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FAMOUS PLAYS
of 1938-1939

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FAMOUS PLAYS OF 1937:

A Month in the Country *Busman's Honeymoon* *The Women*
Judgement Day *In Theatre Street* *People In Love*

FAMOUS PLAYS OF 1936:

Professor Bernhardt *Parnell* *The Two Bouquets*
Bury the Dead *Boy Meets Girl* *Till the Day I Die*

FAMOUS PLAYS OF 1935-6:

St. Helena *Call it a Day* *After October*
Red Night *Awake and Sing* *Katie Roche*

FAMOUS PLAYS OF 1935:

Night Must Fall *Accent on Youth* *Close Quarters*
Grief Goes Over *The Mask of Virtue* *Youth at the Helm*

FAMOUS PLAYS OF 1934-5:

Viceroy Sarah *The Dominant Sex* *Frolic Wind*
The Old Ladies *Flowers of the Forest* *Lovers' Leap*

FAMOUS PLAYS OF 1934:

Touch Wood *Men in White* *The Maitlands*
Queen of Scots *Old Folks at Home* *Family Affairs*

FAMOUS PLAYS OF 1933-4:

Clive of India *The Wind and the Rain* *Reunion in Vienna*
The Laughing Woman *Sixteen* *The Distaff Side*

FAMOUS PLAYS OF 1933:

The Late Christopher Bean *Richard of Bordeaux* *Ten-Minute Alibi*
Sometimes Even Now *Alien Corn* *Of Thee I Sing*

FAMOUS PLAYS OF 1932-3:

Children In Uniform *Miracle at Verdun* *Service*
Strange Orchestra *Behold, We Live* *Counsellor-at-Law*

FAMOUS PLAYS OF 1932:

Musical Chairs *Somebody Knows* *See Naples and Die*
The Rose Without a Thorn *There's Always Juliet* *Once in a Lifetime*

FAMOUS PLAYS OF 1931:

The Barratts of Wimpole Street *The Improper Duchess* *To See Ourselves*
After All *London Wall* *Autumn Crocus*

SIX PLAYS:

The Green Pastures *Street Scene* *Badger's Green*
Down Our Street *Socrates* *Alison's House*

FAMOUS PLAYS OF TO-DAY

Journey's End *Young Woodley* *Many Waters*
The Lady with a Lamp *Such Men are Dangerous* *Mrs. Moonlight*

FAMOUS PLAYS OF
1938-1939

THE ZEAL OF THY HOUSE

DOROTHY L. SAYERS

GOLDEN BOY

CLIFFORD ODETS

TO LOVE AND TO CHERISH

MICHAEL EGAN

GLORIOUS MORNING

NORMAN MACDOWAN

SIX MEN OF DORSET

MILES MALLESON & H. BROOKS

HARVEST IN THE NORTH

JAMES LANSDALE HODSON

LONDON

VICTOR GOLLANCZ LTD

1939

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THE ZEAL OF THY HOUSE

THE ZEAL OF THY
HOUSE

by

DOROTHY L. SAYERS

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PREFACE

A schoolboy, asked to state what he knew of Mary Tudor, replied: "She was known as Bloody Mary but she was not half as bloody as you'd think."

We might reasonably expect Miss Sayers, since the previous plays written or performed at the invitation of the Friends of Canterbury Cathedral have concerned prelates and kings who have come to violent and untimely ends, to write with relish of archbishops and assassination, for she has already proved herself to be thoroughly at home with peers and homicide. But, like Mary Tudor, she has not fulfilled our sanguine expectations. Many will be relieved to find that her hero is an architect, that such violence as there may be is accidental, and that, though a rope is the instrument of his downfall, it is accessory to a windlass and not to a gallows.

At a time when all works of fiction are prefaced by a passionate declaration that the author's characters are entirely imaginary, it is a pleasant change to have to vouch for the authenticity of the main protagonists in this play. It is true that, while most people are familiar with the names of those who damaged or were murdered in Canterbury Cathedral, William of Sens, who designed and built the greater part of it, is not as well known as he ought to be. When the choir was burnt down in 1174, he was chosen by a nervous Chapter to undertake the work of reconstruction. Then as now, that a foreigner in competition with native contractors should be selected for such a task must have caused furious comment. Nevertheless, in the face of official timidity and

practical obstacles, he succeeded in raising from the ashes of Lanfranc's work the leaping choir which we cherish to-day. This creation, magnificent as it is, might hardly seem to be suitable material for a dramatic work. But Miss Sayers chooses William of Sens to be the vehicle for her theme of the artist who in the supreme moment of mastery over his craft may be thrown down and destroyed by a consuming and wasting infirmity, the germ of which is in us all and which too often, fostered by our unawareness, destroys virtue and vitality with its insidious infection. Though few may have fallen physically as far and as hard as William, many have fallen away artistically and have perished without the revelation which was granted to him.

The only scenes which may be suspect historically are those between William and Lady Ursula. It might be considered a little unfair to credit William with an imaginary intrigue; but, in fact, Miss Sayers has ingenious and moderately sound reasons for doing so.

Our authority for these events is the contemporary chronicle of Gervase the Monk. After recording with horror and enthusiasm the fire and the rebuilding, he refers to William's accident in a strange and pregnant sentence; he attributes the calamity to "either the Vengeance of God or the Envy of the Devil." Can we not detect in this the verdict of one who, while full of admiration for the Master's work, has watched with disapproval, and not a little envy, the pride and license which the artist has been at little pains to conceal, and now records a well-merited if lamented punishment with righteous satisfaction? Herein may be the clue to some such fall from grace as that which Miss Sayers suggests in the scenes between the architect and his admirer.

For the rest the play deals with well-established facts. Avoiding sham archaism and the

fusty language which is too often expected and provided in plays of period, it presents the Middle Ages as being very little removed in essentials from our own. Petrol and patent medicines have taken the place of the windlass and the faith-healing of the pilgrims, but human fallibility and the inspiration of the artist remain constant. The Archangels who from time to time descend into the arena and direct the destinies of the groundlings need not bewilder the reader or the spectator. They represent the Will of God, Fate, Providence, Accident or what you will and, in the final scenes, that bright flash of intuition which occasionally illuminates even the most clouded conscience.

LAURENCE IRVING.

THE ZEAL OF THY HOUSE was written for presentation by the Friends of Canterbury Cathedral, and was first acted in the Chapter House at the Canterbury Festival, 12th-18th June, 1937, with Mr. Harcourt Williams as William of Sens and a mixed cast of professional and amateur performers.

It was first presented in London by Mr. Anmer Hall at the Westminster Theatre, on 29th March, 1938, with Mr. Harcourt Williams, Mr. Frank Napier and Mr. Michael Gough in their original parts, and with the original music and costumes.

Mr. Williams and Mr. Napier were the producers on both occasions. The special music was composed by Mr. Gerald H. Knight, the Cathedral Organist at Canterbury.

The present text is that of the play as first written. At Canterbury, it was presented without interval, and in a slightly shortened form. In London, an interval was found necessary between Parts II and III, and the following chorus was accordingly inserted at the beginning of Part III:

The Lord God of Heaven hath given me all the
kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged
me to build Him an house at Jerusalem.
That every man should eat and drink and enjoy
the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.
Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto
Thy name give the praise;
For we look for a city which hath foundations,
whose builder and maker is God.

The only other modification of any importance was in St. Michael's final speech, the last sentences of which were altered as follows:

Behold, then, and honour, all beautiful work of the craftsman, imagined by men's minds, built by the labour of men's hands, working with power upon the souls of men, image of the everlasting Trinity, God's witness in world and time.

And whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.

With the help of these modifications, the play in its original form should prove sufficiently elastic to adapt itself for production in any theatre or place of public or private performance.

DOROTHY L. SAYERS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Angelic Persons :

MICHAEL }
RAPHAEL } Archangels
GABRIEL }
CASSIEL, the Recording Angel
A YOUNG CHERUB, Thurifer to Raphael

Religious :

THE PRIOR OF CHRISTCHURCH	} Choir Brothers and members of the Cathedral Chapter
STEPHEN, the Treasurer	
THEODATUS, the Sacristan	
MARTIN, the Guest-Brother and Infirmarian	
AMBROSE, the Choirmaster	
WULFRAM, the Director of the Farm	
ERNULPHUS, the Director of the Kitchen and Distillery	
PAUL, the Gardener	
HILARY, the Almoner	
SILVESTER, the Painter	
GERVASE, the Historian and Clerk	
HUBERT, an Oblate, Superintendent of the Rough Masons	

Laymen :

WILLIAM OF SENS, Architect to the Cathedral

JOHN OF KENT	} Rival Architects
HENRY OF YORK	
SIMON	} Workmen
WALTER	
HUGH	
GEOFFREY	

A YOUNG BOY
THE LADY URSULA DE WARBOIS
Monks; Lay-Brothers; Workmen; Pilgrims of
both sexes

Two Cantors and a Choir of Mixed Voices

The action takes place during the years
1175-1179.

NOTE.—The names Michael, Raphael, are to be
pronounced as trisyllables throughout.

I

At the opening of the play, the scene is set as for a meeting of the Chapter, with seats about a long table. The CHOIR having entered and taken their places, they sing the hymn following :

CHOIR :

Disposer supreme, and judge of the earth,
Thou choosest for Thine the weak and the poor;
To frail earthen vessels and things of no worth
Entrusting Thy riches which aye shall endure.

Those vessels soon fail, though full of Thy light,
And at Thy decree are broken and gone;
Then brightly appeareth the arm of Thy might,
As through the clouds breaking the lightnings
have shone.

(During the singing of the second half of this verse, there enter MICHAEL, RAPHAEL with his THURIFER, GABRIEL and CASSIEL the Recorder. They pass slowly to the steps while the next verse is sung.)

Like clouds are they borne to do Thy great will,
And swift as the wind about the world go;
All full of Thy Godhead while earth lieth still,
They thunder, they lighten, the waters o'erflow.

℣. He maketh His angels spirits.

℞. And His ministers a flaming fire.

MICHAEL :

I am God's servant Michael the Archangel;
I walk in the world of men invisible,
Bearing the sword that Christ bequeathed His
Church
To sunder and to save.

RAPHAEL : I am God's servant
Raphael the Archangel; and I walk
In the world of men invisible; I receive

Prayer spoken or unspoken, word or deed
Or thought or whatsoever moves the heart,
Offering it up before the Throne.

GABRIEL: I am
God's servant the Archangel Gabriel,
The heavenly runner between God and man,
Moving invisible.

CASSIEL: God's Recorder, I,
That keep the Book and cast up all accounts,
Cassiel, chief scrivener to the Courts of Heaven.

Y. Their sound is gone out into all lands.
R. And their words into the ends of the world.

(During the singing of the following verse, the ANGELIC PERSONS depart severally, MICHAEL standing above RAPHAEL on the right side of the steps, and the THURIFER kneeling below them; CASSIEL with his book on the left side of the steps with GABRIEL above.)

CHOIR:

Oh, loud be Thy trump and stirring the sound,
To rouse us, O Lord, from sin's deadly sleep;
May lights which Thou kindlest in darkness
around

The dull soul awaken her vigils to keep.

(The Recorder, CASSIEL, sits at his desk; RAPHAEL hands his censer to the THURIFER, and sits.)

MICHAEL: What is our business here to-day in
Canterbury?

CASSIEL *(slapping the Book rather sharply open and running his finger down the page)*: A meeting of the Cathedral Chapter to choose an architect for the rebuilding of the Choir after the great fire of 1174.

RAPHAEL *(reminiscently)*: Ah, yes—the choir. I was sorry to see the old one go. It was very beautiful, and a favourite haunt of mine. Prayer had soaked into the stones and sanctified them.

CASSIEL (*austerely*): Mankind are exceedingly careless of their possessions. I have an entry against one Tom Hogg, neatherd, who neglected to clean his chimney and so had his thatch set on fire. The sparks were blown across the road and lodged under the lead roof of the church. In a short time all was ablaze.

GABRIEL: A heavy consequence for a light offence. Was that your doing, Michael?

MICHAEL: It was. I bore the flame betwixt my hands and set it among the rafters. We fanned it with our wings, my angels and I, riding upon the wind from the south.

CASSIEL (*muttering to himself over the Book*):
 . . . and seven, twenty-six . . . and three,
 twenty-nine . . . and nine, thirty-eight. . . .

RAPHAEL: Was it done to avenge the murder of the Archbishop?

CASSIEL: . . . and six. Put down four and carry eight.

MICHAEL: I do not know. I am a soldier. I take my orders.

CASSIEL (*casting up a column and ruling a line beneath it*): We all do that, Michael. Your interference in the matter does not affect the debit against Tom Hogg. He stands charged with Sloth to a considerable amount. What use was made of his sin is neither here nor there. It is a question of economics.

MICHAEL: Quite so. I could have done the work perfectly well myself, with a thunderbolt. Hogg's sin was not in the least necessary.

GABRIEL (*in humorous resignation*): Nothing that men do is ever necessary. At least, that is my experience. I find them very amusing. (*The sound of the "Veni Creator" is heard from the lower end of the Chapter-House as the CHOIR-MONKS enter in procession.*)

RAPHAEL: I find them very pathetic.

GABRIEL: You see them at their best, Raphael; as Michael sees them at their worst.

MICHAEL: I find them very perverse. If God were not infinite, they would surely exhaust His patience.

CASSIEL: They make a great deal of work in the counting house. Happily, being an angel, and not a man, I like work. The hatred of work must be one of the most depressing consequences of the Fall.

GABRIEL: Some men work like angels—and whistle over their work. They are much the most cheerful kind. (*In the meantime, RAPHAEL has met the MONKS at the foot of the steps and now precedes them to the Chapter, swinging his censer before them. The last verse of the hymn is sung by the MONKS standing about the table. Then all sit. RAPHAEL comes down to sit beside MICHAEL. CASSIEL opens the Book at a fresh page and prepares to take minutes of the meeting.*)

PRIOR: Brethren, the business before us is, as you know, the appointment of an architect for the new choir. Our earlier discussions have brought the number of suitable candidates down to three. To-day we have to make our final choice.

THEODATUS: Under God's guidance.

PRIOR: Under God's guidance, of course, Father Theodatus. The three men in question are John of Kent, William of Sens, and Henry of York.

STEPHEN: Have we got the estimates, Father Prior?

PRIOR (*handing papers to STEPHEN*): I have two of them here. Henry of York's is lower than John of Kent's. He thinks he can restore the existing fabric without pulling it all down and rebuilding.

WULFRAM: Will that be safe? Some of the masonry looks to me very insecure. John of Kent is a local man—he has had more opportunity to judge. Besides, it would look well to give the work to a local man.

ERNULPHUS: John is very young—young men are always full of extravagant ideas. No experience.

HILARY: One must encourage young men. The future is with the young.

STEPHEN: John's estimate is certainly rather high, I don't think we can countenance extravagance.

PRIOR: We must consider expense, of course, Father Treasurer. Perhaps we had better have the architects in and hear what they have to say. Father Gervase—if you will be so good——(*GERVASE goes out by door, right*).

AMBROSE: Speaking as Choirmaster, may I urge here and now that we should get a man who understands something about acoustics. The old choir——

PAUL: What we want is the old choir restored to what it was before. I dislike this trivial modern stuff they are putting up all over the place, with its pointed arcading and flourishy capitals. Give me something solid, like Ely.

HILARY: One must move with the times, Father Paul. Now William of Sens is a progressive man.

WULFRAM: He is a foreigner. Why should we have a foreigner? Isn't an Englishman good enough? Money should be kept in the country.

STEPHEN: We do not seem to have had an estimate from William of Sens. (*Re-enter GERVASE right with JOHN OF KENT, WILLIAM OF SENS, and HENRY OF YORK.*)

PRIOR: Not yet. He writes to me here—— Ah, good morning, sirs. Pray come to the table.

We have received your letters and considered your qualifications. We are now minded to hear your further opinions, after inspection of the site. You, Master Henry, have submitted a very conservative estimate of the cost of reconstruction.

HENRY: My Lord Prior, I have kept the expense down to the lowest possible figure; and after examination of the standing masonry I have prepared a plan and elevation. (*Producing it.*)

PRIOR: Let us have that. (HENRY *puts the plan before the PRIOR and moves across to left of table.*)

HENRY: You will see that I have allowed for keeping the greater part of the standing fabric. (THEODATUS and ERNULPHUS on PRIOR'S left examine the plan.) With the exception of the more grievously damaged portions which I have marked, I see no reason why the present structure may not be restored—— (*He passes plan down to the MONKS, on left.*)

JOHN: My Lord Prior——

HENRY: —and put into good order along the original lines. The existing outer walls may be retained——

WULFRAM: You think they are not too much weakened by the action of the fire?

JOHN: Weakened? They are calcined in places almost to powder.

HENRY: They can be patched and grouted, Master John; and by the addition of supporting buttresses and by altering the pitch of the roof so as to lessen the thrust——

SILVESTER (*who has been studying the plan with MARTIN*) Will not the effect of the buttresses be somewhat clumsy?

MARTIN: There is something a little mean in the proportions of this roof.

AMBROSE (*who is a man of one idea*): I should think it would be bad for sound. After all, the chief use of a choir is to hold services in.

MARTIN: The sooner we get a choir the better. The singing has been very bad lately. I am ashamed to hear sacred words so howled. (*Hands back plan to HENRY, who takes it across, right, to WULFRAM.*)

AMBROSE (*defensively*): The nave is very awkward to sing in. What with the west end boarded up——

HILARY: Well, we can't be expected to hold our services in full view, not to say smell, of the common people.

AMBROSE: And the east end boarded up——
(*ERNULPHUS quietly falls asleep.*)

WULFRAM (*taking plan*): The draughts are appalling. I caught a shocking cold last Tuesday.

