittent electric lights wink out the incredible prices. The same in the furrier's. Rich furs of all varieties hang there bathed in a downpour of artificial light. The general effect is of a background of magnificence cheapened and made grotesque by commercialism, a background in tawdry disharmony with the clear light and sunshine on the street itself.

Up the side street YANK *and* LONG *come swaggering.* LONG *is dressed in shore clothes, wears a black Windsor tie, cloth cap.* YANK *is in his dirty dungarees. A fireman's cap with black peak is cocked defiantly on the side of his head. He has not shaved for days and around his fierce, resentful eyes—as around those of* LONG *to a lesser degree—the black smudge of coal dust still sticks like make-up. They hesitate and stand together at the corner, swaggering, looking about them with a forced, defiant contempt.*

LONG [*Indicating it all with an oratorical gesture.*] Well, 'ere we are. Fif' Avenoo. This 'ere's their bleedin' private lane, as yer might say. [*Bitterly.*] We're trespassers 'ere. Proletarians keep orf the grass!

YANK [*Dully.*] I don't see no grass, yuh boob. [*Staring at the sidewalk.*] Clean, ain't it? Yuh could eat a fried egg offen it. The whitewings got some job sweepin' dis up. [*Looking up and down the avenue—surlily.*] Where's all de white-collar stiffs yuh said was here—and de skoits —*her* kind?

LONG In church, blarst 'em!

Arskin' Jesus to give 'em more money.

YANK Choich, huh? I useter go to choich onct—sure—when I was a kid. Me old man and woman, dey made me. Dey never went demselves, dough. Always got too big a head on Sunday mornin', dat was dem. [*With a grin.*] Dey was scrappers for fair, bot' of dem. On Satiday nights when dey bot' got a skinful dey could put up a bout oughter been staged at de Garden. When dey got trough dere wasn't a chair or table wit a leg under it. Or else de bot' jumped on me for somep'n. Dat was where I loined to take punishment. [*With a grin and a swagger.*] I'm a chip offen de old block, get me?

LONG Did yer old man follow the sea?

YANK Naw. Worked along shore. I runned away when me old lady croaked wit de tremens. I helped at truckin' and in de market. Den I shipped in de stokehole. Sure. Dat belongs. De rest was nothin', [*Looking around him.*] I ain't never seen dis before. De Brooklyn water front, dat was where I was dragged up. [*Taking a deep breath.*] Dis ain't so bad at dat, huh?

LONG Not bad? Well, we pays for it wiv our bloody sweat, if yer wants to know!

YANK [*With sudden angry disgust.*] Aw, hell! I don't see no one, see—like her. All dis gives me a pain. It don't belong. Say, ain't der a back room around dis dump? Let's go shoot a ball. All dis is too clean and quiet and dolled-up, get me! It gives me a pain.

LONG Wait and yer'll bloody well see—

YANK I don't wait for no one. I keep on de move. Say, what yuh drag me up here for, anyway? Tryin' to kid me, yuh simp, yuh?

LONG Yer wants to get back at 'er, don't yer? That's what yer been sayin' every bloomin' hour since she hinsulted yer.

YANK [*Vehemently.*] Sure ting I do! Didn't I try to get even wit her in Southampton? Didn't I sneak on de dock and wait for her by de gangplank? I was goin' to spit in her pale mug, see! Sure, right in her pop-eyes! Dat woulda made me even, see? But no chanct. Dere was a whole army of plain-clothes bulls around. Dey spotted me and gimme de bum's rush. I never seen her. But I'll git square wit her yet, you watch. [*Furiously.*] De lousy tart! She tinks she kin get away wit moider—but not wit

me! I'll fix her! I'll tink of a way!

LONG [*As disgusted as he dares to be.*] Ain't that why I brought yer up 'ere—to show yer? Yer been lookin' at this 'ere 'ole affair wrong. Yer been actin' an' talkin' 's if it was all a bleedin' personal matter between yer and that bloody cow. I wants to convince yer she was on'y a representative of 'er clarss. I wants to awaken yer bloody clarss consciousness. Then yer'll see it's 'er clarss yer've got to fight, not 'er alone. There's a 'ole mob of 'em like 'er, Gawd blind 'em!

YANK [*Spitting on his hands —belligerently.*] De more de merrier when I gits started. Bring on de gang!

LONG Yer'll see 'em in arf a mo', when that church lets out. [*He turns and sees the window display in the two stores for the first time.*] Blimey! Look at that, will yer? [*They both walk back and stand looking in the jeweler's.* LONG *flies into a fury.*] Just look at this 'ere bloomin' mess! Just look at it! Look at the bleedin' prices on 'em—more'n our 'ole bloody stokehole makes in ten voyages sweatin' in 'ell! And they—'er and 'er bloody clarss—buys 'em for toys to dangle on 'em! One of these 'ere would buy scoff for a starvin' family for a year!

YANK Aw, cut de sob stuff! T' hell wit de starvin' family! Yuh'll be passin' de hat to me next. [*With naïve admiration.*] Say, dem tings is pretty, huh? Bet yuh dey'd hock for a piece of change aw right. [*Then turning away, bored.*] But, aw hell, what good are dey? Let her have 'em. Dey don't belong no more'n she does. [*With a gesture of sweeping the jewelers into oblivion.*] All dat don't count, get me?

LONG [*Who has moved to the furrier's—indignantly.*] And I s'pose this 'ere don't count neither—skins of poor, 'armless animals slaughtered so as 'er and 'ers can keep their bleedin' noses warm!

YANK [*Who has been staring at something inside—with queer excitement.*] Take a slant at dat! Give it de once-over! Monkey fur —two t'ousand bucks. [*Bewilderedly.*] Is dat straight goods—monkey fur? What de hell—?

LONG [*Bitterly.*] It's straight enuf. [*With grim humor.*] They wouldn't bloody well pay that for a 'airy ape's skin—no, nor for the 'ole livin' ape with all 'is 'ead, and a body, and soul thrown in!

YANK [*Clenching his fists, his*

face growing pale with rage as if the skin in the window were a personal insult.] Trowin' it up in my face! Christ! I'll fix her!

LONG [*Excitedly.*] Church is out. 'Ere they come, the bleedin' swine. [*After a glance at* YANK'S *lowering face—uneasily.*] Easy goes, Comrade. Keep yer bloomin' temper. Remember force defeats itself. It ain't our weapon. We must impress our demands through peaceful means—the votes of the on-marching proletarians of the bloody world!

YANK [*With abysmal contempt.*] Votes, hell! Votes is a joke, see. Votes for women! Let dem do it!

LONG [*Still more uneasily.*] Calm, now. Treat 'em wiv the proper contempt. Observe the bleedin' parasites but 'old yer 'orses.

YANK [*Angrily.*] Git away from me! Yuh're yellow, dat's what. Force, dat's me! De punch, dat's me every time, see! [*The crowd from church enter from the right, sauntering slowly and affectedly, their heads held stiffly up, looking neither to right nor left, talking in toneless, simpering voices. The women are rouged, calcimined, dyed, overdressed to the nth degree. The men are in Prince Alberts, high hats, spats, canes, etc. A procession of gaudy marionettes, yet with something of the relentless horror of Frankensteins in their detached, mechanical unawareness.*]

VOICES
Dear Doctor Caiphas! He is so sincere!
What was the sermon? I dozed off.
About the radicals, my dear—and the false doctrines that are being preached.
We must organize a hundred per cent American bazaar.
And let everyone contribute one one-hundredth per cent of their income tax.
What an original idea!
We can devote the proceeds to rehabilitating the veil of the temple.
But that has been done so many times.

YANK [*Glaring from one to the other of them—with an insulting snort of scorn.*] Huh! Huh! [*Without seeming to see him, they make wide detours to avoid the spot where he stands in the middle of the sidewalk.*]

LONG [*Frightenedly.*] Keep

yer bloomin' mouth shut, I tells yer.

YANK [*Viciously.*] G'wan! Tell it to Sweeney! [*He swaggers away and deliberately lurches into a top-hatted gentleman, then glares at him pugnaciously.*] Say, who d'yuh tink yuh're bumpin'? Tink yuh own de oith?

GENTLEMAN [*Coldly and affectedly.*] I beg your pardon. [*He has not looked at* YANK *and passes on without a glance, leaving him bewildered.*]

LONG [*Rushing up and grabbing* YANK'S *arm.*] 'Ere! Come away! This wasn't what I meant. Yer'll 'ave the bloody coppers down on us.

YANK [*Savagely—giving him a push that sends him sprawling.*] G'wan!

LONG [*Picks himself up—hysterically.*] I'll pop orf then. This ain't what I meant. And whatever 'appens, yer can't blame me. [*He slinks off left.*]

YANK T' hell wit youse! [*He approaches a lady—with a vicious grin and a smirking wink.*] Hello, Kiddo. How's every little ting? Got anyting on for tonight? I know an old boiler down to de docks we kin crawl into. [*The lady stalks by without a look, without a change of pace.* YANK *turns to others—insultingly.*] Holy smokes, what a mug! Go hide yuhself before de horses shy at yuh. Gee, pipe de heine on dat one! Say, youse, yuh look like de stoin of a ferryboat. Paint and powder! All dolled up to kill! Yuh look like stiffs laid out for de boneyard! Aw, g'wan, de lot of youse! Yuh give me de eyeache. Yuh don't belong, get me! Look at me, why don't youse dare? I belong, dat's me! [*Pointing to a skyscraper across the street which is in process of construction—with bravado.*] See dat building goin' up dere? See de steel work? Steel, dat's me! Youse guys live on it and tink yuh're somep'n. But I'm *in* it, see! I'm de hoistin' engine dat makes it go up! I'm it—de inside and bottom of it! Sure! I'm steel and steam and smoke and de rest of it! It moves—speed—twenty-five stories up—and me at de top and bottom—movin'! Youse simps don't move. Yuh're on'y dolls I winds up to see 'm spin. Yuh're de garbage, get me—de leavin's—de ashes we dump over de side! Now, what 'a' yuh gotta say? [*But as they seem neither to see nor hear him, he flies into a fury.*] Bums! Pigs! Tarts! Bitches! [*He turns in a rage on the men, bumping viciously into them but not jarring them the least bit. Rather it is he who recoils after each collision. He keeps growl-*

ing.] Git off de oith! G'wan, yuh bum! Look where yuh're goin', can't yuh? Git outa here! Fight, why don't yuh? Put up yer mits! Don't be a dog! Fight or I'll knock yuh dead! [*But, without seeming to see him, they all answer with mechanical affected politeness* "I beg your pardon." *Then at a cry from one of the women, they all scurry to the furrier's window.*]

THE WOMAN [*Ecstatically, with a gasp of delight.*] Monkey fur! [*The whole crowd of men and women chorus after her in the same tone of affected delight* "Monkey fur!"]

YANK [*With a jerk of his head back on his shoulders, as if he had received a punch full in the face—raging.*] I see yuh, all in white! I see yuh, yuh white-faced tart, yuh! Hairy ape, huh? I'll hairy ape yuh! [*He bends down and grips at the street curbing as if to pluck it out and hurl it. Foiled in this, snarling with passion, he leaps to the lamppost on the corner and tries to pull it up for a club. Just at that moment a bus is heard rumbling up. A fat, high-hatted, spatted gentleman runs out from the side street. He calls out plaintively* "Bus! Bus! Stop there!" *and runs full tilt into the bending, straining* YANK, *who is bowled off his balance.*]

YANK [*Seeing a fight—with a roar of joy as he springs to his feet.*] At last! Bus, huh? I'll bust yuh! [*He lets drive a terrific swing, his fist landing full on the fat gentleman's face. But the gentleman stands unmoved as if nothing had happened.*]

GENTLEMAN I beg your pardon. [*Then irritably.*] You have made me lose my bus. [*He claps his hands and begins to scream.*] Officer! Officer! [*Many police whistles shrill out on the instant and a whole platoon of policemen rush in on* YANK *from all sides. He tries to fight but is clubbed to the pavement and fallen upon. The crowd at the window have not moved or noticed this disturbance. The clanging gong of the patrol wagon approaches with a clamoring din.*]

Curtain.

Scene 6

Night of the following day. A row of cells in the prison on Blackwells Island. The cells extend back diagonally from right front to

left rear. They do not stop, but disappear in the dark background as if they ran on, numberless, into infinity. One electric bulb from the low ceiling of the narrow corridor sheds its light through the heavy steel bars of the cell at the extreme front and reveals part of the interior. YANK *can be seen within, crouched on the edge of his cot in the attitude of Rodin's "The Thinker." His face is spotted with black and blue bruises. A blood-stained bandage is wrapped around his head.*

YANK [*Suddenly starting as if awakening from a dream, reaches out and shakes the bars—aloud to himself, wonderingly.*] Steel. Dis is de Zoo, huh? [*A burst of hard, barking laughter comes from the unseen occupants of the cells, runs back down the tier, and abruptly ceases.*]

VOICES [*Mockingly.*] The Zoo? That's a new name for this coop — a damn good name!

Steel, eh? You said a mouthful. This is the old iron house.

Who is that boob talkin'?

He's the bloke they brung in out of his head. The bulls had beat him up fierce.

YANK [*Dully.*] I musta been dreamin'. I tought I was in a cage at de Zoo—but de apes don't talk, do dey?

VOICES [*With mocking laughter.*] You're in a cage aw right.

A coop!

A pen!

A sty!

A k e n n e l ! [*H a r d laughter—a pause.*]

Say, guy! Who are you? No, never mind lying. What are you?

Yes, tell us your sad story. What's your game?

What did they jug yuh for?

YANK [*Dully.*] I was a fireman—stokin' on de liners. [*Then with sudden rage, rattling his cell bars.*] I'm a hairy ape, get me? And I'll bust youse all in de jaw if yuh don't lay off kiddin' me.

VOICES Huh! You're a hard-boiled duck, ain't, you!

When you spit, it

bounces! [*Laughter.*]

Aw, can it. He's a regular guy. Ain't you? What did he say he was—a ape?

YANK [*Defiantly.*] Sure ting! Ain't dat what youse all are—apes? [*A silence. Then a furious rattling of bars from down the corridor.*]

A VOICE [*Thick with rage.*] I'll show yuh who's a ape, yuh bum!

VOICES Ssshh! Nix! Can de noise! Piano! You'll have the guard down on us!

YANK [*Scornfully.*] De guard? Yuh mean de keeper, don't yuh? [*Angry exclamations from all the cells.*]

VOICE [*Placatingly.*] Aw, don't pay no attention to him. He's off his nut from the beatin'-up he got. Say, you guy! We're waitin' to hear what they landed you for—or ain't yuh tellin'?

YANK Sure, I'll tell youse. Sure! Why de hell not? On'y—youse won't get me. Nobody gets me but me, see? I started to tell de Judge and all he says was: "Toity days to tink it over."—Tink it over! Christ, dat's all I been doin' for weeks! [*After a pause.*] I was tryin' to git even wit someone, see?—someone dat done me doit.

VOICES [*Cynically.*] De old stuff, I bet. Your goil, huh? Give yuh the double-cross, huh? That's them every time! Did yuh beat up de odder guy?

YANK [*Disgustedly.*] Aw, yuh're all wrong! Sure dere was a skoit in it—but not what youse mean, not dat old tripe. Dis was a new kind of skoit. She was dolled up all in white—in de stokehole. I tought she was a ghost. Sure. [*A pause.*]

VOICES [*Whispering.*] Gee, he's still nutty. Let him rave. It's fun listenin'.

YANK [*Unheeding—groping in his thoughts.*] Her hands—dey was skinny and white like dey wasn't real but painted on somep'n. Dere was a million miles from me to her—twenty-five knots a hour. She was like some dead ting de cat brung in. Sure, dat's what. She didn't belong. She belonged in de window of a toy store, or on de top of a garbage can, see! Sure! [*He breaks out angrily.*] But would yuh believe it, she had de noive to do me doit. She lamped me

like she was seein' somep'n broke loose from de menagerie. Christ, yuh'd oughter seen her eyes! [*He rattles the bars of his cell furiously.*] But I'll get back at her yet, you watch! And if I can't find her I'll take it out on de gang she runs wit. I'm wise to where dey hangs out now. I'll show her who belongs! I'll show her who's in de move and who ain't. You watch my smoke!

VOICES [*Serious and joking.*] Dat's de talkin'! Take her for all she's got! What was this dame, anyway? Who was she, eh?

YANK I dunno. First cabin stiff. Her old man's a millionaire, dey says—name of Douglas.

VOICES Douglas? That's the president of the Steel Trust, I bet. Sure. I seen his mug in de papers. He's filthy with dough.

VOICE Hey, feller, take a tip from me. If you want to get back as that dame, you better join the Wobblies. You'll get some action then.

YANK Wobblies? What de hell's dat?

VOICE Ain't you ever heard of the I. W. W.?

YANK Naw. What is it?

VOICE A gang of blokes—a tough gang. I been readin' about 'em today in the paper. The guard give me the *Sunday Times.* There's a long spiel about 'em. It's from a speech made in the Senate by a guy named Senator Queen. [*He is in the cell next to* YANK'S. *There is a rustling of paper.*] Wait'll I see if I got light enough and I'll read you. Listen. [*He reads:*] "There is a menace existing in this country today which threatens the vitals of our fair Republic—as foul a menace against the very life-blood of the American Eagle as was the foul conspiracy of Catiline against the eagles of ancient Rome!"

VOICE [*Disgustedly.*] Aw, hell! Tell him to salt de tail of dat eagle!

VOICE [*Reading.*] "I refer to that devil's brew of rascals, jailbirds, murderers, and cutthroats who libel all honest working men by calling themselves the Industrial Workers of the World; but in the light of their nefarious plots, I call them the Industrious *Wreckers* of the World!"

YANK [*With vengeful satisfaction.*] Wreckers, dat's de right dope! Dat belongs! Me for dem!

VOICE Ssshh! [*Reading.*] "This fiendish organization is a

foul ulcer on the fair body of our Democracy—"

VOICE Democracy, hell! Give him the boid, fellers—the raspberry! [*They do.*]

VOICE Ssshh! [*Reading.*] "Like Cato I say to this Senate, the I. W. W. must be destroyed! For they represent an ever-present dagger pointed at the heart of the greatest nation the world has ever known, where all men are born free and equal, with equal opportunities to all, where the Founding Fathers have guaranteed to each one happiness, where Truth, Honor, Liberty, Justice, and the Brotherhood of Man are a religion absorbed with one's mother's milk, taught at our father's knee, sealed, signed, and stamped upon in the glorious Constitution of these United States!" [*A perfect storm of hisses, catcalls, boos, and hard laughter.*]

VOICES [*Scornfully.*] Hurrah for de Fort' of July!
Pass de hat!
Liberty!
Justice!
Honor!
Opportunity!
Brotherhood!

ALL [*With abysmal scorn.*] Aw, hell!

VOICE Give that Queen Senator guy the bark! All togedder now—one—two—tree— [*A terrific chorus of barking and yapping.*]

GUARD [*From a distance.*] Quiet there, youse—or I'll git the hose. [*The noise subsides.*]

YANK [*With growling rage.*] I'd like to catch dat senator guy alone for a second. I'd loin him some trute!

VOICE Ssshh! Here's where he gits down to cases on the Wobblies. [*Reads.*] "They plot with fire in one hand and dynamite in the other. They stop not before murder to gain their ends, nor at the outraging of defenseless womanhood. They would tear down society, put the lowest scum in the seats of the mighty, turn Almighty God's revealed plan for the world topsy-turvy, and make of our sweet and lovely civilization a shambles, a desolation where man, God's masterpiece, would soon degenerate back to the ape!"

VOICE [*To* YANK.] Hey, you guy. There's your ape stuff again.

YANK [*With a growl of fury.*] I got him. So dey blow up tings, do dey? Dey turn tings round, do dey? Hey, lend me dat paper, will yuh?

VOICE Sure. Give it to him. On'y keep it to yourself, see. We

don't wanter listen to no more of that slop.

VOICE Here you are. Hide it under your mattress.

YANK [*Reaching out.*] Tanks. I can't read much but I kin manage. [*He sits, the paper in the hand at his side, in the attitude of Rodin's "The Thinker." A pause. Several snores from down the corridor. Suddenly* YANK *jumps to his feet with a furious groan as if some appalling thought had crashed on him—bewilderedly.*] Sure—her old man—president of de Steel Trust—makes half de steel in de world—steel—where I tought I belonged—drivin' trou—movin' —in dat—to make *her*—and cage me in for her to spit on! Christ! [*He shakes the bars of his cell door till the whole tier trembles. Irritated, protesting exclamations from those awakened or trying to get to sleep.*] He made dis—dis cage! Steel! *It* don't belong, dat's what! Cages, cells, locks, bolts, bars—dat's what it means!—holdin' me down wit him at de top! But I'll drive trou! Fire, dat melts it! I'll be fire—under de heap—fire dat never goes out—hot as hell—breakin' out in de night—[*While he has been saying this last he has shaken his cell door to a clanging accompaniment. As he comes to the "breakin' out" he seizes one bar with both hands and, putting his two feet up against the others so that his position is parallel to the floor like a monkey's, he gives a great wrench backwards. The bar bends like a licorice stick under his tremendous strength. Just at this moment the* PRISON GUARD *rushes in, dragging a hose behind him.*]

GUARD [*Angrily.*] I'll loin youse bums to wake me up! [*Sees* YANK.] Hello, it's you, huh? Got the D. T.'s, hey? Well, I'll cure 'em. I'll drown your snakes for yuh! [*Noticing the bar.*] Hell, look at dat bar bended! On'y a bug is strong enough for dat!

YANK [*Glaring at him.*] Or a hairy ape, yuh big yellow bum! Look out! Here I come! [*He grabs another bar.*]

GUARD [*Scared now—yelling off left.*] Toin de hose on, Ben! —full pressure! And call de others—and a straitjacket! [*The curtain is falling. As it hides* YANK *from view, there is a splattering smash as the stream of water hits the steel of* YANK'S *cell.*]

Curtain.

Scene 7

Nearly a month later. An I. W. W. local near the water front, showing the interior of a front room on the ground floor, and the street outside. Moonlight on the narrow street, buildings massed in black shadow. The interior of the room, which is general assembly room, office, and reading room, resembles some dingy settlement boy's club. A desk and high stool are in one corner. A table with papers, stacks of pamphlets, chairs about it, is at center. The whole is decidedly cheap, banal, commonplace, and unmysterious as a room could well be. The SECRETARY *is perched on the stool making entries in a large ledger. An eye shade casts his face into shadows. Eight or ten men, longshoremen, iron workers, and the like, are grouped about the table. Two are playing checkers. One is writing a letter. Most of them are smoking pipes. A big signboard is on the wall at the rear, "Industrial Workers of the World—Local No. 57."*

YANK *comes down the street outside. He is dressed as in Scene Five. He moves cautiously, mysteriously. He comes to a point opposite the door; tiptoes softly up to it, listens, is impressed by the silence within, knocks carefully, as if he were guessing at the password to some secret rite. Listens. No answer. Knocks again a bit louder. No answer. Knocks impatiently, much louder.*

SECRETARY [*Turning around on his stool.*] What the hell is that — someone knocking? [*Shouts.*] Come in, why don't you? [*All the men in the room look up.* YANK *opens the door slowly, gingerly, as if afraid of an ambush. He looks around for secret doors, mystery, is taken aback by the commonplaceness of the room and the men in it, thinks he may have gotten in the wrong place, then sees the signboard on the wall and is reassured.*]

YANK [*Blurts out.*] Hello.

MEN [*Reservedly.*] Hello.

YANK [*More easily.*] I tought I'd bumped into de wrong dump.

SECRETARY [*Scrutinizing him carefully.*] Maybe you have. Are you a member?

YANK Naw, not yet. Dat's what I come for—to join.

SECRETARY That's easy. What's your job—longshore?

