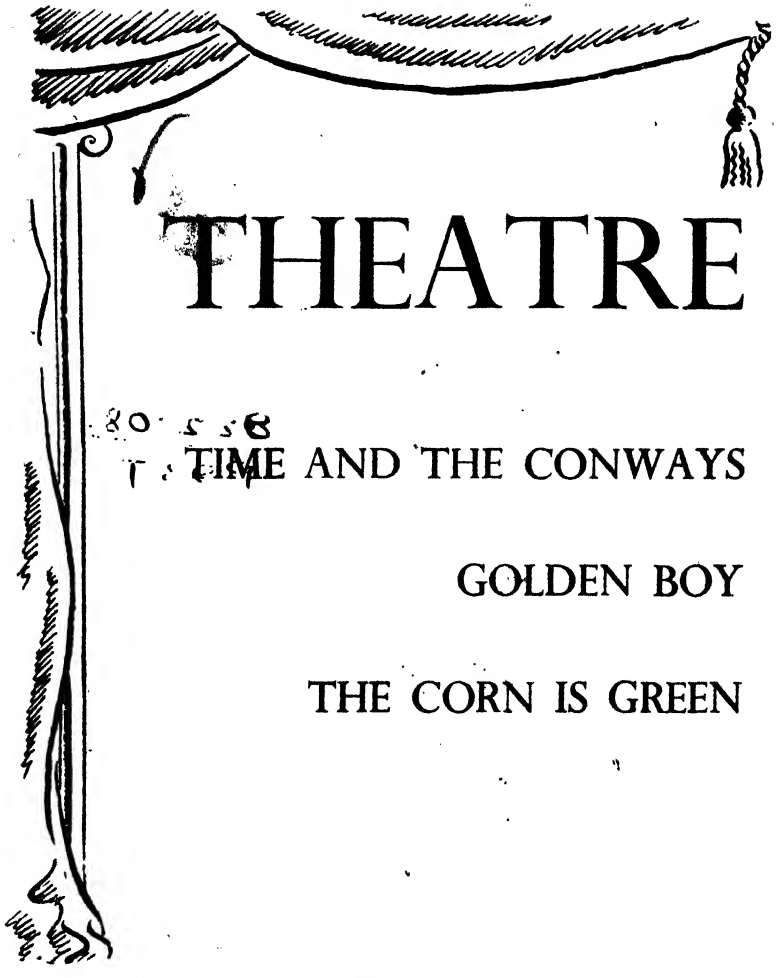
THEATRE, OMNIBUS

Time And The Conways

Golden Boy

The Corn Is Green



THEATRE

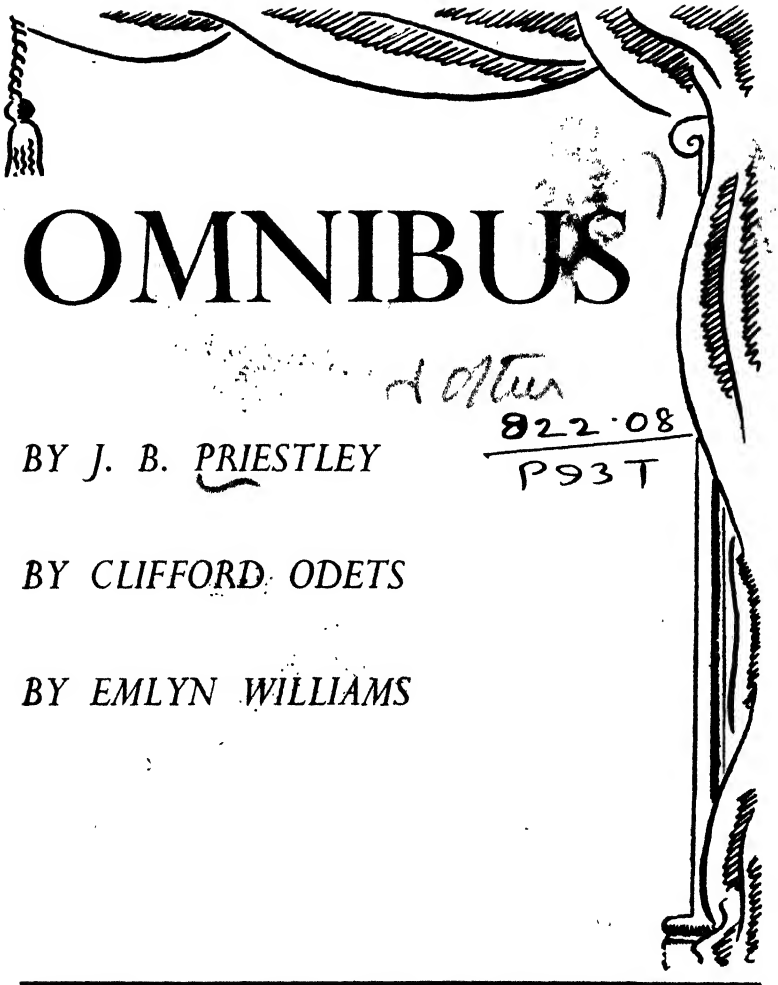
TIME AND THE CONWAYS

GOLDEN BOY

THE CORN IS GREEN

LONDON

READERS UNION LIMITED



OMNIBUS

BY J. B. PRIESTLEY

BY CLIFFORD ODETS

BY EMLYN WILLIAMS

1941

LONDON AND LETCHWORTH

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TIME AND THE CONWAYS

J. B. PRIESTLEY

First published 1937 by
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For

IRENE AND IVOR BROWN WITH AFFECTION

THE PEOPLE

CONWAYS	MRS CONWAY
	ALAN
	MADGE
	ROBIN
	HAZEL
	KAY
	CAROL
OTHERS	JOAN HELFORD
	ERNEST BEEVERS
	GERALD THORNTON

ACT I

That night. Kay's twenty-first birthday.

ACT II

Another night. And another birthday.

ACT III

That night again. Her twenty-first birthday.

Act III is continuous with Act I.

The scene throughout is a sitting-room in Mrs Conway's house, a detached villa in a prosperous suburb of a manufacturing town, Newlingham. Acts I and III take place on an autumn night in 1919. Act II on an autumn night at the present time.

Time and the Conways was first produced in London on 26th August 1937, at the Duchess Theatre, with the following cast:

HAZEL	ROSEMARY SCOTT
CAROL	EILEEN ERSKINE
ALAN	RAYMOND HUNTLEY
MADGE	MOLLY RANKIN
KAY	JEAN FORBES-ROBERTSON
MRS CONWAY	BARBARA EVEREST
JOAN HELFORD	HELEN HORSEY
GERALD THORNTON	WILFRED BABBAGE
ERNEST BEEVERS	MERVYN JOHNS
ROBIN	ALEXANDER ARCHDALE

The play produced by IRENE HENTSCHEL

ACT I

There is a party at the Conways', this autumn evening of 1919, *but we cannot see it, only hear it. All we can see at first is the light from the hall coming through the curtained archway on the right of the room, and a little red firelight on the other side. But we can hear young voices chattering and laughing and singing, the sharp little explosion of a cracker or two, and a piano playing popular music of that period. After a moment or two, a number of voices begin to sing the tune we hear on the piano. It is all very jolly indeed.*

Then we hear a girl's voice (it is Hazel Conway's) calling, loud and clear: 'Mother, where shall we put them?' The voice that replies, further off, can only be Mrs Conway's, and she says: 'In the back room. Then we 'll act out here.' To this, Hazel, who is obviously very excited, screams: 'Yes, marvellous!' and then calls to somebody still further away, probably upstairs: 'Carol—in the back room.'

And now Hazel dashes in, switching on the light. We see at once that she is a tall, golden young creature, dressed in her very best for this party. She is carrying an armful of old clothes, hats, and odds and ends, all the things that happy people used to dress up in for charades. The room looks very cosy, although it has no doorway, only the large curtained archway on the right. At the back is a window with a step to it, and a cushioned seat. The curtains are drawn. On the left is a fireplace or an anthracite stove, glowing red. There are several small bookcases against or in the walls, some pieces of fairly good furniture, including a round table and a small bureau, and some passable pictures. It is obviously one of those nondescript rooms, used by the family far more than the drawing-room is, and variously called the back room, the morning room, the schoolroom, the nursery, the blue, brown, or red room. This might easily have been called the red room, for in this light it seems to range from pink to plum colour, and it makes a fine cosy setting for the girls in their party dresses.

Another one has arrived, while Hazel is dumping her charade things on a round settee in the middle of the room. This is Carol, the youngest of

the Conways—perhaps sixteen—and now terrifically excited, breathless, and almost tottering beneath a load of charade stuff, including a cigar-box gloriously filled with old false whiskers and noses, spectacles, and what not. With all the reckless haste of a child she bangs down all this stuff, and starts to talk, although she has no breath left. And now—after adding that Carol is an enchanting young person—we can leave them to explain themselves.

CAROL [*gasping but triumphant*]: I 've found—the box—with all the false whiskers and things in——

HAZEL [*triumphantly*]: I knew it hadn't been thrown away.

CAROL: Nobody 'd *dare* to throw it away. [*Holds it out, with lid open.*] Look! [*Hazel makes a grab at it.*] Don't *snatch*!

HAZEL [*not angrily*]: Well, I must *look*, mustn't I, idiot? [*They both, like children, eagerly explore the contents of the box.*] Bags I this one. [*She fishes out a large drooping moustache.*] Oo—and this!

[*Fishes out very bulbous false nose.*

CAROL [*an unselfish creature*]: All right, but don't take *all* the good ones, Hazel. Kay and Madge will want some. I think Kay ought to have *first* choice. After all, it 's *her* birthday—and you know how she adores charades. Mother won't want any of these because she 'd rather look grand, wouldn't she? Spanish or Russian or something. What are you doing?

[*Hazel has turned aside to fasten on the nose and moustache, and now has managed it, though they are not very secure. She now turns round.*

HAZEL [*in deep voice*]: Good morning, good morning.

CAROL [*with a scream of delight*]: Mr Pennyman! You know, Hazel, at the paper shop? The one who hates Lloyd George and wags his head very slowly all the time he tells you Lloyd George is no good. Do Mr Pennyman, Hazel. Go on.

HAZEL [*in her ordinary voice, incongruous*]: I couldn't, Carol. I 've only seen him about twice. I never go to the paper shop.

[*Alan looks in, grinning when he sees Hazel. He is a shy, quiet young man, in his earlier twenties, who can have a slight stammer. He is dressed, rather carelessly, in ordinary clothes. Carol turns and sees him.*

CAROL: Alan, come in, and don't let the others see. [*As he does.*] Isn't she *exactly* like Mr Pennyman at the paper shop, the one who hates Lloyd George?

ALAN [*grinning shyly*]: She is—a bit.

HAZEL [*in a fantastic deep voice*]: 'I hate Lloyd George.'

ALAN: No, he doesn't talk like that, Hazel.

CAROL: Not the least little bit. He says: [*with a rather good imitation of a thick, semi-educated man's voice*] 'I 'll tell you what it is—Mish Conway — that there Lloyd George — they 're going to be shorry they ever put 'im where they did —shee?'

ALAN [*grinning*]: Yes, that 's him. Very good, Carol.

CAROL [*excitedly*]: I think I ought to be an actress. They said at school I was the best Shylock they 'd ever had.

HAZEL [*taking off the nose and moustache*]: You can have these if you like, Carol.

CAROL [*taking them*]: Are you sure you don't want them? I don't think you ought to dress up as a silly man because you 're so pretty. Perhaps I could wear these and do Mr Pennyman. Couldn't we bring him into the third syllable somehow? Instead of a general. I think we 've had enough generals.

ALAN: We have. Ask Kay to work in Mr Pennyman instead.

HAZEL: Kay ought to be here now, planning everything.

ALAN: She 's coming in. Mother told me to tell you not to make too much of a mess in here.

CAROL: You *must* have a mess with charades. It 's part of it.

HAZEL: And just wait till mother starts dressing up. She makes more mess than anybody. [*To Alan.*] I hope some of the old ones are going now. Are they?

ALAN: Yes.

HAZEL: It 's much more fun without them. And mother daren't let herself go while they 're still here. Tell Kay and Madge to come in, Alan.

ALAN: Right.

[*Goes out. The two girls begin turning the clothes over. Hazel picks out some old-fashioned women's things and holds them up or against herself.*

HAZEL: Look at these! Could you believe people *ever* wore such ridiculous things?

CAROL: I can just remember mother in that, can't you?

HAZEL: Of course I can, infant!

CAROL [*more soberly, looking at man's old-fashioned shooting or Norfolk coat*]: That was daddy's, wasn't it?

HAZEL: Yes. I believe he wore it—that very holiday.

CAROL: Perhaps we ought to put it away.

HAZEL: I don't think mother would mind—now.

CAROL: Yes she would. And I know I would. I don't want anybody to dress up and be funny in the coat father wore just before he was drowned. [*She has now folded the coat, and puts it on the window-seat. Then, as she returns.*] I wonder if it 's very horrible being drowned.

HAZEL [*impatiently*]: Oh, don't start that all over again, Carol. Don't you remember how you used to go on asking that—until mother was furious?

CAROL: Yes—but I was only a kid then.

HAZEL: Well, now that you think you aren't a kid any longer, just stop it.

CAROL: It was the coat that made me remember. You see, Hazel, to be talking and laughing and all jolly, just the same as usual—and then, only half an hour afterwards—to be drowned—it 's so horrible. It seemed awfully quick to us—but perhaps to him, there in the water, it may have seemed to take ages——

HAZEL: Oh, stop it, Carol. Just when we 're having some fun. Why do you?

CAROL: I don't know. But don't you often feel like that? Just when everything is very jolly and exciting, I suddenly think of something awfully serious, sometimes horrible—like dad drowning—or that little mad boy I once saw with the *huge head*—or that old man who walks in the park with that great lump growing out of his face——

HAZEL [*stopping her ears*]: No, I 'm not listening. I 'm not listening.

CAROL: They pop up right in the middle of the jolly stuff, you know, Hazel. It happens to Kay, too. So it must be in the family—a bit.

Enter Madge. She is a year or two older than Hazel, not so pretty, and a far more serious and responsible person. She has been to Girton, and already done a little teaching, and you feel all this in her brisk, decided, self-confident manner. She is, too, an earnest enthusiast.

MADGE: You found them? Good. [*Looks over the things.*] I didn't think we'd have so many old things left. Mother ought to have given them away.

HAZEL: I 'm glad she didn't. Besides, who 'd have had them?

MADGE: Lots of people would have been glad of them. You never realize, Hazel, how wretchedly poor most people are. It just doesn't occur to you, does it?

HAZEL [*not crossly*]: Don't be schoolmistressy, Madge.

CAROL [*who is trying things on, turning to point at Madge impishly*]: Has Gerald Thornton arrived?

MADGE: As a matter of fact, he has—a few minutes ago.

CAROL [*triumphantly*]: I knew it. I could see it in your eye, Madge.

MADGE: Don't be absurd. He 's brought another man with him, a new client of his, who 's desperately anxious to know this family.

HAZEL: So he ought to be. Nice?

MADGE: Oh—a funny little man.

CAROL [*dancing about*]: That 's just what we want—a funny little man. Perfect for charades.

MADGE: No, not that kind. In fact, he probably hasn't any sense of humour. Very shy, so far, and terrified of mother. Very much the little business man, I should think.

CAROL: Is he a profiteer—like the ones in *Punch*?

MADGE: He looks as if he might be, some day. His name 's Ernest Beevers.

HAZEL [*giggling*]: What a silly name! I 'm sorry for his wife, if he has one.

MADGE: I gather he hasn't. Look here, we ought to be starting. [*Enter Kay, whose twenty-first birthday party this is. An intelligent, sensitive girl, who need not be as pretty as Hazel. She has a sheet of paper.*] Kay, we ought to be starting.

KAY: I know. The others are coming. [*Begins rooting among the things.*] Some good costumes here, laddies. Oo—look! [*She has fished out some absurd old-fashioned woman's cape, cloak, or coat, and*

hat, and throws them on ridiculously, then stands apart and strikes absurd melodramatic attitude and speaks in false stilted tone.] One moment, Lord What's-your-name. If I am discovered here, who will believe that my purpose in coming here to-night—visiting your —er—rooms—er unaccompanied—was solely to obtain the—er papers—that will enable me to clear—er—my husband's name, the name of a man who—er—has asked nothing better than the —er privilege of serving his country—and ours too, Lord Thingumtibob—one who—that is—to whom—— [*In ordinary tone.*] No, I 'm getting all tied up. You know, we ought to have had a scene like that, all grand and dramatic and full of *papers*.

MADGE: Well, what *are* we to have?

HAZEL [*coolly*]: I 've forgotten the word.

CAROL [*indignantly*]: Hazel, you 're the *limit*! And we spent hours working it out!

HAZEL: I didn't. Only you and Kay, just because you fancy yourselves as budding authoresses and actresses.

KAY [*severely*]: The word—idiot!—is *Pussyfoot*. Puss. See. Foot. Then the whole word.

MADGE: I think four scenes are too many. And they 'll easily guess it.

KAY: That doesn 't matter. It makes them happy if they guess it.

CAROL [*rather solemnly*]: The great thing is—to *dress up*.

Enter Mrs Conway. She is a charming woman in her middle forties, very nicely dressed, with an easy, vivacious manner.

MRS C.: Now I 'm ready—if you are. What a mess you 're making. I knew you would. Let me see. [*Dives into the clothes, and scatters them far more wildly than the others have done. She finally fishes out a Spanish shawl and mantilla.*] Ah—here they are. Now I shall be a Spanish beauty. I know a song for it, too.

[*Begins putting the Spanish things on.*

HAZEL [*to Kay*]: What did I tell you?

MRS C. [*who is specially fond of Hazel*]: What did you tell her, darling?

HAZEL: I told Kay whatever she arranged, you 'd insist on doing your Spanish turn.

MRS C.: Well, why not?

KAY: It doesn't come into the scenes I 'd thought of, that 's all.

MRS C. [*busy with her costume*]: Oh—you can easily arrange that, dear—you 're so clever. I 've just been telling Dr Halliday and his niece how clever you are. They seemed surprised, I can't imagine why.

HAZEL: It 's the first time I 've seen Monica Halliday out of her land girl costume. I 'm surprised she didn't turn up to-night in her trousers and leggings.

KAY: She looks quite queer out of them, doesn't she? Rather like a female impersonator.

MADGE: Oh, come on, Kay. What do we do?

KAY: The first scene, *Puss*, is an old lady who 's lost her cat. She 's really a kind of witch.

CAROL [*happily*]: I 'm to be the old lady.

[*Carol begins finding suitable clothes—an old shawl, etc.—and some white hair—for the old lady. And during following dialogue, converts herself into a very creditable imitation.*

KAY: Mother, you and Hazel are her two daughters who are visiting her——

HAZEL: I know my bit. I keep saying: 'I always hated that terrible cat of yours, mother.' What can I wear? [*Pokes about.*

MRS C. [*now Spanish*]: Well, that 's all right, dear. I 'll be the Spanish daughter, you see.

KAY [*resignedly*]: She didn't have a Spanish daughter, but I suppose it doesn't matter.

MRS C.: Not in the least. Nobody cares. And then I think I 'd better not appear in the others, because I suppose you'll be wanting me to sing afterwards.

KAY: Of course. But I 'd put you down for two more. Madge and Joan Helford will have to do those.

MRS C.: What a pity Robin isn't here. You know, Madge, he wrote and said he might be demobbed any day now, and it seems such a shame just to miss Kay's party. Robin loves parties. He 's like me. Your father never cared for them much. Suddenly, right in the middle, just when everything was getting going, he 'd want to be quiet—and take me into a corner and ask me

how much longer people were staying—just when they were beginning to enjoy themselves. I never could understand that.

KAY: I can. I 've often felt like that.

MRS C.: But why, dear, why? It isn't sensible. If you 're having a party, you 're having a party.

KAY [*earnestly*]: Yes, it isn't that. And it isn't that you suddenly dislike the people. But you feel—at least I do, and I suppose that 's what father felt too—you feel, quite suddenly, that it isn't real enough—and you want something to be *real*. Do you see, mother?

MRS C.: No I don't, my dear. It sounds a little morbid to me. But your father could be quite morbid sometimes—you mightn't think so, but he could—and I suppose you take after him.

KAY [*very gravely*]: Do you think that sometimes, in a mysterious sort of way, he *knew*?

MRS C. [*not too attentive to this*]: Knew *what*, dear? Look at Hazel, doesn't she look rather sweet? I can remember where I first wore those things. Absurd! Knew *what*?

KAY: Knew what was going to happen to him. You know, Alan said that some of the men he knew who were killed in the trenches seemed to know sometimes that they were going to be killed, as if a kind of shadow fell over them. Just as if—now and then—we could see round the corner—into the future.

MRS C. [*easily*]: You have the most extraordinary ideas. You must try and put some of them into your book. Are you happy, darling?

KAY: Yes, mother. Very happy.

MRS C.: That 's all right then. I want you to have a lovely birthday. I feel we all can be happy again, now that the horrible war 's all over and people are sensible again, and Robin and Alan are quite safe. I forgot to ask—did Robin send you anything, Kay?

KAY: No. I didn't expect him to.

MRS C.: Oh—but that isn't like Robin, you know, Kay. He 's a most generous boy, much too generous really. Now that may mean he thinks he 's coming home very soon.

[*Enter Alan with Joan Helford, who is Hazel's friend and the same age, pretty and rather foolish.*

KAY: Alan, tell them we 're beginning—and it 's three syllables.

[*Alan goes.*

JOAN: I think you all look marvellous. I 'm rotten at this, you know, Kay. Don't say I didn't warn you.

KAY: Now then, Carol, you start. And remember, only say 'Puss' once. Don't you two say it—only Carol. [*Alan returns. Carol goes out—and there can be heard the sound of distant laughing and clapping.*] Good old Carol! Now then—you two. [*Almost pushes them off.*] Now the next syllable is *S. Y.* So I thought it wouldn't be cheating too badly if we called that 'sy.' Y' know, Cockney—'I sy, Bert.' So this is an East End scene. Madge, you 're the old mother.

MADGE [*who has started putting on very droll shabby clothes*]: Yes, I remembered.

ALAN: What am I? I forget.

KAY: You 're Bert. Just put something silly on. Is there anything here you can wear, Joan?

[*During following dialogue, they all dress up.*

JOAN: I was in London last week, staying with my uncle, and we went to the theatre *three times.* We saw *Tilly of Bloomsbury* and *Cinderella Man* and *Kissing Time.* I liked *Cinderella Man* best—Owen Nares, y' know. I thought Robin was coming home soon.

KAY: He is.

JOAN: He 's an officer, isn't he? You weren't an officer, were you, Alan?

ALAN: No; I was a lance-corporal. One stripe, y' know. Nothing at all.

JOAN: Didn't you want to be anything better than that?

ALAN: No.

KAY: Alan has no ambition at all. Have you, my pet?

ALAN [*simply*]: Not much.

JOAN: If I were a man, I 'd want to be very important. What are you doing now, Alan? Somebody said you were at the Town Hall.

ALAN: I am. In the Rate Office. Just a clerk, y' know.

JOAN: Isn't it dull?

ALAN: Yes.

KAY: Alan never minds being dull. I believe he has tremendous long adventures inside his head that nobody knows anything about.

JOAN: Hazel says you 've started to write another novel, Kay. Have you?

KAY [*rather curtly*]: Yes.

JOAN: I don't know how you can—I mean, I think I 'd be all right once I 'd started properly—but I can't see how you start. What did you do with the last one?

KAY: Burnt it.

JOAN: Why?

KAY: It was putrid.

JOAN: But wasn't that an awful waste of time?

KAY: Yes, I suppose so.

ALAN: Still, look at the time you and I waste, Joan.

JOAN: Oh—no—I 'm always doing *something*. Even though I haven't to go to the canteen any more, I 'm always busy. [*Madge, who has withdrawn herself a little, now laughs.*] Why do you laugh, Madge?

MADGE: Can't a girl laugh?

JOAN [*humbly*]: You always did laugh at me, Madge. I suppose because I 'm not clever, like you.

[*Hazel returns, letting in noise—laughing and clapping—from outside.*

HAZEL: Well, you can imagine what happened. Mother let herself go, and of course it became all Spanish. I don't believe they 'll ever remember hearing 'puss' mentioned. What are you supposed to be, Joan?

JOAN [*hopefully*]: A sort of coster girl.

HAZEL: You look a sort of general mess. Oh—[*to Kay*] Carol wants to do Mr Pennyman at the paper shop instead of a general for the third syllable.

KAY: How can she? If it 's soldiers drilling, you can't have Mr Pennyman. Unless we make him another soldier—and get Gerald Thornton or somebody to be a general.

[*Carol returns, very hot and flushed, and begins taking off her old woman's disguise.*

CAROL: Mother 's still on. Golly!—it 's baking being an old witch.

KAY: Do you insist on being Mr Pennyman in the third syllable?

CAROL [*brightening up*]: Oo—I 'd forgotten that. Yes, please let me do Mr Pennyman, Kay—my lamb, my love, my precious——

KAY: All right. But he 'll have to be a soldier. Just joined up, you see.

[*Enter Mrs C. very grand, flushed, triumphant. She is carrying a glass of claret cup.*

MRS C.: Well—really—that was *very* silly—but they seemed to enjoy it, and that 's the great thing. I thought you were very good, Carol. [*To Kay.*] Carol was sweet, Kay. Now don't ask me to do any more of this, because really I mustn't, especially if you want me to sing afterwards. So leave me out, Kay.

[*Begins to sip cup.*

KAY: All right. Now come on.

[*Begins shepherding her players, Madge, Alan, Joan.*

JOAN: Honestly, Kay, I 'll be *awful.*

KAY: It doesn't matter. You 've nothing to do. Now then—Madge.

MADGE [*loudly, in laborious imitation of Cockney mother*]: Nah then, Bert. End yew, Dy-sy. Cem along or we 'll be lite.

[*Leads the way off, followed by other three.*

HAZEL: How on earth did you get that claret cup, mother?

MRS C. [*complacently*]: Got Gerald Thornton to hand it to me—and it rounded off my little scene nicely. I don't want any more. Would you like it?

[*Hazel takes it, and sips while removing things. They are all removing things.*

CAROL: Mother, you weren't going to be an *actress*, were you—just a singer?

MRS C.: I don't know what you mean by *just* a singer. I was a singer certainly. But I did some acting too. When the Newlingham Amateur Operatic first did *Merrie England*, I played Bess. And I 'd had all you children then. *You* were only about two, Carol.

HAZEL: Mother, Joan *did* stay in London last week, and she went to three theatres.

MRS C.: She has relatives there, and we haven't. That makes a great difference.

HAZEL: Aren't we *ever* going?

MRS C.: Yes, of course. Perhaps Robin will take us—I mean, just you and me—when he comes back.

CAROL [*solemnly*]: It says in the paper this morning that We Must All Get On With Our Jobs. This Mere Rush For Amusement has gone on long enough now. There 's Work Waiting To Be Done.

HAZEL [*indignantly*]: A fat lot of rushing for amusement we 've done, haven't we? I think that 's frightfully unfair and idiotic. Just when we *might* have some fun, after washing up in canteens and hospitals and queueing for foul food, with *nobody* about at all, they go and say we 've had enough amusement and must get on with our jobs. What jobs?

CAROL: Rebuilding a shattered world. It said that too.

MRS C. [*half lightly, half not, to Hazel*]: Your job will be to find a very nice young man and marry him. And *that* oughtn't to be difficult—for you.

CAROL [*now getting into trousers to play Mr Pennyman*]: Hurry up, Hazel, and then I can be a bridesmaid. I believe you 're my *only* chance. Kay says she won't get married for *ages*, if ever, because her Writing—Her Work—must come first.

MRS C.: That 's nonsense, my dear. When the proper young man comes along, she 'll forget about her writing.

CAROL: I don't believe she will, mother. And anyhow, she won't have bridesmaids. And if Madge ever marries, I know it will be to some kind of Socialist in a tweed suit, who 'll insist on being married in a Register Office——

HAZEL: I 'm not so sure about that. I 've had my eye on Madge lately.

CAROL [*now as Mr Pennyman*]: And I 've 'ad my eye on Lloyd George. An' what for, Mish Conway? Bee-corsh yew can't trusht that little Welshman. Yew watch 'im, that 'sh all I shay——

MRS C.: That 's *very* good, dear. You 're rather like Mr Worsnop —do you remember him—the cashier at the works? Every New Year's Eve, your father used to bring Mr Worsnop here, after

they 'd done all the books at the office, and used to give him some port. And when I went in, Mr Worsnop always stood and held his glass like this [*She holds glass close to herself in a rather cringing attitude.*] and said: 'My respects, Mrs Conway, my deepest respects.' And I always wanted to laugh. He 's retired now, and gone to live in south Devon.

[*After slight pause, Madge, still in absurd old costerwoman disguise, enters with Gerald Thornton. He is in his early thirties, a solicitor, and son of a solicitor, and is fairly tall and good-looking, and carefully dressed. He has a pleasant, man-of-the-world air, very consciously cultivated. Madge is arguing hotly, with all the fiery slapdash of enthusiastic youth.*

MADGE: But what the miners want and ask for is simply nationalization. They say, if coal is as important as you say it is, then the mines shouldn't be in the hands of private owners any longer. Nationalize them, they say. That 's the fairest thing.

GERALD: All right. But supposing we don't want them nationalized. What then? Some of us have seen enough of Government mismanagement already.

MRS C.: Quite so, Gerald. Everybody knows how ridiculous they were. Sending bags of sand to Egypt!

MADGE [*hotly*]: I don't believe half those stories. Besides they had to improvise everything in a hurry. And anyhow it wasn't a *Socialist* Government.

GERALD [*mildly*]: But you don't know they 'd be any better. They might be worse—less experience.

MADGE [*same tone*]: Oh—I know that *experience*! We 're always having that flung in our faces. When all that 's wanted is a little intelligence—and enthusiasm—and—and decency.

GERALD [*to Mrs C. rather as one adult to another at children's party*]: I 've been conscripted for the next scene. To be a general or something.

HAZEL: We haven't fancy dress for you.

GERALD: Good!

MRS C.: I really mustn't neglect them any longer, must I? And most of them will be going soon. Then we can have a nice cosy little party of our own. [*Goes out.*

CAROL [*to Gerald*]: Well, you must look different somehow, you know. You could turn your coat inside out.

GERALD: I don't think that would be very effective.

CAROL [*impatiently*]: Wear an overcoat, then. Oh—and—— [*Fishes out a large false moustache and gives it to him.*] Put this on. That 's a *very* good one.

[*Gerald takes and looks at it dubiously. Joan rushes in, more animated now her ordeal is over.*

JOAN [*excitedly, girlish*]: Hazel, d' you know who 's here? You 'll never guess!

HAZEL: Who?

JOAN [*ignoring this*]: That *awful* little man who always stares at you —the one who followed us once all round the park——

HAZEL: He 's *not*.

JOAN: He is, I tell you. I distinctly saw him, standing at the side, near the door.

GERALD: This sounds like my friend Beevers.

HAZEL: Do you mean to say the man you brought is *that* awful little man? Well, you 're the absolute limit, Gerald Thornton! He 's a *dreadful* little creature. Every time I go out, he 's somewhere about, staring and staring at me. And now you bring him here!

GERALD [*not worried by this outburst*]: Oh—he 's not so bad. He insisted on my bringing him, and your mother said it was all right. You shouldn't be so devastating, Hazel.

JOAN [*giggly*]: I told you he must be mad about you, Hazel.

HAZEL [*the haughty beauty now*]: I swear I won't speak to him. He just would butt in like this!

CAROL: Why shouldn't he, poor little manny?

HAZEL: Shut up, Carol, you don't know anything about him.

[*Enter Kay and Alan.*

KAY: That wasn't much good. The costers were a wash-out. Oh—that 's all right, Carol. Now you 're a general, Gerald, and the others are recruits. Hurry up, Alan, and put something different on. Gerald, you 're inspecting them—you know, make up something silly—and then say to one of them: 'Look at your *foot*, my man.' Anyhow, bring in 'foot.'

GERALD: Have I only two recruits, Carol and Alan?

KAY: No, mother 's sending in another man. They aren't guessing anything yet, but that 's simply because it 's all such a muddle. I don't think I like charades as much as I used to do. Dad was marvellous at them. [*To Gerald.*] He always did very fat men. You 'd better be a fat general. And you can be fat, too, Alan.

[*Piano can be heard playing softly off. As the men are stuffing cushions under coats, and Joan and Kay and Madge are finishing removing their last things, Ernest Beevers enters slowly and shyly. He is a little man, about thirty, still socially shy and awkward, chiefly because his social background is rather lower in the scale than that of the Conways, but there is a suggestion of growing force and self-confidence in him. He is obviously attracted towards the whole family, but completely fascinated by Hazel.*

ERNEST [*shyly, awkwardly*]: Oh—er—Mrs Conway told me to come in here.

KAY: Yes, of course. You 've to be one of the recruits in this next bit.

ERNEST: I 'm — not much good — at this sort of thing — you know——

KAY: It doesn't matter. Just be silly.

GERALD: Oh—Beevers—sorry! I 'd better introduce you. [*Carries off slightly awkward situation with determined light touch.*] This—is Mr Ernest Beevers, a rather recent arrival in our—er—progressive city. Now all these are Conways, except this young lady—Miss Joan Helford——

ERNEST [*seriously*]: How d' you do?

JOAN [*faintly giggly*]: How d' you do?

GERALD: This is Kay, who decided to be twenty-one to-day so that we could have this party——

ERNEST: Many happy returns.

KAY [*nicely*]: Thank you.

GERALD: She 's the literary genius of this distinguished family. Over there is Madge, who 's been to Girton and will try to convert you to Socialism.

ERNEST: I 'm afraid she won't succeed.

GERALD: This strange-looking middle-aged person is young Carol——

CAROL [*nicely*]: Hallo!

ERNEST [*grateful for this, smiling*]: Hallo!

GERALD: Alan I think you 've met already. [*Teasing.*] Oh—and let me see—yes, this is Hazel. She creates such havoc that when the Leicesters were stationed here the colonel wrote and asked her to stay indoors when they had route marches.

ERNEST [*solemnly*]: How d' you do?

HAZEL [*crossly*]: Don't be idiotic, Gerald. [*Very quickly to Ernest.*] How d'you do? [*Faint giggle from Joan.*

ALAN [*to Ernest*]: You 'd better do something funny to yourself. Is there anything here you 'd like?

[*Ernest pokes about in the things, while Hazel looks disdainfully on and Joan wants to giggle. Ernest is very clumsy now.*

KAY: Carol and Alan, you start. You 're recruits. Carol can do bits of Mr Pennyman to fill in.

[*Carol, followed by Alan, goes out. Gerald is waiting for Beevers. Kay goes out.*

JOAN: What did your mother say, Hazel, about removing?

HAZEL: Oh, of course, she won't think of it. And she 's been offered five thousand pounds—*five thousand*—for this house!

ERNEST [*the business man*]: Tell her to take it. I 'll bet in ten years she couldn't get two thousand. It 's only this temporary shortage that 's forced prices of property up. You 'll see 'em come down with a bang yet.

HAZEL [*snubbing him*]: But she adores being here, of course, and so it 's hopeless.

[*Ernest realizes he has been snubbed. He has now made a few ridiculous changes in his clothes. He looks hard at Hazel, who will not return his look. Joan still giggly.*

ERNEST [*with dignity which ill assorts with his appearance*]: If I spoke out of my turn, I 'm sorry.

KAY [*looking in*]: Hurry up, Mr Beevers.

ERNEST [*hurrying forward*]: I'm no good at this, you know, Miss Conway, and it's no use pretending I am——

[*But she rushes him and Gerald off, and follows them. Joan bursts into a peal of laughter.*

HAZEL [*indignantly*]: I don't think it 's funny, Joan. I 'm *furious.*

JOAN [*between gurgles and gasps*]: He—looked—so—silly.

[*Hazel begins laughing, too, and they laugh together, rocking round.*

HAZEL [*hardly distinguishable*]: Did you hear him? 'If I spoke out of my turn, I 'm sorry.'

JOAN [*hardly distinguishable*]: We ought to have said: 'Pleased to meet you,' and then he 'd have said, 'Granted.'

[*Kay comes back and looks rather severely at these two.*

KAY [*severely*]: I think you were rather beastly to that little man.

[*They still laugh, and as she looks at them Kay begins to laugh too. They all laugh.*

HAZEL [*coming to*]: Oh—dear! Oh—dear! But that 's the little man I told you about, Kay, who always stared, and once followed us round.

KAY: Well, now he 'll be able to raise his little hat.

HAZEL [*vehemently*]: And that 's all he 'll jolly well get out of this, I 'll tell you. And I think Gerald Thornton had the cheek of the devil to bring him here. Just because he 's a new client.

JOAN [*still giggly*]: You don't think you 'll marry him, then, Hazel?

HAZEL: Ugh! I 'd just as soon marry a—a ferret.

KAY [*rather loftily*]: I don't believe you two ever think or talk about anything but clothes and going to London and young men and marriage.

HAZEL [*not too rudely*]: Oh, don't you start being so grand! [*Quotes dramatically.*] *The Garden of Stars.*

KAY [*hastily*]: Now, shut up, Hazel!

HAZEL [*to Joan*]: That's what she called the last novel she started. *The Garden of Stars.* And there were so many bits of paper with the opening words on that I know them off by heart. [*Quotes dramatically. As soon as she begins Kay makes a rush at her, but she dodges, still quoting.*] 'Marion went out into the still smooth night. There was no moon but already—already—the sky was silver-dusted with stars. She passed through the rose garden, the dying scent of the roses meeting the grey moths——'

KAY [*shouting her down*]: I know it 's all wrong, but I tore it up, didn't I?

HAZEL [*mildly*]: Yes, my duck. And then you cried.

KAY [*fiercely*]: I 've just begun a real one. With some *guts* in it. You 'll see.

HAZEL: I 'll bet it 's about a girl who lives in a town just like Newlingham.

KAY [*still fierce*]: Well, why shouldn't it be? You wait, that 's all.

[*Gerald, plus false moustache, Alan and Ernest in their absurd get-up come in slowly and solemnly.*

GERALD: That 's true, Alan.

ERNEST [*seriously*]: But they can't expect people to behave differently when they 've still got their war restrictions on everything. They can't have it both ways.

GERALD: Well, there 's still a lot of profiteering.

ERNEST: You 've got to let business find its own level. The more interference the worse it is.

ALAN: The worse for everybody?

ERNEST [*decidedly*]: Yes.

ALAN [*stoutly, for him*]: I doubt it.

ERNEST [*not too unpleasantly*]: You 're working in the Town Hall, aren't you? Well, you can't learn much about these things there, y' know.

KAY [*with tremendous irony*]: I say! You three must have been terribly good in the charade, weren't you?

ALAN: No, we weren't very amusing.

CAROL [*who has just entered*]: Oh—they were awful. No, you weren't *too* bad, Mr Beevers, especially for a man who was doing a charade in a strange house.

ERNEST: Now I call that handsome, Miss Carol.

KAY [*briskly*]: The whole word now. *Pussyfoot.* It 's supposed to be a party in America, and we can't have anything to drink. We won't bother dressing up for this. Just some good *acting.* I 'll say the word. Joan, tell Madge, she 's in this. Just the girls, for the grand finale. [*Joan goes.*

GERALD [*now normal again*]: So we 're sacked?

KAY: Yes. No good.

GERALD. Then we can give ourselves a drink. We 've earned a drink. Any dancing afterwards?

KAY: There might be, after mother 's done her singing.

GERALD: Do you dance, Beevers?

ERNEST: No; never had time for it.

HAZEL [*significantly, in loud clear tone*]: Yes, we *must* have some dancing, Gerald.

[*Ernest looks hard at her. She gives him a wide innocent stare of complete indifference. He nods, turns, and goes. Gerald, after distributing a smile or two, follows him. Carol is busy getting out of her Mr Pennyman disguise.*

CAROL [*excitedly*]: Kay, we could have done the Prince of Wales in America for this last scene. Why didn't we think of it? You could be the Prince of Wales, and you could fall in love with Hazel, who could turn out to be Pussyfoot's daughter.

KAY [*laughing*]: Mother 'd be shocked. And so would some of the others.

CAROL: I 'd hate to be a prince of Wales, wouldn't you?

HAZEL [*with decision*]: I 'd *love* it.

CAROL: Old Mrs Ferguson—you know, the one with the queer eye—the rather frightening one—told me there was an old prophecy that when King David came to the throne of Britain everything would be *wonderful*.

[*Sound off of a loud shout, then confused voices and laughter.*

KAY: What 's that?

HAZEL [*excitedly*]: It 's Robin.

[*They all look up with eager interst. Hazel moves, but before she gets very far, Robin dashes in. He is twenty-three, and a rather dashing, good-looking young man in the uniform of an R.A.F. officer. He is in tremendous spirits. He carries a small package.*

ROBIN [*loudly*]: Hallo, kids! Hazel! [*Kisses her.*] Kay, many happies! [*Kisses her.*] Carol, my old hearty! [*Kisses her.*] Gosh! I 've had a dash to get here in time. Did half the journey on one of our lorries. And I didn't forget the occasion, Kay. What about that? [*Throws her the parcel, which she opens and finds is a silk scarf.*] All right, isn't it?

KAY [*gratefully*]: It 's lovely, Robin. Lovely, lovely!

ROBIN: That 's the stuff to give 'em. And I 've finished. Out! Demobbed at last!

HAZEL: Oo—grand! Have you seen mother?

ROBIN: Of course I have, you chump. You ought to have seen her face when I told her I was now a civilian again. Golly! we 'll have some fun now, won't we?

KAY: Lots and lots.

CAROL: Have you seen Alan?

ROBIN: Just for a second. Still the solemn old bird, isn't he?

CAROL [*very young and solemn*]: In my opinion, Alan is a very wonderful person.

ROBIN [*rattling on*]: I know. You always thought that, didn't you? Can't quite see it myself; but I 'm very fond of the old crawler. How 's the writing, Kay?

KAY: I 'm still trying—and learning.

ROBIN: That 's the stuff. We 'll show 'em. This is where the Conways really begin. How many young men, Hazel?

HAZEL [*calmly*]: Nobody to speak of.

CAROL: She 'd worked her way up to colonels, hadn't you, Hazel?

KAY [*affectionately*]: Now that it 's civilians, she 's having to change her technique—and she 's a bit uncertain yet.

ROBIN: All jealousy that, isn't it, Hazel? [*Mrs C. appears, carrying a tray laden with sandwiches, cake, etc., and some beer.*] A-ha, here we are!

[*Rushes to take the tray from her. Mrs C. is very happy now.*

MRS C. [*beaming*]: Isn't this nice? Now we 're *all* here. I knew somehow you were on your way, Robin, even though you didn't tell us—you naughty boy.

ROBIN: Couldn't, mother, honestly. Only wangled it at the last minute.

MRS C. [*to Kay*]: Finish your charade now, dear.

ROBIN: Charade! Can't I be in this? I used to be an ace at charades.

MRS C.: No, dear, they 're just finishing. We can have as many charades as we want now you 're home for good. Have something to eat and talk to me while they 're doing the last bit.

KAY [*to Hazel and Carol*]: Come on, you two. We can collect Madge out there. Remember, it 's an American party, and we can't have anything to drink, and then, after kicking up a row, you ask who 's giving the party, and then I 'll say *Pussyfoot*.

[*She is going off and the others following her as she is saying this. Mrs C. hastily puts some of the old clothes together, while Robin settles down to the tray. Mrs C. then comes and watches him eat and drink with maternal delight. Both are happy and relaxed, at ease with each other.*

MRS C.: Is there everything you want there, Robin?

ROBIN [*mouth full*]: Yes thanks, mother. Gosh, you don't know what it feels like to be out at last!

MRS C.: I do, you silly boy. What do you think I feel, to have you back at last—for good?

ROBIN: I must get some clothes.

MRS C.: Yes, some really nice ones. Though it 's a pity you can't keep on wearing that uniform. You look so smart in it. Poor Alan—he was only a corporal or something, y' know, and had the most hideous uniform, nothing seemed to fit him—Alan never looked *right* in the Army.

ROBIN: He 's got a piffling sort of job at the Town Hall, hasn't he?

MRS C.: Yes. He seems to like it, though. And perhaps he 'll find something better later on.

ROBIN [*eagerly*]: I 've got all sorts of plans, y' know, mother. We 've all been talking things over in the mess. One of our chaps knows Jimmy White—you know, *the* Jimmy White—you 've heard of him—and he thinks he can wangle me an introduction to him. My idea is something in the car and motor-bike line. I understand 'em, and I 've heard people are buying like mad. And I have my gratuity, you know.

MRS C.: Yes, dear, we 'll have to talk about all that. There 's plenty of time now, thank goodness! Don't you think all the girls are looking well?

ROBIN [*eating and drinking away*]: Yes, first-rate, especially Hazel.

MRS C.: Oh—of course Hazel 's the one everybody notices. You ought to have seen the young men. And Kay—twenty-one—I

can hardly believe it—but she 's *very* grown-up and serious now—I don't know whether she 'll make anything out of this writing of hers—but she is trying very hard—don't tease her too much, dear, she doesn't like it——

ROBIN: I haven't been teasing her.

MRS C.: No, but Hazel does sometimes—and I know what you children are. Madge has been teaching, you know, but she 's trying for a much better school.

ROBIN [*indifferently*]: Good old Madge. [*With far more interest.*] I think I ought to go up to town for my clothes, mother. You can't get anything really decent in Newlingham, and if I 'm going to start selling cars I 've got to look like somebody who knows a good suit when he sees one. Lord!—it 's grand to be back again, and not just on a filthy little leave. [*Breaks off, as he looks at her, standing quite close to him.*] Here, mother—steady!—nothing to cry about now.

MRS C. [*through her tears, smiling*]: I know. That 's why. You see, Robin—losing your father, then the war coming—taking you—I 'm not used to happiness. I 've forgotten about it. It 's upsetting! And Robin, now you are back—don't go rushing off again, *please*! Don't leave us—not for years and years. Let 's all be cosy together and happy again, shall we?

[*Joan enters, then stands awkwardly as she sees them together. Mrs C. turns and sees her. So does Robin, and his face lights up. Mrs C. sees Robin's face, then looks again at Joan. This should be played for as long as it will stand.*

JOAN [*rather nervously*]: Oh—Mrs Conway—they 've finished the charade—and some people are going—and Madge asked me to tell you they 're expecting you to sing something.

MRS C.: Why didn't she come herself?

JOAN [*rather faltering*]: She and Kay and Carol began handing people sandwiches and things as soon as they finished the charade.

ROBIN [*rising*]: Hallo, Joan!

JOAN [*coming forward, thrilled*]: Hallo, Robin! Is it—nice to be back again?

ROBIN [*smiling, rather significantly*]: Yes, of course.

MRS C. [*rather irritably*]: Really this room 's a dreadful mess. I

knew it would be. Hazel and Carol brought all these things down here. Joan, go and tell them they must take these things upstairs at once. I can't have this room looking like an old clothes place. Perhaps you 'd like to help them, dear.

JOAN: Yes—rather.

[*Smiles at Robin and goes. Mrs C. turns and looks at him. He smiles at her. She has to smile back.*

ROBIN: You 're looking very artful, mother.

MRS C.: Am I? I 'm not feeling very artful. [*Carefully just.*] Joan 's grown up to be a very nice-looking girl, hasn't she?

ROBIN [*smiling*]: Quite.

MRS C. [*same careful tone*]: And I think she 's got a pleasant easy disposition. Not very clever or go-ahead or anything like that. But a thoroughly *nice* girl.

ROBIN [*not eagerly*]: Yes, I 'll bet she is.

[*Hazel sails in, to begin packing up the things. This should be done as quickly as possible.*

HAZEL: They 're all panting for a song, mother. They don't even mind if it 's German.

MRS C.: Thank goodness, I was never so stupid as to stop singing German songs. What have Schubert and Schumann to do with Hindenburg and the Kaiser?

[*Carol comes in, followed by Joan. Hazel goes with her armful. Robin helps Joan to collect her lot. Mrs C. stands rather withdrawn from him.*

CAROL [*loudly and cheerfully as she collects her stuff*]: Everybody guessed the charade, just because it was Pussyfoot—though they hadn't guessed *any* of the syllables. All except Mr James, who thought it was *Kinema*. [*Hard 'k.'*] When they say 'Kinema' I can't believe I 've been to one. It sounds like some other kind of place. Robin, have you seen William S. Hart?

ROBIN: Yes.

CAROL [*pausing with her armful, very solemnly*]: I *love* William S. Hart. I wonder what 'S' stands for.

ROBIN: Sidney.

CAROL [*turning, in horror*]: Robin, it *doesn't*!

[*Goes out. Joan now has the remainder of the things.*

MRS C.: Come along, Robin, I may want you and Alan to move the piano for me.

ROBIN: Righto.

[*They all go out. Nearly all the things have been cleared now. Sounds of the party—vague applause and laughter—off. Then Kay enters quickly and eagerly, and finds a bit of paper and pencil in some convenient drawer or cupboard. She frowns and thinks, then makes some rapid notes, not sitting down but standing against table or bookshelf. A few chords and runs can be heard from the piano. Carol looks in, to remove the last of the charade things.*

CAROL [*with awe, very charming*]: Kay, have you suddenly been *inspired?*

KAY [*looking up, very serious*]: No, not really. But I 'm bursting with all kinds of feelings and thoughts and impressions—you know——

CAROL [*coming close to her favourite sister*]: Oh—yes—so am I. Millions and millions. I couldn't possibly *begin* to write them.

KAY [*that eager young author*]: No, but in my novel, a girl goes to a party—you see—and there are some things I 've been feeling —very subtle things—that I *know* she 'd feel—and I want my novel to be very real this time—so I had to scribble them down——

CAROL: Will you tell me them afterwards?

KAY: Yes.

CAROL: Bedroom?

KAY: Yes, if you 're not too sleepy.

CAROL: I couldn't be. [*She pauses happily, one earnest young creature staring at the other. And now we can just hear Mrs Conway in the drawing-room beginning to sing Schumann's 'Der Nussbaum.' Carol is now very solemn, a little awed.*] Kay, I think you 're *wonderful.*

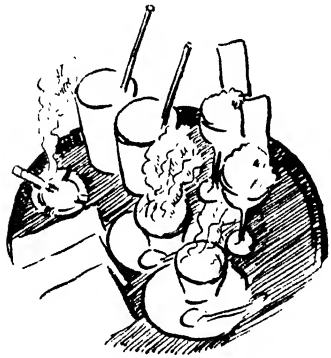
KAY [*awed herself*]: I think *life* 's wonderful.

CAROL: Both of you are.

[*Carol goes out, and now we can hear the lovely rippling Schumann better than before. Kay writes for another moment, then moved by both the music and the sudden ecstasy of creation, she puts down pencil and paper, drifts over to the switch, and turns out the lights. The room is not in darkness because light is coming in from the*

hall. Kay goes to the window and opens the curtains, so that when she sits on the window-seat, her head is silvered in moonlight. Very still, she listens to the music, and seems to stare not at *but* into *something, and as the song goes soaring away, the curtain creeps down.*

END OF ACT I



ACT II

When the curtain rises, for a moment we think nothing has happened since it came down, for there is the light coming in from the hall, and there is Kay sitting on the window-seat. But then Alan comes in and switches on the central lights, and we see that a great deal must have happened. It is the same room, but it has a different wallpaper, the furniture has been changed round, the pictures and books are not altogether the same as before. We notice a wireless set. The general effect is harder and rather brighter than it was during the party in 1919, and we guess at once that this is the present day. Kay and Alan are not quite the same, after nearly twenty years. Kay has a rather hard, efficient, well-groomed look, that of a woman of forty who has earned her own living for years. Alan, in his middle forties, is shabbier than he was before—his coat does not match the rest of his suit and really will not do—but he is still the rather shy, awkward, lovable fellow, only now there is about him a certain quiet poise, an inward certainty and serenity, missing from all the others we shall see now.

ALAN [*quietly*]: Well—Kay.

KAY [*happily*]: Alan!

[*She jumps up and kisses him. Then they look at one another, smiling a little. He rubs his hands in embarrassment, as he always did.*

ALAN: I 'm glad you could come. It was the only thing about this business that didn't make me hate the thought of it—the chance *you* might be able to come. But mother says you 're not staying the night.

KAY: I can't, Alan. I must get back to London to-night.

ALAN: Work?

KAY: Yes. I have to go to Southampton in the morning—to write a nice little piece about the newest little film star.

ALAN: Do you often have to do that?

KAY: Yes, Alan, quite often. There are an awful lot of film stars and they 're always arriving at Southampton, except when they

arrive at Plymouth—damn their eyes! And all the women readers of the *Daily Courier* like to read a bright half-column about their glamorous favourites.

ALAN [*thoughtfully*]: They look very nice—but all rather alike.

KAY [*decidedly*]: They *are* all rather alike—and so are my bright interviews with 'em. In fact, sometimes I feel we 're all just going round and round, like poor old circus ponies.

ALAN [*after a pause*]: Are you writing another novel?

KAY [*very quietly*]: No, my dear, I 'm not. [*Pauses, then gives short laugh.*] I tell myself too many people are writing novels.

ALAN: Well, it does look like that—sometimes.

KAY: Yes. But that 's not the real reason. I still feel mine wouldn't be like theirs—anyhow, not the next, even if the last was. But—as things are—I just can't . . .

ALAN [*after a pause*]: The last time you wrote, Kay—I mean to me—you sounded rather unhappy, I thought.

KAY [*with self-reproach*]: I was. I suppose that 's why I suddenly remembered you—and wrote. Not very flattering—to you—is it?

ALAN [*with cheerful modesty*]: In a way it is, y' know. Yes, Kay, I 'd take that as a compliment.

KAY [*with sudden burst of affection*]: Alan! And I loathe that coat you 're wearing. It doesn't match the rest of you, does it?

ALAN [*stammering, apologetic*]: No—well, you see—I just wear it in the house—an old coat—just as a house coat—it saves my other one—I oughtn't to have put it on to-night. Just habit, y' know. I 'll change it before the others come. . . . Why were you so unhappy then—the last time you wrote?

KAY [*in broken painful phrases*]: Something—that was always ending—really did come to an end just then. It had lasted ten years—off and on—and eating more of one's life away when it was off than when it was on. He was married. There were children. It was the usual nasty muddle. [*Breaks off.*] Alan, you don't know what day it is to-day?

ALAN [*chuckling*]: But I do, I do. And, of course, mother did, too. Look!

[*He pulls small package out of his pocket and holds it out to her.*

KAY [*after taking it and kissing him*]: Alan, you 're an angel! I never

thought I 'd have another single birthday present. And you know how old I am now? Forty. *Forty!*

ALAN [*smiling*]: I 'm forty-four. And it 's all right, y' know. You 'll like it. [*Front door bell rings.*] Look at your present. I hope it 's all right.

[*Goes to front door. Kay hastily unwraps her parcel and takes out a hideous cheap little handbag. She looks at it and does not know whether to laugh or cry over the thing. Meanwhile Alan has brought in Joan, now Joan Conway, for she married Robin. Time has not been very kind to her. She is now a rather sloppy, querulous woman of forty-one. Her voice has a very irritating quality.*

JOAN: Hallo, Kay. I didn't think you 'd manage to be here—you hardly ever do come to Newlingham now, do you? And I must say I don't blame you. [*Breaks off because she notices the awful handbag.*] Oh—what a——

KAY [*hastily*]: Nice, isn't it? Alan has just given it to me. How are the children?

JOAN: Richard 's very well, but the doctor says Ann's tonsils ought to come out—though he doesn't tell me who 's going to pay for the operation, never thinks about that. They did enjoy those things you sent at Christmas, Kay—I don't know what they 'd have done without them, though I did my best.

KAY: I 'm sure you did, Joan.

JOAN: Alan was very good to them, too, weren't you, Alan? Though, of course, it 's not like their having a father. [*Breaks off and looks miserably at Kay.*] You know I haven't seen Robin for months. Some people say I ought to divorce him—but—I don't know—— [*With sudden misery.*] Honestly, isn't it awful? Oh—Kay. [*Suddenly giggles.*] Doesn't that sound silly—*Oh—Kay?*

KAY [*wearily*]: No, I 've stopped noticing it.

JOAN: Richard 's always saying Okay—he 's heard it at the pictures—and, of course, Ann copies him. [*Breaks off, looks anxiously at them both.*] Do you think it 's all right, my coming here to-night? It was Hazel who told me you were having a sort of family meeting, and she thought I ought to be here, and I think so too. But Granny Conway didn't ask me——

KAY [*with a sudden laugh*]: Joan, you don't call mother Granny Conway?

JOAN: Well, I got into the habit, y' know, with the children.

KAY: She must loathe it.

ALAN [*apologetically to Joan*]: I think she does, you know.

JOAN: I must try and remember. Is she upstairs?

ALAN: Yes. Madge is here, too.

JOAN [*nerving herself*]: I think—I 'll go up and ask her if it 's all right—my staying—otherwise I 'd feel such a fool.

KAY: Yes, do. And tell her we think you ought to be here—if you *want* to be——

JOAN: Well, it isn't that—but—you see—if it 's about money—I must know something, mustn't I? After all, I 'm Robin's wife—and Richard and Ann are his children——

ALAN [*kindly*]: Yes, Joan, you tell mother that, if she objects. But she won't though.

[*Joan looks at them a moment doubtfully, then goes. They watch her go, then look at one another.*

KAY [*lowering her voice a little*]: I suppose Robin 's pretty hopeless—but really, Joan 's such a fool——

ALAN: Yes; but the way Robin 's treated her has made her feel more of a fool than she really is. It 's taken away all her confidence in herself, you see, Kay. Otherwise she mightn't have been so bad.

KAY: You used to like Joan, didn't you?

ALAN [*looking at her, then slowly smiling*]: You remember when she and Robin told us they were engaged? I was in love with her then. It was the only time I ever fell in love with anybody. And I remember—quite suddenly hating Robin—yes, really hating him. None of this loving and hating lasted, of course—it was just silly stuff. But I remember it quite well.

KAY: Suppose it had been you instead of Robin?

ALAN [*hastily*]: Oh—no, that wouldn't have done at all. Really it wouldn't. Most unsuitable!

[*Kay laughs in affectionate amusement at his bachelor's horror. Madge enters. She is very different from the girl of Act I. She has short greyish hair, wears glasses, and is neatly but*

severely dressed. She speaks with a dry precision, but underneath her assured schoolmistress manner is a suggestion of the neurotic woman.

MADGE [*very decisively, as she bustles about the room, finding an envelope and filling her fountain-pen*]: I 've just told mother that if I hadn't happened to be in the neighbourhood to-day—I 've applied for a headship at Borderton, you know, Kay, and had my interview there this afternoon—nothing would have induced me to be here to-night.

KAY: Well, I don't know why you bothered telling her, Madge. You *are* here, that 's all that matters.