AMBROSE: We are singing in a wooden box. You can't sing properly in a box.

PRIOR: Time is certainly of some importance.

STEPHEN: The cost is still more important.

HENRY (*moving up again left of table*): To repair, according to my plan, will be very much cheaper and quicker than to pull down and rebuild. I could engage to be ready within two years——

JOHN: And in two years more you will have to rebuild again. My Lord Prior——

PRIOR: You, Master John, recommend a complete reconstruction?

JOHN: Recommend? It must be done. Do not be deceived. This botching is useless and dangerous. It is unworthy——

HENRY: Master John, I am older than you and more experienced——

JOHN: You never in your life built anything bigger than a parish church.

PRIOR: Master John, Master John!

JOHN: This is the Cathedral Church of Christ at Canterbury. It must be the wonder of the realm—nay, of the world! Will you insult God with patchwork? Give me the commission, Lord Prior, and I will build you a church worth looking at! (*Producing plan and elevation, which he passes to STEPHEN.*)

HENRY: To the greater glory of Master John of Kent.

JOHN: To the glory of God and of the blessed Saints Dunstan and Elphege.

STEPHEN (*aside to the PRIOR*): And the entire depletion of the Treasury. Will somebody please tell me where the money is to come from?

THEODATUS: The devotion of the common people is most touching. A poor widow yesterday brought us five farthings, all her little savings.

STEPHEN: Our Lord will reward her. But that will not go very far.

MARTIN: I think we ought to take the long view. Canterbury is the most important church in the Kingdom, and attracts a great many people to the town. What with the visitors and the great increase in the number of pilgrims since the lamented death of the late Archbishop——

ALL: Blessed St. Thomas, pray for us. (*They cross themselves.*)

MARTIN: A little money spent now on building will repay itself handsomely in donations and bequests. (*STEPHEN passes the plan to HILARY.*)

THEODATUS (*rather loudly*): If the fire was a

Divine judgment for the Archbishop's murder——

ERNULPHUS (*waking with a start*): Eh? the Archbishop? Blessed St. Thomas, pray for us. (*He crosses himself and falls asleep instantly.*)

THEODATUS: I say, if the fire was a judgment, then the new building is a reparation to God, and should be an offering worthy of its high destination and a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of this country.

SILVESTER: No artist can do his best work when he has to consider every halfpenny. Thou shalt not muzzle the ox——

THEODATUS: All this talk about money is sheer lack of faith. God will provide.

STEPHEN: No doubt. But, humanly speaking, the accounts will have to go through the Treasury, and I feel responsible.

HILARY (*passing design to PAUL*): There is a good deal of elaborate and expensive ornament here, Master John.

PAUL: Modern nonsense, modern nonsense. Let us have the old choir back. Here is a groined roof and a clerestory and a lot of fiddle-faddle. How long is all this going to take?

JOHN (*uncompromisingly*): Seven years—perhaps more.

MARTIN: Seven years! Have we to put up with half a cathedral for seven years? Why, God made the world in six days!

PRIOR: God, Father Martin, was not subject to limitations of funds or material.

JOHN (*angrily aside to WILLIAM*): Nor to the cheese-paring parsimony of a monastic chapter.

WILLIAM (*who has listened to all this with a quiet smile; with a touch of humour*): Possibly God is an abler architect than any of us.

PRIOR: We have not yet heard your opinion, Master William. Do you think it possible to restore the remaining fabric?

WILLIAM: Oh, I should think very likely. I should certainly hope to save some of it.

JOHN (*angrily to WILLIAM*): That is *not* what you said to us outside.

WILLIAM: But I really cannot say—I do not see how anybody can say—without prolonged and careful examination.

AMBROSE: That's very true. Very reasonable.

WILLIAM: That is why I have as yet prepared no estimate or plan. But I have brought some drawings of the work entrusted to me at Sens and elsewhere which will give you some idea of the kind of thing I should like to do here. (*Hands papers to PRIOR.*)

PRIOR: Now, I like that. Extremely fine and dignified. And very modern in feeling.

STEPHEN: And not too ornate. (*WILLIAM hands them on down right.*)

GERVASE: It is wonderful. It is like a poem in stone. I should dearly love to see it. How light—and yet how majestic! (*He looks admiringly at WILLIAM.*)

WILLIAM: Time and cost would depend on the extent of the work. I suggest making a thorough survey before getting out a preliminary plan and estimate. Naturally, I should commit you to nothing without the advice and approval of yourself, Lord Prior and the Father Treasurer.

STEPHEN: Just so. We should object to nothing in reason.

WILLIAM (*he has now got the ear of the house*): I should be obliged (*firmly*) to stipulate for the best materials.

THEODATUS: God's service demands the best materials.

WILLIAM: But we can effect an economy by making good use of local talent, of which I am sure we must possess a great deal—

WULFRAM: I am all in favour of local talent.

WILLIAM: And we may reduce the cost of shipping and carriage by the use of certain mechanical devices of my own invention, which I need not say I shall be happy to place at the disposal of the authorities without extra fee.

PRIOR: Thank you—that is very proper, very generous. . . . H'm. Well, Brethren, I think we have now the facts before us. If these gentlemen would kindly retire for a few moments. . . .
(*General movement, GERVASE goes up, right, to door.*)

ERNULPHUS (*waking with a start*): Eh, what? what? Have we finished?

SILVESTER: No, Father Ernulphus. The architects are retiring while we deliberate.

ERNULPHUS: Oh, I see. Very good. (*He falls asleep again.*)

HENRY: Two or three years only, Lord Prior—say four at most—and a strict regard for economy. (*Exit HENRY.*)

JOHN: Consider, Lord Prior—a structure worthy of its dedication—and safety to life and limb, if you think that matters. (*Exit JOHN.*)

WILLIAM: Sir, if I am chosen, I will do my best. (*Exit WILLIAM. GERVASE follows them off. The rest examine the plans and documents.*)

GABRIEL: The motives of mankind are lamentably mixed.

RAPHAEL: They mean well, I assure you.

MICHAEL: Then it is a pity they do not say what they mean.

CASSIEL: It is most confusing. I have worn out my pen trying to keep up with them.

GABRIEL: That is easily remedied. Allow me. *(He plucks a feather from his own wing and hands it to CASSIEL as GERVASE re-enters and shuts the door.)*

CASSIEL *(trimming the feather into a pen)*: Thank you.

PRIOR: Well, Brethren?

SILVESTER: I must say, Master Henry's plan seems rather makeshift.

WULFRAM: He is a Yorkshire man. I would as soon have a foreigner as a Yorkshire man.

STEPHEN: He is too anxious to please. First he says two years—then three or four. I should not rely on his estimate.

PRIOR: Are we agreed, then, not to appoint Henry of York? *(The MONKS signify agreement.)* Then that leaves us the choice between John of Kent and William of Sens.

MICHAEL: What will they make of that?

CASSIEL: They will choose the man whom God has appointed.

GABRIEL: I shall see to it that they do.

WULFRAM: Let us have John. He is a local man. *(As the MONKS give their votes, GERVASE notes them down.)*

MARTIN: Yes; his church will attract attention and bring people into the town.

PAUL: Too new-fangled and showy. I am for William. I distrust these go-ahead young men.

HILARY: I have said William all along.

GERVASE: Clearly William is a great craftsman—let us choose him.

THEODATUS: We know nothing about him personally. John is a young man of devout life.

STEPHEN: What has that to do with it? Besides, his manners are abominable. I give my voice for William.

SILVESTER: I like John's plan—we haven't seen William's.

AMBROSE: John's plan looks good from the musicians' point of view.

PRIOR: I must not influence you—but I admit I am greatly impressed by William of Sens. . . . Father Gervase, how does the voting stand?

GERVASE: Five have spoken for John and five for William.

GABRIEL: This is where I interfere. (*He goes up into the Chapter-House.*)

PRIOR: Somebody has not voted. Who is it? (*Everybody stares round at ERNULPHUS.*)

MARTIN: It is Father Ernulphus.

THEODATUS: He has been asleep all the time. (*GABRIEL stands behind ERNULPHUS.*)

PAUL: He is getting very shaky, poor old soul.

THEODATUS (*loudly in ERNULPHUS' ear*): Father Ernulphus!

ERNULPHUS (*starting into consciousness*): Eh? eh? What?

THEODATUS (*shouting in his ear*): Do you vote for John of Kent or William of Sens?

GABRIEL (*in his other ear*): William of Sens.

ERNULPHUS (*to THEODATUS*): Eh? Yes, of course. William of Sens. Certainly. (*He closes his eyes again.*)

THEODATUS (*vexed*): He hasn't heard a word. (*Loudly*) Father Ernulphus!

ERNULPHUS (*suddenly alert*): You needn't shout. I'm not deaf. I have followed everything very carefully. I said William of Sens and I mean William of Sens. (*He shuts his eyes tight with an air of finality.*)

THEODATUS: Really, Father Prior!

STEPHEN: You will never move him now.
(*A pause.*)

PRIOR: The vote of the Chapter, then, is for William of Sens. If there is no further business, the Chapter is dissolved.

ALL (*rising*): Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. (*GABRIEL goes up and stands above.*)

PRIOR (*as the MONKS begin to file down, left and right*): Father Gervase, pray inform the architects of this decision. Thank those that are not chosen for their pains; they shall receive their journey-money from the Father Treasurer. Ask Master William to come and see me. No time must be lost in putting the work in hand, for the night cometh wherein no man can work. (*Exit GERVASE, right, as the PRIOR follows the MONKS out.*)

- ℣. Be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work; for I am with you, saith the Lord God of Hosts.
- R7. No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.
- ℣. There is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his portion.
- R7. Ascribe ye greatness unto our God; He is the Rock, His work is perfect. (*Re-enter GERVASE right, with JOHN, HENRY and WILLIAM.*)

JOHN (*indignantly to WILLIAM*): Trickery, Master William, sheer trickery and cheating. You know well enough that you *cannot* restore a single stone of it.

HENRY (*with equal indignation*): You will tell any lie in order to get the job. You promise economy, and you will spend their money like water. It is treacherous—it is dishonest——

WILLIAM: *You would not only promise, you would do them a dishonest piece of work. That is treachery, if you like, Master Henry. (HENRY bounces down the steps with an angry exclamation.)*

JOHN: But why must you flatter and fawn on them? Why pander to all their ridiculous foibles? Cannot you tell them the truth as I do and let the best man win?

WILLIAM: The trouble with you, my lad, is want of tact. You can handle stone, but you can't handle men. You must learn to humour fools if you want to get anything done.

JOHN: You stinking fox! (JOHN *joins* HENRY, *and they go off muttering together, sinking their differences in their common grievance.*)

GERVASE (*troubled*): Master William, is it true, what they say?

WILLIAM: Listen to me, young man. At my age one learns that sometimes one has to damn one's soul for the sake of the work. Trust me, God shall have a choir fit for His service. Does anything else really matter? (*He and GERVASE follow the others out.*)

(*During the singing of the following Interlude, the scene-shifters set the stage to represent the site of the choir. The other three ANGELS go up and stand above with GABRIEL.*)

Every carpenter and workmaster that laboureth night and day, and they that give themselves to counterfeit imagery, and watch to finish a work;

The smith also sitting by the anvil, and considering the iron work, he setteth his mind to finish his work, and watcheth to polish it perfectly.

So doth the potter sitting at his work, and turning the wheel about with his feet, who is always carefully set at his work, and maketh all his work by number.

All these trust to their hands, and every one is wise in his work.

Without these cannot a city be inhabited, and they shall not dwell where they will nor go up and down;

They shall not be sought for in public council, nor sit high in the congregation;

But they will maintain the state of the world, and all their desire is in the work of their craft.

II

About two years have passed since the previous scene. WORKMEN go in and out, fetching tools and barrows from door, left, which appears to lead to some kind of office or store-room, and carrying out, right, blocks of dressed stone on hand-barrows, etc. About half a dozen LAY BROTHERS and WORKMEN remain to work on the stage. A general impression of bustle and movement is accentuated by the entrance of a number of respectably dressed PILGRIMS, chattering like jackdaws,—right.

PILGRIMS (*they enter by twos and threes, gape vaguely about and pass on and out by way of the steps*): Beautiful, beautiful; and everything in such good taste. . . . I wonder what it costs to keep the shrine going in candles. . . . Two years they've been building now—goodness knows how long it's going to take. . . . Dickon, you bad boy, leave that saw alone. . . . Who did you say the architect was? Wilfrid somebody? . . . My poor, dear husband—such a sad sufferer—I was determined to make the pilgrimage. . . . No doubt, it will be all very fine when it's finished, but I don't think it's a patch on Lincoln. . . . Shocking bad dinners they give you at the "Lamb"—you'd better come and have a bite with us. . . . I beg your pardon, madam, was that your foot? Ah, the poor, dear, martyred Archbishop! Such a charming man. I saw him when he came back from France—yes, really, he was as close to me as I am to you. . . . Have you heard the one about the three fat friars and the tinker's widow? Well, there were three begging friars. . . . So I said to her, "Very well, you may take your wages and go." . . . It came to me as I was

kneeling there that God would most surely have pity upon my sister. . . . I must say it comes out more expensive than I'd reckoned for. And I was abominably cheated that night we lay at Rochester. . . . The King must be a very naughty man to have killed the poor Archbishop. . . . There! I told you it was only putting ideas into the child's head. . . . Bad business, that fire, and if you ask me, I don't believe the true story ever came out. . . . Ycs, darling, ever so sorry—barefoot in a white sheet. . . . Indeed, I have a very great devotion to St. Thomas. . . . 'This Purbeck marble's all the rage, but I don't care about it myself . . . etc., etc. (*They trail away, still chattering. During the confusion, GERVASE and WILLIAM have made their entrances, right, GERVASE crossing the stage and vanishing into doorway, left, while WILLIAM sits at a trestle-table, centre, and waits resignedly for his workshop to get clear. As the stage empties, the ANGELS come down again and take up their former positions.*

CASSIEL:

Two years of toil are passed; what shall I write
About this architect?

MICHAEL: A schedule here,
Long as my sword, crammed full of deadly
 sins;
Jugglings with truth, and gross lusts of the body,
Drink, drabbing, swearing; slothfulness in
 prayer;
With a devouring, insolent ambition
That challenges disaster.

CASSIEL: These are debts;
What shall I set upon the credit side?

GABRIEL:

Six columns, and their aisles, with covering vaults
From wall to arcading, and from thence again
To the centre, with the keystones locking them,
All well and truly laid without a fault.

CASSIEL:

No sum of prayer to balance the account?

GABRIEL:

Ask Raphael, for prayers are in his charge.

CASSIEL:

Come, Raphael, speak; or is thy censer cold?
Canst thou indeed find any grace in William
The builder-up of Canterbury?

RAPHAEL:

Yes.

(He swings his censer, which gives out a cloud of incense.)

Behold, he prayeth; not with the lips alone,
But with the hand and with the cunning brain
Men worship the Eternal Architect.

So, when the mouth is dumb, the work shall
speak

And save the workman. True as mason's rule
And line can make them, the shafted columns rise
Singing like music; and by day and night
The unsleeping arches with perpetual voice
Proclaim in Heaven, to labour is to pray.

MICHAEL: Glory to God, that made the
Firmament!

(Enter GERVASE, left.)

GERVASE: Here are the letters for you to sign,
Master William. These to Caen, about the next
shipment of stone; these to Dover, with instruc-
tions for the unloading and carriage. I have
mentioned the matter of the damaged crane
and told them it must be made good at their
own expense. *(Hands pen and inkhorn.)*

WILLIAM: Thanks, Father Gervase. *(Signs letters.)*

GERVASE: This is the invoice for the oak roofing-
beams. And there is an enclosure I can't quite
understand. Something about the commission.

WILLIAM *(hastily)*: That has no business to be
there. Idiots! It refers to a private transaction.
Give it to me. I will deal with it myself. Any-
thing more? *(Taking paper and pocketing it.)*

GERVASE: Do you mind looking at this consignment note? We seem to be fifty scaffold-poles short; but I will have them checked again.

WILLIAM: Good. I can trust you to get it put in order. I don't know what we should have done these two years without your vigilant eye and skilful pen.

GERVASE: I wish I could do more to help. But my hands are no good for anything but writing. I should have loved to take a more active part in the work. (*Smiling.*) I must be content to be the man with only one talent, and make it go as far as I can. (*Enter HUBERT, right.*)

WILLIAM: If every one would make good use of his own talent and let others do the same, the world would move faster. Well, Brother Hubert, what's the trouble?

HUBERT: Well, sir, if you'd kindly take a look at this here last lot of lime (*presenting specimens of lime and mortar on a shovel*). If lime you can call it. What they've done to it I *don't* know, but it *don't* seem to have no body in it as you might say. It *don't* bind right. You should hear what my lads have to say about it.

WILLIAM: Yes. Poor slack stuff. Where did this come from?

GERVASE: From Jocelyn's. You remember, the Father Treasurer wanted the order given to them. He said Thomas Clay's price was excessive.

WILLIAM: I wish the Father Treasurer would allow me to know my own job. Tell him—no, don't tell him anything. Order in a fresh lot from Thomas Clay's as before, instructing him to charge it up at Jocelyn's price and send me a private note of the difference. We can adjust it on that timber account. Do you understand?

If these timber merchants are knaves enough to offer me a five per cent commission for giving them the contract and Father Stephen is fool enough to grudge a few pounds extra for first-class material, all right. We play off the knave against the fool, get what we want, and save argument.

HUBERT: Ay, that's so. What the Father Treasurer don't see won't worry him.

GERVASE: But is it honest?

HUBERT: All I know is, this here lime ain't honest. Prior Wibert, him as built the Water-Tower, wouldn't never have asked his masons to put up with cheap rubbish like this here.