YANK Naw. Fireman—stoker on de liners.

SECRETARY [*With satisfaction.*] Welcome to our city. Glad to know you people are waking up at last. We haven't got many members in your line.

YANK Naw. Dey're all dead to de woild.

SECRETARY Well, you can help to wake 'em. What's your name? I'll make out your card.

YANK [*Confused.*] Name? Lemme tink.

SECRETARY [*Sharply.*] Don't you know your own name?

YANK Sure; but I been just Yank for so long—Bob, dat's it—Bob Smith.

SECRETARY [*Writing.*] Robert Smith. [*Fills out the rest of the card.*] Here you are. Cost you half a dollar.

YANK Is dat all—four bits? Dat's easy. [*Gives the* SECRETARY *the money.*]

SECRETARY [*Throwing it in drawer.*] Thanks. Well, make yourself at home. No introductions needed. There's literature on the table. Take some of those pamphlets with you to distribute aboard ship. They may bring results. Sow the seed, only go about it right. Don't get caught and fired. We got plenty out of work. What we need is men who can hold their jobs—and work for us at the same time.

YANK Sure. [*But he still stands, embarrassed and uneasy.*]

SECRETARY [*Looking at him—curiously.*] What did you knock for? Think we had a coon in uniform to open doors?

YANK Naw. I tought it was locked—and dat yuh'd wanter give me the once-over trou a peep-hole or somep'n to see if I was right.

SECRETARY [*Alert and suspicious but with an easy laugh.*] Think we were running a crap game? That door is never locked. What put that in your nut?

YANK [*With a knowing grin, convinced that this is all camouflage, a part of the secrecy.*] Dis burg is full of bulls, ain't it?

SECRETARY [*Sharply.*] What have the cops got to do with us? We're breaking no laws.

YANK [*With a knowing wink.*] Sure. Youse wouldn't for woilds. Sure. I'm wise to dat.

SECRETARY You seem to be wise to a lot of stuff none of us knows about.

YANK [*With another wink.*]

Aw, dat's aw right, see. [*Then made a bit resentful by the suspicious glances from all sides.*] Aw, can it! Youse needn't put me trou de toid degree. Can't youse see I belong? Sure! I'm reg'lar. I'll stick, get me? I'll shoot de woiks for youse. Dat's why I wanted to join in.

SECRETARY [*Breezily, feeling him out.*] That's the right spirit. Only are you sure you understand what you've joined? It's all plain and above board; still, some guys get a wrong slant on us. [*Sharply.*] What's your notion of the purpose of the I. W. W.?

YANK Aw, I know all about it.

SECRETARY [*Sarcastically.*] Well, give us some of your valuable information.

YANK [*Cunningly.*] I know enough not to speak outa my toin. [*Then resentfully again.*] Aw, say! I'm reg'lar. I'm wise to de game. I know yuh got to watch your step wit a stranger. For all youse know, I might be a plain-clothes dick, or somep'n, dat's what yuh're tinkin', huh? Aw, forget it! I belong, see? Ask any guy down to de docks if I don't.

SECRETARY Who said you didn't?

YANK After I'm 'nitiated, I'll show yuh.

SECRETARY [*Astounded.*] Initiated? There's no initiation.

YANK [*Disappointed.*] Ain't there no password—no grip nor nothin'?

SECRETARY What'd you think this is—the Elks—or the Black Hand?

YANK De Elks, hell! De Black Hand, dey're a lot of yellow back-stickin' Ginees. Naw. Dis is a man's gang, ain't it?

SECRETARY You said it! That's why we stand on our two feet in the open. We got no secrets.

YANK [*Surprised but admiringly.*] Yuh mean to say yuh always run wide open—like dis?

SECRETARY Exactly.

YANK Den yuh sure got your noive wit youse!

SECRETARY [*Sharply.*] Just what was it made you want to join us? Come out with that straight.

YANK Yuh call me? Well, I got noive, too! Here's my hand. Yuh wanter blow tings up, don't yuh? Well, dat's me! I belong!

SECRETARY [*With pretended carelessness.*] You mean change the unequal conditions of society by legitimate direct action—or with dynamite?

YANK Dynamite! Blow it offen de oith—steel—all de cages —all de factories, steamers,

buildings, jails—de Steel Trust and all dat makes it go.

SECRETARY So—that's your idea, eh? And did you have any special job in that line you wanted to propose to us? [*He makes a sign to the men, who get up cautiously one by one and group behind* YANK.]

YANK [*Boldly.*] Sure, I'll come out wit it. I'll show youse I'm one of de gang. Dere's dat millionaire guy, Douglas—

SECRETARY President of the Steel Trust, you mean? Do you want to assassinate him?

YANK Naw, dat don't get yuh nothin'. I mean blow up de factory, de woiks, where he makes de steel. Dat's what I'm after—to blow up de steel, knock all de steel in de woild up to de moon. Dat'll fix tings! [*Eagerly, with a touch of bravado.*] I'll do it by me lonesome! I'll show yuh! Tell me where his woiks is, how to git there, all de dope. Gimme de stuff, de old butter—and watch me do de rest! Watch de smoke and see it move! I don't give a damn if dey nab me—long as it's done! I'll soive life for it—and give 'em de laugh! [*Half to himself.*] And I'll write her a letter and tell her de hairy ape done it. Dat'll square tings.

SECRETARY [*Stepping away from* YANK.] Very interesting. [*He gives a signal. The men, huskies all, throw themselves on* YANK *and before he knows it they have his legs and arms pinioned. But he is too flabbergasted to make a struggle, anyway. They feel him over for weapons.*]

MAN No gat, no knife. Shall we give him what's what and put the boots to him?

SECRETARY No. He isn't worth the trouble we'd get into. He's too stupid. [*He comes closer and laughs mockingly in* YANK's *face.*] Ho-ho! By God, this is the biggest joke they've put up on us yet. Hey, you Joke! Who sent you—Burns or Pinkerton? No, by God, you're such a bonehead I'll bet you're in the Secret Service! Well, you dirty spy, you rotten agent provocator, you can go back and tell whatever skunk is paying you blood-money for betraying your brothers that he's wasting his coin. You couldn't catch a cold. And tell him that all he'll ever get on us, or ever has got, is just his own sneaking plots that he's framed up to put us in jail. We are what our manifesto says we are, neither more nor less—and we'll give him a copy of that any time he calls. And as for you— [*He glares scornfully at* YANK, *who is sunk in an oblivious stupor.*] Oh, hell,

what's the use of talking? You're a brainless ape.

YANK [*Aroused by the word to fierce but futile struggles.*] What's dat, you Sheeny bum, yuh!

SECRETARY Throw him out, boys. [*In spite of his struggles, this is done with gusto and éclat. Propelled by several parting kicks,* YANK *lands sprawling in the middle of the narrow cobbled street. With a growl he starts to get up and storm the closed door, but stops, bewildered by the confusion in his brain, pathetically impotent. He sits there, brooding, in as near to the attitude of Rodin's "The Thinker" as he can get in his position.*]

YANK [*Bitterly.*] So dem boids don't tink I belong, neider. Aw, to hell wit 'em! Dey're in de wrong pew—de same old bull—soap-boxes and Salvation Army—no guts! Cut out an hour offen de job a day and make me happy! Gimme a dollar more a day and make me happy! Tree square a day, and cauliflowers in de front yard—ekal rights—a woman and kids—a lousy vote—and I'm all fixed for Jesus, huh? Aw, hell! What does dat get yuh? Dis ting's in your inside, but it ain't your belly. Feedin' your face—sinkers and coffee—dat don't touch it. It's way down—at de bottom. Yuh can't grab it, and yuh can't stop it. It moves, and everything moves. It stops and de whole woild stops. Dat's me now—I don't tick, see?—I'm a busted Ingersoll, dat's what. Steel was me, and I owned de woild. Now I ain't steel, and de woild owns me. Aw, hell! I can't see—it's all dark, get me? It's all wrong! [*He turns a bitter mocking face up like an ape gibbering at the moon.*] Say, youse up dere, Man in de Moon, yuh look so wise, gimme de answer, huh? Slip me de inside dope, de information right from de stable—where do I get off at, huh?

A POLICEMAN [*Who has come up the street in time to hear this last—with grim humor.*] You'll get off at the station, you boob, if you don't get up out of that and keep movin'.

YANK [*Looking up at him—with a hard, bitter laugh.*] Sure! Lock me up! Put me in a cage! Dat's de on'y answer yuh know. G'wan, lock me up!

POLICEMAN What you been doin'?

YANK Enuf to gimme life for! I was born, see? Sure, dat's de charge. Write it in de blotter. I was born, get me!

POLICEMAN [*Jocosely.*] God pity your old woman! [*Then*

matter-of-factly.] But I've no time for kidding. You're soused. I'd run you in but it's too long a walk to the station. Come on now, get up, or I'll fan your ears with this club. Beat it now! [*He hauls* YANK *to his feet.*]

YANK [*In a vague mocking tone.*] Say, where do I go from here?

POLICEMAN [*Giving him a push—with a grin, indifferently.*] Go to hell.

Curtain.

Scene 8

Twilight of the next day. The monkey house at the Zoo. One spot of clear gray light falls on the front of one cage so that the interior can be seen. The other cages are vague, shrouded in shadow from which chatterings pitched in a conversational tone can be heard. On the one cage a sign from which the word "gorilla" stands out. The gigantic animal himself is seen squatting on his haunches on a bench in much the same attitude as Rodin's "The Thinker." YANK *enters from the left. Immediately a chorus of angry chattering and screeching breaks out. The gorilla turns his eyes but makes no sound or move.*

YANK [*With a hard, bitter laugh.*] Welcome to your city, huh? Hail, hail, de gang's all here! [*At the sound of his voice the chattering dies away into an attentive silence.* YANK *walks up to the gorilla's cage and, leaning over the railing, stares in at its occupant, who stares back at him, silent and motionless. There is a pause of dead stillness. Then* YANK *begins to talk in a friendly confidential tone, half mockingly, but with a deep undercurrent of sympathy.*] Say, yuh're some hard-lookin' guy, ain't yuh? I seen lots of tough nuts dat de gang called gorillas, but yuh're de foist real one I ever seen. Some chest yuh got, and shoulders, and dem arms and mits! I bet yuh got a punch in eider fist dat'd knock 'em all silly! [*This with genuine admiration. The gorilla, as if he understood, stands upright, swelling out his chest and pounding on it with his fist.* YANK *grins sympathetically.*] Sure, I get yuh. Yuh challenge de whole woild, huh? Yuh got what I was sayin' even if yuh muffed de woids. [*Then*

bitterness creeping in.] And why wouldn't yuh get me? Ain't we both members of de same club—de Hairy Apes? [*They stare at each other—a pause—then* YANK *goes on slowly and bitterly.*] So yuh're what she seen when she looked at me, de white-faced tart! I was you to her, get me? On'y outa de cage—broke out—free to moider her, see? Sure! Dat's what she tought. She wasn't wise dat I was in a cage, too—worser'n yours—sure—a damn sight — 'cause you got some chanct to bust loose—but me—[*He grows confused.*] Aw, hell! It's all wrong, ain't it? [*A pause.*] I s'pose yuh wanter know what I'm doin' here, huh? I been warmin' a bench down to de Battery—ever since last night. Sure. I seen de sun come up. Dat was pretty, too—all red and pink and green. I was lookin' at de skyscrapers—steel—and all de ships comin' in, sailin' out, all over de oith—and dey was steel, too. De sun was warm, dey wasn't no clouds, and dere was a breeze blowin'. Sure, it was great stuff. I got it aw right—what Paddy said about dat bein' de right dope—on'y I couldn't get *in* it, see? I couldn't belong in dat. It was over my head. And I kept tinkin'—and den I beat it up here to see what youse was like. And I waited till dey was all gone to git yuh alone. Say, how d'yuh feel sittin' in dat pen all de time, havin' to stand for 'em comin' and starin' at yuh—de white-faced, skinny tarts and de boobs what marry 'em—makin' fun of yuh, laughin' at yuh, gittin' scared of yuh—damn 'em! [*He pounds on the rail with his fist. The gorilla rattles the bars of his cage and snarls. All the other monkeys set up an angry chattering in the darkness.* YANK *goes on excitedly.*] Sure! Dat's de way it hits me, too. On'y yuh're lucky, see? Yuh don't belong wit 'em and yuh know it. But me, I belong wit 'em—but I don't, see? Dey don't belong wit me, dat's what. Get me? Tinkin' is hard—[*He passes one hand across his forehead with a painful gesture. The gorilla growls impatiently.* YANK *goes on gropingly.*] It's dis way, what I'm drivin' at. Youse can sit and dope dream in de past, green woods, de jungle and de rest of it. Den yuh belong and dey don't. Den yuh kin laugh at 'em, see? Yuh're de champ of de world. But me—I ain't got no past to tink in, nor nothin' dat's comin', on'y what's now—and dat don't belong. Sure, you're de best off! You can't tink, can yuh? Yuh can't talk neider. But I kin make a bluff at talkin' and tinkin'

—a'most git away wit it—a'most —and dat's where de joker comes in. [*He laughs.*] I ain't on oith and I ain't in heaven, get me? I'm in de middle tryin' to separate 'em, takin' all de woist punches from bot' of 'em. Maybe dat's what dey call hell, huh? But you, yuh're at de bottom. You belong! Sure! Yuh're de on'y one in de woild dat does, yuh lucky stiff! [*The gorilla growls proudly.*] And dat's why dey gotter put yuh in a cage, see? [*The gorilla roars angrily.*] Sure! Yuh get me. It beats it when you try to tink it or talk it—it's way down—deep—behind—you 'n' me we feel it. Sure! Bot' members of dis club! [*He laughs—then in a savage tone.*] What de hell! T' hell wit it! A little action, dat's our meat! Dat belongs! Knock 'em down and keep bustin' 'em till dey croaks yuh wit a gat—wit steel! Sure! Are yuh game? Dey've looked at youse, ain't dey—in a cage? Wanter git even? Wanter wind up like a sport 'stead of croakin' slow in dere? [*The gorilla roars an emphatic affirmative.* YANK *goes on with a sort of furious exaltation.*] Sure! Yuh're reg'lar! Yuh'll stick to de finish! Me 'n' you, huh?—bot' members of dis club! We'll put up one last star bout dat'll knock 'em offen deir seats! Dey'll have to make de cages stronger after we're trou! [*The gorilla is straining at his bars, growling, hopping from one foot to the other.* YANK *takes a jimmy from under his coat and forces the lock on the cage door. He throws this open.*] Pardon from de governor! Step out and shake hands. I'll take yuh for a walk down Fif' Avenoo. We'll knock 'em offen de oith and croak wit de band playin'. Come on, Brother. [*The gorilla scrambles gingerly out of his cage. Goes to* YANK *and stands looking at him.* YANK *keeps his mocking tone—holds out his hand.*] Shake —de secret grip of our order. [*Something, the tone of mockery, perhaps, suddenly enrages the animal. With a spring he wraps his huge arms around* YANK *in a murderous hug. There is a crackling snap of crushed ribs — a gasping cry, still mocking, from* YANK.] Hey, I didn't say kiss me! [*The gorilla lets the crushed body slip to the floor; stands over it uncertainly, considering; then picks it up, throws it in the cage, shuts the door, and shuffles off menacingly into the darkness at left. A great uproar of frightened chattering and whimpering comes from the other cages. Then* YANK *moves, groaning, opening his eyes, and there is*

silence. He mutters painfully.] Say—dey oughter match him—with Zybszko. He got me, aw right. I'm trou. Even him didn't tink I belonged. [*Then, with sudden passionate despair.*] Christ, where do I get off at? Where do I fit in? [*Checking himself as suddenly.*] Aw, what de hell! No squawkin', see! No quittin', get me! Croak wit your boots on! [*He grabs hold of the bars of the cage and hauls himself painfully to his feet—looks around him bewilderedly—forces a mocking laugh.*] In de cage, huh? [*In the strident tones of a circus barker.*] Ladies and gents, step forward and take a slant at de one and only— [*His voice weakening.*] one and original—Hairy Ape from de wilds of— [*He slips in a heap on the floor and dies. The monkeys set up a chattering, whimpering wail. And, perhaps, the Hairy Ape at last belongs.*]

Curtain.

Maxwell Anderson

During the thirties Maxwell Anderson was the only successful writer of poetic tragedy in the English-speaking world. Such rivals as W. H. Auden and T. S. Eliot were better lyricists, but Anderson was the one poet who was able to hold the professional stage and build his literary reputation by drama in verse. He has always felt that "prose is the language of information and poetry the language of emotion," and that "the best prose in the world is inferior on the stage to the best poetry." Regardless of how much critics and playwrights might disagree with such ideas, Anderson's success with poetic tragedy was unchallenged on the American stage for over a decade.

Before he became a professional playwright, Anderson was a college English teacher and a journalist in California. His loss of both positions was due in part at least to his pacifist sympathies during the first World War. In 1918 he moved to New York where, in addition to writing for newspapers, he followed his interest in poetry and helped Padraic Colum and Genevieve Taggard establish a magazine of verse, *The Measure*. In 1925 he published a volume of his own poetry entitled *You Who Have Dreams*. All three of these professions—teaching, journalism, and poetry—were important in his career as a playwright. His college work equipped him with historical perspective and a knowledge of letters and criticism. This is apparent in such plays as *Elizabeth the Queen* and *Mary of Scotland*. His experience in writing short poems ultimately produced the effective dramatic blank verse of *Winterset*. And his training on various newspapers helped focus his attention on social problems such as those dealt with in *Saturday's Children* and *Gods of the Lightning*.

In fact it was the social-problem play, popular in the twenties, that first secured Anderson a reputation as a dramatist. *What Price Glory?*, written in collaboration with Laurence Stallings, was a spectacular success. The authors reproduced the life and language of the

soldiers of World War I in realistic and pungent detail, and created an amusing satire on the then widely accepted notion that war was a noble crusade. Even in this matter-of-fact comedy about a contemporary subject, however, Anderson showed a tendency toward a romantic treatment. War was depicted as brutal, but as being responsible for a sense of comradeship, the only acceptable sentiment to be found in Sergeant Quirt and Captain Flagg. And at the same time that the action destroyed the myth that war was noble, it perpetrated the fiction that war was one long, riotous week-end in Paris.

By the end of the twenties Anderson had learned his new profession and was ready to begin an independent career in the theater. He no longer worked in partnership with another playwright. His preoccupation with immediate social problems became subordinated to more general themes, such as the relation of man to the state, the consequences of power, and the ethics of individualism. He later affirmed that "the stage is still a cathedral, but just now a journalistic one, dominated by those who wish to offer something immediate about our political, social or economic life." This change is clearly indicated in two treatments of the Sacco–Vanzetti case, the first in prose and the second in verse. In *Gods of the Lightning,* produced in 1928, he wrote a specific case history of this famous trial. In *Winterset,* produced in 1935, he used the same trial but turned it into an account of the nature of justice and of man's relation to the universe.

The plays that Anderson wrote in the thirties and forties were occupied with two major concerns: man's relation to society and man's relation to himself. The position that he took on the former brought upon him the greatest amount of adverse criticism. No matter what form he used—historical and poetic tragedy, fantasy, musical comedy, radio play, or modern poetic tragedy—what he had to say was in conflict with the liberal spirit of the period. Since the most influential and vocal drama critics were of the liberal tradition, they frequently condemned his point of view.

Both Your Houses, a prose drama produced in 1933, is a satire on contemporary politics. Anderson's attitude here was that government, by its very nature, is corrupt, that its purpose is not good rule but the enrichment and perpetuation of politicians in office. *Valley*

Forge, an historical drama in poetry, was produced the following year. Again Anderson attacked the nature of government. He later declared that during the Revolutionary period "it was generally believed, as I believe now, that the gravest and most constant danger to a man's life, liberty and happiness is the government under which he lives." And *The Masque of Kings* dramatized his belief that even a liberal could not reform the innate tyranny of government.

Finally, when *Knickerbocker Holiday,* a delightful musical comedy about the Colonial Dutch government of New Amsterdam, was produced in 1938, the critics spoke so violently that Anderson felt obliged to defend himself, which he did in an essay entitled "The Politics of Knickerbocker Holiday." He wrote of his concept of democracy as the best government because it interfered least with individual liberty: "The fact that there are three branches of government makes for a salutary delay and a blessed inefficiency, the elective rotation makes for a government not by cynical professionals, but by normally honest and fairly incompetent amateurs." He attacked the growing idea that it was the government's duty to enter into almost every detail in the life of the individual citizen: "The greatest enemies of democracy," he wrote, "the most violent reactionaries, are those who have lost faith in the capacity of a free people to manage their own affairs and wish to set up the government as a political and social guardian, running their business and making their decisions for them." He called social security a "monstrous and dishonest business" and added: "When a government takes over a people's economic life it becomes absolute, and when it has become absolute it destroys the arts, the minds, the liberties and the meaning of the people it governs. . . . Men who are fed by their government will soon be driven down to the status of slaves or cattle."

Anderson most successfully presented his views on man's relation to contemporary economic problems in a farce comedy, *High Tor.* The play has a very amusing situation in which two realtors, representing mercantilism, are trapped in a steam shovel, representing industrialism, and are forced to spend a very uncomfortable night there. Meanwhile, the idealistic hero escapes for one more night from the onslaught of these two modern forces that are assaulting his mountain sanctuary, High Tor. His sense of individual integrity

and his desire for a vanishing beauty are satisfied briefly by the ghosts of the crew of a Dutch sailing ship and particularly by Lise, a beautiful girl who accompanies them. It is significant that this play is almost pure fantasy.

Anderson's second major concern, that of man's relationship to himself, has been developed in his poetic tragedies of historical and contemporary setting. These plays have been, in general, enthusiastically received by the critics and audiences alike. It is by these plays that Anderson's dominant place in the theater is measured today.

Elizabeth the Queen, produced by the Theatre Guild in 1930, was Anderson's first successful poetic tragedy. He deliberately selected an historical setting because his studies in dramatic literature and criticism had led him to the conclusion that such was the practice of all playwrights. He could not find a single tragedy by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Shakespeare, Corneille, or Racine which did not have a setting remote in time or place; and, beginning with *Elizabeth the Queen,* he turned to the production of a succession of historical costume plays. Into the Elizabethan setting of this play he introduced two themes that he was to use in many of the later plays. The first of these was the power of love to raise men and women to unexpected spiritual heights; the second was the tendency of power, especially political power, to corrupt the individual who exercised it. Anderson showed his audiences the conflict between a queen—capricious, fierce-tempered, proud, and lonely—and a young ambitious courtier. Elizabeth and Essex work out their own inevitable destructions because of their consuming ambitions which are in conflict with their love for one another. The young Earl of Essex, like so many of Anderson's later heroes, prefers death to the moral corruption into which his political ambition is driving him. Anderson wanted the audience to feel that the earl's "tragic reconciliation with life" was the modern equivalent of the catharsis to be found in Greek plays when the spectators were purged of pity and fear because of their realization of the dignity and nobility with which the hero faced his destruction.

Despite his success with blank verse in period pieces, it was not until the production of *Winterset* in 1935 that Anderson attempted

to put his protagonist in modern dress. Then he made gangsters, vagrants, a young girl, and a judge all speak blank verse. Although there was some adverse critical comment, *Winterset* found favor with most audiences. Anderson himself came to the modest conclusion that it was not important whether *Winterset* solved the problem of using verse in modern tragedy, but it was important that the question be solved if there were to be a great theater in America. And most subsequent critics have come to the conclusion that he sucessfully broke through the centuries' long tradition and created a satisfactory poetic tragedy on a contemporary subject.