MADGE: No, it isn't. I want her to understand quite clearly that I 've no further interest in these family muddles, financial or otherwise. Also, that I would have thought it unnecessary to ask for a day away from my work at Collingfield in order to attend one of these ridiculous hysterical conferences.

KAY: You talk as if you 'd been dragged here every few weeks.

MADGE: No, I haven't. But I 've had a great many more of these silly discussions than you have—please remember, Kay. Mother and Gerald Thornton seem to imagine that the time of a woman journalist in London is far more precious than that of a senior mistress at a large girls' public school. Why—I can't think. But the result is, I 've been dragged in often when you haven't.

KAY [*rather wearily*]: All right. But seeing we 're both here now, let 's make the best of it.

ALAN: Yes, of course.

MADGE: Joan 's here. I hope there 's no chance of Robin coming too. That 's something you 've missed so far, I think, Kay. I 've had one experience of their suddenly meeting here—Robin half drunk, ready to insult everybody. Joan weeping and resentful—the pair of them discussing every unpleasant detail of their private life—and it 's not an experience I want to repeat.

KAY [*lightly, but serious underneath*]: I don't blame you, Madge. But for the Lord's sake be human to-night. You 're not talking to the Collingfield common room now. This is your nice brother Alan. I 'm your nice sister Kay. We know all about you——

MADGE: That 's just where you 're wrong. You know hardly any-

thing about me, any of you. The life you don't see—call it the Collingfield common room if that amuses you—is my real life. It represents exactly the sort of person I am now, and what you and Alan and mother remember—and trust mother not to forget anything foolish and embarrassing—is no longer of any importance at all.

KAY: I 'd hate to think that, Madge.

ALAN [*shyly, earnestly*]: And it isn't true. It really isn't. Because—— [*Hesitates, and is lost.*

MADGE: I heard your extraordinary views the last time I was here, Alan. I also discussed them with Herrickson—our senior maths mistress and a most brilliant woman—and she demolished them very thoroughly.

KAY [*to cheer him up*]: You tell *me*, Alan, if there 's time later on. We 're not going to be trampled on by any of Madge's Miss What's-her-names. And we don't care how brilliant they are, do we, Alan?

[*Alan grins and rubs his hands. Madge deliberately changes the subject.*

MADGE: I hope you 're doing something besides this popular journalism now, Kay. Have you begun another book?

KAY: No.

MADGE: Pity, isn't it?

KAY [*after a pause, looking steadily at her*]: What about you, Madge? Are you building Jerusalem—in England's green and pleasant land?

MADGE: Possibly not. But I 'm trying to put a little knowledge of history and a little sense into the heads of a hundred and fifty middle-class girls. It 's hard work and useful work. Certainly nothing to be ashamed of.

KAY [*looking hard, speaking very quietly*]: Then—why be ashamed?

MADGE [*instantly, loudly*]: I 'm not.

[*Hazel enters, from outside. She is extremely well dressed, the best dressed of them all, and has not lost her looks, but there is something noticeably subdued, fearful, about her.*

HAZEL: Hallo, Madge! [*Sees Kay.*] Kay! [*Kisses her.*]

KAY: Hazel, my dear, you 're grander every time I see you.

HAZEL [*preening*]: Do you like it?

KAY: Yes—and you didn't get that in Newlingham. At the Bon Marché. Do you remember when we used to think the Bon Marché marvellous?

HAZEL [*brightening up at this*]: Yes—and now they seem ghastly. Well, that 's something, isn't it? [*Realizes that this gives her away, so hastily asks*]: Is Joan here?

ALAN: Yes. She 's upstairs with mother. Is Ernest coming to-night?

HAZEL [*hesitating*]: I—don't—know.

MADGE: I thought it was understood he was coming. Mother thinks he is. I believe she 's rather counting on him.

HAZEL [*hastily*]: Well, she mustn't. I 've told her not to. I don't even know yet if he 'll be here at all.

MADGE [*annoyed*]: But this is ridiculous. We 're told that things are desperate. Kay and I have to leave our work, travel miles and miles, stop thinking about anything else, and now you don't even know if your own husband will walk down the road to be here.

HAZEL: But you know what Ernest is? He said he *might* come to-night. I asked him again only at lunch time to-day—and he said he didn't know—and then I didn't like——

MADGE [*cutting in sharply*]: Didn't like! You mean you *daren't*. That miserable little——

HAZEL: Madge! Please stop.

[*Madge looks at her in contempt, then walks off. Hazel looks very miserable.*

KAY: How are the children?

HAZEL: Peter has a cold again—poor lamb—he 's always getting colds. Margaret 's all right. Never *any* trouble with her. She 's been doing some ballet dancing, y' know, and the teacher thinks she 's *marvellous* for her age. Oh—you forgot her last birthday, Kay. The child was *so* disappointed.

KAY: I 'm sorry. Tell her I 'll make up for it at Christmas. I must have been away on a job or something——

HAZEL [*eagerly*]: I read your article on Glyrna Foss—you know, about three months ago—when she came over from Hollywood.

Did she really say all those things to you, Kay, or did you make them up?

KAY: She said some of them. The rest I made up.

HAZEL [*eagerly*]: Did she say anything about Leo Frobisher—her husband, y' know, and they 'd just separated?

KAY: Yes, but I didn't print it.

HAZEL [*all eagerness now*]: What did she say?

KAY: She said [*imitating very bad type of American voice*]: 'I 'll bet that God-forgotten left-over ham husband of mine gets himself poured out o' the next boat.' [*Normal voice, drily.*] You 'd like her, Hazel. She 's a sweet child.

HAZEL: She sounds awful; but I suppose you can't judge by the way they talk, using all that slang. And I know you don't think you 're very lucky, Kay——

KAY: I vary. Sometimes when I manage to remember what most women go through, all kinds of women all over the world, I don't think, I *know* I 'm lucky. But usually—I feel clean out of luck.

HAZEL: I know; that 's what I say. But I think you 're *very* lucky, meeting all these people, and being in London and all that. Look at me, still in Newlingham, and I *loathe* Newlingham, and it gets worse and worse. Doesn't it, Alan—though I don't suppose you notice?

ALAN: I think it 's about the same—perhaps we get worse, that 's all.

HAZEL [*looking at him in a sort of impersonal fashion*]: Somebody was saying to me only the other day how queer they thought you were, Alan, and you are—really, aren't you? I mean you don't seem to bother about everything as most people do. I 've often wondered whether you 're happy inside or just dull. But I often wonder about people like that—[*To Kay*]—don't you? Though I suppose being so clever now, and a writer and everything, you *know* about them. But I don't. And I simply can't tell from what people look like. We had a maid, y' know, Jessie, and she seemed such a cheerful little thing—always smiling and humming—Ernest used to get quite cross with her—she was *too* cheerful really—and then suddenly she took over twenty aspirins all at once, we had to have the doctor and everything, and she said it was simply because she couldn't bear it

any longer—she 'd had enough of *everything*, she said. Isn't it strange?

KAY: But you must feel like that sometimes, don't you?

HAZEL: Yes, I do. But I 'm always surprised when other people do, because somehow they never *look* it. Oh—— [*Gets up and lowers her voice.*] Robin rang me up yesterday—he 's living in Leicester just now, you know—and I told him about to-night—and he said he might look in because he wouldn't be far away.

ALAN: I hope he doesn't.

KAY: What 's he doing now, Hazel?

HAZEL: I don't know really—he 's always changing, y' know—but it 's something to do with commission. Shall I tell Joan he might be coming here?

KAY: No. Risk it.

[*Doesn't say any more because Mrs Conway comes in now, followed by Joan. Mrs Conway is now a woman of sixty-five, and has not gone neat and modern, but kept to her full-blown Edwardian type.*

MRS C. [*who is still very brisk*]: Now then, Hazel, haven't you brought Ernest with you?

HAZEL: No, mother. I hope—he 'll be here soon.

MRS C. Of course he will. Well, we can't do anything until Gerald arrives. He knows how things are—exactly. Where 's Madge?

KAY: I thought she went upstairs.

MRS C. [*as she goes to turn on more lights*]: She 's probably taking something in the bathroom. I 've never known anybody who took so many things as poor Madge. She 's given herself so many lotions and gargles and sprays that no man has ever looked twice at her—poor thing. Alan, I think we ought to have both port and whisky out, don't you? I told the girl to leave it all ready in the dining-room. Better bring it in. [*Alan goes out, returning, during following dialogue, carrying a tray, with port and small glasses, whisky and soda and tumblers.*] Now what I 'm wondering is this—should we all sit round looking very stiff and formal—y' know, make it a proper business affair, because, after all, it *is* a business affair—or should we make everybody comfortable and *cosy*? What do you think?

KAY: I think—mother—you 're enjoying this.

MRS C.: Well, after all, why shouldn't I? It 's nice to see all you children at home again. Even Madge. [*Madge enters. Mrs C. probably saw her before, but undoubtedly sees her now.*] I say it 's nice to see all you children home again—even you, Madge.

MADGE: I 'm not a child and this is no longer my home.

MRS C. [*sharply*]: You were a child once—and a very troublesome one, too—and for twenty years this was your home—and please don't talk in that tone to me. You 're not in a classroom now, remember.

HAZEL: Now—mother—please—it 's not going to be easy to-night—and——

MADGE [*coldly*]: Don't worry, Hazel. Mother *enjoys* things not being easy.

[*She sits down. Mrs C. observes her maliciously, then turns to Kay.*

MRS C.: Kay, *who* was the man the Philipsons saw you dining with at the—what 's the name of that restaurant?

KAY: The Ivy, mother. And the man is a man called Hugo Steel. I 've told you already.

MRS C. [*smoothly*]: Yes, dear; but you didn't tell me much. The Philipsons said you seemed awfully friendly together. I suppose he 's an old friend?

KAY [*sharply*]: Yes.

MRS C. [*same technique*]: Isn't it a pity—you couldn't—I mean, if he 's a really nice man.

KAY [*trying to cut it short*]: Yes, a great pity.

MRS C.: I 've so often hoped you 'd be settled with some nice man—and when the Philipsons told me——

KAY [*harshly*]: Mother, I 'm forty to-day. Had you forgotten?

MRS C. [*taking it well*]: Of course I hadn't. A mother *always* remembers. Joan——

JOAN [*whose attention has been elsewhere, turning*]: Yes, Grannie Conway?

MRS C. [*crossly*]: Don't call me that ridiculous name.

JOAN: I forgot; I 'm sorry.

MRS C.: Didn't I tell you it was Kay's birthday? I 've something for you too——

KAY: No, mother, you mustn't—really——

MRS C. [*producing small diamond brooch*]: There! Your father gave me that, the second Christmas after we were married, and it 's a charming little brooch. Brazilian diamonds. It was an old piece then. Look at the colour in the stones. You always get that in the old South American diamonds. There now!

KAY [*gently*]: It 's very sweet of you, mother, but really I 'd rather not take this from you.

MRS C.: Don't be absurd. It 's mine and now I give it to you. Take it or I 'll be cross. And many happy returns, of course. [*Kay takes the brooch, then, suddenly rather moved, kisses her mother.*] When you were younger, I never liked you as much as I did Hazel, but now I think I was wrong.

HAZEL: Oh—mother!

MRS C.: I know, Hazel dear; but you 're such a *fool* with that little husband of yours. Why, if he were mine——

HAZEL [*sharply for her*]: Well he isn't—and you really know very little about him.

MRS C. [*as she looks about her*]: It 's time the men were here. I 've always hated seeing a lot of women sitting about, with no men. *They* always look silly, and then I feel silly myself. I don't know why. [*Notices Alan. With some malice.*] Of course you 're here, Alan. I was forgetting you. Or forgetting you were a man.

ALAN [*mildly*]: I must grow a shaggy beard and drum on my chest and ro-o-ar!

JOAN [*doing her best*]: When their Uncle Frank—you know, Freda's husband, they live in London—took the children to the Zoo for the first time, little Richard was only five—and there was an enormous monkey—what Alan said reminded me of it—and——

MRS C. [*cutting this ruthlessly*]: Would anybody like a glass of port? Kay? Hazel? What about you, Madge? It 's scholarly wine. You remember what Meredith wrote about it in *The Egoist*. But nobody reads Meredith now and nobody takes port. I used to read Meredith when I was a girl and thought I was very clever. But I didn't like port then. Now I don't care about Meredith,

but I rather like port. [*She has poured herself a glass of port, and now sips it.*] It 's not good port this—even I know that, though men always say women don't know anything about it—but it 's rich and warming, even this—like a handsome compliment. That 's gone too. Nobody pays compliments any more—except old Doctor Halliday, who 's well over eighty and has no memory at all. He talked to me for half an hour the other day, thinking I was Mrs Rushbury——[*Ring at bell.*] There! That 's probably Gerald.

MADGE [*wearily*]: At last!

MRS C. [*maliciously*]: Yes, Madge; but you musn't be so impatient.

[*Madge glares at her. Alan is now ushering in Gerald Thornton, who carries a brief-case, and Ernest Beevers. Gerald is over fifty now, and though careful of his appearance, he looks it. He is grey and wears glasses. He is much drier and harder than he was in Act I. Ernest Beevers looks far more prosperous than he did before, and has lost his early shyness. With the arrival of these two, the party is apparently complete, so that there is no longer the feeling of waiting about.*

MRS C.: Well, Gerald, will you have a drink before you begin talking?

GERALD: No, thank you. [*He turns to Kay.*] How are you, Kay?

KAY: Quite well, thank you, Gerald. [*Stares at him.*] I 'm sorry, but it 's true.

GERALD: What is?

KAY: I always remember your saying, years ago, that you didn't mind living in Newlingham, but you were determined to be as different as possible from the Newlingham type of man.

GERALD [*hastily, frowning a little*]: I don't remember saying that——

KAY: Yes, you did. And now—I 'm sorry, Gerald, but it 's true —you suddenly look like *all* those Newlingham men rolled into one——

GERALD [*rather shortly*]: What do I do? Apologize?

[*Turns away, leaving her regarding him speculatively.*

HAZEL [*who has managed to get Ernest to herself a moment*]: Oh—Ernest—I 'm so glad you 're here——

ERNEST [*not pleasantly*]: You are, eh?

HAZEL [*who knows him by this time*]: I suppose that means you won't stay now—just to show me——

ERNEST: I don't need to show you. You know, by this time.

HAZEL [*lowering voice*]: Ernest—please—be nice to them to-night —especially to mother—you could be such a help if you wanted to be——

ERNEST [*cutting through this*]: I don't know what you 're talking about.

[*They both notice then that Madge is quite near, regarding them with a contemptuous smile. Ernest gives her a sharp look, then turns away. Hazel looks deeply embarrassed, then looks as if she was about to appeal to Madge.*

MADGE [*coolly*]: I shouldn't say a word, if I were you, Hazel. I mean to me. It would only make it worse.

MRS C. [*loud cheerful tone*]: Now then, everybody, please be quiet and pay attention. We must be very business-like, mustn't we, Gerald? I 'm so glad you were able to come, Ernest. You 'll help us to be business-like, won't you?

ERNEST [*grimly*]: Yes.

MADGE: And that doesn't mean you 're at liberty to make yourself unpleasant.

MRS C. [*sharply*]: Be quiet, Madge. [*Turning, with smile and great social air, to Gerald.*] Now then, Gerald, we're all waiting. Tell us all about it.

[*Gerald, who has been glancing at his papers, looks up at her and round the waiting circle with a sort of despair, as if to ask what could be done with such people.*

GERALD [*in dry legal tone*]: Acting under instructions from Mrs Conway, after it was decided you should all meet here, I have prepared a short statement of Mrs Conway's present financial position——

MRS C. [*protesting*]: Gerald!

GERALD [*rather despairing*]: Yes?

MRS C.: Must you talk in that awful dry inhuman way? I mean, after all, I 've known you since you were a boy, and the children have known you all their lives, and you 're beginning to talk as if you 'd never seen any of us before. And it sounds so horrid.

GERALD: But I 'm not here now as a friend of the family, but as your solicitor.

MRS C. [*with dignity*]: No. You 're here as a friend of the family who also happens to be my solicitor. And I think it would be much better if you told us all in a simple friendly way what the position is.

ALAN: I think that would be better, you know, Gerald.

KAY: So do I. When you turn on that legal manner, I can't take you seriously—I feel you 're still acting in one of our old charades.

HAZEL [*with sudden warmth*]: Oh—weren't they fun! And you were so good in them, Gerald. Why can't we have some more——

ERNEST [*brutally*]: What—at your age?

HAZEL: I don't see why not. Mother was older than we are now when she used to play——

GERALD [*not amused by all this*]: You 're not proposing to turn this into a charade, are you, Hazel?

KAY: What a pity it isn't one!

ALAN [*very quietly*]: Perhaps it is.

MRS C.: Now don't *you* start being silly, Alan. Now then, Gerald, just tell us how things are—and don't read out a lot of figures and dates and things—I know you 've brought them with you—but keep them for anybody who wants to have a look at them—perhaps *you* 'd like to have a look at them afterwards, Ernest——

ERNEST: I might. [*To Gerald.*] Go ahead.

GERALD [*drily*]: Well, the position is this. Mrs Conway for a long time now has derived her income from two sources. A holding in Farrow and Conway Limited. And some property in Newlingham, the houses at the north end of Church Road. Farrow and Conway were hit badly by the slump and have not recovered yet. The houses in Church Road are not worth anything like what they were, and the only chance of making that property pay is to convert the houses into flats. But this would demand a substantial outlay of capital. Mrs Conway has received an offer for her holding in Farrow and Conway Limited, but it is a very poor offer. It would not pay for the reconstruction of the Church

Road property. Meanwhile that property may soon be a liability instead of an asset. So, you see, the position is very serious.

MADGE [*coldly*]: I must say I 'm very much surprised. I always understood that mother was left extremely well provided for.

MRS C. [*proudly*]: Certainly I was. Your father saw to that.

GERALD: Both the shares and the property have declined in value.

MADGE: Yes; but even so—I 'm still surprised. Mother must have been very extravagant.

GERALD: Mrs Conway hasn't been as careful as she might have been.

MRS C.: There were six of you to bring up and educate——

MADGE: It isn't that. I know how much *we* cost. It 's since then that the money 's been spent. And I know who must have had most of it—Robin!

MRS C. [*angry now*]: That 'll do, Madge. It was my money——

MADGE: It wasn't. It was only yours to hold in trust for us. Alan, you 're the eldest, and you 've been here all the time, why didn't you do something?

ALAN: I 'm afraid—I—haven't bothered much about—these things——

MADGE [*with growing force*]: Then you ought to have done. I think it 's absolutely wicked. I 've been working hard earning my living for over twenty years, and I 've looked forward to having something from what father left, enough to pay for a few really good holidays or to buy myself a little house of my own—and now it 's all gone—just because mother and Robin between them have flung it away——

MRS C. [*angrily*]: You ought to be ashamed of yourself, talking like that! What if I have helped Robin? He needed it, and I 'm his mother. If you 'd needed it, I 'd have helped you too——

MADGE: You wouldn't. When I told you I had a chance to buy a partnership in that school, you only laughed at me——

MRS C.: Because you were all right where you were and didn't need to buy any partnerships.

MADGE: And Robin did, I suppose?

MRS C.: Yes, because he 's a man—with a wife and children to support. This is just typical of you, Madge. Call yourself a

Socialist and blame people for taking an interest in money, and then it turns out you 're the most mercenary of us all.

MADGE: I don't call myself a Socialist—though that 's nothing to do with it——

ERNEST [*who has been glancing at an evening paper, breaking in brutally*]: How long does this go on? Because I 've something else to do.

MRS C. [*trying hard to placate him*]: That 's all right, Ernest. Look what you 've done now, Madge. Made Joan cry.

JOAN [*suddenly weeping quietly in the background*]: I 'm sorry—I just —remembered—so many things—that 's all——

GERALD: At the present moment, Mrs Conway has a considerable overdraft at the bank. Now there are two possible courses of action. One is to sell the houses for what they 'll fetch, and to hold on to the Farrow and Conway shares. But I warn you that the houses won't fetch much. The alternative is to sell the shares, then to raise an additional sum—probably between two or three thousand pounds—and to convert the houses into flats——

MRS C. [*hopefully*]: We 've had a sort of scheme from an architect, and really it looks most attractive. There 'd be at least thirty nice flats, and you know what people will pay for flats nowadays. Don't you think it 's a splendid idea, Ernest? [*He does not reply. She smiles at him and then her smile falters, but she returns hopefully to the theme.*] I felt if we all discussed it in a nice friendly way, we could decide something. I know you business men like everything cut and dried; but I believe it 's better to be nice and friendly. It isn't true that people will only do things for money. I 'm always being surprised about that. People are very nice and kind, really—— [*Breaks off, then looks at the women, more intimate tone.*] Only last week, I went to old Mrs Jepson's funeral, and I was walking back through the cemetery with Mrs Whitehead—I hadn't been round there for years—and I saw Carol's grave—and, of course, I was rather upset, suddenly coming on it like that—but it was so beautifully kept, with flowers—lovely flowers —growing there. And I thought, now there 's an instance—nobody 's told them to do that or paid them for it—it 's just natural kindness——

MADGE [*harshly*]: No, it isn't. Somebody must have been paying for it.

KAY [*turning*]: Alan! It must be you. Isn't it?

ALAN: Well—I do send them something—once every year, y' know—it isn't much.

HAZEL: Oh, mother—I 'd forgotten about Carol—it 's sixteen years ago.

ALAN: Seventeen.

HAZEL [*in melancholy wonder*]: Why, my Margaret 's nearly as big as she was. Doesn't that seem strange, Kay?

KAY: I 'd nearly forgotten about Carol too.

MRS C. [*with some emotion*]: Don't think I had—because I was so stupid about that grave. I 'm not one of those people who remember graves, it 's human beings I remember. Only the other day, when I was sitting upstairs, I heard Carol shouting: 'Mother, mo-ther'—you know how she used to do. And then I began thinking about her, my poor darling, and how she came in that awful day, her face quite greyish, and said: 'Mother, I 've the most sickening pain'; and then it was too late when they operated——

HAZEL: Yes, mother, we remember.

ERNEST [*harsh and astonishing*]: I 'll tell you what you don't remember—and what some of you never even knew. She was the best of the lot—that one—little Carol—worth all the rest of you put together.

HAZEL [*a shocked wife*]: Ernest!

ERNEST: Yes, and I 'm counting you in. You were the one I wanted—that 's all right; I got the one I wanted—but it didn't take me two hours to see that little Carol was the best of the lot. [*Adds gloomily.*] Didn't surprise me when she went off like that. Out! Finish! Too good to last.

MRS C. [*now near to tears*]: Ernest is quite right. She was the best of you all. My darling baby, I haven't forgotten you, I haven't forgotten you. [*Rising.*] Oh, why isn't Robin here? [*Begins weeping, also moves away.*] Go on, Gerald, explaining to them. I shan't be long. Don't move.

[*Goes out in tears. There is silence for a moment or two.*

MADGE: Surely under the circumstances, it 's absurd that mother and Alan should continue living in this house. It 's much too large for them.

ALAN [*mildly*]: Yes. We could do with something much smaller now.

MADGE: Then this house could be sold; that would help. It 's mother's freehold, isn't it?

GERALD: Yes. I think it would be better to move into something smaller, just to cut down living expenses. But this house wouldn't fetch very much now.

HAZEL: Why, mother was offered thousands and thousands for it just after the war.

ERNEST [*drily*]: Yes, but this isn't just after the war. It 's just before the next war.

GERALD: How much do *you* think, Ernest?

ERNEST: Take anything you can get for it.

KAY: Well, what are we supposed to do? If the worst comes to the worst, we can club together to keep mother going——

MADGE: But it 's monstrous. When I was at home—and knew about things—we were considered quite well off. There were all the shares and property father left, not simply for mother but for all of us. And now not only has it nearly all been frittered away, but we 're expected to provide for mother——

KAY [*rather wearily*]: But if the money 's gone, it 's gone.

GERALD: No; the point is this——

[*He is stopped by a loud ring at bell. They turn and look. Alan moves, then stops. Robin has marched in. He is wearing an old raincoat. He is shabbily smart, and looks what he is, a slackish, hard-drinking unsuccessful man of forty-two.*

ROBIN: Hallo! All here? Where 's mother?

ALAN: She 'll be back in a minute.

[*Robin takes off his raincoat and negligently gives it to Alan, who characteristically accepts it and puts it away. Robin takes no notice of this, but looks at Joan.*

ROBIN: Well, Joan. How are the offspring?

JOAN [*stiffly*]: They 're quite well, Robin.

ROBIN: Still telling them what an awful man their father is?

MADGE: Are we going to have this all over again?

ROBIN: No, you 're not—dear old Madge. Do I see a drink over there? I do. Have a drink, Gerald. Ernest, have a drink.

No? Well, I will. [*Goes and helps himself liberally to whisky and soda. Turns after first quick drink, faces them, and grins.*] Hallo, Kay. Condescending to visit the provinces again, eh?

KAY: Yes, but I 've got to be back sometime to-night.

ROBIN: Don't blame you. Wish I was going back to town. That 's the place. I 've half a mind to chuck what I 'm doing and try my luck there again. Know several decent chaps there.

KAY: What are you doing now, Robin?

ROBIN [*rather gloomily*]: Trying to sell a new heavy motor oil. I ought to have tried your stunt—writing. Might, one day. I could tell 'em something—my oath, I could! [*Finishes his drink rather noisily.*] Well, don't let me interrupt the business. Or are you waiting for mother?

MADGE: No; we 're better without her.

ROBIN [*belligerently*]: Yes, you would think that! But don't forget it 's her money——

[*He stops because Mrs C. reappears, all smiles.*

MRS C. [*joyfully*]: Robin! Now this is nice! [*Sweeps across and kisses him. There is perhaps a touch of defiance to the others in the warmth of her welcome.*] Are you staying the night?

ROBIN: I wasn't, but I could do—[*with a grin*]—in Alan's best pyjamas. [*They settle themselves.*

MADGE: We were just saying, mother, that it was absurd for you to keep on living here. The house is much too big and expensive now.

ROBIN: That 's for mother to decide——

MRS C.: No; that 's all right, dear. It is too big now, and, of course, if I sold it I could probably raise enough to convert the Church Road houses into flats.

ERNEST: No, you couldn't. Nothing like.

MRS C. [*with dignity*]: Really, Ernest, I was offered four thousand pounds for it once.

ERNEST: You ought to have taken it.

GERALD: I 'm afraid you can't count on getting much for this house, though, of course, you 'll save money by living in a smaller place.

ROBIN: Not much, though. She 'd have to pay rent for the smaller house, and this is hers.

GERALD [*rather impatiently for him, probably because Robin is here*]: But rates and taxes are fairly heavy on this house. I want you all to understand that the present situation is very unsatisfactory. The overdraft can be paid off, of course, simply by selling shares or some of the houses, but after that Mrs Conway would be worse off than ever. If the money for the conversion scheme could be raised, then the Church Road property would bring in a decent income.

MRS C.: And I 'm sure that 's the thing to do. Flats. I might live in one of them myself—a nice, cosy little flat. Delightful!

GERALD: But after you 've sold your shares you 've still to find another two or three thousand to pay for the conversion into flats.

MRS C.: But couldn't I borrow that?

GERALD: Not from the bank. They won't accept the Church Road houses as security for a loan to convert them into flats. I 've tried that.

HAZEL [*hopefully, and a shade timidly*]: Ernest—could you lend the money?

ERNEST [*staggered by this*]: *What!*

HAZEL [*rather faltering now*]: Well, you could easily afford it, Ernest.

MRS C. [*smiling*]: From what I hear, you 're very well off indeed these days, Ernest.

GERALD: Oh—there 's no doubt about that.

MRS C. [*hoping this will win him over*]: And it only seems yesterday, Ernest, that you first came here—a very shy young man from nowhere.

ERNEST [*grimly*]: It 's twenty years ago, to be exact; but that 's just what I was—a shy young man from nowhere. And when I managed to wangle myself into this house I thought I 'd got somewhere.

MRS C.: I remember so well feeling that about you at the time, Ernest.

ERNEST: Yes. I was made to feel I 'd got somewhere, too. But I stuck it. I 've always been able to stick it, when I 've had my mind on something I badly wanted. That 's how I 've managed to get on.

ROBIN [*who doesn't like him, obviously*]: Don't begin to tell us now that you landed here with only a shilling in your pocket——

MRS C. [*warning, reproachful, yet secretly amused*]: Now, now, Robin!

ERNEST [*in level unpleasant tone*]: I wasn't going to. Don't worry, you 're not going to have the story of *my* life. All I was about to say was—that as far as I 'm concerned, you can whistle for your two or three thousand pounds. You won't get a penny from me. And I might as well tell you—while I 'm making myself unpleasant—that I could lend you the two or three thousand without feeling it. Only, I 'm not going to. Not a penny.

HAZEL [*indignation struggling with her fear of him*]: You make me feel ashamed.

ERNEST [*staring hard at her*]: Oh! Why? [*She does not reply, but begins to crumple under his hard stare.*] Go on. Tell 'em why I make you feel ashamed. Tell *me*. Or would you like to tell me later when *I* 'm telling *you* a few things?

[*Hazel crumples into tears. Robin jumps up, furious.*

ROBIN: I never did like you, Beevers. I 've half a mind to boot you out of this house.

ERNEST [*no coward*]: You do, and I 'll bring an action for assault. *And* I 'd enjoy it. My money or the boot, eh? I told Hazel a long time ago that not one of you would ever get a penny out of me. And I 'm not mean. Ask her. But I swore to myself after the very first night I came here, when you were all being so high and mighty—especially you—that you 'd never see a penny that I ever made.

ROBIN [*with a lurking grin*]: I see.

ERNEST [*very sharply*]: What 's that mean? By God, she *has*! She 's been giving you money—*my* money.

HAZEL [*terribly alarmed now*]: Oh—Robin, why did you?

ROBIN [*irritably*]: What does it matter? He can't eat you.

ERNEST [*very quietly and deadly, to Hazel*]: Come on.

[*Goes out. Hazel looks terrified.*

MADGE: Don't go, if you don't want to.

KAY: Hazel, there 's nothing to be afraid of.

HAZEL [*sincere, quiet, desperate*]: There is. I 'm frightened of *him*. Except right at the first—I 've always been frightened of him.

ROBIN [*noisily*]: Don't be silly. This little pip-squeak! What can *he* do?

HAZEL: I don't know. It isn't that. It 's just something about him.

ERNEST [*returning with his overcoat on, to Hazel*]: Come on. I 'm going.

HAZEL [*summoning up all her courage*]: N-no.

[*He waits and looks at her. She slowly moves towards him, fearful and ashamed. Mrs C. moves hastily over towards Ernest.*

MRS C. [*excitedly*]: You sneaked your way in here, Ernest Beevers, and somehow you persuaded or bullied Hazel—who was considered then one of the prettiest girls in Newlingham—into marrying you——

HAZEL [*imploring her*]: No, mother—please don't——

MRS C.: I 'll tell him now what I 've always wanted to tell him. [*Approaching Ernest with vehemence.*] I was a fool. My husband wouldn't have had such a bullying mean little rat near the house. I never liked you. And I 'm not surprised to hear you say you 've always hated us. Don't ever come here again; don't ever let me see you again. I only wish I was Hazel for just one day, I 'd show you something. What—you—my daughter——! [*In a sudden fury she slaps him hard across the face, with a certain grand magnificence of manner.*] Now bring an action for that!

[*Stands there, blazing at him. He rubs his cheek a little, backs a step or two, looking at her steadily.*

ERNEST [*quietly*]: You 've done a lot of dam' silly things in your time, Mrs Conway, but you 'll find that 's the dam' silliest. [*Turns and walks to door. At door he turns quickly to Hazel.*] Come on.

[*Goes out. Hazel is wretched.*

HAZEL: Oh—mother—you shouldn't.

ROBIN [*rather grandly*]: She did quite right. And you just let me know—if he gives you any trouble.

HAZEL [*tearfully, shaking her head as she wanders towards door*]: No, Robin. You don't understand . . . you don't understand. . . .

[*She goes out slowly. A strained silence. Mrs C. goes back to her place.*

MRS C. [*with a short laugh*]: Well—I suppose that was a silly thing to do.

GERALD [*gravely*]: I 'm afraid it was, y' know.

KAY: You see, it 's Hazel who will have to pay for it.

ROBIN: Well, she needn't. She 's only to let me know what he 's up to.

JOAN [*surprisingly*]: What 's the good of talking like that? What could *you* do? He can make her life a misery, and you couldn't stop it.

MADGE: Well, it 's her own fault. I 've no patience with her. I wouldn't stand it ten minutes.

JOAN [*with plenty of spirit, for her*]: It 's no use you talking, Madge. You simply don't understand. You 've never been married.

MADGE: No; and after what I 've seen here, I think I 'm lucky.

MRS C. [*with energy*]: You 're not lucky—never were and never will be—and as you haven't the least idea what a woman's real life is like, the less you say the better. You 're not among schoolgirls and silly teachers now. Robin, give me a glass of port. Won't you have a drink, too?

[*Robin pours her a port and himself another whisky.*

GERALD [*rising. He has already put his papers away in case*]: I don't think there 's any point in my staying any longer.

MRS C.: But we haven't settled anything.

GERALD [*rather coldly*]: I thought there was a chance that Ernest Beevers might have been persuaded to lend you the money. As I don't think anybody else here has three thousand pounds to spare——

ROBIN [*turning to him*]: All right, Thornton, you needn't be so damned supercilious about it. Seems to me you 've not made a particularly bright job of handling my mother's affairs.

GERALD [*annoyed*]: I don't think that comes too well from you. For years I 've given good advice, and never once has it been acted upon. Now I 'd be only too delighted to hand over these affairs.

ROBIN: I believe I could make a better job of it myself.

GERALD [*stiffly*]: I can't imagine a possible worse choice. [*Moves with his case.*] Good night, Kay. Good night, Alan.

ALAN [*moving*]: I think I 'll come along, too, Gerald.

[*Gerald and Alan go out.*

ROBIN: You 'll be able to have a nice little chat about me on the way. [*Joan stands still now and looks across at him.*

JOAN [*very quietly*]: It doesn't hurt as much as it used to do, Robin, when you say such bitter things. I suppose one day it won't hurt at all.

ROBIN [*who is sorry at the moment*]: Sorry, old girl. And give my love to the kids. Say I 'm coming to see them soon.

JOAN: Yes, come and see us soon. Only remember—we 're very poor now.

ROBIN: Thanks for that. And then you talk about being bitter.

[*They look at one another for a moment, lost and hopeless. Then Joan moves away, slowly.*

KAY [*rather painfully*]: Good night, my dear.

JOAN [*painfully turning and producing little social smile*]: Good night, Kay. It 's been nice—seeing you again.

[*She goes out. Kay, who is moved, withdraws herself.*

ROBIN [*after another drink, an optimist*]: Well, now we ought to be able to settle something.

MADGE [*coldly*]: So far as I 'm concerned, this has simply been a waste of time—and nervous energy.

MRS C. [*with malice*]: You know, Madge, when I think of Gerald Thornton as he is now, a dreary, conceited middle-aged bachelor, I can't help thinking it 's perhaps a pity you *didn't* marry him.

ROBIN [*with a guffaw*]: What, Madge! I never knew you fancied Gerald Thornton.

MRS C. [*in light but significant tone*]: She did—once. Didn't you, dear? And I believe he was interested—oh, a long time ago, when you children were all still at home.

KAY [*sharply*]: Mother, if that 's not true, then it 's stupid silly talk. If it *is* true, then it 's cruel.

MRS C.: Nonsense! And not so high and mighty, please, Kay.

MADGE [*facing them bravely*]: It *was* true, a long time ago, just after the War. When I still thought we could suddenly make everything better for everybody. Socialism! Peace! Universal Brotherhood! All that. And I felt then that Gerald Thornton and I together could—help. He had a lot of fine qualities, I

thought—I believe he had then, too—and only needed to be pulled out of his rut here, to have his enthusiasm aroused. I was remembering to-night—when I was looking at him. It came back to me quite quickly. [*This last was more to Kay than the other two. Now she takes her mother in.*] One evening—just one evening—and something you did that evening—ruined it all. I 'd almost forgotten—but seeing us all here again to-night reminded me—I believe it was at a sort of party for you, Kay. [*Accusingly to her mother.*] Do you remember?

MRS C.: Really, Madge, you *are* absurd. I seem to remember some piece of nonsense, when we were all being foolish.

MADGE: Yes, you remember. It was quite deliberate on your part. Just to keep a useful young man unattached or jealousy of a girl's possible happiness, or just out of sheer nasty female mischief. . . . And something went for ever. . . .

MRS C.: It can't have been worth very much then.

MADGE: A seed is easily destroyed, but it might have grown into an oak-tree. [*Pauses, looks solemnly at her mother.*] I 'm glad I 'm not a mother.

MRS C. [*annoyed*]: Yes, you may well say that.

MADGE [*with deadly deliberation*]: I know how I 'd have despised myself if I 'd turned out to be a bad mother.

MRS C. [*angrily, rising*]: So that 's what you call me? [*Pauses, then with more vehemence and emotion.*] Just because you never think of anybody but yourselves. All selfish—selfish. Because everything hasn't happened as you wanted it, turn on me—all my fault. You never really think about me. Don't try to see things for a moment from my point of view. When you were children, I was so proud of you all, so confident that you would grow up to be wonderful creatures. I used to see myself at the age I am now, surrounded by you and your own children, so proud of you, so happy with you all, this house happier and gayer even than it was in the best of the old days. And now my life 's gone by, and what 's happened? You 're a resentful soured schoolmistress, middle-aged before your time. Hazel—the loveliest child there ever was—married to a vulgar little bully, and terrified of him. Kay here—gone away to lead her own life, and very bitter

and secretive about it, as if she 'd failed. Carol—the happiest and kindest of you all—dead before she 's twenty. Robin—I know, my dear, I 'm not blaming you now, but I must speak the truth for once—with a wife he can't love and no sort of position or comfort or anything. And Alan—the eldest, the boy his father adored, that he thought might do anything—what 's he now? [*Alan has come in now and is standing there quietly listening.*] A miserable clerk with no prospects, no ambition, no self-respect, a shabby little man that nobody would look at twice. [*She sees him standing there now, but in her worked-up fury does not care, and lashes out at him.*] Yes, a shabby clerk that nobody would look at twice.

KAY [*in a sudden fury of loyalty*]: How dare you, mother, how dare you! Alan, of all people!

ALAN [*with a smile*]: That 's all right, Kay. Don't you get excited. It 's not a bad description. I am a shabby little clerk, y' know. It must be very disappointing.

MRS C.: Oh—don't be so forgiving! Robin, you 've always been selfish and weak and a bit of a good-for-nothing——

ROBIN: Here, steady, old girl. I 've had some rotten bad luck, too, y' know, and a lot of it 's just luck. I 've come to see that.

MRS C. [*exhausted now*]: All right—add the bad luck, too, my dear. The point is, whatever they may say about you, Robin, my darling, you 're my own boy and my own sort, and a great comfort. So you and I will go upstairs and talk.

ROBIN [*as she takes his arm*]: That 's the spirit!

[*They move off together.*

MADGE [*very quietly*]: Mother [*Mrs C. stops, but does not turn.*] We 've both said what we want to say. There isn't any more to be said. And if you decide to have any more of these family conferences, don't trouble to ask me to attend them, because I shan't. I don't expect now to see a penny of father's money. And please don't expect to see any of mine.

ROBIN: Who wants yours?

MRS C.: Come on, my dear, and we 'll talk like human beings.

[*They go out. The other three are quiet and still.*

MADGE: I have an idea I wasn't too pleasant to you, Kay, earlier when we met to-night. If so, I 'm sorry.

KAY: That 's all right, Madge. Are you going back to Collingfield to-night?

MADGE: No, I can't. But I 'm staying with Nora Fleming—you remember her? She 's Head of Newlingham High now. I 've left my things there. I 'll go now. I don't want to see mother again.

KAY: Good-bye, Madge. I hope you collar one of these headships.

MADGE: Good-bye, Kay. And do try and write a good book, instead of doing nothing but this useless journalism.

[They kiss. Madge goes off, accompanied by Alan. Kay, left to herself, shows that she is deeply moved. She moves restlessly, then hastily pours herself a whisky and soda, lights a cigarette, tastes the whisky, then sits down, ignores the cigarette burning in her hand and the whisky, stares into the past, and then begins to cry. Alan returns, filling his pipe.

ALAN [*cheerfully*]: You 've a good half-hour yet, Kay, before you need set out for the London train. I 'll take you to the station. [*Comes up to her.*] What 's the matter? Has all this—been a bit too much for you?

KAY [*ruefully*]: Apparently. And I thought I was tough now, Alan. . . . See, I was doing the modern working woman—a cigarette and a whisky and soda . . . no good, though. . . . You see, Alan, I 've not only been here to-night, I 've been here remembering other nights, long ago, when we weren't like this. . . .

ALAN: Yes, I know. Those old Christmasses . . . birthday parties. . . .

KAY: Yes, I remembered. I saw all of us then. Myself, too. Oh, silly girl of Nineteen Nineteen! Oh, lucky girl!

ALAN: You mustn't mind too much. It 's all right, y' know. Like being forty?

KAY: Oh no, Alan; it 's hideous and unbearable. Remember what we once were and what we thought we 'd be. And now this. And it 's all we have, Alan, it 's *us*. Every step we 've taken—every tick of the clock—making everything worse.

If this is all life is, what 's the use? Better to die, like Carol, before you find it out, before Time gets to work on you. I 've felt it before, Alan, but never as I 've done to-night. There 's a great devil in the universe, and we call it Time.

ALAN [*playing with his pipe, quietly, shyly*]: Did you ever read Blake?

KAY: Yes.

ALAN: Do you remember this? [*Quotes quietly, but with feeling.*

Joy and woe are woven fine,
A clothing for the soul divine;
Under every grief and pine
Runs a joy with silken twine.
It is right it should be so;
Man was made for joy and woe;
And when this we rightly know,
Safely through the world we go. . . .

KAY: Safely through the world we go? No, it isn't true, Alan—or it isn't true for me. If things were merely mixed—good and bad—that would be all right, but they get worse. We 've seen it to-night. Time 's beating us.

ALAN: No; Time 's only a kind of dream, Kay. If it wasn't, it would have to destroy everything—the whole universe—and then remake it again every tenth of a second. But Time doesn't destroy anything. It merely moves us on—in this life—from one peephole to the next.

KAY: But the happy young Conways, who used to play charades here, they 've gone, and gone for ever.

ALAN: No; they 're real and existing, just as we two, here now, are real and existing. We 're seeing another bit of the view—a bad bit, if you like—but the whole landscape 's still there.

KAY: But, Alan, we can't be anything but what we are *now*.

ALAN: No . . . it 's hard to explain . . . suddenly like this . . . there 's a book I 'll lend you—read it in the train. But the point is, now, at this moment, or any moment, we 're only a cross-section of our real selves. What we *really* are is the whole stretch of ourselves, all our time, and when we come to the end of this life, all those selves, all our time, will be *us*—the real you,

the real me. And then perhaps we 'll find ourselves in another time, which is only another kind of dream.

KAY: I 'll try to understand . . . so long as you really believe—and think it 's possible for me to believe—that Time 's not ticking away our lives . . . wrecking . . . and ruining everything . . . for ever. . . .

ALAN: No; it 's all right, Kay. I 'll get you that book. [*Moves away towards door, then turns.*] You know, I believe half our trouble now is because we think Time 's ticking our lives away. That 's why we snatch and grab and hurt each other.

KAY: As if we were all in a panic on a sinking ship.

ALAN: Yes, like that.

KAY [*smiling at him*]: But you don't do those things—bless you!

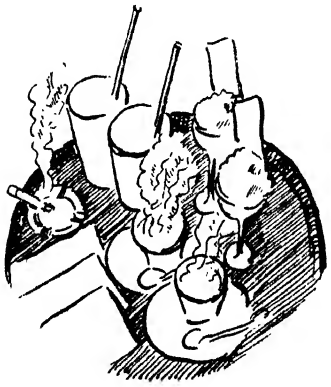
ALAN: I think it 's easier not to—if you take a long view.

KAY: As if we 're—immortal beings?

ALAN [*smiling*]: Yes, and in for a tremendous adventure.

[*Goes out. Kay, comforted, but still brooding, goes to the window and stands there looking out, with head raised. No sooner is she settled there than the curtain comes down.*

END OF ACT II



ACT III

Kay is sitting just as we left her at the end of Act I, and we can still hear Mrs Conway singing Schumann's 'Der Nussbaum.' Nothing happens until the song has ended and we have heard some applause and voices from the party, but then Alan enters and switches on the lights. We see that the room and everything in it is exactly as they were before. Only Kay herself has changed. Something—elusive, a brief vision, a score of shadowy presentiments—is haunting her. She is deeply disturbed. She throws a look or two at the room, as if she had just seen it in some other guise. She looks at Alan, puzzled. He grins and rubs his hands a little.

ALAN: Well, Kay?

KAY [*as if to break into something important*]: Alan—— [*Breaks off.*

ALAN: Yes?

KAY [*hurriedly*]: No—nothing.

ALAN [*looking more closely at her*]: I believe you 've been asleep—while mother was singing.

KAY [*confusedly*]: No. I was sitting here—listening. I turned the light out. No, I didn't fall asleep—I don't know, though, perhaps I did—just for a second. It couldn't have been longer.

ALAN: You 'd know if you 'd been asleep.

KAY [*looking about her, slowly*]: No, I wasn't asleep. But—quite suddenly—I thought I saw . . . we were . . . Anyhow, you came into it, I think, Alan.

ALAN [*amused and puzzled*]: Came into *what*?

KAY: I can't remember. And I know I was listening to mother singing all the time. I 'm—a bit—wuzzy.

ALAN: Most of the people are going now. You 'd better go and say good night.

[*Hazel enters, carrying plate on which is enormous piece of sticky, rich, creamy cake. She has already begun to tackle this as she moves in.*

KAY [*seeing her*]: Hazel, you greedy pig!

[*Kay deftly swoops up a bit of the cake and eats it.*

HAZEL [*talking with her mouth rather full*]: I didn't come in here just to eat this.

KAY: 'Course you did!

HAZEL: They 're all saying good night now, and I 'm dodging that little horror Gerald Thornton brought.

KAY [*hastily*]: I must say my piece to them.

[*Hurries off. Alan lingers.*

ALAN [*after a pause*]: Hazel!

HAZEL [*mouth full*]: Um?

ALAN [*with elaborate air of casualness*]: What 's Joan Helford going to do now?

HAZEL: Oh—just mooch round a bit.

ALAN: I thought I heard her saying she was going away—I was wondering if she was leaving Newlingham.

HAZEL: She 's only going to stay with her aunt. Joan 's always staying with aunts. Why can't *we* have aunts planted all over the place?

ALAN: There 's Aunt Edith.

HAZEL: And a doctor's house in Wolverhampton! Ghastly! [*Quick change of tone. Teasingly.*] Anything else you 'd like to know about Joan?

ALAN [*confused*]: No—no. I—just wondered. [*Turns to go and almost bumps into Ernest, who is wearing a very shabby mackintosh raincoat and carrying a bowler hat. As soon as Hazel sees who it is, she turns away and has another dab at her cake. Alan stops and so does Ernest.*] Oh!—you going?

ERNEST [*a man who knows his own mind*]: In a minute.

[*He obviously waits for Alan to clear out.*

ALAN [*rather confused*]: Yes—well—— [*Makes a move.*

HAZEL [*loudly and clearly*]: Alan, you 're not going?

[*She looks across, completely ignoring Ernest, who waits, not perhaps quite as cool as he would appear on the surface, for the hat he is clutching moves a bit.*

ALAN [*not at home in this*]: Yes—have to say good night and get their coats and things—you know——

[*Goes out. Hazel attends to her cake, and then looks, without a smile, at Ernest.*

ERNEST: I just looked in to say good night, Miss Conway.

HAZEL [*blankly*]: Oh—yes—of course. Well——

ERNEST [*cutting in*]: It 's been a great pleasure to me to come here and meet you all.

[*He waits a moment. She finds herself compelled to speak.*

HAZEL [*same tone*]: Oh—well——

ERNEST [*cutting in again*]: Especially you. I 'm new round here, y' know. I 've only been in the place about three months. I bought a share in that paper mill—Eckersley's—out at West Newlingham—you know it?

HAZEL [*no encouragement from her*]: No.

ERNEST: Thought you might have noticed it. Been there long enough. Matter of fact it wants rebuilding. But that 's where I am. And I hadn't been here a week before I noticed you, Miss Conway.

HAZEL [*who knows it only too well*]: Did you?

ERNEST: Yes. And I've been watching out for you ever since. I expect you 've noticed me knocking about.

HAZEL [*loftily*]: No, I don't think I have.

ERNEST: Oh—yes—you must have done. Come on now. Admit it.

HAZEL [*her natural self coming out now*]: Well, if you must know, I have noticed you——

ERNEST [*pleased*]: I thought so.

HAZEL [*rapidly and indignantly*]: Because I thought you behaved very stupidly and rudely. If you want to look silly yourself—that 's your affair—but you 'd no right to make me look silly too——

ERNEST [*rather crushed*]: Oh! I didn't know—it 'ud been as bad as that——

HAZEL [*feeling she has the upper hand*]: Well, it has.

[*He stares at her, perhaps having moved a little closer. She does not look at him at first, but then is compelled to meet his hard stare. There is something about this look that penetrates to the essential weakness of her character.*

ERNEST [*coming up again now*]: I 'm sorry. Though I can't see anybody 's much the worse for it. After all, we 've only one life to live, let 's get on with it, I say. And in my opinion, you 're the best-looking girl in this town, Miss Hazel Conway. I 've been telling you that—in my mind—for the last two months. But I knew it wouldn't be long before I got to know you. To tell you properly. [*Looks hard at her. She does not like him but is completely helpless before this direct attack. He nods slowly.*] I expect you 're thinking I 'm not much of a chap. But there 's a bit more in me than meets the eye. A few people have found that out already, and a lot more 'll find it out before so long—here in Newlingham. You 'll see. [*Changes his tone, because he is uncertain on purely social matters, almost humble now.*] Would it be all right—if I—sort of—called to see you—some time soon?

HAZEL [*coming to the top again*]: You 'd better ask my mother.

ERNEST [*jocularly*]: Oh!—sort of *Ask Mamma* business, eh?

HAZEL [*confused and annoyed*]: No—I didn't mean it like that at all. I meant that this is mother's house——

ERNEST: Yes; but you 're old enough now to have your own friends, aren't you?

HAZEL: I don't make friends with people very quickly.

ERNEST [*with appalling bluntness*]: Oh! I 'd heard you did.

HAZEL [*haughtily, angrily*]: Do you mean to say you 've been discussing me with people?

ERNEST: Yes. Why not?

[*They stare at one another, Ernest coolly and deliberately, and Hazel with attempted hauteur, when Madge and Robin enter together, in the middle of a talk.*

ROBIN [*who is in great form*]: Golly, yes! It was a great lark. We weren't in uniform, y' know. I did some stoking. Hard work, but a great stunt.

MADGE [*hotly*]: It wasn't. You ought to have been ashamed of yourselves.

ROBIN [*surprised*]: Why?

MADGE: Because helping to break a strike and being a blackleg isn't a lark and a stunt. Those railwaymen were desperately anxious to improve their conditions. They didn't go on strike for fun.

It was a very serious thing for them and for their wives and families. And then people like you, Robin, think it 's amusing when you try to do their work and make the strike useless. I think it 's shameful the way the middle classes turn against the working class.

ROBIN [*rather out of his depth now*]: But there had to be some sort of train service.

MADGE: Why? If the public had to do without trains altogether, they might realize then that the railwaymen have some grievances.

ERNEST [*sardonically*]: They might. But I've an idea they 'd be too busy with their own grievance—no trains. And you only want a few more railway strikes and then half their traffic will be gone for ever, turned into road transport. And what do your clever railwaymen do then? [*Pauses. Madge is listening, of course, but not quite acknowledging that he had any right to join in.*] And another thing. The working class is out for itself. Then why shouldn't the middle class be out for itself?

MADGE [*coldly*]: Because the middle class must have already been 'out for itself'—as you call it——

ERNEST: Well, what do you call it? Something in Latin?

MADGE [*with chill impatience*]: I say, the middle class must have already been successfully out for itself or it wouldn't be a comfortable middle class. Then why turn against the working class when at last *it* tries to look after itself?

ERNEST [*cynically*]: That 's easy. There 's only so much to go round, and if you take more, then I get less.

MADGE [*rather sharply*]: I 'm sorry; but that 's bad economics as well as bad ethics.

ROBIN [*bursting out*]: But we 'd have Red Revolution—like Russia —if we began to listen to these wild chaps like this J. H. Thomas.

HAZEL [*moving*]: Well, I think it 's all silly. Why can't people agree?

ERNEST [*seeing her going*]: Oh!—Miss Conway——

HAZEL [*her very blank sweetness a snub*]: Oh—yes—good night.

[*She goes out. Ernest looks after her, a rather miserable figure. Then he looks towards Robin just in time to catch a grin on his face before it is almost—but not quite—wiped off.*

MADGE [*to Robin*]: I came in here for something. What was it?

[*Looks about her and through Ernest, whom she obviously dislikes.*

ROBIN [*still a grin lurking*]: Don't ask me.

[*Madge goes, ignoring Ernest, though rather absently than pointedly. Robin, still looking vaguely mocking, lights a cigarette.*

ROBIN [*casually*]: Were you in the army?

ERNEST: Yes. Two years.

ROBIN: What crush?

ERNEST: Army Pay Corps.

ROBIN [*easily, not too rudely*]: That must have been fun for you.

[*Ernest looks as if he is going to make an angry retort when Carol hurries in.*

CAROL: Mr Beevers—— [*As he turns, looking rather sullen, Robin wanders out.*] Oh!—you look *Put Out*.

ERNEST [*grimly*]: That 's about it. Put out!

CAROL [*looking hard at him*]: I believe you 're all hot and angry inside, aren't you?

ERNEST [*taking it as lightly as he can*]: Or disappointed. Which is it?

CAROL: A mixture, I expect. Well, Mr Beevers, you mustn't. You were very nice about the charade—and very good in it too—and I don't suppose you 've ever played before, have you?

ERNEST: No. [*Grimly.*] They didn't go in for those sort of things in my family.

CAROL [*looking at him critically*]: No, I don't think you 've had enough fun. That 's your trouble, Mr Beevers. You must come and play charades again.

ERNEST [*as if setting her apart from the others*]: *You* 're all right, y' know.

[*Mrs C.'s voice, very clear, is heard off saying: 'But surely he 's gone, hasn't he?'*

CAROL: We 're *all* all right, you know. And don't forget that, Mr Beevers.

ERNEST [*liking her*]: You 're a funny kid.

CAROL [*severely*]: I 'm not very funny, and I 'm certainly not a kid——

ERNEST: Oh—sorry!

CAROL [*serenely*]: I 'll forgive you this time.

[*Mrs C. enters with Gerald. She looks rather surprised to see Ernest still there. He notices this.*

ERNEST [*awkwardly*]: I 'm just going, Mrs Conway. [*To Gerald.*] You coming along?

MRS C. [*smoothly, but quickly in*]: No; Mr Thornton and I want to talk business for a few minutes.

ERNEST: I see. Well, good-night, Mrs Conway. And I 'm very pleased to have met you.

MRS C. [*condescendingly gracious*]: Good night, Mr Beevers. Carol, will you——

CAROL [*cheerfully*]: Yes. [*To Ernest, who looks rather bewildered by it, in imitation Western American accent.*] I 'll set you and your hoss on the big trail, pardner.

[*She and Ernest go out. Mrs C. and Gerald watch them go. Then Gerald turns and raises his eyebrows at her. Mrs C. shakes her head. We hear a door slammed to.*

MRS C. [*briskly*]: I 'm sorry if your little friend thought he was being pushed out; but really, Gerald, the children would never have forgiven me if I 'd encouraged him to stay any longer.

GERALD: I 'm afraid Beevers hasn't been a success.

MRS C.: Well, after all, he is—rather—isn't he?

GERALD: I did warn you, y' know. And really he was so desperately keen to meet the famous Conways.

MRS C.: Hazel, you mean.

GERALD: Hazel, especially; but he was determined to know the whole family.

MRS C.: Well, I do think they 're an attractive lot of children.

GERALD: Only outshone by their attractive mother.

MRS C. [*delighted*]: Gerald! I believe you 're going to flirt with me.

GERALD [*who isn't*]: Of course, I am. By the way, there *wasn't* any business you wanted to discuss, was there?

MRS C.: No, not really. But I think you ought to know I 've had another *enormous* offer for this house. Of course, I wouldn't dream of selling it; but it 's nice to know it 's worth so much. Oh!—and young George Farrow would like me to sell him my share in the firm, and says he 's ready to make an offer that would surprise me.

GERALD: I believe it would be pretty handsome too. But, of course, there 's no point in selling out when they 're paying fifteen per cent. And once we 're really out of this wartime atmosphere and the Government restrictions are off, there 's going to be a tremendous boom.

MRS C.: Isn't that lovely? All the children back home, and plenty of money to help them to settle down. And, mind you, Gerald, I shouldn't be a bit surprised if Robin doesn't do awfully well in some business quite soon. *Selling* things, probably—people find him so attractive. Dear Robin! [*Pauses. Then change of tone: more depth and feeling.*] Gerald, it isn't so very long ago that I thought myself the unluckiest woman in the world. If it hadn't been for the children, I wouldn't have wanted to go on living. Sometimes—without *him*—I didn't want to go on living. And now—though, of course, it 'll never be the same without *him*—I suddenly feel I 'm one of the luckiest women in the world. All my children round me, quite safe at last, very happy. [*Robin's voice, shouting, off: 'It 's hide and seek all over the house.'*] Did he say 'all over the house'?

GERALD: Yes.

MRS C. [*calling*]: Not in my room, Robin, please.

ROBIN [*off, shouting*]: Mother's room 's barred.

JOAN'S VOICE [*further off, shouting*]: Who 's going to be It?

ROBIN'S VOICE [*off*]: I am. Mother, come on. Where 's Gerald?

MRS C. [*as she prepares to move*]: Just to hear him shouting about the house again—you don't know what it means to me, Gerald. And you never will know.

[*They go out. As Mrs C. passes switch, she can switch off half the lights in the room, perhaps leaving right half unilluminated and perhaps standard lamp on left half.*

ROBIN'S VOICE [*loud, off*]: I 'll go into the coat cupboard and count fifty. Now then—scatter.

[*After a moment Joan enters, happy and breathless, and after looking about chooses a hiding-place to the right—behind a chair, end of bookcase or sofa, or curtain. No sooner has she installed herself than Alan enters and moves across to that end. She peeps out and sees him.*

JOAN [*imploring whisper*]: Oh—Alan—don't hide in here.

ALAN [*humbly*]: I came specially. I saw you come in.

JOAN: No, please. Go somewhere else.

ALAN [*wistfully*]: You look so pretty, Joan.