WILLIAM (*to GERVASE*): No, of course it's not honest. And it's not exactly safe. That is, it's liable to misconstruction, if proclaimed upon the housetops. But the Lord commended the unjust steward.

HUBERT: You can't make bricks without straw, not yet mortar without lime. And if Prior Wibert, rest his soul, was alive, he'd say the same.

WILLIAM: Cheer up, little churchman. Take thy bill and sit down quickly and write ~~five~~ fifty. Nobody's robbing the Church. (*Exit GERVASE, left, still a trifle unhappy about it.*) H'm. Unfortunate. He'll lie awake all night wrestling with his conscience, and probably let the whole thing out to the Father Treasurer. Can't be helped. Sufficient for the day. . . . How about the new arch? D'you think she's settled in? I'd like to get those supports out to-day.

HUBERT: Been over every inch of her, sir, and I think she'll do. We're getting the tackle up now.

WILLIAM: Let me know when you're ready; I don't want anything started till I come. What

do you think of the plan for the roof and clerestory?

HUBERT: Grand, sir, grand. I only wish Prior Wibert, good man, was alive to see it. Always a man for new ideas, was Prior Wibert. Ah! He'd have loved that tall shafting and the way the cross-ribbing is made to carry the span. "Mark my words, Hubert," he used to say to me, "the arch is the secret of building. We ain't half learned yet," he'd say, "what the arch can carry when it's put to it"

WILLIAM: He was right, there. But we're finding out. We're finding out every day. Greece never guessed it; Rome only half understood it; but our sons will know in the years to come. (*With rising excitement.*) We all have our dreams, Hubert. Churches we shall never live to see. Arch shouldering arch, shaft, vault and key-stone, window and arcading, higher and wider and lighter, lifting roof, tower, spire, into the vault of heaven—columns slender as lily-stalks—walls only a framework for the tracerics—living fountains of stone——

HUBERT: That's so, Master, that's so. That's the way to build. Each stone carrying his neighbour's burden, as you might say.

WILLIAM: A triumph of balance, eh, Hubert? A delicate adjustment of interlocking stresses. Look! there was an idea came into my head last night. (*He sketches on a block of stone. Enter STEPHEN and MARTIN, right.*)

STEPHEN: Well, I must say, it's rather inconsiderate. Still, we mustn't let the opportunity slip.

MARTIN: Certainly not; rich benefactors have to be humoured. Nobody knows that better than he does. Will you tackle him?

STEPHEN: If you like. Er—Master William!

WILLIAM: What can I do for you, Father Treasurer?

STEPHEN: Forgive me for interrupting you—I know you're very busy, but the fact is, we have a visitor——

MARTIN: Rather an important visitor.

STEPHEN: The Lady Ursula de Warbois——
(*Enter THEODATUS, right. He has his sleeves tucked up, and a coarse apron over his habit, and carries a trowel.*)

MARTIN: We had been hoping she would come——

STEPHEN: She has just arrived and asked to see the Father Prior.

MARTIN: She is with him now. Father Theodatus, have you heard? The Lady Ursula is with the Father Prior!

THEODATUS: Indeed? (*He goes across to speak to one of the WORKMEN.*)

WILLIAM: Come, sirs. All this excitement is scarcely becoming to your cloth. Is the lady young and beautiful? And what is she doing with the Father Prior, or he with her? (*WORKMEN snigger.*)

THEODATUS: Master William! Pray control your tongue.

WILLIAM: There! you see you have shocked Father Theodatus.

STEPHEN: The Lady Ursula is the widow of an exceedingly wealthy knight.

MARTIN: She has come to reside in Canterbury; and has several times expressed interest in the work. To-day she has come and wants to see over the new choir——

STEPHEN: If she is pleased with what she sees, she will probably be good for a handsome subscription.

WILLIAM: Oh, very well. Take her where you like. Better stand clear of the new arch, though. We're going to get the supports out, and it might come down. You never know—eh, Hubert?

HUBERT: That's right. You never know.

STEPHEN: Yes—but the point is, she particularly wants to meet the architect and be shown round personally.

MARTIN: She wants to see the plans, and have everything explained to her.

WILLIAM: T'cha! women always want explanations. But they never listen, and wouldn't understand a word if they did. I've no use for women—not in working hours.

THEODATUS (*gloomily*): The curse came by a woman.

WILLIAM: Well—if it comes to that, so did *you*, Father Theodatus.

HUBERT: That's right. Women are a curse—but we can't get *into* the world, nor *on* in the world without 'em.

MARTIN: Well, Master William, I'm sure you will oblige her. People always like to talk to the architect. The human touch, you know. It's always good publicity.

WILLIAM: Oh, very well, I suppose one must make one's self a martyr to publicity. Go and keep an eye on the lads, Hubert; I'll come as soon as I'm free. (*Going, STEPHEN and MARTIN offer to accompany him.*) No, thanks. I can find my own way. Don't you run your head into temptation. *Sed libera nos a malo*—deliver us from the apple and all its consequences.

(*Exit, right, with HUBERT.*)

STEPHEN: Dear me! I hope he will behave with discretion.

MARTIN: Never fear. He can bridle his tongue when he likes. He is a politic man. Remember how he persuaded us into the expense of re-building.

STEPHEN: Yes—we have had some experience of his policy. Well—he wheedled money out of us; let him now wheedle it out of the Lady Ursula.

MARTIN: At any rate, he is a first-class workman. He gives us good value for our money.

STEPHEN: Does he? I hope he does. Sometimes I have my doubts. From something one of the carriers let fall the other day, I am inclined to suspect him of—some irregularities.

MARTIN: Oh, surely not! The accounts all go through your hands and the correspondence through those of Father Gervase.

STEPHEN: Father Gervase? Do you think a crafty old fox like that hasn't the wit to hoodwink a young and innocent churchman like Father Gervase? Is he in the office, by the way? I am inclined to give him a caution. (*Calling left.*) Father Gervase!

GERVASE (*emerging left with letters*): Yes, Father Stephen?

STEPHEN: Tell me; since you have been handling Master William's letters, have you ever had any reason to suspect any financial irregularities?

GERVASE (*taken aback*): Financial irregularities?

STEPHEN: Tampering with the estimates? Fudging the accounts? Pocketing commissions and that sort of thing? Doing little deals on the side?

GERVASE (*recovering himself; with confidence*): I am quite positive, Father Stephen, that Master

William has never cheated the Church of a single penny, and never would. He thinks of nothing, lives for nothing, but the integrity of his work. If you knew him as well as I do, working with him these two years, you would be sure of that.

STEPHEN: I am glad to hear it. But keep your eyes open. I have heard stories, and I am not altogether satisfied.

GERVASE: Would it not be better to speak openly to Master William himself?

THEODATUS: Of course it would; but they are afraid to. Why? Because the man has managed to get the ear of the Father Prior—and because they don't want him to throw up the job in the middle—and because, having once put their hands to dirty tools, they don't know how to draw back. (*To STEPHEN and MARTIN*) No man can serve God and mainimon. God's House should be built with prayer. You are trying to build it with worldly wisdom and worldly lucre. Look at all those pilgrims! How many of them have clean hands and pure hearts?

MARTIN: We cannot see into their hearts.

THEODATUS: Have you listened to their talk? One in ten may be sincere. The rest are idle men and gadding women, making pilgrimage an excuse for a holiday trip—compounding for old sins by committing new ones. All they come for is to drink and gossip in alehouses, tell each other dirty stories, pick up loose companions, waste their own time and other people's, and gabble through a few perfunctory prayers at top speed, so as to have more time for sight-seeing.

GERVASE: Are you not a little uncharitable?

STEPHEN: Most of them are very worthy people. And after all, we can't do without their money.

THEODATUS: If you had faith, you could. You degrade the Church by these vulgar and dubious methods of publicity.

MARTIN: Really, Father Theodatus! This is monstrous. The Father Prior himself entrusted me with the publicity side of the appeal. I have taken great pains to get these pilgrimages properly advertised. And this is my reward!

GERVASE: Brethren! brethren! All the workmen are listening to you. (*Enter WILLIAM, right, with URSULA.*)

MARTIN: Let them listen!

THEODATUS: I do not care who hears me!

WILLIAM: Pray, madam, mind your head—the doorway is rather low. One step down. Allow me. This is just a little corner of our workshop, where—— Walter! Hugh! Simon! Is nobody doing any work to-day? Do you take it for the Feast of St. Lazybones? (*The WORKMEN hurriedly return to their tasks.*) Walter—that corner is out of true. And here, you! Is that the way to treat your tools? . . . I beg your pardon, madam. The moment my back is turned, everything seems to come to a standstill.

URSULA: No wonder. Without the heart, how can the limbs do their office? You are the heart of the undertaking.

WILLIAM (*formally*): It is very good of you to say so. I think you know Father Stephen, the Treasurer? Father Martin, the Guest-Brother? Father Theodatus, the Sacristan? And Father Gervase, who is Clerk and Historian to the Chapter, and is good enough to deal with my correspondence in his spare time. (*To GERVASE*) Have those letters gone?

GERVASE: I am just taking them to the messenger. (*Exit GERVASE, right.*)

MARTIN: And what, madam, do you think of our Cathedral?

URSULA: I think it must be the most beautiful in the world. And how glorious the new choir will be when it is finished! Master William has described it all to me and has promised to show me all his plans and drawings. That was a promise, was it not, Master William?

WILLIAM: Certainly—if you are really interested.

URSULA: Of course I am interested. I am glad I have come to live in Canterbury. It will be so exciting to watch the work going on from day to day. A widow needs an interest in life. And it will be a great comfort to live under the protection of blessed St. Thomas.

MARTIN: Thousands of the suffering and bereaved have already found healing and consolation by his benign intervention. Only a few weeks ago, out of a large congregation of worshippers who attended a special service—

(Bell begins to ring. MONKS enter, right, and file across the stage and down the steps. WORKMEN lay down their tools and go out, right, with dinner-baskets.)

THEODATUS: That is the bell for nones. *(Exit down steps.)*

MARTIN: I will tell you presently about the special service. *(Exeunt STEPHEN and MARTIN down steps.)*

WILLIAM: Do you propose to attend nones? The lower part of the nave is available for the laity.

URSULA: No; I propose to see those drawings of yours.

WILLIAM: I do not think you came here to see architectural drawings.

URSULA: I came—to see the architect. (*Pause.*)
Did you realise that this was not the first time
we had met?

WILLIAM: I realised it perfectly. I had the
honour to pick up your glove yesterday in the
market-place.

URSULA: I was much indebted to you for the
courtesy.

WILLIAM: I was much indebted to you for the
opportunity. I am an opportunist. So, I fancy,
are you. We have that much in common.

URSULA: Is that an impertinence, I wonder?

WILLIAM: Yes.

URSULA: I ought to be offended with you.

WILLIAM:

If you are wise, you will be. Let us be plain.
The first time our eyes met, we knew one
another

As fire knows tinder. You have seen what havoc
Fire works. Let be.

URSULA: I do not fear the fire.

WILLIAM:

My fire should be a lamp to light the world,
Fed with my life, consuming only me;
Will you not learn that it is perilous
To play with fire? That it is death to come
Between the man and the work? In one man's
life

Is room for one love and no more—one love;
I am in love with a dream.

URSULA: Tell me your dreams
Sitting by the fire, seeing pictures in the fire,
Visions and dreams.

WILLIAM: Your old men shall dream dreams
And your young men see visions—but not your
women.

What use have women for the dreams of a man
 Save to destroy them? What does a woman know
 Of the love of knowledge, passing the love of
 women?

The passion of making, beside which love's little
 passion

Shows brittle as a bubble?—To raise up beauty
 from ashes

Like the splendour of resurrection; to see the
 stone

Knit unto stone and growing, as in the womb
 Bone grows to bone; to build a world out of
 nothing—

That is my dream; that is the craftsman's dream,
 The power and the glory, the kingdom of God
 and man—

Of man, never of woman. Women create
 Passively, borne on a wind of lust, for a whim,
 At the caprice of a man, in a smile, in a spasm
 Of the flesh; we, with the will, with the blood,
 with the brain,

All desire of the soul, the intent of the mind.
 Now do you understand what my dreams are
 And why they are not for you?

URSULA:

I understand.

Knowledge and work—knowledge is given to
 man

And not to woman; and the glory of work
 To man and not to woman. But by whom
 Came either work or knowledge into the world?
 Not by the man. God said, "Ye shall not know;
 Knowledge is death." And Adam was afraid.
 But Eve, careless of peril, careless of death,
 Hearing the promise, "Ye shall be as Gods,"
 Seized knowledge for herself, and for the man,
 And all the sons of men; knowledge, like God;
 Power to create, like God; and, unlike God,
 Courage to die. And the reward for her
 Was sorrow; but for Adam the reward
 Was work—of which he now contrives to boast
 As his peculiar glory, and in one breath

Denies it to the woman and blames her for it,
 Winning the toss both ways. My simple Adam,
 It is too late to scare woman with risks,
 And perils—woman, that for one splendid risk
 Changed the security of Paradise,
 Broke up the loom and pattern of creation,
 Let in man's dream on the world, and snatched
 the torch
 Of knowledge from the jealous hand of God
 So, that the fire runs in man's blood for ever.

WILLIAM (*carried away*):

So that she runs like fire in a man's blood
 For ever! Take what thou wilt—the risk, the
 sorrow,
 The fire, the dream—and in the dream's end,
 death.

GABRIEL:

Thus Eve cast down the gauntlet in God's face:
 "My will for Thine; man's purpose against
 God's;
 Slay me and slay the man, slay all my seed,
 But let man's knowledge and man's work go on."

MICHAEL:

Thus God took up the gauntlet in Eve's face.
 Having, like man, courage to look on death:
 "My Son for thy sons, and God's blood for
 man's;
 Crucify God, but let the work go on."

CASSIEL:

By man came sin.

RAPHAEL: O felix culpa, quae
 Talis et tanti meruit Redemptoris!

HUBERT (*off*): Master William! Master William!

WILLIAM: There! that means work. You see what
 happens when one starts this kind of thing. Go
 now. They are coming out of church. Quickly
 —or we shall have Father Martin and the special
 service all over again. I will come to your
 lodging after supper.

URSULA (*on the steps*): Bringing your dreams with you. (*Exit down steps. Enter HUBERT, right.*)

HUBERT: Master! The arch is ready when you are.

WILLIAM: I am coming. Work, Hubert, work. Sometimes one persuades one's self that it all means something to somebody.

HUBERT: Do you think the gracious lady will be moved to contribute to the building fund?

WILLIAM: H'm. I had forgotten that aspect of the matter. Yes—I shouldn't be surprised if she did.

HUBERT: The blessed saints be praised for it.

WILLIAM: I wonder! (*Exeunt WILLIAM and HUBERT, right.*)

THE YOUNG CHERUB (*suddenly*): Why did God create mankind in two different sorts, if it makes so much trouble? (*The ANGELS are inexpressibly shocked.*)

RAPHAEL: Hush! you mustn't ask Why.

MICHAEL: Angels never ask Why.

GABRIEL: Only men ask Why.

CASSIEL: And you see what happened to them, just for asking Why.

MICHAEL: Do you want to eat of the Tree of Knowledge, like Adam and Eve?

GABRIEL: And find Michael there, with his big sword?

RAPHAEL: And put our Master to the trouble and pain of another crucifixion?

CASSIEL: Or start another war, like that lost brother whom we must not name?

ALL: Criticising God's creation! I never heard of such a thing!

CHOIR: Shall we that are but worms, but silkworms, but glow-worms, chide God that He hath made slow-worms, and other venomous creeping things?

Shall we that are all discord, quarrel the harmony of His creation or His providence?

Can an apothecary make a sovereign treacle of vipers and other poisons, and cannot God admit offences and scandals into His physic?

As soon as he had made light (which was His first creature) He took pleasure in it; He said it was good; He was glad of it; glad of the sea, glad of the earth, glad of the sun, and moon, and stars, and He said of every one, It is good.

III

The scene is as before; two more years have passed; WALTER, HUGH and GEOFFREY, lay workmen, are engaged in polishing marble rather up-stage.

(Enter SIMON, right, and crosses to door, left.)

SIMON (*sings*):

The animals went in two by two,

Hey, ho, nonny!

Said the dog, Bow-wow! said the cat, Mew,
mew!

Spring is the time for love!

(Exit left.)

WALTER: Spring, indeed! I wish the spring were here. It hasn't stopped raining for three months.

HUGH: More like four. We've had vile weather ever since the eclipse last September. What a climate!

WALTER: I knew that eclipse meant bad luck.

GEOFFREY: Well, it's not raining to-day.

HUGH: Bad luck? If we never get worse luck than a bit of bad weather, I don't care how many eclipses we have.

WALTER: We ain't heard the last of the eclipse yet, mark my words.

HUGH: You and your prophecies! What are you grumbling about? Job's going well enough, ain't it? Four years, and here we've finished the triforium and the clerestory, and the key of the great arch will be put in to-day. Not too bad, in four years. (*Re-enter SIMON, left, trundling a coil of rope, wound on a drum.*)

GEOFFREY: Ah! he's a good worker, is Master William. And a fast worker. Knows what he's

about. He's the sort of master I can do with. Strict, and drives you like the devil, but I don't mind that.

HUGH: That's right. I respect a master that's a good worker. When Master William works, he works.

WALTER: And when he plays (*with a meaning grin*), he plays! Him and the Lady Ursula!

HUGH: Well, I don't mind that, either. That's their affair.

SIMON: Quite right, Hugh. The day for labour and the night for—sleep.

(*Sings*)

Two by two they went into the ark,

Hey, ho, nonny!

The doors were shut, they were all in the dark,

Spring is the time for love!

GEOFFREY: She's somewhere about the place now.

WALTER: Who is? Lady Ursula?