Anderson showed his stature as a playwright and proved that his first successful flouting of tradition was not just a lucky accident when he created a second verse play in modern dress. In *Key Largo* King McCloud, the young hero, becomes disillusioned with the Republican cause of the Spanish Civil War and retreats rather than remain to die in defense of what he feels is political opportunism. This action, however, is a betrayal of his own ideals. Then, just as in *Winterset,* the large problem of the nature of social justice becomes complicated by a lurid gangster theme. Once again, as in the former play, the patriarchal father of the girl declares that it is necessary to believe that man is advancing millennium by millennium, from civilization to civilization. Since McCloud has come to believe this, he chooses to die defiantly rather than to compromise with the forces of evil. Anderson later declared that his own belief was "simply a faith in the human race and its gradual acquisition of wisdom."

Between the production of *Winterset* in 1935 and *Key Largo* in 1939 Anderson summarized his reading and thinking on the subject of tragedy in an essay entitled "The Essence of Tragedy," which was read before the Modern Language Association in 1938. He asserted that in the Greek dramas and in Aristotle's criticism of them he had found the proper movement of action within tragedy. This action, he said, must build to, and then recede from, the key scene, which Aristotle called the recognition or discovery scene. "For the mainspring in the mechanism of a modern play," Anderson said, "is almost invariably a discovery by the hero of some element in his environment or in his own soul of which he has not been aware—or

which he has not sufficiently taken into account." From the moment he becomes aware of it, Anderson added, the course of the action is changed.

In most contemporary tragedies the protagonist discovers this element in his environment. Hedda Gabler learns that her marriage is not what she had hoped and turns from constructive to destructive action. Uncle Vanya discovers that by his life of self-sacrifice he has used up his youth supporting his futile brother-in-law. Yank recognizes that he is considered a hairy ape, and he is destroyed when he tries to fight a class war. But in Anderson's plays the discovery takes place within the soul of the hero and concerns the man himself rather than the outside world.

Anderson also noted that the hero who makes the discovery must not be a perfect man. "He must have some variation of what Aristotle calls a tragic fault—and the reason he must have it is that when he makes his discovery he must change both in himself and in his action—and he must change for the better." Neither Uncle Vanya nor Yank changes within himself. Their tragedy is that each one can dream of a better world and yet find the dream frustrated by reality. It is the nature of society that is wrong, not the nature of man. But Anderson is preoccupied with the reform of the human heart rather than with social reform. He announced that for a playwright "the essence of a tragedy, or even of a serious play, is the spiritual awakening, or regeneration, of his hero." In *The Eve of St. Mark* an American soldier gives his life in rear-guard action rather than abandon his post of duty. He does this to justify his belief in the nobility of man which makes him prefer self-sacrifice to self-preservation. Again, in *Joan of Lorraine* the heroine, in her efforts to save France from the English, must decide whether to indulge in deception and expediency to achieve her goal. Her death follows her rejection of moral weakness and her acceptance of the belief that "there's nothing in the world as important as a pure faith, purely followed."

As a scholar and a playwright, Anderson has consistently looked to the past for his ideas. He has developed, like the Greek dramatists, the concept that "the theatre is a religious institution devoted entirely to the exaltation of the spirit of man." To awaken the spirit of man he has returned to the exaltation of poetry. In full, flooding

beauty of language he has succeeded in lifting his audience to the feeling that "men pass through suffering purified, that, animal though we are, despicable though we are in many ways, there is in us all some divine, incalculable fire that urges us to be better than we are."

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

1888 Born December 15 at Atlantic, Pennsylvania. His father was a Baptist minister who changed residence frequently, moving chiefly westward.

1911 Took his B.A. at the University of North Dakota. Married Margaret Haskett, who died in 1931. Had one son, Quentin Alan Terence. Taught school at Grand Forks, North Dakota, and worked on the *Herald* there.

1914 Became an instructor of English at Leland Stanford and took his M.A. Taught at Whittier College.

1915-18 Became a newspaper writer in San Francisco.

1918-24 Wrote for newspapers in New York City and was on the staff of the *New Republic.* Wrote poetry and helped found a poetry magazine, *The Measure.*

1923 White Desert was his first production.[1] He later said: "I wrote it in verse because I was weary of plays in prose that never lifted from the ground. It failed, and I did not come back to verse again until I had discovered that poetic tragedy had never been successfully written about its own place and time."

1924-28 PERIOD OF PROSE DRAMA

1924 What Price Glory? (written in collaboration with Laurence Stallings) is a realistic account of World War I and was a great success. It popularized the use of profanity on the stage. J. W. Krutch has noted: "There has been more profanity on the English-speaking stage in the twenty-five years since [this play] than there had been in the two centuries and a quarter [preceding it.]"

1925 The Buccaneer (also written in collaboration with Stallings) is a romantic historical play on Henry Morgan. *You Who Have Dreams,* a book of poetry.

1927 Saturday's Children, his first successful independent play, is a realistic account of the economic factors in marriage.

1928 Gods of the Lightning (written in collaboration with Harold Hickerson) is a realistic study of the Sacco–Vanzetti trial.

1930-39 PERIOD OF POETIC TRAGEDY

"The theme of tragedy has always been victory in defeat, a man's conquest of himself in the face of annihilation. The last act of a tragedy contains the moment when the wheel of a man's fate carries him simultaneously to spiritual realization and to the end of his life. The message of tragedy is simply that men are better than they think they are. . . ."

1930 Elizabeth the Queen, an historical play in blank verse.

1933 Both Your Houses, a satire on modern politicians, won the Pulitzer prize. *Mary of Scotland,* another historical poetic tragedy. It ran for 248 performances and was his most popular play in the thirties. Married Gertrude Maynard and had a daughter, Hesper.

1934 Valley Forge is a poetic drama concerning the people who betrayed George Washington.

1935 Winterset won the Drama Critics'

[1] All dates for Anderson's plays are for the New York production unless otherwise noted.

Circle award. This poetic version of the Sacco–Vanzetti case was a success. Anderson's pragmatic judgment was: "Our theatre has not yet produced anything worthy to endure—and endurance, though it may be a fallible test, is the only test of excellence." It ran in New York for 179 performances.

1937 High Tor won the Drama Critics' Circle award. It is a fantasy concerning a young man who, with the aid of the ghostly crew of a Dutch sailing ship, outwits some modern realtors. *The Masque of Kings* uses the Mayerling tragedy to show that tyranny and corruption go with all forms of government. *The Star-Wagon,* mostly in prose, is a fantasy in which people return to their youth by means of a time machine. Anderson has had some interest in radio plays. *Feast of Ortolans,* a one-act radio drama on the French Revolution, was broadcast this year. It was followed in later years by *Second Overture* on the Russian Revolution, *The Bastion Saint* on the Spanish Revolution, and *The Miracle of the Danube* on the Nazi Revolution.

1938 Knickerbocker Holiday, a musical comedy with score by Kurt Weill, was produced by the Playwrights' Company which was formed that year by Maxwell Anderson, S. N. Behrman, Sidney Howard, Elmer Rice, and Robert E. Sherwood.

1939 Key Largo, another poetic tragedy on a contemporary situation, the Spanish Civil War.

1941-45 PLAYS OF WORLD WAR II

Of these war plays, only *The Eve of St. Mark* had a successful run.

1941 Candle in the Wind treats of the occupation of France and the French underground.

1942 The Eve of St. Mark deals with the war in the Pacific.

1944 Storm Operation takes its title from the code name of the North African campaign and dramatizes that struggle.

1945 Truckline Cafe deals with the home front.

1946-ff. RETURN TO POETIC TRAGEDY

1946 Joan of Lorraine, a play within a play on the Joan of Arc story. Certain parallels are drawn between Joan's problems and the problems of present-day democracy and the theater.

1948 Anne of the Thousand Days, a successful costume tragedy.

1949 Lost in the Stars, a musical play with score by Kurt Weill, is based on Alan Paton's novel *Cry the Beloved Country.*

Winterset[1]

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

by MAXWELL ANDERSON

Characters

TROCK ESTRELLA
SHADOW
GARTH
MIRIAMNE
ESDRAS
THE HOBO
1ST GIRL
2ND GIRL
JUDGE GAUNT
MIO
CARR
HERMAN
LUCIA
PINY
A SAILOR
STREET URCHIN
POLICEMEN
RADICAL
SERGEANT

Non-speaking

URCHINS
TWO MEN IN BLUE SERGE

[1] Copyright, 1935, by Anderson House, reprinted by permission.

SCENE: *The scene is the bank of a river under a bridgehead. A gigantic span starts from the rear of the stage and appears to lift over the heads of the audience and out to the left. At the right rear is a wall of solid supporting masonry. To the left an apartment building abuts against the bridge and forms the left wall of the stage with a dark basement window and a door in the brick wall. To the right, and in the foreground, an outcropping of original rock makes a barricade behind which one may enter through a cleft. To the rear, against the masonry, two sheds have been built by waifs and strays for shelter. The river bank, in the foreground, is black rock worn smooth by years of trampling. There is room for exit and entrance to the left around the apartment house, also around the rock to the right. A single street lamp is seen at the left—and a glimmer of apartment lights in the background beyond. It is an early, dark December morning.*

TWO YOUNG MEN IN SERGE *lean against the masonry, matching bills.* TROCK ESTRELLA *and* SHADOW *come in from the left.*

TROCK Go back and watch the car.

The TWO YOUNG MEN *go out.*

TROCK *walks to the corner and looks toward the city.*

You roost of punks and gulls!
Sleep, sleep it off,
whatever you had last night, get down in warm,
one big ham-fat against another —sleep,
cling, sleep and rot! Rot out your pasty guts
with diddling, you had no brain to begin. If you had
there'd be no need for us to sleep on iron
who had too much brains for you.

SHADOW Now look, Trock, look,
what would the warden say to talk like that?

TROCK May they die as I die!
By God, what life they've left me
they shall keep me well! I'll have that out of them—
these pismires that walk like men!

SHADOW Because, look, chief,
it's all against science and penology
for you to get out and begin to cuss that way
before your prison vittles are out of you. Hell,
you're supposed to leave the pen full of high thought,

kind of noble-like, loving toward all mankind,
ready to kiss their feet—or whatever parts
they stick out toward you. Look at me!

TROCK I see you.

And even you may not live as long as you think.
You think too many things are funny. Well, laugh.
But it's not so funny.

SHADOW Come on, Trock, you know me.
Anything you say goes, but give me leave
to kid a little.

TROCK Then laugh at somebody else!
It's a lot safer! They've soaked me once too often
in that vat of poisoned hell they keep up-state
to soak men in, and I'm rotten inside, I'm all
one liquid puke inside where I had lungs
once, like yourself! And now they want to get me
and stir me in again—and that'd kill me—
and that's fine for them. But before that happens to me
a lot of these healthy boys'll know what it's like
when you try to breathe and have no place to put air—
they'll learn it from me!

SHADOW They've got nothing on you, chief.

TROCK I don't know yet. That's what I'm here to find out.

If they've got what they might have
it's not a year this time—
no, nor ten. It's screwed down under a lid.—
I can die quick enough, without help.

SHADOW You're the skinny kind
that lives forever.

TROCK He gave me a half a year,
the doc at the gate.

SHADOW Jesus.

TROCK Six months I get,
and the rest's dirt, six feet.

LUCIA, *the street-piano man, comes in right from behind the rock and goes to the shed where he keeps his piano.* PINY, *the apple-woman, follows and stands in the entrance.* LUCIA *speaks to* ESTRELLA, *who still stands facing* SHADOW.

LUCIA Morning.

TROCK *and* SHADOW *go out round the apartment house without speaking.*

PINY Now what would you call them?

LUCIA Maybe someting da river washed up.

PINY Nothing ever washed him—that black one.

LUCIA Maybe not, maybe so. More like his pa and ma raise-a heem in da cellar. [*He wheels out the piano.*]

PINY He certainly gave me a turn. [*She lays a hand on the rock.*]

LUCIA You don' live-a right, ol' gal. Take heem easy. Look on da bright-a side. Never say-a die. Me, every day in every way I getta be da regular heller. [*He starts out.*]

Curtain.

Scene 2

SCENE: *A cellar apartment under the apartment building, floored with cement and roofed with huge boa constrictor pipes that run slantwise from left to right, dwarfing the room. An outside door opens to the left and a door at the right rear leads to the interior of the place. A low squat window to the left. A table at the rear and a few chairs and books make up the furniture.* GARTH, *son of* ESDRAS, *sits alone, holding a violin upside down to inspect a crack at its base. He lays the bow on the floor and runs his fingers over the joint.* MIRIAMNE *enters from the rear, a girl of fifteen.* GARTH *looks up, then down again.*

MIRIAMNE Garth—

GARTH The glue lets go. It's the steam, I guess.
It splits the hair on your head.

MIRIAMNE It can't be mended?

GARTH I can't mend it.
No doubt there are fellows somewhere
who'd mend it for a dollar—and glad to do it.
That is if I had a dollar.—Got a dollar?
No, I thought not.

MIRIAMNE Garth, you've sat at home here
three days now. You haven't gone out at all.
Something frightens you.

GARTH Yes?

MIRIAMNE And father's frightened.
He reads without knowing where. When a shadow falls
across the page he waits for a blow to follow
after the shadow. Then in a little while
he puts his book down softly and goes out
to see who passed.

GARTH A bill collector, maybe.
We haven't paid the rent.
MIRIAMNE No.
GARTH You're a bright girl, sis.—
You see too much. You run along and cook.
Why don't you go to school?
MIRIAMNE I don't like school.
They whisper behind my back.
GARTH Yes? About what?
MIRIAMNE What did the lawyer mean
that wrote to you?
GARTH [*Rising.*]
What lawyer?
MIRIAMNE I found a letter
on the floor of your room. He said, "Don't get me wrong,
but stay in out of the rain the next few days,
just for instance."
GARTH I thought I burned that letter.
MIRIAMNE Afterward you did. And then what was printed
about the Estrella gang—you hid it from me,
you and father. What is it—about this murder—?
GARTH Will you shut up, you fool!
MIRIAMNE But if you know
why don't you tell them, Garth?
If it's true—what they say—
you knew all the time Romagna wasn't guilty,
and could have said so—
GARTH Everybody knew
Romagna wasn't guilty! But they weren't listening
to evidence in his favor. They didn't want it.
They don't want it now.
MIRIAMNE But was that why
they never called on you?—
GARTH So far as I know
they never'd heard of me—and I can assure you
I knew nothing about it—
MIRIAMNE But something's wrong—
and it worries father—
GARTH What could be wrong?
MIRIAMNE I don't know. [*A pause.*]
GARTH And I don't know.
You're a good kid, Miriamne,
but you see too many movies. I wasn't mixed up
in any murder, and I don't mean to be.
If I had a dollar to get my fiddle fixed
and another to hire a hall, by God! I'd fiddle
some of the prodigies back into Sunday School
where they belong, but I won't get either, and so
I sit here and bite my nails—but if you hoped
I had some criminal romantic past
you'll have to look again!

MIRIAMNE Oh, Garth, forgive me—
But I want you to be so far above such things
nothing could frighten you. When you seem to shrink
and be afraid, and you're the brother I love,
I want to run there and cry, if there's any question
they care to ask, you'll be quick and glad to answer,
for there's nothing to conceal!
GARTH And that's all true—
MIRIAMNE But then I remember—
how you dim the lights—
and we go early to bed—and speak in whispers—
and I could think there's a death somewhere behind us—
an evil death—
GARTH [*Hearing a step.*] Now for God's sake, be quiet!
ESDRAS, *an old rabbi with a kindly face, enters from the outside. He is hurried and troubled.*
ESDRAS I wish to speak alone with someone here
if I may have
this room. Miriamne—
MIRIAMNE [*Turning to go.*] Yes, father.
The outer door is suddenly thrown open. TROCK *appears.*
TROCK [*After a pause.*] You'll excuse me for not knocking.
[SHADOW *follows* TROCK *in.*]
Sometimes it's best to come in quiet. Sometimes
it's a good way to go out. Garth's home, I see.
He might not have been here if I made a point
of knocking at doors.
GARTH How are you, Trock?
TROCK I guess
you can see how I am.
[*To* MIRIAMNE.] Stay here. Stay where you are.
We'd like to make your acquaintance.
—If you want the facts
I'm no better than usual, thanks. Not enough sun,
my physician tells me. Too much close confinement.
A lack of exercise and an overplus
of beans in the diet. You've done well, no doubt?
GARTH I don't know what makes you think so.
TROCK Who's the family?
GARTH My father and my sister.
TROCK Happy to meet you.
Step inside a minute. The boy and I
have something to talk about.
ESDRAS No, no—he's said nothing—
nothing, sir, nothing!
TROCK When I say go out, you go—

ESDRAS [*Pointing to the door.*] Miriamne—
GARTH Go on out, both of you!
ESDRAS Oh, sir—I'm old—
old and unhappy—
GARTH Go on!
MIRIAMNE *and* ESDRAS *go inside.*
TROCK And if you listen
I'll riddle that door! [SHADOW *shuts the door behind them and stands against it.*]
I just got out, you see,
and I pay my first call on you.
GARTH Maybe you think
I'm not in the same jam you are.
TROCK That's what I do think.
Who started looking this up?
GARTH I wish I knew,
and I wish he was in hell! Some damned professor
with nothing else to do. If you saw his stuff
you know as much as I do.
TROCK It wasn't you
turning state's evidence?
GARTH Hell, Trock, use your brain!
The case was closed. They burned Romagna for it
and that finished it. Why should I look for trouble
and maybe get burned myself?
TROCK Boy, I don't know,
but I just thought I'd find out.
GARTH I'm going straight, Trock.
I can play this thing, and I'm trying to make a living.
I haven't talked and nobody's talked to me.
Christ—it's the last thing I'd want!
TROCK Your old man knows.
GARTH That's where I got the money that last time
when you needed it. He had a little saved up,
but I had to tell him to get it. He's as safe
as Shadow there.
TROCK [*Looking at* SHADOW.] There could be people safer
than that son-of-a-bitch.
SHADOW Who?
TROCK You'd be safer dead
along with some other gorillas.
SHADOW It's beginning to look
as if you'd feel safer with everybody dead,
the whole god-damn world.
TROCK I would. These Jesus-bitten
professors! Looking up their half-ass cases!
We've got enough without that.
GARTH There's no evidence to reopen the thing.
TROCK And suppose they called on you
and asked you to testify?
GARTH Why then I'd tell 'em that all I know is what I read in the papers.

And I'd stick to that.

TROCK How much does your sister know?

GARTH I'm honest with you, Trock. She read my name
in the professor's pamphlet, and she was scared
the way anybody would be. She got nothing
from me, and anyway she'd go to the chair
herself before she'd send me there.

TROCK Like hell.

GARTH Besides, who wants to go to trial again
except the radicals?—You and I won't spill
and unless we did there's nothing to take to court
as far as I know. Let the radicals go on howling
about getting a dirty deal. They always howl
and nobody gives a damn. This professor's red—
everybody knows it.

TROCK You're forgetting the judge.
Where's the damn judge?

GARTH What judge?

TROCK Read the morning papers.
It says Judge Gaunt's gone off his nut. He's got
that damn trial on his mind, and been going round
proving to everybody he was right all the time
and the radicals were guilty—stopping people
in the street to prove it—and now he's nuts entirely
and nobody knows where he is.

GARTH Why don't they know?

TROCK Because he's on the loose somewhere! They've got
the police of three cities looking for him.

GARTH Judge Gaunt?

TROCK Yes. Judge Gaunt.

SHADOW Why should that worry you?
He's crazy, ain't he? And even if he wasn't
he's arguing on your side. You're jittery, chief.
God, all the judges are looney. You've got the jitters,
and you'll damn well give yourself away some time
peeing yourself in public.
[TROCK *half turns toward* SHADOW *in anger.*] Don't jump the gun now,
I've got pockets in my clothes, too. [*His hand in his coat pocket.*]

TROCK All right. Take it easy. [*He takes his hand from his pocket, and* SHADOW *does the same.*]
[*To* GARTH.] Maybe you're lying to me and maybe you're not.
Stay at home a few days.

GARTH Sure thing. Why not?
TROCK And when I say stay home I mean stay home.
If I have to go looking for you you'll stay a long time
wherever I find you.
[*To* SHADOW.] Come on. We'll get out of here.
[*To* GARTH.] Be seeing you.
SHADOW *and* TROCK *go out. After a pause* GARTH *walks over to his chair and picks up the violin. Then he puts it down and goes to the inside door, which he opens.*
GARTH He's gone.
MIRIAMNE *enters,* ESDRAS *behind her.*
MIRIAMNE [*Going up to* GARTH.] Let's not stay here. [*She puts her hands on his arms.*]
I thought he'd come for something—horrible.
Is he coming back?
GARTH I don't know.
MIRIAMNE Who is he, Garth?
GARTH He'd kill me if I told you who he is,
that is, if he knew.
MIRIAMNE Then don't say it—
GARTH Yes, and I'll say it! I was with a gang one time
that robbed a payroll. I saw a murder done,
and Trock Estrella did it. If that got out
I'd go to the chair and so would he—that's why
he was here today—
MIRIAMNE But that's not true—
ESDRAS He says it
to frighten you, child.
GARTH Oh, no I don't! I say it
because I've held it in too long! I'm damned
if I sit here forever, and look at the door,
waiting for Trock with his submachine gun, waiting
for police with a warrant!—I say I'm damned, and I am,
no matter what I do! These piddling scales
on a violin—first position, third, fifth,
arpeggios in E—and what I'm thinking
is Romagna dead for the murder —dead while I sat here
dying inside—dead for the thing Trock did
while I looked on—and I could have saved him, yes—
but I sat here and let him die instead of me
because I wanted to live! Well, it's no life,
and it doesn't matter who I tell, because
I mean to get it over!
MIRIAMNE Garth, it's not true!

GARTH I'd take some scum down with me if I died—
that'd be one good deed—
ESDRAS Son, son, you're mad—someone will hear—
GARTH Then let them hear! I've lived
with ghosts too long, and lied too long. God damn you
if you keep me from the truth!—[*He turns away.*]
Oh, God damn the world!
I don't want to die! [*He throws himself down.*]
ESDRAS I should have known.
I thought you hard and sullen,
Garth, my son. And you were a child, and hurt
with a wound that might be healed.
—All men have crimes,
and most of them are hidden, and many are heavy
as yours must be to you. [GARTH *sobs.*]
They walk the streets
to buy and sell, but a spreading crimson stain
tinges the inner vestments, touches flesh,
and burns the quick. You're not alone.
GARTH I'm alone
in this.
ESDRAS Yes, if you hold with the world that only
those who die suddenly should be revenged.
But those whose hearts are cancered, drop by drop
in small ways, little by little, till they've borne
all they can bear, and die—these deaths will go
unpunished now as always. When we're young
we have faith in what is seen, but when we're old
we know that what is seen is traced in air
and built on water. There's no guilt under heaven,
just as there's no heaven, till men believe it—
no earth, till men have seen it, and have a word
to say this is the earth.
GARTH Well, I say there's an earth,
and I say I'm guilty on it, guilty as hell.
ESDRAS Yet till it's known you bear no guilt at all—
unless you wish. The days go by like film,
like a long written scroll, a figured veil
unrolling out of darkness into fire
and utterly consumed. And on this veil,
running in sounds and symbols of men's minds
reflected back, life flickers and is shadow

going toward flame. Only what men can see
exists in that shadow. Why must you rise and cry out:
That was I, there in the ravelled tapestry,
there, in that pistol flash, when the man was killed.
I was there, and was one, and am bloodstained!
Let the wind
and fire take that hour to ashes out of time
and out of mind! This thing that men call justice,
this blind snake that strikes men down in the dark,
mindless with fury, keep your hand back from it,
pass by in silence—let it be forgotten, forgotten!—
Oh, my son, my son—have pity!

MIRIAMNE But if it was true
and someone died—then it was more than shadow—
and it doesn't blow away—

GARTH Well, it was true.