JOAN: Do I? That 's sweet of you, Alan.

ALAN: Can I stay then?

JOAN: No, please. It 's *so* much more fun if you go somewhere else. Alan, don't spoil it.

ALAN: Spoil what?

JOAN [*very hurriedly*]: The game—of course. Go on, Alan, there 's a pet. Oh—you can't go out that way now. You 'll have to go out of the window and then round. Go on.

ALAN: All right. [*Climbs out of window, then looks closely at her a moment, then softly*]: Good-bye, Joan.

JOAN [*whispering, surprised*]: Why do you say that?

ALAN [*very sadly*]: Because I feel it *is* good-bye.

[*Robin's voice, humming, is heard off. Alan goes through the curtains at the window. Robin, half humming, half singing a popular song of the period, enters slowly. He moves to the edge of the lighted half, looking about him, still singing. Finally he turns away and begins to move, when Joan joins in the song softly from her hiding-place.*

ROBIN [*with satisfaction*]: A-ha! [*Very quickly he closes the curtains, but as he turns his back, Joan reaches out and turns off the switch of the standard lamp in her corner. The room is now almost in darkness.*] All right, Joan Helford. Where are you, Joan Helford, where are you? [*She is heard to laugh in the darkness.*] You can't escape, Joan Helford, you can't escape. No, no. No escape for little Joan. No escape.

[*They run round the room, then she goes to the window and stands on the seat. He pulls her down, and then, in silhouette against the moonlight we see them embrace and kiss.*

JOAN [*really moved*]: Oh—Robin!

ROBIN [*mocking, but nicely*]: Oh—Joan!

JOAN [*shyly*]: I suppose—you 've been—doing this—to dozens of girls?

ROBIN [*still light*]: Yes, Joan, dozens.

JOAN [*looking up at him*]: I thought so.

ROBIN [*a trifle unsteadily*]: Like that, Joan. But not—like this——

[*Now he kisses her with more ardour.*

JOAN [*deeply moved, but still shy*]: Robin—you *are* sweet.

ROBIN [*after pause*]: You know, Joan, although it 's not so very long since I saw you last, I couldn't believe my eyes to-night—you looked so stunning.

JOAN: It was because I 'd just heard that you 'd come back, Robin.

ROBIN [*who does*]: I don't believe it.

JOAN [*sincerely*]: Yes, it 's true—honestly—I don't suppose you 've ever thought about me, have you?

ROBIN [*who hasn't*]: Yes, I have. Hundreds of times.

JOAN: I have about you too.

ROBIN [*kissing her*]: Joan, you 're a darling!

JOAN [*after pause, whispering*]: Do you remember that morning you went away so early—a year ago?

ROBIN: Yes. But you weren't there. Only mother and Hazel and Kay.

JOAN: I was there too, but I didn't let any of you see me.

ROBIN [*genuinely surprised*]: You got up at that filthy hour just to see me go?

JOAN [*simply*]: Yes, of course. Oh—it was awful—trying to hide and trying not to cry, all at the same time.

ROBIN [*still surprised and moved*]: But Joan, I 'd no idea.

JOAN [*very shyly*]: I didn't mean to give myself away.

ROBIN [*embracing her*]: But Joan—oh, gosh!—it 's marvellous.

JOAN: You don't love me?

ROBIN [*now sure he does*]: Of course I do. Golly, this is great! Joan, we 'll have a scrumptious time!

JOAN [*solemnly*]: Yes, let 's. But Robin—it 's terribly *serious*, y' know.

ROBIN: Oh—yes—don't think I don't feel that, too. But that 's no reason why we shouldn't enjoy ourselves, is it?

JOAN [*crying out*]: No, no, no. Let 's be happy for ever and ever.

[*They embrace fervently, silhouetted against the moonlit window. Now the curtains are suddenly drawn by Carol, who sees them and calls out to people behind her.*

CAROL [*with a sort of cheerful disgust*]: I thought so! They 're in here—*Courting*! I knew there was a catch in this hide and seek.

[*Robin and Joan spring apart but still hold hands as Carol switches on all the lights and comes into the room, followed by Madge and Gerald. Madge is rather excited—and rather untidy, too, as if she had been hiding in some difficult place.*

ROBIN [*grinning*]: Sorry! Shall we start again?

MADGE [*crossing towards window*]: No, thank you, Robin.

CAROL: You 'd better explain to mother. I 'm going to make tea.

[*She goes. Robin and Joan look at one another, then go out. Gerald watches Madge, who now draws the curtains and then returns to him.*

GERALD: Well, Madge, it sounds all right. And I know Lord Robert Cecil 's a fine chap. But I don't quite see where I come into it.

MADGE: Because in a few weeks' time there 'll be a branch of this League of Nations Union here in Newlingham. It 's no use my doing much about it—though I 'll join, of course—because I 'll be away. But you could be organizing secretary or something, Gerald.

GERALD: Don't know that I 'd be much good.

MADGE: You 'd be perfect. You understand business. You know how to handle people. You 'd make a good public speaker. Oh, Gerald—you 're maddening!

GERALD [*smiling, not without affection*]: Why, Madge? What have I done now?

MADGE: We 're friends, aren't we?

GERALD: I consider you one of my very best friends, Madge, and I hope I 'm not flattering myself.

MADGE [*warmly*]: Of course not.

GERALD [*smiling*]: Good! So?

MADGE: You 're not doing enough, Gerald.

GERALD [*mildly*]: I 'm kept pretty busy, y' know.

MADGE: Yes, I don't mean you 're lazy—though I 'm not sure that you aren't a bit, y' know, Gerald—I mean you 're not doing enough with yourself. You 're not *using* yourself to the utmost. I could be *tremendously* proud of you, Gerald.

GERALD: That 's — almost overwhelming — coming from you, Madge.

MADGE: Why from me?

GERALD: Because I know very well that you 've got a very good brain and are a most critical young woman. Rather frightening.

MADGE [*rather more feminine here*]: Nonsense! You don't mean that. I 'd much rather you didn't, y' know.

GERALD: All right, I don't. As a matter of fact, I 'm very fond of you, Madge, but don't often get a chance of showing you that I am.

MADGE [*lighting up at this*]: I 've always been fond of you, Gerald, and that 's why I say I could be tremendously proud of you. [*With more breadth and sweep and real warm enthusiasm.*] We 're going to build up a new world now. This horrible War was probably necessary because it was a great bonfire on which we threw all the old nasty rubbish of the world. Civilization can really begin—at last. People have learned their lesson——

GERALD [*dubiously*]: I hope so.

MADGE: Oh—Gerald—don't be so pessimistic, so cynical——

GERALD: Sorry; but a lawyer—even a young one—sees a lot of human nature in his office. There 's a procession of people with their quarrels and grievances. And sometimes I wonder how much people are capable of learning.

MADGE: That 's because you have to deal with some of the stupidest. But *the* people—all over the world—have learned their lesson. You 'll see. No more piling up armaments. No more wars. No more hate and intolerance and violence. Oh—Gerald—I believe that when we look back—in twenty years' time—we 'll be staggered at the progress that 's been made. Because things happen quickly now——

GERALD: That 's true enough.

MADGE [*begins to orate a little, sincerely*]: And so is all the rest. Under the League, we 'll build up a new commonwealth of all the nations, so that they can live at peace for ever. And Imperialism will go. And so in the end, of course, will Capitalism. There 'll be no more booms and slumps and panics and strikes and lock-outs, because the people themselves, led by the best

brains in their countries, will possess both the political and economic power. There 'll be Socialism at last, a free, prosperous, happy people, all enjoying equal opportunities, living at peace with the whole world.

[*Quotes with great fervour and sincerity:*

Bring me my Bow of burning gold:
Bring me my Arrows of desire:
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of fire.

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant Land. . . .

GERALD [*genuinely moved by her fervour*]: Madge—you 're inspired to-night. I—I hardly recognize you—you 're——

MADGE [*warmly, happily*]: This is the real me. Oh!—Gerald—in this New World we 're going to build up now, men and women won't play a silly little game of cross-purposes any longer. They 'll go forward together—sharing everything——

[*Mrs C. enters with Hazel. Madge breaks off, looking rather untidy. Gerald, who has been genuinely dominated by her, looks round, recovering himself.*

MRS C. [*with maddening maternal briskness*]: Madge, dear, your hair 's all over the place, you 've made your nose all shiny, you 're horribly untidy, and I 'm sure you 're in the middle of a Socialist speech that must be boring poor Gerald.

[*The generous mood is shattered. Madge might have been hit in the face. She looks at her mother, then looks quickly at Gerald, reads something in his face—a sort of withdrawal from her—that is somehow final, and then in complete silence walks straight out of the room.*

MRS C. [*lightly, but knowing what has happened*]: Poor Madge!

HAZEL [*with sudden reproach*]: Mother!

MRS C. [*with wide innocence*]: What, Hazel?

HAZEL [*significantly, indicating Gerald*]: *You* know!

GERALD [*not half the man he was*]: I think—I 'd better be going.

MRS C.: Oh—no, Gerald, don't go. Kay and Carol are making tea and we 're all going to be nice and cosy in here.

GERALD: I fancy it 's rather late, though. [*Glances at his watch, while Hazel slips out.*] After eleven. I *must* go. I 've an early appointment in the morning, and one or two things to look through before I turn in to-night. So—— [*With slight smile. Kay enters with folding legs of small Oriental table. She puts them down, to turn to Gerald, and Mrs Conway arranges them.*] Good night, Kay. Thank you for a very nice party. And now that you 're properly grown-up, I hope you 'll be happy.

KAY [*with a slight smile*]: Thank you, Gerald. Do you think I will?

GERALD [*his smile suddenly vanishing*]: I don't know, Kay. I really don't know.

[*Smiles again and shakes hands. Nods and smiles at Hazel, who enters with tray of tea things.*

MRS C.: No. I 'll see you out, Gerald.

[*They go out. Hazel and Kay can rearrange things a little while talking.*

HAZEL [*thoughtfully*]: I 've always thought it must be much more *fun* being a girl than being a man.

KAY: I 'm never sure. Sometimes men seem quite hopelessly dull, like creatures made out of wood. And then at other times, they seem to have all the fun.

HAZEL [*very seriously for her*]: Kay, just now—this very minute—I wish I wasn't a girl. I 'd like to be a man—one of those men with red faces and loud voices who just don't care what anybody says about them.

KAY [*laughingly*]: Perhaps they do, though.

HAZEL: I 'd like to be one of those who don't.

KAY: Why all this?

[*Hazel shakes her head. Carol and Alan enter with the rest of the tea things.*

CAROL: Alan says he wants to go to bed.

KAY: Oh—no, Alan. Don't spoil it.

ALAN: How could I?

KAY: By going to bed. It 's my birthday, and you 're not to leave us until I say you can.

CAROL [*severely*]: Quite right, Kay. [*Going up to Alan.*] And that 's because we 're very fond of you, Alan, though you are such a chump. You must smoke your pipe too—for cosiness. [*Generally.*] Robin and Joan are courting in the dining-room now. I can see they 're going to be an awful nuisance.

KAY [*as Hazel and Carol settle down*]: If you had to fall in love with somebody, would you like it to be at home or somewhere else?

HAZEL: Somewhere else. Too ordinary at home. On a yacht or the terrace at Monte Carlo or a Pacific Island. Marvellous!

CAROL: That would be using up too many things at once. Greedy stuff!

HAZEL [*coolly*]: I *am* greedy.

CAROL: I should think so. [*To the other two.*] Yesterday morning, she was in the bath, reading *Greenmantle*, and eating nut-milk chocolate.

KAY [*who has been thinking*]: No, it wouldn't be too ordinary, falling in love at home here. It would be best, I think. Suppose you were suddenly unhappy. It would be awful to be desperately unhappy and in love, miles away, in a strange house. . . .

[*Suddenly stops, shivers.*

CAROL: Kay, what 's the matter?

KAY: Nothing.

CAROL: Then it must have been a goose walking over your grave.

[*Kay abruptly turns away from them, going towards the window. Hazel looks at her—as the other two do—then raises her eyebrows at Carol, who shakes her head sternly. Mrs C. enters and looks cheerful at the sight of the tea.*

MRS C. [*cheerfully*]: Now then, let 's have some tea and be nice and cosy together. Where 's Robin?

HAZEL: Spooning with Joan in the dining-room.

MRS C.: Oh!—hasn't Joan gone yet. I really think she might leave us to ourselves now. After all, it 's the first time we 've all been together in this house for—how long? It must be at least three years. I 'll pour out. Come on, Kay. What 's the matter?

CAROL [*in a tremendous whisper, seriously*]: Sh! It 's a *Mood.*

[*But Kay returns, looking rather strained. Her mother looks at her carefully, smiling. Kay manages an answering smile.*

MRS C.: That 's better, darling. What a funny child you are, aren't you?

KAY: Not really, mother. Where 's Madge?

ALAN: She went upstairs.

MRS C.: Go up, dear, and tell her we 're all in here, with some tea, and ask her—very nicely, dear, specially from me—to come down.

HAZEL [*muttering, rather*]: I 'll bet she doesn't.

[*Alan goes. Mrs C. begins pouring out tea.*

MRS C.: This is just like old times, isn't it? And we seem to have waited so long. I ought to tell fortunes again—to-night.

HAZEL [*eagerly*]: Oh—yes—mother, do.

KAY [*rather sharply*]: No.

MRS C.: Kay! Really! Have you had too much excitement to-day?

KAY: No, I don't think so. Sorry, mother. Somehow, I hated the idea of you messing about with those cards to-night. I never did like it much.

CAROL [*solemnly*]: I believe only the Bad Things come true.

MRS C.: Certainly not. I clearly saw Madge's Girton scholarship, you remember. I said she was going to get one, didn't I? And I always said Robin and Alan would come back. I saw it every time in the cards.

Enter Joan and Robin.

JOAN: I—I think I ought to go now, Mrs Conway. [*To Kay, impulsively.*] Thank you so much, Kay, it 's been the loveliest party there ever was. [*Suddenly kisses her with great affection, then she looks solemnly at Mrs C. who is considering the situation.*] I really have had a marvellous time, Mrs Conway.

[*Standing close to her now. Mrs C. looks quite searchingly at her. Joan meets her look quite bravely, though a little shaky.*

ROBIN: Well, mother?

[*Mrs C. looks at him, then at Joan, and suddenly smiles. Joan smiles back.*

MRS C.: Are you two children *serious*?

ROBIN [*boisterously*]: Of course we are.

MRS C.: Joan?

JOAN [*very solemnly, nervously*]: Yes.

MRS C. [*with an air of capitulation*]: I think you 'd better have a cup of tea, hadn't you?

[*Joan flings her arms round Mrs C. and kisses her excitedly.*

JOAN: I 'm so happy.

CAROL [*loudly, cheerfully*]: Tea. Tea. Tea.

[*Passing of cups, etc. Alan enters.*

ALAN: Madge says she 's too tired, mother.

[*Goes and sits down near Kay.*

MRS C.: Well, I think we can get on very nicely without Madge. Kay ought to read us some of the new novel she 's writing——

[*Exclamations of agreement and approval from Joan and Robin and a groan from Hazel.*

KAY [*in horror*]: I couldn't possibly, mother.

MRS C.: I can't see why not. You always expect me to be ready to sing for you.

KAY: That 's different.

MRS C. [*mostly to Robin and Joan*]: Kay 's always so solemn and secretive about her writing—as if she were ashamed of it.

KAY [*bravely*]: I am—in a way. I know it 's not good enough yet. Most of it 's stupid, stupid, *stupid.*

CAROL [*indignantly*]: It isn't, Kay.

KAY: Yes, it is, angel. But it won't always be. It *must* come right if I only keep on trying. And then—you 'll see.

JOAN: Is that what you want to do, Kay? Just to write novels and things?

KAY: Yes. But there 's nothing in simply writing. The point is to be *good*—to be sensitive and sincere. Hardly anybody 's both, especially women who write. But I 'm going to try and be. And whatever happens, I 'm never, *never* going to write except what I want to write, what I feel is true to me, deep down. I won't write just to please silly people or just to make money. I 'll—— [*But she suddenly breaks off. The rest wait and stare.*

ALAN [*encouragingly*]: Go on, Kay.

KAY [*confusedly, dejectedly*]: No—Alan—I 'd finished really—or if

I was going to say something else, I 've forgotten what it was —nothing much——

MRS C. [*not too concernedly*]: You 're sure you 're not over-tired, Kay?

KAY [*hastily*]: No, mother. Really.

MRS C.: I wonder what will have happened to you, Hazel, when Kay 's a famous novelist? Perhaps one of your majors and captains will come back for you soon.

HAZEL [*calmly*]: They needn't. In fact, I 'd rather none of them did.

ROBIN [*teasingly*]: Thinks she can do much better than them.

HAZEL [*calmly*]: I know I can. I shall marry a tall, rather good-looking man, about five or six years older than I am, and he 'll have plenty of money and be very fond of travel, and we 'll go all over the world together, but have a house in London.

MRS C.: And what about poor Newlingham?

HAZEL: Mother, I couldn't possibly spend the rest of my life here. I 'd die. But you shall come and stay with us in London, and we 'll give parties so that people can come and stare at my sister, Kay Conway, the famous novelist.

ROBIN [*boisterously*]: And what about your brother, Robin, the famous—oh! famous something or other, you bet your life.

JOAN [*rather teasingly*]: You don't know what you 're going to do yet, Robin.

ROBIN [*grandly*]: Well, give me a chance. I 've only been out of the Air Force about twelve hours. But—by jingo—I 'm going to do *something*. And none of this starting-at-the-bottom-of-the ladder, pushing-a-pen-in-a-corner business either. This is a time when young men get a chance, and I 'm going to take it. You watch.

MRS C. [*with mock alarm, though with underlying seriousness*]: Don't tell me you 're going to run away from Newlingham, too!

ROBIN [*grandly*]: Oh—well—I don't know about that yet, mother. I might make a start here—there 's some money in the place, thanks to some jolly rotten profiteering, and we 're pretty well known here, so that would help; but I don't guarantee to take root in Newlingham, no fear! Don't be surprised, Hazel, if

I 'm in London before you. Or even before you, Kay. *And* making plenty of money. [*To Hazel.*] Perhaps more than this tall, good-looking chap of yours will be making.

CAROL [*sharply, pointing*]: Hazel will always have plenty of money.

MRS C. [*amused*]: How do you know, Carol?

CAROL: I just do. It came over me suddenly then.

MES C. [*still amused*]: Well now! I thought I was the prophetic one of the family. I suppose it wouldn't be fair if I sent my rival to bed.

CAROL: I should jolly well think it wouldn't. And I 'll tell you another thing. [*Points suddenly to Alan.*] Alan 's the happy one.

ROBIN: Good old Alan!

ALAN: I—rather think—you 're wrong there, y' know, Carol.

CAROL: I 'm not. I *know*.

MRS C.: Now I 'm not going to have this. I 'm the one who *knows* in this family. Now wait a minute. [*Closes her eyes, then half playfully, half seriously.*] Yes. I see Robin dashing about, making lots of money and becoming very important and helping some of you others. And a very devoted young wife by his side. And Hazel, of course, being very grand. And her husband *is* tall and *quite* good-looking, nearly as good-looking as she thinks he is. I believe he comes into a title.

ROBIN: Snob!

MRS C.: I don't see Madge marrying; but then she 'll be headmistress of a big school quite soon, and then she 'll become one of these women who are on all sorts of committees and have to go up to London to give evidence, and so becomes happy and grand that way.

ROBIN: I 'll bet she will, too, good old Madge!

MRS C. [*gaily*]: I 'll go and stay with her sometimes—*very* important, the headmistress's mother—and the other mistresses will be invited in to dine and will listen *very* respectfully while I tell them about my other children——

JOAN [*happily, admiringly*]: Oh—Mrs Conway—I can just imagine that. You 'll have a *marvellous* time.

MRS C. [*same vein*]: Then there 's Carol. Well, of course, Carol will be here with me for years yet——

CAROL [*excitedly*]: I don't know about that. I haven't exactly decided *what* to do yet, there are so many things to do.

JOAN: Oh—Carol—I think you could go on the stage.

CAROL [*with growing excitement*]: Yes, I could, of course, and I 've often thought of it. But I shouldn't want to be on the stage *all* the time—and when I wasn't playing a part, I 'd like to be painting pictures—just for myself, y' know—daubing like mad—with lots and lots and lots of the very brightest paint—tubes and tubes of vermilion and royal blue and emerald green and gamboge and cobalt and Chinese white. And then making all kinds of weird dresses for myself. And scarlet cloaks. And black crêpe de Chine gowns with orange dragons all over them. And cooking! Yes, doing sausages and gingerbread and pancakes. And sitting on the top of mountains and going down rivers in canoes. And making friends with all sorts of people. And I 'd share a flat or a little house with Kay in London, and Alan would come to stay with us and smoke his pipe, and we 'd talk about books and laugh at *ridiculous* people, and then go to foreign countries——

ROBIN [*calling through*]: Hoy, hoy, steady!

MRS C. [*affectionately amused*]: How are you going to *begin* doing all that, you ridiculous child.

CAROL [*excitedly*]: I 'd get it all in somehow. The point is—to live. Never mind about money and positions and husbands with titles and rubbish—I 'm *going to live.*

MRS C. [*who has now caught the infection*]: All right, darling. But wherever you were, all of you, and whatever you were doing, you 'd all come back here sometimes, wouldn't you? I 'd come and see you, but you 'd all come and see me, too, all together, perhaps with wives and husbands and lovely children of your own; not being rich and famous or anything but just being yourselves, as you are now, enjoying our silly old jokes, sometimes playing the same silly old games, all one big happy family. I can see us all here again——

KAY [*a terrible cry*]: Don't!

[*She is now standing, deeply moved. The others stare in silent consternation.*

MRS C.: But what is it, Kay?

[*Kay, still moved, shakes her head. The others exchange puzzled glances, but Carol hurries across, all tenderness, and puts an arm round her.*

CAROL [*going to her with the solemnity of a child*]: I won't bother with any of those things, Kay, really I won't. I 'll come and look after you wherever you go. I won't leave you ever if you don't want me to. I 'll look after you, darling.

[*Kay stops crying. She looks—half smiling—at Carol in a puzzled, wistful fashion. Carol goes back to her mother's side.*

MRS C. [*reproachful but affectionate*]: Really, Kay! What 's the matter? [*Kay shakes her head, then looks very earnestly at Alan.*

KAY [*struggling with some thought*]: Alan . . . please tell me. . . . I can't bear it . . . and there 's something . . . something . . . you could tell me. . . .

ALAN [*troubled, bewildered*]: I 'm sorry, Kay. I don't understand. What is it?

KAY: Something you know—that would make it different—not so hard to bear. Don't you know *yet*?

ALAN [*stammering*]: No—I don't—understand.

KAY: Oh—hurry, hurry, Alan—and then—tell me—and comfort me. Something—of Blake's—came into it——

[*Looks hard at him, then struggling, remembers, saying brokenly:*

Joy . . . and woe . . . are woven fine,
A clothing for the . . . soul divine. . . .

I used to know that verse, too. What was it at the end?

[*Remembers, as before:*

And, when this . . . we rightly know,
Safely through the world we go.

Safely . . . through the world we go. . . .

[*Looks like breaking down again, but recovers herself.*

MRS C. [*almost a whisper*]: Over-excitement. I might have known. [*To Kay, firmly, cheerfully.*] Kay, darling, all this birthday excitement 's been too much. You 'd better go to bed now, dear, and Carol shall bring you some hot milk. Perhaps an aspirin, too, eh? [*Kay, recovering from her grief, shakes her head.*] You 're all right now, aren't you, darling?

KAY [*in muffled voice*]: Yes, mother, I 'm all right.

[*But she turns and goes to the window, pulling back the curtains and looking out.*

MRS C.: I know what might help, it did once before. Robin, come with me.

JOAN [*rather helplessly*]: I ought to go, oughtn't I?

MRS C.: No; stay a few minutes, Joan. Robin.

[*She and Robin go out.*

CAROL [*whispering as she moves*]: She 's going to sing, and I know what it will be.

[*Carol switches out the lights and returns to sit with Hazel and Joan, the three girls making a group, dimly but warmly lit by the light coming in from the hall. Very softly there comes the opening bars of Brahms's 'Wiegenlied.' Alan joins Kay at the window, so that his face, too, like hers, is illuminated by the moonlight.*

ALAN [*quietly through the music*]: Kay.

KAY [*quietly through the music*]: Yes, Alan?

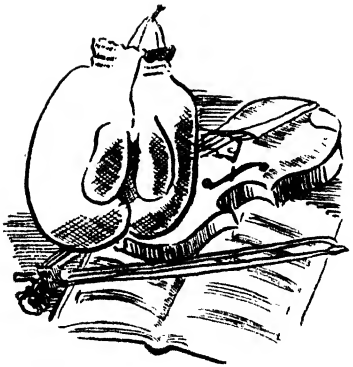
ALAN: There will be—something—I can tell you—one day. I 'll try—I promise.

[*The moonlight at the window shows us Alan looking at her earnestly, and we just catch her answering smile, as the song swells out a little. And then the lights begin to fade, and very soon the three girls are no more than ghosts and all the room is dark, but the moonlight—and the faces of Kay and Alan—still lingers; until at last there is only the faintest glimmer, and the Conways have gone, the curtain is down, and the play over.*

END OF PLAY

GOLDEN BOY

CLIFFORD ODETS



First Published 1938 by
Victor Gollancz Ltd

For

LUISE

ARTIST, WIFE, BEST FRIEND!

This play was first produced in London at the St James's Theatre on 21st June 1938, with the following cast:

TOM MOODY	ROMAN BOHNEN
LORNA MOON	LILLIAN EMERSON
JOE BONAPARTE	LUTHER ADLER
TOKIO	ART SMITH
MR CARP	LEE J. COBB
SIGGIE	WILL LEE
MR BONAPARTE	MORRIS CARNOVSKY
ANNA	PHOEBE BRAND
FRANK BONAPARTE	JOHN O'MALLEY
ROXY GOTTLIEB	ROBERT LEWIS
EDDIE FUSELI	ELIA KAZAN
PEPPER WHITE	HARRY BRATSBURG
MICKEY	MICHAEL GORDON
CALL BOY	NORMAN BROWNE
SAM	GEORGE FRANKLIN
LEWIS	BERT CONWAY
DRAKE	FRANK STEVENSON
DRISCOLL	CHARLES CRISP
BARKER	SANFORD MIESNER

Directed by HAROLD CLURMAN

Settings by MORDECAI GORELIK

INTRODUCTION

BY HAROLD CLURMAN

Golden Boy has already been praised as a good show, common-sense entertainment, and effective melodrama. It has also been blamed for betraying Hollywood influence in its use of terse, typical situations, story motifs which resemble that of either popular fiction or movies, and possibly too in its use of an environment (the prize-fight world) that somehow seems unworthy of the serious purpose professed by its author. There has been, in addition, almost universal admiration for many separate scenes and long passages of brilliant dialogue.

What has not been discussed very fully, however, is the total significance of these divers elements, the meaning that their configuration within one framework might have. And it is this meaning, both in relation to the American scene and to Clifford Odets's work and progress within it, that might be most valuable to examine.

An early draft of *Golden Boy* bore the designation 'a modern allegory.' An allegory, I take it, is an extremely simple but boldly outlined tale in which a series of images is used to suggest a meaning of a more general, and usually a moral, nature. The good allegory will hold one's interest by the sheer directness or vividness of its story, the suggested meaning of which may occur to us only in retrospect, or which may be so organically imbedded in the structure of the story that in absorbing the story details we are almost automatically and spontaneously aware of their meaning. The allegory, in other words, deals in symbols that are so pointed and unmistakable that they transform themselves easily into the truth that their author hopes to express.

Whether or not Clifford Odets has chosen the happiest symbols in *Golden Boy*, it is a fact that his intention was to convey such a truth, and to convey it in terms that would not only avoid preachment, but entertain us by the mere raciness of its presentation.

The story of this play is not so much the story of a prize-fighter as the picture of a great fight—a fight in which we are all involved, whatever our profession or craft. What the golden boy of this allegory is fighting for is a place in the world as an individual; what he wants is to free his ego from the scorn that attaches to 'nobodies' in a society in which every activity is viewed in the light of a competition. He wants success not simply for the soft life—automobiles, etc.—which he talks about, but because the acclaim that goes with it promises him acceptance by the world, peace with it, safety from becoming the victim that it makes of the poor, the alien, the unnoticed minorities. To achieve this success, he must exploit an accidental attribute of his make-up, a mere skill, and abandon the development of his real self.

It so happens that Odets thought of embodying this fight for achievement in terms of the *fight business*. For it is obvious on reflection that though the use of the prize-fight world is central to the play's plot, in the playwright's larger intention it may be considered almost incidental. . . . Further than that, to dramatize the conflict between what a man might be and what he becomes, the author has conceived a youth who is essentially an artist in a modest, unspectacular way. The hero is a violinist; and the fiddle in this allegory is employed as the symbolic antithesis of the fighting game.

The play tells the story then of an artist, or even more generally of a sensitive human being, growing up in a world where personal achievement is measured in terms of that kind of sensational success that our newspapers, our mania for publicity slogans, indeed our whole large-scale production psychology makes into almost the only kind of success we can recognize. To tell this story two worlds are mirrored in the swiftest, barest terms: the artists' world with its humble pleasures, its small but basic contentments, and the business world with its fundamental uncertainty, hysteria, indifference to and impatience with human problems as such, its inevitable ruthlessness, its ultimate killer tendencies.

The home scenes with their funny lines, their petty 'philosophical' disputes between the two old cronies, their healthy naïveté, and even their vulgarity, are not haphazardly designed to show off the author's faculty for salty speech or clever characterization. They are part

of a pattern to illustrate both the sweet human earthiness that the hero leaves for the hard world where success is made, and the slight shabbiness which makes the hero look upon his background as an almost shameful world—futile, unglamorous, lamentably unaware of the advantages it is missing.

What happens to the boy when he makes the compromise with his true nature? Odets's allegory proceeds to show that the boy becomes a commodity, something that can be bought and sold, manœuvred, that he who begins by trying to beat the competitive world by playing its game becomes himself a thing possessed. Odets's hero is literally taken over by a whole ring of exploiters: agents, managers, merchants, and middlemen of every description, including the criminal racketeer. And it is most characteristic of the situation that while the hero tries to use these people for his own ends he despises them, while they who are to a large extent dependent on him resent the intrusion of any of his personal problems into their business considerations.

Beyond this, the activity involved in performing his new task—fighting his way to 'fame and fortune'—finally incapacitates him from ever doing his true work or going back to his old and real self. In realistic terms, he breaks his hands in a fight so that he no longer can hope to play the violin which once meant so much to him. And when he has become a fighter a certain coarseness develops in him, a certain despair. He is denatured to the point of becoming a killer, figuratively and, thanks to a ring accident, literally. In the interim, he has fallen in love, hoping, by a romantic attachment to a woman equally lost in the hurly-burly of the success world, to solve his inner dilemma. But he is a defeated man. He has nothing to live by now. Both worlds are closed to him, and he must die.

It is necessary to repeat the bare features of the story to show the particular scheme, at once ideological and narrative, that gives the play its basic form. If we analyse it even further we shall find that the choice and placement of almost every character fits into this scheme. Take, for example, the momentary presence of the older brother Frank, the C.I.O. organizer. What is his significance here? His wounded head, his quiet retort 'I fight,' his sureness, are all minute indications that there is nothing abhorrent to the author in

the thought of physical struggle as such, but that for people like his hero to have a world in which they might ultimately feel at home in being what they are and to have honour in such a world as well, it is necessary for the Franks to exist and fight. Our hero fights as a lone ego: Frank fights, as he says, together with and for millions of others. Frank is a free man; our hero is destroyed.

If there is any Hollywood influence in this play beyond the mere quick action and stock figures employed, it must be in the fact that in an important sense Hollywood and what it represents have provided the play with its inner theme, its true subject-matter. So many artists to-day stand in relation to Hollywood as our hero in relation to his double career. From this point of view *Golden Boy* might be regarded as Clifford Odets's most subjective play.

Yet with this deeply and subtly subjective material Odets has attempted to write his most objective play—a play that would stand on its own feet, so to speak, as a good show, a fast-moving story, a popular money-making piece. He has tried, in short, to bridge the gap between his own inner problems and the need he feels, like his hero and all of us in the audience, to make 'fame and fortune.' In his own work he has tried to reconcile the fiddle and the fist; he has tried to yield himself a positive result out of a contradiction that kills his hero. He has done this by making the whole thing into a morality which would instruct and read us all a lesson (himself and his audience) even while it amused.

The strength and weakness of the play lie in this fusion of elements, admirable in intention, more varied in effect than in any of his former plays, but still imperfect as a whole. The strength of the present play is shown by its definite audience compact in the theatre; its imperfection comes from a certain lack of concreteness in details of plot and character—an objective flaw due to his mere nodding acquaintance with most of the play's locale, and from an insistence on certain character touches that mislead rather than clarify, such as the reference to the hero's eyes—a subjective flaw due to a reliance on a personal interpretation where a social one is required.

It must be pointed out in conclusion that the technical problem for a playwright—the problem of making himself completely articulate as well as sound—increases with the depth and richness

of his material. The content of Clifford Odets's talent is greater than that of any young playwright in America to-day, and the line of his development must necessarily be arduous and complex. In certain instances, pat advice is more flattering to the critic than helpful to the writer. With Clifford Odets, we should simply be grateful for each of the endeavours that mark his progress. *Golden Boy* is a step ahead in the career of one of the few American playwrights who can be discussed as an artist.

CHARACTERS

TOM MOODY
LORNA MOON
JOE BONAPARTE
TOKIO
MR CARP
SIGGIE
MR BONAPARTE
ANNA
FRANK BONAPARTE
ROXY GOTTLIEB
EDDIE FUSELI
PEPPER WHITE
MICKEY
CALL BOY
SAM
LEWIS
DRAKE
DRISCOLL
BARKER

SCENES

Act I

Scene 1. *The office of Tom Moody.*
Scene 2. *The Bonaparte home. That night.*
Scene 3. *The office. Two months later.*
Scene 4. *A park bench. A few nights later.*
Scene 5. *The Bonaparte home. Midnight, six weeks later.*

Act II

Scene 1. *A gymnasium. Five months later.*
Scene 2. *The park bench. A few nights later.*
Scene 3. *The office. The following day.*
Scene 4. *A dressing-room in the arena. Six weeks later.*

Act III

Scene 1. *The office. Six months later.*
Scene 2. *The dressing-room. The following night.*
Scene 3. *The Bonaparte home. Several hours later.*

ACT I

SCENE I

The small Broadway office of Tom Moody, the fight manager.

The office is scantily furnished, contains desk, chairs, telephone, and couch. With Moody at present is his girl, Lorna Moon. There is a certain quiet glitter about this girl, and if she is sometimes hard, it is more from necessity than choice. Her eyes often hold a soft, sad glance. Likewise, Moody's explosiveness covers a soft, boyish quality, and at the same time he possesses a certain vulnerable quality which women find very attractive.

The time is eighteen months ago.

As the lights fade in, we catch these two at the height of one of their frequent fights.

MOODY: Pack up your clothes and go! Go! Who the hell 's stopping you?

LORNA: You mean it?

MOODY: You brought up the point yourself.

LORNA: No, I didn't!

MOODY: Didn't you say you had a good mind to leave me?

LORNA: No, I said——

MOODY: You said you were going to pack!

LORNA: I said I feel like a tramp and I don't like it. I want to get married, I want——

MOODY: Go home, Lorna, go home! I ain't got time to discuss it. Gimme some air. It 's enough I got my wife on my neck.

LORNA: What does she say?

MOODY: Who?

LORNA: Your wife—your sweet Goddam Monica!

MOODY: She wants five thousand dollars to give me the divorce. [*Lorna laughs.*] I don't see that it 's funny.

LORNA: Look, Tom, this means as much to me as it does to you.

If she 's out of the way we can get married. Otherwise I 'm a tramp from Newark. I don't like the feeling.

MOODY. Lorna, for Pete's sake, use your noodle! When I get rid of Monica, we 'll marry. Now, do I have to bang you on the nose to make you understand?

LORNA: Go to hell! . . . But come back to-night.

[*Moody's answer is to look at her, then smile, then walk to her. They kiss.*

MOODY: If I had the money I 'd buy you something—I don't know what—a big ostrich feather! If Kaplan wins to-night I 'll take you dancing at the park.

LORNA: He won't win.

MOODY: How do you know? *I* don't know—how do *you* know?

LORNA: Are you crazy? Do you think your Mr Kaplan can go ten rounds with the Baltimore Chocolate Drop?

MOODY: How do I know?

LORNA: It 's the Twentieth Century, Tom—no more miracles. [*Moody's face turns worried. Lorna smiles.*] You know what I like about you—you take everything so serious.

MOODY: Who will if I don't? I 've been off the gold standard for eight years. This used to be a gorgeous town. New York was hot with money. Kaplan gets four hundred bucks to-night. In the old days, that was nothing. Those were the days when I had Marty Welch, the heavyweight contender—Cy Webster who got himself killed in a big red Stutz. In '27 and 8 you couldn't go to sleep—the town was crawling with attractions. . . .

LORNA: My mother died in '28.

MOODY: I haven't had a break in years. 'Carry me back to old Virginny'—that 's how I feel. There isn't much of a future.

[*Suddenly despondent, Moody goes back to his desk.*

LORNA: I was fooling.

MOODY: What about?

LORNA: Do you think I 'd leave you?

MOODY: Why not? I 'm an old man. What can I give you?

LORNA: A bang on the nose for a start. But what can I give you?

MOODY: A boy who can fight. Find me a good black boy and I 'll show you a mint.

LORNA: Are good boys so hard to find?

MOODY: Honest to God, you make me sick to my stomach! What do you think I took a trip to Philadelphia? What do you think I went to Chicago? Wasn't I up in Boston for a week? You think good boys are laying around like popcorn? I 'd even take a bantam-weight, if I found one.

LORNA: How about a nice lady fighter with a beard? [*Preparing to leave.*] Well, I 'll see you to-night, Moody.

MOODY [*thoughtfully*]: I 'd give me right eye for a good black boy.

LORNA: Let me have your right eye for a minute. [*She kisses his eye. Moody begins to embrace her—she eludes his grasp.*] That 's to keep you hot. But if the truth were known—'yours till hell freezes over.'

MOODY: I need you, I need you, Lorna—I need you all the time. I 'd like to give you everything you want. Push your mouth over. . . .

[*Lorna holds her face to his; he kisses her. Suddenly a youth is standing at the office door. Lorna sees him and breaks away.*

BOY [*breathing quickly*]: Mr Moody . . .

MOODY [*spinning around*]: Don't you knock when you come in an office?

BOY: Sometimes I knock, sometimes I don't.

MOODY: Say your piece and get the hell out!

BOY: I just ran over from the gym . . .

MOODY: What gym?

BOY: Where Kaplan trains. He just broke his hand. . . . [*Moody stiffens to attention.*] It 's a fact.

MOODY [*grasping the phone*]: Is Tokio over there? My trainer?

BOY: He 's looking after Kaplan.

[*Moody begins to dial the phone but abruptly changes his mind and replaces the phone.*

MOODY: You can put me in the bug-house right now. Moody is the name, folks—step right up and wipe your shoes! Ah, that Kaplan! That phonus bolonus! [*He sits at his desk in despair.*] Now I have to call up Roxy Gottlieb and cancel the match. His club 's in the red as it is.

BOY: I don't think it 's necessary to cancel, Tom.

MOODY [*aware of the Boy for the first time*]: Oh, you don't? Who the hell are you? And who the hell are you to call me Tom? Are we acquainted?

BOY: I wrote you a couple of letters. I can do that stretch.

MOODY: What stretch?

BOY: Why don't you let me take Kaplan's place to-night?

MOODY [*sarcastically*]: Go slow and tell me again . . . what?

BOY [*coolly*]: I can take Kaplan's place. . . .

MOODY: You mean you want to fight the Baltimore Chocolate Drop? *You?* [*The Boy remains silent. Moody comes out from behind his desk and stands face to face with the Boy. With sudden discovery.*] You 're cock-eyed too.

BOY [*quietly*]: Can't you fix it up with Roxy Gottlieb?

MOODY [*suddenly*]: Looka, kid, go home, kid, before I blame Kaplan's glass mitts on *you*. Then you won't like it, and I won't like it, and Miss Moon here, she won't like it.

BOY [*turning to Lorna*]: How do you do, Miss Moon. [*Lorna smiles at the Boy's quiet confidence.*] I need a good manager, Mr Moody. You used to be tops around town—every one says so. I think you can develop me. I can fight. You don't know it, but I can fight. Kaplan 's been through for years. He may be the best fighter in your stable, but he 's a stumble-bum for the younger boys growing up. Why don't you give me this chance, Tom?

MOODY: I don't want you calling me Tom!

[*He glares at the Boy and then returns to the desk and telephone.*

BOY: I 'm waiting for your answer. [*Moody's answer is an exasperated glance as he begins to dial the phone. The Boy half approaches the desk.*] There are forty-three thousand minutes in a month—can't you give me five?

MOODY: I 'll give you this phone in the head in a minute! Who are you? What the hell do you want? Where do you fight?

BOY [*with cool persistence*]: We ought to get together, Tom.

MOODY: I don't want you calling me Tom. You 're brash, you 're fresh, you 're callow—and you 're cock-eyed! In fact, you 're an insult to my whole nature! Now get out! [*Moody turns back to the phone and begins dialling again. The Boy stands there, poised on his toes, not sure of his next move. He turns and looks at Lorna.*

She nods her head and gives him a faint smile of encouragement. On phone.] This is Tom Moody . . . is Tokio there? . . . [*He hangs up the phone and holds the instrument thoughtfully.*] Tokio 's on his way over.

BOY: The Baltimore Chocolate Drop is not as good as you think he is. [*Moody suddenly whirls around and holds the telephone high over his head in a threatening gesture. The Boy steps back lightly and continues.*] I 've studied his style for months; I 've perfected the exact punch to quench his thirst. Did you ever watch closely? [*Acting it out.*] He likes to pull your lead—he hesitates for a second—he pulls your lead—he slips his face away and then he 's in. Suppose you catch that second when he hesitates—he 's open for the punch!

MOODY [*sarcastically*]: And what do you do with his left hook?

BOY [*simply*]: Avoid it.

MOODY [*lowering the phone*]: Looka, you idiot, did you ever hear of Phil Mateo?

BOY: I heard of him.

MOODY: The Chocolate Drop marked him lousy in twelve minutes and ten seconds. Was Kid Peters within your ken? And did you ever hear of Eddie Newton? The Chocolate gave him the blues in two rounds. And Frisco Samuels and Mike Mason . . .

BOY: Did you ever hear of me?

MOODY [*sarcastically*]: No, who are you? I would honestly like to know—who are you?

BOY [*quietly*]: My name is Bonaparte. [*Moody howls with laughter, and even Lorna, sympathetic to the Boy, laughs. The Boy continues.*] I don't think it 's funny. . . .

MOODY: Didn't that name used to get you a little giggle in school? Tell the truth, Bonaparte. Didn't it?

BOY: Call me Joe.

MOODY [*laughing*]: And your eyes. . . . Didn't they used to get a little giggle too?

JOE: You don't seem as intelligent as I thought you were.

LORNA [*to the laughing Moody, seeing the Boy's pain*]: Stop it, Tom.

MOODY [*laughing*]: You can't blame me, Bonaparte. . . . I haven't laughed for years.

JOE: I don't like it. . . . I don't want you to do it. [*Suddenly Joe grabs Moody by the coat lapels. Moody, surprised, shakes him off. At the same time a small, quiet man enters the office. He is Tokio, Moody's trainer.*] I 'm sorry I did that, Tom. We ought to be together, Tom—not apart.

MOODY: Tokio, did you send this kid here?

TOKIO: No.

MOODY: Take him out before I brain him!

[*He storms back to his desk.*

TOKIO [*after looking at the Boy*]: You hear about Kaplan?

MOODY: This idiot told me. It 's the end of everything! I 'm off my top with the whole thing! Kaplan was our meal-ticket. I 'm up to the throat in scandal, blackmail, perjury, alimony, and all points west!

TOKIO [*turning to Joe*]: You oughta be ashamed to show your face in this office.

JOE: If Kaplan's mother fed him milk, he wouldn't have those brittle bones.

MOODY: ? ? ? ?

TOKIO [*to Moody*]: This is the boy who did it to Kaplan.

MOODY: ? ? ?

TOKIO: I went down for an apple and I come back and Kaplan 's sparring with this kid—picked him up in the gym. The next thing I know, Kaplan 's down on the floor with a busted mitt.

JOE [*modestly*]: I took it on the elbow.

MOODY: ! ! [*Silence finally.*

LORNA: Where do you come from, Bonaparte?

JOE: Here.

LORNA: How old are you?

JOE: Twenty-one—to-morrow.

MOODY [*after a look at Lorna*]: Fight much?

JOE: Enough.

MOODY: Where?

JOE [*fabricating*]: Albany, Syracuse . . .

LORNA: Does Roxy Gottlieb know you?

JOE: I never fought at his club.

MOODY [*harshly*]: Does he know you?

JOE: No. [*Tokio and Moody look at each other. The phone rings.*

MOODY [*on the phone*]: Hallo. . . . 'What 's this you hear?'. . . You hear the truth, Roxy. . . . He bust his mitt again. . . . I can't help it if you got *fifty* judgments on your club. . . . The same to you. . . . Your mother too! [*Keeping his eyes on Bonaparte.*] If you tie up your big flabby mouth for a minute I 'll give you some news. I 'm in a position to do you a big favour. I got a replacement—*better* than Kaplan. . . . Bonaparte. . . . No, Bon-a-parte. [*Holds hand over mouthpiece and asks Boy.*] Is that crap?

JOE: No, that 's my name.

MOODY [*back at phone*]: That 's right, like in Napoleon. . . . [*Looks the Boy over appraisingly.*] One hundred and thirty . . .

JOE: Three.

MOODY: Hundred and thirty-three. Your customers 'll eat him up. I 'll bring him right over . . . you can take my word—the kid 's a cock-eyed wonder . . . *your* mother too! [*He hangs up and turns around. Joe is the focus of all eyes.*] It 's revenge on somebody—maybe God.

JOE [*quietly*]: I think you 'll be surprised.

MOODY [*sadly*]: Do your worst, kid. I 've been surprised by experts.

JOE: Don't worry, Tom.

MOODY: Call me Tom again and I 'll break your neck!!

[*Quick fade-out.*

SCENE II

Later that night.

The combination dining and front room of the Bonaparte home. A round dining-room table, littered with newspapers, is lighted from directly above like a billiard table. Plaster busts of Mozart and Beethoven are on the sideboard. A cage of love-birds at the other side of the room. Sitting at the table are two men: Mr Bonaparte, the father of Joe, and a Jewish friend, a Mr Carp, who owns the local candy and stationery store.

As the lights fade in Mr Bonaparte turns his newspaper. Mr Carp is slowly pouring beer from a bottle. He begins to sip it as Siggie, Mr Bonaparte's son-in-law, enters from the kitchen. He is barefooted, dressed

in an undershirt, trousers, and hung-down suspenders. He brings his own beer and glass, which he begins to fill with an expert's eye. In the silence Mr Carp takes a long cool sip of beer combined with a murmur of relish.

CARP [*finally*]: I don't take it easy. That 's my trouble—if could only learn to take it easy . . .

SIGGIE: What do you call it now, what you 're doing?

CARP: Say, it 's after business hours.

SIGGIE: That 's a business? A man who runs a candy store is an outcast of the world. Don't even sell *nickel* candies—*penny* candies!

CARP: And your taxi-cab business makes you higher in the social scale?

SIGGIE: So I 'm an outcast too. Don't change the subject. Like my father-in-law here—he 's always changing the subject when I get a little practical on him. [*Putting his beer on the table and scratching himself under the arms like a monkey.*] You—I 'm talking about you, Mr Bonaparte.

MR BONAPARTE [*suddenly shooting out two words*]: Ha ha!

[*He then resumes his reading.*

SIGGIE: Every time I talk money he gives me that horse laugh. Suppose you bought me a cab—I could pay it off by the week.

MR BONAPARTE [*who talks with an Italian accent*]: I don't go in taxi-cab business.

SIGGIE: I am married to your daughter, and when you do this little thing you do it for her and me together. A cab in two shifts is a big source of profit. Joe takes the night shift. I 'm a married man so you don't expect me to take the night shift.

[*Anna, Siggie's wife, in a night-gown, pokes her head in at the door.*

ANNA: Come to bed, Siggie. You 'll wake up the whole neighbourhood. [*Anna disappears.*

SIGGIE: See? I 'm a married man! You don't expect me to take the night shift.

MR BONAPARTE [*having heard this talk for months*]: No, Siggie . . . no.

SIGGIE: No, what?

MR BONAPARTE: No taxi-cab.

SIGGIE: Don't you wanna help your own family, Foolish? After all, Joe 's your own son—he 's a man, no kid no more——

MR BONAPARTE: To-morrow 's twenty-one.

SIGGIE: If he don't work he 'll turn into a real bum. Look how late he 's staying out at night.

MR BONAPARTE: I don't expecta for Joe to drive taxi.

SIGGIE: He 's got to do something. He can drive like a fire-engine. Why not?

MR BONAPARTE: He gonna do something.

SIGGIE: What? Play his violinsky in the back yards?

ANNA [*looking in at the door again*]: Come to bed, Siggie! Poppa, don't talk to him so he 'll come to bed! [*Anna disappears again.*

SIGGIE [*annoyed*]: Women! Always buzzing around.

[*Mr Bonaparte's only answer is to turn over the newspaper on the table before him.*

CARP [*reflectively*]: Women . . . the less we have to do with women the better. As Schopenhauer says: 'Much ado about nothing . . . the comedy of reproduction.' [*He wags his head bitterly.*] Women . . .!

SIGGIE: I 'm hungry, but I ain't got the heart to go in the kitchen again. It reminds me of how my wife slaves for this family of crazy wops! A fine future for an intelligent woman!

MR BONAPARTE: She 'sa your wife, but also my daughter. She 'sa not so intelligent as you say. Also, *you* are not so intelligent!

SIGGIE: You can't insult me, I 'm too ignorant!

[*Anna now comes fully into the room. She is buxom, energetic, good-natured, and adenoidal.*

ANNA: Poppa, why don't you let Siggie come to bed? Looka him, walking around barefooted.

MR BONAPARTE: I don't stop him. . . .

SIGGIE: Sure he stops me—he stops me every night. I 'm worried. I don't sleep. It 's my Jewish disposition. He don't wanna help me out, your old man. He wants me to drive a company cab and submit to the brutalities of the foremen all my life. I could be in a healthy little enterprise for myself, but your old man don't wanna help me out.

ANNA: Why don't you buy Siggie a cab, poppa? You got the cash.

SIGGIE: Buy it for Siggie and Joe.

ANNA: For Siggie and Joe—it don't have to be a new one.

SIGGIE [*after giving his wife a stabbing glance*]: Sure, even an old one —the way they recondition them nowadays——

MR BONAPARTE: Children, gone to bed.

SIGGIE: Don't tell a lie—how much you got in the bank?

MR BONAPARTE [*with a smile*]: Millions.

SIGGIE: Four thousand?

MR BONAPARTE: No.

SIGGIE: Three? [*Mr Bonaparte shakes his head.*] Three? . . .

ANNA: What 's your business how much he 's got?

SIGGIE: Shut up, duchess! Am I asking for my health? If I wanna take you out of the kitchen, is that the gratitude I get? You and your father, you get my goat! I 'm sore!

ANNA: Come to bed, Siggie!

SIGGIE: 'Come to bed, come to bed!' What the hell 's so special in bed. [*Anna's answer is a warm prolonged giggle.*] It 's a conspiracy around here to put me to bed. I 'm warning one thing: if matters go from worse to worse, don't ever expect me to support this family, I 'm warning!

MR BONAPARTE [*smiling kindly*]: We have-a receive the warning. We are in a conspiracy against you—go to bed.

[*He turns back to his newspaper. Siggie sees he has lost again, and now turns on his wife.*

SIGGIE: Who asked you to stick in your two cents about second-hand cabs? As long as I 'm not gonna get it, I 'll tell you what I want—a first-class job, fresh from the factory.

[*He suddenly swats her on the head with a rolled-up newspaper. She hits him back. He returns her blow.*

ANNA: Don't be so free with your hands! [*He hits her again. She hits him back.*] You got some nerve, Siggie!

SIGGIE [*hitting her again*]: The next time I 'll break your neck— I 'm super-disgusted with you!

MR BONAPARTE [*standing up*]: Stop this . . .

SIGGIE [*turning to him*]: And with you, I 'm super-finished! [*Turning back to his wife.*] Sit out here with this Unholy Alliance—I 'll sleep alone to-night.

[*He starts for the door. Mr Bonaparte puts his arm around Anna, who begins to sob.*

MR BONAPARTE: Hit your wife in private, not in public!

CARP: A man hits his wife, and it is the first step to Fascism!

SIGGIE [*to Carp*]: What are you talking about, my little prince! I love my wife. You don't stop talking how you hate yours. [*Now to Mr Bonaparte.*] And as for you, don't make believe you care!—Do I have to fall on my knees to you otherwise? We wanna raise a family—it 's a normal instinct. Take your arm off her.

ANNA [*suddenly moving over to Siggie*]: That 's right, poppa. He can hit me any time he likes.

SIGGIE [*his arm around her*]: And we don't want you interfering in our affairs unless you do it the right way!

ANNA: That 's right, poppa—you mind your g.d. business!

[*Mr Bonaparte, repressing a smile, slowly sits.*

SIGGIE: In the bed, duchess.

ANNA [*with a giggle*]: Good night.

MR BONAPARTE *and* MR CARP: Good night.

[*She exits. After a belligerent look at the pair at the table, Siggie follows her.*

MR BONAPARTE [*bursting into hushed laughter*]: There 'sa olda remark—never interfere in the laws of nature and you gonna be happy. Love! Ha ha!

CARP [*gloomily*]: Happy? A famous man remarked in the last century: 'Pleasure is negative.'

MR BONAPARTE: I feela good. Like-a to have some music! Hey, where 'sa my boy, Joe? [*Looks at his watch; is surprised.*] One o'clock . . . don't come home yet. Hey, he make-a me worry!

CARP: You think you got worries? Wait, you 're a young man yet. You got a son, Joe. He practised on his fiddle for ten years? He won a gold medal, the best in the city? They gave him a scholarship in the Erickson Institute? To-morrow he 's twenty-one, yeah?

MR BONAPARTE [*emphatically*]: Yeah!

CARP [*leaning forward and dramatically making his point*]: Suppose a war comes? Before you know it, he 's in the army!

MR BONAPARTE: Naw, naw! Whata you say? Naw!

CARP [*wagging his head in imitation*]: Look in the papers! On every side the clouds of war——

MR BONAPARTE: My Joe gotta biga talent. Yesterday I buy-a him present!

[*With a dramatic flourish he brings a violin case out of the bottom part of the sideboard.*

CARP [*as the case is opened*]: It looks like a coffin for a baby.

MR BONAPARTE [*looking down at the violin in its case*]: His teacher help me to picka him.

CARP [*the connoisseur*]: Fine, fine—beautiful, fine! A cultural thing!

MR BONAPARTE [*touching it fondly*]: The mosta golden present for his birthday which I give him to-night.

CARP: How much, if I 'm not getting too personal, did such a violin cost you?

MR BONAPARTE: Twelve hundred dollars.

CARP [*shocked*]: What?

MR BONAPARTE: You 're surprised of me? Well, I waita for this moment many years.

CARP [*sitting*]: Ask yourself a pertinent remark: could a boy make a living playing this instrument in our competitive civilization to-day?

MR BONAPARTE: Why? Don't expect for Joe to be a millionaire. He don't need it, to be millionaire. A good life 'sa possible——

CARP: For men like us, yes. But nowadays is it possible for a young man to give himself to the Muses? Could the Muses put bread and butter on the table?

MR BONAPARTE: No millionaire is necessary. Joe loves music. Music is the great cheer-up in the language of all countries. I learn that from Joe.

[*Carp sighs as Mr Bonaparte replaces the violin in the buffet.*

CARP: But in the end, as Schopenhauer says, what 's the use to try something? For every wish we get, ten remains unsatisfied. Death is playing with us as a cat and her mouse!

MR BONAPARTE: You make-a me laugh, Mr Carp. You say life 'sa bad. No, life 'sa good. Siggie and Anna fight—good! They

love—good! You say life 'sa bad . . . well, is pleasure for you to say so. No? The streets, winter a' summer—trees, cats—I love-a them all. The gooda boys and girls, they who sing and whistle—[*Bursts into a moment of gay whistling.*]—very good! The eating and sleeping, drinking wine—very good! I gone around on my wagon and talk to many people—nice! Howa you like the big buildings of the city?

CARP: Buildings? And suppose it falls? A house fell down last week on Staten Island!

MR BONAPARTE: Ha ha, you make me laugh, ha ha! [*Now enters Frank Bonaparte, oldest son of the family, simple, intelligent, observant.*] Hallo, Frank.

FRANK: Hallo, poppa . . . Mr Carp . . .

CARP [*nodding*]: What 's new in the world?

FRANK [*dropping newspapers to the table, but keeping one for himself*]: Read 'em and weep. March first to-morrow—spring on the way. Flowers soon budding, birds twittering—south wind. . . . Cannons, bombs, and airplane raids! Where 's Joe? Did you give him the fiddle yet?

MR BONAPARTE: No, not in yet. Siggie and Anna sleep. Hungry?

FRANK [*beginning to undress—putting his coat on the back of a chair*]: No, I 'm tired. I 'll see you in the morning, before I leave.

CARP. Going away again?

FRANK: South. Tex-tiles. There 's hell down there in tex-tiles.

[*He sits on the other side of the room and looks at a paper.*

CARP: I don't begin to understand it—tex-tiles! What 's it his business if the workers in tex-tiles don't make good wages!

MR BONAPARTE: Frank, he fighta for eat, for good life. Why not!

CARP: Foolish!

MR BONAPARTE: What ever you got ina your nature to do isa not foolish!

CARP [*flipping over the newspaper*]: For instance—look: playing baseball isn't foolish?

MR BONAPARTE: No, if you like-a to do.

CARP: Look! Four or five pages—baseball—tennisball—it gives you an idea what a civilization! You ever seen a baseball game?

MR BONAPARTE: No.

CARP [*wagging his head*]: Hit a ball, catch a ball . . . believe me, my friend—nonsense!

FRANK: Poppa, where did you say Joe was?

MR BONAPARTE: Don't know——

FRANK: Poppa, you better brace yourself in your chair!

MR BONAPARTE: What?

[*Frank places the paper before Mr Bonaparte. He reads aloud.*

FRANK: Looka this, Joe 's had a fight. 'Flash: Chocolate Drop fails to K.O. new cock-eyed wonder.' Take a look at the picture.

CARP: What?