GEOFFREY: Yes. Takes a lot of interest. Always putting up a bit o' prayer, or coming to see how the job's getting on, or calling on the Father Treasurer with a little donation to something.

SIMON (*sings*):

But when old Noah opened the door,

Hey, ho, nonny!

They all came out by three and four;

Spring is the time for love!

(*Enter* PRIOR and THEODATUS, *right*).

HUGH: It's a wonder the good fathers don't see through it.

GEOFFREY: Maybe they do. Maybe it pays them to wink t'other eye. Lady Ursula's rich. It don't do to offend rich folks.

THEODATUS: You hear that, Father Prior?

WALTER: All the same, mark my words, no good will come of it. That eclipse wasn't sent for nothing.

HUGH: Ah, come off it. You and your eclipse!

SIMON (*sings*):

Who d'ye think had been playing tricks?

Hey, ho, nonny!

They went in two and they came out six,

Spring is the time for love!

THEODATUS: For shame, my son, for shame! We cannot have these lewd songs here. (*He comes down past SIMON to the steps, with the PRIOR.*)

SIMON: Sorry, Father. (*He goes out, left.*)

THEODATUS:

So it goes on, Father, day after day—

Songs in the workshop, sniggering in the dortor,

Unbecoming gossip among the novices,

Heads wagged in the market-place, and tales going round

In the ale-house, fingers pointed everywhere

At William of Sens, the Cathedral architect—

A notorious evil liver, a seducer of women,

A taker of bribes——

PRIOR (*mildly*): That was not proved, I fancy.

THEODATUS: A cunning liar, that boasts of pulling the wool

Over the eyes of the fat, innocent monks;

A man without truth, without shame. It is not respectable;

It is not right.

PRIOR: You must not say, without truth,

Lest you should hear the very stones cry out

Against you. Truth is glorious; but there is one

Glory of the sun, another of the moon,

And all the truth of the craftsman is in his craft.

Where there is truth, there is God; and where there is glory,

There is God's glory too.

THEODATUS (*sullenly*): Craft is the word.
 We could do better without William's craft
 In more ways than in one. I would rather have
 A worse-built church with a more virtuous
 builder.

PRIOR:
 Make God the loser for your conscience' sake?
 This is God's House, and if on any pretext
 We give him less than the best, we shall cheat
 God
 As William never cheated God, nor us.
 He that bestowed the skill and the desire
 To do great work is surely glad to see
 That skill used in His service.

THEODATUS: Skill is not all.
 The kingdom of Heaven is won by righteous-
 ness,
 Not skill. He cannot wish His work performed
 Save with clean hands and a pure heart.

PRIOR: My son,
 Will you not let God manage His own business?
 He was a carpenter, and knows His trade
 Better, perhaps, than we do, having had
 Some centuries of experience; nor will He,
 Like a bad workman, blame the tools where-
 with
 He builds His City of Zion here on earth.
 For God founded His Church, not upon John,
 The loved disciple, that lay so close to His heart
 And knew His mind—not upon John, but Peter;
 Peter the liar, Peter the coward, Peter
 The rock, the common man. John was all gold,
 And gold is rare; the work might wait while
 God
 Ransacked the corners of the earth to find
 Another John; but Peter is the stone
 Whereof the world is made. So stands the
 Church,
 Stone upon stone, and Christ the corner-stone
 Carved of the same stuff, common flesh and
 blood,

With you, and me, and Peter; and He can,
 Being the alchemist's stone, the stone of
 Solomon,
 Turn stone to gold, and purge the gold itself
 From dross, till all is gold.

THEODATUS: To purge—to burn!
 He makes His ministers a flaming fire—
 And are not we His ministers? Shall not we
 Lay axe to the rotten root, trunk, branch?
 destroy,
 Make bonfire of this scandal in the Church
 And burn God's honour clean?

PRIOR: God is a man,
 And can defend His honour, being full-grown
 In wisdom and in stature. We need not
 Play nursemaid to the Babe of Bethlehem
 To shield Him from the harlot and the thief,
 Or keep those tender, innocent hands from
 harm
 That bear the sharp nails' imprint, and uphold
 The axis of the spheres. He can touch dirt
 Without defilement, for Himself hath said,
 "What I have cleansed, that call not thou
 unclean."

THEODATUS:
 But while His laws are broken in our sight
 Must we stand by, and smile, and still do
 nothing?

PRIOR:
 Do your own work, while yet the daylight lasts.
 Look that it be well done; look not beyond it.
 I charge you, on your holy obedience,
 Set charity as a bridle on your tongue;
 Talk not of William's nor another's faults,
 Unless to God, Who hears but spreads no
 scandal.
 Of this be sure: who will not have the Gospel
 Shall have the Law; but in God's time, not
 ours.

(Enter SIMON by door, left, carrying small windlass.)

SIMON (*bursting irrepressibly into song*):
 Every bird had found her mate,
Hey, ho, nonny!
 They all came out by seven and eight,
Spring is the time for love!

(*He sets the windlass down, centre. Enter WILLIAM, right.*)

WILLIAM: You are merry, Simon. Is that the rope to rig the travelling cradle?

SIMON: Yes, sir.

WILLIAM: See that every inch of it is well tested before I go up. I'm not as young or as light as I was. Good morning, Father Prior. Ah! Father Theodatus, you are just the man I was looking for. Pray will you help Simon to test that rope? It is to hoist me up to the top of the great arch, and I have a value for my neck.

THEODATUS: Oh, by all means. (*Moving up, left.*)

WILLIAM: Simon is a good lad enough, but I would rather trust your vigilance. Young men's minds are apt to run astray.

(*During the following dialogue, THEODATUS takes the free end of the rope and begins to wind it off on to the windlass. SIMON stands by the drum, so that, as the rope is slowly wound off, they can both examine it for flaws. They occupy the stage from centre to left.*)

PRIOR: Young men are not alone in that, Master William. The talk of the town comes to our ears sometimes, dull-witted old churchmen though we be. It seems that even a master architect may find interests outside his work.

WILLIAM: Outside his working hours, Father Prior.

PRIOR: I quite appreciate that. My dear son, as your father in God I might find many things to say to you. . . .

WILLIAM: But as a man of the world you doubt whether I should listen. It is a rare virtue to refrain even from good words.

PRIOR: Then I will speak only as a man of the world and urge the value of discretion.

WILLIAM: Father Theodatus would say, of hypocrisy.

PRIOR: Father Theodatus is not your employer. The Church is your employer, and it is my duty to speak for the Church.

WILLIAM: Very well. As my *employer*, to use your own blunt term, what fault have you to find with my private amusements?

PRIOR: This; that instead of attending to their work, your workmen waste their time in gossip and backbiting about you. If you choose to be damned, you must; if you prefer to make a death-bed repentance, you may; but if an idle workman does an unsound job now, no repentance of yours will prevent it from bringing down the church some day or other.

WILLIAM (*after a pause*): You are quite right. I congratulate you. You have found the one argument to which I am bound to listen. Were you a diplomat before you were a churchman?

PRIOR: Perhaps. (*Exit, right.*)

WILLIAM (*looking after him*): Or a soldier. The old man's a hard hitter and knows where to plant his blows. (*He goes up, back, to overlook the work of WALTER and GEOFFREY, speaking to THEODATUS and SIMON as he goes*): Test it with the eye and the hand—don't trust to either alone.

MICHAEL:

Are there no fires in Heaven, that every man
With his own hand, upon the anvil of sin
Forges the sword of judgment? Gabriel,
Raphael,
There is a sword in the making; look you to it.

(RAPHAEL goes up and stands near THEODATUS, centre, and GABRIEL near SIMON, left.)

Y. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

R7. Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid.

Y. He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good;

R7. And sendeth rain upon the just and unjust.

(Enter URSULA, right.)

URSULA: William!

WILLIAM (turning quickly and coming to meet her): Ah! You have come at a very good moment.

(He leads her forward to the steps.)

SIMON (watching them with interest): Oho! look at that!

WILLIAM: We are just about to put in the key of the great arch.

THEODATUS: Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity!

WILLIAM: If you will stand here presently and watch, you will see me fly up to the top of the scaffold in a machine of my own devising—and down again, like blessed St. Paul in a basket!

THEODATUS (hastily reciting with averted eyes):

Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis;

Sancta Die genetrix, ora pro nobis;

Sancta Virgo virginum, ora pro nobis.

(RAPHAEL sets his censer gently swinging.)

URSULA: How amusing! I hope it is safe.

SIMON (over his shoulder to GEOFFREY): More headaches for Father Martin! He don't like these goings-on. Says they look bad, and shock influential patrons.

WILLIAM: Never fear for that. But, hark'ee—we're in disgrace with the Prior.

THEODATUS: Mater castissima, ora pro nobis;
 Mater inviolata, ora pro nobis;
 Mater intemerata, ora pro nobis.

URSULA: Oh! I ought not to have come.

WILLIAM: That was my fault. I asked you. I wanted you here.

GABRIEL: Take care, Simon! There is a flaw in the rope. (SIMON, *with his eyes on WILLIAM and URSULA, pays no attention.*)

SIMON (*sings:*)

The cat, the rat, the sow, the hen,
Hey, ho, nonny!
 They all came out by nine and ten,
Spring is the time for love!

(*The rope runs through his heedless fingers. GABRIEL makes a despairing gesture, and looks across at RAPHAEL. The scandalised THEODATUS continues to pray with his eyes tight shut.*)

THEODATUS: Virgo veneranda, ora pro nobis;
 Virgo praedicanda, ora pro nobis;
 Virgo potens, ora pro nobis.

URSULA: What does the Prior complain of?
 Scandal in the Cathedral?

WILLIAM: Something like that.

THEODATUS: Vas honorabile, ora pro nobis;
 Vas insigne devotionis, ora pro
 nobis;
 Rosa mystica, ora pro nobis.

RAPHAEL: Take care, Theodatus! There is a flaw in the rope.

THEODATUS: Turris Davidica, ora pro nobis;
 Turris eburnea, ora pro nobis;
 Domus aurea, ora pro nobis.

(RAPHAEL *flings away the censer, which rolls clanging down the steps. The rope, flaw and all, is wound off.*)

URSULA: At least he cannot say that you think more of me than of your work.

WILLIAM: No, he has not said that.

THEODATUS:

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, par-
nobis Domine;

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, exaudi
nos, Domine;

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere
nobis.

(The rope is now all wound off.)

URSULA: He will not take the work away from
you?

WILLIAM: He is too shrewd for that. Besides,
God would not let him: He has put me here
and will keep me here, Prior or no Prior.

WORKMAN (*putting his head in at the door, below*):
Master Hubert says, is that rope ready?

SIMON: Here you are, mate. (*He picks up the
windlass and takes it down to WORKMAN, who
carries it out.*)

URSULA: Do we presume too much upon God's
mercy?

WILLIAM:

We are the master-craftsmen, God and I—
We understand one another. None, as I can,
Can creep under the ribs of God, and feel
His heart beat through those Six Days of
Creation;

Enormous days of slowly turning lights
Streaking the yet unseasoned firmament;
Giant days, Titan days, yet all too short
To hold the joy of making. God caught His breath
To see the poles of the world stand up through
chaos;

And when He sent it forth, the great winds blew,
Carrying the clouds. And then He made the trees
For winds to rustle through—oak, poplar, cedar,
Hawthorn and elm, each with its separate
motion—

And with His delicate fingers painted the flowers,

Numberless—numberless! why make so many
 But that He loved the work, as I love mine,
 And saw that it was good, as I see mine?—
 The supple, swift mechanics of the serpent,
 The beautiful, furred beasts, and curious fish
 With golden eyes and quaintly-laced thin bones,
 And whales like mountains loud with spurting
 springs,
 Dragons and monsters in strange shapes, to
 make
 His angels laugh with Him; when He saw those
 God sang for joy, and formed the birds to sing.
 And lastly, since all Heaven was not enough
 To share that triumph, He made His master-
 piece,
 Man, that like God can call beauty from dust,
 Order from chaos, and create new worlds
 To praise their maker. Oh, but in making
 man
 God over-reached Himself and gave away
 His Godhead. He must now depend on man
 For what man's brain, creative and divine
 Can give Him. Man stands equal with Him
 now,
 Partner and rival. Say God needs a church,
 As here in Canterbury—and say He calls
 together
 By miracle stone, wood and metal, builds
 A church of sorts; *my* church He cannot make—
 Another, but not that. This church is mine
 And none but I, not even God, can build it.
 Me hath He made vice-gerent of Himself,
 And were I lost, something unique were lost
 Irreparably; my heart, my blood, my brain
 Are in the stone; God's crown of matchless
 works
 Is not complete without my stone, my jewel,
 Creation's nonpareil.

URSULA: Hush! God will hear you—
 The priests say He is jealous. Tempt Him not
 Lest He should smite and slay.

WILLIAM: He will not dare;
 He knows that I am indispensable
 To His work here; and for the work's sake, He,
 Cherishing, as good masons do, His tools,
 Will keep me safe. When the last stone is laid
 Then may He use me as He will; I care not;
 The work is all; when that is done, good night—
 My life till then is paramount with God.

URSULA:
 You make me shake to hear you. Blasphemy!
 blasphemy!

WILLIAM:
 Sound sense. Fear nothing. I must leave you now;
 The work waits for me, and that must not be;
 Idleness is the only sin. Like God
 I must be doing in my little world,
 Lest, lacking me, the moon and stars should fail.
 (*He goes out down the steps.*)

URSULA (*watching him go*):
 I am afraid; have mercy on him, Christ!

CASSIEL:
 Draw thy sword, Michael; the hour is come.
 (*MICHAEL follows WILLIAM out, with his sword
 drawn in his hand.*)

Y. Except the Lord build the house, their
 labour is but lost that build it.

R7. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman
 waketh but in vain.

Y. The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;
 and rebukes are fallen upon me.

R7. For Thou art great and doest wondrous
 things: Thou art God alone.

(*During the singing of these verses, the three remaining
 ANGELS stand side by side at the top of the steps,
 with URSULA below them. Now they go up and stand
 on the plinth at the back of the stage, RAPHAEL and
 GABRIEL to right and left, with CASSIEL centre.*)

CHOIR:
 The Lord is known to execute judgment; the
 ungodly is trapped in the work of his own hands.

For he hath said in his heart, Tush, I shall never be cast down; there shall no harm happen unto me.

The snares of death compassed me round about, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me.

I shall find trouble and heaviness, and I will call upon the name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul.

(The stage gradually fills with MONKS and WORKMEN; among them is a YOUNG BOY.)

MONKS AND WORKMEN: This is a brave day . . . the great arch finished . . . See, they are making ready to drop in the keystone . . . It is wonderful how well Master William's machines work—they have halved the labour of building . . . there's old Hubert—he'll be a proud man to-day . . . Laus Deo! our new choir will be ready for us within the year . . . There it goes! No, they're waiting for something . . . They're waiting for the architect . . . There he is, slung half-way up in the travelling cradle . . . Can't you see? Come on, lad, up on my shoulder . . . There's the keystone slung aloft on the crane . . . Hurray! Master William's up now—just getting to the top of the scaffolding . . . Get ready to cheer, boys. . . .

THE YOUNG BOY (*from his perch on the workman's shoulder, shrilly*): Oh, look! look at the angel—the terrible angel!

ALL: What's that? An angel? What? Where? Nonsense!

THE YOUNG BOY: High on the scaffold, with the drawn sword in his hand!

URSULA: Mother of God! (*She falls upon the steps.*)
(A shout from the stage is succeeded by a heavy crash without from the far end of the building. Men run in, right.)

ALL: He's fallen . . . Master William's down . . . He's killed . . . fifty feet at least . . .

His foot slipped . . . No, the rope broke . . .
 What's happened? . . . God have mercy on
 us! . . . Run for help! . . . Blessed Mary,
 pray for us! . . . Send for the Prior . . . Fetch
 a chirurgeon . . . The devil is abroad . . .
 No, it was an angel . . . Where's that boy who
 saw the angel? . . . Here, the lady's fainted—
 give us a hand here to carry her in . . . Come
 along, let's see what's happened . . .

(There is a general rush down the steps).

URSULA (*to the men who are supporting her*): Take
 me with you. (*But she is unable to stand.*) No—
 leave me! Run and bring me word.

*(They leave her crouched on the steps and run out.
 The three ANGELS come down and follow the crowd
 out. Nobody is left but THEODATUS, SIMON and
 URSULA.)*

SIMON: The rope! God forgive me—I was
 talking and laughing. Father Theodatus, what
 have we done?

THEODATUS: The rope! God is avenged. But
 I did not mean—I did not think—if it had not
 been for your lewd songs and his own behaviour
 with this woman—

URSULA: Could You not break me and not him,
 O God?

SIMON: We have killed him among us.

CHOIR:

Out of the deep have I called unto Thee. O
 Lord, hear my voice.

O let Thine ears consider well the voice of my
 complaint.

If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what
 is done amiss,

O Lord, who may abide it?

For there is mercy with Thee, therefore shalt
 thou be feared.

I look for the Lord, my soul doth wait for Him,
 in His word is my trust.

My soul fleeth unto the Lord; before the morning watch,

I say, before the morning watch.

O Israel, trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption;

And He shall redeem Israel from all his sins.

(During the singing of the psalm, the PRIOR has re-entered from the lower end, with HUBERT, GERVASE and the YOUNG BOY. They mount the steps.)

URSULA: Father! Father! In pity, tell me—is he dead?

PRIOR: No, my poor child. But sorely maimed.

HUBERT: He will never be the same man again.

URSULA: Let me go to him.

PRIOR: Presently. The leech is with him now, seeing to his hurts. Trust me, you shall see him presently. *(He goes on up steps and sits, right.)* Now, Hubert, I must know how all this came to pass.