ESDRAS Say it if you must. If you have heart to die,
say it, and let them take what's left—there was little
to keep, even before—

GARTH Oh, I'm a coward—
I always was. I'll be quiet and live. I'll live
even if I have to crawl. I know.
[*He gets up and goes into the inner room.*]

MIRIAMNE Is it better
to tell a lie and live?

ESDRAS Yes, child. It's better.

MIRIAMNE But if I had to do it—
I think I'd die.

ESDRAS Yes, child. Because you're young.

MIRIAMNE Is that the only reason?

ESDRAS The only reason.

Curtain.

Scene 3

SCENE: *Under the bridge, evening of the same day. When the curtain rises* MIRIAMNE *is sitting alone on the ledge at the rear of the apartment house. A spray of light falls on her from a street lamp above. She shivers a little in her thin coat, but sits still as if heedless of the weather. Through the rocks on the other side a* TRAMP *comes down to the river bank, hunting a place to sleep. He goes softly to the apple-women's hut and looks in, then turns away, evidently not daring to preëmpt it. He looks at Miriamne doubtfully. The door of the*

street-piano man is shut. The vagabond passes it and picks carefully among some rags and shavings to the right. MIRIAMNE *looks up and sees him but makes no sign. She looks down again, and the man curls himself up in a makeshift bed in the corner, pulling a piece of sacking over his shoulders.* TWO GIRLS *come in from round the apartment house.*

1ST GIRL Honest, I never heard of anything so romantic. Because you never liked him.

2ND GIRL I certainly never did.

1ST GIRL You've got to tell me how it happened. You've got to.

2ND GIRL I couldn't. As long as I live I couldn't. Honest, it was terrible. It was terrible.

1ST GIRL What was so terrible?

2ND GIRL The way it happened.

1ST GIRL Oh, please—not to a soul, never.

2ND GIRL Well, you know how I hated him because he had such a big mouth. So he reached over and grabbed me, and I began all falling to pieces inside, the way you do—and I said, "Oh no you don't mister," and started screaming and kicked a hole through the windshield and lost a shoe, and he let go and was cursing and growling because he borrowed the car and didn't have money to pay for the windshield, and he started to cry, and I got so sorry for him I let him, and now he wants to marry me.

1ST GIRL Honest, I never heard of anything so romantic! [*She sees the sleeping* TRAMP.] My God, what you won't see!

They give the TRAMP *a wide berth, and go out right. The* TRAMP *sits up looking about him.* JUDGE GAUNT, *an elderly, quiet man, well dressed but in clothes that have seen some weather, comes in uncertainly from the left. He holds a small clipping in his hand and goes up to the* HOBO.

GAUNT [*Tentatively.*] Your pardon, sir. Your pardon, but perhaps you can tell me the name of this street.

HOBO Huh?

GAUNT The name of this street?

HOBO This ain't no street.

GAUNT There, where the street lamps are.

HOBO That's the alley.

GAUNT Thank you. It has a name, no doubt?

HOBO That's the alley.

GAUNT I see. I won't trouble you. You wonder why I ask, I daresay.—I'm a stranger.—Why do you look at me? [*He steps back.*] I—I'm not the man you think. You've mistaken me, sir.

HOBO Huh?

JUDGE Perhaps misled by a resemblance. But you're mistaken—I had an errand in this city. It's only by accident that I'm here—

HOBO [*Muttering.*] You go to hell.

JUDGE [*Going nearer to him, bending over him.*] Yet why should I deceive you? Before God, I held the proofs in my hands. I hold them still. I tell you the defense was cunning beyond belief, and unscrupulous in its use of propaganda—they gagged at nothing—not even—[*He rises.*] No, no—I'm sorry—this will hardly interest you. I'm sorry. I have an errand. [*He looks toward the street.* ESDRAS *enters from the basement and goes to* MIRIAMNE. *The* JUDGE *steps back into the shadows.*]

ESDRAS Come in, my daughter. You'll be cold here.

MIRIAMNE After a while.

ESDRAS You'll be cold. There's a storm coming.

MIRIAMNE I didn't want him to see me crying. That was all.

ESDRAS I know.

MIRIAMNE I'll come soon.

ESDRAS *turns reluctantly and goes out the way he came.* MIRIAMNE *rises to go in, pausing to dry her eyes.* MIO *and* CARR, *road boys of seventeen or so, come round the apartment house. The* JUDGE *has disappeared.*

CARR Thought you said you were never coming east again.

MIO Yeah, but—I heard something changed my mind.

CARR Same old business?

MIO Yes. Just as soon not talk about it.

CARR Where did you go from Portland?

MIO Fishing—I went fishing. God's truth.

CARR Right after I left?

MIO Fell in with a fisherman's family on the coast and went after the beautiful mackerel fish that swim in the beautiful sea. Family of Greeks—Aristides Marinos was his lovely name. He sang while he fished. Made the pea-green Pacific ring with his bastard Greek chanties. Then I went to Hollywood High School for a while.

CARR I'll bet that's a seat of learning.

MIO It's the hind end of all wisdom. They kicked me out after a time.

CARR For cause?

MIO Because I had no per-

manent address, you see. That means nobody's paying school taxes for you, so out you go. [*To* MIRIAMNE.] What's the matter, kid?

MIRIAMNE Nothing. [*She looks up at him, and they pause for a moment.*] Nothing.

MIO I'm sorry.

MIRIAMNE It's all right. [*She withdraws her eyes from his and goes out past him. He turns and looks after her.*]

CARR Control your chivalry.

MIO A pretty kid.

CARR A baby.

MIO Wait for me.

CARR Be a long wait? [MIO *steps swiftly out after* MIRIAMNE, *then returns.*] Yeah?

MIO She's gone.

CARR Think of that.

MIO No, but I mean—vanished. Presto—into nothing—prodigioso.

CARR Damn good thing, if you ask me. The homely ones are bad enough, but the lookers are fatal.

MIO You exaggerate, Carr.

CARR I doubt it.

MIO Well, let her go. This river bank's loaded with typhus rats, too. Might as well die one death as another.

CARR They say chronic alcoholism is nice but expensive. You can always starve to death.

MIO Not always. I tried it. After the second day I walked thirty miles to Niagara Falls and made a tour of the plant to get the sample of shredded wheat biscuit on the way out.

CARR Last time I saw you you couldn't think of anything you wanted to do except curse God and pass out. Still feeling low?

MIO Not much different. [*He turns away, then comes back.*] Talk about the lost generation, I'm the only one fits that title. When the State executes your father, and your mother dies of grief, and you know damn well he was innocent, and the authorities of your home town politely inform you they'd consider it a favor if you lived somewhere else—that cuts you off from the world—with a meat-axe.

CARR They asked you to move?

MIO It came to that.

CARR God, that was white of them.

MIO It probably gave them a headache just to see me after all that agitation. They knew as well as I did my father never staged a holdup. Anyway, I've got a new interest in life now.

CARR Yes—I saw her.

MIO I don't mean the skirt.

—No, I got wind of something, out west, some college professor investigating the trial and turning up new evidence. Couldn't find anything he'd written out there, so I beat it east and arrived on this blessed island just in time to find the bums holing up in the public library for the winter. I know now what the unemployed have been doing since the depression started. They've been catching up on their reading in the main reference room. Man, what a stench! Maybe I stank, too, but a hobo has the stench of ten because his shoes are poor.

CARR Tennyson.

MIO Right. Jeez, I'm glad we met up again! Never knew anybody else that could track me through the driven snow of Victorian literature.

CARR Now you're cribbing from some half-forgotten criticism of Ben Jonson's Roman plagiarisms.

MIO Where did you get your education, sap?

CARR Not in the public library, sap. My father kept a newsstand.

MIO Well, you're right again. [*There is a faint rumble of thunder.*] What's that? Winter thunder?

CARR Or Mister God, beating on His little tocsin. Maybe announcing the advent of a new social order.

MIO Or maybe it's going to rain coffee and doughnuts.

CARR Or maybe it's going to rain.

MIO Seems more likely. [*Lowering his voice.*] Anyhow, I found Professor Hobhouse's discussion of the Romagna case. I think he has something. It occurred to me I might follow it up by doing a little sleuthing on my own account.

CARR Yes?

MIO I have done a little. And it leads me to somewhere in that tenement house that backs up against the bridge. That's how I happen to be here.

CARR They'll never let you get anywhere with it, Mio. I told you that before.

MIO I know you did.

CARR The State can't afford to admit it was wrong, you see. Not when there's been that much of a row kicked up over it. So for all practical purposes the State was right and your father robbed the payroll.

MIO There's still such a thing as evidence.

CARR It's something you can buy. In fact, at the moment I don't think of anything you can't buy, including life, honor, vir-

tue, glory, public office, conjugal affection, and all kinds of justice, from the traffic court to the immortal nine. Go out and make yourself a pot of money and you can buy all the justice you want. Convictions obtained, convictions averted. Lowest rates in years.

MIO I know all that.

CARR Sure.

MIO This thing didn't happen to you.

They've left you your name
and whatever place you can take. For my heritage
they've left me one thing only, and that's to be
my father's voice crying up out of the earth
and quicklime where they stuck him. Electrocution
doesn't kill, you know. They eviscerate them
with a turn of the knife in the dissecting room.
The blood spurts out. The man was alive. Then into
the lime pit, leave no trace. Make it short shrift
and chemical dissolution. That's what they thought
of the man that was my father. Then my mother—
I tell you these county burials are swift
and cheap and run for profit! Out of the house
and into the ground, you wife of a dead dog. Wait,
here's some Romagna spawn left. Something crawls here—
something they called a son. Why couldn't he die
along with his mother? Well, ease him out of town,
ease him out, boys, and see you're not too gentle.
He might come back. And, by their own living Jesus,
I will go back, and hang the carrion
around their necks that made it!
Maybe I can sleep then.
Or even live.

CARR You have to try it?

MIO Yes.
Yes. It won't let me alone. I've tried to live
and forget it—but I was birthmarked with hot iron
into the entrails. I've got to find out who did it
and make them see it till it scalds their eyes
and make them admit it till their tongues are blistered
with saying how black they lied!

HERMAN, *a gawky shoe salesman, enters from the left.*

HERMAN Hello. Did you see a couple of girls go this way?

CARR Couple of girls? Did we see a couple of girls?

MIO No.

CARR No. No girls.

HERMAN *hesitates, then goes out right.* LUCIA *comes in from the left, trundling his piano.* PINY *follows him, weeping.*

PINY They've got no right to do it—

LUCIA All right, hell what, no matter, I got to put him away, I got to put him away, that's what the hell! [TWO STREET URCHINS *follow him in.*]

PINY They want everybody on the relief rolls and nobody making a living?

LUCIA The cops, they do what the big boss says. The big boss, that's the mayor, he says he heard it once too often, the sextette—

PINY They want graft, that's all. It's a new way to get graft—

LUCIA Oh, no, no, no! He's a good man, the mayor. He's just don't care for music, that's all.

PINY Why shouldn't you make a living on the street? The National Biscuit Company ropes off Eighth Avenue—and does the mayor do anything? No, the police hit you over the head if you try to go through!

LUCIA You got the big dough, you get the pull, fine. No big dough, no pull, what the hell, get off the city property! Tomorrow I start cooking chestnuts . . . [*He strokes the piano fondly. The* TWO GIRLS *and* HERMAN *come back from the right.*] She's a good little machine, this baby. Cost plenty—and two new records I only played twice. See, this one. [*He starts turning the crank, talking while he plays.*] Two weeks since they play this one in a picture house. [A SAILOR *wanders in from the left. One of the* STREET URCHINS *begins suddenly to dance a wild rumba, the others watch.*] Good boy—see, it's a lulu—it itches in the feet! HERMAN, *standing with his girl, tosses the boy a penny. He bows and goes on dancing; the other* URCHIN *joins him. The* SAILOR *tosses a coin.*

SAILOR Go it, Cuba! Go it!

LUCIA *turns the crank, beaming.*

2ND GIRL Oh, Herman! [*She throws her arms round* HERMAN *and they dance.*]

1ST URCHIN Hey, pipe the professionals!

1ST GIRL Do your glide, Shirley! Do your glide!

LUCIA Maybe we can't play in front, maybe we can play behind! [*The* HOBO *gets up from his nest and comes over to watch.* A YOUNG RADICAL *wanders in.*] Maybe you don't know, folks! Tonight we play good-bye to the piano! Good-bye forever! No more piano on the streets! No more music! No more money for the music-man! Last time, folks!

Good-bye to the piano—good-bye forever! [MIRIAMNE *comes out the rear door of the apartment and stands watching. The* SAILOR *goes over to the* 1ST GIRL *and they dance together.*] Maybe you don't know, folks! Tomorrow will be sad as hell, tonight we dance! Tomorrow no more Verdi, no more rumba, no more good time! Tonight we play good-bye to the piano, good-bye forever! [*The* RADICAL *edges up to* MIRIAMNE, *and asks her to dance. She shakes her head and he goes to* PINY, *who dances with him. The* HOBO *begins to do a few lonely curvets on the side above.*] Hoy! Hoy! Pick 'em up and take 'em around! Use the head, use the feet! Last time forever! [*He begins to sing to the air.*]

MIO Wait for me, will you?

CARR Now's your chance.

MIO *goes over to* MIRIAMNE *and holds out a hand, smiling. She stands for a moment uncertain, then dances with him.* ESDRAS *comes out to watch.* JUDGE GAUNT *comes in from the left. There is a rumble of thunder.*

LUCIA Hoy! Hoy! Maybe it rains tonight, maybe it snows tomorrow! Tonight we dance good-bye. [*He sings the air lustily.* A POLICEMAN *comes in from the left and looks on.* TWO OR THREE PEDESTRIANS *follow him.*]

POLICEMAN Hey you! [LUCIA *goes on singing.*] Hey, you!

LUCIA [*Still playing.*] What you want?

POLICEMAN Sign off!

LUCIA What you mean? I get off the street!

POLICEMAN Sign off!

LUCIA [*Still playing.*] What you mean?

The POLICEMAN *walks over to him.* LUCIA *stops playing and the* DANCERS *pause.*

POLICEMAN Cut it.

LUCIA Is this a street?

POLICEMAN I say cut it out.

The HOBO *goes back to his nest and sits in it, watching.*

LUCIA It's the last time. We dance good-bye to the piano.

POLICEMAN You'll dance good-bye to something else if I catch you cranking that thing again.

LUCIA All right.

PINY I'll bet you don't say that to the National Biscuit Company!

POLICEMAN Lady, you've been selling apples on my beat for some time now, and I said nothing about it—

PINY Selling apples is allowed—

POLICEMAN You watch yourself— [*He takes a short walk*

around the place and comes upon the HOBO.] What are you doing here? [*The* HOBO *opens his mouth, points to it, and shakes his head.*] Oh, you are, are you? [*He comes back to* LUCIA.] So you trundle your so-called musical instrument to wherever you keep it, and don't let me hear it again. *The* RADICAL *leaps on the base of the rock at right. The* 1ST GIRL *turns away from the* SAILOR *toward the* 2ND GIRL *and* HERMAN.

SAILOR Hey, captain, what's the matter with the music?

POLICEMAN Not a thing, admiral.

SAILOR Well, we had a little party going here—

POLICEMAN I'll say you did.

2ND GIRL Please, officer, we want to dance.

POLICEMAN Go ahead. Dance.

2ND GIRL But we want music!

POLICEMAN [*Turning to go.*] Sorry. Can't help you.

RADICAL And there you see it, the perfect example of capitalistic oppression! In a land where music should be free as air and the arts should be encouraged, a uniformed minion of the rich, a guardian myrmidon of the Park Avenue pleasure hunters, steps in and puts a limit on the innocent enjoyments of the poor! We don't go to theaters! Why not? We can't afford it! We don't go to night clubs, where women dance naked and the music drips from saxophones and leaks out of Rudy Vallee—we can't afford that either!—But we might at least dance on the river bank to the strains of a barrel organ—!

GARTH *comes out of the apartment and listens.*

POLICEMAN It's against the law!

RADICAL What law? I challenge you to tell me what law of God or man—what ordinance—is violated by this spontaneous diversion? None! I say none! An official whim of the masters who should be our servants!—

POLICEMAN Get down! Get down and shut up!

RADICAL By what law, by what ordinance do you order me to be quiet?

POLICEMAN Speaking without a flag. You know it.

RADICAL [*Pulling out a small American flag.*] There's my flag! There's the flag of this United States which used to guarantee the rights of man—the rights of man now violated by every third statute of the commonweal—

POLICEMAN Don't try to pull tricks on me! I've seen you before! You're not making any speech, and you're climbing down—

JUDGE GAUNT [*Who has come*

quietly forward.] One moment, officer. There is some difference of opinion even on the bench as to the elasticity of police power when applied in minor emergencies to preserve civil order. But the weight of authority would certainly favor the defendant in any equable court, and he would be upheld in his demand to be heard.

POLICEMAN Who are you?

JUDGE GAUNT Sir, I am not accustomed to answer that question.

POLICEMAN I don't know you.

GAUNT I am a judge of some standing, not in your city but in another with similar statutes. You are aware, of course, that the bill of rights is not to be set aside lightly by the officers of any municipality—

POLICEMAN [*Looking over* GAUNT'S *somewhat bedraggled costume.*] Maybe they understand you better in the town you come from, but I don't get your drift.—[*To the* RADICAL.] I don't want any trouble, but if you ask for it you'll get plenty. Get down!

RADICAL I'm not asking for trouble, but I'm staying right here. [*The* POLICEMAN *moves toward him.*]

GAUNT [*Taking the* POLICEMAN'S *arm, but shaken off roughly.*] I ask this for yourself, truly, not for the dignity of the law nor the maintenance of precedent. Be gentle with them when their threats are childish—be tolerant while you can—for your least harsh word will return on you in the night—return in a storm of cries!—[*He takes the* POLICEMAN'S *arm again.*] Whatever they may have said or done, let them disperse in peace! It is better that they go softly, lest when they are dead you see their eyes pleading, and their outstretched hands touch you, fingering cold on your heart!—I have been harsher than you. I have sent men down that long corridor into blinding light and blind darkness! [*He suddenly draws himself erect and speaks defiantly.*] And it was well that I did so! I have been an upright judge! They are all liars! Liars!

POLICEMAN [*Shaking* GAUNT *off so that he falls.*] Why, you fool, you're crazy!

GAUNT Yes, and there are liars on the force! They came to me with their shifty lies! [*He catches at the* POLICEMAN, *who pushes him away with his foot.*]

POLICEMAN You think I've got nothing better to do than listen to a crazy fool?

1ST GIRL Shame, shame!

POLICEMAN What have I got

to be ashamed of? And what's
going on here, anyway? Where
in hell did you all come from?

RADICAL Tread on him!
That's right! Tread down the
poor and the innocent! [*There is
a protesting murmur in the
crowd.*]

SAILOR [*Moving in a little.*]
Say, big boy, you don't have to
step on the guy.

POLICEMAN [*Facing them,
stepping back.*] What's the mat-
ter with you? I haven't stepped
on anybody!

MIO [*At the right, across
from the* POLICEMAN.] Listen
now, fellows, give the badge a
chance.
He's doing his job, what he gets
paid to do,
the same as any of you. They're
all picked men,
these metropolitan police, hand
picked
for loyalty and a fine up-standing
pair
of shoulders on their legs—it's
not so easy
to represent the law. Think what
he does
for all of us, stamping out crime!
Do you want to be robbed and
murdered in your beds?

SAILOR What's eating you?

RADICAL He must be a capi-
talist.

MIO They pluck them fresh
from Ireland, and a paucity of
headpiece
is a prime prerequisite. You from
Ireland, buddy?

POLICEMAN [*Surly.*] Where
are you from?

MIO Buddy, I tell you flat
I wish I was from Ireland, and
could boast
some Tammany connections.
There's only one drawback
about working on the force. It
infects the brain,
it eats the cerebrum. There've
been cases known,
fine specimens of manhood, too,
where autopsies,
conducted in approved scientific
fashion,
revealed conditions quite incred-
ible
in policemen's upper layers. In
some, a trace,
in others, when they've swung a
stick too long,
there was nothing there!—but
nothing! Oh, my friends,
this fine athletic figure of a man
that stands so grim before us,
what will they find
when they saw his skull for the
last inspection?
I fear me a little puffball dust
will blow away
rejoining earth, our mother—
and this same dust,
this smoke, this ash on the wind,
will represent

all he had left to think with!

THE HOBO Hooray!

The POLICEMAN *turns on his heel and looks hard at the* HOBO, *who slinks away.*

POLICEMAN Oh, yeah?

MIO My theme
gives ears to the deaf and voice to the dumb! But now
forgive me if I say you were most unkind
in troubling the officer. He's a simple man
of simple tastes, and easily confused
when faced with complex issues. He may reflect
on returning home, that is, so far as he
is capable of reflection, and conclude
that he was kidded out of his uniform pants,
and in his fury when this dawns on him
may smack his wife down!

POLICEMAN That'll be about enough from you, too, professor!

MIO May I say that I think you have managed this whole situation rather badly, from the beginning?—

POLICEMAN You may not!

TROCK *slips in from the background. The* TWO YOUNG MEN IN SERGE *come with him.*

MIO Oh, but your pardon, sir! It's apparent to the least competent among us that you should have gone about your task more subtly—the glove of velvet, the hand of iron, and all that sort of thing—

POLICEMAN Shut that hole in your face!

MIO Sir, for that remark I shall be satisfied with nothing less than an unconditional apology! I have an old score to settle with policemen, brother, because they're fools and fat-heads, and you're one of the most fatuous fat-heads that ever walked his feet flat collecting graft! Tell that to your sergeant back in the booby-hatch.

POLICEMAN Oh, you want an apology, do you? You'll get an apology out of the other side of your mouth! [*He steps toward* MIO. CARR *suddenly stands in his path.*] Get out of my way! [*He pauses and looks round him; the crowd looks less and less friendly. He lays a hand on his gun and backs to a position where there is nobody behind him.*] Get out of here, all of you! Get out! What are you trying to do—start a riot?

MIO There now, that's better! That's in the best police tradition. Incite a riot yourself and then accuse the crowd.

POLICEMAN It won't be pleas-

ant if I decide to let somebody have it! Get out!

The onlookers begin to melt away. The SAILOR *goes out left with the* GIRLS *and* HERMAN. CARR *and* MIO *go out right,* CARR *whistling "The Star-Spangled Banner." The* HOBO *follows them. The* RADICAL *walks past with his head in the air.* PINY *and* LUCIA *leave the piano where it stands and slip away to the left. At the end the* POLICEMAN *is left standing in the center, the* JUDGE *near him.* ESDRAS *stands in the doorway.* MIRIAMNE *is left sitting half in shadow and unseen by* ESDRAS.

JUDGE GAUNT [*To the* POLICEMAN.] Yes, but should a man die, should it be necessary that one man die for the good of many, make not yourself the instrument of death, lest you sleep to wake sobbing! Nay, it avails nothing that you are the law—this delicate ganglion that is the brain, it will not bear these things—!

The POLICEMAN *gives the* JUDGE *the once-over, shrugs, decides to leave him there and starts out left.* GARTH *goes to his father—a fine sleet begins to fall through the street lights.* TROCK *is still visible.*

GARTH Get him in here, quick.

ESDRAS Who, son?

GARTH The Judge, damn him!

ESDRAS Is it Judge Gaunt?

GARTH Who did you think it was? He's crazy as a bedbug and telling the world. Get him inside! [*He looks round.*]

ESDRAS [*Going up to* GAUNT.] Will you come in, sir?

GAUNT You will understand, sir. We old men know how softly we must proceed with these things.

ESDRAS Yes, surely, sir.

GAUNT It was always my practice—always. They will tell you that of me where I am known. Yet even I am not free of regret—even I. Would you believe it?