MR BONAPARTE: What?

FRANK: It 's my little brother Joey, or I don't know a scab from a picket!

MR BONAPARTE: Had a fight? That is foolish—not possible.

FRANK [*pointing with his finger*]: There 's his name—Bonaparte.

MR BONAPARTE [*puzzled*]: Musta be some other boy.

[*Frank suddenly flips over the newspaper. The others immediately see the reason: Joe stands in the entrance, in the shadows.*

JOE [*in the shadows*]: Gee, you 're up late. . . .

MR BONAPARTE: We waita for you.

[*Joe slowly moves into the lights. His face is bruised and over one eye is a piece of adhesive tape.*

JOE [*seeing their looks*]: I had a fight—a boy in the park——

MR BONAPARTE: He hit you?

JOE: I hit him.

MR BONAPARTE: You hurt?

JOE: No.

[*Mr Bonaparte casts a furtive look in the direction of the other men.*

MR BONAPARTE: Whata you fight him for?

JOE: Didn't like what he said to me.

MR BONAPARTE: What he said?

JOE [*evasively*]: It 's a long story and I 'm tired.

MR BONAPARTE [*trying to break a pause of embarrassment*]: I was say to Mr Carp to-morrow is your birthday. How you like to be so old?

JOE: I forgot about that! I mean I forgot for the last few hours. Where do you think I was? Do you want the truth?

FRANK: Truth is cheap. We bought it for two cents.

[*He turns over the paper and shows Joe his own face. Joe looks at the picture, likes it. General silence.*

JOE [*finally, belligerently*]: Well, what are you going to do about it?

MR BONAPARTE [*still puzzled*]: Abouta what?

JOE [*challengingly*]: To-morrow 's my birthday!

FRANK: What 's that got to do with being a gladiator?

JOE [*turning to Frank, with sudden vehemence*]: Mind your business! You don't know me—I see you once a year; what do you know about me?

FRANK [*smiling*]: You 're a dumb kid!

MR BONAPARTE [*starting to his feet*]: Hey, waita one-a minute. What 'sa for this excite-a-ment?

JOE [*hotly*]: I don't want to be criticized! Nobody takes me serious here! I want to do what I want. I proved it to-night I 'm good—I went out to earn some money and I earned! I had a professional fight to-night—maybe I 'll have some more.

CARP: You honest to God had a fight?

JOE [*glaring at Carp*]: Why not?

FRANK [*to Joe*]: No one 's criticizin'.

MR BONAPARTE: That 's right.

JOE [*half sheepishly*]: I don't know why I got so sore. . . .

FRANK: You 're expecting opposition all the time——

MR BONAPARTE: Sit down, Joe—resta you'self.

JOE: Don't want to sit. Every birthday I ever had I sat around. Now 'sa time for standing. Poppa, I have to tell you—I don't like myself, past, present, and future. Do you know there are men who have wonderful things from life? Do you think they 're better than me? Do you think I like this feeling of no possessions? Of learning about the world from Carp's encyclopaedia? Frank don't know what it means—he travels around, sees the world! [*Turning to Frank.*] You don't know what it means to sit around here and watch the months go ticking by! Do you think that 's a life for a boy of my age? To-morrow 's my birthday! I change my life!

MR BONAPARTE: Justa like that?

JOE: Just like that!

FRANK: And what do you do with music?

JOE: Who says I 'm married to music? I take a vacation—the notes won't run away!

FRANK: You 're a mysterious kid. Where did you learn the fighting game?

JOE: These past two years, all over the city—in the gyms——

MR BONAPARTE: Hey, Joe, you sounda like crazy! You no gotta nature for fight. You 're musician. Whata you say, heh? Whata you do?

JOE: Let 's call it a day.

MR BONAPARTE: Isa no true whata I say?——

JOE: That 's all for to-night. [*His lips tightened, he abruptly exits.*

MR BONAPARTE [*calling after him*]: Take a gooda sleep, Joe.

FRANK [*smiling*]: It looks like the gold bug has visited our house.

CARP [*sadly*]: Fortunes! I used to hear it in my youth—the streets of America is paved with gold. Say, you forgot to give him the present.

MR BONAPARTE [*slowly, puzzled*]: I don'ta know . . . he say he gonna fight. . . .

[*Slow fade-out.*

SCENE III

Two months later; Moody's office as seen before.

Moody is pacing back and forth in one of his fuming moods. Those present include Lorna, stretched out on the couch, blowing cigarette smoke into the air; Tokio sitting quietly on the window sill; and Roxy Gottlieb, comfortably spread out in the desk chair, wearing a big white panama hat which he seldom removes.

ROXY: They don't like him. They seen him in five fights already. He 's a clever boy, that Bonaparte, and speedy—but he 's first-class lousy in the shipping department! I bought a piece of him, so I got a right to say it: a mosquito gives out better! Did you read what he wrote in his column, that Drake? He writes he 's a regular 'brain trust.'

LORNA: What 's wrong with that?

ROXY: I 'll tell you in a capsule: the people who 'll pay to watch a

'brain trust' you could fit in a telephone booth! Roxy Gottlieb is telling you!

MOODY: Roxy 's right. Joe pulls his punches. Two months already and he don't throw his hands right and he don't throw them enough.

LORNA: Tom, what do you want the boy to do? You surely know by now he 's not a slugger. His main asset is his science—he 's a student.

ROXY [*loftily*]: Excuse me, Miss Moon. In the prize-fight ring the cash customer don't look for stoodents. Einstein lives in a college—a wonderful man in *his* line! Also, while I think of it, a woman's place is in the hay, not in the office!

MOODY [*indignantly*]: Where do you come off to make a remark like that?

LORNA [*standing up*]: At the moment a woman's place is in the bar —see you later.

[*She looks at the others with a peculiar smile and exits. Moody stares at Roxy, who realizes he has said the wrong thing.*

MOODY: I 'm worried about that boy!

TOKIO: I 'd trust him, Tom. Joe knows his own needs, as he says. Don't ask him to change his style. A style is best when it 's individual, when it comes out of the inner personality and the lay of the muscles and the set of the bones. That boy stands a chance to make the best lightweight since Benny Simon.

ROXY: On *your* nose!

TOKIO: He 's got one of the best defences I ever seen. And speedy as the wind.

MOODY: But he won't fight!

ROXY: A momma doll gives out better!

TOKIO: He 's a peculiar duck—I want him thinking he 's the best thing in shoe-leather.

MOODY: He thinks so now.

TOKIO: I don't like to contradict you, Tom, but he don't. It 's seventy-five per cent front. If you want the goods delivered you have to treat him delicate, gentle—like a girl.

ROXY: Like a girl? Why didn't you say so before?

MOODY: No, Roxy, not you—you just treat him like a human being.

TOKIO: I think we can begin the build-up now.

MOODY: A road tour?

TOKIO: I 'd like to take him around the Middle West, about fifteen bouts.

ROXY [*answering a look from Moody*]: I didn't say no. But will he co-operate?

TOKIO: As soon as I find the password.

MOODY: What 's the password to make this kid go in and slug——that 's the problem. [*There is a knock at the door. Moody calls.*] Yes? [*The door opens and Mr Bonaparte stands there hesitantly.*

MR BONAPARTE [*timidly*]: My name is Joe Bonaparte's father. I come-a to see my son's new friends.

MOODY [*expansively*]: Come in, sit down, Mr Bonaparte.

ROXY [*sitting comfortably*]: Take a seat.

MR BONAPARTE: Am I interrupt?

MOODY: Not at all.

ROXY: What 's the matter with your boy?

TOKIO [*to Mr Bonaparte*]: This is Mr Moody and Mr Gottlieb.

MR BONAPARTE [*sitting*]: Good afternoon.

MOODY: We were just discussing your son.

MR BONAPARTE: I please to hear. I like to find out froma you how 's this boxer business for Joe. Whata good in it for him.

MOODY: Your Joe 's a very clever fighter.

ROXY: Can you take it? We want to make your boy famous—a millionaire, but he won't let us—won't co-operate. How do you like it?

MR BONAPARTE: Why? Whata he do?

ROXY [*going over and facing the old man in a lecturing position*]: I 'll ask *you*. What does he do? What does he do that 's right? *Nothing!* We offer him on a gold platter! Wine, women, and song, to make a figure of speech. We offer him *magnitudes*! . . .

MR BONAPARTE [*waiting*]: Yes——?

MOODY: But he won't fight.

MR BONAPARTE [*puzzled*]: He 'sa fighta for you, no?

ROXY: You 're right—no! Your boy 's got unexplored possibilities—*unexplored*! But you can't make a purse out of somebody's ear.

MOODY [*trying to counteract Roxy's volubility*]: My colleague is trying to say that Joe keeps holding back in the ring.

MR BONAPARTE: Holda back?

TOKIO: He nurses his self——

MOODY: He keeps holding back——

TOKIO: His defence is brilliant——

MOODY: Gorgeous——!

ROXY: But where 's the offence? You take but you can't give. Figure it out—where would you be in a traffic jam? You know how to reverse—but to shift in second or high?—nothing!

MR BONAPARTE [*quietly to Roxy*]: Hey, you talka too much—nobody 's contradicta you.

ROXY [*after a momentary setback*]: 'Everybody 'sa contradicta me!' Even you, and I never met you before.

[*With a reproachful glance he retires to the desk where he sits and sulks.*

MR BONAPARTE [*singling out Tokio as a man to whom he can speak*]: Who are you?

TOKIO: Your son's trainer. . . .

MR BONAPARTE: You interest to helpa my boy?

TOKIO [*respectfully*]: Very much. . . .

MR BONAPARTE: Me too. Maybe not so as plan by these-a gentleman here. I don't say price fight 'sa no good for Joe. Joe like-a to be fame, not feel ashame. . . .

TOKIO: Is Joe afraid of his hands?

MR BONAPARTE: I don't know. You tella me what 'sa what. . . . I don't know price fight. His hand coulda get hurt?

MOODY: Every fighter hurts his hands. Sometimes they break——

TOKIO: They heal up in no time.

ROXY [*flaring out*]: What 's so special about hands? I suppose your kid plays piano!

MR BONAPARTE: Coulda get hurt? Coulda break?!

ROXY: So what?

MR BONAPARTE [*up on his feet*]: Hey, you! I don't like-a you! You no interest in my boy! [*Proudly.*] My boy 'sa besta violin' in New York!

MOODY [*suddenly sickened*]: What . . .?

MR BONAPARTE: Yes, play the violin!

MOODY: That 's it! . . .

ROXY [*anguished by this stupidity*]: If I had hair I 'd tear it out! Five hundred fiddlers stand on Broadway and 48th Street, on the corner, every day, rain or shine, hot or cold. And your boy dares——! [*Turning to Moody.*] How do you like it?

[*He waves his hands in despair and retires to the desk, where he sits in fuming disgusted silence.*

MOODY [*repressing a feeling of triumph*]: Your boy 's afraid of his hands because he fiddles?

MR BONAPARTE: Yes, musta be!

TOKIO: Why did you come and tell us this?

MR BONAPARTE: Because I like-a to help my boy. I like-a for him to try himself out. Maybe thisa better business for him. Maybe not. He mus' try to find out, to see whata he want. . . . I don't know. Don't help Joe to tell him I come here. Don't say it. [*He slowly walks to the door.*

MOODY: That means you won't stand in his way?

MR BONAPARTE: My boy coulda break his hand? Gentleman, I 'ma not so happy as you . . . no! [*He slowly exits.*

MOODY [*joyously*]: I 'm beginning to see the light! Joe's mind ain't made up that the fist is mightier than the fiddle.

ROXY [*bouncing up and down*]: I 'll make up his mind. For the money that 's involved I 'd make Niagara Falls turn around and go back to Canada.

TOKIO: Don't try to bully him into anything.

ROXY: In Roxy Gottlieb he met his match.

MOODY [*explosively*]: What the hell 's the matter with you, Roxy! Sit down a minute! [*Roxy sits.*] As I see it, the job is to handle him gently, to make him see how much we prize him—to kill his doubts with goodness.

ROXY: I got it: the password is honey! . . .

MOODY: Right! The Middle West tour is on! Tokio goes along to build up a real offensive. I take care of the newspapers here. Chris', I thought it was something serious! I 'm getting to feel like 1928 again. Call it intuition: I feel like the Resurrection. [*He gets up and begins to stroll about.*] Once we 're out of the tunnel, with thirty bouts behind us——

ROXY: If you hear a noise it 's my mouth watering——

[*The telephone rings. Moody answers.*

MOODY: Hallo? . . . Yeah. . . . I think he 'll win—— [*Hangs up.*] Who do you think that was? [*Imitating.*] 'Fuseli is speaking.' Eddie Fuseli!

ROXY: Fuseli? What 's he want?

MOODY: Will Joe win against Vincenti Tuesday. Tokio, from now on it 's your job.

TOKIO: I got faith in the boy.

MOODY [*to Roxy*]: I have to ask one thing—when Joe comes over from the gym let me do the talking.

TOKIO: And don't mention music!

Lorna enters.

LORNA: Shh! Here 's Joe.

Joe Bonaparte enters the office. Immediately Moody and Roxy put on their softest kid gloves. Their methods of salesmanship will shortly become so apparent that both Joe and Lorna become suspicious.

MOODY [*slowly circling around*]: Glad to see you, Joe. Joe, you remember in reference to what we were speaking about yesterday? Well . . . we had several friends on the long-distance phone. We 're booking fifteen out-of-town bouts for you. Tough ones, too.

ROXY: To-night I 'm calling my Chicago connections.

MOODY: We talked it over with Tokio and he says—well, tell him what you said, Tokio—tell him the truth.

TOKIO: I think you got a wonderful future.

MOODY [*to Tokio*]: Name the names, Tokio.

TOKIO: Well, I said Benny Simon—as good as Simon, I said.

MOODY: Tokio 's gonna work with you—help you develop a right——

ROXY: And a left! What 's a right without a left?

MOODY: Tokio thinks that when he brings you back you 'll be a contender for Number One.

JOE [*a little defensively*]: Really? . . .

MOODY: But *you* have to help *us* help *you*.

ROXY: Could Webster say it better?

MOODY [*softly singing a siren song, his arm around Joe's shoulder*]: This

job needs gorgeous concentration. All your time and thoughts, Joe. No side lines, no side interests——

JOE [*defensively*]: I don't go out with girls.

MOODY: You 're in the fighting game. It 's like being a priest—your work comes first. What would you rather do than fight?

JOE [*defensively*]: I don't know what you mean.

MOODY [*carefully picking his words*]: Some boys, for instance, like to save their looks. They 'd practically throw the fight to keep their nose intact.

JOE [*smiling wryly*]: My looks don't interest me.

[*Lorna is listening with rapt attention.*

MOODY [*still singing the siren song*]: Then what 's holding you back, Joe? You can tell me, Joe. We 've set up housekeeping together, Joe, and I want you to tell me if you can't cook a steak —it don't matter. We 're married anyway. . . .

JOE [*uneasily*]: Who 's being put to bed?

MOODY: What do you mean?

JOE: I don't like this seduction scene. [*To Tokio.*] What are they after?

TOKIO: They think you 're afraid of your hands.

MOODY: Are you?

JOE: Half. . . .

TOKIO: Why?

ROXY [*bouncing up*]: Tell the truth!

JOE: What truth?

MOODY [*holding back Roxy with a look*]: Are you afraid your hands 'll bust, Joe? [*Joe remains silent.*] What 's a busted hand to a *fighter*? You can't go in and do your best if you 're scared of your mitts . . . can you? You tell me. . . .

JOE: No. . . .

MOODY: Whyn't you give up outside ideas, Joe?

ROXY [*suddenly, in a loud voice to Tokio*]: You shoulda seen that bunch of musicians on 48th Street before. Fiddlers, drummers, cornetists—not a dime in a car-load. Bums in the park! Oh, excuse me, Tom, I was just telling Tokio——

[*Joe is now aware that the others know of the violin. Now he is completely closed to them. Moody sees this. He says to Roxy:*

MOODY [*wrathfully*]: What would you like to say, my fine-feathered friend?

ROXY [*simulating bewilderment*]: What 's the matter? What happened? [*Receiving no answer, he looks around several times and adds, with a shrug:*] I think I 'll run across the street and pick up an eight-cylinder lunch.

MOODY: Sprinkle it with arsenic. Do that for me, for me, sweetheart!!

ROXY [*hurt*]: That 's a fine remark from a friend.

[*He haughtily exits.*

JOE: What do you want, Mr Moody?

MOODY: At the moment, nothing. I 'm puffed out. See you to-morrow over the gym.

JOE: Maybe I won't be there. I might give up fighting as a bad job. I 'm not over-convinced it 's what I want. I can do other things. . . .

TOKIO: I 'll see you to-morrow at the gym, Joe. [*Joe looks at both the men, says nothing, exits.*] That Mr Gottlieb is a case. See you later.

MOODY [*not looking up*]: Okay.

[*Tokio exits. Lorna and Moody are alone. She blows cigarette smoke to the ceiling. Moody puts his feet up on the desk and leans back wearily.*

MOODY [*snorting through his nostrils*]: The password is honey!

LORNA: What was that all about? [*The telephone rings.*

MOODY [*of the ringing bell*]: If that 's for me, tear it up. I ain't in, not even for God.

LORNA [*answering*]: Hallo? . . . [*Putting her hand on the mouthpiece*]. It 's My God—your wife.

[*Moody makes a grimace of distaste but picks up the phone and puts on a sweet voice.*

MOODY: Yes, Monica darling. . . . Yeah . . . you and your support. . . . You 're gonna fifty-buck me to death! . . . Monica, if I had fifty bucks I 'd buy myself a big juicy coffin—what?—so throw me in jail. [*He hangs up the phone.*] Bitch! That 'll be time number three. She means it too.

LORNA: What was that scene with Bonaparte?

MOODY: Sweetheart, the jig is up! Believe it or not, Bonaparte 's a violinist. Maybe he was on the radio. I don't know what the hell he was. His old man came here and told us. His mitts are on his mind. You can't do a thing with a nut like that.

LORNA: Won't he give up the violin?

MOODY: You heard him stalling. This is the end, Lorna. It 's our last chance for a decent life, for getting married—we have to make that kid fight! He 's *more* than a meal ticket—he 's everything we want and need from life!

[*Lorna goes over and slaps him on the back.*

LORNA: Pick up your chin, little man.

MOODY: Don't Brisbane me, Lorna. I 'm licked. I 'm tired. Find me a mouse hole to crawl in. . . .

LORNA: Why don't you ask me when you want something? You got the brains of a flea. Do you want Bonaparte to fight?

MOODY: Do I wanna see to-morrow?

LORNA: I 'll make him fight.

MOODY: How?

LORNA: How? . . . I 'm 'a tramp from Newark,' Tom. . . . I know a dozen ways. . . .

[*Slow fade-out.*

SCENE IV

A few nights later.

Joe and Lorna sit on a bench in the park. It is night. There is carousal music in the distance. Cars ride by in front of the boy and girl in the late spring night. Out of sight a traffic light changes from red to green and back again throughout the scene and casts its colours on the faces of the boy and girl.

LORNA: Success and fame! Or just a lousy living. You 're lucky you won't have to worry about those things. . . .

JOE: Won't I?

LORNA: Unless Tom Moody 's a liar.

JOE: You like him, don't you?

LORNA [*after a pause*]: I like him.

JOE: I like how you dress. The girls look nice in the summer

time. Did you ever stand at the Fifth Avenue Library and watch those girls go by?

LORNA: No, I never did. [*Switching the subject.*] That 's the carousal, that music. Did you ever ride on one of those?

JOE: That 's for kids.

LORNA: Weren't you ever a kid, for God's sake?

JOE: Not a happy kid.

LORNA: Why?

JOE: Well, I always felt different. Even my name was special—Bonaparte—and my eyes. . . .

LORNA: I wouldn't have taken that too serious. . . .

[*There is a silent pause; Joe looks straight ahead.*

JOE: Gee, all those cars . . .

LORNA: Lots of horses trot around here. The rich know how to live. You 'll be rich. . . .

JOE: My brother Frank is an organizer for the C.I.O.

LORNA: What 's that?

JOE: If you worked in a factory you 'd know. Did you ever work?

LORNA [*with a smile*]: No, when I came out of the cocoon I was a butterfly and butterflies don't work.

JOE: All those cars . . . whiz, whiz. [*Now turning less casual.*] Where 's Mr Moody to-night?

LORNA: He goes up to see his kid on Tuesday nights. It 's a sick kid, a girl. His wife leaves it at her mother's house.

JOE: That leaves you free, don't it?

LORNA: What are you hinting at?

JOE: I 'm thinking about you and Mr Moody.

LORNA: Why think about it? I don't. Why should you?

JOE: If you belonged to me I wouldn't think about it.

LORNA: Haven't you got a girl?

JOE: No.

LORNA: Why not?

JOE [*evasively*]: Oh . . .

LORNA: Tokio says you 're going far in the fighting game.

Joe: Music means more to me. May I tell you something?

LORNA: Of course.

JOE: If you laugh I 'll never speak to you again.

LORNA: I 'm not the laughing type.

JOE: With music I 'm never alone when I 'm alone—playing music . . . that 's like saying: 'I am man. I belong here. How do you do, World—good evening!' When I play music nothing is closed to me. I 'm not afraid of people and what they say. There 's no war in music. It 's not like the streets. Does this sound funny?

LORNA: No.

JOE: But when you leave your room . . . down in the street . . . it 's war! Music can't help me there. Understand?

LORNA: Yes.

JOE: People have hurt my feelings for years. I never forget. You can't get even with people by playing the fiddle. If music shot bullets I 'd like it better—artists and people like that are freaks to-day. The world moves fast and they sit around like forgotten dopes.

LORNA: You 're loaded with fireworks. Why don't you fight?

JOE: You have to be what you are——!

LORNA: Fight! See what happens——

JOE: Or end up in the bughouse!

LORNA: God's teeth! Who says you have to be one thing?

JOE: My nature isn't fighting!

LORNA: Don't Tokio know what he 's talking about? Don't Tom? Joe, listen: be a fighter! Show the world! If you made your fame and fortune—and you can—you 'd be anything you want. Do it! Bang your way to the lightweight crown. Get a bank account. Hire a great doctor with a beard—get your eyes fixed——

JOE: What 's the matter with my eyes?

LORNA: Excuse me, I stand corrected. [*After a pause.*] You get mad all the time.

JOE: That 's from thinking about myself.

LORNA: How old are you, Joe?

JOE: Twenty-one and a half, and the months are going fast.

LORNA: You 're very smart for twenty-one and a half 'and the months are going fast.'

JOE: Why not? I read every page of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica.*

My father's friend, Mr Carp, has it. A shrimp with glasses had to do something.

LORNA: I 'd like to meet your father. Your mother dead?

JOE: Yes.

LORNA: So is mine.

JOE: Where do you come from? The city is full of girls who look as if they never had parents.

LORNA: I 'm a girl from over the river. My father is still alive—shucking oysters and bumming drinks somewhere in the wilds of Jersey. I 'll tell you a secret: I don't like you.

JOE [*surprised*]: Why?

LORNA: You 're too sufficient by yourself . . . too inside yourself.

JOE: You like it or you don't.

LORNA: You 're on an island——

JOE: Robinson Crusoe. . . .

LORNA: That 's right—'me, myself, and I.' Why not come out and see the world?

JOE: Does it seem that way?

LORNA: Can't you see yourself?

JOE: No. . . .

LORNA: Take a bird's-eye view; you don't know what 's right or wrong. You don't know what to pick, but you won't admit it.

JOE: Do you?

LORNA: Leave me out. This is the anatomy of Joe Bonaparte.

JOE: You 're dancing on my nose, huh?

LORNA: Shall I stop?

JOE: No.

LORNA: You 're a miserable creature. You want your arm in *gelt* up to the elbow. You 'll take fame so people won't laugh or scorn your face. You 'd give your soul for those things. But every time you turn your back your little soul kicks you in the teeth. It don't give in so easy.

JOE: And what does your soul do in its perfumed vanity case?

LORNA: Forget about me.

JOE: Don't you want——?

LORNA [*suddenly nasty*]: I told you forget it!

JOE [*quietly*]: Moody sent you after me—a decoy! You made a mistake, Lorna, for two reasons. I make up my own mind to fight. Point two, he doesn't know you don't love him——

LORNA: You 're a fresh kid.

JOE: In fact he doesn't know anything about you at all.

LORNA [*challengingly*]: But you do?

JOE: This is the anatomy of Lorna Moon: she 's a lost baby. She doesn't know what 's right or wrong. She 's a miserable creature who never knew what to pick. But she 'd never admit it. And I 'll tell you why you picked Moody!

LORNA: You don't know what you 're talking about.

JOE: Go home, Lorna. If you stay I 'll know something about you. . . .

LORNA: You don't know anything.

JOE: Now 's your chance—go home!

LORNA: Tom loves me.

JOE [*after a long silence, looking ahead*]: I 'm going to buy a car.

LORNA: They make wonderful cars to-day. Even the lizzies——

JOE: Gary Cooper 's got the kind I want. I saw it in the paper, but it costs too much—fourteen thousand. If I found one second-hand——

LORNA: And if you had the cash——

JOE: I 'll get it——

LORNA: Sure, if you 'd go in and really fight!

JOE [*in a sudden burst*]: Tell your Mr Moody I 'll dazzle the eyes out of his head!

LORNA: You mean it?

JOE [*looking out ahead*]: Those cars are poison in my blood. When you sit in a car and speed you 're looking down at the world. Speed, speed, everything is speed—nobody gets me!

LORNA: You mean in the ring?

JOE: In or out, nobody gets me! Gee, I like to stroke that gas!

LORNA: You sound like Jack the Ripper.

JOE [*standing up suddenly*]: I 'll walk you back to your house—your hotel, I mean. [*Lorna stands. Joe continues.*] Do you have the same room?

LORNA [*with sneaking admiration*]: You 're a fresh kid!

JOE: When you 're lying in his arms to-night, tell him, for me, that the next World's Champ is feeding in his stable.

LORNA: Did you really read those Britannia books?

JOE: From A to Z.

LORNA: And you 're only twenty-one?

JOE: And a half.

LORNA: Something 's wrong somewhere.

JOE: I know. . . . *[They slowly walk out as—fade-out.*

SCENE V

The next week.

It is near midnight in the dining-room of the Bonaparte home. An open suit-case rests on the table. Siggie is pouring samples of wine for Lorna Moon. He himself drinks appreciatively. To one side sits Mr Bonaparte, silently, thoughtfully, watchfully—pretending to read the newspaper.

SIGGIE: I was fit to be knocked down with a feather when I heard it. I couldn't believe it until I seen him fight over at the Keystone last week. You never know what somebody 's got in him—like the man with germs—suddenly he 's down in bed with a crisis!

Joe enters with an armful of clothes which he begins to pack in the suit-case.

LORNA: Joe's road tour will do him lots of good.

[Anna enters, and takes off an apron. Silence, in which Siggie and Lorna sip their wine.

ANNA: How do you like that wine, Miss Moon? My father makes better wine than any Eyetalian in New York. My father knows everything—don't you, poppa?

[With a faint smile, Mr Bonaparte shrugs his shoulders.

SIGGIE: We 're thinking of sending the old man to a leper colony. . . .

ANNA: Don't my husband say funny things? Tell her what you told the janitor Tuesday, Siggie.

SIGGIE: Never mind, never mind.

ANNA: You know how I met Siggie? He was a United Cigar Store

clerk, and I walked in for a pack of Camels and the first thing you know he said something funny. It was raw, so I can't say it. He had me laughing from the first. Seven years and I haven't stopped laughing yet. [*She laughs loudly, pleasurably.*] This will be the first time Joe ever went travelling. Was you ever out of New York, Miss Moon?

LORNA: Oh, many times.

ANNA: That 's nice. Far?

LORNA: California, Detroit, Chicago. I was an airplane hostess for two months.

ANNA: That 's nice—it 's a real adventure. I 'd like to fly.

SIGGIE: Stay on the ground! Fly! What for? Who do you know up there? Eagles?

ANNA: It must be a wonderful way to see life.

LORNA [*drinking*]: I 've seen life in all its aspects. [*Mr Bonaparte stands up with a smile, Lorna's eyes follow him as he exits. To Joe.*] I think your father left because he don't like me.

JOE: He likes you.

ANNA: My father likes everybody. He 's a very deep man. My father has more friends than any man alive. But best of all he likes his horse, Dolly, who drives the fruit wagon. My father can't sit still on Sunday afternoon—he has to go see what that horse is doing. [*Her eyes catch sight of the suit-case.*] Joe, you don't know how to pack. [*She starts over to assist him.*

SIGGIE [*querulously*]: Rest the feet awhile, duchess.

ANNA [*explaining her move*]: He don't know how to pack.

[*Beginning to rearrange the suit-case. Mr Bonaparte returns and hands Joe a sweater.*

MR BONAPARTE: You forget your good sweater.

JOE: Thanks. [*Mr Bonaparte sits. Joe looks at him sideways.*

ANNA: When you get out to Chicago, buy yourself some new underwear, Joe. I hear everything 's cheaper in Chicago. Is that right, Miss Moon?

LORNA [*after taking another drink*]: Chicago? I don't know. I was there only one night—I got news that night my mother died. As a matter of fact she kllied herself.

ANNA: That 's very sad.

LORNA: No, my father 's an old drunk son-of-a-bitch. Did you ask me about my father?

MR BONAPARTE [*who has been listening intently*]: Yes. . . .

LORNA: Twice a week he kicked my mother's face in. If I let myself go I 'd be a drunkard in a year.

ANNA: My father never said one bad word to my mother in her whole lifetime. And she was a big nuisance right up till the day she died. She was more like me, more on the stout side. Take care of your health, Joe, when you 're out there. What 's better than health?

LORNA [*turning to Mr Bonaparte, with whom she is self-conscious*]: The question is, do you like me or do you not?

MR BONAPARTE [*with a faint smile*]: Yes. . . .

LORNA: Your family is very cute—— Now do you like me?

MR BONAPARTE: Yes. . . .

LORNA: Why do you look at me that way?

MR BONAPARTE: I don't look special. You gonna travel on those train with my son?

LORNA: God's teeth, no! I 'm a friend of his manager's, that 's all. And a friend of Joe's, too.

MR BONAPARTE: You are in favour for my son to prize-fight?

[*Joe looks at his father sideways and exits.*

LORNA: Certainly. Aren't you?

MR BONAPARTE: Joe has a dream many year to be superior violin'. Was it boyhood thing? Was it real? Or is this real now? Those are-a my question, Miss Moon. Maybe you are friend to my son. Then I aska you, look out for him. Study him. Help him find what 'sa right. Tell me, Miss Moon, when you find out. Help Joe find truthful success. Will you do it for me?

LORNA: I 'll be glad to keep my eye on him.

Joe enters with slippers, which he puts in bag.

ANNA [*to Joe*]: You could stand some new shirts, too.

SIGGIE: Listen, pop, I 'm a natural man, and I don't like wise guys. Joe went in the boxing game 'cause he 's ashamed to be poor. That 's his way to enter a little enterprise. All other remarks are so much alfalfa! [*Joe locks the bag.*

ANNA [*taking the wineglass from Siggie's hand*]: Drunk as a horse-fly!

JOE: It 's getting late and the train won't wait.

SIGGIE [*standing up*]: My God is success. Need I say more? I 'm prouda you, Joe. Come home a champ. Make enough dough to buy your sister's boy friend a new cab. Yes, boys and girls, I 'm looking in that old crystal ball and I see strange and wonderful events! Yazoo!

ANNA [*giggling*]: Drunk as a horse-fly!

JOE [*to Siggie*]: You can't drive us down to the station in this condition.

SIGGIE: What condition?

ANNA: You 're drunk, stupid.

SIGGIE: Shut the face, foolish! Just because I don't hold in my nerves she thinks I 'm drunk. If you hold in your nerves you get ulcers. [*To Joe.*] Get your 'chapow' and let 's go. Or don't you want me to drive you down?

JOE: No.

SIGGIE: I should worry—my cab 's in the garage anyway!

[*Suddenly he sits.*

JOE: We 'd better start. . . .

LORNA [*to Mr Bonaparte*]: I 'd like to have another talk with you some time.

MR BONAPARTE: Come any time in the evening. You are a very lovely girl. [*Mr Carp stands in the doorway.*] Here is Mr Carp to say good-bye.

SIGGIE: Come in, my little prince.

CARP [*coming in and shaking hands with Joe*]: I wish you good luck in every undertaking.

JOE [*uneasily, because his father is looking at him*]: Thanks.

MR BONAPARTE [*introducing Carp*]: Miss Moon, my neighbour, Mr Carp.

CARP: A pleasure to meet you.

LORNA: Hallo.

[*Mr Bonaparte brings the violin case from its hiding-place in the buffet.*

MR BONAPARTE: Joe, I buy you this some time ago. Don't give 'cause I don't know whatta you gonna do. Take him with you

now. Play for yourself. It gonna remember you your old days of musical life.

[*Joe puts down the suit-case and picks up the violin. He plucks the strings, he tightens one of them. In spite of the tension his face turns soft and tender.*

LORNA [*watching intently*]: We better not miss the train—Tokio 's waiting.

MR BONAPARTE [*of violin*]: Take him with you, Joe.

JOE: It 's beautiful. . . .

MR BONAPARTE: Practise on the road.

[*Joe abruptly turns and with the violin exits. The others listen, each standing in his place, as rich violin music comes from the other room. Joe returns. There is silence as he places the violin on the table in front of his father.*

JOE [*in a low voice*]: Return it, poppa.

ANNA [*hugging Joe*]: Have a good trip, Joey.

CARP: Eat in good restaurants. . . .

[*There is silence: the father and son look at each other. The others in the room sense the drama between the two. Finally:*

JOE: I have to do this, poppa.

MR BONAPARTE [*to Joe*]: Be careful fora your hands.

JOE: Poppa, give me the word——

MR BONAPARTE: What word?

JOE: Give me the word to go ahead. You 're looking at yesterday —I see to-morrow. Maybe you think I ought to spend my whole life here—you and Carp blowing off steam.

MR BONAPARTE [*holding himself back*]: Oh, Joe, shut your mouth!

JOE: Give me the word to go ahead!

MR BONAPARTE: Be careful fora your hands!

JOE: I want you to give me the word!

MR BONAPARTE [*crying out*]: *No! No word!* You gonna fight? All right? Okay? but I don't gonna give no word! No!

JOE: That 's how you feel?

MR BONAPARTE: That 'sa how I feel!

[*Mr Bonaparte's voice breaks and there is nothing for father and son to do but to clutch each other in a hasty embrace. Finally Mr Bonaparte disentangles himself and turns away. Joe abruptly*

grabs up his suit-case and exits. Lorna follows, stopping at the door to look back at Mr Bonaparte. In the ensuing silence Anna looks at her father and shakes her head. Siggie suddenly lumbers to his feet and sounds off like a chime.

SIGGIE: Gong gong gong gong!

ANNA: Gee, poppa . . .

SIGGIE: Come to bed, Anna. . . . Anna-banana. . . .

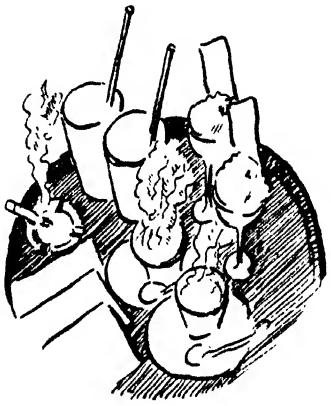
[*Siggie exits.*

ANNA: Gee, poppa . . . *She touches her father sympathetically.*

MR BONAPARTE [*without turning*]: Gone to bed, Anna. . . .

[*Anna slowly exits. Mr Bonaparte now slowly comes back to the table and looks down at the violin.*

CARP [*seating himself slowly*]: Come, my friend . . . we will have a nice talk on a cultural topic. [*Looking at the violin.*] You 'll work around a number of years before you make it up, the price of that fiddle. . . . [*Mr Bonaparte stands looking down at the violin.—Sadly.*] Yes, my friend, what is man? As Schopenhauer says and in the last analysis . . . [*Slow fade-out.*



ACT II

SCENE I

Six months later. Present in the corner of a gymnasium are Roxy, Moody, Lorna, and Tokio. They are looking off right, watching Joe Bonaparte work out with a partner. From off right come the sounds of typical gym activities: the thud of boxing-gloves, the rat-a-tat of the punching bag, and from time to time the general bell which is a signal for rest periods. Tacked on the tin walls are an ad for Everlast boxing equipment, boxing 'card' placards, a soiled American flag, some faded exit signs.

The group watches silently for several seconds after the lights fade in. A boxer, wiping his perspiring body with a towel, passes from left to right and looks back at Lorna's legs. As Roxy watches, his head moves to and fro in the rhythm of Joe's sparring off stage. Roxy nods his head in admiration.

ROXY: Tokio. I gotta give the devil his dues: in the past six months you done a noble job!

TOKIO [*calling off*]: With the left! A long left, Joe! . . .

LORNA [*looking off*]: Joe 's a very good-looking boy. I never quite noticed it before.

[*The general bell sounds; the boxing din off stage stops.*

MOODY [*rubbing his hands enthusiastically*]: 'Let it rain, let it pour! It ain't gonna rain where we 're headed for!'

ROXY: I 'm tickled to death to see the canary birds left his gloves.

TOKIO: He 's the king of all he surveys.

MOODY: Boy, oh, boy, how he surprised them in the Bronx last night! . . . But one thing I can't explain—that knock-out he took in Philly five weeks ago.

TOKIO: That night he was off his feed, Tom. Where do you see speed like that? That 's style, real style—you can't tag him. And he 's giving it with both hands.

MOODY: You don't have to sell me his virtues—I 'm sold. Nevertheless, he got tagged in Philly.

TOKIO: Here 's what happened there: we run into some man when we 're leaving the hotel. Joe goes pale. I ask him what it is. 'Nothing,' he says. But I see for myself—a man with long hair and a violin case. When we turn the corner, he says: 'He 's after me,' he says. As if it 's cops and robbers!

[*The general bell sounds; the fighting din begins again.*

ROXY: A kidnapper?

LORNA: Don't be a fool. He was reminded . . .

ROXY: Speak when spoken to, Miss Moon!

MOODY [*moodily*]: And when he got in the ring that night, he kept his hands in his pockets?

TOKIO: Yeah. I didn't mention this before—it 's not important.

MOODY: But it 's still a danger——

TOKIO: No. No.

MOODY: But anyway, we better get him away from his home. We can't afford no more possible bad showings at this stage of the game. No more apparitions, like suddenly a fiddle flies across the room on wings! [*The group again intently watches Joe off stage.*] Ooh! Did you see that? He 's packing a real Sunday punch in that right. [*Calling off.*] Hit 'im, Joe, hit 'im! [*As an indistinct answer comes back.*] Ha ha, looka that, ha ha ha. . . . [*Now turning to Tokio.*] What 's your idea of a match with Lombardo?

TOKIO: Can you get it?

MOODY: Maybe.

TOKIO: Get it.

MOODY: Sure?

TOKIO: It 's an easy win, on points at least.

[*During the last few lines a thin dark man has entered. His dark hair is greyed at the temples, an inarticulate look in his face. He is Eddie Fuseli, a renowned gambler and gunman.*

EDDIE FUSELI [*approaching the group*]: Hallo.

ROXY [*nervously*]: Hallo, Eddie.

MOODY [*turning*]: I haven't seen you for a dog's age, Fuseli.

EDDIE [*pointing off left*]: You got this certain boy—Bonaparte. I like his looks. American born?

ROXY: Right from here.

EDDIE [*watching Joe off*]: Like a cat, never off his position. He appeals to me. [*To Moody.*] They call you the Brown Fox. What 's your opinion of this boy?

MOODY [*coolly, on guard*]: Possibilities. . . .

EDDIE [*to Tokio*]: What 's your idea?

TOKIO: Tom said it.

EDDIE: Could he get on top?

MOODY [*as above*]: I can't see that far ahead. I don't read palms.

EDDIE: Could I buy a piece?

MOODY: No.

EDDIE [*coolly*]: Could I?

MOODY: No!

EDDIE [*with a certain tenderness*]: I like a good fighter. I like to see you after, Tom. [*Of Lorna.*] This your girl?

LORNA [*pertly*]: I 'm my mother's girl.

EDDIE [*with a small mirthless laugh*]: Ha ha—that 's a hot one.

[*He coolly drifts out of the scene on his cat's feet. The general bell sounds. The din ceases.*

LORNA: What exhaust pipe did he crawl out of?

ROXY: I remember this Eddie Fuseli when he came back from the war with a gun. He 's still got the gun and he still gives me goose pimples!

MOODY: That Fuseli 's a black mark in my book. Every once in a while he shoots across my quiet existence like a roman candle!

LORNA: Sell or don't sell. But better be careful, that guy 's tough!

[*A fighter, robed, hooded, with towel, passes across; a gambling type passes in the opposite direction. Both look at Lorna's legs.*

MOODY: Give a rat like that a finger and you lose a hand before you know it!

TOKIO: Did you know Joe bought a car this morning?

ROXY: What kinda car?

TOKIO: A Deusenberg.

MOODY: One of those fancy speed wagons?

TOKIO [*agreeing*]: It cost him five grand, second-hand.

MOODY [*flaring up*]: Am I a stepchild around here? I 'm glad you tell me now, if only outa courtesy!

ROXY [*indignantly*]: Whatta you keep a think like that incognito for?

MOODY: He drives like a maniac! That time we drove to Long Beach? I almost lost my scalp! We can't let him drive around like that! Boy, he 's getting a bushel of bad habits! We gotta be careful. [*The general bell sounds again: the fighting din stops.*] Here 's the truth: our boy can be the champ in three easy lessons —Lombardo, Fulton, the Chocolate Drop. But we gotta be careful!

LORNA: Here he comes.

Joe enters in bath-robe, taking off his head-gear, which Tokio takes from him.

MOODY [*completely changing his tone*]: You looked very good in there, Joe. You 're going swell and I like it. I 'd work more with that long left if I were you.

JOE: Yes, I was speaking to Tokio about that. I feel my form 's improving. I like to work. I 'm getting somewhere—I feel it better every day.

LORNA: Happy?

JOE [*looking at her intently*]: Every day 's Saturday!

ROXY [*officiously*]: Say, what 's this I hear you bought a Deusenberg?

JOE: What 's your objection—I might have some fun?

ROXY: I got my wampum on you. I like to know your habits. Ain't I permitted?

[*Joe is about to retort hotly when Moody gently takes his arm in an attempt to soothe him.*

MOODY: Wait a minute, Joe. After all we have your welfare at heart. And after all a Deusenberg can go one fifty per——

[*Eddie Fuseli appears above, unseen by the others. He listens.*

JOE: Who 'd want to drive that fast?

MOODY: And since we 're vitally interested in your future——

JOE [*shaking off Moody's arm and saying what is really on his mind*]: If you 're vitally interested in my future, prove it! Get me some fights—fights with contenders, not with dumb-bunny club fighters. Get me some main bouts in the metropolitan area!——

MOODY [*losing his temper*]: For a kid who got kayoed five weeks ago, your mouth is pretty big!

[*The general bell sounds; the din begins.*

JOE: That won't happen again! And how about some mention in the press? Twenty-six bouts—no one knows I 'm alive. This isn't a vacation for me—it 's a profession! I 'm staying more than a week. Match me up against real talent. You can't go too fast for me. Don't worry about autos!

MOODY: We can go too fast! You 're not so good!

JOE [*with a boyish grin*]: Look at the records!

[*Joe abruptly exits. Tokio follows him, first giving the others a glance.*

MOODY: Boy, oh, boy, that kid 's changing!

ROXY: He goes past my head like a cold wind from the river!

LORNA: But you 're gettin' what you want—the contender for the crown!

MOODY: I wish I was sure.

ROXY: Frankenstein! [*Eddie Fuseli saunters down to the others.*

EDDIE: I thought it over, Tom. I like to get a piece of that boy.

MOODY [*angrily*]: I thought it over, too—not for sale. In fact I had a visitation from Jehovah. He came down on the calm waters and He said: 'Let there be unity in the ownership.'

EDDIE [*with a dead face*]: I had a visit, too. He come down in the bar, and He ate a pretzel. And He says: 'Eddie Fuseli, I like you to buy a piece!'

MOODY [*trying to delay the inevitable*]: Why not see me in my office to-morrow?

EDDIE: It 's a cheap office. I get depressed in that office.

MOODY [*finally*]: I can't make any guarantees about the boy.

EDDIE: How do you mean it, Tom?

MOODY: I don't know what the hell he 'll do in the next six months.

ROXY: Eddie, it 's like flap-jacks—up and down—you don't know which side next!

EDDIE [*with his small mirthless laugh*]: Ha ha, that 's a good one. You oughta be on the radio.

MOODY: No, it 's a fact——

ROXY: We had enough headaches already. He 's got a father, but how!

EDDIE: Don't want him to fight?

ROXY: His father sits on the kid's head like a bird's nest!

[*Roxy puts his hand on Eddie's arm.*

EDDIE: Take your hand off. [*Roxy hastily withdraws.*] Let the boy decide. . . .

MOODY: If you buy in?

EDDIE: Let the boy decide.

MOODY: Sure! But if he says no—— [*Before Moody can finish Joe enters. Eddie whirls around and faces Joe, getting his cue from the others. Curiously, Eddie is almost embarrassed before Joe. The bell sounds; the din stops.*] Joe, this is Eddie Fuseli. He 's a man around town——

EDDIE [*facing Joe, his back to the others*]: With good connections——

MOODY: He wantsa buy a piece of you——

EDDIE [*whirling around*]: I will tell him myself. [*Turning back to Joe; with quiet intense dignity.*] I 'm Eyetalian too—Eyetalian born, but an American citizen. I like to buy a piece of you. I don't care for no profit. I could turn it back to—*you* could take my share. But I like a good fighter; I like a good boy who could win the crown. It 's the in-ter-est of my life. It would be a proud thing for me when Bonaparte could win the crown like I think he can.

MOODY [*confidently*]: It 's up to you, Joe, if he buys in.

EDDIE [*wooingly*]: Some managers can't give you what you need——

MOODY: Don't say that!

EDDIE: *Some* managers can't! I 'll see you get good bouts . . . also press notices . . . I know how. You 're a boy who needs that. You decide . . .

[*There is a pause; Joe's eyes flit from Lorna to the others and back to Eddie.*

JOE: Not my half.

EDDIE: Not your half.

JOE: As long as Mr Fuseli doesn't mix in my private life . . . cut it up any way you like. Excuse me, I got a date with Miss Deusenberg. [*The others silently watch Joe exit.*

EDDIE: A date with who?

MOODY [*snorting*]: Miss Deusenberg!

ROXY: An automobile. It gives you an idea what a boy—'Miss Deusenberg'!

EDDIE: How do you like it, Tom? Big bills or little bills?

MOODY: Don't think you 're buying in for an apple and an egg.

EDDIE: Take big bills—they 're new, they feel good. See you in that office to-morrow. [*The bell clangs off stage. Eddie starts off, but abruptly turns and faces Roxy whom he inwardly terrifies.*] It 's a trick you don't know, Roxy; when a bird sits on your head and interferes with the championship, you shoot him off. All kinds of birds. You be surprised how fast they fall on the ground. Which is my intention in this syndicate.

[*He smiles thinly and then moves out of the scene like a cat.*

MOODY: I don't like that!

ROXY: I 'm not so happy myself at the present time. How do you like it with our boy for gratitude? He leaves us here standing in our brevities!

LORNA: What makes you think you 're worthy of gratitude?

MOODY [*to Lorna*]: For Pete's sake pipe down! Are you with us or against us?

ROXY [*haughtily to Moody*]: Take my advice, Tom. Marry her and the first year give her a baby. Then she 'll sit in the corner and get fat and sleepy, and not have such a big mouth! Uncle Roxy 's telling you!

LORNA [*to Roxy*]: Couldn't you keep quiet about the father to that gunman? Go home and let your wife give *you* a baby!

ROXY: A woman shouldn't interfere——

MOODY: Peace, for Chri' sake, peace! Lorna, we 're in a bad spot with Joe. He 's getting hard to manage and this is the time when everything 's gotta be right. I 'm seeing Lombardo's manager to-morrow! Now that gunman 's on my tail. You have to help me. You and I wanna do it like the story books, 'happy ever after'? Then help me.

LORNA: How?

MOODY: Go after the boy. Keep him away from his folks. Get him away from the buggies——

LORNA: How?

MOODY [*impatiently*]: You know how.

ROXY: Now you 're talking.

LORNA [*pointing to Roxy*]: You mean the way I see it on his face?

MOODY: For crying out loud! Where do you come off to make a remark like that?

LORNA: You expect me to sleep with that boy?

MOODY: I could tear your ears off for a remark like that!

ROXY [*discreetly*]: I think I 'll go agrab a corn-beef sandwich.

[*He exits.*

MOODY [*after silence*]: Are you mad?

LORNA [*tight-lipped*]: No.

MOODY [*seductively*]: I 'm not a bad guy, Lorna. I don't mean anything bad. . . . All right, I 'm crude—sometimes I 'm worried and I 'm crude. [*The bell clangs; the boxing din stops.*] But what the hell, my heart 's in the right place. . . . [*Coming behind her and putting his arms around her as she looks ahead.*] Lorna, don't we both want that sun to come up and shine on us? Don't we? Before you know it the summer 'll be here. Then it 's the winter again, and it 's another year again . . . and we 're not married yet. See? . . . See what I mean? . . .

LORNA [*quietly*]: Yes. . . .

MOODY [*beaming, but with uncertainty*]: That sounds like the girl I used to know.

LORNA: I see what you mean. . . .

MOODY [*worried underneath*]: You 're not still mad?

LORNA [*briefly*]: I 'm not mad.

[*But she abruptly cuts out of the scene, leaving Moody standing there.*

MOODY [*shaking his head*]: Boy, I still don't know anything about women! . . . [*Medium fade-out.*

SCENE II

A few nights later. Lorna and Joe sit on the same park bench.

JOE: Some nights I wake up—my heart 's beating a mile a minute! Before I open my eyes I know what it is—the feeling that someone 's standing at my bed. Then I open my eyes . . . it 's gone—ran away!

LORNA: Maybe it 's that old fiddle of yours.

JOE: Lorna, maybe it 's you. . . .

LORNA: Don't you ever think of it any more—music?

JOE: What 're you trying to remind me of? A kid with a Buster Brown collar and a violin case tucked under his arm? Does that sound appetizing to you?

LORNA: Not when you say it that way. You said it different once. . . .

JOE: What 's on your mind, Lorna?

LORNA: What 's on yours?

JOE [*simply*]: You. . . . You 're real for me—the way music was real.

LORNA: You 've got your car, your career—what do you want with me?

JOE: I develop the ability to knock down any one my weight. But what point have I made? Don't you think I know that? I went off to the wars 'cause someone called me a name—because I wanted to be two other guys. Now it 's happening. . . . I 'm not sure I like it.

LORNA: Moody 's against that car of yours.

JOE: I 'm against Moody, so we 're even.

LORNA: Why don't you like him?

JOE: He 's a manager! He treats me like a possession! I 'm just a little silver mine for him—he bangs me around with a shovel!

LORNA: He 's helped you——

JOE: No, Tokio 's helped me. Why don't you give him up? It 's terrible to have just a Tuesday-night girl. Why don't you belong to me every night in the week? Why don't you teach me love? . . . Or am I being a fool?

LORNA: You 're not a fool, Joe.

JOE: I want you to be my family, my life. Why don't you do it, Lorna, why?

LORNA: He loves me.

JOE: I love you!

LORNA [*treading delicately*]: Well. . . . Anyway, the early bird got the worm. Anyway, I can't give him anguish. I . . . I know what it 's like. You shouldn't kick Moody around.

He 's poor compared to you. You 're alive, you 've got yourself —I can't feel sorry for you.

JOE: But you don't love him!

LORNA: I 'm not much interested in myself. But the thing I like best about you . . . you still feel like a flop. It 's mysterious, Joe. It makes me put my hand out.

[*She gives him her hand and he grasps it.*

JOE: I feel very close to you, Lorna.

LORNA: I know. . . .

JOE: And you feel close to me. But you 're afraid——

LORNA: Of what?

JOE: To take a chance! Lorna darling, you won't let me wake you up! I feel it all the time—you 're half dead, and you don't know it!

LORNA [*half smiling*]: Maybe I do. . . .

JOE: Don't smile—don't be hard-boiled!

LORNA [*sincerely*]: I 'm not.

JOE: Don't you trust me?

LORNA [*evasively*]: Why start what we can't finish?

JOE [*fiercely*]: Oh, Lorna, deep as my voice will reach—*listen*!! Why can't you leave him? Why?

LORNA: Don't pull my dress off—I hear you.

JOE: Why?

LORNA: Because he needs me and you don't——

JOE: That 's not true!

LORNA: Because he 's a desperate guy who always starts out with two strikes against him. Because he 's a kid at forty-two and you 're a man at twenty-two.

JOE: You 're sorry for him?

LORNA: What 's wrong with that?

JOE: But what do *you* get?

LORNA: I told you before I don't care.

JOE: I don't believe it!

LORNA: I can't help that!

JOE: What did he ever do for you?

LORNA [*with sudden verve*]: Would you like to know? He loved me in a world of enemies, of stags and bulls! . . . and I loved

him for that. He picked me up in Friskin's hotel on 39th Street. I was nine weeks behind in rent. I hadn't hit the gutter yet, but I was near. He washed my face and combed my hair. He stiffened the space between my shoulder blades. Misery reached out to misery——

JOE: And now you 're dead.

LORNA [*lashing out*]: I don't know what the hell you 're talking about!

JOE: Yes, you do. . . .

LORNA [*withdrawing*]: Ho hum. . . . [*There is silence. The soft park music plays in the distance. The traffic lights change. Lorna is trying to appear impassive. Joe begins to whistle softly. Finally Lorna picks up his last note and continues; he stops. He picks up her note, and after he whistles a few phrases she picks him up again. This whistling duet continues for almost a minute. Then the traffic lights change again.—Beginning in a low voice.*] You make me feel too human, Joe. All I want is peace and quiet, not love. I 'm a tired old lady, Joe, and I don't mind being what you call 'half dead.' In fact it 's what I like. [*Her voice mounting higher.*] The twice I was in love I took an awful beating and I don't want it again! [*Now half crying.*] I want you to stop it! Don't devil me, Joe. I beg you, don't devil me . . . let me alone. . . . [*She cries softly. Joe reaches out and takes her hand; he gives her a handkerchief, which she uses. Finally.*] That 's the third time I cried in my life. . . .

JOE: Now I know you love me.

LORNA [*bitterly*]: Well . . .

JOE: I 'll tell Moody.

LORNA: Not yet. Maybe he 'd kill you if he knew.

JOE: Maybe.

LORNA: Then Fuseli 'd kill him. . . . I guess I 'd be left to kill myself. I 'll tell him. . . .

JOE: When?

LORNA: Not to-night.

JOE: Swiftly, do it swiftly——

LORNA: Not to-night.

JOE: Everything 's easy if you do it swiftly.

LORNA: He went up there to-night with six hundred bucks to bribe her into divorce.

JOE: Oh . . .

LORNA [*sadly*]: He 's a good guy, neat all over—sweet. I 'll tell him to-morrow. I 'd like a drink.

JOE: Let 's drive over the Washington Bridge.

LORNA [*standing*]: No, I 'd like a drink.

JOE [*standing and facing her*]: Lorna, when I talk to you . . . something moves in my heart. Gee, it 's the beginning of a wonderful life! A man and his girl! A warm living girl who shares your room. . . .

LORNA: Take me home with you.

JOE: Yes.

LORNA: But how do I know you love me?

JOE: Lorna . . .

LORNA: How do I know it 's true? You 'll get to be the champ. They 'll all want you, all the girls! But I don't care! I 've been undersea a long time! When they 'd put their hands on me I used to say: 'This isn't it! This isn't what I mean!' It 's been a mysterious world for me! But, Joe, I think you 're it! I don't know why, I think you 're it! Take me home with you.

JOE: Lorna!

LORNA: Poor Tom. . . .

JOE: Poor Lorna!

[*The rest is embrace and kiss and clutching each other. Slow fade-out.*

SCENE III

The next day: the office. Lorna and Moody are present. She has a hangover and is restless.

MOODY: Boy, you certainly double-scotched yourself last night. What 's the idea, you making a career of drinking in your old age? Headache?

LORNA: No.

MOODY: I won't let you walk alone in the park any more, if you do that.

LORNA [*nasty in spite of her best intentions*]: Well, if you stayed away from your wife for a change . . .

MOODY: It 's pretty late to bring that up, isn't it? Tuesday nights——

LORNA: I can't help it—I feel like a tramp. I 've felt like a tramp for years.

MOODY: She was pretty friendly last night.

LORNA: Yeah? Did you sleep with her?

MOODY: What the hell 's the matter with you, Lorna?

[*He goes to her. She shrugs away from him.*

LORNA: Keep off the grass!

[*Moody gives her a quizzical look, goes back to his desk, and from there gives her another quizzical look.*

MOODY: Why do you drink like that?

LORNA [*pointing to her chest*]: Right here—there 's a hard lump and I drink to dissolve it. Do you mind?

MOODY: I don't mind—as long as you keep your health.

LORNA: Aw, Christ!—you and your health talks!

MOODY: You 're looking for a fight, dolly-girl!

LORNA: And you 'll give it?

MOODY [*with a grin*]: No, I 'm feeling too good.

LORNA [*sitting wearily*]: Who left you a fortune?

MOODY: Better. Monica 's seen the light. The truth is she 's begun to run around with a retired brewer and now *she* wants the divorce.

LORNA: Good, now she can begin paying *you*.

MOODY: She goes to Reno in a few months.

LORNA [*moodily*]: I feel like a tramp. . . .

MOODY: That 's what I 'm telling you—— In a few months we 'll be married! [*He laughs with pleasure.*

LORNA: You still want to marry me? Don't I feel like an old shoe to you?

MOODY [*coming to her*]: Honest, you 're so dumb!

LORNA [*touched by his boyishness*]: You 're so sweet. . . .

MOODY: And flash!—I signed Lombardo to-day! They meet six weeks from to-night.

LORNA: Goody. . . .

MOODY [*disappointed by her flippant reaction, but continuing*]: I 'm still not sure what he 'll show with Lombardo. But my present worry is this: help me get that kid straight. Did you speak to him about the driving last night?

LORNA: I didn't see him. . . .

MOODY: It 's very important. A Lombardo win clinches everything. In the fall we ride up to the Chocolate's door and dump him in the gutter! After that . . . I don't like to exaggerate —but the kid 's primed! And you and I—Lorna baby, we 're set. [*Happily.*] What do you think of that?

LORNA [*evasively*]: You draw beautiful pictures.

[*A knock sounds on the door.*

MOODY: Come in.

Siggie enters, dressed in cab-driver's garb.

SIGGIE: Hallo, Miss Moon.

LORNA: Hallo. You know Mr Moody.