HUBERT: My Lord Prior, there is no doubt at all. There was a flaw in the rope. Just as the cradle came up to the level of the scaffolding, bearing Master William, I saw with my eyes the strands spring asunder. I stretched out my hands to catch him, but I could not reach. If I could have done anything—anything! I would gladly have given my life.

GERVASE: So would I, Hubert.

PRIOR: I am sure you would.

HUBERT: Such a craftsman! such a craftsman! So kind a master! Just, zealous, generous—no fault in him at all.

GERVASE: So faithful a servant of the Church! Who will finish his work now? . . . He was my friend, too.

HUBERT: What I should like to know is—who had the testing o' that there rope?

SIMON (*flinging himself at the PRIOR's feet*): It was I—it was my neglect. I have no excuse. I shall never forgive myself.

URSULA: It was my fault. I was talking to William—distracting the attention of them all. This is a judgment for our sin—his and mine.

THEODATUS: True; it was a judgment. Ask this boy here. Did he not see the angel thrust him down?

PRIOR: Yes, child. What is this about an angel?

THE YOUNG BOY: It is true. I saw a great angel stand between heaven and earth—all in gold and scarlet, with a drawn sword. Oh, and he had great wings, too. He cut the rope and the cradle fell.

THEODATUS: There, you see! it was a divine judgment.

HUBERT: Divine judgment! The boy's dreaming. It was rank carelessness. Simon—who was at the other end of the rope when you tested it? (*SIMON looks round at THEODATUS, waiting for him to speak.*) Speak up, man! Who was it?

PRIOR: I was there, Theodatus.

THEODATUS: Well, it was I. But I had nothing to do with it. You heard what the child said. It was a miracle.

PRIOR: I think we sometimes make disasters, and then call them miraculous judgments. Did you at any moment take hand or eye from the rope while you were testing it?

THEODATUS: I cannot remember. (*Under the PRIOR's eye, he abandons this line of defence.*) She was there with William. For my soul's sake I could not look at them. I was saying my prayers. . . .

HUBERT: Sayin' your prayers! With the master's safety depending on you!

THEODATUS: God Himself laid the seal upon my eyes. I was His appointed instrument to overthrow the wicked man.

PRIOR:

Think what you say, my son. It is not for us
To ordain ourselves the ministers of vengeance;
For it must needs be that offences come,
But woe unto that man by whom the offence
Cometh; 'twere better he had not been born.

This is thy sin: thou hast betrayed the work;
Thou hast betrayed the Church; thou hast
betrayed

Christ, in the person of His fellow-man.

What was the prayer whercin thou offer'dst up
Thy brother's life?

THEODATUS: The Litany of the Virgin.

PRIOR:

Go to the church; repeat it once again,
Saying at every line: "This was the spear
With which I pierced the body of the Lord,"
Then come to me and ask for absolution.

THEODATUS:

I will obey.

(Exit THEODATUS, right.)

PRIOR: For you, my son and daughter,
You see how sin brings its own suffering;
Do not despair; God's mercy is very great.
(He rises.)

Thou that hast visions of angels, come with me.
I am an old man. Let me have thy shoulder.
So. Thou shalt tell me more about the angel.

(Exeunt PRIOR and YOUNG BOY, right.)

GERVASE *(helping URSULA to her feet)*: Madam,
pray do not weep so. He would be sorry to see it.
I loved him, too. Let us go together to visit him.

URSULA: And supposing he can never work
again? What comfort in this world for him?

And what forgiveness for any of us? (*Exeunt GERVASE and URSULA, right.*)

HUBERT: Well, Simon, you've made a nice mess of it. There, there, lad, I can see you're sorry. Don't 'ee lose heart, now. It's a bad business, but we must make the best of it.

SIMON: Oh, Hubert! (*Exeunt HUBERT and SIMON, right.*)

During the singing of the following hymn the ANGELS return and take up their places as at the beginning of the play.

CHOIR: Plebs angelica
phalanx et archangelica
principans turma, virtus
Uranica,
ac potestas
almiphona.

Dominantia
numina divinaque
subsellia, Cherubim
aetherea
ac Seraphim
ignicoma,

Vos, O Michael
caeli satrapa,
Gabrielque vera
dans verba nuntia,

Atque Raphael,
vitae vernula,
transferte nos inter
Paradisicolas.

IV

Six months have passed since the preceding scene. During the singing of the interlude, GERVASE, assisted by a LAY-BROTHER, is making up a couch in the centre of the stage. Enter, right, MARTIN, carrying a couple of large sheepskins.

MARTIN: They told me you wanted some extra coverings for Master William's bed.

GERVASE: Thank you, brother. Why, this is very kind! Surely these are the best fleeces.

MARTIN: They are usually kept for distinguished visitors. But Father Wulfram specially asked that you should have them. They will make Master William warm and comfortable—since he has taken this fancy for lying here.

GERVASE: We are in hopes he may sleep better close to his work. He is so restless. Day and night he thinks of nothing but the building, and frets to lie helpless and so far away. From here he can see the sun shine on the arches he has raised; and when he lies wakeful in the early dawn it will comfort him to hear the clink of the mason's trowel and the carver's hammer heralding in the day. (*The LAY-BROTHER sets a stool near the head of the couch, down-stage, and goes out, right.*)

MARTIN: Poor soul! Well, let us praise God for this warm and seasonable weather. Now that the summer is come, he will take no hurt from his change of lodging. (*The LAY-BROTHER returns with a jug of water, a horn drinking-vessel, and a candlestick, which he places on the stool.*)

GERVASE: May it refresh him, soul and body! But I fear he undertakes more than his strength

will bear. He has insisted to-day on being carried to view the progress of the roof over the Choir and Crosses. It is impossible to move him without causing severe pain—and then he gives orders and excites himself. Indeed, it is too much for him.

MARTIN (*with some hesitation*): I suppose nothing would induce him to resign the appointment?

GERVASE: Part him from his work? Oh, no! It would be more bitter to him than death. And where should we get another like him?
(*Exit LAY-BROTHER, right.*)

MARTIN: Well, I don't know. It is true he has done magnificent work. But frankly, dear brother, a sick man with a crippled spine cannot have his eyes here, there and everywhere, and during this half-year since his accident things have not gone quite so well.

GERVASE: You know why that is. Some of the brethren do not work so loyally for Brother Hubert as they did for him.

MARTIN: Isn't that natural? Hubert is an excellent craftsman, but, after all, he is only an oblate, and a man of no education. Now if Master William had appointed, let us say, Father Hilary——

GERVASE: Father Hilary does fine carving very prettily, but he's quite out of his depth when it comes to the practical side of building. Now, Brother Hubert understands his job inside out.

MARTIN: Of course, but—— Well, there you are! You can't deny that there has been a certain amount of ill-feeling.

GERVASE (*bitterly*): Jealousy, vanity, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness! And these are churchmen, vowed to holy obedience and humility.

MARTIN: *Beati pauperes spiritu. Beati mites.*

GERVASE: Amen! (*He examines the couch critically and gives a punch to the pillows. Re-enter LAY-BROTHER, right, with a crucifix in his hand and a large bundle of papers under his arm.*) Ah, thanks, Brother Robert. (*He sets the crucifix on the stool with the other things.*) Better put the papers on that other stool for the moment. (*LAY-BROTHER puts them on stool, right.*) There! I think that is the best we can do. (*Voices and footsteps off, right.*)

MARTIN: I think they are bringing our patient in now.

GERVASE: I hope he is not too much exhausted. (*Enter, right, WILLIAM, carried by THEODATUS and SIMON.*)

WILLIAM: Ugh! ugh! Gently, you fools, gently. Do you want to kill me? You've had one good shot at it. Jolt, jolt, like a couple of pack-asses. Clumsy idiots. (*They lay him on the couch, to a running accompaniment of groans and curses.*)

THEODATUS: I am sorry. Did I hurt you?

WILLIAM: Oh, no! Only jarred me to pieces, that's all.

GERVASE (*arranging pillows*): Is that a little easier? I'm afraid you have over-tired yourself. Are you in great pain?

WILLIAM: Oh, I daresay it'll be worse in Purgatory.

MARTIN (*pouring out water*): You have been out too long in the hot sun.

WILLIAM (*drinking*): Thanks. Sorry, Simon. Don't mind me, Father Theodatus. It's only bad temper. The Prior set you a hard penance when he appointed you beast of burden to a sick man. (*Exit LAY-BROTHER.*)

THEODATUS: No, indeed. There is nothing I would more gladly do. I deserve far more than that for the evil I did you.

WILLIAM: Oh, stop blaming yourself. What's done can't be helped. Blame God, or the devil, or whoever looks after these things. Where's Hubert? I want him here. Go and fetch Brother Hubert, for God's sake, somebody. (*Exeunt SIMON and THEODATUS, right.*) Why haven't my papers been brought down?

GERVASE (*bringing stool with papers and setting it by the couch up-stage.*): They are all here. I will put them handy for you.

MARTIN: Will you not rest a little first?

WILLIAM: No, I will not. Leave me alone, can't you? Gervase, find me the measurements for those corbels. They've got them all wrong, as I knew they would. (*Enter HUBERT, right.*) Just because I'm not there to stand over them all the time— Oh, Hubert, come and look at this. What did I tell you? I knew it was not my measurements that were wrong. Can't you remember anything you're told?

HUBERT: I am sure, sir, I gave Father Hilary the measurements exactly as you gave them to me. But he would have it as his own way was the right one, and he told the men under him—

WILLIAM: Father Hilary! Why should they pay any attention to Father Hilary? If I had the use of my limbs I'd give 'em something to remind them who's in charge here. But I have to lie helpless as a log while you make a mess of it among you. Never mind. Not your fault. Gervase, give me pen and ink—I'll show you how you can put it right. (*GERVASE fetches pen and ink from bench, left.*) Lift me up, somebody. (*MARTIN lifts him up.*) Ugh! Now, see here . . . I've got an idea about this. . . . (*He begins to draw on the plan, but is overcome by faintness.*)

HUBERT: Dear master, leave it until to-morrow.

WILLIAM: It looks as though I shall have to. All right, Hubert. Don't worry. We'll put it straight in the morning. (*GERVASE and MARTIN take away the drawing materials and settle him back on his pillows.*) Oh, God! Shall I never be able to do anything again? (*Enter LAY-BROTHER, right, with a bowl of soup and a trencher of bread.*)

MARTIN (*soothingly*): You work too hard. You have over-tired yourself. You will feel better when you have eaten. (*GERVASE takes the bowl and hands it to WILLIAM, and the LAY-BROTHER goes out.*) Come away now, Brother Hubert. He must be persuaded to rest. (*He bustles HUBERT away, right, then turns at the door as ERNULPHUS and PAUL pop their heads round it.*) Here are some visitors for you. (*Enter PAUL, carrying a bunch of roses and something done up in a cabbage leaf, and ERNULPHUS, obviously concealing some offering under his habit. Exeunt MARTIN and HUBERT.*)

ERNULPHUS: May we come in? Pax tecum, my son, pax tecum.

WILLIAM (*in a dispirited growl*): Et cum spiritu tuo.

ERNULPHUS: And how do you feel this evening?

WILLIAM (*with a wry face, but not unkindly*): Horrible!

ERNULPHUS: T—t—t—t—t!

PAUL: It's this dreadful hot weather. Very trying. I don't know when I remember such a trying June. I'm sure we never had such unwholesome heat when I was a boy. I was nearly melted away, working in the garden. And the greenfly gets worse every year. There never was such a year for greenfly. Everything smothered. Still, I've managed to find a few roses (*presenting them*), and see! A dozen or so

of the early strawberries. I thought you might like them for your supper.

WILLIAM (*genuinely touched*): That's very good of you, Father Paul. Are they the first?

PAUL: The very first. Nobody else has had any—not even the Father Prior. I hope you will find them sweet. Though I must say, fruit doesn't seem to have the flavour it had in my young days. Still, such as they are, there they are. (*He puts them on the stool, down-stage.*)

WILLIAM: I shall enjoy them immensely. I don't know anything more refreshing than early strawberries.

ERNULPHUS: Oho! don't you? I do. (*He produces a stout little flask from under his habit.*) Just you try this. A reviving cordial water from our own distillery. Not too fiery, and full of healthful properties. Made from herbs, according to our special recipe. (*Puts it on the stool.*)

WILLIAM: Thank you; thank you very much. I will drink it to the healths of both of you.

PAUL: Oh, but it is your own health we must all wish and pray for. We do pray for you, of course. Night and morning. And remember you at Mass. Eh, Father Ernulphus?

ERNULPHUS: Always, All of us. So you mustn't lose heart. Oh, dear, no. Now we had better run away, or we shall tire you out. Good night, my son. May God watch over and restore you!

PAUL: Our Lady and all the blessed saints have you in their keeping. (*PAUL and ERNULPHUS trundle amiably off, right.*)

WILLIAM: Good old souls! This is what I have come to, Gervase—to be nursed and coddled, and comforted like a child with strawberries. Ah, well. You can tuck me up for the night and leave me to my own hobgoblins.

GERVASE (*taking the supper things away and helping him to lie down*): To the holy Angels, rather. There! is that comfortable?

WILLIAM: Yes, thank you, my boy.

GERVASE (*with a little assumption of authority*): Do not forget your prayers.

WILLIAM: Very well, Father.

GERVASE: Benedicat te omnipotens Deus, Pater, et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus. Amen.

WILLIAM: Amen.

GERVASE (*going out, right*): Sleep in peace. Hubert and I will be at hand if you should need anything. (*Exit, left.*)

WILLIAM *pulls out a rosary, mechanically counts the first decade, then tosses it away impatiently.*

CHOIR: O lux beata trinitas,
Et principalis unitas,
Jam sol recedit igneus;
Infunde lumen cordibus.

RAPHAEL: Michael.

GABRIEL: Michael.

CASSIEL: Michael, thou watchman of the Lord! What of the night? Watchman, what of the night?

MICHAEL: The morning cometh, and also the night; if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come.

CHOIR: Te mane laudum carmine,
Te deprecamur vesperi,
Te nostra supplex gloria
Per cuncta laudet saecula.

(*Enter THEODATUS, right.*)

THEODATUS: Master William, there is one without would speak with you.

WILLIAM: Who?

THEODATUS: The Lady Ursula.

WILLIAM: What is the use of this? I will not see her. It is always the same story. She asks to be my wife, my nurse, my servant—Heaven knows what; to devote her life, make reparation and all the rest of it. She shall not do it. I will not have people sacrificing themselves for me. It is monstrous. It is impossible. Tell her so.

THEODATUS: She says she is here for the last time. She is very unhappy. I think you ought—I beseech you to let her come.

WILLIAM: That is a new tune for you to sing, Father Theodatus.

THEODATUS: I have learnt a little charity of late. Let me beg of you.

WILLIAM: Oh, very well. (THEODATUS *beckons in* URSULA *and goes out, right.*)

URSULA: William, I have come to say good-bye. I will not trouble you any more. Since I am nothing to you now, and the world without you is nothing to me, I can but take refuge at the Throne of Grace and pray for both of us.

WILLIAM: That is folly, my dear. You, in a convent of nuns! Go and be happy, and forget me.

URSULA: That is the one thing I cannot do. No other man shall have me, if not you.

WILLIAM: I am not a man, Ursula. I am a cripple with a broken back—a stock, a stone—I am nothing. A marriage-bond with me would be a bond indeed. Let the dead past bury its dead. Our dream is over.

URSULA: "Sitting by the fire, seeing pictures in the fire, visions and dreams"—do you remember?

WILLIAM: I have no dreams now—only nightmares. Nobody can bring back my dreams. Some of them even grudge me my work here—all that is left to me.

URSULA: I have broken what I cannot mend. William, tell me—had I at any time, even for a moment, any part in your dream?

WILLIAM: I hardly know. But once, high in a corner of the clerestory, where none but God will look for it, I carved an angel with your face.

URSULA: Ah, my dear! . . . And you will still have me go?

WILLIAM: Yes; go. I am sorry. Go. (URSULA goes without protest.) Father Theodatus! (THEODATUS looks in) Pray conduct the Lady Ursula to the convent gate and ask the Father Prior if he can come and see me.

THEODATUS: I will, my son. (Exit THEODATUS with URSULA, right.)

CHOIR:

My days are consumed away like smoke, and my bones are burnt up as it were a fire-brand. My heart is smitten down and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread.

For the voice of my groaning, my bones will scarce cleave to my flesh.

And that because of Thine indignation and wrath; for

Thou hast taken me up and cast me down.

(Enter PRIOR, right.)

PRIOR: You sent for me, my son?

WILLIAM: Yes. I scarcely know why, save that I am in hell and can see no way out.

PRIOR: Is there some sin troubling your conscience?

WILLIAM: All the sins there are—or most of them, any way. Not that they ever troubled

me till I was punished for them. But now— they rise up round me in the night and stifle me.

PRIOR: My son, will you not confess them and receive absolution?

WILLIAM: Confess? if I were to confess them all, you would be here till to-morrow. I cannot remember when I last made a confession.

PRIOR (*removing the papers from the stool up-stage and sitting down*): In general, then, my son, and as well as you can remember them, tell me your sins.

WILLIAM: I do confess to God
 The Father and the Son and Holy Ghost,
 To Mary Mother of God the ever-virgin,
 To the most holy Apostles Peter and Paul,
 To blessed Michael and all his angels
 And the whole company of Heaven, and thee,
 Father, that I have sinned exceedingly,
 In thought, in word, in action, by my fault,
 By my own fault, my own most grievous fault.
 I have lusted as men lust; I have eaten and
 drunk
 With the drunken; I have given way to wrath,
 Taking God's name in vain, cursing and
 smiting;
 I have been too much eager after gold
 And the brave things of the world, that take
 the eye
 And charm the flesh. Now, smitten in my flesh
 My sins have left me, and I see perforce
 How worthless they all were. I am sorry for
 them.
 Though yet I think I was not the worse crafts-
 man
 Because in me the lusty flesh rejoiced,
 Lending its joy to all I did. Some men,
 Fettering the body, fetter the soul, too,
 So that the iron eats inward; thereof come
 Cruelties, deceits, perversities of malice,

Strange twistings of the mind, defeats of spirit,
 Whereof I cannot with sincerity
 Accuse myself. But if it be a sin
 To make the flesh the pander to the mind,
 I have sinned deep. Of the means, not of the
 end,
 I heartily repent.