ESDRAS I believe we are none of us free of regret.

GAUNT None of us? I would it were true. I would I thought it were true.

ESDRAS Shall we go in, sir? This is sleet that's falling.

GAUNT Yes. Let us go in.

ESDRAS, GAUNT *and* GARTH *enter the basement and shut the door.* TROCK *goes out with his men. After a pause* MIO *comes back from the right, alone. He stands at a little distance from* MIRIAMNE.

MIO Looks like rain. [*She is silent.*]

You live around here? [*She nods gravely.*]
I guess
you thought I meant it—about waiting here to meet me. [*She nods again.*]
I'd forgotten about it till I got that winter
across the face. You'd better go inside.
I'm not your kind. I'm nobody's kind but my own.
I'm waiting for this to blow over. [*She rises.*]
I lied. I meant it—
I meant it when I said it—but there's too much black
whirling inside me—for any girl to know.
So go on in. You're somebody's angel child
and they're waiting for you.

MIRIAMNE Yes. I'll go. [*She turns.*]

MIO And tell them
when you get inside where it's warm,
and you love each other,
and mother comes to kiss her darling, tell them
to hang on to it while they can, believe while they can
it's a warm safe world, and Jesus finds his lambs
and carries them in his bosom.—I've seen some lambs
that Jesus missed. If they ever want the truth
tell them that nothing's guaranteed in this climate
except it gets cold in winter, nor on this earth
except you die sometime. [*He turns away.*]

MIRIAMNE I have no mother. And my people are Jews.

MIO Then you know something about it.

MIRIAMNE Yes.

MIO Do you have enough to eat?

MIRIAMNE Not always.

MIO What do you believe in?

MIRIAMNE Nothing.

MIO Why?

MIRIAMNE How can one?

MIO It's easy if you're a fool. You see the words
in books. Honor, it says there, chivalry, freedom,
heroism, enduring love—and these
are words on paper. It's something to have them there.
You'll get them nowhere else.

MIRIAMNE What hurts you?

MIO Just that.
You'll get them nowhere else.

MIRIAMNE Why should you want them?

MIO I'm alone, that's why. You see those lights,
along the river, cutting across the rain—?
those are the hearths of Brooklyn, and up this way

the love-nests of Manhattan—
they turn their points
like knives against me—outcast of the world,
snake in the streets.—I don't want a hand-out.
I sleep and eat.

MIRIAMNE Do you want me to go with you?

MIO Where?

MIRIAMNE Where you go. [*A pause. He goes nearer to her.*]

MIO Why, you god-damned little fool—
what made you say that?

MIRIAMNE I don't know.

MIO If you have a home
stay in it. I ask for nothing. I've schooled myself
to ask for nothing, and take what I can get,
and get along. If I fell for you, that's my look-out,
and I'll starve it down.

MIRIAMNE Wherever you go, I'd go.

MIO What do you know about loving?
How could you know?
Have you ever had a man?

MIRIAMNE [*After a slight pause.*] No. But I know.
Tell me your name.

MIO Mio. What's yours?

MIRIAMNE Miriamne.

MIO There's no such name.

MIRIAMNE But there's no such name as Mio!

M.I.O. It's no name.

MIO It's for Bartolomeo.

MIRIAMNE My mother's name was Miriam,
so they called me Miriamne.

MIO Meaning little Miriam?

MIRIAMNE Yes.

MIO So now little Miriamne will go in
and take up quietly where she dropped them all
her small housewifely cares.—
When I first saw you,
not a half-hour ago, I heard myself saying,
this is the face that launches ships for me—
and if I owned a dream—yes, half a dream—
we'd share it. But I have no dream. This earth
came tumbling down from chaos, fire and rock,
and bred up worms, blind worms that sting each other
here in the dark. These blind worms of the earth
took out my father—and killed him, and set a sign
on me—the heir of the serpent—and he was a man
such as men might be if the gods were men—
but they killed him—
as they'll kill all others like him
till the sun cools down to the stabler molecules,

yes, till men spin their tent-worm webs to the stars
and what they think is done, even in the thinking,
and they are the gods, and immortal, and constellations
turn for them all like mill wheels —still as they are
they will be, worms and blind. Enduring love,
O gods and worms, what mockery!—And yet
I have blood enough in my veins. It goes like music,
singing, because you're here. My body turns
as if you were the sun, and warm. This men called love
in happier times, before the Freudians taught us
to blame it on the glands. Only go in
before you breathe too much of my atmosphere
and catch death from me.

MIRIAMNE I will take my hands
and weave them to a little house, and there
you shall keep a dream—

MIO God knows I could use a dream
and even a house.

MIRIAMNE You're laughing at me, Mio!

MIO The worms are laughing.
I tell you there's death about me
and you're a child! And I'm alone and half mad
with hate and longing. I shall let you love me
and love you in return, and then, why then
God knows what happens!

MIRIAMNE Something most unpleasant?

MIO Love in a box car—love among the children.
I've seen too much of it. Are we to live
in this same house you make with your two hands
mystically, out of air?

MIRIAMNE No roof, no mortgage!
Well, I shall marry a baker out in Flatbush,
it gives hot bread in the morning! Oh, Mio, Mio,
in all the unwanted places and waste lands
that roll up into the darkness out of sun
and into sun out of dark, there should be one empty
for you and me.

MIO No.

MIRIAMNE Then go now and leave me.
I'm only a girl you saw in the tenements,
and there's been nothing said.

MIO Miriamne. [*She takes a step toward him.*]

MIRIAMNE Yes. [*He kisses her lips lightly.*]
MIO Why, girl, the transfiguration on the mount
was nothing to your face. It lights from within—
a white chalice holding fire, a flower in flame,
this is your face.
MIRIAMNE And you shall drink the flame
and never lessen it. And round your head
the aureole shall burn that burns there now,
forever. This I can give you. And so forever
the Freudians are wrong.
MIO They're well-forgotten at any rate.
MIRIAMNE Why did you speak to me
when you first saw me?
MIO I knew then.
MIRIAMNE And I came back
because I must see you again. And we danced together
and my heart hurt me. Never, never, never,
though they should bind me down and tear out my eyes,
would I ever hurt you now. Take me with you, Mio,
let them look for us, whoever there is to look,
but we'll be away.
MIO *turns away toward the tenement.*
MIO When I was four years old
we climbed through an iron gate, my mother and I,
to see my father in prison. He stood in the death-cell
and put his hand through the bars and said, My Mio,
I have only this to leave you, that I love you,
and will love you after I die. Love me then, Mio,
when this hard thing comes on you, that you must live
a man despised for your father. That night the guards,
walking in flood-lights brighter than high noon,
led him between them with his trousers slit
and a shaven head for the cathodes. This sleet and rain
that I feel cold here on my face and hands
will find him under thirteen years of clay
in prison ground. Lie still and rest, my father,
for I have not forgotten. When I forget
may I lie blind as you. No other love,
time passing, nor the spaced light-years of suns
shall blur your voice, or tempt me from the path
that clears your name—

till I have these rats in my grip
or sleep deep where you sleep.
[*To* MIRIAMNE.] I have no house,
nor home, nor love of life, nor fear of death,
nor care for what I eat, or who I sleep with,
or what color of calcimine the Government
will wash itself this year or next to lure
the sheep and feed the wolves. Love somewhere else,
and get your children in some other image
more acceptable to the State! This face of mine
is stamped for sewage! [*She steps back, surmising.*]

MIRIAMNE Mio—

MIO My road is cut
in rock, and leads to one end. If I hurt you, I'm sorry.
One gets over hurts.

MIRIAMNE What was his name—
your father's name?

MIO Bartolomeo Romagna.
I'm not ashamed of it.

MIRIAMNE Why are you here?

MIO For the reason
I've never had a home. Because I'm a cry
out of a shallow grave, and all roads are mine
that might revenge him!

MIRIAMNE But Mio—why here—why here?

MIO I can't tell you that.

MIRIAMNE No—but—there's someone
lives here—lives not far—and you mean to see him—
you mean to ask him—[*She pauses.*]

MIO Who told you that?

MIRIAMNE His name
is Garth—Garth Esdras—

MIO [*After a pause, coming nearer.*] Who are you, then? You seem
to know a good deal about me.—Were you sent
to say this?

MIRIAMNE You said there was death about you! Yes,
but nearer than you think! Let it be as it is—
let it all be as it is, never see this place
nor think of it—forget the streets you came
when you're away and safe! Go before you're seen
or spoken to!

MIO Will you tell me why?

MIRIAMNE As I love you
I can't tell you—and I can never see you—

MIO I walk where I please—

MIRIAMNE Do you think it's easy for me
to send you away? [*She steps back as if to go.*]

MIO Where will I find you then

if I should want to see you?
MIRIAMNE Never—I tell you
I'd bring you death! Even now.
Listen!
SHADOW *and* TROCK *enter between the bridge and the tenement house.* MIRIAMNE *pulls* MIO *back into the shadow of the rock to avoid being seen.*
TROCK Why, fine.
SHADOW You watch it now—
just for the record, Trock—
you're going to thank me for staying away from it
and keeping you out. I've seen men get that way,
thinking they had to plug a couple of guys
and then a few more to cover it up, and then
maybe a dozen more. You can't own all
and territory adjacent, and you can't
slough all the witnesses, because every man
you put away has friends—
TROCK I said all right.
I said fine.
SHADOW They're going to find this judge,
and if they find him dead it's just too bad,
and I don't want to know anything about it—
and you don't either.
TROCK You all through?
SHADOW Why sure.
TROCK All right.
We're through, too, you know.
SHADOW Yeah? [*He becomes wary.*]
TROCK Yeah, we're through.
SHADOW I've heard that said before, and afterwards
somebody died. [TROCK *is silent.*]
Is that what you mean?
TROCK You can go.
I don't want to see you.
SHADOW Sure, I'll go.
Maybe you won't mind if I just find out
what you've got on you. Before I turn my back
I'd like to know. [*Silently and expertly he touches* TROCK'S *pockets, extracting a gun.*]
Not that I'd distrust you,
but you know how it is. [*He pockets the gun.*]
So long, Trock.
TROCK So long.
SHADOW I won't talk.
You can be sure of that.
TROCK I know you won't.
SHADOW *turns and goes out right, past the rock and along the bank. As he goes the* TWO YOUNG MEN IN BLUE SERGE *enter from the left and walk slowly after* SHADOW. *They look toward* TROCK *as they enter and he motions with his thumb in the direction taken by* SHADOW. *They follow* SHADOW *out without haste.* TROCK *watches them dis-*

appear, then slips out the way he came. MIO *comes a step forward, looking after the two men. Two or three shots are heard, then silence.* MIO *starts to run after* SHADOW.

MIRIAMNE Mio!

MIO What do you know about this?

MIRIAMNE The other way, Mio—quick!

CARR *slips in from the right, in haste.*

CARR Look, somebody's just been shot.
He fell in the river. The guys that did the shooting
ran up the bank.

MIO Come on.

MIO *and* CARR *run out right.* MIRIAMNE *watches uncertainly, then slowly turns and walks to the rear door of the tenement. She stands there a moment, looking after* MIO, *then goes in, closing the door.* CARR *and* MIO *return.*

CARR There's a rip tide past the point. You'd never find him.

MIO No.

CARR You know a man really ought to carry insurance living around here.—God, it's easy, putting a fellow away. I never saw it done before.

MIO [*Looking at the place where* MIRIAMNE *stood.*] They have it all worked out.

CARR What are you doing now?

MIO I have a little business to transact in this neighborhood.

CARR You'd better forget it.

MIO No.

CARR Need any help?

MIO Well, if I did I'd ask you first. But I don't see how it would do any good. So you keep out of it and take care of yourself.

CARR So long, then.

MIO So long, Carr.

CARR [*Looking downstream.*] He was drifting face up. Must be halfway to the island the way the tide runs. [*He shivers.*] God, it's cold here. Well—

He goes out to the left. MIO *sits on the edge of the rock.* LUCIA *comes stealthily back from between the bridge and the tenement, goes to the street-piano and wheels it away.* PINY *comes in. They take a look at* MIO, *but say nothing.* LUCIA *goes into his shelter and* PINY *into hers.* MIO *rises, looks up at the tenement, and goes out to the left.*

Curtain.

Winterset ACT TWO

SCENE: *The basement as in Scene 2 of Act One. The same evening.* ESDRAS *sits at the table reading,* MIRIAMNE *is seated at the left, listening and intent. The door of the inner room is half open and* GARTH'S *violin is heard. He is playing the theme from the third movement of Beethoven's Archduke Trio.* ESDRAS *looks up.*

ESDRAS I remember when I came to the end
of all the Talmud said, and the commentaries,
then I was fifty years old—and it was time
to ask what I had learned. I asked this question
and gave myself the answer. In all the Talmud
there was nothing to find but the names of things,
set down that we might call them by those names
and walk without fear among things known. Since then
I have had twenty years to read on and on
and end with Ecclesiastes. Names of names,
evanid days, evanid nights and days
and words that shift their meaning. Space is time,
that which was is now—the men of tomorrow
live, and this is their yesterday. All things
that were and are and will be, have their being
then and now and to come. If this means little
when you are young, remember it. It will return
to mean more when you are old.
MIRIAMNE I'm sorry—I
was listening for something.
ESDRAS It doesn't matter.
It's a useless wisdom. It's all I have,
but useless. It may be there is no time,
but we grow old. Do you know his name?
MIRIAMNE Whose name?
ESDRAS Why, when we're young and listen for a step
the step should have a name—
MIRIAMNE, *not hearing, rises and goes to the window.* GARTH *enters from within, carrying his violin and carefully closing the door.*

GARTH [*As* ESDRAS *looks at him.*] Asleep.
ESDRAS He may
sleep on through the whole night
—then in the morning
we can let them know.
GARTH We'd be wiser to say nothing—
let him find his own way back.
ESDRAS How did he come here?
GARTH He's not too crazy for that. If he wakes again
we'll keep him quiet and shift him off tomorrow.
Somebody'd pick him up.
ESDRAS How have I come
to this sunken end of a street, at a life's end—?
GARTH It was cheaper here—
not to be transcendental—
So—we say nothing—?
ESDRAS Nothing.
MIRIAMNE Garth, there's no place
in this whole city—not one—
where you wouldn't be safer
than here—tonight—or tomorrow.
GARTH [*Bitterly.*] Well, that may be.
What of it?
MIRIAMNE If you slipped away and took
a place somewhere where Trock couldn't find you—
GARTH Yes—
using what for money? and why do you think
I've sat here so far—because I love my home
so much? No, but if I stepped round the corner
it'd be my last corner and my last step.
MIRIAMNE And yet—
if you're here—they'll find you here—
Trock will come again—
and there's worse to follow—
GARTH Do you want to get me killed?
MIRIAMNE No.
GARTH There's no way out of it. We'll wait
and take what they send us.
ESDRAS Hush! You'll wake him.
GARTH I've done it.
I hear him stirring now.
They wait quietly. JUDGE GAUNT *opens the door and enters.*
GAUNT [*In the doorway.*] I beg your pardon—
no, no, be seated — keep your place—I've made
your evening difficult enough, I fear;
and I must thank you doubly for your kindness,
for I've been ill—I know it.
ESDRAS You're better, sir?
GAUNT Quite recovered, thank you. Able, I hope,
to manage nicely now. You'll be rewarded

for your hospitality—though at this moment
[*He smiles.*] I'm low in funds.
[*He inspects his billfold.*] Sir, my embarrassment
is great indeed—and more than monetary,
for I must own my recollection's vague
of how I came here—how we came together—
and what we may have said. My name is Gaunt,
Judge Gaunt, a name long known in the criminal courts,
and not unhonored there.

ESDRAS My name is Esdras—
and this is Garth, my son. And Miriamne,
the daughter of my old age.

GAUNT I'm glad to meet you.
Esdras. Garth Esdras. [*He passes a hand over his eyes.*]
It's not a usual name.
Of late it's been connected with a case—
a case I knew. But this is hardly the man.
Though it's not a usual name. [*They are silent.*]
Sir, how I came here,
as I have said, I don't well know. Such things
are sometimes not quite accident.

ESDRAS We found you
outside our door and brought you in.

GAUNT The brain
can be overworked, and weary, even when the man
would swear to his good health. Sir, on my word
I don't know why I came here, nor how, nor when,
nor what would explain it. Shall we say the machine
begins to wear? I felt no twinge of it.—
You will imagine how much more than galling
I feel it, to ask my way home—and where I am—
but I do ask you that.

ESDRAS This is New York City—
or part of it.

GAUNT Not the best part, I presume? [*He smiles grimly.*]
No, not the best.

ESDRAS Not typical, no.

GAUNT And you — [*To* GARTH.]
you are Garth Esdras?

GARTH That's my name.

GAUNT Well, sir, [*To* ESDRAS.]
I shall lie under the deepest obligation
if you will set an old man on his path,
for I lack the homing instinct, if the truth
were known. North, east, and south mean nothing to me
here in this room.

ESDRAS I can put you in your way.
GARTH Only you'd be wiser to wait a while—
if I'm any judge.—
GAUNT It happens I'm the judge— [*With stiff humor.*]
in more ways than one. You'll forgive me if I say
I find this place and my predicament
somewhat distasteful. [*He looks round him.*]
GARTH I don't doubt you do;
but you're better off here.
GAUNT Nor will you find it wise
to cross my word as lightly as you seem
inclined to do. You've seen me ill and shaken—
and you presume on that.
GARTH Have it your way.
GAUNT Doubtless what information is required
we'll find nearby.
ESDRAS Yes, sir — the terminal—
if you could walk so far.
GAUNT I've done some walking—
to look at my shoes. [*He looks down, then puts out a hand to steady himself.*]
That—that was why I came—
never mind—it was there—and it's gone.
[*To* GARTH.] Professor Hobhouse—
that's the name—he wrote some trash about you
and printed it in a broadside.
—Since I'm here I can tell you
it's a pure fabrication—lacking facts
and legal import. Senseless and impudent,
written with bias—with malicious intent
to undermine the public confidence
in justice and the courts. I knew it then—
all he brings out about this testimony
you might have given. It's true I could have called you,
but the case was clear—Romagna was known guilty,
and there was nothing to add. If I've endured
some hours of torture over their attacks
upon my probity—and in this torture
have wandered from my place, wandered perhaps
in mind and body—and found my way to face you—
why, yes, it is so—I know it—I beg of you
say nothing. It's not easy to give up
a fair name after a full half century

of service to a state. It may well rock
the surest reason. Therefore I ask of you
say nothing of this visit.

GARTH I'll say nothing.

ESDRAS Nor any of us.

GAUNT Why, no—for you'd lose, too.
You'd have nothing to gain.

ESDRAS Indeed we know it.

GAUNT I'll remember you kindly. When I've returned,
there may be some mystery made of where I was—
we'll leave it a mystery?

GARTH Anything you say.

GAUNT Why, now I go with much more peace of mind—
if I can call you friends.

ESDRAS We shall be grateful
for silence on your part, Your Honor.

GAUNT Sir—
if there were any just end to be served
by speaking out, I'd speak! There is none. No—
bear that in mind!

ESDRAS We will, Your Honor.

GAUNT Then—
I'm in some haste. If you can be my guide,
we'll set out now.

ESDRAS Yes, surely. [*There is a knock at the door. The four look at each other with some apprehension.* MIRIAMNE *rises.*] I'll answer it.

MIRIAMNE Yes. [*She goes into the inner room and closes the door.* ESDRAS *goes to the outer door. The knock is repeated. He opens the door.* MIO *is there.*]

ESDRAS Yes, sir.

MIO May I come in?

ESDRAS Will you state your business, sir?
It's late—and I'm not at liberty—

MIO Why, I might say
that I was trying to earn my tuition fees
by peddling magazines. I could say that,
or collecting old newspapers—paying cash—
highest rates — no questions asked — [*He looks round sharply.*]

GARTH We've nothing to sell.
What do you want?

MIO Your pardon, gentlemen.
My business is not of an ordinary kind,
and I felt the need of this slight introduction
while I might get my bearings. Your name is Esdras,
or they told me so outside.

GARTH What do you want?

MIO Is that the name?

GARTH Yes.

MIO I'll be quick and brief.

I'm the son of a man who died many years ago
for a payroll robbery in New England. You
should be Garth Esdras, by what I've heard. You have
some knowledge of the crime, if one can believe
what he reads in the public prints, and it might be
that your testimony, if given, would clear my father
of any share in the murder. You may not care
whether he was guilty or not. You may not know.
But I do care—and care deeply, and I've come
to ask you face to face.

GARTH To ask me what?

MIO What do you know of it?

ESDRAS This man Romagna, did he have a son?

MIO Yes, sir, this man Romagna,
as you choose to call him, had a son, and I
am that son, and proud.

ESDRAS Forgive me.

MIO Had you known him,
and heard him speak, you'd know why I'm proud, and why
he was no malefactor.

ESDRAS I quite believe you.
If my son can help he will. But at this moment,
as I told you—could you, I wonder, come tomorrow,
at your own hour?

MIO Yes.

ESDRAS By coincidence
we too of late have had this thing in mind—
there have been comments printed, and much discussion
which we could hardly avoid.

MIO Could you tell me then
in a word?—What you know—
is it for him or against him?—
that's all I need.

ESDRAS My son knows nothing.

GARTH No.
The picture-papers lash themselves to a fury
over any rumor—make them up when they're short
of bedroom slops.—This is what happened. I
had known a few members of a gang one time
up there—and after the murder they picked me up
because I looked like someone that was seen
in what they called the murder car. They held me
a little while, but they couldn't identify me
for the most excellent reason I wasn't there
when the thing occurred. A dozen years later now
a professor comes across this, and sees red

and asks why I wasn't called on as a witness
and yips so loud they syndicate his picture
in all the rotos. That's all I know about it.
I wish I could tell you more.
ESDRAS Let me say too
that I have read some words your father said,
and you were a son fortunate in your father,
whatever the verdict of the world.
MIO There are few
who think so, but it's true, and I thank you. Then—
that's the whole story?
GARTH All I know of it.
MIO They cover their tracks well, the inner ring
that distributes murder. I came three thousand miles
to this dead end.
ESDRAS If he was innocent
and you know him so, believe it, and let the others
believe as they like.
MIO Will you tell me how a man's
to live, and face his life, if he can't believe
that truth's like a fire,
and will burn through and be seen
though it takes all the years there are?
While I stand up and have breath in my lungs
I shall be one flame of that fire; it's all the life I have.
ESDRAS Then you must live so.
One must live as he can.
MIO It's the only way
of life my father left me.
ESDRAS Yes? Yet it's true
the ground we walk on is impacted down
and hard with blood and bones of those who died
unjustly. There's not one title to land or life,
even your own, but was built on rape and murder,
back a few years. It would take a fire indeed
to burn out all this error.
MIO Then let it burn down, all of it!
ESDRAS We ask a great deal of the world
at first—then less—and then less. We ask for truth
and justice. But this truth's a thing unknown
in the lightest, smallest matter—and as for justice,
who has once seen it done? You loved your father,
and I could have loved him, for every word he spoke
in his trial was sweet and tolerant, but the weight

of what men are and have rests heavy on
the graves of those who lost. They'll not rise again,
and their causes lie there with them.

GAUNT If you mean to say
that Bartolomeo Romagna was innocent,
you are wrong. He was guilty.
There may have been injustice
from time to time, by regrettable chance, in our courts,
but not in that case, I assure you.

MIO Oh, you assure me!
You lie in your scrag teeth, whoever you are!
My father was murdered!

GAUNT Romagna was found guilty
by all due process of law, and given his chance
to prove his innocence.

MIO What chance? When a court
panders to mob hysterics, and the jury
comes in loaded to soak an anarchist
and a foreigner, it may be due process of law
but it's also murder!

GAUNT He should have thought of that
before he spilled blood.