SIGGIE [*to Moody*]: Hallo.

MOODY: What can we do for you?

SIGGIE: For me you can't do nothing. I 'm sore. I 'm here against my better instinct. [*Taking a roll of money from his pocket and slapping it on the desk.*] He don't want it—no part of it! My father-in-law don't want it. Joe sent it up—two hundred bucks —enough to choke a horse—but he don't want it!

MOODY: Why?

LORNA: That 's nice he remembers his folks.

SIGGIE: Listen, I got a father-in-law. Nothing 's nice to him but feeding his horse and giving a laugh and slicing philosophical salami across the table! He 's sore because Joe don't come home half the time. As a matter of fact, ain't he suppose to come to sleep no more? The old man 's worried.

MOODY: That 's not my concern.

SIGGIE: I can't see what it 's such a worry. A boy gets in the higher brackets—what 's the worry? He 's got enough clothes now to leave three suits home in the closet. [*Turning to Lorna.*] It won't hurt if he sends me a few passes—tell him I said so.

LORNA: How 's the wife?

SIGGIE: The duchess? Still laughing.

LORNA: When you getting that cab?

SIGGIE: Do me a favour, Miss Moon—tell him I could use this wad for the first instalment.

LORNA: I 'll tell him. Tell Mr Bonaparte I saw Joe last night. He 's fine.

MOODY: I 'll see you get some passes.

SIGGIE: Thanks, thanks to both of you. Adios. [*He exits.*

LORNA: He and his wife are crazy for each other. Married . . . they throw each other around, but they 're like love-birds. Marriage is something special. . . . I guess you have to deserve it.

MOODY: I thought you didn't see Joe last night.

LORNA: I didn't, but why worry his father?

MOODY: The hell with his father.

LORNA: The hell with you!

MOODY [*after a brooding pause*]: I 'll tell you something, Lorna. I 'm not overjoyed the way Joe looks at you.

LORNA: How 's he look?

MOODY: As if he saw the whole island of Manhattan in your face, and I don't like it.

LORNA: You thought of that too late.

MOODY: Too late for what?

LORNA: To bawl me out.

MOODY: Who 's bawling you out?

LORNA: You were about to. Or warn me. I don't need warnings. [*Coasting away from the argument.*] If you saw Joe's father you 'd like him.

MOODY: I saw him.

LORNA: If you knew him you 'd like him.

MOODY: Who wantsa like him? What do I need him for? I don't like him and I don't like his son! It 's a business—Joe does his work, I do mine. Like this telephone—I pay the bill and I use it!

LORNA: He 's human. . . .

MOODY: What 're we fighting about?

LORNA: We 're fighting about love. I 'm trying to tell you how cynical I am. Tell the truth, love doesn't last——

MOODY [*suddenly quietly serious*]: Everything I said about *Joe*—the

opposite goes for you. Love lasts . . . if you want it to. . . . I want it to last. I need it to last. What the hell 's all this struggle to make a living for if not for a woman and a home? I don't kid myself. I know what I need. I need you, Lorna.

LORNA: It has to end. . . .

MOODY: What has to end?

LORNA: Everything.

MOODY: What 're you talking about?

LORNA: I oughta burn. I 'm leaving you. . . .

MOODY [*with a sick smile*]: That 's what you think.

LORNA [*not looking at him*]: I mean it.

MOODY [*as above*]: I mean it too.

LORNA [*after looking at him for a moment*]: You can't take a joke?

MOODY [*not knowing where he stands*]: It all depends. . . . I don't like a joke that pushes the blood down in my feet.

LORNA [*coming to him and putting her arms around his neck*]: That 's true, you 're pale.

MOODY: Who 's the man?

LORNA [*heartsick, and unable to tell him the truth*]: There 's no man, Tom . . . even if there was, I couldn't leave you.

[*She looks at him, unable to say more.*

MOODY [*after a pause*]: How about some lunch? I 'll buy it. . . .

LORNA [*wearily*]: Where would I put it, Tom?

MOODY [*impulsively*]: In your hat!

[*And suddenly he embraces her roughly and kisses her fully and she allows it. Joe walks into the office, Eddie Fuseli behind him. They break apart.*

JOE: The first time I walked in here that was going on. It 's one long duet around here.

MOODY: Hallo.

EDDIE [*sardonically*]: Hallo, partner. . . .

[*Lorna is silent and avoids Joe's looks.*

JOE: How about that fight with Lombardo?

MOODY: Six weeks from to-night.

JOE: He 's gonna be surprised.

MOODY [*coolly*]: No one doubts it.

JOE [*sharply*]: I didn't say it was doubted!

MOODY: Boy, every one 's off his feed to-day. It started with the elevator boy—next it 's Lorna—now it 's you! What are *you* sore about?

LORNA [*trying to turn the conversation; to Joe*]: Siggie was here looking for you. Your father 's worried——

JOE: Not as much as my 'manager' worries me.

MOODY: I don't need you to tell me how to run my business. I 'll book the matches——

JOE: That doesn't worry me.

MOODY: But you and your speeding worries me! First it 's music, then it 's motors. Christ, next it 'll be girls and booze!

JOE: It 's girls already.

LORNA: Joe——

JOE [*bitterly*]: Certainly! By the dozens!

EDDIE: Ha ha—that 's a hot one. Don't ask me which is worst—women or spiders.

LORNA: Siggie left this money—your father won't take it. Siggie says buy him a cab—— [*Joe takes the money.*

EDDIE: Your relative? I 'll get him a cab. [*To Moody.*] How about a flock of bouts for Bonaparte over the summer?

MOODY [*bitterly*]: All he wants—practice fights—to make him a better 'artiste.'

EDDIE: That is what we like. [*Joe is looking at Lorna.*

MOODY: 'We?' Where do *I* come in?

EDDIE: You push the buttons, the *right* buttons. I wanna see Bonaparte with the crown.

MOODY [*sarcastically*]: Your concern touches me deep in my heart!

EDDIE: What 's the matter, Tom? You getting tired?

MOODY [*coolly*]: I get tired, don't you?

EDDIE: Don't get tired, Tom . . . not in a crucial time.

MOODY: Get him to give up that Deusenberg.

EDDIE [*after looking at Joe*]: That 's his fun. . . .

MOODY: His fun might cost your crown.

JOE [*suddenly to Lorna*]: Why did you kiss him?

MOODY [*to Joe*]: It 's about time you shut your mouth and minded your own goddam business. Also, that you took some orders.

JOE [*suddenly savage*]: Who are you, God?

MOODY: Yes! I 'm your maker, you cock-eyed gutter rat! Outa sawdust and spit I made you! I own you—without me you 're a blank! Your insolence is gorgeous, but this is the end! I 'm a son of a gun! What 're you so superior about!

EDDIE: Don't talk so quick, Tom. You don't know . . .

MOODY: I wouldn't take the crap of this last six-eight months from the President himself! Cut me up in little pieces, baby—but not me!

EDDIE [*quietly*]: You could get cut up in little pieces.

MOODY [*retiring in disgust*]: Sisst!

EDDIE: You hear me?

MOODY [*from his desk*]: You wanna manage this boy? Help yourself—do it. I 'll sell my piece for half of what it 's worth. You wanna buy?

EDDIE: You are a funny man.

MOODY: Gimme twenty thousand and lemme out. Ten, I 'll take ten. I got my girl. I don't need crowns or jewels. I take my girl and we go sit by the river and it 's everything.

JOE: What girl?

MOODY: I 'm not on speaking terms with you! [*To Eddie*]. Well?

EDDIE: It would be funny if your arms got broke.

JOE: Wait a minute! Lorna loves me and I love her.

MOODY [*after looking from Joe to Lorna and back*]: Crazy as a bat!

[*He laughs.*

JOE [*frigidly*]: Is it so impossible?

MOODY: About as possible as hell freezes over.

[*He and Joe simultaneously turn to Lorna.*

JOE: Tell him. . . .

LORNA [*looking Joe in the face*]: I love Tom. Tell him what?

[*Joe looks at her intently. Silence. Joe then turns and quietly exits from the office. Moody shakes his head with a grin.*

MOODY: Eddie, I take everything back. I was a fool to get sore—that boy 's a real nutsy-Fagan!

[*He offers his hand. Eddie looks at it and then viciously slaps it down.*

EDDIE [*repressing a trembling voice*]: I don't like no one to laugh at that boy. You call a boy like that a rat? An educated boy?

What is your idea to call him cock-eyed? When you do it in front of me, I say: 'Tom don't like himself' . . . for Bonaparte is a good friend to me . . . you 're a clever manager for him. That 's the only reason I take your slop. Do your business, Tom. [*To Lorna.*] And that goes for you, too! No tricks, Miss Moon!

[*He slowly exits. Moody stands there thoughtfully. Lorna moves to the couch.*

MOODY: I 'm a son of a gun!

LORNA: I feel like I 'm shot from a cannon.

MOODY: Why?

LORNA: I 'm sorry for him.

MOODY: Why? Because he 's a queer?

LORNA: I 'm not talking of Fuseli.

[*Suddenly Lorna's eyes flood with tears. Moody takes her hand, half sensing the truth.*

MOODY: What 's wrong, Lorna? You can tell me. . . .

LORNA: I feel like the wrath of God.

MOODY: You like that boy, don't you?

LORNA: I love him, Tom. [*Slow fade-out.*

SCENE IV

Six weeks later.

A dressing-room before the Lombardo fight. There are a couple of rubbing tables in the room. There are some lockers and a few hooks on which hang pieces of clothing. A door to the left leads to the showers; a door to the right leads to the arena.

As the lights fade in, Mr Bonaparte and Siggie are sitting to one side, on a long wooden bench. Tokio is fussing around in a locker. A fighter, Pepper White, hands already bandaged, is being rubbed down by his trainer-manager, Mickey. Throughout the scene is heard the distant roar of the crowd and the clanging of the bell.

MR BONAPARTE [*after a silence of intense listening*]: What is that noise?

SIGGIE: That 's the roar of the crowd.

MR BONAPARTE: A thousand people?

SIGGIE: Six thousand.

PEPPER WHITE [*turning his head as he lies on his belly*]: Nine thousand.

SIGGIE: That 's right, nine. You 're sitting under nine thousand people. Suppose they fell down on your head? Did you ever think of that?

The outside door opens; Eddie Fuseli enters. The distant bell clangs. Eddie looks around suspiciously, then asks Tokio:

EDDIE: Where 's Bonaparte?

TOKIO: Still with the newspaper men.

EDDIE [*unpleasantly surprised*]: He 's what?

TOKIO: Tom took him upstairs—some sports writers.

EDDIE: A half-hour before a fight? What is Moody trying to do?

TOKIO: Tom 's the boss.

EDDIE: Looka, Tokio—in the future you are gonna take your orders from me! [*Pointing to Siggie and Mr Bonaparte.*] Who is this?

TOKIO: Joe's relatives.

EDDIE [*going over to them*]: Is this his father?

MR BONAPARTE [*sombrely*]: Yes, thisa his father.

SIGGIE: And this is his brother-in-law. Joe sent passes up the house. We just got here. I thought it was in Coney Island—it 's lucky I looked at the tickets. Believe it or not, the old man never seen a fight in his life! Is it human?

EDDIE [*coldly*]: Shut your mouth a minute! This is the Arena—Bonaparte is fighting a good man to-night——

SIGGIE: Ahh, that Lombardo 's a bag of oats?

EDDIE: When Bonaparte goes in there I like him to have one thing on his mind—fighting! I hope you understand me. An' I don't like to find you here when I return! I hope you understand that. . . . [*After a full glance at them Eddie gracefully exits.*

SIGGIE: That 's a positive personality!

TOKIO: That 's Eddie Fuseli.

SIGGIE: Momma-mia! No wonder I smelled gunpowder! [*Turning to Mr Bonaparte.*] Pop, that 's a paradox in human behaviour: he shoots you for a nickel—then for fifty bucks he sends you flowers!

TOKIO [*referring to the distant bell*]: That 's the next bout.

SIGGIE [*to Mr Bonaparte*]: Come on, we don't wanna miss the whole show.

MR BONAPARTE: I waita for Joe.

SIGGIE: You heard what Fuseli said——

MR BONAPARTE [*with sombre stubbornness*]: I gonna wait!

SIGGIE: Listen, pop, you——

MR BONAPARTE [*with sudden force*]: *I say I gonna wait!!*

SIGGIE [*handing Mr Bonaparte a ticket*]: Ticket. [*Shrugging.*] Goodbye, you 're letting flies in!

[*Siggie exits jauntily. Mr Bonaparte silently watches Tokio work over the fighter's materials. A second comes in, puts a pail under the table where Tokio hovers, and exits. Pepper White, his head turned, watches Mr Bonaparte as he hums a song.*

PEPPER: Oh, Sweet Dardanella, I love your harem eyes, Oh, Sweet Dardanella, I 'm a lucky fellow to get such a prize. . . . [*To Mr Bonaparte.*] So you 're Bonaparte's little boy, buddy? Why didn't you say so before? Come over here and shake my hand. [*Mr Bonaparte does so.*] Tell Bonaparte I like to fight him.

MR BONAPARTE: Why?

PEPPER: I like to beat him up.

MR BONAPARTE [*naïvely, not amused*]: Why? You don't like him?

PEPPER: Don't kid me, buddy! [*A call boy looks in at the door.*

CALL BOY: Pepper White! Ready, Pepper White!

[*Call boy exits. Pepper White slips off the table and begins to change his shoes.*

PEPPER [*to Mr Bonaparte*]: When I get back I 'll explain you all the ins and outs. [*A second enters, takes a pail from Mickey, and exits. Lorna enters.—Indignantly.*] Who told girls to come in here?

LORNA: Modest? Close your eyes. Is Moody . . .? [*Suddenly seeing Mr Bonaparte.*] Hallo, Mr Bonaparte!

MR BONAPARTE [*glad to see a familiar face*]: Hallo, hallo, Missa Moon! Howa you feel?

LORNA: What brings you to this part of the world?

MR BONAPARTE [*sombrely*]: I come-a to see Joe. . . .

LORNA: Why, what 's wrong?

MR BONAPARTE [*with a slow shrug*]: He don't come-a to see me. . . .

LORNA: Does he know you 're here?

MR BONAPARTE: No. [*Lorna looks at him sympathetically.*

LORNA [*finally*]: It 's a three-ring circus, isn't it?

MR BONAPARTE: How you mean?

LORNA: Oh, I mean you . . . and him . . . and other people. . . .

MR BONAPARTE: I gonna see how he fight.

LORNA: I owe you a report. I wish I had good news for you, but I haven't.

MR BONAPARTE: Yes, I know . . . he gotta wild wolf inside—eat him up!

LORNA: You could build a city with his ambition to be somebody.

MR BONAPARTE [*sadly, shaking his head*]: No . . . burn down!

Now the outside door is thrust open—the distant bell clangs. Joe enters, behind him Moody and Roxy. Joe stops in his tracks when he sees Lorna and his father together—the last two persons in the world he wants to see now. His hands are already bandaged, a bath-robe is thrown around his shoulders.

JOE: Hallo, poppa. . . .

MR BONAPARTE: Hallo, Joe. . . .

JOE [*turning to Tokio*]: Throw out the girls—this isn't a hotel bedroom!

MOODY: That 's no way to talk!

JOE [*coolly*]: I talk as I please!

MOODY [*angrily*]: The future Mrs Moody——

JOE: I don't want her here!

LORNA: He 's right, Tom. Why fight about it? [*She exits.*

JOE [*to Moody*]: Also, I don't want to see writers again before a fight; it makes me nervous!

ROXY [*softly, for a wonder*]: They 're very important, Joe——

JOE: *I* 'm important! My mind must be clear before I fight. I have to think before I go in. Don't you know that yet?

ROXY [*suddenly*]: Yeah, we know—you 're a stoodent—you gotta look in your notes.

JOE: What 's funny about that? I do, *I do*!!

ROXY [*retreating*]: So I said you do!

[*Pepper White comes forward, about to exit; to Moody.*

PEPPER: How 'bout a bout with Napoleon?

MOODY: On your way, louse!

PEPPER [*with a grin*]: Pickin' setups?

[*Joe suddenly turns and starts for Pepper. Tokio quickly steps in between the two boys.*

TOKIO: Save it for the ring!

[*The two fighters glare at each other. Joe slowly turns and starts back for the table.*

PEPPER: You think he 'll be the champ? Where 'd you ever read about a cock-eye champ?

[*Joe spins around, speeds across the room—Pepper is on the floor! Mickey now starts for Joe. Tokio starts for Mickey. Pepper gets up off the floor and finds himself occupied with Moody. For a moment the fight is general. Eddie Fuseli enters. All see him. The fighting magically stops on the second.*

EDDIE: What 'sa matter? Cowboys and Indians? [*To Pepper.*] Out! [*Mickey and Pepper sullenly exit. To Moody.*] I 'm lookin' for you! You 're a manager and a half! You and your fat friend! [*Meaning Roxy.*] You think this boy is a toy!

JOE: Eddie 's the only one here who understands me.

MOODY: Who the hell wantsa understand you! I got one wish—for Lombardo to give you the business! The quicker he taps you off to-night, the better! You gotta be took down a dozen pegs! I 'm versus you! Completely versus!

EDDIE [*quietly, to Moody*]: Moody, your brains is in your feet! This is how you handle a coming champ, to give him the jitters before a bout? Go out and take some air! . . . [*Seeing Eddie's quiet deadliness, Moody swallows his wrath and exits: Roxy follows with pursed lips.*] Lay down, Joe—take it easy. [*Joe sits on a table.*] Who hurt you, Joe? Someone hurt your feelings?

JOE: Everything 's all right.

EDDIE: Tokio, I put fifty bucks on Bonaparte's nose for you. It 's my appreciation to you. . . .

TOKIO: Thanks.

EDDIE [*of Mr Bonaparte*]: Whatta you want me to do with him?

JOE: Leave him here.

EDDIE: Tell me if you want something. . . .

JOE: Nothing.

EDDIE: Forget that Miss Moon. Stop lookin' down her dress

Go out there and kill Lombardo! Send him out to Woodlawn! Tear his skull off! . . . as I know Bonaparte can do it!

[*Eddie gives Mr Bonaparte a sharp look and exits. There is silence intensified by the distant clang of the bell and the muted roar of the crowd. Tokio looks over at Mr Bonaparte, who has been silently seated on the bench all this time.*

JOE [*not quite knowing what to say*]: How is Anna, poppa?

MR BONAPARTE: Fine.

JOE: Siggie watching the fights?

MR BONAPARTE: Yes. . . .

JOE: You look fine. . . .

MR BONAPARTE: Yes, feela good. . . .

JOE: Why did you send that money back? [*There is no answer.*] Why did you come here? . . . You sit there like my conscience. . . .

MR BONAPARTE: Why you say so?

JOE: Poppa, I have to fight, no matter what you say or think? This is my profession! I 'm out for fame and fortune, not to be different or artistic! I don't intend to be ashamed of my life!

MR BONAPARTE [*standing up*]: Yeah, I understanda you. . . .

JOE: Go out and watch the fights.

MR BONAPARTE [*sombrely*]: Yeah . . . you fight. Now I know . . . isa too late for music. The men musta be free an' happy for music . . . not like-a you. Now I see whatta you are . . . I give-a you every word to fight . . . I sorry for you. . . .

[*Silence. The distant roar of the crowd climbs up and falls down; the bell clangs again.*

TOKIO [*gently*]: I 'll have to ask you to leave, Mr Bonaparte. . . .

MR BONAPARTE [*holding back his tears*]: Joe . . . I hope-a you win every fight.

[*Mr Bonaparte slowly exits. As he opens and closes the door the roar of the crowd swells up for an instant.*

TOKIO: Lay down, Joe. There 's five minutes left to tune you up.

JOE [*in a low voice*]: That 's right, tune me up. . . .

[*Joe stretches out on his stomach and Tokio's busy hands start up the back of his legs.*

TOKIO [*working with steady briskness*]: I never worried less about a boy . . . in my life. You 're a real sweetheart. . . . [*Sud-*

denly Joe begins to cry in his arms. Tokio looks down, momentarily hesitates in his work—then slowly goes ahead with his massaging hands. The Boy continues to shake with silent sobs. Again the bell clangs in the distance.—In a soft caressing voice.] You 're getting good, honey. Maybe I never told you that before. I seen it happen before. [*Continuing the massaging.*] It seems to happen sudden—a fighter gets good. He gets easy and graceful. He learns how to save himself—no energy wasted . . . he slips and slides—he travels with the punch. . . . Oh, sure, I like the way you 're shaping up. [*Tokio continues massaging. Joe is silent. His sobbing stops. After a moment Tokio continues.*] What was you saying about Lombardo's trick? I understood you to say he 's a bull's-eye for a straight shot from the inside. I think you 're right, Joe, but that kind of boy is liable to meet you straight-on in a clinch and give you the back of his head under the chin. Watch out for that.

JOE: He needs a straight punch. . . . [*Joe suddenly sits up on the table, his legs dangling.*] Now I 'm alone. They 're all against me—Moody, the girl . . . you 're my family now, Tokio—you and Eddie! I 'll show them all—nobody stands in my way! My father 's had his hand on me for years. No more. No more for her either—she had her chance! When a bullet sings through the air it has no past—only a future—like me! Nobody, nothing stands in my way!

[In a sudden spurt of feeling Joe starts sparring around lightly in a shadow-boxing routine. Tokio smiles satisfaction. Now the roar of the crowd reaches a frenzied shriek and hangs there. The bell clangs rapidly several times. The roar of the crowd settles down again.

TOKIO: That sounds like the kill.

[Joe draws his bath-robe around him and prances on his toes.

JOE: I 'm a new boy to-night! I could take two Lombardos! [*Vigorously shaking out his bandaged hands above his head.*] Hallelujah! We 're on the Millionaire Express to-night! Nobody gets me! *[The door is thrust open and a call boy shouts.*

CALL BOY: Bonaparte, ready. Bonaparte, ready.

[Pepper White and Mickey enter as the call boy speeds away. Pepper is flushed with victory.

PEPPER [*to Joe*]: Tell me when you want it: you can have it the way I just give it to Pulaski! [*Joe looks Pepper in the face, flexes his hands several times, and suddenly breaks out in laughter, to Pepper's astonishment. Joe and Tokio exit. Pepper throws off his robe and displays his body.*] Look me over—not a mark. How do you like that for class! I 'm in a hurry to grab a cab to Flushing.

MICKEY [*impassively*]: Keep away from her.

PEPPER: I don't even hear you.

MICKEY: Keep away from her!

PEPPER: I go for her like a bee and the flower.

MICKEY [*in a droning prophetic voice*]: The flower is married. Her husband is an excitable Armenian from the Orient. There will be hell to pay! Keep away from her!

[*Now in the distance is heard the indistinct high voice of the announcer.*

PEPPER: You oughta get me a fight with that cock-eye Napoleon—insteada sticking your nose where it don't belong! I could slaughter him in next to nothing.

MICKEY [*impassively*]: If you could make his weight and slaughter him, you 'd be the next world's champion. But you can't make his weight, you can't slaughter him, and you can't be the champ. Why the hell don't you take a shower?

[*The bell clangs—in the arena, Joe's fight is on.*

PEPPER [*plaintively, beginning to dress at his locker*]: If my girl don't like me without a shower, I 'll tell her a thing or two.

MICKEY: If her husband don't tell you first.

The roar of the crowd swells up as the door opens and Mr Bonaparte enters. He is unusually agitated. He looks at Pepper and Mickey and sits on a bench. The roar of the crowd mounts higher than before, then drops.

PEPPER [*to Mr Bonaparte*]: What 's the matter with you?

MR BONAPARTE [*shaking his head*]: Don't like to see. . . .

PEPPER [*delighted*]: Why? Your boy gettin' smeared?

MR BONAPARTE: They fighta for money, no?

MICKEY: No, they 're fighting for a noble cause——

MR BONAPARTE: If they wasa fight for cause or for woman, woulda not be so bad.

PEPPER [*still dressing behind the locker door*]: I fight for money and I like it. I don't fight for under a thousand bucks. Do I, Mickey?

MICKEY: Nope.

PEPPER [*boasting naïvely*]: I didn't fight for under a thousand for five years. Did I, Mickey?

MICKEY [*impassively*]: Nope.

PEPPER: I get a thousand bucks to-night, don't I?

MICKEY: Nope.

PEPPER [*up like a shot*]: How much? How much to-night?

MICKEY: Twelve hundred bucks.

PEPPER: What? Mickey, I oughta bust you in the nose. How many times do I have to say I don't fight for under one thousand bucks! [*To Mr Bonaparte.*] Now you see what I 'm up against with this manager!

MICKEY [*impassively*]: Okay, you 'll get a thousand.

PEPPER: I better, buddy! That 's all I say—I better! [*To Mr Bonaparte.*] I tell him I want to fight your kid and he don't lift a finger. [*The roar of the crowd crescendos and drops down again.*

MICKEY: You don't rate no fight with Bonaparte. [*To Mr Bonaparte, of Pepper.*] He 's an old man, a fossil!

MR BONAPARTE: Who?

MICKEY: Him—he 's twenty-nine.

MR BONAPARTE: Old?

MICKEY: In this business twenty-nine is ancient.

PEPPER: My girl don't think so.

MICKEY: Keep away from her.

[*The roar of the crowd mounts up to a devilish shriek.*

PEPPER: Wow, is your boy getting schlocked!

MR BONAPARTE: My boy isa win.

PEPPER: Yeah, and that 's why you ran away?

MR BONAPARTE: Whatta the difference who 'sa win? Is terrible to see!

PEPPER [*grinning*]: If I wasn't in a hurry I 'd wait around to help pick up your little Joey's head off the floor.

[*He draws on a sport shirt.*

MICKEY [*to Pepper*]: What are you wearing a polo shirt on a winter night for?

PEPPER: For crying out loud, I just bought it! . . . So long, Mr Bonaparte.

MR BONAPARTE: I aska you please—whatta happen to a boy's hands when he fight a longa time?

PEPPER [*holding up his fists*]: Take a look at mine—I got a good pair. See those knuckles? Flat!

MR BONAPARTE: Broke?

PEPPER: Not broke, flat!—pushed down!

MR BONAPARTE: Hurt?

PEPPER: You get used to it.

MR BONAPARTE: Can you use them?

PEPPER: Go down the hall and look at Pulaski.

MR BONAPARTE: Can you open these-a hands?

PEPPER: What for?

MR BONAPARTE [*gently touching the fists*]: So strong, so hard. . . .

PEPPER: You said it, buddy. So long, buddy. [*To Mickey.*] Take my stuff.

MICKEY: Sam 'll take it after. Keep away from her!

[*Pepper looks at Mickey with a sardonic grin and exits, followed by Mickey.*

MR BONAPARTE [*to himself*]: So strong . . . so useless. . . . [*The roar of the crowd mounts up and calls for a kill. Mr Bonaparte trembles. For a moment he sits quietly on the bench. Then he goes to the door of the shower room and looks around at the boxing paraphernalia. In the distance the bell begins to clang repeatedly. Mr Bonaparte stares in the direction of the arena. He goes to the exit door. The crowd is cheering and howling. Mr Bonaparte hesitates a moment at the door and then rapidly walks back to the bench, where he sits. Head cocked, he listens for a moment. The roar of the crowd is heated, demanding, and hateful. Suddenly Mr Bonaparte jumps to his feet. He is in a murderous mood. He shakes his clenched fist in the direction of the noise—he roars aloud. The roar of the crowd dies down. The door opens, Pepper's second, Sam, enters, softly whistling to himself. Deftly he begins to sling together Pepper's paraphernalia.*] What 'sa happen in the fight?

SAM: Knock-out.

MR BONAPARTE: Who?

SAM: Lombardo 's stiff.

[*Mr Bonaparte slowly sits. Softly whistling, Sam exits with the paraphernalia. The outside door is flung open. In come Joe, Tokio, Moody, and Roxy, who is elated beyond sanity. Joe's eyes glitter; his face is hard and flushed. He has won by a knock-out.*

ROXY [*almost dancing*]: My boy! My darling boy! My dear darling boy! [*Silently Joe sits on the edge of the table, ignoring his father after a glance. His robe drops from his shoulders. Roxy turns to Moody.*] How do you like it, Tom? He knocks him out in two rounds!

MOODY [*stiffly, to Joe*]: It 's good business to call the sports writers in——

ROXY: That 's right, give a statement! [*Moody gives Joe a rapid glance and hurriedly exits.*] I 'm collecting a bet on you. All my faith and patience is rewarded.]*As he opens the door he almost knocks over Eddie Fuseli.*] Ha ha! How do you like it, Eddie? Ha ha!

[*He exits. Eddie Fuseli closes the door and stands with his back to it. Tokio moves up to Joe and begins to remove a glove.*

TOKIO [*gently*]: You 're a real sweetheart. . . .

[*Tokio removes the sweaty glove and begins to fumble with the lace of the other one. Joe carefully moves this glove out of Tokio's reach, resting it on his opposite arm.*

JOE [*almost proudly*]: Better cut it off. . . .

[*Mr Bonaparte is watching tensely. Eddie watches from the door.*

TOKIO: . . . Broke? . . .

JOE [*holding the hand out proudly*]: Yes, it 's broke. . . . [*Tokio slowly reaches for a knife. He begins carefully to cut the glove.*] Hallelujah!! It 's the beginning of the world!

[*Mr Bonaparte, lips compressed, slowly turns his head away. Eddie watches with inner excitement and pleasure; Joe has become a fighter. Tokio continues with his work. Joe begins to laugh loudly, victoriously, exultantly—with a deep thrill of satisfaction. Slow fade-out.*

ACT III

SCENE I

Moody's office, six months later. Present are Moody, acting the persuasive salesman with two sports writers, Drake and Lewis; Roxy Gottlieb being helpful in his usual manner; Tokio, to one side, characteristically quiet . . . and Joe Bonaparte. Bonaparte sits on the desk and diffidently swings his legs as he eats a sandwich. His success has added a certain bellicosity to his attitude; it has changed his clothing to silk shirts and custom-made suits.

MOODY: He 's got his own style. He won't rush——

ROXY: Nobody claims our boy 's Niagara Falls.

DRAKE [*a newspaper man for twenty years*]: Except himself!

MOODY: You newspaper boys are right.

DRAKE: We newspaper boys are always right!

MOODY: He won't take chances to-morrow night if he can help it. He 'll study his man, pick out flaws—then shoot at them.

JOE [*casually*]: It won't matter a helluva lot if I win late in the bout or near the opening. The main thing with Bonaparte is to win.

DRAKE [*dryly*]: Well, what does Bonaparte expect to do to-morrow night?

JOE [*as dryly*]: Win.

MOODY: Why shouldn't we have a win from the Chocolate Drop? Look at our record!——

LEWIS [*good-natured and slow*]: We just wanna get an impression——

MOODY: Seventeen knock-outs? Fulton, Lombardo, Guffey Talbot——?

JOE: Phil Weiner . . .

MOODY: Weiner?

ROXY: That 's no powder-puff hitter!

LEWIS: In this fight to-morrow night, can you name the round?

JOE: Which round would you like?

DRAKE: You 're either a genius or an idiot!

MOODY: Joe don't mean——

DRAKE [*sharply*]: Let him talk for himself.

JOE [*getting off the desk*]: Listen, Drake, I 'm not the boy I used to be —the honeymoon 's over. I don't blush and stammer these days. Bonaparte goes in and slugs with the best. In the bargain his brain is *better* than the best. That 's the truth; why deny it?

DRAKE: The last time you met Chocolate you never even touched him!

JOE: It 's almost two years since I 'never even touched him.' Now I know how!

MOODY: What Joe means to say——

DRAKE: He 's the genuine and only modest cock-eyed wonder!

JOE: What good is modesty? I 'm a fighter! The whole essence of prize-fighting is immodesty! 'I 'm better than you are—I 'll prove it by breaking your face in!' What do you expect? A conscience and a meek smile? I don't believe that bull the meek 'll inherit the earth!

DRAKE: Oh, so it 's the earth you want!

JOE: I know what I want—that 's my business! But I don't want your guff!

DRAKE: I have two sons of my own—I like boys. But I 'm a son-of-a-bitch if I can stomach your conceit!

MOODY [*trying to save the situation*]: They serve a helluva rum Collins across the street——

DRAKE: Bonaparte, I 'll watch for Waterloo with more than interest!

MOODY: Why don't we run across for a drink? How 'bout some drinks?

DRAKE: Tom, you can buy me twenty drinks and I still won't change my mind about him. [*He exits.*

LEWIS [*smiling*]: You 're all right, Bonaparte.

JOE: Thanks. . . .

LEWIS [*clinching a cigarette at the desk*]: How 's that big blonde of yours, Tom?

MOODY: Fine.

LEWIS: How does she feel about the wedding bells? Sunday, is it?

[*This is news to Joe, and Moody knows it is.*

MOODY [*nervously*]: Happy, the way I am. Yeah, Sunday.

ROXY: How about the drinks? We 'll drink to everybody's health!

LEWIS [*to Joe*]: Good luck to-morrow.

JOE: Thanks. . . .

[*They exit, Moody throwing a resentful look at Joe. Joe and Tokio are left. In the silence Joe goes back to the remains of his lunch.*

TOKIO: That Drake is a case.

JOE [*pushing the food away*]: They don't make cheesecake the way they used to when I was a boy. Or maybe I don't like it any more. When are they getting married?

TOKIO: Moody? Sunday.

JOE: Those writers hate me.

TOKIO: You give them too much lip.

JOE [*looking down at his clenched fists*]: I 'd rather give than take it. That 's one reason I became a fighter. When did Moody get his divorce?

TOKIO: Few weeks ago. . . . [*Cannily.*] Why don't you forget Lorna?

JOE [*as if not understanding*]: What?

TOKIO: I 'll say it again . . . why not forget her? [*No answer comes.*] Joe, you 're loaded with love. Find something to give it to. Your heart ain't in fighting . . . your *hate* is. But a man with hate and nothing else . . . he 's half a man . . . and half a man . . . is no man. Find something to love, or someone. Am I stepping on your toes?

JOE [*coldly*]: I won't be unhappy if you mind your business.

TOKIO: Okay. . . . [*Tokio goes to the door, stops there.*] Watch your dinner to-night. No girls either.

JOE: Excuse me for saying that——

TOKIO [*with a faint smile*]: Okay.

[*Tokio opens the door and Lorna Moon enters. Tokio smiles at her, and exits. She carries a pack of newspapers under her arm. Joe and she do not know what to say to each other—they wish they had not met here.*

Lorna crosses and puts the newspapers on the desk. She begins to bang through the desk drawers, looking for the scissors.

JOE: I hear you 're making the leap to-morrow. . . .

LORNA: Sunday. . . .

JOE: Sunday. [*Intense silence.*

LORNA [*to say anything*]: I 'm looking for the scissors. . . .

JOE: Who 're you cutting up to-day?

LORNA [*bringing out the shears*]: Items on Bonaparte, for the press book.

[*She turns and begins to unfold and clip a sheet of newspaper. Joe is at a loss for words.*

JOE [*finally*]: Congratulations. . . .

LORNA [*without turning*]: Thanks. . . .

[*In a sudden irresistible surge Joe tears the papers out of Lorna's hands and hurls them behind the desk. The two stand facing each other.*

JOE: When I speak to you, look at me!

LORNA: What would you like to say?

[*They stand face to face, straining. Finally:*

JOE: Marry any one you like!

LORNA: Thanks for permission!

JOE: Queen Lorna, the tramp of Newark!

LORNA: You haven't spoken to me for months. Why break your silence?

JOE: You 're a historical character for me—dead and buried!

LORNA: Then everything 's simple; go about your business.

JOE: Moody 's right for you—perfect—the mating of zero and zero!

LORNA: I 'm not sorry to marry Tom——

JOE [*scornfully*]: That 's from the etiquette book—page twelve: 'When you marry a man say you like it!'

LORNA: I know I could do worse when I look at you. When did you look in the mirror last? Getting to be a killer! You 're getting to be like Fuseli! You 're not the boy I cared about, not you. You murdered that boy with the generous face—God knows where you hid the body! I don't know you.

JOE: I suppose I never kissed your mouth——

LORNA: What do you want from me? Revenge? Sorry—we 're all out of revenge to-day!

JOE: I wouldn't look at you twice if they hung you naked from a Christmas tree!

[*At this moment Eddie Fuseli enters with a pair of packages. He looks intently at Lorna, then crosses and puts the packages on the desk. He and Joe are dressed almost identically. Lorna exits without a word. Eddie is aware of what has happened but begins to talk casually about the packages.*

EDDIE: This one 's your new head-gear. This is shirts from Jacobs Brothers. He says the neck bands are gonna shrink, so I had him make sixteens—they 'll fit you after one washing. [*Holding up a shirt.*] You like that colour?

JOE: Thanks.

EDDIE: Your brother-in-law drove me over. Picked him up on 49th. Don't you ever see them no more?

JOE [*sharply*]: What for?

EDDIE: What 'sa matter?

JOE: Why? You see a crowd around here, Eddie?

EDDIE: No.

JOE: That 's right, you don't! But I do! I see a crowd of Eddies all around me, suffocating me, burying me in good times and silk shirts!

EDDIE [*dialling the telephone*]: You wanna go to the Scandals to-night? I got tickets. [*Into the telephone.*] Charley? Fuseli is speaking. . . . I 'm giving four to five on Bonaparte to-morrow. . . . Four G's worth. . . . Yes. [*Hanging up the phone.*] It 's gonna be a good fight to-morrow.

JOE [*belligerently*]: How do you know?

EDDIE: I know Bonaparte. I got eighteen thousand spread out on him to-morrow night.

JOE: Suppose Bonaparte loses?

EDDIE: I look at the proposition from all sides—I know he 'll win.

JOE: What the hell do you think I am? A machine? Maybe I 'm lonely, maybe——

EDDIE: You wanna walk in a parade? Everybody 's lonely. Get the money and you 're not so lonely.

JOE: I want some personal life.

EDDIE: I give Bonaparte a good personal life. I got loyalty to his cause. . . .

JOE: You use me like a gun! Your loyalty 's to keep me oiled and polished!

EDDIE: A year ago Bonaparte was a rookie with a two-pants suit. Now he wears the best, eats the best, sleeps the best. He walks down the street respected—the golden boy! They howl their heads off when Bonaparte steps in the ring . . . and I done it for him!

JOE: There are other things. . . .

EDDIE: There 's no other things! Don't think so much—it could make you very sick! You 're in this up to your neck. You owe me a lot—I don't like you to forget. You better be on your toes when you step in that ring to-morrow night.

[Eddie turns and begins to dial the telephone.

JOE: Your loyalty makes me shiver. *[Joe starts for the door.*

EDDIE: Take the shirts.

JOE: What do I want them for? I can only wear one at a time. . . .

[Eddie speaks into the phone.

EDDIE: Meyer? . . . Fuseli is speaking. . . . I 'm giving four to five on Bonaparte to-morrow. . . . Two? . . . Yeah. . . .

[About to exit, Joe stands at the door and watches Eddie as he calmly begins to dial the phone again. Medium fade-out.

SCENE II

The next night.

The lights fade in on an empty stage. We are in the same dressing-room as seen in Act II. Far in the distance is heard the same roar of the crowd. The distant bell clangs menacingly. The room is shadows and patches of light. The silence here has its own ugly dead quality.

Lorna Moon enters. She looks around nervously; she lights a cigarette; this reminds her to rouge her lips; she puffs the cigarette. The distant bell clangs again. Eddie Fuseli enters, pale and tense. He sees Lorna and stops short in his tracks. There is an intense silence as they look at each other.

LORNA: How 's the fight?

EDDIE: I like to talk to you.

LORNA: Is Joe still on his feet?

EDDIE: Take a month in the country, Miss Moon.

LORNA: Why?

EDDIE [*repressing a murderous mood*]: Give the boy . . . or move away.

LORNA: I get married to-morrow. . . .

EDDIE: You heard my request—give him or go!

LORNA: Don't Moody count?

EDDIE: If not for Bonaparte they 'd find you in a barrel long ago—in the river or a bush!

LORNA: I 'm not afraid of you. . . . [*The distant bell clangs.*

EDDIE [*after turning his head and listening*]: That 's the beginning of the eighth. Bonaparte 's unsettled—fighting like a drunken sailor. He can't win no more, unless he knocks the Chocolate out. . . .

LORNA [*at a complete loss*]: Don't look at me . . . what 'd you . . . I . . .

EDDIE: Get outa town! [*The roar of the crowd mounts to a demand for a kill.—Listening intently.*] He 's like a bum to-night . . . and a bum done it! You! [*The roar grows fuller.*] I can't watch him get slaughtered. . . .

LORNA. I couldn't watch it myself. . . . [*The bell clangs loudly several times. The roar of the crowd hangs high in the air.*] What 's happening now?

EDDIE: Someone 's getting murdered. . . .

LORNA: It 's me. . . .

EDDIE [*quietly, intensely*]: That 's right . . . if he lost . . . the trees are ready for your coffin. [*The roar of the crowd tones down.*] You can go now. I don't wanna make a scandal around his name. . . . I 'll find you when I want you. Don't be here when they carry him in.

LORNA [*at a complete loss*]: Where do you want me to go?

EDDIE [*suddenly releasing his wrath*]: Get outa my sight! You turned down the sweetest boy who ever walked in shoes! You turned him down, the golden boy, that king among the juven-niles! He gave you his hand—you spit in his face! You led him on like Gertie's whore! You sold him down the river! And now

you got the nerve to stand here, to wait and see him bleeding from the mouth!——

LORNA: Fuseli, for God's sake——

EDDIE: Get outa my sight!

LORNA: Fuseli, please——

EDDIE: Outa my sight, you nickel whore!

[*Completely enraged and out of control, Eddie half brings his gun out from under his left armpit. Joe appears in the doorway. Behind him are Roxy, Moody, and a second.*

JOE: Eddie!

[*Eddie whirls around. The others enter the room. In the ensuing silence Moody, sensing what has happened, crosses to Lorna.*

LORNA [*quietly*]: What happened?

ROXY: What happened? [*He darts forward and picks up Joe's arm in the sign of victory. The arm drops back limply.*] The monarch of the masses!

EDDIE [*to the second*]: Keep everybody out. Only the newspaper boys.

[*The second exits and closes the door. Joe sits on a table. Physically he is a very tired boy. There is a high puff under one eye; the other is completely closed. His body is stained with angry splotches.*

TOKIO [*gently*]: I have to hand it to you, Joe. . . .

ROXY [*explaining to the frigid Eddie, elaborately*]: The beginning of the eighth: first the bell! Next the Chocolate Drop comes out like a waltz clog, confident. Oh, he was so confident! Ha ha! The next thing I know the Chocolate 's on the floor, the referee lifts our arm, we got on our bath-robe, and we 're here in the dressing-room! How do you like it?

EDDIE [*narrowly*]: I like it.

TOKIO [*taking off Joe's gloves*]: I 'll have you feelin' better in a minute. [*After which he cuts the tapes.*

JOE: I feel all right.

EDDIE [*to Tokio*]: Gimme his gloves.

MOODY [*wary of Joe*]: That 's a bad lump under your eye.

JOE: Not as bad as the Chocolate Drop got when he hit the floor!

ROXY: Darling, how you gave it to him! Not to my enemies!

JOE: 'Twas a straight right—with no trimmings or apologies! Aside from fouling me in the second and fifth——

MOODY: I called them on it——

ROXY: I seen the bastard——

JOE: That second time I nearly went through the floor. I gave him the fury of a lifetime in that final punch! [*Eddie has taken the soggy boxing gloves for his own property. Tokio is daubing the bruise under Joe's eye.*] And did you hear them cheer! [*Bitterly, as if reading a news report.*] Flash! As thousands cheer, that veritable whirlwind Bonaparte—that veritable cock-eye wonder, Bonaparte—he comes from behind in the eighth stanza to slaughter the Chocolate Drop and clinch a bout with the champ! Well, how do you like me, boys? Am I good or am I good?

ROXY: Believe *me*!

TOKIO [*attempting to settle Joe*]: You won the right for a crack at the title. You won it fair and clean. Now lay down. . . .

JOE [*in a vehement outburst*]: I 'd like to go outside my weight and beat up the whole damn world!

MOODY [*coldly*]: Well, the world 's your oyster now!

TOKIO [*insistently*]: Take it easy. Lemme fix that eye, Joe——

Now a bustling little Irishman, Driscoll, hustles into the room.

DRISCOLL: Who 's got the happy boy's gloves?

EDDIE: Here . . . why?

[*Driscoll rapidly takes the gloves, 'breaks' and examines them.*

TOKIO: What 's the matter, 'Drisc'?

JOE: What 's wrong?

DRISCOLL [*handing the gloves back to Eddie*]: Chocolate 's a sick boy. Your hands are clean.

[*Driscoll bustles for the door. Joe is up and to him.*

JOE: What happened?

DRISCOLL [*bustling*]: It looks like the Pride of Baltimore is out for good. Change your clothes.

JOE: How do you mean?

DRISCOLL: Just like I said—out!

[*Driscoll pats Joe's shoulder, hustles out, closing the door in Joe's face. Joe slowly sits on the nearest bench. Immediately Tokio comes to him, as tender as a mother.*

TOKIO: You didn't foul him—you 're a clean fighter. You 're so honest in the ring it 's stupid. If something 's happened it 's an accident.

[*The others stand around stunned, not knowing what to do or say.*

MOODY [*very worried*]: That 's right, there 's nothing to worry about.

ROXY [*ditto*]: That 's right. . . .

JOE: Gee. . . .

[*Joe stands up, slowly crosses the room, and sits on the table, head in his hands, his back to the others. No one knows what to say.*

EDDIE [*to Moody*]: Go out there and size up the situation.

[*Moody, glad of the opportunity to leave the room, turns to the door, which is suddenly violently thrust open. Barker, the Chocolate Drop's manager, pushes Moody into the room with him, leaving the door open. From outside a small group of curious people look in. Barker, bereft of his senses, grabs Moody by the coat lapel.*

BARKER: Do you know it? Do you know it?

MOODY: Now wait a minute, Barker——

[*Barker runs over to Joe and screams:*

BARKER: You murdered my boy! He 's dead! You killed him!

TOKIO [*getting between Joe and Barker*]: Just a minute!

BARKER [*literally wringing his hands*]: He 's dead! Chocolate 's dead!

TOKIO: We 're very sorry about it. Now pull yourself together.

[*Eddie crosses the room and slams the door shut as Barker points an accusing finger at Joe and screams:*

BARKER: This dirty little wop killed my boy!

EDDIE [*coming to Barker*]: Go back in your room.

BARKER: Yes, he did!! [*Eddie's answer is to shove Barker roughly toward the door, weeping.*] Yes, he did!!

EDDIE: Get out before I slug your teeth apart!

JOE [*jumping to his feet*]: Eddie, for God sakes, don't hit him! Let him alone!

[*Eddie immediately desists. Barker stands there, a weeping idiot.*

MOODY: Accidents can happen.

BARKER: I know . . . know. . . .

MOODY: Chocolate fouled us twice.

BARKER: I know, I know. . . .

[Barker stammers, gulps, and tries to say something more. Suddenly he dashes out of the room. There is a long silent pause during which Joe sits down again.

EDDIE: We 'll have to wait for an investigation.

TOKIO *[to Joe]*: Don't blame yourself for nothing. . . .

JOE: That poor guy . . . with those sleepy little eyes. . . .

ROXY *[solemnly]*: It 's in the hands of God, a thing like that.

[Lewis, the sports writer, tries to enter the room.

EDDIE *[herding him out]*: Stay outside. *[To Moody.]* See what 's happening? *[Moody immediately leaves.]* Everybody out—leave Bonaparte to calm hisself. I 'll watch the door.

TOKIO: Don't worry, Joe.

[He exits, followed by Roxy. Eddie turns and looks at Lorna.

EDDIE: You too, Miss Moon—this ain't no cocktail lounge.

LORNA: I 'll stay here. *[Eddie looks at her sharply, shifts his glance from her to Joe and back again; he exits.]* Joe. . . .

JOE: Gee, that poor boy. . . .

LORNA *[holding herself off]*: But it wasn't your fault.

JOE: That 's right—it wasn't my fault!

LORNA: You didn't mean it!

JOE: That 's right—I didn't mean it! I wouldn't want to do that, would I? Everybody knows I wouldn't want to kill a man. Lorna, you know it!

LORNA: Of course!

JOE: But I *did* it! That 's the thing—I *did* it! What will my father say when he hears I murdered a man? Lorna, I see what I did. I murdered myself, too! I 've been running around in circles. Now I 'm smashed! That 's the truth. Yes, I was a real sparrow, and I wanted to be a fake eagle! But now I 'm hung up by my finger tips—I 'm no good—my feet are off the earth!

LORNA *[in a sudden burst, going to Joe]*: Joe, I love you! We love each other. Need each other!

JOE: Lorna darling, I see what 's happened!

LORNA: You wanted to conquer the world——

JOE: Yes——

LORNA: But it 's not the kings and dictators who do it—it 's that kid in the park——

JOE: Yes, that boy who might have said: 'I have myself; I am what I want to be!'

LORNA: And now, to-night, here, this minute—finding yourself again—that 's what makes you a champ. Don't you see that?

JOE: Yes, Lorna—yes!

LORNA: It isn't too late to tell the world good evening again!

JOE: With what? These fists?

LORNA: Give up the fighting business!

JOE: To-night!

LORNA: Yes, and go back to your music——

JOE: But my hands are ruined. I 'll never play again! What 's left, Lorna? Half a man, nothing, useless. . . .

LORNA: No, *we* 're left! Two together! We have each other! Somewhere there must be happy boys and girls who can teach us the way of life! We 'll find some city where poverty 's no shame—where music is no crime!—where there 's no war in the streets—where a man is glad to be himself, to live and make his woman herself!

JOE: No more fighting, but where do we go?

LORNA: To-night? Joe, we ride in your car. We speed through the night, across the park, over the Triboro Bridge——

JOE [*taking Lorna's arms in his trembling hands*]: Ride! That 's it, we ride—clear my head. We 'll drive through the night. When you mow down the night with headlights, nobody gets you! You 're on top of the world then—nobody laughs! That 's it —speed! We 're off the earth—unconnected! We don't have to think!! That 's what speed 's for, an easy way to live! Lorna darling, we 'll burn up the night!

[*He turns and, as he begins to throw his street clothes out of his locker, medium fade-out.*

Scene III

Late the same night.

In the Bonaparte home sit Eddie Fuseli, Moody, Roxy, and Siggie, drinking home-made wine, already half drunk. Mr Bonaparte stands on the other side of the room, looking out of the window. Frank sits near him, a bandage around his head.

Moody is at the telephone as the lights fade in.

Moody [*impatiently*]: . . . 'Lo? Hallo! . . .

Siggie: I 'll tell you why we need another drink. . . .

Roxy: No, I 'll tell you. . . .

Moody [*turning*]: Quiet! For Pete's sake! I can't hear myself think! [*Turning to the phone.*] Hallo? . . . This is Moody. Any calls for me? Messages? . . . No sign of Miss Moon? . . . Thanks. Call me if she comes in—the number I gave you before. [*Hanging up and returning to his wineglass; to Mr Bonaparte.*] I thought you said Joe was coming up here!

Mr Bonaparte: I say maybe. . . .

Moody [*sitting*]: I 'll wait another fifteen minutes. [*He drinks.*

Siggie: Here 's why we need another drink; it 's a night of success! Joe 's in those lofty brackets from now on! We 're gonna move to a better neighbourhood, have a buncha kids! [*To Mr Bonaparte.*] Hey, pop, I wish we had a mortgage so we could pay it off! To the next champ of the world!

[*Siggie lifts his glass; the others join him.*

Roxy: Bonaparte.

Eddie: Don't you drink, Mr Bonaparte?

Siggie: You, too, Frank—it 's all in the family.

[*Mr Bonaparte shrugs and comes down, accepting a glass.*

Roxy: It 's in the nature of a celebration!

Mr Bonaparte: My son 'sa kill a man to-night—what 'sa celebrate? What 'sa gonna be, heh?

Siggie: Ahh, don't worry—they can't do him nothing for that! An accident!

Eddie [*coldly, to Mr Bonaparte*]: Listen, it 's old news. It 's been out on the front page two-three hours.

Mr Bonaparte: Poor colour' boy. . . .

MOODY: Nobody's fault. Everybody 's sorry—we give the mother a few bucks. But we got the next champ! Bottoms up.

[*All drink, Frank included.*

ROXY [*to Mr Bonaparte*]: You see how a boy can make a success nowadays?

MR BONAPARTE: Yeah . . . I see.

EDDIE [*resenting Mr Bonaparte's attitude*]: Do we bother you? If I didn't think Joe was here I don't come up. I don't like nobody to gimme a boycott!

MR BONAPARTE [*going back to the window*]: Helpa you'self to more wine.

SIGGIE [*to Eddie*]: Leave him alone—he don't feel social to-night.

MOODY: Don't worry, Mr Bonaparte. Looka me—take a lesson from me—I 'm not worried. I 'm getting married to-morrow—*this afternoon*!—I don't know where my girl is, but I 'm not worried! What for? We 're all in clover up to our necks!

SIGGIE: Shh . . . don't wake up my wife.

[*Moody suddenly sits heavily; jealousy begins to gnaw at him despite his optimism. Roxy takes another drink. Eddie asks Frank, apropos of his bandaged head:*

EDDIE: What 's that 'Spirit of '76' outfit for?

SIGGIE [*grinning to Eddie*]: Didn't you hear what he said before? They gave it to him in a strike——

EDDIE [*to Frank*]: You got a good build—you could be a fighter.

FRANK: I fight. . . .

EDDIE: Yeah? For what?

FRANK: A lotta things I believe in. . . .

[*Eddie looks at Frank and appreciates his quality.*

EDDIE: Whatta you get for it?

ROXY [*laughing*]: Can't you see? A busted head!

FRANK: I 'm not fooled by a lotta things Joe 's fooled by. I don't get autos and custom-made suits. But I get what Joe don't.

EDDIE: What don't he get?

[*Mr Bonaparte comes in and listens intently.*

FRANK [*modestly*]: The pleasure of acting as you think! The satisfaction of staying where you belong, being what you are . . . at harmony with millions of others!

ROXY [*pricking up his ears*]: Harmony? That 's music! the family 's starting up music again!

FRANK [*smiling*]: That 's right, that 's music——

[*Now Moody emphatically stamps his glass down on the table and stands.*

MOODY: What 's the use waiting around! They won't be back. [*Bitterly.*] Lorna 's got a helluva lotta nerve, riding around in Long Island with him! Without even asking me!

SIGGIE: Long Island 's famous for the best eating ducks.

EDDIE [*to Moody*]: You got the champ—you can't have everything.

MOODY: What 's that supposed to mean?

EDDIE [*coldly*]: That girl belongs to Bonaparte. They 're together now, in some roadhouse . . . and they ain't eating duck!

MOODY [*finally, unsteadily*]: You don't know what you 're talking about!

EDDIE: Moody, what do you figger your interest is worth in Bonaparte?

MOODY: Why?

EDDIE [*without turning*]: Roxy . . . are you listening?

ROXY: Yeah. . . .

EDDIE: 'Cause after to-night I 'd like to handle Bonaparte myself.

MOODY: . . . Your gall is gorgeous! But I got a contract. . . .

ROXY: Eddie, have a heart—I 'm holding a little twenty per cent. . . .

[*Out of sheer rage Moody drinks more wine; Roxy follows his example.*

FRANK [*to Eddie*]: How much does Joe own of himself?

EDDIE: Thirty per cent. After to-night I own the rest.

MOODY: Oh, no! No, sir-ee!!

EDDIE: You 're drunk to-night! To-morrow!

MR BONAPARTE [*coming forward*]: Maybe Joe don't gonna fight no more, after to-night. . . .

EDDIE: Listen, you creep! Why don't you change your tune for a minute!

ROXY [*to Mr Bonaparte*]: What 're YOU worried about?

MR BONAPARTE: My boy usta coulda be great for all men. Whatta he got now, heh? Pardon me fora nota to feel so confident in Joe'sa future! Pardon me fora to be anxious. . . .

EDDIE [*standing up*]: I don't like this talk!

SIGGIE: Sit down, pop—you 're rocking the boat! Shh! Shh!

[*He slips out of the room.*

ROXY: Does any one here know what he 's talking about?

FRANK: He 's trying to say he 's worried for Joe.

ROXY: But why? Why? Don't he realize his kid 's worth a fortune from to-night on? [*After giving Eddie a quick glance.*] Ain't he got brains enough to see two feet ahead? Tell him in Italian—he don't understand our language—this is a festive occasion! To Bonaparte, the Monarch of the Masses!

[*The telephone rings.*

MOODY [*triumphantly, to Eddie*]: That 's my hotel! You see, you were all wrong! That 's Lorna! [*Speaking into the telephone.*] Hallo? . . . No. . . . [*Turning to Mr Bonaparte.*] It 's for you. [*Moody extends the telephone in Mr Bonaparte's direction, but the latter stands in his place, unable to move. After a few seconds Frank sees this and briskly moves to the telephone, taking it from Moody. In the meantime Moody has begun to address Eddie with drunken eloquence. Wavering on his feet.*] There 's a constitution in this country, Eddie Fuseli. Every man here enjoys life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness!

FRANK [*speaking into the telephone*]: Yes? . . . No, this is his son. . . .

[*Mr Bonaparte watches Frank mutely as he listens at the telephone.*

MOODY: There 's laws in this country, Fuseli!—*contracts*! We live in a civilized world——!

FRANK [*loudly, to the others*]: Keep quiet! [*Resumes listening.*] Yes . . . yes. . . .

ROXY [*to Eddie*]: And there 's a God in heaven—don't forget it!

FRANK [*on the telephone*]: Say it again. . . . [*He listens.*] Yes. . . .

MOODY [*to Eddie*]: You 're a killer! A man tries to do his best—but you 're a killer!

[*Frank lowers the telephone and comes down to the others.*

FRANK: *You 're all killers!*

[*Mr Bonaparte advances a step toward Frank.*

MR BONAPARTE: Frank . . . is it . . .?

FRANK: I don't know how to tell you, poppa. . . .

MR BONAPARTE [*hopefully*]: Yes? . . .

FRANK: We 'll have to go there——

EDDIE: Go where?

FRANK: Both of them . . . they were killed in a crash——

EDDIE: Who?! What?!

FRANK: They 're waiting for identification—Long Island, Babylon.

EDDIE [*moving to Frank*]: What are you handing me?!

[*Eddie, suddenly knowing the truth, stops in his tracks. The telephone operator signals for the telephone to be replaced. The mechanical clicks call Frank to attention; he slowly replaces the instrument.*

MOODY: I don't believe that! Do you hear me? I don't believe it——

FRANK: What waste! . . .

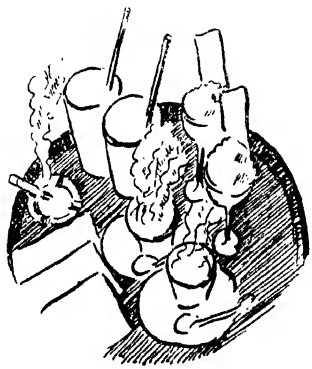
MOODY: It 's a goddam lie!!