PRIOR: Son, they mistake
 Who think God hates those bodies which He
 made
 Freedom, not licence, must be given the body,
 For licence preys upon itself and others,
 Devouring freedom's gifts. Have others suffered
 Through lust, wrath, greed of yours?

WILLIAM: I do confess it,
 And ask their pardon and God's pardon for it
 Most humbly.

PRIOR: In this world as in God's heaven
 There is no power to match humility:
 It breaks the horns of the unicorns, and makes
 The wand of justice flower like Aaron's rod.
 Stoop to repent, and God will stoop to pardon.

WILLIAM: I do repent.

PRIOR: Indeed I hope thou dost.
 For all these injuries, see thou make amends
 So far as may be done; the irreparable
 God's grace shall turn to good, since only He
 Can lead out triumph from the gates of hell,
 As He hath done by thee, using thy faults
 To further His great ends, by His sole power,
 Not Thine.

WILLIAM: I understand. A year ago
 An idle mason let the chisel slip.
 Spoiling the saint he carved. I chid him for it,
 Then took the tool and in that careless stroke
 Saw a new vision, and so wrought it out
 Into a hippogriff. But yet the mason
 Was not the less to blame. So works with us
 The cunning craftsman, God.

PRIOR: Thou hast a mind
Apt to receive His meaning. But take heed:
The mind hath its own snares. What sins of
the mind
Trouble thee now?

WILLIAM: I do not know of any.

PRIOR:
I cannot read the heart; but I am old
And know how little one need fear the flesh
In comparison of the mind. Think, I beseech
thee,
If any sin lie yet upon thy conscience.

WILLIAM:
Father, I know of none.

PRIOR: The Tree of Life
Grew by the Tree of Knowledge; and when
Adam
Ate of the one, this doom was laid upon him
Never, but by self-knowledge, to taste life.
Pray now for grace, that thou may'st know and
live.

WILLIAM:
Wilt thou not give me present absolution?

PRIOR:
Of all thy fleshly faults, humbly confessed,
Truly repented, I do absolve thee now
In the name of the Father and of the Son and of
The Holy Ghost. Amen.

WILLIAM: Amen.

PRIOR: Good night;
Peace be with thee.

WILLIAM: And with thy spirit. Good night.
(*Exit* PRIOR. WILLIAM *tosses restlessly.*)

Ÿ. The ministers of God are sons of thunder,
they are falls of water, trampling of horses,
and running of chariots; and if the voices
of these ministers cannot overcome thy
music, thy security, yet the angels' trumpets
will. (*Distant trumpet.*)

CHOIR: Quantus tremor est futurus
 Quando iudex est venturus
 Cuncta stricte discussurus.

(GABRIEL goes up and stands behind WILLIAM.)

Tuba mirum spargens sonum
 Per sepulchra regionum
 Coget omnes ante thronum.

(MICHAEL goes up and stands with drawn sword before WILLIAM.)

Liber scriptus proferetur
 In quo totum continetur
 Unde mundus iudicetur.

(CASSIUS goes up and stands at the foot of WILLIAM'S bed, with the Book open before him.)

Quid sum miser tunc dicturus,
 Quem patronem rogaturus,
 Cum vix justus sit securus?

(RAPHAEL goes up and stands with his censer at the head of WILLIAM'S bed.)

WILLIAM:

Sleep! while these voices wail through aisle and
 cloister

Howling on judgment? Cannot Father Ambrose
 Keep his monks quiet—let a sick man rest?

I am confessed, absolved. Why think of judgment?

My soul is heavy even unto death,
 And something not myself moves in the dusk
 Fearfully. Lights! lights! lights!

GABRIEL (*laying his hand on WILLIAM'S eyes*):

Let there be light!

(WILLIAM becomes aware of the presence of the ANGELS.)

℣. Behold, the angel of the Lord, standing in
 the way, and his sword drawn in his hand.

℞. And he was afraid, because of the sword of
 the angel of the Lord.

℣. My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee, and I
 am afraid of Thy judgments.

R7. God is a righteous judge, strong and patient,
and God is provoked every day.

WILLIAM:

So—it is come; first death and then the judgment.
Thou standest there and holdest up the Book
Wherein my sins show black. But I am shriven.
Christ's blood hath washed me white. What then
art thou,
Threats in thy hand, and in thy face a threat
Sternier than steel and colder?

MICHAEL: I am Michael,
The sword of God. The edge is turned toward
thee:

Not for those sins whereof thou dost repent,
Lust, greed, wrath, avarice, the faults of flesh
Sloughed off with the flesh, but that which feeds
the soul,
The sin that is so much a part of thee
Thou know'st it not for sin.

WILLIAM: What sin is that?
Angel, what sins remain? I have envied no man,
Sought to rob no man of renown or merits,
Yea, praised all better workmen than myself
From an ungrudging heart. I have not been
slothful—

Thou canst not say I was. Lust, greed, wrath,
avarice,
None ever came between my work and me;
That I put first; never by nights of lust
Too spent to labour in the dawning day;
Never so drunken that I could not set
Level to stone or hold the plumb-line true;
Never so wroth as to confound my judgment
Between the man and the work, or call the one
Ill-done because I wished the other ill;
Never so grasping as to take reward
For what I did not, or despised to do.
If I neglected lip-service to God,
My hands served for me, and I wrought His praise
Not in light words puffed from a slumberous
mind

Like wind, but in enduring monuments,
Symbol and fruit of that which works, not sleeps.
Answer, me Angel, what have I ever done
Or left undone, that I may not repent
Nor God forgive?

MICHAEL: There where thy treasure is
Thy heart is also. Sin is of the heart.

WILLIAM:
But all my heart was in my work.

MICHAEL: Even so.

WILLIAM:
What, in my work? The sin was in my work?
Thou liest. Though thou speak with God's own
voice

Thou liest. In my work? That cannot be.
I grant the work not perfect; no man's work
Is perfect; but what hand and brain could do,
Such as God made them, that I did. Doth God
Demand the impossible? Then blame God, not
me,

That I am man, not God. He hath broken me,
Hath sought to snatch the work out of my
hand——

Wherefore? . . . O now, now I begin to see.
This was well said, He is a jealous God;
The work was not ill done—'twas done too well;
He will not have men creep so near His throne
To steal applause from Him. Is *this* my fault?
Why, this needs no repentance, and shall have
none.

Let Him destroy me, since He has the power
To slay the thing He envies—but while I have
breath

My work is mine; He shall not take it from me.

MICHAEL:
No; thou shalt lay it down of thine own will.

WILLIAM:
Never. Let Him heap on more torments yet——

MICHAEL:
He can heap none on thee, He hath not borne——

WILLIAM:

Let Him strike helpless hands as well as feet——

MICHAEL:

Whose Feet and Hands were helpless stricken
through——

WILLIAM:

Scourge me and smite me and make blind mine
eyes——

MICHAEL:

As He was blindfolded and scourged and
smitten——

WILLIAM:

Dry up my voice in my throat and make me
dumb——

MICHAEL:

As He was dumb and opened not His mouth——

WILLIAM:

Cramp me with pains——

MICHAEL:

As He was cramped
with pains,
Racked limb from limb upon the stubborn
Cross——

WILLIAM: Parch me with fever——

MICHAEL: He that cried, "I thirst"——

WILLIAM:

Wring out my blood and sweat——

MICHAEL: Whose sweat, like blood,
Watered the garden in Gethsemane——

WILLIAM:

For all that He can do I will not yield,
Nor leave to other men that which is mine,
To botch—to alter—turn to something else,
Not mine.

MICHAEL:

Thou wilt not? Yet God bore this too,
The last, the bitterest, worst humiliation,
Bowing His neck under the galling yoke
Frustrate, defeated, half His life unlive,
Nothing achieved.

WILLIAM: Could God, being God, do this?

MICHAEL:

Christ, being man, did this; but still through
faith

Knew what He did. As gold and diamond
Weighed in the chemist's balance, are but earth
Like tin or iron, albeit within them still
The purchase of the world lie implicit:
So, when God came to test of mortal time
In nature of a man whom time supplants,
He made no reservation of Himself
Nor of the godlike stamp that franked His gold,
But in good time let time supplant Him too.
The earth was rent, the sun's face turned to
blood,

But He, unshaken, with exultant voice
Cried, "It is finished!" and gave up the ghost.
"Finished"—when men had thought it scarce
begun.

Then His disciples with blind faces mourned,
Weeping: "We trusted that He should redeem
Israel; but now we know not." What said He
Behind the shut doors in Jerusalem,
At Emmaus, and in the bitter dawn
By Galilee? "I go; but feed My sheep;
For Me the Sabbath at the long week's close—
For you the task, for you the tongues of fire."
Thus shalt thou know the Master Architect,
Who plans so well, He may depart and leave
The work to others. Art thou more than God?
Not God Himself was indispensable,
For lo! God died—and still His work goes on.

Ÿ. Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest
it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the
Son of God, come down from the cross.

R7. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to
My Father, and He shall presently give Me
more than twelve legions of angels? But how
then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that
thus it must be?

RAPHAEL:

Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.

WILLIAM:

Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.

CHOIR: Faithful Cross, above all other
 One and only noble Tree,
 None in foliage, none in blossom,
 None in fruit thy peer may be;
 Sweetest wood and sweetest iron,
 Sweetest weight is hung on thee.

WILLIAM:

O, I have sinned. The eldest sin of all,
 Pride, that struck down the morning star from
 Heaven
 Hath struck down me from where I sat and shone
 Smiling on my new world. All other sins
 God will forgive but that. I am damned, damned
 Justly. Yet, O most just and merciful God,
 Hear me but once, Thou that didst make the
 world
 And wilt not let one thing that Thou hast made,
 No, not one sparrow, perish without Thy Will
 (Since what we make, we love)—for that love's
 sake
 Smite only me and spare my handiwork.
 Jesu, the carpenter's Son, the Master-BUILDER,
 Architect, poet, maker—by those hands
 That Thine own nails have wounded—by the
 wood
 Whence Thou didst carve Thy Cross—let not
 the Church
 Be lost through me. Let me lie deep in hell,
 Death gnaw upon me, purge my bones with fire,
 But let my work, all that was good in me,
 All that was God, stand up and live and grow.
 The work is sound, Lord God, no rottenness
 there—
 Only in me. Wipe out my name from men
 But not my work; to other men the glory
 And to Thy Name alone. But if to the damned

Be any mercy at all, O send Thy spirit
 To blow apart the sundering flames, that I
 After a thousand years of hell, may catch
 One glimpse, one only, of the Church of Christ,
 The perfect work, finished, though not by me.

∇. Save me from the lion's mouth; Thou hast
 heard me also from among the horns of the
 unicorns.

R7. For why? Thou shalt not leave my soul in
 hell, neither shalt Thou suffer Thine holy
 one to see corruption. (*Trumpet.*)

CASSIEL:

Sheathe thy sword, Michael; the fight is won

RAPHAEL:

Close the book, Cassiel; the score is paid.

GABRIEL:

Give glory, Raphael; the race is run.

MICHAEL:

Lead homeward, Gabriel, the sheep that strayed.

ALL:

Eloi, Eloi, Eloi,

Glory to God in the highest; holy is He!

MICHAEL:

How hardly shall the rich man enter in
 To the Kingdom of Heaven! By what sharp,
 thorny ways,
 By what strait gate at last! But when he is come,
 The angelic trumpets split their golden throats
 Triumphant, to the stars singing together
 And all the sons of God shouting for joy.
 Be comforted, thou that wast rich in gifts;
 For thou art broken on the self-same rack
 That broke the richest Prince of all the world,
 The Master-man. Thou shalt not surely die,
 Save as He died; nor suffer, save with Him;
 Nor lie in hell, for He hath conquered hell
 And flung the gates wide open. They that bear
 The cross with Him, with Him shall wear a
 crown.

Such as the angels know not. Then be still,
And know that He is God, and God alone.

∇. Who suffered for our salvation; descended
into hell, rose again the third day from the
dead.

R7. He ascended into Heaven, He sitteth on
the right hand of the Father, God Almighty;
from whence He shall come to judge the
quick and the dead.

CHOIR:

Eloi, Eloi, Eloi,
Glory to God in the highest; holy is He!
*(While this is sung, the ANGELS go up and stand side
by side across the stage behind the couch.)*

WILLIAM: I shall not die but live, and declare
the works of the Lord. Who is there? I was
dreaming. Gervase! Hubert! *(GERVASE and
HUBERT run in, left and right.)*

GERVASE: William?

HUBERT: Dear master?

WILLIAM: God hath changed my mind.
I must submit. I must go back to France.
I do but hinder the work, lingering here,
Kicking against the pricks.

GERVASE: Do not say so!

HUBERT:
What should we do without you?

WILLIAM: I am not
The only architect in the world—there are others
Will do the work as well, better perhaps.
Stay not to chide me—listen, there is one,
William the Englishman, a little man,
But with a mounting spirit and great vision;
Send now for him. I think we quarrelled once,
Not seeing eye to eye—but that is nothing;
He will respect my work as I do his,
And build a harmony of his and mine
To a nobler close than mine. I'll not dictate

Conditions to the Chapter; but, should they
choose

William the Englishman to follow me,
He'll do such work for them as honours God
And them and all good craftsmen. As for me,
My place is here no more. I am in God's hand.
Take me and bear me hence.

HUBERT: Dear master, whither?

WILLIAM:

To the Lady Ursula's lodging. If unto her
I can make any amends, then I will make it.
To all of you, I owe a debt of love
Which I will pay with love. Only to God,
That royal creditor, no debt remains.
He from the treasure of His great heart hath
paid
The whole sum due, and cancelled out the bond.

GERVASE: Laus Deo! (GERVASE and HUBERT
carry WILLIAM out, right.)

CHOIR: O quanta qualia sunt illa sabbata,
Quae semper celebrat superna curia,
Quae fessis requies, quae merces fortibus,
Cum erit omnia Deus in omnibus.

Vere Jerusalem illic est civitas,
Cujus pax jugis est summa jucunditas,
Ubi non praevenit rem desiderium,
Nec desiderio minus est praemium.

Illic ex sabbato succedit sabbatum,
Perpes laetitia sabbatizantium,
Nec ineffabiles cessabunt jubili,
Quos decantabimus et nos et angeli.

(MICHAEL comes down to the foot of the steps and
addresses the congregation; the other three ANGELS
standing above him.)

MICHAEL:

Children of men, lift up your hearts.
Laud and magnify God, the everlasting Wisdom,
the holy, undivided and adorable Trinity.

Praise Him that He hath made man in His own image, a maker and craftsman like Himself, a little mirror of His triune majesty.

For every work of creation is threefold, an earthly trinity to match the heavenly.

First: there is the Creative Idea; passionless, timeless, beholding the whole work complete at once, the end in the beginning; and this is the image of the Father.

Second: there is the Creative Energy, begotten of that Idea, working in time from the beginning to the end, with sweat and passion, being incarnate in the bonds of matter; and this is the image of the Word.

Third: there is the Creative Power, the meaning of the work and its response in the lively soul; and this is the image of the indwelling Spirit.

And these three are one, each equally in itself the whole work, whereof none can exist without other; and this is the image of the Trinity.

Look then upon this Cathedral Church of Christ: imagined by men's minds, built by the labour of men's hands, working with power upon the souls of men; symbol of the everlasting Trinity, the visible temple of God.

As you would honour Christ, so honour His Church; nor suffer this temple of His Body to know decay.

FINIS

GOLDEN BOY

GOLDEN BOY

A Play in Three Acts

by

Clifford Odets

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For
LUISE,
ARTIST, WIFE, BEST FRIEND!

This play was first produced at the St. James's Theatre on June 21st, 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 diverse 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' 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' 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' hero is literally taken over by a whole ring of exploiters: agents, managers, merchants and middle-men 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 analyze 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

fighths, 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 today 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' 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' talent is greater than that of any young playwright in America today, 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	EDDIE FUSELI
LORNA MOON	PEPPER WHITE
JOE BONAPARTE	MICKEY
TOKIO	CALL BOY
MR. CARP	SAM
SIGGIE	LEWIS
MR. BONAPARTE	DRAKE
ANNA	DRISCOLL
FRANK BONAPARTE	BARKER
ROXY GOTTLIEB	

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 tonight.

(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 tonight, 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 tonight. 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 pop-corn? I'd even take a bantamweight, if I found one.

LORNA: How about a nice lady fighter with a beard—(*Preparing to leave*) Well, I'll see you tonight, 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 tonight?

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—everyone 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.)

JOE: 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*): Hello. . . . "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, Bonaparte. (*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 Fadeout

ACT I

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 I 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 taxicab 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 taxicab 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 taxicab.

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: Tomorrow'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 expects 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 backyards?

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 bare-footed.

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 now-a-days—

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 tonight. (*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's a 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's a 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's a 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 love 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's a bad. No, life's a good. Siggie and Anna fight—good! They love—good! You say life's a 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, simble, intelligent, observant.*)

MR. BONAPARTE: Hello, Frank.

FRANK: Hello, 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 tomorrow—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 Joie, 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 tomorrow 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*): Tomorrow'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 tonight I'm good—I went out to earn some money and I earned! I had a professional fight tonight—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? Tomorrow'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 tonight. (*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 are 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 Fadeout

ACT I

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 prizefight ring the cash customer don't look for stoddents. 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 mamma 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's a 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 help a 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's a no good for Joe. Joe like-a to be fame, not feel ashamed. . . .