MIO He?

GAUNT Sir, I know too well
that he was guilty.

MIO Who are you? How do you know?
I've searched the records through, the trial and what
came after, and in all that million words
I found not one unbiased argument
to fix the crime on him.

GAUNT And you yourself,
were you unprejudiced?

MIO Who are you?

ESDRAS Sir,
this gentleman is here, as you are here,
to ask my son, as you have asked, what ground
there might be for this talk of new evidence
in your father's case. We gave him the same answer
we've given you.

MIO I'm sorry. I'd supposed
his cause forgotten except by myself. There's still
a defense committee then?

GAUNT There may be. I
am not connected with it.

ESDRAS He is my guest,
and asks to remain unknown.

MIO [*After a pause, looking at* GAUNT.]
The judge at the trial
was younger, but he had your face. Can it be
that you're the man?—Yes— Yes.
—The jury charge—

I sat there as a child and heard your voice,
and watched that Brahminical mouth. I knew even then
you meant no good to him. And now you're here
to winnow out truth and justice —the fountainhead
of the lies that slew him! Are you Judge Gaunt?

GAUNT I am.

MIO Then tell me what damnation to what inferno
would fit the toad that sat in robes and lied
when he gave the charge, and knew he lied! Judge that,
and then go to your place in that hell!

GAUNT I know and have known
what bitterness can rise against a court
when it must say, putting aside all weakness,
that a man's to die. I can forgive you that,
for you are your father's son, and you think of him
as a son thinks of his father. Certain laws
seem cruel in their operation; it's necessary
that we be cruel to uphold them. This cruelty
is kindness to those I serve.

MIO I don't doubt that.
I know who it is you serve.

GAUNT Would I have chosen
to rack myself with other men's despairs,
stop my ears, harden my heart, and listen only
to the voice of law and light, if I had hoped
some private gain for serving? In all my years
on the bench of a long-established commonwealth
not once has my decision been in question
save in this case. Not once before or since.
For hope of heaven or place on earth, or power
or gold, no man has had my voice, nor will
while I still keep the trust that's laid on me
to sentence and define.

MIO Then why are you here?

GAUNT My record's clean. I've kept it so. But suppose
with the best intent, among the myriad tongues
that come to testify, I had missed my way
and followed a perjured tale to a lethal end
till a man was forsworn to death? Could I rest or sleep
while there was doubt of this,
even while there was question in a layman's mind?
For always, night and day,

there lies on my brain like a weight, the admonition:
see truly, let nothing sway you; among all functions
there's but one godlike, to judge. Then see to it
you judge as a god would judge, with clarity,
with truth, with what mercy is found consonant
with order and law. Without law men are beasts,
and it's a judge's task to lift and hold them
above themselves. Let a judge be once mistaken
or step aside for a friend, and a gap is made
in the dykes that hold back anarchy and chaos,
and leave men bond but free.

MIO Then the gap's been made,
and you made it.

GAUNT I feared that too. May you be a judge
sometime, and know in what fear,
through what nights long
in fear, I scanned and verified and compared
the transcripts of the trial.

MIO Without prejudice,
no doubt. It was never in your mind to prove
that you'd been right.

GAUNT And conscious of that, too—
that that might be my purpose—watchful of that,
and jealous as his own lawyer of the rights
that should hedge the defendant!
And still I found no error,
shook not one staple of the bolts that linked
the doer to the deed! Still following on
from step to step, I watched all modern comment,
and saw it centered finally on one fact—
Garth Esdras was not called. This is Garth Esdras,
and you have heard him. Would his deposition
have justified a new trial?

MIO No. It would not.

GAUNT And there I come, myself. If the man were still
in his cell, and waiting, I'd have no faint excuse
for another hearing.

MIO I've told you that I read
the trial from beginning to end. Every word you spoke
was balanced carefully to keep the letter
of the law and still convict—convict, by Christ,
if it tore the seven veils! You stand here now
running cascades of casuistry, to prove
to yourself and me that no judge of rank and breeding

could burn a man out of hate! But that's what you did
under all your varnish!
GAUNT I've sought for evidence,
and you have sought. Have you found it? Can you cite
one fresh word in defense?
MIO The trial itself
was shot full of legerdemain, prearranged to lead
the jury astray—
GAUNT Could you prove that?
MIO Yes!
GAUNT And if
the jury were led astray, remember it's
the jury, by our Anglo-Saxon custom,
that finds for guilt or innocence. The judge
is powerless in that matter.
MIO Not you! Your charge
misled the jury more than the evidence,
accepted every biased meaning, distilled
the poison for them!
GAUNT But if that were so
I'd be the first, I swear it, to step down
among all men, and hold out both my hands
for manacles—yes, publish it in the streets,
that all I've held most sacred was defiled
by my own act. A judge's brain becomes
a delicate instrument to weigh men's lives
for good and ill—too delicate to bear
much tampering. If he should push aside
the weights and throw the beam, and say, this once
the man is guilty, and I will have it so
though his mouth cry out from the ground,
and all the world
revoke my word, he'd have a short way to go
to madness. I think you'd find him in the squares,
stopping the passers-by with arguments,—
see, I was right, the man was guilty there—
this was brought in against him, this—and this—
and I was left no choice! It's no light thing
when a long life's been dedicate to one end
to wrench the mind awry!
MIO By your own thesis
you should be mad, and no doubt you are.
GAUNT But my madness
is only this—that I would fain look back
on a life well spent—without one stain—one breath

of stain to flaw the glass—not in men's minds
nor in my own. I take my God as witness
I meant to earn that clearness, and believe
that I have earned it. Yet my name is clouded
with the blackest, fiercest scandal of our age
that's touched a judge. What I can do to wipe
that smutch from my fame I will. I think you know
how deeply I've been hated, for no cause
that I can find there. Can it not be—and I ask this
quite honestly—that the great injustice lies
on your side and not mine? Time and time again
men have come before me perfect in their lives,
loved by all who knew them, loved at home,
gentle, not vicious, yet caught so ripe red-handed
in some dark violence there was no denying
where the onus lay.

MIO That was not so with my father!

GAUNT And yet it seemed so to me. To other men
who sat in judgment on him. Can you be sure—
I ask this in humility—that you,
who were touched closest by the tragedy,
may not have lost perspective—may have brooded
day and night on one theme—till your eyes are tranced
and show you one side only?

MIO I see well enough.

GAUNT And would that not be part of the malady—
to look quite steadily at the drift of things
but see there what you wish—not what is there—
not what another man to whom the story
was fresh would say is there?

MIO You think I'm crazy.
Is that what you meant to say?

GAUNT I've seen it happen
with the best and wisest men. I but ask the question.
I can't speak for you. Is it not true wherever
you walk, through the little town where you knew him well,
or flying from it, inland or by the sea,
still walking at your side, and sleeping only
when you too sleep, a shadow not your own
follows, pleading and holding out its hands
to be delivered from shame?

MIO How you know that
by God I don't know.

GAUNT Because one spectre haunted you and me—
and haunts you still, but for me it's laid to rest
now that my mind is satisfied. He died
justly and not by error. [*A pause.*]
MIO [*Stepping forward.*]
Do you care to know
you've come so near to death it's miracle
that pulse still beats in your splotchy throat?
Do you know
there's murder in me?
GAUNT There was murder in your sire,
and it's to be expected! I say he died
justly, and he deserved it!
MIO Yes, you'd like too well
to have me kill you! That would prove your case
and clear your name, and dip my father's name
in stench forever! You'll not get that from me!
Go home and die in bed, get it under cover,
your lux-et-lex putrefaction of the right thing,
you man that walks like a god!
GAUNT Have I made you angry
by coming too near the truth?
MIO This sets him up,
this venomous slug, this sets him up in a gown,
deciding who's to walk above the earth
and who's to lie beneath! And giving reasons!
The cobra giving reasons; I'm a god,
by Buddha, holy and worshipful my fang,
and can I sink it in! [*He pauses, turns as if to go, then sits.*]
This is no good.
This won't help much.
The JUDGE *and* ESDRAS *look at each other.*
GAUNT We should be going.
ESDRAS Yes. [*They prepare to go.*]
I'll lend you my coat.
GAUNT [*Looking at it with distaste.*]
No, keep it. A little rain
shouldn't matter to me.
ESDRAS It freezes as it falls,
and you've a long way to go.
GAUNT I'll manage, thank you.
GAUNT *and* ESDRAS *go out,* ESDRAS *obsequious, closing the door.*
GARTH [*Looking at* MIO's *back.*] Well?
MIO [*Not moving.*] Let me sit here a moment.
GARTH *shrugs his shoulders and goes toward the inner door.* MIRIAMNE *opens it and comes out.* GARTH *looks at her, then at* MIO, *then lays his fingers on his lips. She nods.* GARTH *goes out.* MIRIAMNE *sits and watches* MIO.

After a little he turns and sees her.

MIO How did you come here?

MIRIAMNE I live here.

MIO Here?

MIRIAMNE My name is Esdras. Garth
is my brother. The walls are thin.
I heard what was said.

MIO [*Stirring wearily.*] I'm going. This is no place for me.

MIRIAMNE What place would be better?

MIO None. Only it's better to go.
Just to go. [*She comes over to him, puts her arm round him and kisses his forehead.*]

MIRIAMNE Mio.

MIO What do you want?
Your kisses burn me—and your arms. Don't offer
what I'm never to have! I can have nothing. They say
they'll cross the void sometime to the other planets
and men will breathe in that air.
Well, I could breathe there,
but not here now. Not on this ball of mud.
I don't want it.

MIRIAMNE They can take away so little
with all their words. For you're a king among them.
I heard you, and loved your voice.

MIO I thought I'd fallen so low there was no further, and now a pit
opens beneath. It was bad enough that he
should have died innocent, but if he were guilty—
then what's my life—what have I left to do—?
The son of a felon—and what they spat on me
was earned—and I'm drenched with the stuff.
Here on my hands
and cheeks, their spittle hanging! I liked my hands
because they were like his. I tell you I've lived
by his innocence, lived to see it flash
and blind them all—

MIRIAMNE Never believe them, Mio,
never. [*She looks toward the inner door.*]

MIO But it was truth I wanted, truth—
not the lies you'd tell yourself, or tell a woman,
or a woman tells you! The judge with his cobra mouth
may have spat truth—and I may be mad! For me—
your hands are too clean to touch me. I'm to have
the scraps from hotel kitchens—and instead of love
those mottled bodies that hitch themselves through alleys

to sell for dimes or nickels. Go, keep yourself chaste
for the baker bridegroom—baker and son of a baker,
let him get his baker's dozen on you!

MIRIAMNE No—
say once you love me—say it once; I'll never
ask to hear it twice, nor for any kindness,
and you shall take all I have!

GARTH *opens the inner door and comes out.*

GARTH I interrupt
a love scene, I believe. We can do without
your adolescent mawkishness.
[*To* MIRIAMNE.] You're a child.
You'll both remember that.

MIRIAMNE I've said nothing to harm you—
and will say nothing.

GARTH You're my sister, though,
and I take a certain interest in you. Where
have you two met?

MIRIAMNE We danced together.

GARTH Then
the dance is over, I think.

MIRIAMNE I've always loved you
and tried to help you, Garth. And you've been kind.
Don't spoil it now.

GARTH Spoil it how?

MIRIAMNE Because I love him.
I didn't know it would happen. We danced together.
And the world's all changed. I see you through a mist,
and our father, too. If you brought this to nothing
I'd want to die.

GARTH [*To* MIO.] You'd better go.

MIO Yes, I know. [*He rises. There is a trembling knock at the door.* MIRIAMNE *goes to it. The* HOBO *is there shivering.*]

HOBO Miss, could I sleep under the pipes tonight, miss?
Could I, please?

MIRIAMNE I think—not tonight.

HOBO There won't be any more nights—
if I don't get warm, miss.

MIRIAMNE Come in.

The HOBO *comes in, looks round deprecatingly, then goes to a corner beneath a huge heating pipe, which he crawls under as if he'd been there before.*

HOBO Yes, miss, thank you.

GARTH Must we put up with that?

MIRIAMNE Father let him sleep there—
last winter.

GARTH Yes, God, yes.

MIO Well, good night.

MIRIAMNE Where will you go?

MIO Yes, where? As if it mattered.

GARTH Oh, sleep here, too.
We'll have a row of you under the pipes.

MIO No, thanks.

MIRIAMNE Mio, I've saved a little money. It's only
some pennies, but you must take it. [*She shakes some coins out of a box into her hand.*]

MIO No, thanks.

MIRIAMNE And I love you.
You've never said you love me.

MIO Why wouldn't I love you
when you're clean and sweet,
and I've seen nothing sweet or clean
this last ten years? I love you. I leave you that
for what good it may do you. It's none to me.

MIRIAMNE Then kiss me.

MIO [*Looking at* GARTH.] With that scowling over us? No.
When it rains, some spring
on the planet Mercury, where the spring comes often,
I'll meet you there, let's say. We'll wait for that.
It may be some time till then.

The outside door opens and ESDRAS *enters with* JUDGE GAUNT, *then, after a slight interval,* TROCK *follows.* TROCK *surveys the interior and its occupants one by one, carefully.*

TROCK I wouldn't want to cause you inconvenience,
any of you, and especially the Judge.
I think you know that. You've all got things to do—
trains to catch, and so on. But trains can wait.
Hell, nearly anything can wait, you'll find,
only I can't. I'm the only one that can't
because I've got no time. Who's all this here?
Who's that? [*He points to the* HOBO.]

ESDRAS He's a poor half-wit, sir,
that sometimes sleeps there.

TROCK Come out. I say come out,
whoever you are. [*The* HOBO *stirs and looks up.*]
Yes, I mean you. Come out. [*The* HOBO *emerges.*]
What's your name?

HOBO They mostly call me Oke.

TROCK What do you know?

HOBO No, sir.

TROCK Where are you from?

HOBO I got a piece of bread. [*He brings it out, trembling.*]

TROCK Get back in there! [*The* HOBO *crawls back into his corner.*]
Maybe you want to know why I'm doing this.

Well, I've been robbed, that's why—
robbed five or six times;
the police can't find a thing—so I'm out for myself—
if you want to know.
[*To* MIO.] Who are you?

MIO Oh, I'm a half-wit,
came in here by mistake. The difference is
I've got no piece of bread.

TROCK What's your name?

MIO My name?
Theophrastus Such. That's respectable.
You'll find it all the way from here to the coast
on the best police blotters.
Only the truth is we're a little touched in the head,
Oke and me. You'd better ask somebody else.

TROCK Who is he?

ESDRAS His name's Romagna. He's the son.

TROCK Then what's he doing here? You said you were on the level.

GARTH He just walked in. On account of the stuff in the papers. We didn't ask him.

TROCK God, we are a gathering. Now if we had Shadow we'd be all here, huh? Only I guess we won't see Shadow. No, that's too much to ask.

MIO Who's Shadow?

TROCK Now you're putting questions. Shadow was just nobody, you see. He blew away. It might happen to anyone. [*He looks at* GARTH.] Yes, anyone at all.

MIO Why do you keep your hand in your pocket, friend?

TROCK Because I'm cold, punk. Because I've been outside and it's cold as the tomb of Christ. [*To* GARTH.] *Listen,* there's a car waiting up at the street to take the Judge home. We'll take him to the car.

GARTH That's not necessary.

ESDRAS No.

TROCK I say it is, see? You wouldn't want to let the Judge walk, would you? The Judge is going to ride where he's going, with a couple of chauffeurs, and everything done in style. Don't you worry about the Judge. He'll be taken care of. For good.

GARTH I want no hand in it.

TROCK Anything happens to me happens to you too, musician.

GARTH I know that.

TROCK Keep your mouth out of it then. And you'd better keep the punk here tonight, just for luck. [*He turns toward the door. There is a brilliant lightning flash through the windows, followed slowly by dying thunder.* TROCK *opens the door. The rain begins to pour in sheets.*] Jesus, somebody tipped it over again!

[*A cough racks him.*] Wait till
it's over. It takes ten days off me
every time I step into it. [*He closes the door.*] Sit down and
wait. [*Lightning flashes again. The thunder is fainter.* ESDRAS, GARTH *and the* JUDGE *sit down.*]

GAUNT We were born too early. Even you who are young
are not of the elect. In a hundred years
man will put his finger on life itself, and then
he will live as long as he likes. For you and me
we shall die soon—one day, one year more or less,
when or where, it's no matter. It's what we call
an indeterminate sentence. I'm hungry.

GARTH *looks at* MIRIAMNE.

MIRIAMNE There was nothing left
tonight.

HOBO I've got a piece of bread. [*He breaks his bread in two and hands half to the* JUDGE.]

GAUNT I thank you, sir. [*He eats.*]
This is not good bread. [*He rises.*]
Sir, I am used
to other company. Not better, perhaps, but their clothes
were different. These are what it's the fashion to call
the underprivileged.

TROCK Oh, hell! [*He turns toward the door.*]

MIO [*To* TROCK.] It would seem that you and the Judge know each other. [TROCK *faces him.*]

TROCK I've been around.

MIO Maybe you've met before.

TROCK Maybe we have.

MIO Will you tell me where?

TROCK How long do you want to live?

MIO How long? Oh, I've got big ideas about that.

TROCK I thought so. Well, so far I've got nothing against you but your name, see? You keep it that way. [*He opens the door. The rain still falls in torrents. He closes the door. As he turns from it, it opens again, and* SHADOW, *white, bloodstained and dripping, stands in the doorway.* GARTH *rises.* TROCK *turns.*]

GAUNT [*To the* HOBO.] Yet if one were careful of his health, ate sparingly, drank not at all, used himself wisely, it might be that even an old man could live to touch immortality. They may come on the secret sooner than we dare hope. You see? It does no harm to try.

TROCK [*Backing away from* SHADOW.] By God, he's out of his grave!

SHADOW [*Leaning against the doorway, holding a gun in his hands.*] Keep your hands where they belong, Trock.
You know me.
TROCK Don't! Don't! I had nothing to do with it! [*He backs to the opposite wall.*]
SHADOW You said the doctor gave you six months to live—well, I don't give you that much. That's what you had, six months, and so you start bumping off your friends to make sure of your damn six months. I got it from you.
I know where I got it.
Because I wouldn't give it to the Judge.
So he wouldn't talk.
TROCK Honest to God—
SHADOW What God?
The one that let you put three holes in me
when I was your friend? Well, He let me get up again
and walk till I could find you. That's as far as I get,
but I got there, by God! And I can hear you
even if I can't see! [*He takes a staggering step forward.*]
A man needs blood
to keep going.—I got this far.—And now I can't see!
It runs out too fast—too fast—when you've got three slugs
clean through you.
Show me where he is, you fools! He's here!
I got here! [*He drops the gun.*]
Help me! Help me! Oh, God! Oh, God!
I'm going to die! Where does a man lie down?
I want to lie down!
MIRIAMNE *starts toward* SHADOW. GARTH *and* ESDRAS *help him into the next room,* MIRIAMNE *following.* TROCK *squats in his corner, breathing hard, looking at the door.* MIO *stands, watching* TROCK. GARTH *returns, wiping his hand with a handkerchief.* MIO *picks up and pockets the gun.* MIRIAMNE *comes back and leans against the door jamb.*
GAUNT You will hear it said that an old man makes a good judge, being calm, clear-eyed, without passion. But this is not true. Only the young love truth and justice. The old are savage, wary, violent, swayed by maniac desires, cynical of friendship or love, open to bribery and the temptations of lust, corrupt and dastardly to the heart. I know these old men. What have they left to believe, what have they left to lose? Whorers of daughters, lickers of girls' shoes, contrivers of nastiness in the night, purveyors of perversion, worshippers of possession! Death is the only radical. He comes late, but

he comes at last to put away the old men and give the young their places. It was time. [*He leers.*] Here's one I heard yesterday:

Marmaduke behind the barn
got his sister in a fix;
he says damn instead of darn;
ain't he cute? He's only six!

THE HOBO He, he, he!

GAUNT

And the hoot-owl hoots all night,
and the cuckoo cooks all day,
and what with a minimum grace of God
we pass the time away.

THE HOBO He, he, he—I got ya! [*He makes a sign with his thumb.*]

GAUNT [*Sings.*]

And he led her all around
and he laid her on the ground
and he ruffled up the feathers of her cuckoo's nest!

HOBO Ho, ho, ho!

GAUNT I am not taken with the way you laugh. You should cultivate restraint.

ESDRAS *re-enters.*

TROCK Shut the door.

ESDRAS He won't come back again.

TROCK I want the door shut! He was dead, I tell you! [ESDRAS *closes the door.*] And Romagna was dead, too, once! Can't they keep a man under ground?

MIO No. No more! They don't stay under ground any more, and they don't stay under water! Why did you have him killed?

TROCK Stay away from me! I know you!

MIO Who am I, then?

TROCK I know you, damn you! Your name's Romagna!

MIO Yes! And Romagna was dead, too, and Shadow was dead, but the time's come when you can't keep them down, these dead men! They won't stay down! They come in with their heads shot off and their entrails dragging! Hundreds of them! One by one—all you ever had killed! Watch the door! See!—It moves!

TROCK [*Looking, fascinated, at the door.*] Let me out of here! [*He tries to rise.*]

MIO [*The gun in his hand.*] Oh, no! You'll sit there and wait for them! One by one they'll come through that door, pulling their heads out of the gunny-sacks where you tied them—glauming over you with their rotten hands! They'll see without eyes and crawl over you—Shadow and the paymaster and all the rest of them—putrescent bones without eyes! Now! Look! Look! For I'm first among them!

TROCK I've done for better

men than you! And I'll do for you!

GAUNT [*Rapping on the table.*] Order, gentlemen, order! The witness will remember that a certain decorum is essential in the court-room!

MIO By God, he'll answer me!

GAUNT [*Thundering.*] Silence! Silence! Let me remind you of courtesy toward the witness! What case is this you try?

MIO The case of the State against Bartolomeo Romagna for the murder of the paymaster!

GAUNT Sir, that was disposed of long ago!

MIO Never disposed of, never, not while I live!

GAUNT Then we'll have done with it now! I deny the appeal! I have denied the appeal before and I do so again!

HOBO He, he!—He thinks he's in the moving pictures!

A flash of lightning.

GAUNT Who set that flash! Bailiff, clear the court! This is not Flemington, gentlemen! We are not conducting this case to make a journalistic holiday! [*The thunder rumbles faintly.* GARTH *opens the outside door and faces a solid wall of rain.*] Stop that man! He's one of the defendants!

GARTH *closes the door.*

MIO Then put him on the stand!

GARTH What do you think you're doing?

MIO Have you any objection?

GAUNT The objection is not sustained. We will hear the new evidence. Call your witness.

MIO Garth Esdras!

GAUNT He will take the stand!

GARTH If you want me to say what I said before I'll say it!

MIO Call Trock Estrella then!

GAUNT Trock Estrella to the stand!

TROCK No, by God!

MIO Call Shadow, then! He'll talk! You thought he was dead, but he'll get up again and talk!

TROCK [*Screaming.*] What do you want of me?

MIO You killed the paymaster! You!

TROCK You lie! It was Shadow killed him!

MIO And now I know! Now I know!

GAUNT Again I remind you of courtesy toward the witness!

MIO I know them now!
Let me remind you of courtesy
toward the dead!
He says that Shadow killed him!
If Shadow were here
he'd say it was Trock! There
were three men involved
in the new version of the crime
for which

my father died! Shadow and Trock Estrella
as principals in the murder—Garth as witness!—
Why are they here together?—and you—the Judge—
why are you here? Why, because you were all afraid
and you drew together out of that fear to arrange
a story you could tell! And Trock killed Shadow
and meant to kill the Judge out of that same fear—
to keep them quiet! This is the thing I've hunted
over the earth to find out, and I'd be blind
indeed if I missed it now!
[*To* GAUNT.] You heard what he said:
It was Shadow killed him! Now let the night conspire
with the sperm of hell! It's plain beyond denial
even to this fox of justice—and all his words
are curses on the wind! You lied! You lied!
You knew this too!