MR BONAPARTE: What have-a you expect? . . .

MOODY [*suddenly weeping*]: Lorna! . . .

MR BONAPARTE [*standing, his head high*]: Joe. . . . Come, we bring-a him home . . . where he belong. . . .

[*Slow fade-out.*



THE CORN IS GREEN

EMLYN WILLIAMS

First Published 1938 by
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To

S. G. C.

THE CHARACTERS

(In the order of their appearance)

MR JOHN GORONWY JONES	MISS MOFFAT
MISS RONBERRY	ROBBART ROBBATCH
IDWAL MORRIS	GLYN THOMAS
SARAH PUGH	WILL HUGHES
A GROOM	JOHN OWEN
THE SQUIRE	MORGAN EVANS
BESSIE WATTY	OLD TOM
MRS WATTY	*Boys, girls, and parents*

The action of the play takes place in the living-room of a house in Glansarno, a small village in a remote Welsh countryside.

The time is the latter part of the last century, and covers a period of three years.

ACT I

Scene i: *An afternoon in June.*

Scene ii: *A night in August, six weeks later.*

ACT II

Scene i: *An early evening in August, two years later.*

Scene ii: *A morning in November, three months later.*

ACT III

An afternoon in July, seven months later.

The Corn is Green was first presented in London by Stephen Mitchell at the Duchess Theatre on 20th September 1938, with the following cast:

MR JOHN GORONWY JONES	JOHN GLYN-JONES
MISS RONBERRY	CHRISTINE SILVER
IDWAL MORRIS	WILLIAM JOHN DAVIES
SARAH PUGH	DOROTHY LANGLEY
A GROOM	ALBERT BIDDISCOMBE
THE SQUIRE	FREDERICK LLOYD
BESSIE WATTY	BETTY JARDINE
MRS WATTY	KATHLEEN HARRISON
MISS MOFFAT	SYBIL THORNDIKE
ROBBART BOBBATCH	KENNETH EVANS
GLYN THOMAS	WYNFORD MORSE
WILL HUGHES	JACK GLYN
JOHN OWEN	GLAN WILLIAMS
MORGAN EVANS	EMLYN WILLIAMS
OLD TOM	FRANK DUNLOP

The play produced by THE AUTHOR

Setting and costumes by MICHAEL WEIGHT

ACT I

SCENE I

The living-room of a house in Glansarno, a small village in a remote Welsh countryside. A sunny afternoon in June, in the latter part of the last century.

The house is old, and the ceiling slants away from the audience. Facing the audience, on the right (throughout the play, 'left' and 'right' refer to the audience's left and right), narrow stairs lead up to a landing and then on the right to a passage to the bedrooms; we can just see, facing, the door of one bedroom which is later to be Miss Moffat's. Under the landing, a low door leads to the kitchen; at the foot of the stairs, an alcove and a door lead to a little room which is later the study. In the back wall, to the left, the front door, with outside it a small stone porch faintly overgrown with ivy, and opening to the left on to a path; in the back wall, to the right, one step leads up to a large bay window with a seat round the recess. In the left wall, downstage, the garden door, with above it a small side window; when the door is open we can just see a trellised porch with a creeper. Through the thickish muslin curtains over the bay window we glimpse a jagged stone wall and the sky.

The floor is of stone flags, with two rugs, one in front of the sofa next the footlights, to mark the fireplace. Faded sprigged wallpaper.

The furniture is a curious jumble of old Welsh and Victorian pieces. A large serviceable flat-topped desk under the side window, a desk chair in front of it; a round table with a small chair, near the middle of the room; an arm-chair, between the desk and the table; a sofa, downstage, between the table and the foot of the stairs; in the right wall, above the kitchen door, an old Welsh dresser with plates and crockery; in the right wall, against the staircase, a settle; in the window recess, a small table; below the bay window, an old spinning-wheel. In the back wall, to the left of the front door, a small grandfather's clock. An oil lamp on the centre table, another on the desk.

The most distinctive feature of the room is the amount of books on the walls, of all sorts and sizes: some in open bookcases, others on newly built shelves, on practically every available space.

The kitchen door is open; there are books on the window seat, several on the edge of the sofa.

As the curtain rises, Mr John Goronwy Jones and Miss Ronberry are arranging the last books in their places; she is sitting on a tiny stool taking books out of a large packing-case and fitting them on to narrow shelves between the garden door and the side window, flicking each one mechanically with a tiny lace handkerchief. She is a gentlewoman in her thirties, with the sort of pinched prettiness that tends to look sharp before that age, especially when it makes sporadic attempts at coquetry; she wears a hat. He is a shabby Welshman of forty, bespectacled, gloomy, and intense; a volcano, harmless even in full eruption. He is perched on top of a step-ladder, arranging books on a high shelf between the front door and the bay window, dusting them vigorously before putting them in place.

MR JONES [*singing in a resentful bass*]: '. . . Pechadur wyf, y dua'n fyw—"O Uffern!" yw fy nghri;
Gostwng dy glust, a'm llefain clyw . . . [*Booming to a final note.* So—so—so—la—so—so!'

MISS RONBERRY: Your voice has given me an agonizing headache. And if you must indulge in music, will you please not do it in Welsh?

MR JONES: I wasn't indulgin' in music, I was singin' a hymn. [*Putting the last book on the shelf and climbing down.*] And if a hymn gives you a headache, there is nothing wrong with the hymn, there is something wrong with your head.

[*His accent is marked, but not exaggerated.*

MISS RONBERRY: I still don't see the necessity for it.

MR JONES [*picking up the empty packing-case and moving towards the kitchen*]: I sing to cheer myself up.

MISS RONBERRY: What do the words mean?

MR JONES: 'The wicked shall burn in hell.'

[*He goes into the kitchen. Miss Ronberry looks depressed, fits in the last of her books, and crosses to the books on the back of the*

sofa, as Idwal Morris comes in from the garden, carrying a bunch of flowers. He is a thin, ragged boy of thirteen, very timid.

MISS RONBERRY [*graciously, flicking the books one by one*]: Is the garden nice and ready?

IDWAL: 'Sgwelwchi'n dda, d'wi'di torri'r bloda.

MISS RONBERRY [*calling*]: Translation!

[*Mr Jones returns from the kitchen, slowly climbs the ladder again, and settles to his books once more.*

IDWAL [*to him, as he does so*]: Os gwelwchi'n dda, Mistar Jones, d'wi'di torri'r bloda, a mae'r domen yn hogla'n ofnadwy.

MR JONES [*to Miss Ronberry*]: He says he cut the sweet peas, and the rubbish-heap is smelling terrible.

MISS RONBERRY: Oh dear . . . [*Taking the flowers from Idwal, and crossing to the desk with them and the books.*] His father must put something on it.

MR JONES: That 's the English all over. The devil is there, is he? Don't take him away, put a bit of scent on him! [*To Idwal.*] Gofyn i dy dad i roi rwbeth arno am heddyw.

IDWAL: Diolch, syr. [*He runs into the kitchen.*

MISS RONBERRY [*arranging the sweet peas in a vase on the desk*]: I hope he will have the sense to give the message.

MR JONES: It is terrible, isn't it, the people on these green fields and flowery hillsides bein' turned out of heaven because they cannot answer Saint Peter when he asks them who they are in English? It is wicked, isn't it, the Welsh children not bein' *born* knowing English, isn't it? [*In a crescendo of ironic mimicry.*] Good heavens, God bless my soul, by Jove, this that and the other!

MISS RONBERRY: Anybody in Wales will tell you that the people in this part of the countryside are practically barbarians. Not a single caller for fifteen miles, and even then——

[*Sarah Pugh comes out of the bedroom and down the stairs. She is a buxom peasant-woman, with a strong Welsh accent.*

SARAH: Please, miss, I made the bed lovely. And I dust——

MISS RONBERRY: That will be all, dear; the colonel is bound to have his own manservant.

SARAH [*disappointed, going to the front door*]: Then I bettar have another sit down in my post-office.

MR JONES [*sternly*]: What is the matter with your post-office?

SARAH [*turning at the door*]: It has not had a letter for seven weeks. Nobody but me can write, and no good *me* writin', because nobody but me can read. If I get a telegram I put him in the window and I die straight off. [*She goes.*

MISS RONBERRY: You see? I can't *think* why a colonel should elect to come and live in this place. [*Patting the last flower into position.*] There . . . [*Coming into the middle of the room, and surveying it.*] I have never *seen* so many books! I do hope the curtains will not be too feminine. [*Sitting on the sofa.*] I chose them with such care——

MR JONES [*darkly*]: Why are you taking so much trouble getting somebody else's house ready for them?

MISS RONBERRY [*flustered*]: You need not have helped me if you did not wish! . . . [*Finishing sewing a rent in a cushion on the sofa.*] I am frightened of the spinning-wheel, too, and the china; his own furniture is *so* distinctive. The desk. And the waste-paper basket. So . . . so virile.

MR JONES: Are you hoping that the colonel will live up to his waste-paper basket?

MISS RONBERRY: That is horrid.

MR JONES: And then you will have two on a string: him and the squire——

MISS RONBERRY [*pleasurably shocked*]: Mr Jones——!

MR JONES [*implacable*]: And if I was a bit more of a masher, there would be three. Worldly things, that is your trouble. 'Please Mistar Jones, my life is as empty as a rotten nutshell, so get me a husband before it is too late, double quick!'

[*He has gone too far.*

MISS RONBERRY: You insulting man——

[*A knock at the front door; it opens and a liveried groom appears.*

THE GROOM [*announcing*]: The squire.

[*The Squire follows him. He is a handsome English country gentleman in his forties, wearing knickerbockers and gaiters; a hard drinker, very moustached, bluff, kind, immensely vain; and,*

when the time comes, obtusely obstinate. The groom goes out again and shuts the door.

MISS RONBERRY [*fluttering eagerly into a handshake*]: Squire . . .

THE SQUIRE [*with exuberant patronage, throwing his hat on the table*]: Delicious lady, delicious surprise, and a merry afternoon to ye, as our forbears put it . . . [*A cold nod.*] How are you, Jones, making the most of your half-day?

MR JONES [*sullen, making an uncertain effort to rise from the ladder*]: Good afternoon, sir——

THE SQUIRE: Squat, dear fellow, squat, no ceremony with me! . . . [*Bowing Miss Ronberry on to the sofa, and sinking himself into the arm-chair.*] And why, dear lady, were you not at the Travers-Ellis wedding?

MISS RONBERRY [*dashed*]: Naughty! I sat next to you at the breakfast.

THE SQUIRE: By Jingo, so you did! Deuced fine breakfast . . .

MR JONES: Excuse me——

[*He goes into the study, carrying the step-ladder.*

MISS RONBERRY: We had a talk about children.

THE SQUIRE: *Did* we? . . . Well, the next wedding we 're at, there 'll be *no* chance of my forgettin' you, eh?

MISS RONBERRY [*breath suspended, for a second*]: Why?

THE SQUIRE: Because you 'll be the stunning, blushing bride!

MISS RONBERRY: And who—will be the——?

THE SQUIRE [*in a paroxysm of joviality*]: Now that 's what *I* want to know, because *I* 'm going to give you away!

MISS RONBERRY: Oh! [*Mr Jones returns from the study.*

THE SQUIRE: Now who 's it going to be?

MISS RONBERRY: Squire, you are too impatient! [*Teasing.*] I am taking my time!

[*She laughs, catches the gleam of Mr Jones's spectacles, and subsides quickly. Mr Jones sits at the table in the window-seat and dusts the books there.*

THE SQUIRE: Too bad . . . No sign of the new inhabitant?

MISS RONBERRY [*sewing*]: Any moment now, I think! The pony and trap met the London train at a quarter to twelve!

THE SQUIRE: Hasn't the fellow got his own private conveyance?

MISS RONBERRY: I think not.

THE SQUIRE: I hope he 's all right.

MISS RONBERRY: He wrote very civilly to Mr Jones about the house——

THE SQUIRE: Oh, yes. Not a club, I remember, but not bad texture. [*Suspiciously.*] Funny sort of chap, though, eh?

MISS RONBERRY: Why?

THE SQUIRE: All these books.

[*A timid knock at the front door. Idwal enters, very frightened.*

IDWAL [*to the Squire*]: Os gwelwchi'n dda, syr, mae Mistar Tomos wedi 'ngyrru i yma ich gweld chi!

THE SQUIRE [*chuckling good-humouredly*]: Y' know, it 's as bad as being abroad . . . been among it half my life, and never get used to it.

MR JONES [*rising, and coming down*]: The groom told him, sir, that you wanted to see him.

THE SQUIRE: Oh, yes—well, come here where I can see you, eh? . . . [*As Idwal advances fearfully round his chair.*] Now, boy, how old are you, or whatever the Chinese is for it?

MR JONES: Just turned thirteen, sir.

THE SQUIRE: Thirteen? Well, why aren't you working in the mine over in the next valley? Don't like to see young fellows wasting their time, y' know.

MR JONES: He has got one lung funny.

THE SQUIRE: Oh, I see. . . . Rough luck—here, laddy, there 's a penny for you; and remember all work and no play makes Taffy a dull boy!

IDWAL [*delighted, going*]: Diolch yn fawr, syr——

THE SQUIRE: And tell your uncle I want Ranger shod——

IDWAL [*going*]: Diolch, syr——

THE SQUIRE: And a window mended——

IDWAL: Diolch yn fawr, syr—— [*He runs out by the front door.*

MISS RONBERRY: But he hasn't understood your orders!

THE SQUIRE: Neither he has——

MR JONES: He thought the Squire was havin' a chat. [*Going towards the window.*] I will tell his uncle——

IDWAL [*calling shrilly to his friends, in the road*]: Tomos—Aneurin—dyma'r cerbyd—dewch i wel'd—fe ddwedai wrth y Scweiar—brysiwch!

MISS RONBERRY [*rising, excited*]: That must be something——

[*Idwal appears at the front door, panting with expectation.*

IDWAL [*to the Squire*]: Pliss, syr, dyma'r cerbyd!

[*He darts back, leaving the door open.*

MISS RONBERRY: He must mean the colonel—how gratifying——

THE SQUIRE: Capital——

[*He rises and stands between the arm-chair and the garden door, while Mr Jones shrinks back into the window recess, as Bessie Watty wanders shyly in from the front door. She is an extremely pretty, plump little girl of fourteen; it is a moment before one realizes that her demureness is too good to be true. She wears her hair over her shoulders, is dressed very plainly, in a shabby sailor suit and hat, and carries brown-paper parcels. She stands immobile near the table. She is followed by Mrs Watty, a middle-aged Cockney servant, dressed for travelling, carrying a hamper in her arms surmounted by several articles tied together with rope, including a kettle, a rolling-pin, and a pudding-basin. Her self-confidence is not so overwhelming as the Squire's, but it is quite as complete, and as kindly. She looks round uncertainly, unable to dispose of her burden.*

MRS WATTY [*to the Squire*]: D' you speak English?

THE SQUIRE [*taken aback*]: I do.

MRS WATTY: Be a dear an' 'old this!

[*She hands him the hamper, takes the rest, manœuvres them on to the table, and hurries out through the front door.*

THE SQUIRE: Crikey! A colonel with an abigail! [*Catching Bessie's owl-like expression, and stopping short.*] Why don't *you* say something?

BESSIE: I never speak till I 'm spoken to.

THE SQUIRE: Oh. . . . Well, who was that?

BESSIE: My mummy. I never had no daddy.

[*Her accent is not as natural as her mother's; she sometimes strains to be ladylike, especially a tmoments like this. Mrs Watty returns carrying two large cloth-covered parcels.*

MRS WATTY: My Gawd, they 're heavy.

MISS RONBERRY: What are they?

MRS WATTY: Books.

[*She drops the parcels on the floor, takes the hamper from the Squire, and places it on the table.*

THE SQUIRE: Is your employer with you, my good woman?

MRS WATTY: No; followed be'ind, most of the way. [*Hurrying back to the front door and peering down the street.*] Ought to be 'ere by now, I 'll 'ave a see. . . . [*Calling.*] 'Ere we are! Tally-o! Thought we 'd lost you!

[*A pause. Miss Moffat comes in from the road, wheeling a bicycle. She is about forty, a healthy Englishwoman with an honest face, clear, beautiful eyes, a humorous mouth, a direct friendly manner, and unbounded vitality, which is prevented from tiring the spectator by its capacity for sudden silences and for listening. Her most prominent characteristic is her complete unsentimentality. She wears a straw hat, collar and tie, and a dark unexaggerated skirt; a satchel hangs from her shoulder.*

MISS MOFFAT: I was hoping to pass you, but that last hill was too much for me. [*Displaying the bicycle.*] There 's a smallish crowd already, so I thought I 'd better bring Priscilla inside. Watty, can you find somewhere for her? [*She gives the room a quick appraising look, peers out of the side window, and nods pleasantly at the Squire.*] I think I 'll have a look at the garden first.

[*She goes out into the garden. The Squire stares after her.*

MRS WATTY [*wheeling the bicycle gingerly towards the kitchen*]: Dunno, I 'm sure—that must be my kitchen in there; we 'll 'ave to 'ang 'er with the bacon. [*To Bessie.*] Come on, girl, give us a 'and, don't stand there gettin' into mischief!

BESSIE: I 'm frightened of it.

MRS WATTY: It won't bite you! Most it can do is catch fire, and I 'll 'ave a drop o' water ready for it. . . .

[*Her voice fades away into the kitchen.*

BESSIE: Has anybody got a sweetie?

MISS RONBERRY: No.

BESSIE [*depressed*]: Oh. . . .

[*She trails after her mother into the kitchen. Miss Moffat returns, very businesslike; not a movement of hers is wasted.*

MISS MOFFAT: It 's bigger than I expected. . . . [*Shutting the front door, then unpinning her hat, pleasantly, as they stare at her.*] There! Good afternoon! [*Looking round the room, as she pitches her hat on to the desk.*] So this is my house. . . .

THE SQUIRE [*blustering*]: No, it isn't!

MISS MOFFAT: Oh? Isn't this Pengarth? The name of the building, I mean?

MISS RONBERRY: Yes it is——

[*Mrs Watty returns from the kitchen, motions to Mr Jones to unpack the books in the hamper, and takes the kettle and its appurtenances back into the kitchen. Mr Jones unpacks. During this Miss Moffat speaks.*

MISS MOFFAT [*relieved*]: That 's right, it was left me by my uncle, Doctor Moffat. I 'm Miss Moffat. [*As she unstraps her satchel.*] I take it you 're Miss Ronberry, who so kindly corresponded with me?

THE SQUIRE [*sternly*]: But surely those letters were written by a man?

MISS MOFFAT: Well, if they were, I have been grossly deceiving myself for over forty years . . . [*Addressing him as his equal and not as his inferior, for him a new experience with women.*] Now this is jolly interesting. Why did it never occur to you that I might be a woman?

THE SQUIRE: Well—the paper wasn't scented——

MISS RONBERRY: And such a bold hand——

THE SQUIRE: And that long piece about the lease being ninety-nine years, don't you know——

MISS MOFFAT [*concerned*]: Was there anything wrong with it?

THE SQUIRE: No there wasn't, that 's the point.

MISS MOFFAT. I see.

MISS RONBERRY: And surely you signed your name very oddly?

MISS MOFFAT: My initials, L. C. Moffat? You see, I 've never felt that Lily Christabel really suited me.

MISS RONBERRY [*sitting on the sofa.*]: And I thought it meant lieutenant-colonel . . . But there *was* a military title after it!

MISS MOFFAT [*after thinking a second*]: M.A., Master of Arts.

THE SQUIRE: Arts? D' ye mean the degree my father bought me when I came down from the varsity?

MISS MOFFAT: The very same. Except that I was at Aberdeen, and had to work jolly hard for mine.

THE SQUIRE: A female M.A.? And how long 's that going to last?

MISS MOFFAT [*placing her satchel next the desk*]: Quite a long time, I hope, considering we 've been waiting for it for two thousand years.

MR JONES [*who has been silent as the grave, since she entered*]: Are you saved?

MISS MOFFAT [*staring, turning and taking him in for the first time*]: I beg your pardon?

MR JONES: Are you Church or Chapel?

MISS MOFFAT: I really don't know . . . [*To the Squire, as she crosses to the table to fetch some books.*] And now you know all about me, what do *you* do?

THE SQUIRE [*distantly, moving towards the front door.*] I 'm afraid I don't do anything. [*He extricates his hat angrily from the table.*

MISS RONBERRY [*shocked*]: Mr Treverby owns the Hall!

MISS MOFFAT [*frank and friendly*]: Really. I 've never had much to do with the landed gentry. Interesting.

THE SQUIRE [*to Miss Ronberry*]: Au revoir, dear lady. 'Day, Jones. [*He goes frigidly out by the front door.*

MISS MOFFAT: Well, nobody could say that I 've made a conquest there. . . . [*Crossing towards the stairs.*] What 's the matter with him?

[*Mrs Watty comes in from the kitchen, carrying a small tray with three cups and saucers.*

MRS WATTY [*placing the tray on the table*]: I found the tea, ma'am, it *looks* all right——

MISS MOFFAT: Good——

MRS WATTY: An' the big luggage is comin' after——

MISS MOFFAT [*opening the study door*]: This isn't a bad little room—— [*Mr Jones crosses to the desk with books from the table.*

MRS WATTY [*to the others*]: Where 's his lordship?

MISS MOFFAT [*going upstairs*]: Took offence and left.

[*She disappears down the passage.*

MRS WATTY: Took offence? At 'er?

MISS RONBERRY: I am afraid so.

MRS WATTY: I 'm jiggered! [*Arranging the cups and saucers.*] What d'*you* think of 'er, eh? Ain't she a clinker?

MISS RONBERRY: She is unusual, is she not?

MRS WATTY: She 's a clinker, that 's what. Terrible strong-willed, o' course, terrible. Get 'er into mischief, I keep tellin' 'er. Would bring me 'ere. I said no, I said, not with my past, I said.

MISS RONBERRY: Your past?

MRS WATTY: Before she took me up. But what with 'er, and now I 've joined the Corpse, it 's all blotted out.

MR JONES: The Corpse?

MRS WATTY: The Militant Righteous Corpse. Ran into 'em in the street I did, singin' and prayin' and collectin', full blast; and I been a different woman since. [*Turing to Mr Jones.*] Are *you* saved?

MR JONES [*stiffening*]: Yes, I am.

MRS WATTY: So 'm I; ain't it lovely?

MISS RONBERRY: But what *was* . . . your past?

MRS WATTY [*sorrowfully*]: Light fingers.

MISS RONBERRY: Light fingers? [*The truth dawning on her.*] You mean—stealing?

MRS WATTY: Everywhere I went. Terrible. Pennies, stockin's, brooches, spoons, tiddly, anything; and I always looked so pi! Every time there was a do, everything went; and I always knew it was me! [*Miss Moffat comes downstairs. Moving towards the kitchen.*] I was just tellin' 'em about my trouble.

MISS MOFFAT: Well, don't tell them any more. Is your kitchen all right?

MRS WATTY: I ain't *seed* no mice yet.

[*She goes into the kitchen. Miss Moffat looks round again. Far away, softly, the sound of boys' voices, singing an old country song, in harmony, in Welsh: 'Yr Hufen Melyn.'*

MISS MOFFAT: I agree with the last tenant's taste. Though I don't

see myself spinning very much . . . [*Warmly.*] You have arranged my things quite splendidly, Miss Ronberry, I do thank you—both of you . . . [*Savouring the atmosphere of the room.*] I like this house . . . [*As the music grows imperceptibly, in the distance.*] What 's that singing?

MR JONES: Boys coming home from the mine.

MISS RONBERRY: They burst into song on the slightest provocation. You mustn't take any notice——

MIS MOFFAT: I like it . . . [*After listening a moment, looking out of the side window.*] And those mountains. That grand wild countryside . . . the foreign-looking people . . . [*As the singing dies away.*] But business . . . I 've heard about that mine. How far is it?

MR JONES: It is the Glasynglo coal mine, six miles over the hills.

MISS MOFFAT [*moving towards the bay window*]: Hm . . .

MISS RONBERRY: We 're hoping it will stay the only one, or our scenery will be ruined—such a pretty landscape——

MISS MOFFAT [*looking out, suddenly*]: What is the large empty building next door?

MR JONES: Next door? The old barn belongin' to the Gwalia Farm, before the farm was burnt down——

MISS MOFFAT: So it 's free?

MR JONES [*perplexed*]: Free? Yes——

MISS RONBERRY [*losing interest, rising and crossing in front of the table*]: I am overstaying my welcome—so very charming——

MR JONES [*taking the rest of the books to the desk*]: I also—all the volumes are dusted——

MISS MOFFAT: I want you two people. Very specially. First you, Miss Ronberry. [*Coming down to her.*] I used to meet friends of yours at lectures in London. You live alone, you have just enough money, you 're not badly educated, and time lies heavy on your hands.

MISS RONBERRY [*sitting again, suddenly in the arm-chair*]: The Wingroves! How mean—I should never have thought——

MISS MOFFAT: Isn't that so?

MISS RONBERRY: Not at all. When the right gentleman appears——

MISS MOFFAT: If you 're a spinster well on in her thirties, he 's lost his way and isn't coming. Why don't you face the fact and enjoy yourself, the same as I do?

MISS RONBERRY: But when did you give up hope—oh, what a horrid expression——

MISS MOFFAT: I can't recall ever having any hope. [*Sitting on the sofa.*] Visitors used to take a long look at my figure and say: '*She* 's going to be the clever one.' I shall never forget what I looked like the night my mother put me on the market. A tub with pink ribbon in every hoop. And when the only young man who had spoken to me said I was the sort of girl he 'd like for a sister, then I knew.

MISS RONBERRY: But a woman's only future is to marry and—and fulfil the duties of——

MISS MOFFAT: Skittles. I 'd have made a shocking wife anyway.

MISS RONBERRY: But haven't you ever—been in love?

MISS MOFFAT: No.

MISS RONBERRY: How very odd.

MISS MOFFAT: I 've never talked to a man for more than five minutes without wanting to box his ears. [*Mr Jones looks apprehensive.*

MISS RONBERRY: But how have you passed your time since——

MISS MOFFAT: Since I had no hope? Very busily. In the East End, for years.

MISS RONBERRY [*politely*]: Social service?

MISS MOFFAT: If you like; though there 's nothing very social about washing invalids, with every unmentionable ailment under the sun. . . . I 've read a lot, too. I 'm afraid I 'm what is known as an educated woman. Which brings me to Mr Jones. [*To him.*] the Wingroves told me all about you, too.

MR JONES [*advancing, stiffly*]: My conscience is as clear as the snow.

MISS MOFFAT: I 'm sure it is; but you 're a disappointed man, aren't you?

MR JONES [*startled*]: How can I be disappointed when I am saved?

MISS MOFFAT: Oh, but you can! You can't really enjoy sitting all by yourself on a raft, on a sea containing everybody you know. You 're disappointed because you 're between two stools.

MR JONES [*at a loss*]: Between two stools? On a raft?

MISS MOFFAT: Exactly. Your father was a grocer with just enough money to send you to a grammar school, with the result that you are educated beyond your sphere, and yet fail to qualify for the upper classes. You feel frustrated, and fall back on being saved. Am I right?

MR JONES [*turning away*]: It is such a terrible thing you have said that I will have to think it over.

MISS MOFFAT: Do; but in the meantime would you two like to stop moping and be very useful to me?

MISS RONBERRY: Useful?

MISS MOFFAT [*walking about*]: Tell me—within a radius of five miles, how many families are there round here?

MISS RONBERRY [*at home for a moment*]: Families? There 's the Squire, of course, and Mrs Gwent-Price in the little Plas Lodge, quite a dear thing——

MISS MOFFAT: I mean ordinary people.

MISS RONBERRY [*lost again*]: The villagers?

MISS MOFFAT: Yes. How many families?

MISS RONBERRY: I really haven't the faint——

MR JONES: There are about twenty families in the village, and fifteen in the farms around.

MISS MOFFAT: Many children?

MR JONES: What age?

MISS MOFFAT: Up to sixteen or seventeen.

MR JONES: Round here they are only children till they are twelve. Then they are sent away over the hills to the mine, and in one week they are old men.

MISS MOFFAT: I see. . . . How many can read or write?

MR JONES: Next to none.

MISS RONBERRY: Why do you ask?

MISS MOFFAT: Because I am going to start a school for them.

MISS RONBERRY: Start a school for them? [*Coldly.*] What for?

MISS MOFFAT: What for? You cheerfully contribute funds to send missionaries to African heathens, who are as happy as the day is long, and you ask me what for? See these books? Hundreds

of 'em, and something wonderful to read in every single one—these nippers are to be cut off from all that, for ever, are they? Why? Because they happen to be born penniless in an uncivilized countryside, coining gold down there in that stinking dungeon for some beef-headed old miser!

MR JONES [*roused*]: That 's right. . . .

MISS MOFFAT: The printed page, what is it? One of the miracles of all time, that 's what! And yet when these poor babies set eyes on it, they might just as well have been struck by the miracle of sudden blindness; and that, to my mind, is plain infamous!

MR JONES [*in an excited whisper*]: My goodness, miss, that 's right. . . .

MISS RONBERRY: The *ordinary* children, you mean?

MISS MOFFAT: Yes, my dear, the ordinary children, that came into the world by the same process exactly as you and I. When I heard that this part of the world was a disgrace to a Christian country, I knew this house was a godsend; I am going to start a school, immediately, next door, in the barn, and you are going to help me!

MISS RONBERRY: I? [*The rest of the scene is played very quickly.*

MISS MOFFAT [*settling again on the end of the sofa*]: Yes, you! You 're going to fling away your parasol and your kid gloves, and you 're going to stain those tapering fingers with a little honest toil!

MISS RONBERRY: I couldn't teach those children, I couldn't! They—they smell!

MISS MOFFAT: If we 'd never been taught to wash, so would we; we 'll put 'em under the pump. . . . Mr Jones, d' ye know what I 'm going to do with that obstinate old head of yours?

MR JONES: My head?

MISS MOFFAT: I 'm going to crack it open with a skewer. And I 'm going to excavate all those chunks of grammar school knowledge, give 'em a quick dust, and put 'em to some use at last——

MR JONES: I am a solicitor's clerk in Gwaenygam and I earn thirty-three shillings per week——

MISS MOFFAT: I 'll give you thirty-four—and your lunch,

MISS RONBERRY: I have an enormous house to run, and the flowers to do——

MISS MOFFAT: Shut it up except one room, and leave the flowers to die a natural death—in their own beds. . . . [*Crossing excitedly to the foot of the stairs.*] I 've been left a little money and I know exactly what I am going to do with it——

MR JONES: But those children are in the mine—earning money—how can they——

MISS MOFFAT: I 'll pay their parents the few miserable pennies they get out of it. . . . And when I 've finished with you, *you* won't have time to think about snapping up a husband, and *you* won't have time to be so pleased that you 're saved! Well?

MR JONES [*after a pause, solemnly*]: I do not care if you are not Chapel, I am with you.

MISS MOFFAT: Good! [*Crossing swiftly to the desk, and taking her satchel*]. I have all the details worked out, I 'll explain roughly . . . Come along, my dears, gather round—— [*She takes the dazed Miss Ronberry by the arm, sits her beside her on the sofa, and beckons Mr Jones to sit on her other side. Opening the satchel and spilling a sheaf of papers on to her knee.*] Of course we must go slowly at first, but if we put our backs into it . . . [*Aglow.*] Here we are, three stolid middle-aged folk, settled in our little groove and crammed with benefits; and *there* are those babies scarcely out of the shell, that have no idea they are even breathing the air . . . Only God can know how their life will end, but He will give us the chance to direct them a little of the way——

MR JONES [*intoning, seized with religious fervour*]: We have the blessed opportunity to raise up the children from the bowels of the earth where the devil hath imprisoned them in the powers of darkness, and bring them to the light of knowledge——

MRS WATTY [*coming in from the kitchen, sailing round the table with an enormous steaming teapot, calling shrilly, as Miss Moffat displays her papers*]: Tea!

[*Black out. The curtain falls, and rises immediately on*

Scene II

A night in August, six weeks later. The window curtains are closed and the lamps lit. The arm-chair has been pushed above the desk, and a small bench put in its place, facing the audience. Red geraniums in pots across the window-sills. Miss Moffat's straw hat is slung over the knob at the foot of the stairs. The big desk, the desk chair, the sofa, and the settle are littered with books, exercise-books, and sheets of paper. Apart from these details the room is unchanged.

Sitting on the bench are five black-faced miners, between twelve and sixteen years of age, wearing caps, mufflers, boots, and corduroys embedded in coal; they look as if they had been commanded to wait. They all look alike under their black; the ringleader is Morgan Evans, fifteen, quick and impudent; his second is Robbart Robbatch, a big, slow boy, a year or two older; the others are Glyn Thomas, Will Hughes, and John Owen.

Mrs Watty comes downstairs, carrying a basket of washing.

Mrs Watty [*singing*]: 'I 'm saved, I am—I 'm saved, I am—I 'm S-A-V-E-D——' [*Seeing the boys, and halting.*] You 'ere again?

Robbart [*nudging Morgan*]: Be mai'n ddeud?

Mrs Watty: I said, you 'ere again?

Morgan: No, miss.

Mrs Watty: What d' ye mean, no, miss?

Morgan [*a strong accent*]: We issn't 'ere again, miss.

Mrs Watty: What are you, then?

Morgan: We issn't the same lot ass this mornin', miss.

Mrs Watty [*coming downstairs*]: Ain't you?

Morgan: Miss Ronny-berry tell us to wait, miss.

Mrs Watty [*calling*]: Ma'am!

Miss Moffat [*in the bedroom*]: Yes?

Mrs Watty: Five more nigger-boys for you!

[*She goes into the kitchen. Morgan takes a bottle from his pocket and swigs at it; one of the others holds out his hand, takes the bottle, gulps, and gives it back, while another begins to hum, absent-mindedly, a snatch of the same song as before—'Yr*

Hufen Melyn.' The rest (including Morgan) take up the harmony and sing it to the end.

ROBBART [*loudly, derisively*]: Please, miss, can I have a kiss?

MORGAN: No, you can't, you dirty Taffy, you dirty my nose!

ROBBART: Get out o' my school, you dirty Taffys——

MORGAN: Get out——

[*He gives a hefty push and sends all the others sprawling to the floor. Pandemonium, involving a torrent of Welsh imprecations.*

GLYN: Denna'r trydydd tro—be haru ti, diawl——

JOHN: Get out o' my school, cer gartra—mochyn budur gwaith glo—cer gartra——

WILL: Wtisho dy drwyn i waedu eto?

MORGAN: Sospon mawr, yn berwi ar y llawr—sospon bach—wtish dy drwyn di i waedu?

[*In the middle of this Mrs Watty comes in from the kitchen, her arms covered in soapsuds.*

MRS WATTY: Now, now, you boys, me on me washin' night too!

MORGAN: Please, miss, can I have a kiss?

MRS WATTY [*shocked*]: You naughty boy! You wait till you see Miss Moffat, she 'll give you what for! [*On her way back to the kitchen.*] Can I 'ave a kiss, indeed; bad as the West End . . .

[*She goes.*

ROBBART [*bored, singing raucously*]: 'Boys and girls come out to play——'

[*He claps his hands to his knees, the others half take up the refrain. Mr Jones comes in from the front door.*

MORGAN: Sh! [*The boys are silent, turn, and watch Mr Jones. He eyes them fearfully.—Blandly*] Good evenin', sir.

MR JONES [*relieved, taking off his hat*]: Good evening.

[*He moves towards the kitchen.*

MORGAN [*suddenly*]: I seed you and the lady teacher be'ind the door!

[*A chorus of* 'Oooo!' *in mock horror from him and the others.*

MR JONES [*frightened and dignified*]: You wait till you see Miss Moffat. She will give you what for.

MORGAN [*muttering, mimicking him*]: You wait till you see Miss

Moffat, she will give you what for! [*The others join in as Mr Jones goes into the kitchen:* 'You wait till you see Miss Moffat, she will give you what for!'] Shh!

[*The rest are silent, as Miss Moffat comes downstairs from the bedroom. She is dressed much the same, and carries a roll of papers.*

MISS MOFFAT [*calling*]: I told you, the shape of the bedroom doesn't allow for a door into the barn—oh, she isn't here . . . [*Picking up her hat from the knob and putting it on.*] Sorry to keep you waiting, boys, but I have to go across to Mr Rees, the carpenter, and then I 'll be able to talk to you. In the meantime, will you go to the pump in the garden shed, and wash your hands? Through there. You 'll find a lantern. [*They stare before them, immovable.—Smiling.*] Did you understand all that?

MORGAN [*with false submissiveness*]: Yes, miss.

THE OTHERS [*taking his tone*]: Thank you, miss.

MISS MOFFAT: Good.

MORGAN [*as she starts for the front door, loud and shrill*]: Please, miss, can I have a kiss? [*A pause.*

MISS MOFFAT [*turning*]: What did you say?

MORGAN [*rising, leaping over the bench, and grinning at the others*]: Please, miss, can I have a kiss?

MISS MOFFAT [*after a pause, quietly*]: Of course you can. [*She walks briskly down, puts one foot on the end of the banch, seizes Morgan, turns him over on her knee, spanks him six times, hard, with the roll of papers, then releases him. Looking coolly at the others.*] Can I oblige anybody else?

[*She goes out by the front door. The others follow her with their eyes, aghast, in silence.*

ROBBART [*imitating Morgan*]: Please, miss, can I 'ave a smack bottom? [*An uproar of mirth, and a quick tangle of Welsh.*

MORGAN: Cythral uffarn——

GLYN: Be hari hi—hi a'i molchi——

JOHN: Pwy sisho molchi——

WILL: Welso ti'rioed wraig fel ene——

MORGAN: Mae'n lwcus na ddaru mi mo'i thrawo hi lawr a'i lladd hi——

ROBBART: Nawn i drio molchi—dewch hogia—mae'n well nag eistedd yma—dewch——

[*They lumber into the garden, Morgan muttering furiously, the others talking and laughing. Their voices die away. Mr Jones's head appears timidly round from the kitchen. He sees they are gone, gives a sigh of relief, and comes into the room, carrying books. He sits at the desk, intoning a hymn. Bessie comes in from the front door, dejected and sulky. She is munching a sweet; her hair is in curls, and one curl is turned round one finger, which she holds stiffly in the air. She lays her hat on the sofa, then decides Mr Jones's company is better than none.*

BESSIE: Would you like a sweetie?

MR JONES: No, thank you, my little dear. Have you had another walk?

BESSIE: Yes, Mr Jones. [*Perching on the edge of the sofa.*] All by myself.

MR JONES [*genially, for him*]: Did you see anybody?

BESSIE: Only a lady and a gentleman in the lane; and mother told me never to look . . . [*As he pretends not to have heard.*] I do miss the shops. London 's full o' them, you know.

MR JONES: Full of fancy rubbish, you mean.

BESSIE: I 'd like to be always shopping, I would. Sundays and all . . . . Mr Jones, d' you remember sayin' everybody who don't go to chapel on Sundays will go to hell?

MR JONES [*bravely*]: Indeeed I do.

BESSIE: Last Sunday Miss Moffat was diggin' the garden all afternoon; she's in for it, then, isn't she?

MR JONES: Miss Moffat is a good woman. If she went to chapel she would be a better one, but she is still a good woman.

MRS WATTY [*calling, in the kitchen*]: Bessie!

BESSIE [*slyly*]: Mr Jones, is it true the school idea isn't going on that well?

MR JONES [*after a pause*]: Who told you that?

BESSIE: Miss Ronberry was sayin' something to my mum—oh, I wasn't listenin'! . . . Besides, we 've been here six weeks, and nothin' 's started yet.

MR JONES: Everything is splendid.

BESSIE [*disappointed*]: Oh, I am glad. Miss Moffat 's been cruel to me, but I don't bear no grudge.

MR JONES: Cruel to you?

BESSIE: She hides my sweets. [*Going.*] She 's a liar, too.

MR JONES: A liar?

BESSIE: Told me they 're bad for me, and it says on the bag they 're nourishin' . . . [*Going, dipping her nose into her bag.*] And the idea of learnin' school with those children, ooh . . .

MR JONES: Why are you holding your hair like that?

BESSIE: These are me curls. D' you think it 's nice?

MR JONES: It is nice; but it is wrong.

MRS WATTY [*calling shrilly, in the kitchen*]: Bess-ie!

BESSIE: I 've been curlin' each one round me finger and holdin' it tight till it was all right. [*Moving, dejectedly, still holding her hair.*] My finger 's achin' something terrible.

[*She goes into the kitchen. A knock at the front door.*

MR JONES [*calling*]: Dewch ifewn.

[*Idwal appears, drawing a small wooden crate on tiny wheels which he pushes to the front of the sofa. Miss Ronberry comes in from the study, poring over a book and looking harassed.*

IDWAL: Cloch yr ysgol, Mistar Jones.

MR JONES: Diolch, ymachgeni. Nosdawch.

IDWAL: Nosdawch, Mistar Jones.

[*He goes back through the front door. Miss Ronberry sits on the settle.*

MISS RONBERRY: It says here that eight sevens are fifty-six. Then it says that seven eights are fifty-six—I can't see that at all. [*Miss Moffat returns from the front door. Her cheerfulness is a little forced.*] Well?

MISS MOFFAT: No good.

MISS RONBERRY: Oh dear.

MISS MOFFAT [*throwing down her hat*]: Mr Rees says he 's had a strict order not to discuss lining the roof till the lease of the barn is signed.

MR JONES: Who gave the order?

MISS MOFFAT: That 's what I want to know.

MISS RONBERRY: And when will the lease be signed?

MISS MOFFAT: Never, it seems to me. [*Anxiously, to Mr Jones.*] Did you call at the solicitor's?

MR JONES [*unwillingly*]: They have located Sir Herbert Vezey; but he is now doubtful about letting the barn and will give his decision by post.

MISS MOFFAT: But why? He 'd already said it was no use to him. And my references were impeccable . . . [*Flinging herself on the sofa, on top of papers and books.*] *Why?*

MISS RONBERRY: You look tired.

MISS MOFFAT: It 's been a bit of a day. A letter from the mine to say no child can be released above ground—that 's all blethers, but still . . . A request from the public house not to start a school in case it interferes with beer-swilling and games of chance. A message from the chapel people to the effect that I am a foreign adventuress with cloven feet; and Priscilla 's got a puncture. A bit of a day.

[*Mrs Watty comes in from the kitchen, carrying a cup of tea.*

MRS WATTY: Drop o' tea, ma'am. I expect you 've 'ad a bit of a day. . . .

MISS MOFFAT: Who was that at the back; anything important?

MRS WATTY [*handing Miss Moffat her tea, and stirring it for her*]: Only the person that does for that Mrs Gwent-Price. Would you not 'ave your school opposite her lady because of her lady's 'eadaches.

MISS MOFFAT [*angry*]: What did you say?

MRS WATTY: I pulverised 'er. [*Stirring, hard.*] I said it would be a shame, I said, if there was such a shindy over the way that the village couldn't hear Mrs Double-Barrel givin' her 'usband what for, I said. The person didn't know where to put 'erself.

[*She goes back into the kitchen.*

MR JONES [*gathering books and making to cross towards the study*]: That has not helped the peace in the community, neither.

MISS MOFFAT: I know; but she does make a tip-top cup of tea. . . . [*Seeing the crate, wearily.*] What 's that?

MR JONES: It is the bell, for the school.

MISS MOFFAT [*sitting up, more cheerfully*]: Oh, is it?

MISS RONBERRY [*rising*]: The bell? Do let us have a peep——

[*Miss Moffat unhinges the side of the crate and shows the bell. It is an old one, about a cubic foot in size.*

MR JONES: It was on Llantalon Monastery before it burnt down——

MISS MOFFAT: Look, it 's got the rope, and everything. . . . [*Getting depressed again.*] Well, it 's good to see it, anyway.

MISS RONBERRY: The mason finished the little tower for it yesterday—do let us tell those boys to put it up! It 'll bring us luck!

MISS MOFFAT [*sitting on the sofa drinking her tea*]: If it keeps them out of mischief till I 'm ready——

MISS RONBERRY: Mr Jones, do go and tell them!

[*Mr Jones gives her a doubtful look and goes towards the garden. A sudden noise of raucous abuse outside in the shed; he winces, and goes.*

MISS MOFFAT: Poor Jonesy, he 's terrified of 'em.

MISS RONBERRY: So am I. They 're so big. And so black——

[*A knock at the front door. Sarah runs in, excited, leaving the door open behind her.*

SARAH: A letter from the gentleman that own the barn, I had a good look at the seal!

MISS MOFFAT: At last——

[*She hands her cup to Miss Ronberry, takes the letter quickly from Sarah, and reads it.*

MISS RONBERRY [*putting the cup on the settle*]: What does it say?

MISS MOFFAT: Sir Herbert still cannot give a definite decision until the seventeenth. [*Crushing the letter.*] Another week wasted. This is infuriating. [*She rises and crosses towards the desk.*

MISS RONBERRY: Does it mean he may not let you have it?

SARAH [*disappointed*]: Oh . . . [*She moves towards the front door.*

MISS MOFFAT: He must—it would ruin everything——

MISS RONBERRY: Sarah, isn't there another empty building *anywhere* round here?

SARAH [*considering*]: There is the pigsties on the Maes Road, but they issn't big enough.

[*She goes. Miss Moffat sits in the desk chair.*

MISS RONBERRY: Can't we start afresh somewhere else?

MISS MOFFAT: I 've spent too much on preparations here—besides, I felt so right here from the start—I *can't* leave now. . . . I 'm a Christian woman, but I could smack Sir Herbert's face till my arm dropped off.

[*The front door is opened unceremoniously and the Squire strides in; he is in full evening dress, without a hat, and smokes a cigar; he is a little flushed with port. He smiles foolishly at Miss Moffat.*

THE SQUIRE: Jolly good evenin', teacher. Remember me?

MISS MOFFAT: Would you mind going outside, knocking, and waiting quite a long time before I say 'Come in'?

THE SQUIRE: Jolly good! Parlour games, what?

MISS RONBERRY [*horrified*]: But Miss Moffat, it 's the *Squire*! Squire, you must forget you ever saw me in this dress—so ashamed—I shan't be a moment——

[*She runs upstairs into the bedroom.*

THE SQUIRE: Rat tat tat, one two three four, come in; one two three four, forward *march*! My dear madam, you 're not in class now! [*A knock at the garden door.*] Come in!

[*Robbart enters. His attitude is a little chastened, though he does not see the Squire. He is followed by Mr Jones and Morgan, who carries a lantern.*

ROBBART [*touching his forelock*]: Please, miss, for the bell.

THE SQUIRE [*with jolly patronage*]: Evening, Jones! Evening, boys! [*The boys recognize him and doff their caps, deeply impressed.—With mock solemnity.*] I am appalled to observe, my boys, that you are still soiling your fingers in that disgusting coal-mine!

[*An awkward pause.*

MR JONES: Excuse me, please. . . .

[*He goes into the study. Robbart makes an uncertain movement towards the bell.*

THE SQUIRE: What 's that you 've got there?

ROBBART: Bell, syr, for the school.

THE SQUIRE [*laughing loudly*]: Up with it, boys, up with it! [*Robbart lifts the crate and carries it out of the front door, which Morgan has openea for him. Morgan follows him, shutting the door.—During*

this.] Ding dong bell—teacher 's in the well! . . . [*Pushing books off the sofa and sitting on it.*] Now, my dear madam——

MISS MOFFAT: I 'm rather irritable this evening, so unless there 's a reason for your visit——

THE SQUIRE: Oh, but there is! Very important message. Word of mouth. From a gent that 's just been dining with me. Sir Herbert Vezey.

MISS MOFFAT [*with a start*]: Yes? . . . Oh, do be quick . . .!

THE SQUIRE: He has definitely decided that he has no use for the barn—but . . . [*Rising and lifting a finger, playfully.*] . . . he does not see it as a school, and under no circumstances will he let it as such, so he must regretfully decline, et cetera.

[*He sits down suddenly. A pause. Miss Moffat tries in vain to hide her chagrin.*

MISS MOFFAT: He implied in his first letter that he would be willing to sell.

THE SQUIRE: Then some bigwig must have made him change his mind, mustn't he?

MISS MOFFAT [*suddenly looking at him, incredulously*]: You?

THE SQUIRE [*rising, serious, and taking the floor with a certain authority*]: I have not called on you, madam, because I have been eyeing your activities very closely from afar—— [*Confused.*] It is with dis—disapproval and—er—dis——

MISS MOFFAT: It is unwise to embark on a speech with the vocabulary of a child of five.

THE SQUIRE [*suddenly aggressive*]: I am not going to have any of this damned hanky-panky in my village!

MISS MOFFAT: *Your* village?

THE SQUIRE: *My* village! I am no braggart; but I 'd have you know that everything you can see from that window—and you haven't got a bad view—*I own*! [*Heavily.*] Now, my dear madam——

MISS MOFFAT [*in an outburst*]: And stop calling me your dear madam. I 'm not married, I 'm not French, and you haven't the slightest affection for me!

THE SQUIRE: Oh. . . . First of all, I 'm not one to hit a woman below the belt. If you know what I mean. Always be fair—to

the fair sex. . . . All my life I 've done my level best for the villagers—they call me Squire, y' know, term of affection, jolly touching—I mean, a hamper every Christmas, the whole shoot, and a whopping tankard of beer on my birthday, and on my twenty-firster they all got a mug——

MISS MOFFAT: Go on.

THE SQUIRE: They jabber away in that funny lingo, but bless their hearts, it 's a free country! But puttin' 'em up to read English, and pothooks, and givin' 'em ideas—if there were more people like you, y' know, England 'd be a jolly dangerous place to live in! [*With a chuckle.*] What d' ye want to do, turn 'em into gentlemen? What 's the idea? [*Raucous cat-calls from the garden.*

MISS MOFFAT: I am beginning to wonder myself.

THE SQUIRE [*sobering*]: Anyway, this buyin' 'em out of the mine is a lot of gammon. I own a half-share in it.

MISS MOFFAT: That explains a good deal.

THE SQUIRE: Why don't you take up croquet? Keep your pecker up! [*Miss Ronberry comes out of the bedroom. She has put on a new dress, and is much prinked up.*] Well, dear lady, anything I can do to make your stay here a happier one——

MISS MOFFAT: Thank you.

THE SQUIRE: I must be getting back. If I know Sir Herbert, my best old port will be no more——

MISS MOFFAT [*rising suddenly, and facing him*]: Wait a minute.

[*Miss Ronberry pauses on the stairs, and looks inquiringly from one to the other.*

THE SQUIRE: Yes?

MISS MOFFAT: I know I shall be sticking a pin into a whale; but here are just two words about yourself. You are the Squire Bounitful, are you? Adored by his contented subjects, intelligent, and benignly understanding, are you? I should just like to point out that there is a considerable amount of dirt, ignorance, misery, and discontent abroad in this world, and that a good deal of it is due to people like you, because you are a stupid, conceited, greedy, good-for-nothing, addle-headed nincompoop, and you can go to blue blazes. Good night!

[*She turns away. A frozen pause. The Squire walks to the front door, and turns.*

THE SQUIRE [*majestically*]: I perceive that you have been drinking.

[*He goes.*

MISS MOFFAT: That was undignified, but I feel better for it.

[*She sits on the bench, intensely depressed.*

MISS RONBERRY: I am glad, because it *was* plain-spoken, wasn't it? [*Coming down.*] Has he been nasty? So unlike the Squire——

MISS MOFFAT: He was kindness itself. He advised me to go and live in a hole in the ground with my knitting. He has persuaded the owner not to sell.

MISS RONBERRY: Oh, dear. . . . Of course . . . [*Sitting beside her on the bench, after giving it a cautious flick with her handkerchief.*] . . . I always think men know best, don't you?

MISS MOFFAT: Yes.

MISS RONBERRY: I 'm wearing my mousseline de soie, and he never even noticed. . . . What will you do?

MISS MOFFAT [*rising, her back to the audience*]: Sell the house; take this brain-child of a ridiculous spinster, and smother it. Have you got a handkerchief?

MISS RONBERRY: Yes, Miss Moffat. Why?

MISS MOFFAT: I want to blow my nose.

[*She holds her hand out; Miss Ronberry hands her the handkerchief. She blows her nose, and hands the handkerchief back.*

MISS RONBERRY: You ought to have had a cry. [*As Miss Moffat crosses to the study.*] I love a cry when I 'm depressed. Such an advantage over the gentlemen, I always think——

MISS MOFFAT [*opening the study door*]: Mr Jones, will you write letters to the tradespeople and the mine? We are giving up the school. . . . [*Coming back to her desk and picking up the wastepaper basket.*] I suppose we 'd better start putting some order into this chaos, and get the business over. . . . [*Sitting on the sofa, the basket beside her, picking up five grubby books lying open, one on top of the other.*] What are these filthy exercise-books doing among my papers? . . .

MISS RONBERRY [*going to the desk and tidying papers*]: Those hooligans

just now. They said Mr Jones had picked them out because they could write English, and would I mind my own some dreadful-word business.

[*She crosses and drops some papers in the basket.*

MISS MOFFAT [*glancing at the top book*]: I set them an essay on 'How I would spend my holiday.' [*Throwing it into the basket.*] I must have been mad. . . .

[*Miss Ronberry takes another of the exercise-books from her and looks at it as she crosses back to the desk.*

MISS RONBERRY [*reading laboriously*]: 'If—I has ever holiday—I has breakfast and talks then dinner and a rest, tea then nothing—then supper then I talk and I go sleep.'

MISS MOFFAT: From exhaustion, I suppose. [*Bessie comes in from the kitchen, advances to the sofa and takes up her hat.—Tearing up pages.*] Where are you going?

BESSIE: Just another walk, Miss Moffat.

MISS RONBERRY [*as Bessie trails up to the front door, wiping an eye, ostentatiously*]: What 's the matter, little dear?

BESSIE: Mum 's hit me.

MISS RONBERRY: Oh, naughty mum. Why?

BESSIE: 'Cause I told her she was common. [*She goes.*

MISS RONBERRY [*crossing to the table, and taking up papers*]: That child *is* unhappy.

MISS MOFFAT: I can't be bothered with her. [*Glancing at another book.*] Another time I 'd have been faintly amused by this one's idea of a holiday, judging by a rather crude drawing.

MISS RONBERRY: What is it?

MISS MOFFAT: A bicycling tour with me in bloomers.

MISS RONBERRY: Tch, tch. . . .

[*She crosses to the settle, where she collects more papers.*

MISS MOFFAT [*reading from a third exercise-book*]: '"Holiday-time." That carefree magic word! What shall it be this year, tobogganing among the eternal snows or tasting the joys of Father Neptune?'

MISS RONBERRY: But that 's beautiful! Extraordinary!

MISS MOFFAT: I might think so too if I hadn't seen it in a book open on that desk. [*She tears up the book and throws it away.*

MISS RONBERRY: Oh!

MISS MOFFAT: No; your Squire was right. . . . [*Her eyes resting casually and despondently on the last book.*] I have been a stupid and impractical ass, and I can't imagine how—— [*A pause. Her eye has caught something in the paper. She begins to read, slowly, with difficulty.*] 'The mine is dark. . . . If a light come in the mine . . . the rivers in the mine will run fast with the voice of many women; the walls will fall in, and it will be the end of the world.'

[*Miss Ronberry is listening, inquiringly. Morgan enters brusquely from the front door. He has made no attempt to wash, but now that he is alone he half emerges as a truculent arresting boy, with, latent in him, a very strong personality which his immaturity and natural inclination make him shy to display.*

MORGAN: Please, miss, I help with the bell——

MISS RONBERRY: Shhh—the garden—— [*To Miss Moffat.*] Do go on——

[*Morgan moves sulkily towards the garden door. Miss Moffat, who has not looked up from the paper, begins to read again.*

MISS MOFFAT [*reading*]: '. . . So the mine is dark. . . .' [*Morgan stops, turns, sees what she is holding, and stops abruptly. She continues without having noticed him.—Reading.*] '. . . But when I walk through the Tan—something—shaft, in the dark, I can touch with my hands the leaves on the trees, and underneath . . . [*Turning over a page.*] . . . where the corn is green.' [*A pause.*

MORGAN: Go on readin'.

[*Miss Moffat looks up at him, then back at the paper.*

MISS MOFFAT [*reading*]: '. . . There is a wind in the shaft, not carbon monoxide they talk about, it smell like the sea, only like as if the sea had fresh flowers lying about . . . and that is my holiday.' [*A pause. She looks at the front of the book.*] Are you Morgan Evans?

MORGAN: Yes, miss.

MISS MOFFAT: Did you write this?

MORGAN [*after hesitation, sullenly*]: No, miss.

MISS MOFFAT: But it 's in your book.

MORGAN: Yes, miss.

MISS MOFFAT: Then who wrote it?

MORGAN: I dunno, miss.

[*Miss Moffat nods to Miss Ronberry, who patters discreetly into the study. Morgan makes for the garden.*

MISS MOFFAT: Did you write this?

[*It is difficult to tell from the crisp severity of her manner that she is experiencing a growing inward excitement. Morgan stops and looks at her, distrustfully.*

MORGAN: I dunno, miss. . . . [*After hesitating, bursting out.*] What iss the matter with it?

MISS MOFFAT: Sit down. [*He stares at her, looks uncertainly towards the garden door, and moves towards the bench.*] And take your cap off. [*He stares at her again, on the brink of revolt, then doffs his cap and sits on the bench.*] Spelling 's deplorable, of course. 'Mine' with two 'n's' and 'leaves' l, e, f, s.

MORGAN [*interested, against his will*]: What wass it by rights?

MISS MOFFAT: A 'v,' to start with.

MORGAN: I never 'eard o' no 'v's,' miss.

MISS MOFFAT: Don't call me miss.

MORGAN: Are you not a Miss?

MISS MOFFAT: Yes I am, but it is not polite.

MORGAN [*uninterested*]: Oh.

MISS MOFFAT: You say 'Yes, Miss Moffat,' or 'No, Miss Moffat.' M, o, double f, a, t.

MORGAN [*after a pause*]: No 'v's'?

MISS MOFFAT: No 'v's.' Where do you live?

MORGAN: Under the ground, miss.

MISS MOFFAT: I mean your home.

MORGAN: Llyn-y-Mwyn, Miss . . . Moffat. Four miles from 'ere.

MISS MOFFAT: How big is it?

MORGAN: Four 'ouses and a beer-'ouse.

MISS MOFFAT: Have you any hobbies?

MORGAN: Oh, yes.

MISS MOFFAT: What?

MORGAN: Rum.

MISS MOFFAT: Rum? [*He takes his bottle from his pocket, holds it up, and puts it back.*] Do you live with your parents?

MORGAN: No; by me own self. Me mother iss dead, and me father and me four big brothers wass in the big shaft accident when I wass ten.