TOKIO: Is Joe afraid of his hands?

MR. BONAPARTE: I don't know. You tella me what's a 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's a 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.*)

MOODY: 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: Hello? . . . 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

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: Tonight 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 arms 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 tomorrow 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 tomorrow 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*): Hello? . . . (*Putting her hand on the mouthpiece*) It's Mrs. 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 tomorrow?

LORNA: I'll make him fight.

MOODY: How?

LORNA: How? . . . I'm "a tramp from Newark," Tom. . . . I know a dozen ways. . . .

Slow Fadeout

ACT I

SCENE IV

A few nights later.

JOE and LORNA sit on a bench in the park. It is night. There is carousel 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 carousel, 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 . . . whizz, whizz. (*Now turning less casual.*) Where's Mr. Moody tonight?

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 today. 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 today. 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 tonight, 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*)

Fadeout.

ACT I

SCENE V

The next week.

It is near midnight in the dining room of the Bonaparte home. An open suitcase 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 suitcase.)

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 Eytalian 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.*)

LORNA (*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 suitcase.*) 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 suitcase.*)

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 killed 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 prizefight? (*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 wine glass 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: Hello. (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 suitcase 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 placed 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 tomorrow. 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 suitcase 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.*)

CARP (*Sadly*): Yes, my friend, what is man? As Schopenhauer says and in the last analysis . . .

Slow Fadeout

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 knockout 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.*)

MOODY: 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, hahaha . . . (*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*): Hello.

ROXY (*Nervously*): Hello, 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 Deussenberg.

MOODY: One of those fancy speed wagons?

TOKIO (*Agreeing*): It cost him five grand, second-hand.

MOODY (*Flaring up*): Am I a step-child 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.*)

MOODY: 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 bathrobe, taking off his headgear, 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 tomorrow?

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.)

MOODY: 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 Deussenberg. (*The others silently watch JOE exit.*)

EDDIE: A date with who?

MOODY (*Snorting*): Miss Deussenberg!

ROXY: An automobile. It gives you an idea what a boy—"Miss Deussenberg"!

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 tomorrow. (*The bell clangs off stage. EDDIE starts off, but abruptly turns and faces ROXY whom he inwardly terrifies.*)

EDDIE: 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's 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 tomorrow! 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 grab 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.*)

MOODY: 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 Fadeout.

ACT II

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 anyone 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.*)

LORNA (*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.*)

LORNA (*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 tonight.

JOE: Swiftly, do it swiftly ---

LORNA: Not tonight.

JOE: Everything's easy if you do it swiftly.

LORNA: He went up there tonight 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 tomorrow. 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 Fadeout.

ACT II

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 today! They meet six weeks from tonight.

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: Hello, Miss Moon.

LORNA: Hello. You know Mr. Moody.

SIGGIE (*To MOODY*): Hello.

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: Hello.

EDDIE (*Sardonically*): Hello, Partner. . . .
(*LORNA is silent and avoids JOE's looks.*)

JOE: How about that fight with Lombardo?

MOODY: Six weeks from tonight.

JOE: He's gonna be surprised.

MOODY (*Coolly*): No one doubts it.

JOE (*Sharply*): I didn't say it was doubted!

MOODY: Boy, everyone's off his feed today. 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: Haha—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 or 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 Fadeout

ACT II

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 books 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 newspapermen.

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 fathel.

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 tonight——

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 gun powder! (*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*) Good-bye, 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.*)

PEPPER: 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.*)

PEPPER (*Indignantly*): Who told girls to come in here?

LORNA: Modest? Close your eyes. Is Moody . . . ? (*Suddenly seeing MR. BONAPARTE*) Hello, Mr. Bonaparte!

MR. BONAPARTE (*Glad to see a familiar face*): Hello, hello, 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 bathrobe is thrown around his shoulders.*)

JOE: Hello, poppa. . . .

MR. BONAPARTE: Hello, 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 student—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's a matter? Cowboys and Indians? (*To PEPPER*) Out! (*MICKEY and PEPPER sullenly exit.*)

EDDIE (*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 tonight, 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.*)

EDDIE: Lay down, Joe—take it easy. (JOE sits on a table.)

EDDIE: 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 . . . is'a 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. . . . (*Suddenly 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.*)

TOKIO (*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.)

JOE: 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 bathrobe around him and prances on his toes.)

JOE: I'm a new boy tonight! I could take two Lombardos! (Vigorously shaking out his bandaged hands above his head.) Hallelujah! We're on the Millionaire Express tonight! 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.)

PEPPER: 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—instead a 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 tonight, don't I?

MICKEY: Nope.

PEPPER (*Up like a shot*): How much? How much tonight?

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's-a win? Is terrible to see!

PEPPER (*Grinning*): If I wasn't in a hurry, I'd wait around to help pick up your little Joie'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 thees-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.*)

MR. BONAPARTE: What'sa happen in the fight?

SAM: Knockout.

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 knockout.*)

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.*)

ROXY: 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.*)

ROXY: 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*) Haha! How do you like it, Eddie? Haha! (*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.*)

JOE: 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 Fadeout

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 newspaperman for twenty years*): Except himself!

MOODY: You newspaper boys are right.

DRAKE: We newspaper boys are always right!

MOODY: He won't take chances tomorrow 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 tomorrow 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 knockouts? Fulton, Lombardo, Guffey Talbot——?

JOE: Phil Weiner . . .

MOODY: Weiner?

ROXY: That's no powderpuff hitter!

LEWIS: In this fight tomorrow 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 prizefighting 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 tomorrow.

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 tonight. 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 w 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 tomorrow. . . .

LORNA: Sunday. . . .

JOE: Sunday. (*Intense silence.*)

LORNA (*To say anything*): I'm looking for the scissors. . . .

JOE: Who're you cutting up today?

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 anyone 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 today!

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 headgear. 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's a 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 (*Dialing the telephone*): You wanna go to the Scandals tonight? I got tickets. (*Into the telephone.*) Charley? Fuseli is speaking. . . . I'm giving four to five on Bonaparte tomorrow. . . . Four G's worth. . . . Yes. (*Hanging up the phone.*) It's gonna be a good fight tomorrow.

JOE (*Belligerently*): How do you know?

EDDIE: I know Bonaparte. I got eighteen thousand spread out on him tomorrow 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 tomorrow 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 tomorrow. . . . Two? . . . Yeah. . . . (About to exit, JOE stands at the door and watches EDDIE as he calmly begins to dial the phone again.)

Medium Fadeout

ACT III

SCENE II

The next night.

The lights fade in on an empty stage. We are in the same dressing room as seen in Act Two. 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 tomorrow. . . .

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.*)

EDDIE (*Listening intently*): He's like a bum tonight . . . 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-iles! He gave you his hand—you spit in his face! You led him on like Gertie's whoore! 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! Haha! The next thing I know the Chocolate's on the floor, the referee lifts our arm, we got on our bathrobe 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, pushed 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, tonight, 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: Tonight!

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: Tonight? Joe, we ride in your car. We speed through the night, across the part, 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 Fadeout

ACT III

SCENE III

Late the same night.

In the Bonaparte home sit EDDIE FUSELI, MOODY, ROXY and SIGGIE, drinking homemade 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? Hello! . . .
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 phones.*) Hello? . . . 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 wine glass; 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's a kill a man to-night—what's a celebrate? What's a 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 tonight.

MOODY: Don't worry, Mr. Bonaparte. Looka me—take a lesson from me—I'm not worried. I'm getting married tomorrow—*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 tonight 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 tonight I own the rest.

MOODY: Oh, no! No, sir-ee!!

EDDIE: You're drunk tonight! Tomorrow!

MR. BONAPARTE (*Coming forward*): Maybe Joe don't gonna fight no more, after tonight. . . .

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 anyone 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 tonight 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.*) Hello? . . . 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-ahim home . . .where
he belong. . . .

Slow Fadeout

TO LOVE AND TO CHERISH

TO LOVE
AND TO CHERISH

A Play in Three Acts

by

Michael Egan

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*Permission for performance by amateur and professional
actors must be obtained from the London Playgoers'
Club, Ltd, Cecil Chambers, 76 Strand, London, W.C.2*

CHARACTERS

(in the order of their appearance)

ANNIE, the maid

HELEN FAIRLEY

THE REVEREND MARK FAIRLEY

PRUDENCE FAIRLEY

SUSAN STANLEY

DAVE MANFORD

THE VERY REVEREND DEAN MURRAY, D.D.

LOUISE

ACT I

A morning in early Spring

ACT II

Two days later. Afternoon

ACT III

The next morning

First produced by the L.P.C. Sunday Play Society at the St. Martin's Theatre on Sunday December 11th, with the following cast:—

<i>Annie, a maid</i>	NELLIE BOWMAN
<i>Helen Fairley</i>	JOYCE BLAND
<i>The Rev. Mark Fairley</i>	LAIMAN BROWNE
<i>Prudence Fairley</i>	MARY JONES
<i>Susan Townsend</i>	HELEN HORSEY
<i>Dave Manford</i>	NORMAN WOOLAND
<i>The Very Rev. Dean Murray</i>	CECIL TROUNCER
<i>Louise</i>	NAITA MOORE

First West End production, at the Kingsway Theatre, on Tuesday, February 21st, with the following cast:—

<i>Annie, a maid</i>	NELLIE BOWMAN
<i>Helen Fairley</i>	LYDIA SHERWOOD
<i>The Rev. Mark Fairley</i>	LAIMAN BROWNE
<i>Prudence Fairley</i>	MARY JONES
<i>Susan Townsend</i>	HELEN HORSEY
<i>Dave Manford</i>	ROBERT BEATTY
<i>The Very Rev. Dean Murray</i>	JULIAN D'ALBIE
<i>Louise</i>	NAITA MOORE

Both productions directed by HENRY CASS.

ACT I

SCENE: *The living-room of the Vicarage attached to the Church of St. John, in Midenhurst, a small town in the Midlands.*

A pleasant, restful room with a single door up R., leading to the hall, in which the stairs can be seen when the door is open. Down R. a fireplace with couch at right angles, and armchair below. Down L, a semi-circular bay window, with cushioned seat running round it. Near this, a table with two chairs, one an old-fashioned upright armchair. Up L, a desk against the wall with a similar armchair.

TIME: *Today. A morning in early Spring.*

AT RISE: HELEN FAIRLEY *is sitting on the couch, sewing rings on a rather hilarious cretonne curtain. She is the Vicar's eldest daughter, aged 28. Beside her, sewing rings on a similar curtain, is ANNIE, an old retainer, maid-of-all-work, plump and matronly, aged about 50.*

ANNIE: Seems to me, Miss Helen, as these are going to be too long for that bathroom window.

HELEN: Well, we can cut them.

ANNIE: Speaking for meself, I don't see what was wrong with the old curtains. These new cretonne things—

HELEN: Annie, do please make up your mind to tolerate these new cretonne things. If father *will* buy curtains at the bazaar—especially from Miss Cunningham—we've simply got to make the best of them. Anyhow the bathroom is at the back of the house.

ANNIE: How he listens to half that Miss Cunningham says fair beats me.

HELEN: You ought to try *not* listening to Miss Cunningham sometime—specially at a bazaar.

ANNIE (*darkly*): I know what's wrong with *her*.

HELEN: What?

ANNIE: A man, that's what *she* wants.

HELEN: Annie!

ANNIE: Oh, I didn't mean it that way, miss! What I mean is, she mightn't be so smart at meddling in other bodies' business if she had somebody of her own to be a misery to.

HELEN (*absent-mindedly, re-threading her needle*): Whose business has she been meddling in now?

ANNIE: Well, perhaps I oughtn't to say.

HELEN: Which means, of course, you're bursting to say it.

ANNIE (*bursting*): Well, that I am, Miss Helen! For I think he ought to know.

HELEN: *Who* ought to know?

ANNIE (*hesitates*): The vicar.

HELEN: Don't worry, Annie; if there's any gossip going, father will hear it himself, sooner or later.

ANNIE: Not *this*, he won't. It's about *him*. I heard it from Letty, her maid.

HELEN (*puzzled*): Are you trying to tell me that Miss Cunningham has been gossiping about father?

ANNIE: Who doesn't she gossip about?

HELEN: But what on earth could she find to say about father?

ANNIE (*with an effort*): She's said he's—losing his religion.

HELEN: She said *what*?

ANNIE: I'm only telling you what Letty heard, miss. It seems Miss Cunningham thinks your father is weakening on divorce.

HELEN: What rubbish! You shouldn't listen to such gossip, Annie. Father is as much against divorce as ever he was.

ANNIE: Well, that's what *I* said, miss. But it seems Miss Cunningham said he *couldn't* be, else why did he allow Miss Prudence to go about so open-like with Mr. Sinclair, and him only just out of the divorce courts, you might say?

HELEN (*arrested*): But—that's all over. Prudence is *not* going about with Mr. Sinclair now. She promised father a fortnight ago.

ANNIE: Well, I'm only saying what I heard, Miss Helen.

HELEN: Then what you heard was just stupid gossip. (*But she doesn't look too convinced of that herself.*)

[*The REVEREND MARK FAIRLEY enters. He is a tall, spare man of about 55, with white hair, lined features, and a rather vague, kindly manner. This latter, however, does not conceal the force of his deep inner spirituality, which is revealed chiefly by a curiously detached, yet penetrating, look in his eyes. As the father of a family of three girls, his intense spirituality is softened, as it were, by his humanity and a streak of whimsical humour. When he enters now, with a sheet of blue notepaper in his hand, there is a serious, rather worried look about him.*]

FAIRLEY Ah, Helen—I'd like a word with you. I've just had this letter—sent round by hand, from Miss Cunningham.

[ANNIE *sniffs disdainfully, and shoots a significant look at HELEN.*]

Oh, Annie—perhaps you'd like to be doing my study now?

ANNIE: Yes, sir. (*Puts down curtain and rises.*)

FAIRLEY (*to HELEN*): Where is Prudence?

HELEN: Clearing up at the bazaar; getting the things we lent.

FAIRLEY (*waits until ANNIE closes door behind her*): Tell me, my dear—so far as you know, have you ever seen Prudence the worse for drink?

HELEN: Drink!

FAIRLEY: I know, it does sound unbelievable. But as Miss Cunningham says here, it's difficult to think of any other explanation of her conduct.

HELEN: What conduct?

FAIRLEY: At the dance last night. It's a pity you didn't go, you might have had a restraining influence.

HELEN: What happened?

FAIRLEY: Apparently this man Sinclair turned up, "reeling drunk, as usual," she says—and—(*refers to letter in his hand*) "in the middle of the floor, with all eyes upon her, Prudence threw her arms around him and kissed him in the most disgracefully wanton manner."

[HELEN *looks incredulous.*]

Even allowing for the possibility of exaggeration—

HELEN: You can certainly allow for that.

FAIRLEY: She says the whole town is already talking about it.

HELEN: If it isn't she'll soon see that it is.

FAIRLEY: We mustn't be uncharitable, my dear. Whatever motive she may have in telling us, she has at least warned us in good time.

HELEN: I expect the truth is just that Prue was a bit excited at meeting him again, and she probably let him kiss her good night when she was leaving.

FAIRLEY: I don't see how that helps matters.

HELEN: Well, at least it would mean that she wasn't being "disgracefully wanton".

[PRUDENCE enters, carrying a large cardboard box tied with string, which she dumps on the table. She is a pretty girl of 19, rather pale; serious and reserved in her manner. She has inherited a good deal of her father's spiritual nature, and under her quiet manner is an unexpectedly strong will.

PRUDENCE: That's the last of our stuff, Helen: all except our nice apostle tea spoons. That silly Mrs. Bolton has them; someone packed them in her box by mistake and she's taken them home. I'll fetch them sometime; not now, I'm too fagged. Father, how *could* you buy such ghastly curtains?

HELEN: Nonsense, they're very nice curtains.

PRUDENCE: To think that every time we go in the bathroom we'll be reminded of that wretched Cunningface! (Flops into a chair.) Pooh! I'm tired. *I'll* sit the other way round in the bath in future.

FAIRLEY: You didn't have much sleep last night?

PRUDENCE: Not nearly enough. Six hours.

FAIRLEY: From which I gather you got home about two this morning?

PRUDENCE: Yes— (Catches a warning glance from HELEN, and sits up.) Oh, no, before then, father.

FAIRLEY: The dance, I understand, was to end at midnight?

[*He is standing with his hands behind his back, concealing the letter. PRUDENCE senses something ominous about his manner, and another glance from HELEN puts her sharply on her guard.*

PRUDENCE: It didn't, though. People hung around for ages after.

Hi

FAIRLEY: I see. (*Refers to the letter.*)

PRUDENCE (*starts and rises*): I know that note-paper. And you needn't read the letter. I can guess what's in it.

FAIRLEY: And what have you to say about it?

PRUDENCE (*hesitates*): Nothing.

HELEN: You'd better say something, darling. She's exaggerated horribly. She says you flung your arms around Mr. Sinclair in public and kissed him.

PRUDENCE: So I did—twice. I mean, kissed him twice. I was afraid she didn't see it the first time.

[*Her father looks at her incredulously, and, as always when he is hurt or shocked, his face takes on a grim look.*]

FAIRLEY: Then—are we to understand that she is also correct in saying you were—intoxicated?

PRUDENCE (*hesitates again*): I was—but not in the way *she* means. I was excited.

FAIRLEY: At meeting this man again unexpectedly?

PRUDENCE (*hesitates once more*): It wasn't unexpected.

HELEN (*rather sharply*): Oh, Prue, for goodness sake stop trying to make it all sound worse than it is! Do tell us *why* you behaved so stupidly.