GAUNT [*Low.*] Let me go. Let me go!

MIO Then why
did you let my father die?

GAUNT Suppose it known,
but there are things a judge must not believe
though they should head and fester underneath
and press in on his brain. Justice once rendered
in a clear burst of anger, righteously,
upon a very common laborer,
confessed an anarchist, the verdict found
and the precise machinery of law
invoked to know him guilty—think what furor
would rock the state if the court then flatly said;
all this was lies—must be reversed? It's better,
as any judge can tell you, in such cases,
holding the common good to be worth more
than small injustice, to let the record stand,
let one man die. For justice, in the main,
is governed by opinion. Communities
will have what they will have, and it's quite as well,
after all, to be rid of anarchists. Our rights
as citizens can be maintained as rights
only while we are held to be the peers
of those who live about us. A vendor of fish
is not protected as a man might be

who kept a market. I own I've sometimes wished
this was not so, but it is. The man you defend
was unfortunate—and his misfortune bore
almost as heavily on me.—I'm broken—
broken across. You're much too young to know
how bitter it is when a worn connection chars
and you can't remember—can't remember.
[*He steps forward.*] You
will not repeat this? It will go no further?

MIO No.

No further than the moon takes the tides—no further
than the news went when he died—
when you found him guilty
and they flashed that round the earth. Wherever men
still breathe and think, and know what's done to them
by the powers above, they'll know. That's all I ask.
That'll be enough.

TROCK *has risen and looks darkly at* MIO.

GAUNT Thank you. For I've said some things
a judge should never say.

TROCK Go right on talking.
Both of you. It won't get far, I guess.

MIO Oh, you'll see to that?

TROCK I'll see to it. Me and some others.
Maybe I lost my grip there just for a minute.
That's all right.

MIO Then see to it! Let it rain!
What can you do to me now when the night's on fire
with this thing I know? Now I could almost wish
there was a god somewhere—I could almost think
there was a god—and he somehow brought me here
and set you down before me here in the rain
where I could wring this out of you! For it's said,
and I've heard it, and I'm free! He was as I thought him,
true and noble and upright, even when he went
to a death contrived because he was as he was
and not your kind! Let it rain! Let the night speak fire
and the city go out with the tide, for he was a man
and I know you now, and I have my day!

There is a heavy knock at the outside door. MIRIAMNE *opens it, at a glance from* GARTH. *The* POLICEMAN *is there in oilskins.*

POLICEMAN Evening. [*He*

steps in, followed by a SERGEANT, *similarly dressed.*]
We're looking for someone
might be here. Seen an old man around
acting a little off?
[*To* ESDRAS.] You know the one
I mean. You saw him out there. Jeez! You've got
a funny crowd here! [*He looks round. The* HOBO *shrinks into his corner.*]
That's the one I saw.
What do you think?

SERGEANT That's him. You mean to say
you didn't know him by his pictures? [*He goes to* GAUNT.]
Come on, old man.
You're going home.

GAUNT Yes, sir. I've lost my way.
I think I've lost my way.

SERGEANT I'll say you have.
About three hundred miles. Now don't you worry.
We'll get you back.

GAUNT I'm a person of some rank
in my own city.

SERGEANT We know that. One look at you
and we'd know that.

GAUNT Yes, sir.

POLICEMAN If it isn't Trock! Trock Estrella. How are you, Trock?

TROCK Pretty good, Thanks.

POLICEMAN Got out yesterday again, I hear?

TROCK That's right.

SERGEANT Hi'ye, Trock?

TROCK O.K.

SERGEANT You know we got orders
to watch you pretty close. Be good now, baby,
or back you go. Don't try to pull anything,
not in my district.

TROCK No, sir.

SERGEANT No bumping off.
If you want my advice quit carrying a gun.
Try earning your living for once.

TROCK Yeah.

SERGEANT That's an idea.
Because if we find any stiffs on the river bank
we'll know who to look for.

MIO Then look in the other room!
I accuse that man of murder! Trock Estrella!
He's a murderer!

POLICEMAN Hello. I remember you.

SERGEANT Well, what murder?

MIO It was Trock Estrella
that robbed the payroll thirteen years ago
and did the killing my father died for! You know

the Romagna case! Romagna was innocent,
and Trock Estrella guilty!

SERGEANT [*Disgusted.*] Oh, what the hell!
That's old stuff—the Romagna case.

POLICEMAN Hey, Sarge! [*The* SERGEANT *and* POLICEMAN *come closer together.*]
The boy's a professional kidder. He took me over
about half an hour ago. He kids the police
and then ducks out!

SERGEANT Oh, yeah?

MIO I'm not kidding now.
You'll find a dead man there in the next room
and Estrella killed him!

SERGEANT Thirteen years ago?
And nobody smelled him yet?

MIO [*Pointing.*] I accuse this man
of two murders! He killed the paymaster long ago
and had Shadow killed tonight. Look, look for yourself!
He's there all right!

POLICEMAN Look boy. You stood out there
and put the booby sign on the dumb police
because they're fresh out of Ireland. Don't try it twice.

SERGEANT [*To* GARTH.] Any corpses here?

GARTH Not that I know of.

SERGEANT I thought so. [MIO *looks at* MIRIAMNE.]
[*To* MIO.] Think up a better one.

MIO Have I got to drag him
out here where you can see him? [*He goes toward the inner door.*]
Can't you scent a murder
when it's under your nose? Look in!

MIRIAMNE No, no—there's no one—there's no one there!

SERGEANT [*Looking at* MIRIAMNE.] Take a look inside.

POLICEMAN Yes, sir. [*He goes into the inside room. The* SERGEANT *goes up to the door. The* POLICEMAN *returns.*]
He's kidding, Sarge. If there's a cadaver in here I don't see it.

MIO You're blind then! [*He goes into the room, the* SERGEANT *following him.*]

SERGEANT What do you mean? [*He comes out,* MIO *following him.*]
When you make a charge of murder it's better to have
the corpus delicti, son. You're the kind puts in
fire alarms to see the engine!

MIO By God, he was there!
He went in there to die.

SERGEANT I'll bet he did.
And I'm Haile Selassie's aunt! What's your name?

MIO Romagna.

[*To* GARTH.] What have you done with him?

GARTH I don't know what you mean.

SERGEANT [*To* GARTH.] What's he talking about?

GARTH I wish I could tell you. I don't know.

SERGEANT He must have seen something.

POLICEMAN He's got
the Romagna case on the brain. You watch yourself,
chump, or you'll get run in.

MIO Then they're in it together!
All of them!
[*To* MIRIAMNE.] Yes, and you!

GARTH He's nuts, I say.

MIRIAMNE [*Gently.*] You have dreamed something—isn't it true?
You've dreamed—
But truly, there was no one—

MIO *looks at her comprehendingly.*

MIO You want me to say it. [*He pauses.*]
Yes, by God, I was dreaming.

SERGEANT [*To* POLICEMAN.] I guess you're right.
We'd better be going. Haven't you got a coat?

GAUNT No, sir.

SERGEANT I guess I'll have to lend you mine. [*He puts his oilskins on* GAUNT.]
Come on, now. It's getting late.

[GAUNT, *the* POLICEMAN *and the* SERGEANT *go out.*]

TROCK They're welcome to him.
His fuse is damp. Where is that walking fool
with the three slugs in him?

ESDRAS He fell in the hall beyond
and we left him there.

TROCK That's lucky for some of us. Is he out this time
or is he still butting around?

ESDRAS He's dead.

TROCK That's perfect.
[*To* MIO.] Don't try using your firearms, amigo baby,
the Sarge is outside. [*He turns to go.*]
Better ship that carrion
back in the river! The one that walks when he's dead;
maybe he'll walk the distance for you.

GARTH Coming back?

TROCK Well, if I come back, you'll see me. If I don't, you won't. Let the punk
go far as he likes. Turn him loose and let him go.
And may you all rot in hell. [*He pulls his coat around him and goes to the left.* MIRIAMNE *climbs up to look out a window.*]

MIRIAMNE He's climbing up to the street,

along the bridgehead. [*She turns.*]
Quick, Mio! It's safe now! Quick!
GARTH Let him do as he likes.
MIRIAMNE What do you mean? Garth! He means to kill him!
You know that!
GARTH I've no doubt Master Romagna
can run his own campaign.
MIRIAMNE But he'll be killed!
MIO Why did you lie about Shadow? [*There is a pause.* GARTH *shrugs, walks across the room, and sits.*]
You were one of the gang!
GARTH I can take a death if I have to! Go tell your story,
only watch your step, for I warn you, Trock's out gunning
and you may not walk very far. Oh, I could defend it
but it's hardly worth while.
If they get Trock they get me too.
Go tell them. You owe me nothing.
ESDRAS This Trock you saw, no one defends him. He's earned his death so often
there's nobody to regret it. But his crime,
his same crime that has dogged you, dogged us down
from what little we had, to live here among the drains,
where the waterbugs break out like a scrofula
on what we eat—and if there's lower to go
we'll go there when you've told your story. And more
that I haven't heart to speak—
MIO [*To* GARTH.] My father died
in your place. And you could have saved him!
You were one of the gang!
GARTH Why, there you are.
You certainly owe me nothing.
MIRIAMNE [*Moaning.*] I want to die.
I want to go away.
MIO Yes, and you lied!
And trapped me into it!
MIRIAMNE But Mio, he's my brother.
I couldn't give them my brother.
MIO No. You couldn't.
You were quite right. The gods were damned ironic
tonight, and they've worked it out.
ESDRAS What will be changed
if it comes to trial again? More blood poured out
to a mythical justice, but your father lying still
where he lies now.
MIO The bright, ironical gods!
What fun they have in heaven! When a man prays hard

for any gift, they give it, and then one more
to boot that makes it useless.
[*To* MIRIAMNE.] You might have picked
some other stranger to dance with!
MIRIAMNE I know.
MIO Or chosen
some other evening to sit outside in the rain.
But no, it had to be this. All my life long
I've wanted only one thing, to say to the world
and prove it: the man you killed was clean and true
and full of love as the twelve-year-old that stood
and taught in the temple. I can say that now
and give my proofs—and now you stick a girl's face
between me and the rites I've sworn the dead
shall have of me! You ask too much! Your brother
can take his chance! He was ready enough to let
an innocent man take certainty for him
to pay for the years he's had. That parts us, then,
but we're parted anyway, by the same dark wind
that blew us together. I shall say what I have to say. [*He steps back.*]
And I'm not welcome here.
MIRIAMNE But don't go now! You've stayed
too long! He'll be waiting!
MIO Well, is this any safer?
Let the winds blow, the four winds of the world,
and take us to the four winds.
[*The three are silent before him. He turns and goes out.*]

Curtain.

Winterset ACT THREE

SCENE: *The river bank outside the tenement, a little before the close of the previous act. The rain still falls through the street lamps. The* TWO NATTY YOUNG MEN IN SERGE AND GRAY *are leaning against the masonry in a ray of light, concentrating on a game of chance. Each holds in his hand a packet of ten or fifteen crisp bills. They compare the numbers on the top notes and immediately a bill changes hands. This goes on with varying fortune until the tide begins to run toward the* 1ST GUNMAN, *who has accumulated nearly the whole supply. They*

play on in complete silence, evidently not wishing to make any noise. Occasionally they raise their heads slightly to look carefully about. Luck begins to favor the 2ND GUNMAN, *and the notes come his way. Neither evinces the slightest interest in how the game goes. They merely play on, bored, half-absorbed. There is a slight noise at the tenement door. They put the bills away and watch.* TROCK *comes out, pulls the door shut and comes over to them. He says a few words too low to be heard, and without changing expression the* YOUNG MEN *saunter toward the right.* TROCK *goes out to the left, and the* 2ND PLAYER, *catching that out of the corner of his eye, lingers in a glimmer of light to go on with the game. The* 1ST, *with an eye on the tenement door, begins to play without ado, and the bills again shift back and forth, then concentrate in the hands of the* 1ST GUNMAN. *The* 2ND *shrugs his shoulders, searches his pockets, finds one bill, and playing with it begins to win heavily. They hear the door opening, and putting the notes away, slip out in front of the rock.* MIO *emerges, closes the door, looks round him and walks to the left. Near the corner of the tenement he pauses, reaches out his hand to try the rain, looks up toward the street, and stands uncertainly a moment. He returns and leans against the tenement wall.* MIRIAMNE *comes out.* MIO *continues to look off into space as if unaware of her. She looks away.*

MIO This rather takes one off his high horse.—What I mean, tough weather for a hegira. You see, this is my sleeping suit, and if I get it wet—basta!

MIRIAMNE If you could only hide here.

MIO Hide?

MIRIAMNE Lucia would take you in. The street-piano man.

MIO At the moment I'm afflicted with claustrophobia. I prefer to die in the open, seeking air.

MIRIAMNE But you could stay there till daylight.

MIO You're concerned about me.

MIRIAMNE Shall I ask him?

MIO No. On the other hand there's a certain reason in your concern. I looked up the street and our old friend Trock hunches patiently under the warehouse eaves.

MIRIAMNE I was sure of that.

MIO And here I am, a young man on a cold night, waiting the

end of the rain. Being read my lesson by a boy, a blind boy—you know the one I mean. Knee-deep in the salt-marsh, Miriamne, bitten from within, fought.

MIRIAMNE Wouldn't it be better if you came back in the house?

MIO You forget my claustrophobia.

MIRIAMNE Let me walk with you, then. Please. If I stay beside you he wouldn't dare.

MIO And then again he might. — We don't speak the same language, Miriamne.

MIRIAMNE I betrayed you. Forgive me.

MIO I wish I knew this region. There's probably a path along the bank.

MIRIAMNE Yes. Shadow went that way.

MIO That's true, too. So here I am, a young man on a wet night, and blind in my weather eye. Stay and talk to me.

MIRIAMNE If it happens—it's my fault.

MIO Not at all, sweet. You warned me to keep away. But I would have it. Now I have to find a way out. It's like a chess game. If you think long enough there's always a way out.—For one or the other.—I wonder why white always wins and black always loses in the problems. White to move and mate in three moves. But what if white were to lose—ah, what then? Why, in that case, obviously black would be white and white would be black.—As it often is.—As we often are.—Might makes white. Losers turn black. Do you think I'd have time to draw a gun?

MIRIAMNE No.

MIO I'm a fair shot. Also I'm fair game.

The door of the tenement opens and GARTH *comes out to look about quickly. Seeing only* MIO *and* MIRIAMNE *he goes in and comes out again almost immediately carrying one end of a door on which a body lies covered with a cloth. The* HOBO *carries the other end. They go out to the right with their burden.*

This is the burial of Shadow, then;
feet first he dips, and leaves the haunts of men.
Let us make mourn for Shadow, wetly lying,
in elegiac stanzas and sweet crying.
Be gentle with him, little cold waves and fishes;
nibble him not, respect his skin and tissues—

MIRIAMNE Must you say such things?

MIO My dear, some requiem is fitting over the dead, even for

Shadow. But the last rhyme was bad.
Whittle him not, respect his dying wishes.
That's better. And then to conclude:
His aromatic virtues, slowly rising
will circumamb the isle, beyond disguising.
He clung to life beyond the wont of men.
Time and his silence drink us all. Amen.
How I hate these identicals. The French allow them, but the French have no principles anyway. You know, Miriamne, there's really nothing mysterious about human life. It's purely mechanical, like an electric appliance. Stop the engine that runs the generator and the current's broken. When we think the brain gives off a small electric discharge — quite measurable, and constant within limits. But that's not what makes your hair stand up when frightened.

MIRIAMNE I think it's a mystery.

MIO Human life? We'll have to wear veils if we're to keep it a mystery much longer. Now if Shadow and I were made up into sausages we'd probably make very good sausages.

MIRIAMNE Don't—

MIO I'm sorry. I speak from a high place, far off, long ago, looking down. The cortège returns. [GARTH *and the* HOBO *return, carrying the door, the cloth lying loosely over it.*] I hope you placed an obol in his mouth to pay the ferryman? Even among the Greeks a little money was prerequisite to Elysium. [GARTH *and the* HOBO *go inside, silent.*] No? It's grim to think of Shadow lingering among lesser shades on the hither side. For lack of a small gratuity.

ESDRAS *comes out the open door and closes it behind him.*

ESDRAS You must wait here, Mio, or go inside. I know
you don't trust me, and I haven't earned your trust.
You're young enough to seek truth—
and there is no truth;
and I know that—
but I shall call the police and see that you
get safely off.

MIO It's a little late for that.

ESDRAS I shall try.

MIO And your terms? For I daresay you make terms?

ESDRAS No.

MIO Then let me remind you what will happen.
The police will ask some questions.
When they're answered

they'll ask more, and before they're done with it
your son will be implicated.
ESDRAS Must he be?
MIO I shall not keep quiet. [*A pause.*]
ESDRAS Still, I'll go.
MIO I don't ask help, remember. I make no truce.
He's not on my conscience, and I'm not on yours.
ESDRAS But you
could make it easier, so easily.
He's my only son. Let him live.
MIO His chance of survival's better than mine, I'd say.
ESDRAS I'll go.
MIO I don't urge it.
ESDRAS No. I put my son's life in your hands.
When you're gone,
that may come to your mind.
MIO Don't count on it.
ESDRAS Oh,
I count on nothing. [*He turns to go.* MIRIAMNE *runs over to him and silently kisses his hands.*]
Not mine, not mine, my daughter!
They're guilty hands. [*He goes out left.* GARTH'S *violin is heard within.*]
MIO There was a war in heaven
once, all the angels on one side, and all
the devils on the other, and since that time
disputes have raged among the learned, concerning
whether the demons won, or the angels. Maybe
the angels won, after all.
MIRIAMNE And again, perhaps
there are no demons or angels.
MIO Oh, there are none.
But I could love your father.
MIRIAMNE I love him. You see,
he's afraid because he's old. The less one has
to lose the more he's afraid.
MIO Suppose one had
only a short stub end of life, or held
a flashlight with the batteries run down
till the bulb was dim, and knew that he could live
while the glow lasted. Or suppose one knew
that while he stood in a little shelter of time
under a bridgehead, say, he could live, and then,
from then on, nothing. Then to lie and turn
with the earth and sun, and regard them not in the least
when the bulb was extinguished or he stepped beyond
his circle into the cold? How would he live
that last dim quarter-hour, before he went,

minus all recollection, to grow in grass
between cobblestones?
MIRIAMNE Let me put my arms round you, Mio.
Then if anything comes, it's for me, too. [*She puts both arms round him.*]
MIO Only suppose
this circle's charmed! To be safe until he steps
from this lighted space into dark! Time pauses here
and high eternity grows in one quarter-hour
in which to live.
MIRIAMNE Let me see if anyone's there—
there in the shadows. [*She looks toward the right.*]
MIO It might blast our eternity—
blow it to bits. No, don't go. This is forever,
here where we stand. And I ask you, Miriamne,
how does one spend a forever?
MIRIAMNE You're frightened?
MIO Yes.
So much that time stands still.
MIRIAMNE Why didn't I speak—
tell them—when the officers were here? I failed you
in that one moment!
MIO His life for mine? Oh, no.
I wouldn't want it, and you couldn't give it.
And if I should go on living we're cut apart
by that brother of yours.
MIRIAMNE Are we?
MIO Well, think about it.
A body lies between us, buried in quicklime.
Your allegiance is on the other side of that grave
and not to me.
MIRIAMNE No, Mio! Mio, I love you!
MIO I love you, too, but in case my life went on
beyond that barrier of dark—then Garth
would run his risk of dying.
MIRIAMNE He's punished, Mio.
His life's been torment to him. Let him go,
for my sake, Mio.
MIO I wish I could. I wish
I'd never seen him—or you. I've steeped too long
in this thing. It's in my teeth and bones. I can't
let go or forget. And I'll not add my lie
to the lies that cumber his ground. We live our days
in a storm of lies that drifts the truth too deep
for path or shovel; but I've set my foot on a truth
for once, and I'll trail it down!

A silence. MIRIAMNE *looks out to the right.*

MIRIAMNE There's someone there—
I heard—

CARR *comes in from the right.*

MIO It's Carr.

CARR That's right, No doubt about it.
Excuse me.

MIO Glad to see you. This is Miriamne.
Carr's a friend of mine.

CARR You're better employed than when I saw you last.

MIO Bow to the gentleman, Miriamne. That's meant for you.

MIRIAMNE Thank you, I'm sure.
Should I leave you, Mio? You want to talk?

MIO Oh, no,
we've done our talking.

MIRIAMNE But—

CARR I'm the one's out of place—
I wandered back because I got worried about you,
that's the truth.—Oh—those two fellows with the hats
down this way, you know, the ones that ran
after we heard the shooting—they're back again,
lingering or malingering down the bank,
revisiting the crime, I guess. They may mean well.

MIO I'll try to avoid them.

CARR I didn't care
for the way they looked at me.—No luck, I suppose,
with that case history? The investigation
you had on hand?

MIO I can't say. By the way,
the stiff that fell in the water and we saw swirling
down the eddy, he came trudging up, later on,
long enough to tell his name. His name was Shadow,
but he's back in the water now. It's all in an evening.
These things happen here.

CARR Good God!

MIO I know.
I wouldn't believe it if you told it.

CARR But—
the man was alive?

MIO Oh, not for long! He's dunked
for good this time. That's all that's happened.

CARR Well,
if you don't need me—

MIRIAMNE You had a message to send—
have you forgotten—?

MIO I? — Yes, I had a message—
but I won't send it—not now.

MIRIAMNE Then I will—!

MIO No.

Let it go the way it is! It's all arranged
another way. You've been a good scout, Carr,
the best I ever knew on the road.
CARR That sounds
like making your will.
MIO Not yet, but when I do
I've thought of something to leave you. It's the view
of Mt. Rainier from the Seattle jail,
snow over cloud. And the rusty chain in my pocket
from a pair of handcuffs my father wore. That's all
the worldly goods I'm seized of.
CARR Look, Mio—hell—
if you're in trouble—
MIO I'm not. Not at all. I have
a genius that attends me where I go,
and guards me now. I'm fine.
CARR Well, that's good news.
He'll have his work cut out.
MIO Oh, he's a genius.
CARR I'll see you then.
I'll be at the Grand Street place. I'm lucky tonight,
and I can pay. I could even pay for two.
MIO Thanks, I may take you up.
CARR Good night.
MIO Right, Carr.
CARR [*To* MIRIAMNE.] Good night.
MIRIAMNE [*After a pause.*] Good night. [CARR *goes out to the left.*]
Why did you do that? He's your genius, Mio,
and you let him go.
MIO I couldn't help it.
MIRIAMNE Call him.
Run after him and call him!
MIO I tried to say it
and it strangled in my throat. I might have known
you'd win in the end.
MIRIAMNE Is it for me?
MIO For you?
It stuck in my throat, that's all I know.
MIRIAMNE Oh, Mio,
I never asked for that! I only hoped
Garth could go clear.
MIO Well, now he will.
MIRIAMNE But you—
It was your chance!
MIO I've lost
my taste for revenge if it falls on you. Oh, God,
deliver me from the body of this death
I've dragged behind me all these years! Miriamne!
Miriamne!
MIRIAMNE Yes!
MIO Miriamne, if you love me
teach me a treason to what I am, and have been,

till I learn to live like a man! I think I'm waking
from a long trauma of hate and fear and death
that's hemmed me from my birth —and glimpse a life
to be lived in hope—but it's young in me yet, I can't
get free, or forgive! But teach me how to live
and forget to hate!

MIRIAMNE He would have forgiven.

MIO He?