MISS MOFFAT: Killed?

MORGAN: Oh, yes, everybody wass.

MISS MOFFAT: What sort of man was your father?

MORGAN: 'E was a mongrel.

MISS MOFFAT: A what?

MORGAN: 'E had a dash of English. He learned it to me.

MISS MOFFAT: D' you go to chapel?

MORGAN: No, thank you.

MISS MOFFAT: Who taught you to read and write?

MORGAN: Tott?

MISS MOFFAT: Taught. The verb 'to teach.'

MORGAN: Oh, teached.

MISS MOFFAT: Who taught you?

MORGAN: I did.

MISS MOFFAT: Why?

MORGAN: I dunno.

MISS MOFFAT: What books have you read?

MORGAN: Books? A bit of the Bible and a book that a feller from the Plas kitchen nab for me.

MISS MOFFAT: What was it?

MORGAN: *The Ladies' Companion.* [*A pause. She rises, and walks thoughtfully up towards her desk, studying him. He sits uncomfortably, twirling his cap between grimy fingers. Rising, at last, making to don his cap.*] Can I go now, pliss——

MISS MOFFAT [*suddenly, decisively*]: No. [*He sits, taken aback. She walks round the bench and stands near the garden door, facing him.*] Do you want to learn any more?

MORGAN: No, thank you.

MISS MOFFAT: Why not?

MORGAN: The other men would have a good laugh.

MISS MOFFAT: I see. [*A pause. She crosses slowly to the sofa, turns,*

and faces him again.] Have you ever written anything before this exercise?

MORGAN: No.

MISS MOFFAT: Why not?

MORGAN: Nobody never ask me to. [*After a pause, truculently, feeling her eyes on him*]: What iss the matter with it?

MISS MOFFAT [*sitting, looking thoughtfully at the book*]: Nothing 's the matter with it. Whether it means anything is too early for me to say, but it shows exceptional talent for a boy in your circumstances.

MORGAN [*after blinking and hesitating*]: Terrible long words, Miss Moffat.

MISS MOFFAT: This shows that you are very clever.

[*A pause. He looks up slowly, not sure if he has heard aright; looks at her searchingly, then away again. His mind is working, uncertainly, but swiftly.*

MORGAN: Oh.

MISS MOFFAT: Have you ever been told that before?

MORGAN: It iss news to me.

MISS MOFFAT: What effect does the news have on you?

MORGAN: It iss a bit sudden. [*After a pause.*] It makes me that I—— [*Hesitating, then plunging.*]—I want to get more clever still. [*Looking slowly, wonderingly round the room.*] I want to know what iss—behind of all them books. . . .

MISS MOFFAT [*after studying him a moment, calling suddenly*]: Miss Ronberry! . . . [*To him.*] Can you come to-morrow?

MORGAN [*taken by surprise*]: To-morrow—no—I am workin' on the six till four shift——

MISS MOFFAT: Then can you be here at five?

MORGAN: Five—no, not before seven, Miss—six miles to walk——

MISS MOFFAT: Oh, yes, of course—seven then. In the meantime I 'll correct this for spelling and grammar.

MORGAN [*staring at her, fascinated, after a pause*]: Yes, Miss Moffat.

[*She walks briskly towards the study. He has not moved. She turns and looks at him.*

MISS MOFFAT: That will be all. Good night.

MORGAN [*after a pause*]: Good night, Miss Moffat.

[*He goes towards the front door, putting on his cap.*

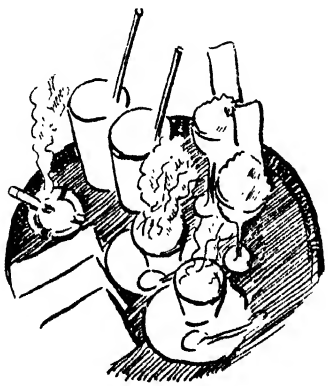
MISS MOFFAT: Are you the one I spanked? [*He turns at the door, looks at her, blinks, and goes.—Calling, excitedly*]: Miss Ronberry! Mr Jones! [*Miss Ronberry runs in from the study.*

MISS RONBERRY: Yes?

MISS MOFFAT: I have been a deuce of a fool. It doesn't matter about the barn; we are going to start the school, in a small way at first, in this room. . . . And I am going to get those youngsters out of that mine if I have to black my face and go down and fetch them myself! Get Jonesy before he posts those letters, and tell those others I 'll be ready for them in five minutes. We are going on with the school! [*Miss Ronberry, who has punctuated this speech with a series of nods, scampers into the study, rather dazed. Her voice is heard calling*]: We are going on with the school! [*The door shuts behind her. Miss Moffat looks down at the exercise book she is still carrying.—Reading*]: '. . . and when I walk, in the dark . . . I can touch with my hands . . . where the corn is green. . .'

[*The fitful joyous clang of the school bell above. She looks up, excited, listening.*

CURTAIN



ACT II

SCENE I

An early evening in August, two years later; the sun is still bright.

The room is now a complete jumble of living-room and schoolroom, and there is every sign of cheerful overcrowding. The table in the window recess is replaced by two school desks; the table and its small chair are pushed behind the sofa; the spinning-wheel has been removed; a school desk stands isolated between the big open-top desk and the sofa; between the sofa and the bay window, two rows of four school desks each, squeezed together and facing the audience at an angle. Charts, maps, an alphabet list, and a slate with writing on it, are pinned up higgledy-piggledy over all the books; a large world globe on the shelf; hat-pegs have been fixed irregularly on the stair banisters. Books overflow everywhere, all over the dresser especially, in place of plates; the hat-pegs are loaded with caps and hats; Miss Moffat's hat is still perched on the knob at the foot of the stairs; her cloak hangs on a hook on the back of the front door; an easel and blackboard lie against the sofa, with 'Constantinople is the capital of Turkey' written across in Miss Ronberry's tremulous handwriting; stuffed fish in a glass case on top of a bookcase. The lamp on the table has been removed. Potted plants on the window-sills.

Before the curtain rises, voices are heard singing, in harmony, in Welsh: 'Bugeilio'r Gwenyth Gwyn': children, shrill, sweet, and self-confident, reinforced by harmony from older boys and parents, especially Sarah.

The room seems full of people; Miss Ronberry stands perched on the tiny stool between the sofa and the foot of the stairs, her back to the audience, conducting stiffly with a ruler; Mr Jones is crouched in the desk chair, correcting exercises at the open desk. Sarah, two older peasant women in shawls, and three older men in their shabby best stand crowded behind the eight desks and in the window recess. In the front row of desks sit Robbart, Idwal, a little girl, and Glyn Thomas; in the second sit another

little boy, another little girl, Bessie, and Will Hughes. In another desk, pushed provisionally next the front row, sits John Owen, and in the other isolated one sits Old Tom, an elderly, distinguished-looking, grey-bearded peasant, his cap and stick before him, carried away by the music.

Bessie is silent, bored, and prettier than ever, though still dressed as a sober little schoolgirl. The boys we saw before as miners are clean and almost spruce; the parents follow every movement of Miss Ronberry's with avid curiosity. The pupils have slates and slate-pencils in front of them. The song is sung through to the end.

MISS RONBERRY: Now that was quite better. Full of splendid feeling, and nice and precise as well. Have you all got my English translation?

THE PUPILS: Yes, Miss Ronberry.

MISS RONBERRY: Are you all quite sure of the meaning of 'Thou lovedest him, fair maid, that doth not love thee back'?

THE PUPILS [*as she climbs down from her stool*]: Yes, Miss Ronberry.

OLD TOM [*singing stentoriously, in broken English*]: . . . 'That doth not luff thee . . . ba-a-ck!'

MISS RONBERRY: Capital, Mr Tom. [*She takes a small handbell from a hook beneath the stairs, rings it vigorously, and hangs it up again; nobody moves.*] Home, sweet home, children! . . . [*Gaily, as they study her like owls.*] Boys and girls, come out to play!

IDWAL: Please, Miss Ronberry, can we have some more?

MISS RONBERRY: Well, just the tiniest lesson. [*Climbing on to her stool again.*] We must keep to the curriculum. Now what would you like?

IDWAL: Please, Miss Ronberry, how do you spell it?

MISS RONBERRY: What, dear?

OLD TOM: Curriculum!

MISS RONBERRY: What would you like? The rivers of Europe or King Alfred and the cakes?

OLD TOM [*ecstatically*]: Multiplication table!

MISS RONBERRY: Twice six are twelve!

THE PUPILS: Twice seven are fourteen—twice eight are sixteen——

[*They continue up to 'Twice twelve are twenty-four,' and stop.*

OLD TOM: Twice thirteen are twenty-six!

MISS RONBERRY: Capital—school dismiss!

[*The children and grown-ups bustle and chatter. One or two scribble on their slates; another rubs out what he has written; others run over for hats and coats.*

IDWAL [*after looking out of the open garden door, calling to the others*]: Dyma'r fistress!

[*The whole room, except Bessie, who remains seated, stand silent and respectful while Miss Moffat walks in from the garden. She is more alert and business-like than ever, carries a tiny portable desk under one arm, and is studying an exercise-book. She nods pleasantly to the room, goes upstairs and into her bedroom; as she sets foot on the stairs the hubbub starts again abruptly, and the crowd saunter or hurry chattily through the front door; during this Robbart takes the blackboard and easel, leans them against the settle, and puts away the stool, while John Owen shuts the garden door and pushes his desk into the corner near the grandfather's clock. The crowd finally trickle out, shepherded by Miss Ronberry, who shuts the door after them. Besides Bessie, there are left Old Tom, standing immovable next to his desk, studying Miss Ronberry as if she were a book, and Idwal, who hovers eagerly on the other side.*

The overlapping crowd dialogue in this scene could be allotted roughly from the following:

1. Be'di'r gloch, Merry?
   Chwarter i bump.
2. What iss the next thing in the multiplication?
   Wn i ddim yn wyr—gofyn iddi——
3. Why issn't there any geography now?
   Friday geography, Thursday to-day——
   Pnawn dydd Iau, te, hanner awr wedi tri——
4. Mi ddylaswn fod yn pobi heddyw——
   A dwidi gadal y cig yn y popdy——
   Mi fydd eich cegin chi ar dan, Mrs Pugh——
5. IDWAL: 'Nhad, gai fynd i chwara yn nghae John Davies——
   OLDER MAN [*answering him*]: Ddim heddyw—dwisho ti gartre——

6. Yfory d'wi am drio sgwennu llythyr——
Os gynnachi steel-pen golew?
Mae'na gymaint o flots!
Dwi wedi sgwennu llythyr at fy nain, wni ddim be ddidi'thi . . .
Welsochi 'rioed eiriau fel ene?
7. Fedri'thi ddim canu fel Cymraes, digon siwr——
Mae'r hen ddyn am ofyn rwbeth iddi eto—drychwch arno——
Mi gollith'o ei Gymraeg cyn bo hir——
8. Idwal, what you looking so sorry—always wanting to know something——
9. Mae genni just ddigon o amser i gyrraedd at y llyn——
Mae'r dwr yn rhy oer i ymdrochi——
Nag ydi—mae'r haul wedi bod yn rhy boeth heddyw——
11. Neidi ofyn i Morgan ddwad——
Feder o ddim——
Mae o'n gweithio'n rhy galed——

[*Miss Ronberry shuts the door on the crowd, with a sigh of relief, and finds herself between Old Tom and Idwal.*

IDWAL: Miss Ronberry, please, what is four times fourteen?

MISS RONBERRY: Thank you so much for the flowers, Idwal, dear.

IDWAL: Yes, Miss Ronberry.

[*He follows the others, calling after them by name.*

MISS RONBERRY [*nervously*]: Is there anything *you* would like to know, Mr Tom?

OLD TOM: Where iss Shakespeare?

MISS RONBERRY: Where? . . . Shakespeare, Mr Tom, was a very great writer.

OLD TOM: Writer? Like the Beibl?

MISS RONBERRY: Like the Bible.

OLD TOM [*looking at her doubtfully*]: Dear me, and me thinkin' the man was a place. [*Following the others, muttering sadly.*] If I iss born fifty years later, I iss been top of the class. . . .

MISS RONBERRY [*shutting the front door after him*]: Oh dear . . . [*Tidying the desks.*] Miss Moffat has been doing grammar with Form Two under the pear-tree for an hour, she must be dead . . . [*To Bessie, who is climbing over the desks*]: Why did you not get up when she crossed?

BESSIE: My foot went to sleep.

[*Her manner is more impudent than when we last saw her.*

MISS RONBERRY [*coming down to the sofa*]: That, dear, is a naughty fib.

BESSIE [*subsiding into Old Tom's desk*]: If you want to know, Miss Ronberry, I feel quite faint sometimes, as if my heart 'd stopped and the world was coming to an end.

[*Miss Moffat comes downstairs, still carrying her portable desk, and studying her exercise-book.*

MISS RONBERRY [*with guileless solicitude*]: Bessie, dear, how *horrid*!

MR JONES: It may be in the nature of a premonition.

MISS RONBERRY: A what?

[*She perches on the edge of a desk in the recess and tries to get ink off her knuckles with pumice-stone. Miss Moffat lays her portable desk on the table, and paces slowly towards the front door, studying her exercise-book.*

MR JONES: I had a premonition once. Like a wave of the ocean breakin' on a sea-shell. Something had said to me that mornin': 'Walk, and think, and keep off the food, for thirteen hours.' So I ordered my supper, and I went. Towards the end of the day, I was sittin' on a stile in a cloak of meditation; and a voice roared at me: 'John Goronwy Jones, to-morrow morning is the end of the world!'

MISS MOFFAT: And was it?

MR JONES [*sadly*]: It was eight years ago. It was a splendid experience. [*He goes back to his correcting.*

MISS MOFFAT: Which proves how much the gift of prophecy can owe to an empty stomach. . . . Anybody seen a Greek book? [*Picking up a tiny volume from under a pile of papers on the desk.*] Here it is. . . .

MISS RONBERRY: Greek, Miss Moffat?

MISS MOFFAT: Morgan Evans is starting Greek this month.

MISS RONBERRY: No! I didn't know you knew Greek?

MISS MOFFAT [*hurrying upstairs*]: I don't; I 've just got to keep one day ahead of him and trust to luck.

[*She disappears into her bedroom.*

MISS RONBERRY: To think that two years ago he hardly knew English!

BESSIE: Stuck-up teacher's pet.

MISS RONBERRY: You must not think that, dear; Miss Moffat says he is clever.

BESSIE: He always looks right through me, so I don't know, I 'm sure. Stuck-up teacher's pet. . . . I got some scent on my hands, Mr Jones; like to smell them?

MR JONES [*timidly*]: No, thank you, Bessie, I can smell them from here, thank you.

BESSIE [*sniffing her hands softly*]: Ooh, it 's lovely. . . .

MISS RONBERRY: She has some wonderful plans for him—I can tell by her manner. *I* think she is trying to send him to one of those Church schools to be a curate. Would not that be exciting?

BESSIE [*resting her head on her hands, indolently*]: *I* think she 's ridin' for a fall.

MISS RONBERRY: Bessie! Why?

BESSIE: All this orderin' 'im about. I 've got eyes in my head, if she hasn't, and he 's gettin' sick of it. *I* think a lady ought to be dainty. She 's no idea.

[*Miss Moffat appears at the top of the stairs, wiping her hands with a towel.*

MISS MOFFAT: Evans! [*A pause. Morgan comes in from the study. He is now seventeen. He is dressed in a shabby country suit, and is at the moment the submissive schoolboy, very different from the first act. He carries a sheet of writing and a pen. Miss Moffat's attitude to him seems purely impersonal. The others watch them.*] Finished?

MORGAN: Yes, Miss Moffat.

MISS MOFFAT: How many pages?

MORGAN: Nine.

MISS MOFFAT: Three too many. Boil down to six. Have you got those lines of Voltaire?

MORGAN [*showing the paper*]: Yes, Miss Moffat.

MISS MOFFAT: It 's just five—have your walk now, good and brisk . . . [*Taking his cap from a peg and tossing it to him.*] . . . here.

MORGAN [*starting for the front door, putting his pen behind his ear*]: Yes, Miss Moffat.

MISS MOFFAT: But kill two birds and get the Voltaire by heart. If you can ever argue a point like that, you 'll do. Back in twenty minutes—and take your pen from behind your ear.

[*She disappears into her bedroom. Her manner is too matter-of-fact to be unkind, but Morgan is not taking it well; he throws his pen on to Bessie's desk; he has stopped close to her, and catches her eye.*

BESSIE: Now turn a somersault and beg. [*He looks at her with contempt. She returns his stare brazenly; he is unwillingly attracted by her. She turns to see if the others are noticing. Miss Ronberry is busy with her pumice-stone in the window recess and Mr Jones is engrossed in his work. Bessie looks away from them all, suddenly soft and mysterious.*] Can you smell scent?

MORGAN [*after a pause*]: Yes.

BESSIE [*dreamily*]: Nice, isn't it?

MORGAN: I don't know, I never come across scent before. [*Correcting himself unwillingly.*] I did never come across . . . scent before. . . .

BESSIE: Bright, aren't you? Don't you ever get tired of lessons? [*She begins to sing, softly, at him. He goes to the front door, turns, arrested by her singing, then goes, banging the door. She flings down her slate with annoyance.—Darkly.*] There we go. And my mummy ought to be back soon, and then we 'll know somethin'.

MR JONES: What is the matter? Where has she gone?

BESSIE: One of her prayer meetings. Twenty miles to shake a tambourine in the open air; I think it 's wicked. . . . She ought to be just in time, and then we 'll know.

MR JONES: Know what?

BESSIE: About that horrid Morgan Evans. It 's been lessons every night with teacher, hasn't it, since we left the mine? And long walks in between, to blow the cobwebs away? But the last week or two we 've been breaking our journey, so we 've heard.

MR JONES: How do you mean?

BESSIE [*triumphantly*]: A glass of rum next door at the 'Gwesmor Arms,' and then another, and then another!

MR JONES [*perturbed*]: Oh. . . . Whoever told you that?

BESSIE: A little bird. [*As he crosses and sits at the table.*] And if my mummy's sciatica 's better she 's going to jump up and look over the frosty part, and then we 'll *know*.

[*Mrs Watty hurries in through the front door, in high spirits. She wears an ill-fitting Militant Righteousness Corps uniform, and carries an umbrella and a brown-paper parcel.*

MRS WATTY: Guess what 's 'appened to me!

BESSIE: What?

MRS WATTY: I 'm a sergeant-major!

[*Miss Moffat has come out on to the landing; her hair is down and she is brushing it.*

MISS MOFFAT: Watty, you 're not!

MRS WATTY: Oh, ma'am, I didn't see you——

MISS MOFFAT: Tell me more!

MRS WATTY: You remember Sergeant-Major 'Opkins desertin' in Cardiff and marryin' a sailor?

MISS MOFFAT: Yes?

MRS WATTY: Well, last week, not two months after she give up the Corpse, she was dead!

MISS MOFFAT: And you 've stepped into her shoes?

MRS WATTY: They 're a bit on the big side; but I can put a bit of paper in. The uniform fits lovely, though. [*Moving towards the kitchen.*] I 'll get you a cup o' tea and an egg, ma'am; you never 'ad that cold meat, ma'am, I 'll be bound?

MISS MOFFAT: Folk eat too much anyway.

[*She goes back into her bedroom.*

BESSIE: Did you jump?

MRS WATTY [*coming back into the room*]: Just caught 'im. [*To Mr Jones, sorrowfully.*] 'Avin' a good swig, sir. . . . [*To Bessie.*] Don't you dare tell '*er*, you little dollymop, or I 'll rattle your bones——

[*Miss Moffat reappears and comes downstairs, finishing doing up her hair, her little book between her teeth.*

MISS MOFFAT: Was it a nice service, Watty?

[*Miss Ronberry walks round the desks and begins to take an interest.*

MRS WATTY: Beautiful, ma'am. They said they 'oped the late

sergeant-major was gone where we all want to go, but with 'er having deserted they couldn't be sure. Then we saved three sinners. [*Prodding Mr Jones with her umbrella.*] *You* ought to been there. . . . And the collection! [*Going.*] I 'adn't seed so much oof since the Great Liverpool Exhibition.

MISS RONBERRY: But they didn't make a collection at the Liverpool Exhibition, did they?

MRS WATTY: No; but I did.

[*She goes into the kitchen. Mr Jones erects the board on its easel next to the stairs, takes an old duster which is trailing from his pocket, rubs out what is written, takes out a chalk, and copies a diagram carefully and indistinguishably on to the board from the paper in his hand. Miss Moffat wanders towards the front door, studying.*

BESSIE: Please, Miss Moffat, can I have the money for my ticket?

MISS MOFFAT: What ticket?

BESSIE: For Tregarna Fair to-morrow. You said I could go.

MISS MOFFAT: On the contrary, I said you couldn't. Not in school hours. [*She studies. Bessie sighs and tries to look ill.*

MISS RONBERRY: Are you feeling better, dear?

BESSIE: No, Miss Ronberry. It 's all this sittin' down. It 's been going on for two years now. I heard tell it ends in everythin' rottin' away.

MISS MOFFAT [*looking up*]: What 's rotting away?

MISS RONBERRY: Bessie says she 's been sitting down for two years.

MISS MOFFAT: She 's lucky. My feet feel as if I 've been standing for the same length of time. [*Sitting at the open desk and looking at some papers on a book.*] What are these, Ron?

MISS RONBERRY: Two more accounts, I fear.

MISS MOFFAT: Oh, yes. The Liddell and Scott and Evans's new suit ——[*Seeing the amounts.*] tch. . . . [*Cheerfully.*] I shall have to sell out a couple more shares, I expect.

MISS RONBERRY: Oh, dear.

MISS MOFFAT: Not at all. [*Unlacing her boots.*] It 's easy to squander money, and its easy to hoard it; the most difficult thing in the world is to use it. And if I 've learnt to use it, I 've *done* something. That 's better . . . [*Rubbing her hands.*] My plans are

laid, Ron, my dear, my plans are laid! But don't ask me what I 'm hatching, because I can't tell you till to-morrow.

MISS RONBERRY: You are wonderful!

MISS MOFFAT: Go to Halifax. I 'm enjoying myself. [*Miss Ronberry crosses, sits on the sofa, and peers at her papers. Miss Moffat puts her head in her hands and studies her Greek dictionary. Bessie sighs again, ostentatiously. Miss Moffat looks at her.*] Bessie Watty, what is all this dying duck business?

BESSIE: Yes, Miss Moffat.

MISS MOFFAT: Don't 'yes, Miss Moffat' me. Explain yourself.

[*The instinctive hostility between them is strong.*

BESSIE: My mummy said all these lessons is bad for my inside.

MISS MOFFAT [*turning back to her book*]: She told me they stop you eating sweets; but perhaps *I* am telling the lies.

BESSIE: Yes, Miss Moffat.

MISS MOFFAT: What 's the matter with your inside?

BESSIE: It goes round and round through sittin' down. P'raps what I want is a change.

MISS MOFFAT: What you want is castor oil. [*Muttering.*] 'Adelphos, a brother' . . . There is nothing to prevent you going for walks between lessons. You can go for one now, as far as Sarah Pugh Postman, to see if my new chalks have arrived. [*Looking round at Bessie, as the latter stares before her without moving, her inward rage mounting.*] Quick march.

[*She goes back to her book. Bessie rises, moves sulkily towards the front door, stops, and turns. The only sound is the scratch of Mr Jones's chalk on the blackboard.*

BESSIE: I 'm not goin'.

[*The other three turn and look at her, astounded.*

MISS MOFFAT: What did you say?

BESSIE: I 'm not goin'. Everybody 's against me . . . I 'm goin' to throw myself off of a cliff, an' kill myself. . . . It 'll make a nice case in the papers, me in pieces at the bottom of a cliff! . . . I 'm goin' mad, mad, and I 'm goin' to kill myself, nothin' 's goin' to stop me—stone dead at the bottom of a cliff—ah—ah—ah——

[*She has gradually warmed up into a fit of hysteria, half natural, half*

induced; her paroxysms rises to a crescendo of screaming and wringing of hands; spoilt, unfortunately, by Mrs Watty striding in from the kitchen with a cupful of cold water which she throws into her daughter's face. Bessie splutters, chokes, and subsides into inarticulate moans of self-pity.

MRS WATTY [*to Miss Moffat*]: I made a mess o' your rug, ma'am, but it 's worth it. She 's got bad blood, this girl, mark my word.

MISS RONBERRY: She 'll catch her death!

MRS WATTY: Nothing like cold water, ma'am. I learnt that with her father. 'E was foreign, you know.

[*She goes back into the kitchen. Bessie stands sniffing and gulping. Miss Moffat studies her with distaste.*

MISS MOFFAT: And how do you feel after that?

BESSIE: I can't remember anything. I 'm in a comma.

MISS MOFFAT [*taking her by the arm and pushing her upstairs*]: We 'll sit on our bed for an hour with the door locked, shall we, and *try* to remember? And next week you go away into service—and see how we like that—— [*She pushes her out of sight into the passage; a door bangs; the noise of a lock turning. Miss Moffat comes downstairs, tucking the key into her petticoat pocket. Mr Jones turns the blackboard round back to front on its easel.*] I must count her as one of my failures. Fish out of water, of course. Guttersnipe species —if there is such a fish. She 'll be more at home in service . . . [*Muttering.*] 'Dendron, a tree——'

MISS RONBERRY: I beg your pardon? . . . Oh, Miss Moffat, I am bursting with curiosity—your plans for Morgan Evans . . . is it a curateship?

MISS MOFFAT [*slowly, amused*]: No, it isn't a curateship.

[*She laughs happily, walks towards the desk, and takes up an exercise-book.*

MISS RONBERRY: I really don't see anything funny about curates. [*To Mr Jones.*] I mean, there is nothing *wrong* with curates, is there?

MR JONES: No, except that they ought to go to chapel.

MISS MOFFAT: Who has been writing in here?

MRS WATTY [*appears at the kitchen door*]: Your egg, ma'am!

MISS MOFFAT: 'Bessie Watty has the face of an angel'!

MISS RONBERRY: What an extraordinary——

MISS MOFFAT: But I know the writing—— [*She looks again; Mr Jones blinks behind his spectacles, takes his hat from a peg, and makes to pass her.*] John Goronwy Jones, I 'm ashamed of you.

MR JONES: I shall see you to-morrow, if we are spared.

MISS RONBERRY [*shocked*]: Oh!

MR JONES: You all misjudge that little girl. She has the face of a good woman in the melting-pot.

MISS MOFFAT: I 've got the face of a good woman too, and well out of the melting-pot, but I don't think I 'd ever find it in writing.

[*She goes into the kitchen, chuckling, as Miss Ronberry puts on her hat in a little mirror in front of the study door.*

MRS WATTY: I never thought I 'd live to call *you* a dirty old man.

[*She follows Miss Moffat into the kitchen. Mr Jones goes out through the front door. Miss Ronberry sighs a little disconsolately into the mirror, tries to look like an angel, fails, and sighs again. The front door opens abruptly and Morgan appears. He is dishevelled, and it is fairly apparent that he has been drinking. His manner is defiant, and he does not remove his cap. The door bangs behind him.*

MISS RONBERRY: Oh, it 's you, Morgan. . . . [*Back at the mirror.*] Miss Moffat is having something to eat.

MORGAN: And I have been having something to drink, so we are quits.

MISS RONBERRY [*looking round at him sharply, the unpleasant truth dawning on her*]: I will tell her that you are back——

MORGAN [*looking away, breathing hard*]: I don't want to see no Miss Moffat.

MISS RONBERRY [*bravely*]: You mean 'I don't want to see Miss Moffat.' The double negative——

MORGAN: Now don't you start! . . . [*Bearing down on her.*] I like the double negative; it says what I want the way I like, and I am *not* goin' to stand *no* interferences from nobody! [*Taking his paper from his pocket and kicking it savagely into a corner of the room.*] Voltaire indeed. . . .

MISS RONBERRY: Morgan! I 've never seen you like this before!

MORGAN: You haven't, have you? [*In a rising torrent of invective, getting more Welsh as it goes on.*] Well, now I come to think of it, I haven't neither, not for two years, and I 'm surprised by meself, and shocked by meself! Goin' inside one o' them public houses and puttin' me nice clean boots on that dirty rail, and me dainty lady-fingers on that detestable mucky counter! Pourin' poison rum down me nice clean teeth, and spittin' in a spittoon—what 's come over you, Morgan Evans? You come back to your little cage, and if you comb hair and wash hands and get your grammar right and forget you was once the middle-weight champion of the Glasynglo miners, we might give you a nice bit of sewin' to do. . . . [*Turning back to the front door, muttering.*] Where 's that Bessie Watty, sendin' her mother to spy on me, I 'll knock her bloody block off. . . .

MISS RONBERRY [*outraged*]: Morgan Evans, *language*! Don't you dare use an expression like that to me again!

MORGAN [*turning back on her*]: I got plenty of others, thank you, and they are all comin' out. I am goin' to surprise quite a few——

[*He stops short and pulls off his cap as Miss Moffat enters from the kitchen.*

MISS MOFFAT [*pouring milk into a cup from a jug*]: Have a good walk, Evans?

MORGAN [*controlling himself, avoiding Miss Ronberry's eye*]: Yes, Miss Moffat.

MISS MOFFAT [*sitting on the sofa, drinking*]: Can you repeat the Voltaire?

MORGAN: Not yet.

MISS MOFFAT: It 's very short.

MORGAN: Paper blowed away.

MISS MOFFAT: Oh. Copy it again, will you, and bring it to me.

MORGAN [*muttering*]: Yes, Miss Moffat. [*He goes towards the study.*

MISS MOFFAT [*holding out the jug*]: Would you like a drink?

[*He starts, looks round at her and sees the milk.*

MORGAN: No, thank you.

[*He goes into the study. Miss Moffat takes her little book again from her pocket, and opens it.*

MISS MOFFAT: I hope he 's not going to be slow at French. It 'll make the Greek so much more difficult——

MISS RONBERRY [*timidly*]: You don't think perhaps all this—in his situation—is rather sudden for him? I mean——

MISS MOFFAT: Not for him, my dear. He has the most brilliantly receptive brain I 've ever come across. Don't tell him so; but he has.

MISS RONBERRY: I know his *brain* is all right——

MISS MOFFAT [*absently*]: I 'm very pleased with his progress, on the whole. . . . [*A knock at the front door. Miss Ronberry looks at her uncertainly, then moves towards the door. Miss Moffat suddenly remembers something, and stops her.*] Wait a minute! [*Rising, hurrying to the bay window, and peering out towards the front door, and hurrying down again urgently.*] Yes, it is. . . .

MISS RONBERRY: Who?

MISS MOFFAT [*sitting on the sofa and doing up her boots, hastily*]: Royalty, the Conservatives, and all the Grand Lamas rolled into one. The Squire.

MISS RONBERRY: The Squire! [*In a panic.*] Oh, *my*!

MISS MOFFAT [*lacing*]: It is indeed, oh my——

MISS RONBERRY: But he hasn't been here since that dreadful evening——

MISS MOFFAT: I behaved more stupidly that night than I ever have in my life, and that 's saying something——

MISS RONBERRY: But why is he here now?

MISS MOFFAT [*placing the milk-jug and cup on the table*]: Never you mind. . . . All I can tell you is that it is to do with Morgan Evans, and that it is vital I make the right impression——

MISS RONBERRY [*as Miss Moffat runs upstairs*]: What sort of impression?

MISS MOFFAT: Helpless and clinging, or as near as dammit——

[*She disappears into her room, as there is a second impatient knock at the front door.*

MISS RONBERRY [*timidly*]: Come in!

[*The door opens and the groom appears.*

THE GROOM [*announcing*]: The Squire.

[*The Squire follows the groom, who retires and shuts the door.*

THE SQUIRE: Good afternoon.

[*His manner is stiff and careful. He is dressed in a summer lounge suit, and holds his hat in his hand. He looks round the room with cold disapproval.*

MISS RONBERRY: Your hat, Squire——

THE SQUIRE: No, thank you, I am not staying.

MISS RONBERRY: Oh, dear, I do look a sketch. . . .

THE SQUIRE: So this is the seat of learning.

MISS RONBERRY: We are always on the point of a good spring clean. How dreadful that we have no refreshment to offer you!

THE SQUIRE: Has she given it up, then? . . . You can tell her from me that I am not here to be insulted again.

MISS RONBERRY: Oh, I 'm sure you aren't! I mean——

THE SQUIRE [*ruminatively*]: She called me an addle-headed nincompoop.

[*Miss Moffat comes downstairs, a lace shawl draped over her shoulders. She carries a bowl of flowers.*

MISS MOFFAT: Miss Ronberry, dear, my roses are dying—would you pour out a little water for them; I have such a headache, I don't think—— [*Feigning surprise.*] *Squire!*

THE SQUIRE [*as she crosses to him, hand outraised*]: You wrote to me. Perhaps you have forgotten.

MISS MOFFAT: How could I forget! I only thought that after the overwrought fashion of my behaviour at our last meeting you must ignore my very nervous invitation—— Miss Ronberry, a chair, dear, for the Squire——

[*Startled, Miss Ronberry looks for a chair, then back at her. Puzzled, and trying not to unbend, the Squire stands examining Miss Moffat.*

THE SQUIRE: I have not a great deal of time to spare, I fear.

MISS MOFFAT [*sitting on the lower end of the sofa*]: Of course you haven't. I was just saying to Miss Ronberry, he 's so busy he 'll *never* be able to fit it in! Miss Ronberry dear, would you get some water for them? [*She hands the bowl to Miss Ronberry, who passes the Squire and goes into the garden, bewildered.*] Tell me, Squire, how did your prize-giving fare this afternoon?

THE SQUIRE: Rather a bore, y' know.

MISS MOFFAT: I had so hoped to see you judge. I love flowers.

THE SQUIRE: It wasn't flowers. It was cows.

MISS MOFFAT: Oh. It was your speech I wanted to hear, of course; I heard you made such an amusing one at the Croquet.

THE SQUIRE [*breaking into a smile*]: Oh, did they tell you about that? Rather a good pun, eh? [*Laughing reminiscently.*] Ha ha! . . . I—may I sit down?

MISS MOFFAT: Do!

THE SQUIRE [*after looking at Bessie's desk, and finally choosing the top end of the sofa*]: I thought Griffiths the butcher was going to laugh his napper off.

MISS MOFFAT: Indeed. . . . Do you know, Squire, that makes me rather proud?

THE SQUIRE [*stiffening again*]: Proud? Why?

MISS MOFFAT [*innocently*]: Because he would not have understood a word if his little girls hadn't learnt English at my school.

THE SQUIRE: Oh. Never thought of it like that . . . [*As she puts her hand to her head.*] Headache?

MISS MOFFAT: Squire, you see before you a tired woman. We live and learn, and I have learnt how right you were that night. I have worked my fingers to the bone battering my head against a stone wall.

THE SQUIRE [*puzzled*]: But I heard you were a spiffing success.

MISS MOFFAT: Oh, no.

THE SQUIRE [*muttering*]: It 's fair of you to admit it, I must say.

MISS MOFFAT: You see, in one's womanly enthusiasm one forgets that the qualities vital to success in this sort of venture are completely lacking in one; intelligence, courage, and authority . . . the qualities, in short, of a man.

THE SQUIRE: Come, come, you mustn't be too hard on yourself, y' know. After all, you 've meant well.

MISS MOFFAT: It 's kind of you to say that.

THE SQUIRE: What about this Jones chappie?

MISS MOFFAT: He 's a dear creature, but . . . [*Soberly.*] . . . I have no wish to be fulsome, I mean a man like yourself.

THE SQUIRE: I see.

MISS MOFFAT: One gets into such muddles! You 'd never believe!

THE SQUIRE: Well . . . I 've never been on your side, but I 'm sorry to hear you 've come a cropper. When are you giving it up?

MISS MOFFAT [*taken aback*]: Oh. . . . That again is difficult; I have all my widow's mite, as it were, in the venture——

[*A knock at the study door. Morgan appears, carrying a paper. He has regained his self-control. He hesitates on seeing there is a visitor, and makes to go back.*

MORGAN: Please excuse me——

MISS MOFFAT [*hastily*]: It 's all right, Evans. Have you copied it? On my desk, will you?

MORGAN [*bowing, and crossing in front of the sofa*]: Excuse me, sir . . . [*Turning back his head.*] Good afternoon, sir.

THE SQUIRE [*eyeing him curiously as he places the paper on the desk*]: Good afternoon, my boy.

MORGAN [*bowing, before crossing him again*]: Excuse me, sir . . . [*Turning at the study door, and bowing again.*] Thank you.

[*He goes.*

THE SQUIRE: Nice well-spoken lad. Relative?

MISS MOFFAT: No. A pupil. He used to be one of your miners.

THE SQUIRE: No!

MISS MOFFAT: I 'm glad you thought he was a nice well-spoken boy.

THE SQUIRE [*vaguely*]: Yes. . . . One of my miners, interesting . . .

MISS MOFFAT: Because he is the problem I should like your advice about.

THE SQUIRE: What 's he been up to, poaching?

MISS MOFFAT: No.

THE SQUIRE: A bit o' muslin?

MISS MOFFAT [*amused*]: No, no. . . . There are none, anyway——

THE SQUIRE [*suddenly shrewd*]: What about the little Cockney filly?

MISS MOFFAT: Bessie Watty? Oh no, I assure you——[*Amused.*] —she 's a schoolgirl——

THE SQUIRE: I dunno, all these young people growing up together, y' know?—eh?

MISS MOFFAT: I think it 's good for them. . . . No, there 's

nothing of that sort—— [*Getting back to the point.*]—but he 's a problem just the same. And like a true woman I have to scream for help to a man. To you.

THE SQUIRE [*after a pause, completely won*]: Scream away, dear lady, scream away!

MISS MOFFAT [*earnestly*]: Well, he 's . . . clever.

THE SQUIRE: Oh, is he? Good at figures, and all that? Because if he is, there 's no reason why I shouldn't put him in my mine office, as junior office boy. [*Munificently.*] What d 'ye think of that?

MISS MOFFAT: No. Figures aren't his strong point.

THE SQUIRE: Thought you said he was clever.

MISS MOFFAT: To begin with, he can write.

THE SQUIRE: Oh. Well?

MISS MOFFAT: Very well.

THE SQUIRE: Then he could make fair copies. Eh?

MISS MOFFAT [*patiently*]: No. [*Choosing her words carefully.*] This boy . . . is quite out of the ordinary.

THE SQUIRE: Sure?

MISS MOFFAT [*with great earnestness*]: As sure as one of your miners would be, cutting through coal and striking a diamond without a flaw. He was born with very exceptional gifts. They must be —they ought to be given every chance.

THE SQUIRE: You mean he might turn into a literary bloke?

MISS MOFFAT: He might, yes.

THE SQUIRE: I 'm blowed! How d' ye know?

MISS MOFFAT: By his work. It 's very good.

THE SQUIRE: How d' ye know it 's good?

MISS MOFFAT: How does one know Shakespeare 's good?

THE SQUIRE: Shakespeare? What 's he got to do with it?

MISS MOFFAT: He was a literary bloke.

THE SQUIRE: Ye-es. *He* was good, of course.

MISS MOFFAT: But how do you *know* he was?

THE SQUIRE [*after thought*]: I 've heard he was.

MISS MOFFAT: This little tenant of yours, Squire, has it in him to bring great credit to you.

THE SQUIRE: Yes, he *is* a tenant of mine, isn't he?

MISS MOFFAT: Imagine if you could say that you had known—well, say Lord Tennyson, as a boy on your estate!

THE SQUIRE: Rather a lark, what? [*Sobering.*] Though it 's a bit different, y' know, Tennyson was at Cambridge. My old college.

MISS MOFFAT [*damped*]: Oh. . . . [*Rising and crossing towards her desk.*] Poor Evans. What a pity he was not born at the beginning of the eighteenth century!

THE SQUIRE [*pondering*]: Beginning of the eighteenth century—now when was that? . . .

MISS MOFFAT [*wandering to the bookshelves between the side window and the garden door*]: He would have had a protector.

THE SQUIRE: What against?

MISS MOFFAT: A patron. [*Taking down two books and coming back to him.*] Pope, you recall, dedicated the famous *Essay on Man* to his protector. [*Showing him the fly-leaf of the first book.*

THE SQUIRE [*reading*]: 'To H. St John Lord Bolingbroke.' Mmm. . . . I *have* heard of it, now I remember——

MISS MOFFAT: Isn't it wonderful to think that that inscription is handed down to posterity? [*Reading from the other book.*] 'To the Right Honourable Earl of Southampton. . . . Your honour's in all duty, William Shakespeare.'

THE SQUIRE: Oh.

MISS MOFFAT: I often think of the pride that surged in the earl's bosom when his encouragement gave birth to the masterpiece of a poor and humble writer!

THE SQUIRE: Funny, I never thought of Shakespeare being poor, somehow.

MISS MOFFAT: Some say his father was a butcher. The earl realized he had genius, and fostered it.

THE SQUIRE: Mmm! [*She takes the books and places them on the table, studying him anxiously behind his back. Following her reasoning with surprising quickness.*] If this boy really is clever it seems a pity for *me* not to do something about it, doesn't it?

MISS MOFFAT [*eagerly*]: A great pity. [*Sitting beside him, on his right this time, and mustering for the offensive.*] And I can tell you exactly how you can do something about it.

THE SQUIRE: How?

MISS MOFFAT: There 's a scholarship going.

THE SQUIRE: Scholarship? Where?

MISS MOFFAT: To Oxford.

THE SQUIRE [*staggered*]: Oxford?

MISS MOFFAT [*attacking hard*]: A scholarship to Trinity College, Oxford, open to boys of secondary education in the British Isles. My school hardly comes under the heading of secondary education, and I wrote to your brother at Magdalen; he pulled some strings for me, and they have agreed to make a special case of this boy, on one condition. That you vouch for him. Will you?

THE SQUIRE: My dear lady, you take the cake. . . . Can't he be just as clever at home?

MISS MOFFAT: No, he can't. For the sort of future he ought to have, he must have polish—he has everything else. The background of a university would be invaluable to him. . . . Will you?

[*The Squire blinks and rises. He is almost thinking.*

THE SQUIRE: Well, the varsity, y' know, hang it all . . . mind you, he 'll never get it.

MISS MOFFAT: I know; but he *must* have the chance——

THE SQUIRE: Still, y' know, even the mere prospect of one o' my miners——

MISS MOFFAT [*desperately*]: Think of Shakespeare!

THE SQUIRE [*after a pause*]: All serene. [*As she rises*]. I 'll drop a line to Henry next week. Rather a lark, what? I must be off——

MISS MOFFAT: I should be most obliged if the letter could be posted to-morrow. Would you like me to draft out a recommendation and send it over to the hall? You must be so busy with the estate——

THE SQUIRE: I am rather. Polka supper to-morrow night. . . . Yes, do do that. [*Moving towards the front door.*] Good-bye, dear lady!

MISS MOFFAT [*seeing him out*]: Thank you so very much, Squire——

THE SQUIRE: Happier conditions, and all that! Glad you 've come to your senses!

MISS MOFFAT: Thank you so very much, Squire!

THE SQUIRE: Not at all, I 'm all for giving a writer-fellow a helping hand. Tell my brother that, if you like. . . . [*At the front door.*] Y' know, I can never get over Henry bein' a don, though I always said he 'd end up as something funny. . . .

[*He goes, chuckling. She shuts the door after him and walks down, relieved and excited. Miss Ronberry hurries in from the garden, carrying the bowl of roses.*

MISS RONBERRY: Well?

MISS MOFFAT: That man is so stupid it sits on him like a halo.

MISS RONBERRY [*putting the bowl down on the desk, hurriedly*]: What happened?

MISS MOFFAT. In ten minutes I have given the Squire the impression that he spends his whole time fostering genius in the illiterate.

MISS RONBERRY: But how?

MISS MOFFAT: Soft soap and curtsying; with my brain, my heart, and my soul. I 've beaten you at your own game, my dear; at my age and with my looks, I flirted with him! And he is going to write to Oxford; at least, I am going to write to Oxford for him. Hurray, hip, hip, hip, hip, hurray!

MISS RONBERRY: Oxford?

MISS MOFFAT [*shaking her, happily*]: I am entering my little pit-pony for a scholarship to Oxford, child, Oxford University!

MISS RONBERRY [*incredulous*]: But they don't have miners at Oxford University!

MISS MOFFAT: Well, they 're going to. [*Haranguing her.*] The lad is on this earth for eighty years at the most out of a few millions, let the proud silly ones grovel and be useful for a change, so he can step up on their backs to something better! I was bursting to say that to the Lord of the Manor, so I must vent it on you. . . . Thank you for your shawl, my dear—[*Wrapping it round the helpless Miss Ronberry and piloting her to the front door.*]—and now you 've served your purpose, you can go home—but you 'd better watch out, I may race you to the altar yet—— [*She shuts the front door on her, and comes back into the room. She looks round, with a sigh of pleasure, then calls:* Evans! *She pulls the table round the sofa to the centre of the room, takes the milk-jug and cup from the table to the desk,*

pulls the desk chair up to the table, and sits at it, studying the exercise-book she has been correcting earlier. She holds her eyes a moment; it is obvious that she could be tired if she allowed herself to be. Morgan comes in from the study, carrying a pen, books, and papers; his mantle of reserve has descended on him again; his inward rebellion is only to be guessed at from his eyes, which she does not see. He pulls the table chair up to the table and sits opposite her, half behind the sofa; it is apparent that this is a daily procedure at this hour. He makes fitful notes of her ensuing comments. The daylight begins to wane.] Is this your essay on *The Wealth of Nations*?

MORGAN: Yes.

MISS MOFFAT [*reading briskly*]: Say so and underline it. Nothing irritates examiners more than that sort of vagueness. [*She crosses out three lines with a flourish, reads further, then hands him the exercise-book.*] *I* couldn't work this sentence out.

MORGAN [*reading*]: 'The eighteenth century was a cauldron. Vice and elegance boiled to a simmer until the kitchen of society reeked fulminously, and the smell percolated to the marble halls above.'

MISS MOFFAT [*as he hands the book back to her*]: D' ye know what that means?

MORGAN: Yes, Miss Moffat.

MISS MOFFAT: Because I don't. Clarify, my boy, clarify, and leave the rest to Mrs Henry Wood. . . . 'Water' with two t's . . . [*scoring heavily.*] . . . that 's a bad lapse. . . . [*After reading quickly to herself while he broods.*] The Adam Smith sentence was good. Original, and clear as well. [*Writing.*] Seven out of ten, not bad, but not good—you *must* avoid long words until you know exactly what they mean. Otherwise domino. . . . [*Handing the essay back to him.*] Your reading?

MORGAN [*concentrating with an effort*]: Burke's *Cause of the Present Discontents*.

MISS MOFFAT: Style?

MORGAN: His style appears to me . . . as if there was too much of it.

MISS MOFFAT [*mechanically*]: His style struck me as florid.

MORGAN [*repeating*]: 'His style struck me as florid.'

MISS MOFFAT: Again.

MORGAN (*mumbling*]: 'His style struck me as florid.'

MISS MOFFAT: Subject-matter?

MORGAN: A sound argument, falsified by—by the high colour of the sentiments.

MISS MOFFAT: Mmmm. 'The high colour of the sentiments' . . . odd but not too odd, good and stylish. . . . For next time. [*Dictating, as Morgan writes.*] Walpole and Sheridan as representatives of their age; and no smelly cauldrons. [*Opening another book.*] By the way, next Tuesday I 'm starting you on Greek.

MORGAN [*feigning interest*]: Oh, yes? [*He writes again.*

MISS MOFFAT [*subduing her excitement*]: I am going to put you in for a scholarship to Oxford. [*A pause. He looks up at her, arrested.*

MORGAN: Oxford? Where the lords go?

MISS MOFFAT (*amused*]: The same. [*Rising happily, and crossing to the desk with the two books with which she wooed the Squire.*] I 've made a simplified alphabet to begin with. It 's jolly interesting, after Latin . . . [*She searches among her papers. The matter-of-factness with which she is (typically) controlling her excitement over the scholarship seems to gall him more and more; he watches her, bitterly.*] Have a look at it by Tuesday, so we can make a good start—oh, and before we go on with the lesson, I 've found the nail-file I mentioned—— [*In his mood, this is the last straw. He flings his pen savagely down on the table. Without noticing, rummaging briskly.*] I 'll show you how to use it. I had them both here somewhere——

MORGAN [*quietly*]: I shall not need a nail-file in the coal-mine.

MISS MOFFAT [*mechanically, still intent at the desk*]: In the what?

MORGAN: I am going back to the coal-mine.

[*She turns and looks at him. He rises, breathing fast. They look at each other. A pause.*

MISS MOFFAT [*perplexed*]: I don't understand you. Explain yourself.

MORGAN: I do not want to learn Greek, nor to pronounce any long English words, nor to keep my hands clean.

MISS MOFFAT [*staggered*]: What 's the matter with you? Why not?

MORGAN: Because . . . [*Plunging.*] . . . because I was born in a Welsh hayfield when my mother was helpin' with the harvest—and I always lived in a little house with no stairs only a ladder—and no water—and until my brothers was killed I never sleep except three in a bed. I know that is terrible grammar but it is true.

MISS MOFFAT: What on earth has three in a bed got to do with learning Greek?

MORGAN: It has—a lot! The last two years I have not had no proper talk with English chaps in the mine because I was so busy keepin' this old grammar in its place. Tryin' to better myself . . . [*His voice rising.*] . . . tryin' to better myself, the day and the night! . . . You cannot take a nail-file into the 'Gwesmor Arms' public bar!

MISS MOFFAT: My dear boy, file your nails at home! I never heard anything so ridiculous. Besides, you don't go to the 'Gwesmor Arms!'

MORGAN: Yes, I do. I have been there every afternoon for a week, spendin' your pocket-money, and I have been there now, and that is why I can speak my mind!

[*She looks at him, alarmed and puzzled.*

MISS MOFFAT: I had no idea that you felt like this.

MORGAN: Because you are not interested in me.

MISS MOFFAT [*incredulously*]: Not interested in you?

MORGAN [*losing control*]: How can you be interested in a machine that you put a penny in and if nothing comes out you give it a good shake? 'Evans, write me an essay; Evans, get up and bow; Evans, what is a subjunctive?' My name is Morgan Evans, and all my friends call me Morgan, and if there is anything gets on the wrong side of me it is callin' me Evans! . . . And do you know what they call me in the village? Ci bach yr ysgol! The schoolmistress's little dog! What has it got to do with you if my nails are dirty? Mind your own business!

[*He bursts into sobs and buries his head in his hands on the end of the sofa.*

[*She turns away from him, instinctively shying from the spectacle of his grief. A pause. She is extremely upset, but tries hard not to show it. She waits for him to recover, and takes a step towards him.*

MISS MOFFAT: I never meant you to know this. I have spent money on you—[*As he winces quickly.*]—I don't mind that, money ought to be spent. But time is different. Your life has not yet begun, mine is half over. And when you 're a middle-aged spinster, some folk say it 's pretty near finished. Two years is valuable currency. I have spent two years on you. [*As he raises his head and stares before him, trying not to listen to her.*] Ever since that first day, the mainspring of this school has been your career. Sometimes, in the middle of the night, when I have been desperately tired, I have lain awake, making plans. Large and small. Sensible and silly. Plans, for you. And you tell me I have no interest in you. If I say any more I shall start to cry; and I haven't cried since I was younger than you are, and I 'd never forgive you for that. [*Walking brusquely to the front door and throwing on her cloak.*] I am going for a walk. I don't like this sort of conversation; please never mention it again. If you want to go on, be at school to-morrow. [*Going.*] If not, don't.

MORGAN [*muttering fiercely*]: I don't want your money, and I don't want your time! . . . I don't want to be thankful to no strange woman—for anything! [*A pause.*

MISS MOFFAT [*shaking her head helplessly*]: I don't understand you. I don't understand you at all.

[*She goes out by the front door.*

[*He sits up and folds his arms, with a deep breath; he feels something in his breast pocket, roots out a little rum bottle, takes a pull at it, lifts an exercise-book, crashes it viciously on the table, and relapses into moody thought. The daylight has faded perceptibly. Without his hearing her, Bessie comes in from the garden. She has put her hair half up and wears ear-rings.*

BESSIE: Hallo! [*He stares at her coldly, plants the bottle on the table and stares away again. She clutches her leg, ostentatiously.*] Caught

my knee climbin' down the rainpipe, ooh. . . . [*As he takes no notice.*] P'r'aps I 'm invisible. . . . [*She tosses her head, marches into the kitchen, singing raucously, and bangs the door behind her. Far away, the sound of singing: men returning from the mine, harmonizing their familiar melody, 'Yr Hufen Melyn.' Morgan brushes a tear angrily from his cheek, but unhappy thoughts assail him; his mood is fed by the music. A pause. Bessie returns from the kitchen. She is suddenly changed, subdued, and almost timid.*] Mum 's gone out. [*After a pause, advancing slowly towards the foot of the stairs.*] Expect she 's gone to tell Mrs Roberts about her meetin'. Though how she manages with Mrs Roberts knowin' no English an' deaf as well . . . [*After a pause.*] Talking a lot, aren't I?

MORGAN: Yes.

BESSIE: Well, *I* 'm not deaf.

MORGAN [*looking up at her*]: Been spyin'?

BESSIE [*pointing upstairs*]: If people lock me in and take the key out of the key-hole, they can't blame me for listenin' at it. [*As he turns away.*] Oo, I think she 's wicked.

MORGAN [*stung*]: Mind your own business!

BESSIE: I won't. [*Gaining confidence.*] I like to know about everything; I like doin' all the things I like, I like sweets, I don't care if it does make me fat, and I *love* ear-rings. I like to shake my head like a lady. . . . [*She stands, hands on hips, transformed from the sullen child into something crafty, mischievous, and attractive. The singing stops. A pause.*] It 's funny. . . . We never been by ourselves before. [*He looks at her. She returns the look. He turns away, disconsolate. A pause. She wanders up towards the bay window, and begins to sing in Welsh, in a voice surprisingly pure and pleasing. The tune is 'Lliw Gwyn Rhosyn yr Haf.' He raises his head and listens, arrested. She leans against one of the desks in the window recess, and looks out towards the setting sun; her voice ends softly on a phrase. A pause. She turns her head and looks at him. She smiles, begins to sing again, more sure of herself, and walks slowly between the desks to his right, where she rests her elbows deliberately on the table with a deliberate movement; she looks dreamily before her as her voice dies away. He looks sharply round at her. Slowly her head turns towards him;*

slowly she smiles at him; subtle, and quite self-confident now.] Didn't know I knew Welsh, did you? . . . You like that song, don't you? That 's why I learnt it.

MORGAN: You are different when you sing.

BESSIE: Am I? . . . [*Picking the bottle from the table.*] What 's this, medicine? [*Taking a gulp, and choking.*] Tastes like rubber. Nice though. . . . [*As he takes it roughly from her, rises, drains the bottle, and puts it back in his pocket.*] You know, you was quite right to put her in her place. Clever chap like you learnin' lessons off a woman!

MORGAN: That 's right. . . .

BESSIE [*soft, persuasive*]: You don't 'ave to go to Oxford! Clever chap like you!

MORGAN [*in a whisper*]: That 's right. . . .

[*He turns slowly and looks at her. She crosses behind him and sits on the back of the sofa.*

BESSIE: What a man wants is a bit o' sympathy!

[*He looks at her, his hand on the back of the chair. It is growing faintly darker. She laughs, and begins to sing again; she turns, still singing, looks up at him, and smiles. He pushes away the chair, seizes her with violence, and kisses her passionately. Their arms entwine and the chair crashes to the floor.*

[*Black out. The curtain falls, and rises immediately on*

SCENE II

A morning in November, three months later. The room is much as it was; the potted plants have been removed; the daylight is so poor that the lamps are lit.

Mrs Watty is carrying in from the kitchen a small table, new and light, with on it blotter, ink, pens, pencil, a duster, and a cup of tea. Miss Ronberry is pushing the arm-chair in from the study past the sofa into its old place, next to the isolated desk.

MRS WATTY [*singing*]: I 'm saved, I am, I 'm saved, I am. . . . [*She puts down the small table, pushes the desk chair back against the desk,*

drags the large table and its chair to its old place behind the sofa, then sets the small table well down stage, between the arm-chair and the sofa. She fetches a loose seat attached to one of the desks and places it below the small table, its back to the audience. During this.] What would the arm-chair be for, miss?

MISS RONBERRY: The Squire 's coming. He 's invigilating.

MRS WATTY: *What* was that, please, miss?

MISS RONBERRY [*taking a parcel tied with string from a drawer in the desk, and unpacking papers from it*]: The Oxford people have appointed him and Miss Moffat to watch Morgan Evans while he is sitting the scholarship, so that he cannot cheat.

MRS WATTY: What a shame! . . . [*Still arranging furniture.*] You 'd never think it was nearly nine in the morning, would you?

MISS RONBERRY [*peering out of the side window*]: It 's stopped snowing.

MRS WATTY: Only just. The milkman said the road was blocked down by the bridge.

MISS RONBERRY: How terrible if Morgan couldn't get through!

MRS WATTY: Countin' sheep all night, I was. She didn't 'ave a wink neither. [*Picking up two envelopes from the floor, near the front door.*] I could 'ear her thinkin'.

MISS RONBERRY: It is a very important day for her.

MRS WATTY [*handing the envelopes to her*]: Looks like that one 's Bessie. Would you mind?

MISS RONBERRY [*opening it*]: That means Sarah the Post got through——

MRS WATTY: She 'd come the other way, down the 'ill——

MISS RONBERRY: That 's true . . . [*Reading.*] 'Dear Mum'—to think I taught her to write—'Cheltenham is terrible. Can I have a shilling. I do the steps. Madam is terrible. Your obedient girl.'

MRS WATTY [*taking back the letter, as Miss Ronberry glances at the other and tucks it into her belt*]: Obedient, I like that. . . . [*Throws the letter into the waste-paper basket*]. She 's been away three months now, she ought to be gettin' used to it.

MISS RONBERRY [*busy at the desk*]: But do you not miss her?

MRS WATTY [*emphatically, dusting the little table*]: No! I don't like 'er, you know, never 'ave.

MISS RONBERRY: But, Mrs Watty, your own daughter!

MRS WATTY: I know; but I 've never been able to take to 'er. First time I saw 'er, I said 'No.' [*Going.*] With 'er dad being foreign, you see.

MISS RONBERRY: But couldn't your husband have taken her abroad to his own family?

MRS WATTY: Oh, my 'usband was quite different. British to the core.

[*She goes into the kitchen. Miss Ronberry blinks after her, and places foolscap on the little table. Miss Moffat comes slowly downstairs. She is alert, but more subdued than the audience has yet seen her. Miss Ronberry takes up the cup of tea, and watches her, apprehensively, as she crosses her.*

MISS MOFFAT: It 's stopped snowing.

MISS RONBERRY [*Sitting on the sofa, and sipping*]: It 's a white world, as they say . . . [*Watching Miss Moffat as she looks out of the side window.*] Do you think he will get through the snow?

MISS MOFFAT: This morning he would get through anything.

MISS RONBERRY: I am so glad. I thought perhaps he—he had not been working satisfactorily——

MISS MOFFAT: At ten o'clock last night I had to take his books away from him.

MISS RONBERRY: I *am* glad.

MISS MOFFAT [*still looking out*]: I hope he won't get wet—he must not be upset in any way. . . . [*Playing nervously with the string Miss Ronberry has left on the desk.*] What made you think he wasn't working well?

MISS RONBERRY [*flustered*]: Nothing, only . . . you remember the night you went for that long walk, when he might be going back to the mine?

MISS MOFFAT [*after a pause*]: Yes?

MISS RONBERRY: The next morning he started studying again, and yet it seemed so different.

MISS MOFFAT: How?

MISS RONBERRY: Almost strained . . . what a silly thing to say . . . I mean, as you did not say anything more about the mine——

MISS MOFFAT [*playing with the string*]: He didn't say any more himself. He just turned up. I didn't embrace him on both cheeks, but I said 'Righto.' Since which time, he has never stopped working.

MISS RONBERRY: I *am* so glad. . . . [*Taking the other envelope from her belt, relieved to be changing the subject.*] Oh, this arrived from the Penlan Town Hall! It must be his birth certificate——

MISS MOFFAT: Good . . . [*Crossing, taking it from her briskly, and taking it back to her desk.*] I must send it off to the President of Trinity. Rather a nervous post-mortem from him last night, two pages to ask if the youngster 's legitimate; thank heaven he is. And no convictions for drunkenness; references have been spotless. That will help, I hope.

MISS RONBERRY: Would it not be splendid if he . . . won!

MISS MOFFAT [*after a pause*]: Not very likely, I am afraid. [*Moving about nervously.*] The syllabus rather attaches importance to general knowledge of the academic sort. Hs is bound to be patchy—on the exuberant side—I have had to force it; two years is not enough even for him. If he checks himself, and does not start telling them what they ought to think of Milton, with fair luck he might stand a chance. He will have some pretty strong public school candidates against him, of course. Bound to. It depends on how much the examiners will appreciate a highly original intelligence.

MISS RONBERRY: But wouldn't it be *exciting*!

MISS MOFFAT [*after a pause, in a measured voice*]: Yes, it would. People run down the universities, and always will, but it would be a wonderful thing for him. It would be a wonderful thing for rural education all over the country.

MISS RONBERRY: And most of all, it would be a wonderful thing for you!

MISS MOFFAT: I suppose so . . . [*After a pause, almost soliloquizing.*] It is odd to have spent so many hours with another human being, in the closest intellectual communion—because it has been that, I know every trick and twist of that brain of his, exactly where it will falter and where it will gallop ahead of me—and yet not to know him at all. [*Realizing the other woman's presence, and breaking her mood.*] I woke up in the middle of the night thinking of Henry the Eighth. I have a feeling there may be a question about the old boy and the papacy. [*At one of the bookshelves between the side window and the garden door.*] I 'll cram one or two facts into him, the last minute . . . [*Suddenly, in a sob, with all the inward strength of which she is capable.*] Oh, God, he must win it! . . . [*Mrs Watty comes in from the kitchen, carrying a steaming cup and saucer. Leaning her head against the bookcase; brokenly.*] He must . . .

[*Mrs Watty stops short, and exchanges a distressed look with Miss Ronberry. She goes over to Miss Moffat.*

MRS WATTY [*coaxingly*]: Tea! [*Miss Moffat turns and looks at her, trying to pull herself together—Giving her the teacup and stirring the tea for her, with an attempt at jauntiness.*] Now, ma'am, don't get in a pucker! Six more Saturday mornin's like this in the next 'alf-year, remember!

MISS MOFFAT [*recovering quickly, and making a note at the desk, from a book*]: The first paper is the important one—I expect we 'll get more used to the others——

MISS RONBERRY [*chatty again, as Mrs Watty takes the empty cup*]: Suppose the Squire doesn't come!

MISS MOFFAT: He will. He has got to the point of looking on the lad as a racehorse.

MISS RONBERRY: You don't think the snow might deter him?

MRS WATTY: I just seed 'is nibs's gardener clearin' a way from the gates. Shame the red carpet gettin' so wet.

[*She goes back into the kitchen. Miss Ronberry rises and looks out of the side window.*

MISS RONBERRY: Surely it is getting brighter this side. . . . Oh, I can see him! Morgan, I mean!

MISS MOFFAT [*looking past her*]: Can you?

MISS RONBERRY: Coming up the Nant, do you see? Ploughing through!

MISS MOFFAT: What is the time?

MISS RONBERRY: Ten minutes to!

MISS MOFFAT [*sitting at her desk and searching again in her book*]: He will have just two minutes—— [*A knock at the front door.*

MISS MOFFAT: Good. There 's the Squire——

MISS RONBERRY [*running to the front door*]: He is as excited as any of us—— [*She opens the front door. Bessie stands in the porch, in the drifted snow. She enters the room, followed by Mr Jones, heavily muffled and looking very sheepish. Miss Ronberry shuts the door and follows them into the room in wonderment. They are faintly powdered with snow.*] Bessie! . . . But it cannot be you, your mother has just received——

BESSIE: I left the same day I posted it.

[*She is shabbily dressed, in semi-grown-up fashion, and wears a cloak. Her manner is staccato, nervy, and defiant; she is bursting with news, which might be good or bad. Her hands twitching over her Gladstone bag, she faces Miss Moffat, who stares at her, puzzled.*

MISS MOFFAT [*without rising*]: This is unexpected.

BESSIE: Isn't it just? I have been travellin' all night, quite a wreck. I woke Mr Jones up and he got the station-master to drive us over in his trap, in the snow; nice, wasn't it?

[*She is trying not to be frightened, and not succeeding. The conversation from now on quickens and grows more nervous.*

MISS MOFFAT: You have arrived at an inconvenient time.

BESSIE: Fancy.

[*She plucks up courage and sits suddenly in the arm-chair. Miss Moffat frowns and rises. Miss Ronberry is near the kitchen door; Mr Jones hovers round the front door.*

MISS MOFFAT: Have you come to see your mother?

BESSIE: No.

MISS MOFFAT: Then why are you here?

BESSIE: Questions and answers, just like school again!

MISS MOFFAT [*to Mr Jones*]: Why have you brought this girl here this morning?

MR JONES: I did not bring her, Miss Moffat, she brought me——

MISS MOFFAT [*to Bessie*]: Whom have you come to see?

BESSIE: You.

MISS MOFFAT: Me? [*Bessie does not speak. Undecided, Miss Moffat crosses above the arm-chair, looks at the clock, then quickly out of the side window.*] I can give you exactly one minute of my time. Is it money? [*As Bessie does not answer, impatiently to the others.*] Will you wait in the study? [*Mr Jones follows Miss Ronberry into the study; she is perplexed, he is very worried. Before they are out of the room.*] One minute. . . . Quickly!

BESSIE: Why?

MISS MOFFAT: Morgan Evans is sitting for his Oxford examination here this morning.

BESSIE: Well, 'e needn't.

MISS MOFFAT: What do you mean?

BESSIE: Because he won't ever be goin' to Oxford.

MISS MOFFAT: Why not?

BESSIE: Because there 's goin' to be a little stranger. [*A pause.*] I 'm going to have a little stranger.

[*She begins to whimper into her handkerchief; half acting, half nerves and excitement. Miss Moffat stares at her.*

MISS MOFFAT: You 're lying.

BESSIE [*looking up, suddenly*]: Doctor Brett, The Firs, Cheltenham. . . . And if you don't believe it 's Morgan Evans, you ask 'im about that night you locked me up—the night you had the words with him! [*A pause.*

MISS MOFFAT: I see. . . . [*With a sudden cry.*] Why couldn't I have seen before! . . . [*Her eyes rest on the examination table. She collects herself, desperately.*] Does he know?

BESSIE: I 've come to tell 'im! I was ever so upset, of course, and now I 've lost me place—ooh, she was artful—he 'll have to marry me, or I 'll show him up, 'cause I must give the little stranger a name——

MISS MOFFAT [*exasperated beyond endurance*]: Stop saying 'little stranger,' if you must have a baby, then call it a baby! . . . Have you told anybody?

BESSIE: Mr Jones, that 's all——

[Miss Ronberry peers timidly round the study door.

MISS RONBERRY: The Squire is coming up the road!

[She looks anxiously from one to the other and goes back into the study.

BESSIE: I 'll wait here for him.

MISS MOFFAT *[panting]*: For the next three hours he must not be disturbed. You are not going to see him——

BESSIE *[almost triumphantly]*: You can't bully me, the way I am! *[Rising, and facing her across the examination table, the resentment of two years pouring out, real hysteria this time.]* 'Asn't sunk in yet, 'as it? I 'm teaching *you* something, am I? You didn't know things like that went on, did you? Why? You couldn't see what was goin' on under your nose, 'cause you 're too busy managin' everythin'! Well, you can't manage him any longer, 'cause he 's got to manage me now, the way I am, he 's got to——

[Mr Jones pokes his head round the study door; he is in a state of panic. Miss Ronberry hovers behind him.

MR JONES: Morgan Evans has turned the corner up the hill——

MISS RONBERRY: So there isn't much time!

[Mr Jones gives the others a desperate look, and follows Miss Ronberry back into the study.

MISS MOFFAT: I 'm afraid I am going to do a little managing now. You are going into the kitchen, where your mother will make you breakfast; you will then lie down, and as soon as this session is finished we will go upstairs and talk it all over when we are a little calmer. *[A knock at the front door.*

BESSIE: He 's here! *[Rising.]* I got to see him!

MISS MOFFAT *[seizing her by the arm, suddenly]* If you try and disobey me, I shall not answer for the consequences.

BESSIE *[cowed]*: You wouldn't dare to lay a finger on me——

MISS MOFFAT: Oh, yes, I would. *[They face each other, panting; deadly enemies.]* If you attempt to stay in this room, or to blab to anybody about this before we have had that talk—even your mother—I am in a pretty nervous state myself, this morning, and I shall strike you so hard that I shall probably kill you,

and be hanged as a thwarted spinster. . . . I mean every word of that.

[*Another knock, more impatient. She quells Bessie with her look; crosses, and holds open the kitchen door.*

BESSIE: I don't mind. [*Following her, and turning at the door.*] Three hours 'll go soon enough.

[*She goes into the kitchen, her head high. Miss Moffat shuts the door after her, straightens herself, and opens the front door. The Squire enters, in Inverness cape and hat, stamping the snow from his boots; he carries several periodicals, chiefly 'Sporting and Dramatic.' The rest of the scene is played very quickly.*

MISS MOFFAT [*shutting the door*]: So very sorry—how kind of you—such a dreadful day——

THE SQUIRE: Not at all, Mistress Pedagogue, anything for a lark. . . . [*Looking at the little table.*] Glad it isn't me, what? . . . [*Settling on the sofa, as she takes his overcoat.*] I 've got a spiffy bit of news for you.

MISS MOFFAT: Yes?

THE SQUIRE: I 've bought the barn from Sir Herbert, and we can move the whole shoot next door by March. What d' ye think?

MISS MOFFAT [*abstracted, hanging the coat behind the front door*]: Wonderful——

THE SQUIRE [*showing the study as he settles on the sofa*]: We can knock a door straight through here to the barn—— [*A knock at the front door.*] Aren't ye pleased about it?

MISS MOFFAT [*crossing to the desk, hardly aware of what she is doing, as Miss Ronberry runs in from the study*]: Yes, but you know, this examination, rather worrying——

MISS RONBERRY [*crossing*]: Good morning, Squire! Terrible weather——

THE SQUIRE [*half rising*]: Beastly——

[*Miss Ronberry opens the front door and lets Morgan in. His overcoat, cap, and muffler are sprinkled with snow. He has been hurrying, but he is quiet and calm. His eyes rest immediately on the little examination table.*

MISS MOFFAT: Wet?

MORGAN [*taking off his overcoat*]: No, thank you—good day, sir——

MISS RONBERRY: Let me take your things——

MORGAN: Thank you——

MISS MOFFAT: Before I open the papers, I have a feeling they may bring up Henry the Eighth. [*Holding out the paper on which she has been scribbling.*] Memorize these two facts, will you?

[*Morgan takes the paper and studies it, brushing stray flakes of snow out of his hair as he does so.*

MISS RONBERRY [*taking a spray from her blouse and laying it on the small table*]: White heather—just a thought!

[*She runs into the study with Morgan's coat, scarf, and cap.*

MORGAN: Thank you——

THE SQUIRE: Good luck, my boy.

MORGAN: Thank you, sir——

THE SQUIRE: Glad it isn't me!

[*Mr Jones pops his head round the study door.*

MR JONES: Pob llwyddiant, ymachgeni!

MORGAN: Diolch——

[*Mr Jones goes back into the study. Morgan hands the paper back to Miss Moffat, who crumples it and throws it in the waste-paper basket. He sits at the little table, his back to the audience.*

MISS MOFFAT: Name and particulars, to save time. And don't get exuberant.

MORGAN: No.

MISS MOFFAT: Or illegible.

MORGAN: No.

[*He writes. She takes up an official envelope from the desk.*

THE SQUIRE: But aren't *you* going to wish my little protégé good fortune?

MISS MOFFAT [*after a pause, to Morgan*]: Good luck.

MORGAN [*looking up at her, after a pause*]: Thank you.

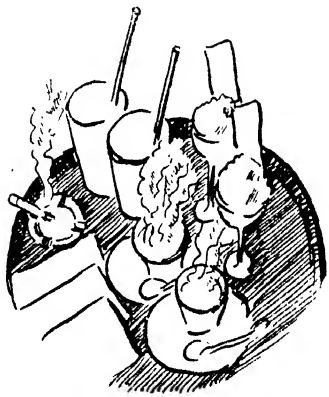
[*The clock begins to strike nine.*

MISS MOFFAT: Ready? [*Morgan nods. She cuts the envelope and places the examination paper in front of him. He studies it anxiously.*

She looks at the duplicate. Involuntarily, gratified.] Henry the Eighth!

[*She sits in the arm-chair. The Squire embarks on his periodical. Morgan begins to write. Miss Moffat raises her head, looks anxiously towards the kitchen, then steadfastly at Morgan, her lip trembling. A pause. The only sound is the scratch of a pen.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS SLOWLY



ACT III

An afternoon in July. Seven months later.

The school has been moved next door, and the room is much less crowded; the small table is back in the window recess, the arm-chair is in its old position; the large table, however, is no longer behind the sofa with its chair, its place being taken by three small school desks facing the front door; between the front door and the bay window a blackboard on its easel faces the audience at an angle, with 'Elizabeth, known as Good Q. Bess' written on it in block letters.

Mr Jones stands in command beside the blackboard. In two of the school desks sit Idwal and Robbart, each poring over his slate. On the settle sit the Squire, downstage, his arms folded like a pupil, his eyes fixed on Mr Jones, and next to him Old Tom, upstage, laboriously copying the inscription on to his slate.

OLD TOM [*muttering, as he writes*]: Elissabeth . . . known . . . as . . . what in goodness is a 'k' doin' there, that iss a pussell for me——

MR JONES [*suddenly*]: 'I wandered lonely as a cloud.' From *The Daffodils*, by Wordsworth.

[*The boys scratch busily. The Squire begins to nod sleepily. Miss Ronberry hurries in from the garden.*

MISS RONBERRY [*to Mr Jones, in an urgent whisper*]: What is the capital of Sweden?

MR JONES: Stockholm.

MISS RONBERRY: Thank you. [*She hurries back into the garden.*

OLD TOM [*after pondering anxiously, to the Squire*]: Please, sir, how many l's in 'daffodils'?

THE SQUIRE: Blest if I know.

[*He closes his eyes again. John Owen comes in by the study door.*

JOHN: Please, Mistar Jones, Form Two Arithmetic Report—Miss Moffat says will you come in school with it.

[*He goes back. Mr Jones takes some papers hastily from the dresser and follows him through the study. A mild snore from the Squire.*

ROBBART [*looking at him*]: Mae o'n cysgu. Tyd. Idwal——

OLD TOM [*in a passion*]: Plenty Welsh at home, not in the class please by request scoundrels and notty boys!

IDWAL [*to him*]: Squire iss 'avin' a snore. Nai ddangos rwbeth ichi——

[*He rises, runs to the blackboard, takes the chalk and the duster, and swiftly rubs out and adds to the inscription till it reads:* 'NO . . . GOOD . . . BESSIE.' *The Squire grunts. Idwal throws the duster under the open desk, darts back to his desk, and buries his head in his slate. Mr Jones returns.*

MR JONES: Now history. [*Crossing the Squire, waking him.*] Excuse me. . . . [*Going to the blackboard.*] Elizabeth—— [*He sees the inscription and stops short. He turns on the others, grave and perturbed. Old Tom watches, missing nothing.*] Who did this?

IDWAL: Please, Mr Jones, perhaps it iss some terrible dunce that want to know what iss Bessie Watty been doin' the last few months.

[*A pause.*

MR JONES: Whoever it was . . . I am going to cane him! [*To the Squire, timidly, as the latter rises and walks up.*] It was not you, sir, by any chance?

THE SQUIRE: Not guilty. . . . [*Going to the bay window and peering out towards the left.*] Bessie Watty? Little Cockney thing? Nice ankles?

MR JONES: I do not know, sir. . . . [*As Idwal giggles.*] Silence, boys! Where is my duster?

THE SQUIRE [*coming back with a sigh*]: Still no sign of him.

MR JONES: You mean Morgan Evans, sir? [*The boys sober suddenly and look round at the Squire.*] He is not expected before the train leaving Oxford half-past one——

THE SQUIRE: There 's a sporting chance the Viva finished yesterday, and I sent the wagonette to meet the one-ten.

[*He sits again on the settle. The boys watch him.*

MR JONES: Do you think that he may know the result when he arrives?

THE SQUIRE: I doubt it, Miss Moffat said we 'll hear by letter in a day or two. . . . [*Rising restlessly, and going towards the front door.*] Think I 'll propel the old pins down the highway, just in case . . .

IDWAL: Please, sir, what sort of a place is Oxford?

THE SQUIRE [*turning at the door*]: Dunno, I 'm sure. Cambridge myself. [*He goes.*

MR JONES [*standing in front of the blackboard*]: Now history. Repeat after me——

IDWAL [*in a piping voice*]: Please, Mr Jones, tell us about Bessie Watty!

MR JONES]*after a pause, cornered*]: If you are kept in to-morrow, I will give you religion. Repeat after me—— [*The school bell rings.*] Dismiss!

[*He goes to the dresser and tidies papers in his satchel. Idwal and Robbart breathe on their slates and wipe them, gather their books hurriedly together and tie them with a strap. Sarah hurries in from the front door. She is dressed in her best, in the traditional Welsh peasant costume with a steeple hat.*

SARAH: Please, sir, have you got my father—— [*Seeing Old Tom.*] —tiddona, 'nhad, ma'dy frwas di'n oeri——

OLD TOM [*furious*]: English, daughter, in the class, pliss!

SARAH [*pulling at his sleeve*]: You are an old soft, your porridge it iss gettin' cold, and you have not got your sleep——

OLD TOM: But I got my Queen Elizabeth——

SARAH [*helping him towards the front door*]: And in the mornin' you got your rheumatics—come on!

[*Miss Ronberry comes in from the garden and places her papers on the open desk.*

ROBBART: Sarah Pugh, what you all clobbered up for?

SARAH: Because for Morgan Evans.

MR JONES [*starting forward*]: Is there some news?

MISS RONBERRY: About Morgan? Oh, quickly!

SARAH: Not yet, Mistar Jones. [*As they sigh impatiently.*] But when it comes, I know it iss good news, so what do I do? I open the

dresser, out the lavendar bags, and into my Sundays! Home, dada, for Sundays——

MR JONES: Before we have definite news, that is unwise——

SARAH: John Goronwy Jones pliss sir, you are an old soft. Everybody is ready to meet him by the Nant! The grocer got his fiddle——

IDWAL: And William Williams the public got his cornet!

ROBBART: And with me on me mouth-organ——

SARAH: And me singin'!

ROBBART: Tyd, Idwal——

[He runs out by the front door, followed by Idwal.

MR JONES *[calling after them]*: Jack Rhys Policeman will be after you with his breach of the peace!

Miss RONBERRY: Perhaps preparing for news to be good means that it will be.

MR JONES: Everything is pre-ordained. Morgan Evans has either won the scholarship, or lost it.

Miss RONBERRY: Let us all say together: 'Morgan Evans has won the scholarship!'

ALL *[except Mr Jones, lustily]*: 'Morgan Evans has won the scholarship!'

SARAH *[to Old Tom]*: Tiddona, 'nhad——

[She stands arranging her shawl.

OLD TOM *[wistfully]*: I never got a lettar yet, and nobody never put Sundays on for me. . . .

[He goes out by the front door. Miss Ronberry is about to cross into the school when her eye catches the blackboard; Sarah is about to follow her father when Miss Ronberry's voice arrests her.

Miss RONBERRY: 'No . . . good . . . Bessie.' Good gracious!

MR JONES *[trying to hide the board from Sarah, but too late]*: Where *is* my duster?

Miss RONBERRY: What does that mean?

SARAH: Bessie Watty. Miss Ronberry, where is she?

Miss RONBERRY *[after a stifled look at Mr Jones]*: I don't know, dear.

SARAH: Miss Moffat she hears from her, in my post office. We wass all wonderin'. *[She goes out by the front door.*

MISS RONBERRY [*turning on Mr Jones*]: Well, *I* have been wondering too! [*Sitting on the sofa, as he crosses to the desk.*] She came back that morning and just went away again—Morgan Evans was telling me only the day he left for Oxford that he didn't even *see* her. Where is she?

MR JONES [*pouring ink from a bottle in a drawer into a rack of ink-wells on the desk*]: It is more important to know if Morgan Evans has won or not.

MISS RONBERRY: I know. . . . If he hasn't it will break her heart.

MR JONES: Would she feel it so keen as all that?

MISS RONBERRY: I used not to think so, but since that day they have been so much better friends, it has been a pleasure to hear them conversing—perhaps it is the strain of all these examinations——

[*She stops guiltily as Miss Moffat comes in from the study, reading an exercise-book and chuckling; she wanders up towards the blackboard.*

MISS MOFFAT: Gwyneth Thomas the plasterer's eldest: essay on Knowledge. 'Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever' —I wonder if the reverend Kingsley had any idea what a smack in the eye that was for lady teachers? And then Gwyneth Thomas starts [*Reading.*] 'It is not nice to know too much, I wish to be like Miss Ronberry, Miss Moffat is different, she knows everything.' Ha! Not bad for a youngster! Hit the nail—— [*Suddenly, apprehensively, catching Miss Ronberry's face.*] Any news?

MR JONES: Not yet.

MISS MOFFAT [*relieved*]: I thought not. . . . [*She sees the blackboard and stops short. A pause. She takes out her handkerchief and with a swift movement wipes the board clean. The others watch her.*] Where is the Squire?

MR JONES: Gone to see if there is any sign.

MISS MOFFAT: Thank the Lord, that man is really becoming a nuisance. [*Sitting on the top end of the sofa.*] He gave up Henley to be here this week—did you know?

MR JONES [*coming down towards her*]: You do not appear nervous?

MISS MOFFAT: I am past being nervous. If he has won, I shan't believe it. Flatly.

MISS RONBERRY: And if he has lost?

MISS MOFFAT: If he has lost . . . [*After a pause.*] . . . we must proceed as if nothing had happened. The sun rises and sets every day, and while it does we have jolly well got to revolve round it; the time to sit up and take notice will be the day it decides not to appear. [*Rising briskly.*] In the meantime, Mr Jones, your report is on your desk; Miss Ronberry, Form Two are waiting for your music like a jungle of hungry parakeets.

MISS RONBERRY: Yes, Miss Moffat.

[*They retire meekly through the study. Miss Moffat is alone. She looks at her watch; her armour loosens perceptibly; she is on edge and apprehensive. She goes towards the stairs, but before she reaches them the garden door opens suddenly, and Morgan appears. He wears a new dark suit, carries a travelling bag and his cap, and looks dusty and tired. His manner is excited and unstable; he is alternately eager and intensely depressed. She stares at him, not daring to speak.*

MORGAN: I caught the early train. I knew they would all be watching for me, so I got out at Llanmorfedd and got a lift to Gwaenygam.

MISS MOFFAT [*fearfully*]: Does that mean——?

MORGAN: Oh, no news. [*He puts down his bag and cap next to the arm-chair; she relaxes, comes down, and sits on the lower end of the sofa.*] Except that I am not hopeful.

MISS MOFFAT: Why not?

MORGAN [*sitting in the arm-chair*]: They talked to me for one hour at the Viva——

MISS MOFFAT: That doesn't mean anything. Go on.

MORGAN: They jumped down hard on the New Testament question. As you said they would—you are very pale.

MISS MOFFAT: Better than a raging fever. Go on.

MORGAN: I spent five minutes explaining why Saint Paul sailed from a town three hundred miles inland.

MISS MOFFAT: Oh, dear. [*Their manner together has changed since we last saw them together; they are hardly at all teacher and pupil, superior and inferior, adult and child; they are more like two friends held solidly*

by a bond unsentimental and unself-conscious. Morgan's English has immensely improved, and he expresses himself with ease.] Parnell?

MORGAN: Parnell. . . . Oh, yes—I was going to stick up for the old chap, but when they started off with 'that fellow Parnell,' I told the tale against him for half an hour, I wasn't born a Welshman for nothing.

MISS MOFFAT: Ha. . . . And the French?

MORGAN: Not good. I said 'naturellement' to everything, but it didn't fit every time.

MISS MOFFAT: And the Greek verbs?

MORGAN: They were sarcastic.

MISS MOFFAT: Did the president send for you?

MORGAN: I had half an hour with him——

MISS MOFFAT: You did?

MORGAN: Yes, but so did the other nine candidates! He was a very kind and grand old gentleman sitting in a drawing-room the size of Penlan Town Hall. I talked about religion, the same as you said——

MISS MOFFAT [*correcting him, mechanically*]: Just as you advised——

MORGAN: Just as you advised. He asked me if I had ever had strong drink, and I looked him straight in the eye and said 'No.'

MISS MOFFAT: Oh!

MORGAN: I was terrible—terribly nervous. My collar stud flew off, and I had to hold on to my collar with one hand, and he did not seem impressed with me at all. . . . He was very curious about you. Did you know there was an article in the *Morning Post* about the school?

MISS MOFFAT [*waving aside the news*]: Was there? . . . But what else makes you despondent?

MORGAN: The other candidates. They appeared to me brilliant —I had never thought they would be, somehow! Two from Eton and one from Harrow, one of them very rich. I had never thought a scholarship man might be rich. He had his own servant.

MISS MOFFAT: Gosh!

MORGAN: And the servant looked so like my father I thought it was at first. . . . And as I was leaving the examiners appeared to be

sorry for me in some way, and I received the impression that I had failed. I——

[*He is suddenly depressed, rises and wanders towards the stairs. She catches his mood.*

MISS MOFFAT: When shall we know?

MORGAN: The day after to-morrow. They are writing to you.

MISS MOFFAT [*Rising and pacing towards the desk*]: The villagers are all in their best, and talking about a holiday to-morrow. It is very stupid of them, because if you have failed it will make you still more sick at heart——

MORGAN: If I have failed? [*In sudden desperation.*] Don't speak about it!

MISS MOFFAT [*turning to him, surprised*]: But we must! You faced the idea the day you left for Oxford——

MORGAN: I know, but I have *been* to Oxford, and come back, since then! [*Sitting on the lower end of the sofa, facing her.*] I have come back—from the world! Since the day I was born, I have been a prisoner behind a stone wall, and now somebody has given me a leg-up to have a look at the other side . . . [*Vehement.*] . . . they cannot drag me back again, they cannot, they *must* give me a push and send me over!

MISS MOFFAT [*sitting beside him, half-touched, half-amused*]: I 've never heard you talk so much since I 've known you.

MORGAN: That is just it! I *can* talk, now! The three days I have been there, I have been talking my head off!

MISS MOFFAT: Ha! If three days at Oxford can do that to you, what would you be like at the end of three years?

MORGAN: That 's just it again—it would be everything I need, everything! Starling and I spent three hours one night discussin' the law—Starling, you know, the brilliant one. . . . The words came pouring out of me—all the words that I had learnt and written down and never spoken—I suppose I was talking nonsense, but I was at least holding a conversation! I suddenly realized that I had never done it before—I had never been *able* to do it. [*With a strong Welsh accent.*] 'How are you, Morgan? Nice day, Mr Jones! Not bad for the harvest!'—a vocabulary

of twenty words; all the thoughts that you have given to me were being stored away as if they were always going to be useless—locked up and rotting away—a lot of questions with nobody to answer them, a lot of statements with nobody to contradict them . . . and there I was with Starling, nineteen to the dozen. [*Suddenly quieter.*] I came out of his rooms that night, and I walked down the High. That 's their High Street, you know.

MISS MOFFAT [*nodding, drinking in the torrent with the most intense pleasure*]: Yes, yes. . . .

MORGAN [*looking before him*]: I looked up, and there was a moon behind Magd—Maudlin. Not the same moon I have seen over the Nant, a different face altogether. Everybody seemed to be walking very fast, with their gowns on, in the moonlight; the bells were ringing, and I was walking faster than anybody, and I felt—well, the same as on the rum in the old days!

MISS MOFFAT: Go on.

MORGAN: All of a sudden, with one big rush, against that moon, and against that High Street . . . I saw this room; you and me sitting here studying, and all those books—and everything I have ever learnt from those books, and from you, was lighted up—like a magic lantern—ancient Rome, Greece, Shakespeare, Carlyle, Milton . . . everything had a meaning, because I was in a new world—my world! And so it came to me why you worked like a slave to make me ready for this scholarship. . . . [*Lamely.*] I 've finished.

MISS MOFFAT [*smiling, dreamily*]: I didn't want you to stop.

MORGAN: I had not been drinking.

MISS MOFFAT: I know.

MORGAN: I can talk to you too, now.

MISS MOFFAT: Yes. I 'm glad.

[*The Squire comes in from the front door, leaving it open behind him. Morgan rises.*

THE SQUIRE [*coming down*]: No sign of the feller-me-lad, dang it—Evans! There you are! . . . Well?

MORGAN: Good day, sir. They are sending the result through the post.

THE SQUIRE: The devil they are. [*To Miss Moffat, as he sits in the arm-chair.*] D'ye know I am finding this waiting a definite strain? . .

[*Mr Jones runs in from the study, in a state of excitement, as Miss Moffat rises and walks round the room.*

MR JONES: Somebody said they had seen Morgan——

MORGAN: Day after to-morrow. [*He sits, abruptly, on the settle.*

MR JONES: Oh. . . .

[*He wanders sheepishly towards the open front door.*

THE SQUIRE: Examiners all right, my boy?

MORGAN: Rather sticky, sir.

THE SQUIRE: Lot of old fogies, I expect. Miss Moffat, I told you you ought to have made inquiries at the other place. However . . .

[*Miss Ronberry runs in from the study, excited, carrying a sheet of music.*

MISS RONBERRY: Somebody said they had seen——

THE SQUIRE AND MR JONES [*in irritated chorus*]: The day after to-morrow!

MISS RONBERRY [*dashed*]: Oh . . . How are you, Morgan, dear? . . .

[*Morgan half rises to greet her. She crosses to the desk. Morgan looks thoughtfully before him. Miss Moffat tries to busy herself with a book at the dresser.*

MR JONES [*wandering out into the porch*]: The suspense is terrible.

THE SQUIRE: I know.

MR JONES: Even the little children are worrying about—— [*He stops short; he has seen somebody coming down the village street; he looks again, doubtfully, starts, then peers anxiously into the room; everybody is preoccupied. He comes into the room, shuts the door, and stands a moment with his back to it.*] Morgan, my boy . . . are you not exhausted after your journey—would you not like something to eat?

MORGAN [*rousing himself from his thoughts*]: I am rather hungry, yes——

MISS MOFFAT: But how stupid of me—Watty will boil you an egg— [*Moving towards the kitchen.*]—come along——

MORGAN [*rising*]: Thank you—[*To the others.*]—excuse me——

MISS MOFFAT [*as she goes into the kitchen*]: Did they spot the Dryden howler?

MORGAN [*following her*]: No.

[*Mr Jones crosses quickly and shuts the door after them.*

THE SQUIRE: You seemed very anxious to get 'em out of the room. What 's the matter——

[*The front door opens suddenly, and Bessie walks in. She has completely changed; she might be ten years older. Her hair is up; she wears a cheaply smart costume, with a cape, and looks dazzlingly pretty in a loose opulent style. Her whole personality has blossomed. A pause. They stare at her. She is perfectly self-possessed.*

BESSIE: Hallo!

THE SQUIRE [*mechanically*]: How d' ye do. . . .

BESSIE: I 'm very well indeed, thanks, and how are you, blooming? [*Her accent is nearer ladylike than it has been yet.*

THE SQUIRE: Yes, thanks. . . . [*To the others.*] What *is* this?

MISS RONBERRY: I really couldn't say. . . . Good gracious, it 's Bessie W——

BESSIE: Right first time. Hallo, Miss Ronberry, how 's geography; the world still goin' round in circles? Hallo, Mr Jones, flirty as ever? [*She sits on the sofa, completely at home.*

THE SQUIRE: And to what do we owe this honour?

BESSIE: Well, it 's like this——

MR JONES [*to Miss Ronberry, desperately*]: Miss Ronberry, will you please return to your class——

MISS RONBERRY [*agog, shutting the front door*]: They are quite safe. I left Mary Davies in charge——

BESSIE [*to Mr Jones*]: No you don't. We 've had too many secrets as it is——

MR JONES: Three days ago she sent money to you—did you not receive the letter?——

BESSIE: Yes I did, and all the others, till I was sick of 'em.

THE SQUIRE: What *is* all this?

BESSIE [*taking off her cape*]: Last week I was glancing through the

Mid-Wales Gazette, and I 'm here to congratulate a certain young gent in case he has won that scholarship.

MR JONES: Oh!

MISS RONBERRY: But what has that got to do with you?

BESSIE: You see, miss, it 's like this——

MR JONES [*in a last effort to stop her*]: Don't say it—don't say it!

BESSIE: Four weeks yesterday, I had a baby.

[*A pause. Miss Ronberry and the Squire stare at her. Mr Jones gives a sigh of impotent despair.*

THE SQUIRE: You had a what?

BESSIE: A baby. Seven pounds thirteen ounces.

THE SQUIRE: Good God, how ghastly.

MR JONES [*moving up, as Miss Ronberry sinks into the desk chair*]: It is a disgustin' subject and——

BESSIE: It isn't disgusting at all; if I had a wedding-ring you 'd think it was sweet. [*Mrs Watty hurries in from the kitchen.*

MRS WATTY: Morgan Evans's luggage. Excuse me, sir—— [*She crosses, picks up the bag and cap, and is about to take them back to the kitchen when she catches sight of the Squire's serious face.*] Oh! . . . [*Fearfully.*] Any news?

THE SQUIRE [*Rising*]: Well, yes . . .

[*He goes towards the front door, turning to watch the scene; Mrs Watty looks from Miss Ronberry to Bessie, then back, not having recognized her daughter the first time.*

MRS WATTY: Bessie! [*Dropping what she is carrying, in her excitement.*] My, you do look a dollymop! Excuse me, sir . . .

THE SQUIRE: Say anything you like——

MRS WATTY: Where 'd you get them bracelets?

BESSIE: Present.

MRS WATTY: Oh, that 's all right . . . Where 'ave you been, you madam?

BESSIE: Turnin' you into a granny.

MRS WATTY: A gra . . . [*Delighted.*] Well, *fancy*!

[*Miss Moffat comes in from the kitchen.*

MISS MOFFAT [*calling back into the kitchen*]: And I should try and have a sleep if I were you——

MRS WATTY [*as Miss Moffat comes down and begins to go upstairs*]: You could 'ave knocked me down with a feather!

BESSIE: Hallo. [*Miss Moffat stops short, turns, and looks at her.*] I 've just been telling them you know what.

[*It is plain she is no longer afraid of Miss Moffat. The latter looks from one to the other, helplessly.*

THE SQUIRE: And now I think it 's time you told us who the fellow is. I am going to take drastic proceedings——

MRS WATTY: That 's right, dear—who is it?——

BESSIE: Well, as a matter of fact——

MISS MOFFAT [*with a cry, coming down*]: No! I 'll pay you anything . . . anything!

BESSIE [*kindly*]: It 's no good, miss. [*To the others, quickly.*] It 's Morgan Evans.

[*A pause, Miss Moffat puts her clenched fist to her eyes, in despair.*

THE SQUIRE: What!

MISS RONBERRY [*dazed*]: I don't believe it . . .

MRS WATTY [*really upset, to Miss Moffat*]: Oh, ma'am . . .

MISS MOFFAT: I 've been dreading this, for months. In a terrible way it 's a relief.

BESSIE: Bamboozlin' me every week he was in the gutter!

MISS MOFFAT: Lies, all lies, and I was glad to be telling them——

MISS RONBERRY [*suddenly articulate*]: I can't go on listening. I can't bear it! [*Wringing her hands.*] It all comes of meddling with this teaching—she was in my class—what *would* papa have said! [*Collapsing in the arm-chair.*] This horrible unnatural happening——

MISS MOFFAT [*exasperated beyond endurance*]: Don't talk nonsense, it isn't horrible, and it isn't unnatural! On the contrary, it 's nature giving civilization a nasty tweak of the nose. All we can say is that she led him on; but even she was only obeying her instincts—what is at the bottom of the whole thing, actually, is my own crass stupidity for allowing not one jot for humanity. [*Clinging wearily to the banister.*] I should have tried to understand and forestall, instead of riding rough-shod like a mare with blinkers. Her own mother begged me not to bring her here in

the first place—even the Squire gave me a hint—even *he* knew more about human nature than I did——

THE SQUIRE: I say, you know——

MISS MOFFAT: But I must do a little reforming, if you please, and this is where it has landed us. [*Sitting listlessly on the settle, her head turned away.*] The schoolmistress has learnt a lesson; but it 's a little late now.

BESSIE [*Rising.*] Where is he?

MRS WATTY [*defending the kitchen door, trying not to shout*]: Over my dead body, my girl——

BESSIE [*standing with her back to the audience, hands on hips*]: She 's right, mum, it 's too late, I got a four weeks old baby, kickin' healthy, and hungry, and I haven't got a husband to keep him, so his father 's got to turn *into* my husband. That 's only fair, isn't it?

THE SQUIRE: I 'm sorry, Miss Moffat, but I 'm inclined to agree——

BESSIE: I 'll call him——

MR JONES [*blinking*]: There is no need to call him!

THE SQUIRE: What 's the matter with you?

MR JONES [*coming forward*]: I am sorry to say that I have a strong feeling of affection for this young woman.

BESSIE [*sitting again on the sofa, amused*]: Oh, yes—I 've got the face of an angel, haven't I?

MR JONES: And I am willing to do my duty by rehabilitating her in wedlock, and bestowing on the infant every advantage by bringing it up a Baptist.

MISS MOFFAT [*suddenly turning to him*]: Are you serious?

MR JONES: I am always serious.

MISS MOFFAT [*rising, to Bessie, entreatingly*]: I know it sounds cold-blooded, but . . . will you agree?

BESSIE: No, I won't. [*Good-humouredly.*] I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings, but I do draw the line.

MISS MOFFAT: Oh, please think again!

MRS WATTY [*coming down round the sofa to Bessie*]: We 're not pretendin' it 's a windfall, but for a girl who 's took the wrong turnin' it 's a present! And you 'd 'ave your own way in everything—wouldn't she, sir?

MR JONES [*eagerly*]: Of course——

MISS MOFFAT: Watty 's put it perfectly . . . [*Sitting beside Bessie on the sofa.*] I can't expect you to realize how much this means to me . . . except that I 'm begging you, and begging doesn't come easily to me. . . . Will you?

BESSIE: I 'd like to oblige . . . [*Looking at Mr Jones and giggling in spite of herself.*] . . . but really I couldn't! [*As he retreats despondently.*] Besides, my friend would be furious.

MRS WATTY [*clutching at straws*]: Your friend?

BESSIE: Ever such a nice gentleman, sporting, quite a swell, owns a racecourse. [*Catching her mother's eye.*] You needn't look like that, I only met him ten weeks ago. I 'd started servin' behind a bar for fun. I was the picture of health, and ever so lucky in the counter bein' very high.

THE SQUIRE: I have never heard such a conversation outside a police court. I am seeking the safety of my own quarters—anything I can do, Miss Moffat—— [*He goes towards the front door.*

BESSIE [*to him*]: I suppose *you* wouldn't care to stake a claim?

THE SQUIRE: Good gracious——

[*He gives her a startled look and goes.*

MISS MOFFAT: Doesn't this man of yours want to marry you?

BESSIE: 'E won't talk of anything else, but he won't have the baby. He says it would be different if the father 'd been a pal of his—you can understand it, really, can't you? So I 've got to give up my friend and marry Morgan Evans. [*As Miss Moffat rises and moves despairingly up to the bay window.*] Pity, 'cos my friend worships me. Ever since I left he keeps on sending me telegrams. I just got two at the station, and I expect I 'll get some more tonight, isn't it rich? Mr Jones wouldn't consider the baby without me?

MISS RONBERRY: The baby without you! Your child! What about your—your mother-love?

BESSIE: I expect you 'll think I 'm a wicked girl, but, d' you know, I haven't got any!

MISS RONBERRY: Oh, what a vile thing to say, vile——

BESSIE [*rising*]: Now listen, dear . . . [*Going to her.*] . . . you 're

seeing this baby as if it was yours, aren't you—you 'd think the world of it, wouldn't you?

MISS RONBERRY: It would mean everything to me . . . [*Suddenly pathetic.*] . . . my whole life . . .

BESSIE: I have a pretty near idea how old you are; well, my 'rithmetic was never very good, but quite a year or two ago you were twice as old as I am now. When I 'm your age I 'll love the idea of a baby, but life hasn't begun yet for me—I 'm just getting a taste for it—what do *I* want with a baby?

MRS WATTY: That 's what we all want to know!

BESSIE: Yes, mum, but you know what it is——

MISS RONBERRY [*rising*]: You 're inhuman, that 's what you are! To think you don't want it. . . .

[*She is on the point of bursting into foolish tears, and runs into the study.*

BESSIE: I didn't mean to be nasty—but inhuman indeed! I didn't want the baby, nobody would have, but I was careful so it 'd be all right, and now it is all right I want it to have a good time—but *I* want a good time, too! I *could* have left it on a doorstep, couldn't I? But I must see it 's in good hands—[*Turning up to Miss Moffat.*]—and that 's why I 've come to Morgan Evans.

MISS MOFFAT [*turning to her*]: You want to make him marry you, on the chance he will become fond enough of the child to ensure its future—[*Her voice rising.*]—your conscience will be clear and later you can go off on your own?

[*Mrs Watty tries to silence them, pointing to the kitchen.*

BESSIE: I shouldn't be surprised——

MISS MOFFAT: In the meantime, it 's worth while to ruin a boy on —on the threshold of——

BESSIE: I don't know anything about that, I 'm sure. [*Calling.*] Morgan!

MISS MOFFAT: Ssh! [*Intercepting her, desperately.*] Wait a minute, wait. . . . There may be a way out—there must be——

MRS WATTY: Gawd bless us, ma'am—I got it!

MISS MOFFAT: What?

MRS WATTY: Why can't you adopt it?

[*Bessie and Mr Jones stare from her to Miss Moffat.*

MISS MOFFAT [*turning away*]: Don't be ridiculous.

MRS WATTY: Would that do you, Bessie?

BESSIE [*impressed*]: Well! I never thought . . .

MRS WATTY: Would it, though?

BESSIE [*after consideration*]: Yes, it would.

MISS MOFFAT [*really taken aback, for the first time*]: It *would*? . . . But . . . but what would *I* do with a baby? I—I don't even know what they look like!

MRS WATTY: They 're lovely little things—now it 's all arranged——

MISS MOFFAT: But it would be fantastic——

BESSIE [*going up to her, eagerly*]: Oh, do, please, it 'd put *everything* to rights! I would know the baby was safe, Morgan Evans need never know a thing about it, I can marry my friend, and it will all be beautiful! He might grow like his father and turn out quite nice, and anyway I 'm not really so bad, you know—and he 's on the bottle now—and I could give all the instructions before I go —and you could have it straight away, see, because if it 's going I don't want to have it with me longer than I can help, see, because I 'd only start gettin' fond of it, see——

MRS WATTY [*to Miss Moffat*]: Come on, ma'am, you 've been pushin' us about for three years, now we 'll give *you* a shove!

MISS MOFFAT: But it 's mad—I tell you——

MRS WATTY: Not as mad as takin' *me* in was, with my trouble! You 've allus been like that, you might as well go on—where 's that old gumption of yours?

MISS MOFFAT: But I was never meant to be a mother—I 'm not like Miss Ronberry—why, *she* is the one to do it——

MR JONES [*hastily*]: She would never agree—we were discussin' Marged Hopkins going to the workhouse—and she said she could never hold with any child born like that.

MISS MOFFAT: Oh . . . I suppose it would worry some folk. . . . But Watty, you 're the grandmother, and surely you——

MRS WATTY: Oh, I couldn't! I don't bear it no ill will, but every penny I get goes to the Corpse. You 're the one, dear, reelly you are.

MISS MOFFAT [*after thought, decisively*]: Bessie Watty, do you mean that if I do not adopt this child, you——

BESSIE: I will have to tell Morgan Evans, and he will have to marry me, I swear that.

MISS MOFFAT: And do you swear that you would never let Morgan Evans know the truth?

BESSIE: I swear. If there are any questions, I 'll say it was my friend's. [*A pause.*

MISS MOFFAT: Then . . . [*Sitting in one of the desks.*] . . . I give in.

BESSIE [*elated*]: That 's lovely. My friend *will* be pleased. I 'll pop back to the public house for his telegram and send him a nice one back. [*Taking her cape from the sofa.*] Good-bye, all, we 'll arrange details later, shall we? [*Showing them a clasp on her cape.*] My friend gave me this buckle, isn't it nice? He offered me a tiny one, real, but I think the false is prettier, don't you?

MR JONES [*as she turns to go*]: Are you going to take up a life of sin?

BESSIE [*smiling*]: I shouldn't be surprised. I 'm only really meself with a lot of gentlemen round me, y' know, and a nice glass o' port will never come amiss, neither. [*To Mrs Watty.*] That cold water didn't really do the trick, mum, did it? . . . [*To Miss Moffat, serious for a moment.*] Good-bye. . . . I only did it to spite you, y' know.

MR JONES: You are not fit to touch the hem of her garment.

BESSIE [*rounding on him, good-humouredly*]: Oh, yes, I am! Just because she 's read a lot o' books. Books, books! . . . [*Embracing the room with a magnificent gesture.*] Look at 'em all! I got more out of life at my age than she has out o' them all her days—and I 'll get a lot more yet! What d' you bet me?

[*She goes out by the front door.*

MRS WATTY [*shutting the door after her, with a deep sigh*]: That 's settled. . . .

[*The voices of children, in the barn; singing 'Dacw'nghariad.'*

MR JONES [*making for the study door*]: For which we must be truly thankful. . . .

[*Morgan walks in quickly from the kitchen. He goes straight to Miss Moffat; his face is white and shocked; they stare at him, instinctively silent.*

MORGAN: I 've been waiting for her to go.

MISS MOFFAT: Why?

MORGAN: The Squire just came in to see me.

MISS MOFFAT: The fool! The idiotic fool——

MORGAN: Then it 's true! . . . [*A pause. The singing stops in the barn. Looking at the others mechanically.*] He thought I knew. Then he said it was for the best—that I ought to be told. . . . It is funny. She and I, we do not know each other at all—it was a long time ago, and I never thought again about it—and neither did she, I know she didn't . . . and here we are . . . [*To Miss Moffat, dully.*] It is funny, too, because if you and I had not made that bad quarrel, it would never have happened. . . . It ought to make me feel older . . . but I feel more—young than I have ever done before. . . . [*Almost collapsing, suddenly.*] O God, why should this happen to me? . . .

MISS MOFFAT: Steady. . . .

MR JONES: There is no need for you to upset yourself, my boy. Miss Moffat is going to take care of—of——

MORGAN: What?

MISS MOFFAT: I am going to adopt it.

MORGAN [*to Miss Moffat, his old truculent self emerging*]: What in hell do you take me for?

MR JONES: Morgan, swearing! Be haru ti——

MORGAN [*in a rage*]: I will swear some more too, if people talk to me like that! [*To Miss Moffat.*] What do you take me for?

MR JONES: Then what would you like to do, my boy?——

MORGAN: What would I like to do? [*Getting more and more Welsh.*] It is not a question of what I would like to do, or what I might be allowed, but what I am *going* to do—what any fellow with any guts in him must do! [*Crossing, impetuously.*] I am going to marry her!

MISS MOFFAT [*with a cry*]: I knew this would happen, I knew——

MORGAN: What else is there, when I have made a fool of myself

and of her, and of the poor—the poor—I am not going to talk about any of it to anybody, all I will say is that Bessie Watty and I are going to get married as soon as we can, and that is final!

[*He flings himself into the arm-chair, closing his eyes.*

MISS MOFFAT [*crossing and sitting on the sofa, hopelessly*]: I see.

[*A knock at the front door. Sarah hurries in, agog with excitement. She runs to Mrs Watty.*

SARAH: Bessie's telegram from her friend, they send it from Penlan—— [*To the others, gleefully, as Mrs Watty opens the envelope.*] —I never seed one before!

MRS WATTY [*sniffing*]: Poor chap, 'e 'll be disappointed again. . . . [*Placing the telegram on Miss Moffat's lap.*] What does it say, ma'am? . . . [*As Miss Moffat does not move, almost tearfully.*] Read it, ma'am, take your mind off things. . . .

[*Miss Moffat glances half-heartedly at the telegram. A pause. She looks up at Morgan.*

MISS MOFFAT: You have won the scholarship. [*Reading.*] 'First, Evans; second, Fayver-Iles; third, Starling. Congratulations.' [*Sarah claps her hands and runs out by the front door. Morgan laughs bitterly and turns away. Folding up the telegram carefully, tucking it into her belt, still quiet, burning with a slow-mounting and deliberate fever.*] Lock the school door, Watty, will you?

MRS WATTY [*To Mr Jones, tremulously*]: Go in there, sir, I 'll make you a cup of tea. . . .

[*Mr Jones goes into the kitchen. Mrs Watty locks the study door and follows him.*

MISS MOFFAT: Look at me, Morgan. [*Morgan faces her in the arm-chair, defiantly.*] For the first time, we are together. Our hearts are face to face, naked and unashamed, because there 's no time to lose, my boy; the clock is ticking and there 's no time to lose. If ever anybody has been at the cross-roads, you are now——

MORGAN [*rising, and pacing restlessly up to the side window*]: It is no good, I am going to marry her.

MISS MOFFAT: And I am going to speak to you very simply. I want you to change suddenly from a boy to a man. I understand that this is a great shock to you, but I want you to throw off this

passionate obstinacy to do the right thing, which is natural at your age, and try to assume the sober judgment of somebody more *my* age. . . . Did you promise her marriage?

MORGAN: No, never——

MISS MOFFAT: Did you even tell her that you were in love with her?

MORGAN [*repelled*]: No, never——

MISS MOFFAT: Then your situation now is the purest accident; it is to be regretted, but it has happened before and it will happen again. So cheer up, you are not the central figure of such a tragedy as you think——

MORGAN: That does not alter the fact that I have a duty to—to them both——

MISS MOFFAT: She has her own plans, and she doesn't want the child; and I am willing to look after it if you behave as I want you to behave. If you marry her, you know what will happen, don't you? You will go back to the mine. In a year she will have left you—both. You will be drinking again, and this time you will not stop. And you will enjoy being this besotted and uncouth village genius who once showed such promise; but it will not be worth it, you know.

MORGAN [*moving to her, fighting*]: There is a child, living and breathing on this earth, and living and breathing because of me——

MISS MOFFAT [*turning on him, with her old snap*]: I don't care if there are fifty children on this earth because of you! . . . [*As he sits again, wearily in the arm-chair.*] You mentioned the word 'duty,' did you? Yes, you have a duty, but it is not to this loose little lady, or to her offspring either.

MORGAN: You mean a duty to you?

MISS MOFFAT [*shaking her head, with a smile*]: No. [*As he looks at her, arrested.*] A year ago I should have said a duty to me, yes; but that night you showed your teeth . . . you gave me a lot to think about, you know. You caught me unawares, and I gave you the worst possible answer back; I turned sorry for myself and taunted you with ingratitude. I was a dolt not to realize that a debt of gratitude is the most humiliating debt of all, and that a

little show of affection would have wiped it out. I offer that affection to you, to-day.

MORGAN: Why are you saying this to me now?

MISS MOFFAT: Because, as the moments are passing, and I am going to get my way, I know that I am never going to see you again.

[*A pause.*

MORGAN [*incredulously*]: Never again? [*Rising.*] But why?

MISS MOFFAT: If you are not to marry her, it would be madness for you to come into contact with the child; so if I am adopting the child you can never come to see me; it is common sense. Actually there is no reason why you should ever come to Glansarno again; you have been given the push over the wall that you asked for, and you have grown out of this already.

MORGAN: But you . . . will be staying here—how can I never come back—after everything you have done for me?

MISS MOFFAT [*after a pause, smiling*]: D' you remember, the last six months, I 've gone for a long walk over Moel Hiraeth, every morning at eight, like clock-work, for my health?

MORGAN [*sitting*]: Yes?

MISS MOFFAT: There 's one bit of the road, round a boulder—and there 's an oak-tree, and under it the valley suddenly drops sheer. Every morning regularly, as I was turning that corner, by some trick of the mind, I found myself thinking of you working for this scholarship, and winning it. And I experienced something which must after all be comparatively rare: a feeling . . . of complete happiness. [*She is suddenly moved. He looks away slowly. She recovers.*] I shall experience it again. No, Morgan Evans, you have no duty to me. Your only duty—is to the world.

MORGAN [*turning to her*]: To the world?

MISS MOFFAT: Now you are going, there is no harm in telling you something. I don't think you realize quite how exceptional you are, or what your future can become if you give it the chance. I have always been very definite about the things I wanted, and I have always had everything worked out to a T—p'raps that 's the trouble with me, I dunno. . . . I 've got *you* worked out, and it 's up to you whether it will come right or not——

MORGAN [*eagerly*]: Go on.

MISS MOFFAT: I rather made out to the Squire that I wanted you to be a writer—the truth might have sounded ridiculous; but stranger things have happened. You have brains, shrewdness, eloquence, imagination, and enough personality; and Oxford will give you enough of the graces.

MORGAN: For what?

MISS MOFFAT [*simply*]: Enough to become a great statesman of our country. [*After a pause, as he stares at her.*] It needn't be just politics—it could be more, much, much more—it could be . . . for a future nation to be proud of. . . . P'raps I 'm mad, I dunno. We 'll see. I know you 're absurdly young for such an idea, and that so far you 've only got the groundwork—I know all that; but I 've got the measure of your intellect better than you have yourself. It 's up to you. . . . [*After a pause.*] And now doesn't Bessie Watty and her baby seem a little unimportant?

[*She hangs on his answer. A pause. He is looking straight before him.*

MORGAN [*quietly*]: Yes. [*Mr Jones appears timidly from the kitchen.*

MR JONES: Is it all right to ring the bell to say holiday to-morrow?

MISS MOFFAT: Yes. [*Mr Jones's face lights up; he hurries to the study door, unlocks it, and disappears.—Rising, suddenly.*] I think that 's all.

[*She goes to the back of the sofa and picks up Morgan's bag and cap.*

MORGAN [*rising, and facing her*]: But—I—I do not know what to say.

MISS MOFFAT [*smiling*]: Then don't say it.

MORGAN [*looking round*]: I have been . . . so much time in this room.

MISS MOFFAT: And the lessons are over.

MORGAN [*turning to her, impulsively*]: I shall—always remember.

MISS MOFFAT [*shaking her head, with a smile*]: Will you? Well, I 'm glad you think you will.

[*She presses the bag and cap into his unwilling hands. Idwal runs in from the study, very excited.*

IDWAL: Please Miss Moffat, the band is out, and they say Morgan got to come down to Penlan Town Hall for Wales to see a real toff! [*Robbart appears behind him.*

MORGAN [*unwilling*]: Na, ddim diolch——

ROBBART: Tyd, man, tyd, they never forgive you. [*An afterthought.*] And please, Miss Moffat, Mr Jones say is he to say school day after to-morrow, nine o'clock same as usual?

MISS MOFFAT [*turning to him, slowly*]: Nine o'clock. The same as usual. . . .

ROBBART: Yes, Miss Moffat.

[*He runs back into the study, followed by Idwal. Miss Moffat holds out her hand, smiling.*

MISS MOFFAT: Good-bye. [*They shake hands. Morgan is too near tears to speak.*] And I had my heart set on coming up to London and having tea on the Terrace.

IDWAL [*putting his head round the barn door, and disappearing again*]: Brysia, Morgan Evans, brysia!

[*Morgan tries to say something, fails, and hurries into the study. As he shuts the door the kitchen door opens, and Mrs Watty appears cautiously.*

MRS WATTY [*whispering*]: Has he gone?

MISS MOFFAT: Yes. [*Crossing to the desk.*] It 's all over.

MRS WATTY: Oh, no, it isn't all over, ma'am! Because you 're wanted in the kitchen—Bessie 's sent a gentleman over to see you from the public house——

MISS MOFFAT: Tell him I can't see anybody——

MRS WATTY: 'E wouldn't understand, ma'am; you see, he 's only four weeks old. [*Miss Moffat turns and looks at her. A pause.*

MISS MOFFAT [*quietly*]: I had forgotten—all about that.

MRS WATTY: Poor little feller, nobody wants 'im! [*In a conspiratorial whisper.*] I only hope nobody 'll put two and two together, ma'am, 'e 's the spit of 'is father! [*Pressing a paper into her hand.*] This is 'is birth certificate she sent over . . . [*Moving to the kitchen door.*] . . . and I got everything else in there, and I 'll see to the bottle. [*As Miss Moffat does not move.*] Come on, ma'am, you got to start some time!

MISS MOFFAT: Just coming. [*Mrs Watty goes into the kitchen. The sound of the village people singing and cheering down the road. A pause. Miss Moffat looks down at the birth certificate. The singing*

and cheering die down. A pause.] Moffat, my girl, you mustn't be clumsy this ti[illegible]. You mustn't be clumsy. . . .

[*The schoo[illegible] begins to ring, clear and confident. She looks up, as sh[illegible]nce before, listening, smiling faintly. A vociferous burst of cheering in the village. She turns and walks towards the kitchen.*

CURTAIN