MIRIAMNE Your father. [*A pause.*]

MIO Yes. [*Another pause.*]
You'll think it strange, but I've never
remembered that.

MIRIAMNE How can I help you?

MIO You have.

MIRIAMNE If I were a little older—if I knew
the things to say! I can only put out my hands
and give you back the faith you bring to me
by being what you are. Because to me
you are all hope and beauty and brightness drawn
across what's black and mean!

MIO He'd have forgiven—
Then there's no more to say— I've groped long enough
through this everglades of old revenges—here
the road ends.—Miriamne, Miriamne,
the iron I wore so long—it's eaten through
and fallen from me. Let me have your arms.
They'll say we're children— Well —the world's made up
of children.

MIRIAMNE Yes.

MIO But it's too late for me.

MIRIAMNE No. [*She goes into his arms, and they kiss for the first time.*]
Then we'll meet again?

MIO Yes.

MIRIAMNE Where?

MIO I'll write—
or send Carr to you.

MIRIAMNE You won't forget?

MIO Forget?
Whatever streets I walk, you'll walk them, too,
from now on, and whatever roof or stars
I have to house me, you shall share my roof
and stars and morning. I shall not forget.

MIRIAMNE God keep you!

MIO And keep you. And this to remember!
if I should die, Miriamne, this half-hour
is our eternity. I came here seeking

light in darkness, running from the dawn,
and stumbled on a morning.
One of the YOUNG MEN IN SERGE *strolls in casually from the right, looks up and down without expression, then, seemingly having forgotten something, retraces his steps and goes out.* ESDRAS *comes in slowly from the left. He has lost his hat, and his face is bleeding from a slight cut on the temple. He stands abjectly near the tenement.*
MIRIAMNE Father—what is it? [*She goes toward* ESDRAS.]
ESDRAS Let me alone. [*He goes nearer to* MIO.]
He wouldn't let me pass.
The street's so icy up along the bridge
I had to crawl on my knees—he kicked me back
three times—and then he held me there—I swear
what I could do I did! I swear to you
I'd save you if I could.
MIO What makes you think that I need saving?
ESDRAS Child, save yourself if you can!
He's waiting for you.
MIO Well, we knew that before.
ESDRAS He won't wait much longer. He'll come here—
he told me so. Those damned six months of his—
he wants them all—and you're to die—you'd spread
his guilt—I had to listen to it—
MIO Wait— [*He walks forward and looks casually to the right, then returns.*]
There must be some way up through the house and out
across the roof—
ESDRAS He's watching that. But come in—
and let me look.—
MIO I'll stay here, thanks. Once in
and I'm a rat in a deadfall—I'll stay here—
look for me if you don't mind.
ESDRAS Then watch for me—
I'll be on the roof— [*He goes in hurriedly.*]
MIO [*Looking up.*] Now all you silent powers
that make the sleet and dark, and never yet
have spoken, give us a sign, let the throw be ours
this once, on this longest night, when the winter sets
his foot on the threshold leading up to spring
and enters with remembered cold—let fall
some mercy with the rain. We are two lovers
here in your night, and we wish to live.

MIRIAMNE Oh, Mio—
if you pray that way, nothing good will come!
You're bitter, Mio.
MIO How many floors has this building?
MIRIAMNE Five or six. It's not as high as the bridge.
MIO No, I thought not. How many pomegranate seeds
did you eat, Persephone?
MIRIAMNE Oh, darling, darling,
if you die, don't die alone.
MIO I'm afraid I'm damned
to hell, and you're not damned at all. Good God,
how long he takes to climb!
MIRIAMNE The stairs are steep. [*A slight pause.*]
MIO I'll follow him.
MIRIAMNE He's there—at the window—now.
He waves you to go back, not to go in.
Mio, see, that path between the rocks—
they're not watching that — they're out at the river—
I can see them there—they can't watch both—
it leads to a street above.
MIO I'll try it, then.
Kiss me. You'll hear. But if you never hear—
then I'm the king of hell, Persephone,
and I'll expect you.
MIRIAMNE Oh, lover, keep safe.
MIO Good-bye. [*He slips out quickly between the rocks. There is a quick machine gun rat-tat. The violin stops.* MIRIAMNE *runs toward the path.* MIO *comes back slowly, a hand pressed under his heart.*]
It seems you were mistaken.
MIRIAMNE Oh, God, forgive me! [*She puts an arm round him. He sinks to his knees.*]
Where is it, Mio? Let me help you in! Quick, quick,
let me help you!
MIO I hadn't thought to choose—this—ground—
but it will do. [*He slips down.*]
MIRIAMNE Oh, God, forgive me!
MIO Yes?
The king of hell was not forgiven then,
Dis is his name, and Hades is his home—
and he goes alone—
MIRIAMNE Why does he bleed so? Mio, if you go
I shall go with you.
MIO It's better to stay alive.
I wanted to stay alive—because of you—
I leave you that—and what he said to me dying:
I love you, and will love you after I die.

Tomorrow, I shall still love you, as I've loved
the stars I'll never see, and all the mornings
that might have been yours and mine. Oh, Miriamne,
you taught me this.

MIRIAMNE If only I'd never seen you
then you could live—

MIO That's blasphemy— Oh, God,
there might have been some easier way of it.
You didn't want me to die, did you, Miriamne—?
You didn't send me away—?

MIRIAMNE Oh, never, never—

MIO Forgive me—kiss me—
I've got blood on your lips—
I'm sorry — it doesn't matter —I'm sorry—

ESDRAS *and* GARTH *come out.*

MIRIAMNE Mio—
I'd have gone to die myself— you must hear this, Mio,
I'd have died to help you—you must listen, sweet,
you must hear it— [*She rises.*]
I can die, too, see! You! There!
You in the shadows!—You killed him to silence him! [*She walks toward the path.*]
But I'm not silenced! All that he knew I know,
and I'll tell it tonight! Tonight—
tell it and scream it
through all the streets — that Trock's a murderer
and he hired you for this murder!
Your work's not done —
and you won't live long! Do you hear?
You're murderers, and I know who you are! [*The machine gun speaks again. She sinks to her knees.* GARTH *runs to her.*]

GARTH You little fool! [*He tries to lift her.*]

MIRIAMNE Don't touch me! [*She crawls toward* MIO.]
Look, Mio! They killed me, too. Oh, you can believe me
now, Mio. You can believe I wouldn't hurt you,
because I'm dying! Why doesn't he answer me?
Oh, now he'll never know! [*She sinks down, her hand over her mouth, choking.* GARTH *kneels beside her, then rises, shuddering. The* HOBO *comes out.* LUCIA *and* PINY *look out.*]

ESDRAS It lacked only this.

GARTH Yes. [ESDRAS *bends over* MIRIAMNE, *then rises slowly.*]
Why was the bastard born? Why did he come here?

ESDRAS Miriamne—Miriamne —yes, and Mio,
one breath shall call you now— forgive us both—

forgive the ancient evil of the earth
that brought you here—

GARTH Why must she be a fool?

ESDRAS Well, they were wiser than you and I. To die
when you are young and untouched, that's beggary
to a miser of years, but the devils locked in synod
shake and are daunted when men set their lives
at hazard for the heart's love, and lose. And these,
who were yet children, will weigh more than all
a city's elders when the experiment
is reckoned up in the end. Oh, Miriamne,
and Mio—Mio, my son—know this where you lie,
this is the glory of earth-born men and women,
not to cringe, never to yield, but standing,
take defeat implacable and defiant,
die unsubmitting. I wish that I'd died so,
long ago; before you're old you'll wish
that you had died as they have. On this star,
in this hard star-adventure, knowing not
what the fires mean to right and left, nor whether
a meaning was intended or presumed,
man can stand up, and look out blind, and say:
in all these turning lights I find no clue,
only a masterless night, and in my blood
no certain answer, yet is my mind my own,
yet is my heart a cry toward something dim
in distance, which is higher than I am
and makes me emperor of the endless dark
even in seeking! What odds and ends of life
men may live otherwise, let them live, and then
go out, as I shall go, and you. Our part
is only to bury them. Come, take her up.
They must not lie here.

LUCIA *and* PINY *come near to help.* ESDRAS *and* GARTH *stoop to carry* MIRIAMNE.

Curtain.

Tennessee Williams

Besides the sensationally successful productions of *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* on Broadway, Tennessee Williams has written six other full-length plays and a score of one-act plays that have been produced in many of the little theaters around the country. For over a decade he has written and lived with those auxiliary artists who have made the success of his Broadway productions possible. He has been actively connected with little-theater groups and has paid them an affectionate tribute in the introduction to the New Directions edition of his one-act plays, *27 Wagons Full of Cotton*. Here he speaks of The Mummers in St. Louis, of the variety of backgrounds and abilities of the actors, and of the almost spontaneous organization by which they produced plays, including two of his own earliest dramas. "I guess it was all run by a kind of beautiful witchcraft!" he wrote. "It was like a definition of what I think theater is. Something wild, something exciting, something that you are not used to." Almost ten years later he remembered that The Mummers did have bad performances but that they always succeeded finally in bringing the stage alive, and that "it made a difference in the lives of the spectators."

Even after he had established his name on the New York stage, Williams continued to look toward the provinces for the future of the American theater. This was more than a debt of gratitude for his own start. Like many authors and producers, he recognized the limitations of having writers, directors, actors—the whole professional drama—centered on Broadway. He also realized that the legitimate theater in New York is contracting. Many older playhouses have been closed or converted to movies and not a new one has been built in twenty years. The cost of mounting a production has increased enormously, particularly since the war. These restrictive conditions have encouraged Williams to promote the grass-roots theater. He was elected a trustee of the Dallas Civic Repertory The-

ater, which gave, under the direction of Margo Jones, the first presentation of *Summer and Smoke.* Although he ultimately favors a state-supported national theater somewhat like Ibsen's Norwegian Theater or the Moscow Art Theatre of Russia, he uses the medium that is already established in the little theaters.

Along with this wide experience in the theater, Williams has developed a sense of deep seriousness about his profession. Like Maxwell Anderson, he thinks of the theater as "the highest and purest form of religion" and believes that it "should be fostered and respected, because it is concerned with truth." He has worked consistently to bring out the truth of human relationships, and the plays that have resulted from his years of writing have an excellent literary quality.

The four plays that have had Broadway productions all suggest situations in Williams' own life. He was born in Columbus, Mississippi, a town reminiscent of Glorious Hill, Mississippi, in *Summer and Smoke.* His childhood was spent in an atmosphere of southern Episcopalianism in the home of his minister grandfather, which may account for the parsonage background of Alma Weinmiller, that play's heroine. When he moved to St. Louis with his family, they occupied just such an apartment as the one described in *The Glass Menagerie.* His close attachment to his sister, who actually had a glass menagerie, has been mentioned in several interviews. Her room overlooked a brick court such as the one he described in the play; this court was known to the family as "Death Valley" because stray dogs were constantly cornering and killing stray cats beneath his sister's window. After his graduation from the university, he lived off and on in New Orleans, which provided him with the background for *A Streetcar Named Desire.* The play *You Touched Me,* written in collaboration with Donald Windham, grew out of a trip he made to Taos, New Mexico, to visit the memorial home of D.H. Lawrence, for whom he has great admiration. Out of all these places he has created settings peopled with characters who are haunted by some elusive weakness and who are poetic in the intensity of their tragic passions.

Williams' childhood was pleasant, but his college years were not easy ones. He was interested in writing poetry, and his regular courses suffered from his diverted attention. When the depression

added economic hardships to a weak academic record, his father took him out of the University of Missouri and put him to work for two years in a shoe manufacturing company. Here the conflict between his duties in the business world and his interest in writing poetry eventually produced a nervous breakdown. He returned to school at Washington University but was unhappy there because his plays did not win the approval he expected. Finally he took his B.A. degree at the University of Iowa in 1938. Afterward, and particularly in the next five years, he wandered with apparent aimlessness about the country but tended to focus on New York. He has declared that he considered himself a poet who stumbled by accident into the theater. But the pull of Broadway and his interest in the little theaters wherever he has gone make it appear that the theater satisfies some internal urge just as much as poetry does.

Williams was feeling his way artistically during the years 1936-39 and wrote nothing that the New York theaters were willing to produce. The Group Theatre, which included Clifford Odets and Irwin Shaw among other writers who had strong social interests, awarded him a cash prize for four one-act plays entitled *American Blues.* Then Theresa Helburn and John Gassner gave him a scholarship for their advanced playwriting seminar at the New School for Social Research in New York. There he wrote a full-length play, *Battle of Angels,* which the Theatre Guild tried out in Boston. This lyrical drama was directed by Margaret Webster, and Miriam Hopkins was engaged for the leading role, but the play occasioned a near riot. "I never heard of an audience getting so infuriated," Williams said. "The thing is, you can't mix up sex and religion, as I did." He discovered that, even in America where audiences are notoriously indifferent to almost everything save whether or not they are entertained, this combination brings a violent reaction. *Battle of Angels* was closed and the Theatre Guild did not even try to take it to New York.

Williams was discouraged by the reception of this play and felt for a time that he was destined to be a failure in the theater. He turned, however, to a less explosive theme in his next work, *The Glass Menagerie;* and Eddie Dowling, after some misgivings, decided to test this gently nostalgic portrait of two Southern women. Its success in Chicago was such that Dowling brought it to New York with

himself in the role of the son and Laurette Taylor and Julie Hayden as the mother and sister. The New York production was not only a triumph for Tennessee Williams but also for Miss Taylor. Her performance as the mother brought forth the greatest critical encomiums of the season. Her death closed the play in New York, but it continued on the road for several seasons with Helen MacKellar in the role. And it made Williams famous.

Out of his background of emotional and economic insecurity has come the hard center of realism found even in his most imaginative passages. His success, which must seem to many a struggling playwright to have been achieved early and easily, does not appear that way to him. He always speaks of himself in terms of the Darwinian struggle for survival. He calls himself "that most common American phenomenon, the rootless, wandering writer." Furthermore, he feels that his existence is threatened even more because he is a poet: "The most destructible element in our society, the immature and rootless artists or poets, is the one that is subjected to the worst lambastings. . . . I know this because I have survived it myself." After the failure of *Battle of Angels* he said: "I had already discovered that the life of a young writer was going to be something similar to the defense of a stockade against a band of savages." By the time he had established his reputation with *The Glass Menagerie,* Williams was so conscious of his early struggles that he even looked upon success as a trap designed to kill the artist in him. As a result he wrote with a sense of triumph in simple aggressiveness: "But once you fully apprehend the vacuity of a life without struggle you are equipped with the basic means of salvation." When he asked himself the age-old questions: What is man? What is good? he answered that "the heart of man, his body and his brain, are forged in a white-hot furnace for the purpose of conflict." And what is good in life is an "obsessive interest in human affairs" and a sense of "compassion and moral conviction" that force a man to express life in terms of dynamic art.

One of the characteristics of Williams' plays has been the poetic use of his own experience. In all his published dramas he has required his stage designer to conceive imaginatively rather than realistically several important areas of interest in the life of a town or city in which these plays are laid. Williams was particularly fortunate in having Jo Mielziner, one of the most talented scenic designers

in the contemporary theater, as designer for all three of his major productions. The poetry suggested by Williams' descriptions of the backgrounds for these plays was brilliantly interpreted in the delicate line, color, and proportion of Mielziner's sets.

Williams has placed himself as a descendant of the early expressionists in his attempts to evoke not only the essential characteristics and important physical qualities of their theater but their mental attitudes as well. He has utilized many frankly expressionistic devices: the portrait of the father in *The Glass Menagerie* which lights up whenever he is mentioned; the musical score provided by Paul Bowles in *A Streetcar Named Desire,* which is particularly effective in suggesting the incipient insanity of the heroine; and the anatomical chart in the doctor's office in *Summer and Smoke* which is contrasted with the statue of the angel that broods over the scenes in the park.

A Streetcar Named Desire illustrates the richness of Williams' theater. In it he contrasts the lives of two sisters, descendants of plantation aristocrats, who are forced to make adjustments with modern life. The younger, who has married a Polish salesman for a mechanical parts manufacturing company, has been successful. The older, who is revolted by the squalor of her sister's apartment, bounded by the L and N railroad tracks and haunted by the cries of street vendors and the music from the Blue Piano nightclub, is unable to make an adjustment to that life and is led off by attendants to an insane asylum.

The author gives a full-length portrait of the older sister, Blanche, and he carefully shows that her insanity is brought on by the emotional disturbances of her earlier life which might have unhinged a sounder mind. The audience is alternately disgusted by her feeble pretenses at gentility and touched by the real tragedy of her position. Her weakness is admirably contrasted with the ruthless strength of the young, beer-drinking, poker-playing, traveling salesman. The third scene rises in mounting tension to a drunken brawl in which he beats his pregnant wife. Williams does not minimize the brutality, but he shows, at the same time, the essential love and affection that has transformed the life of the younger sister. She is able to live in a present of which the sordidness is relieved by love and understanding. Blanche, whose neuroses are rooted deeply in the Old South,

struggles pitifully against her life, but she is overwhelmed by the pretensions of gentility which she carries alone and in poverty.

Although the audience is made intensely aware of the brawling, economic forces of the new South, Williams achieves his effects by a minimum of direct reference. Instead of dramatizing the conflicts of modern industrialism or mercantilism on the stage, he holds them in the immediate background as a constant threat to the happiness of his characters. In the foreground he develops the purely personal struggles of his people, particularly the women. "My chief aim in playwriting," he says, "is the creation of character. I have always had a deep feeling for the mystery in life, and essentially my plays have been efforts to explore the beauty and meaning in the confusion of living." It is largely as a result of this subtle blending of the external and internal forces that his audiences frequently feel they have seen a poetic play. Williams also uses music and lights and such symbols as the picture of the father in *The Glass Menagerie* in order to heighten the poetic effect. The symbols serve not only a dramatic value but also act as a kind of visual refrain. They help establish a pattern in his plays that is more repetitious and more fixed than that of most prose dramas. But it is in his use of suggestion rather than of direct exposition that Williams best achieves the effect of poetry in what are otherwise nonversified plays.

The American theater from the 1920's to the present day has felt the remarkable revival of drama that started with Ibsen. During this period it has even surpassed the British drama in the intensity and variety of its serious pictures of life. But one of the problems of the American theater is that, out of the hundreds of authors listed in Burns Mantle's *Best Plays* who have successfully brought at least one play to the stage, so few have realized the promise of their first works. Clifford Odets and William Saroyan, the most promising young men of the later thirties, are not writing as distinguished plays now as those they then created. Williams, however, has learned to use the rich resources of the theater more fully than any other young dramatist of the forties. There is real poetic revelation in some scenes of every play that he has produced, and he has successfully dramatized this revelation. There are many critics who feel that the dramatist's most important function is to realize a poetic insight.

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

1914 Born March 26 in Columbus, Mississippi. He was christened Thomas Lanier Williams but now uses only his nickname, Tennessee. Because his father was a traveling salesman, Tennessee spent much of his youth at the home of his maternal grandfather, an Episcopal minister. He has described these years as "pleasant—gracious, full of imaginings."

1927 Moved with his family to St. Louis, Missouri, where his father became sales manager of a shoe manufacturing company. In their crowded apartment his sister collected glass animals for decoration. "By poetic association they came to represent in my memory all the softest emotions that belong to the recollections of things past. They stood for all the tender things that relieve the austere pattern of life and make it endurable to the sensitive."

1931-33 Studied at the University of Missouri and wrote poetry. Then he worked for two years in the shoe company.

1936-37 Studied at Washington University, St. Louis. *Cairo, Shanghai, Bombay!* His first production, a farce, was played in Memphis.

1937 *Candles to the Sun,* a serious play about coal miners, was produced in St. Louis by The Mummers. *Fugitive Kind,* a story of tramps in a flophouse, was also produced by The Mummers.

1938 Received his B.A. at the University of Iowa while supporting himself by waiting on tables at the state hospital. His poetry matured under the influence of Rimbaud, Rilke, and especially Hart Crane. He began five years of restless wandering all over the country, writing and working at odd jobs.

1939 Won first prize in a Group Theatre play contest with four one-act plays entitled *American Blues.* He was awarded a scholarship at the New School for Social Research in New York. His first professional production grew out of his playwriting seminar there.

1940 *Battle of Angels* was produced by the Theatre Guild in Boston but failed. "I thought for a while I was washed up even before I'd got started," he said later. But he also won a Rockefeller Fellowship for writing and continued to drift about the country. Until 1945 his one-act plays appeared almost yearly in Margaret G. Mayorga's *The Best One-Act Plays.*

1943 Received a $1,000 grant from the National Institute of Arts and Letters. He went to Hollywood under contract to write, but his first script was not filmed. Then his opinion of child actors, to whom he was assigned, led to his suspension, and he drew his pay for the rest of his contract while swimming at the Pacific beaches.

1944 *The Glass Menagerie* won the Drama Critics' Circle award,[1] the Sidney Howard Memorial award, and the fourth annual award of the Catholic monthly *The Sign.* It was the only show of the season in which the opening-night audience

[1] All dates for Williams' plays are for the New York production unless otherwise noted.

applauded the author onto the stage. It had a run of 561 performances. Williams explained that he tried to write a static drama, "a play whose interest does not depend on incident or situation but holds its audience through the revelation of quiet and ordinary truths." And he warned that this play was the last one in which he would say pleasant things about people. "The future things will be harsher." "The Summer Belvedere," a group of poems, was published in *Five Young American Poets.*

1945 *You Touched Me,* a romantic play written in collaboration with Donald Windham, is based on a short story of the same name by D. H. Lawrence, whose importance lies, Williams says, "in his affirmation of the fullness of life. In an age of very negative and cynical attitudes, he was one of the few who felt the great richness and glory of being alive." It ran for 109 performances in New York. *Stairs to the Roof* had a one-night trial run at the Pasadena Playbox theater. *27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other Plays,* a collection of eleven one-act plays, was published.

1947 *A Streetcar Named Desire* won a Pulitzer prize and the Drama Critics' Circle award. "The one dominant theme in most of my writings, the most magnificent thing in all human nature, is valor —and endurance." The play had 625 performances in New York up to June 1, 1949, and continued to run beyond this date.

1948 *Summer and Smoke* is on the theme of flesh vs. spirit. The New York production of this play ran for 100 performances but was less well received by the critics than the preceding plays. The poetic quality again prevails though it is in prose. *One Arm, and Other Stories,* was published. *American Blues,* consisting now of five short plays, was published.

The Glass Menagerie[1]

A PLAY

by TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

Nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands.
E. E. CUMMINGS

[1] Copyright, 1945, by Tennessee Williams and Edwina D. Williams, reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

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 theater which must take the place of the exhausted theater of realistic conventions if the theater 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.

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.*

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. 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, 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.

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 animals' 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 repect. 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 hap-

pened, 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 washroom! 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 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 gave us nervous indigestion! [*Laughs wearily.*] What is there left but dependency all our lives? I know so well what be-

comes 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 mousetrap 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 disadvantage 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 cuplike 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' hangouts, 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 cathouses 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 nightdress, observing* TOM'S *empty bed in the front room.*

TOM *fishes in his pockets for door key, removing a motely 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 the canary cage and you get a bowl of goldfish. You wave it over the goldfish 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 expression 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 THE 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: "ANNUNICATION." *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 ashpits 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, caught in the folds of Chamberlain's umbrella—

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?

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 suggest-

ing 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 pigsty! 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 repapered. . . . 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 cowlick 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 superciliious 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.

TOM 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 washroom 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.

LAURA *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.*

JIM 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 is on his bad behavior.

TOM [*Disinterest.*] Yeah? [*Lights cigarette and crosses back to fire-escape door.*]

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 hand 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. 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 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 non-existent! 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!

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!

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 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 deliber-*

ately 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 dancelike, 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, 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 goodbye. . . . *She blows the candles out.*

The scene dissolves.