PRUDENCE (*coldly*): You needn't put on your big sister voice. It wasn't unexpected, father, because I *arranged* to meet him there. I've met him twice, secretly, since I promised you I wouldn't see him again. I only promised because—I didn't want to hurt you. I hated having to go behind your back—honestly, father!

FAIRLEY: I'm very disappointed, Prudence. Is that all you have to say?

PRUDENCE: Then, last night at the dance, the Cunningface tracked us all over the place. Every time I turned my head, I saw her piggy little eyes on us—pointing us out to people—it made me *furious!* But I was happy too—excited—and the two feelings got mixed up together suddenly and made me do it.

FAIRLEY: You haven't yet told us the cause of your excitement.

PRUDENCE (*not looking at him*): Jack and I—we love each other.

[*Now that he has heard the worst, the Vicar's manner changes subtly. It is as if he no longer sees her as his erring daughter, but impersonally almost, as a soul to be saved.*]

FAIRLEY (*kindly*): You realise what you're saying, Prudence?

PRUDENCE: Yes, father.

FAIRLEY: You say you love this man who—this notorious drunkard—who has been divorced?

PRUDENCE: I've told you before, he *wasn't* divorced. *He* divorced his *wife*, when she ran away with another man. And he's *not* a drunkard.

HELEN: Oh, Prue, the whole town knows what he is.

PRUDENCE (*hotly*): The whole town doesn't know! The whole town only knows the gossip that's spread about him!

HELEN: You forget *I* happened to know his *wife*. And I remember some of the things she told me about the way he ill-treated her in his drunken moods.

PRUDENCE: Yes, and you believed her! Well, I believe *him*. I admit he drinks too much. He

admits it himself. And he hates himself for it. (*Rather shyly.*) But he says he could give it up—for me. He says I'm the only woman who can help him to conquer it.

FAIRLEY (*smiles*): Ah—there speaks the real Prudence—with the heart of gold! I begin to understand. You want to help him to reform, to overcome his weakness.

PRUDENCE (*quickly*): It isn't only that. I love him too.

HELEN: He used to promise his wife to reform. A pity he didn't, instead of driving her to another man with his drinking.

PRUDENCE (*hotly*): A pity *she* didn't love him, instead of driving him to drink with her nagging!

HELEN: That's what *he* says, of course.

FAIRLEY: My dears—please! (*To PRUDENCE.*) I think I understand more clearly now. I know you a little better perhaps than you give me credit for, and I know—Helen knows too—that one of your finest qualities has always been your unselfish desire to sacrifice yourself for others, particularly for the weak and struggling. And I needn't tell you, my dear, how deeply I admire you and respect you for it. Pity is certainly akin to love, and at your age it can be very difficult to realise how *closely* akin sometimes.

[ANNIE opens the door and says :

ANNIE: Excuse me, miss Helen—the butcher's here, and he hasn't a wing-rib under six pounds.

HELEN: I'll come, Annie. (*Puts down curtain and rises.*)

ANNIE: And will you have your cocoa now, sir?

FAIRLEY (*vaguely*): My what?

HELEN: All right, Annie, I'll see to it: you get on with the study while you have the chance.

[*They go out.*]

FAIRLEY: I want you to think this over very carefully, Prudence. I know well, my dear, that no one is more capable of loving, or more worthy of love, than you. Which is all the more reason for being honest with yourself and—and realising that your feeling for this man is one of sympathy and pity.

PRUDENCE: You don't understand, father. I *love* Jack, and—he asked me to marry him. I accepted him.

FAIRLEY: You don't know what you're saying, child.

PRUDENCE: I *do* know what I'm saying. *You* don't make any distinction between the innocent person and the guilty person in a divorce.

FAIRLEY: I? Nor do you, Prudence. All your life you have believed in the letter and the spirit of the teaching: "Whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

PRUDENCE (*with an effort*): I know I did, but—I don't any more.

[*He recoils from her.*]

Oh, I know you hate me to say it, father, and I hate to hurt you—I do, honestly I do—but—I *have* thought about it, a lot—and prayed for guidance. And Dean Murray says in his book that the innocent person is free to marry again.

FAIRLEY (*grimly*): So? You've ignored my warning about reading that book?

PRUDENCE: But what am I to do, father? It can't be a sin to read a book by a dean—or to agree with what he says? Oh, father, don't be hurt—*please!*

FAIRLEY (*after a pause*): If I thought for one moment you were likely to fall into that modern error—that trap of the intellect—I should be more hurt than you could ever know.

PRUDENCE (*desperately*): But what am I to *do*, father, if I honestly *believe* it?

FAIRLEY (*quietly*): I can see you're not in a fit state to discuss the matter. You need rest. You'd better go to your room. I'll see you in my study after lunch. And if you insist on disobeying my wishes by meeting this man again, I shall make a point of forbidding *him* to meet *you*.

[*He turns abruptly and goes out, as—*

HELEN *enters gingerly with a cup of cocoa.*

HELEN: Here you are, darling! (FAIRLEY *sweeps past her in silence*). There! That means you've upset him, badly!

PRUDENCE: Oh, don't *you* start on me!

[*She drops into a chair, on the verge of tears.*

HELEN *hesitates, then puts cocoa cup on table and crosses to her.*

HELEN: Don't be such a goose, Prue! What happened?

PRUDENCE: We had a row about innocent parties.

HELEN (*puzzled*): Innocent parties? Where?

PRUDENCE: Being free to marry again.

HELEN: Oh!

PRUDENCE: He went up in smoke because I mentioned the Dean's book.

HELEN (*sharply*): You did? Then I think it was very stupid of you. You know perfectly well he's been against that book ever since it came out.

PRUDENCE: Well, *I'm* not against it, I *believe* in it!

[HELEN reacts.

And you needn't try to look so holy suddenly! I'm certain you do too, if you were honest with yourself. You said as much the other day.

HELEN (*moves away impatiently*): I do wish you wouldn't try to twist my words sometimes! I said I could sympathise with its arguments, which is quite a different thing.

PRUDENCE: Anyway, it doesn't matter what you think. I'm going to marry Jack.

HELEN: Prue! You're joking!

[ANNIE enters, flustered.

ANNIE: Whatever's happened to your father, Miss Helen?

HELEN: You were pushed out, I suppose?

ANNIE: *Pushed* out? I was fair *blown* out! And 'twas all in such a rush I've been and left me pan and broom behind, and I dursn't go back for them!

HELEN (*takes up cocoa cup*): He'll be all right presently. He's a bit upset, he wouldn't take his cocoa.

ANNIE: Oh dear, that is a bad sign!

HELEN: Keep it hot, Annie, for a few minutes; then slip in quietly and put it on his desk, and you can get your pan and broom.

ANNIE (*going*): That Cunningham person is at the bottom of it, I'll be bound. I do wish she could find a man of her own to bother! But that she never will, of course—outside an asylum!

[ANNIE goes out. *There is a self-conscious silence between the two sisters for a moment. Then PRUDENCE jumps up suddenly and is going out.*

HELEN (*in a friendly tone*): Where are you going, Prue?

PRUDENCE: To write a letter.

HELEN: Don't go for a minute; I want to talk to you.

PRUDENCE (*shrugs*): What's the good?

HELEN: I'm sorry I was a bit short just now.

PRUDENCE (*smiles ominously*): Just now?

HELEN (*puzzled*): What do you mean?

PRUDENCE: Nothing.

HELEN (*a little hurt*): I only thought I might be able to help.

PRUDENCE: I don't see how.

HELEN: Well, I thought you might find it difficult to talk to father properly about this.

PRUDENCE (*significantly*): I find it difficult to talk to *anyone* in this house lately.

HELEN (*surprised*): Do you mean—me?

PRUDENCE: Lately.

HELEN: You mean that I've—changed?

PRUDENCE: You're changing.

HELEN: Oh, I—I didn't know. (*She sits on couch, puzzled.*)

PRUDENCE (*softens, coming back*): Oh, I'm sorry, Hell. I'm in a beastly mood. I only mean that you—you do get a bit snappy sometimes—only sometimes, and you usen't to, ever. I think I know why.

HELEN: Why?

PRUDENCE: You're repressed. (*HELEN smiles.*) You've never really expressed yourself. You were unlucky being the eldest when mother died; you got let in for running the show and looking after Sue and me, not to mention father.

HELEN: I see. How terrible. I must be getting old-maidish.

PRUDENCE: Oh, rot! You could have had lots of men friends if you'd wanted to; but you never let yourself. I've often heard you cancelling dates. "The children" had to be looked after, or the rooms had to be done, or father had to have his cocoa.

HELEN: Well, thanks for the tip about being snappy. I'll try to improve.

PRUDENCE: Oh, I know it's easy for me to talk. I'll bet if I had to look after you and Sue for six years, *I'd* get snappy. I'm snappy enough as it is!

HELEN (*laughs*): Oh, darling! Come here! (*Holds out her arms.*)

PRUDENCE (*suddenly snappy again*): No, I *won't*. That's another thing that's wrong with you—always wanting to *mother* me. I'm sick of being mauled about like a kid!

[HELEN'S arms fall to her sides, and she turns her head away, genuinely hurt. PRUDENCE remains tense for a moment, then steals a glance at her, and at once relents.]

PRUDENCE (*running to her*): Oh darling Hell, I'm sorry! I *am* a beast!

[HELEN is aloof for a moment, then she thaws and smiles.]

HELEN: Very well, I won't "mother" you any more. I suppose I haven't really got used to you being grown up yet. Why didn't you tell me about it before?

PRUDENCE: Well, it's only in the past year or so—since Sue got married—that you began to kind of—fasten on to me. When I'm not in a filthy mood, of course, I know it really only means you're being *doubly* sweet to *me*.

HELEN (*smiles*): Very nicely put! Well, in future I promise to be only *half* sweet to you. And I'll begin now by telling you something

you'll only half like. I believe you're only half in love with Jack Sinclair.

PRUDENCE (*freezes slightly*): I never said I was in love with him. I said I love him.

HELEN: Oh.

PRUDENCE: Anybody can fall in love. The girls at school were always falling in love, which only meant they lost their heads over somebody for the time being. When you love a person, you—you know what you're doing.

HELEN (*solemnly*): I see.

PRUDENCE: I suppose it's hard to understand when you don't love anyone.

HELEN: Meaning—*me* again?

PRUDENCE: Well, you don't, *do* you?

HELEN: Don't I? I love you. I love father. But that's another kind of love, I suppose.

PRUDENCE (*depressed*): Yes, that's the worst of it . . . there are so many kinds of love . . . and when they clash—You're lucky!

HELEN (*smiles; then seriously*): You know how this is going to hurt father, Prue? You—his favourite—

PRUDENCE (*shrugs*): I don't expect you to take *my* side, of course.

HELEN: I'll be honest, Prue. I *do* take your side, in my *mind*. I *do* think the innocent person in a divorce should be free to marry again. I *think* it. But somewhere inside me I—I *feel*—oh, it isn't even a feeling—it's a kind of intuition—that father is right.

PRUDENCE: That's only because he's drummed it into us all our lives.

HELEN: I wonder. I don't know. But I do see father's argument: that it's the thin edge of the wedge, as it were, and if the Church once starts

making exceptions and "compromising with Satan" as he calls it, there'll be no end to it. Christ didn't compromise.

PRUDENCE: But how do we *know* what Christ did? We don't even know for certain what He *said*. And if some of the cleverest minds in the Church disagree about his teaching—

HELEN: But that's just the point, darling. Father doesn't believe in *minds* interpreting the Gospels. He says Christ's message is a message of the *spirit*, and it can only be *interpreted* by the spirit. The spirit is universal, but minds vary from person to person. That's why father says once people start analysing the Gospel with their *minds* they just tear it to pieces—because the real *inner meaning*—the *spiritual* meaning—escapes them.

PRUDENCE: But how *are* you to interpret with your spirit if your mind won't let you?

HELEN: I suppose father would say by having *faith*—and applying it—practising it. And whatever else anyone may say about father, he does practise what he preaches.

[*The door bursts open, and SUSAN enters in a little whirlwind of excitement. She is 25, rather buxom and bouncing, and much freer in speech and general deportment than her sisters.*]

SUSAN: Hello, Helen!

HELEN: Sue! I thought you were on the Working Committee?

SUSAN: So I am, my pet. (*To PRUDENCE*)
Hullo, kid!

PRUDENCE: Hello, *matron*!

HELEN: Then why aren't you at the bazaar, clearing up?

SUSAN: Because I simply had to dash up to tell you a most exciting bit of news. *You*, Prue.

You remember Mr. Fellman, who used to own Tamworth Hall, over at Leafdown?

PRUDENCE: Mr. Fellman? He's dead.

SUSAN (*nods*): And he left all his money to a nephew who went out to Canada as a boy. Well, he's come back—the nephew, I mean—to live at Tamworth—a bachelor—Molly Phelps told me yesterday—she and Flo were full of him—trust those Phelps girls to be the first to know when a wealthy bachelor comes to town!

HELEN (*mock solemnly*): You should be more charitable, my dear.

SUSAN: Charitable my hip! Those Phelps girls would smell a wealthy bachelor a mile off. Molly, poor soul, would smell him if he was a pauper in mid-Atlantic.

HELEN: But what's it all got to do with Prue?

SUSAN: I'm coming to that. (*Slowly and mysteriously*) He's terribly nice. Tall—broad—serious—handsome—virile——

PRUDENCE: Oh, don't be an ass, Sue. You've been to the films.

SUSAN: You wait! You'll see for yourself presently. He's coming up here. That's why I dashed in front of him.

HELEN: Coming *here*?

SUSAN: Yes; ostensibly to see father; he knew him as a boy. But actually to see—(*Turns to PRUDENCE*) you!

PRUDENCE (*mystified, to HELEN*): I believe she's gone dotty.

SUSAN: He's fallen for you, darling. And if I know anything about men—which I certainly *do*—he's got it badly. You've probably both seen him already without realising. He looked in at the bazaar yesterday during the tea rush. (*To HELEN.*) Did you notice a tall, handsome——

HELEN (*laughs*): During the tea rush?

SUSAN (*to PRUDENCE*): . . . broad—virile——

PRUDENCE: All I saw during the tea rush was about ten million hands, all trying to grab the wrong cup.

SUSAN: Well, I didn't see him yesterday either—but he's got a marvellous car, and Mrs. Phelps commandeered him to do some shifting this morning. Those Phelps girls certainly make good use of their mother.

PRUDENCE (*suddenly*): Oh! Was he dressed in a greyish kind of suit?

SUSAN: That's him! A tall man—broad—virile——

HELEN: Handsome—serious——

PRUDENCE: Now I come to think of it, I did see a tall man *going out*; I noticed him because he stood in the doorway for a moment looking back at our stall.

SUSAN: There! She clicked and she wasn't going to tell us!

PRUDENCE: I did *not* click!

SUSAN: I'll bet you flashed your optics at him.

HELEN (*mock-solemnly*): So that's how you were helping me with the tea, Prudence Fairley?

PRUDENCE (*shrugs*): I didn't give him a second thought.

SUSAN: Well, he gave you a second thought, darling, and a third and a fourth, if *I* know anything about men——

HELEN: Which you certainly *do*.

SUSAN: Thank you, Hell. (*To PRUDENCE*): Anyhow, you hadn't been gone two minutes this morning when he arrived in his limousine. Mrs. Phelps introduced me—I saw to that—and when she told him I was one of the Vicar's

daughters you should have seen his ears flap! You're my "very charming sister," you'll be glad to hear!

[ANNIE enters.]

ANNIE (to HELEN): Excuse me, miss, there's a gentleman called to see your father, but he's gone out.

SUSAN (*excitedly*): A tall, handsome gentleman?

ANNIE: Well, handsome is as handsome does, *I* always say, miss—I mean ma'am. But he's tall enough for most purposes, as you might say.

PRUDENCE (*anxiously*): Did father say *where* he was going?

ANNIE: A messenger came to tell him one of Mrs. Bardel's little boys has been and gone and swallowed his spoon.

SUSAN: What on earth can *father* do about it?

ANNIE: What can he do half the times he goes running off to help people in trouble?

HELEN: He adores the Bardel kids.

SUSAN: Show the gentleman in, Annie.

ANNIE: Yes, miss. (*Goes back.*)

PRUDENCE: Oh, Suc, I *don't* want to see him. Besides, it will all look so *obvious*!

SUSAN: Don't be a little nitwit. Of course it'll be obvious; the more obvious the better; that's how our grandmothers always got them.

HELEN: You'd better tell us his name; we'll never catch it.

SUSAN: Help! I didn't catch it myself!

[ANNIE returns, and shows in DAVE MANFORD, who answers fairly well to SUSAN's idealistic description. He is about 30; rather rough and pleasantly uncouth, but self-possessed and direct in his manner and speech.]

ANNIE: Mr. Manford, miss. (*She goes back.*)

DAVE *pulls up short on seeing the three girls.*

SUSAN: Hello!

DAVE: Oh—hello! How on earth did you do that?

SUSAN: Do what?

DAVE: I've just said good-bye to you.

SUSAN (*casually*): Oh, I had to bring some of our things back from the bazaar. This is my sister Helen.

DAVE: How do you do?

HELEN: How do you do? (*They shake hands.*)

SUSAN: I'm most awfully sorry, I didn't catch your name.

DAVE: Manford—Dave Manford.

SUSAN: Of course. I knew it had "man" in it somewhere. And this is Prudence.

DAVE: How do you do?

PRUDENCE (*coldly*): How do you do?

[*He holds out his hand, and she gives him a very limp hand, looking away. He is rather taken aback by her manner, and half turns to SUSAN for an explanation.*]

SUSAN: She's only a little shy.

PRUDENCE (*furious*): I'm not shy!

SUSAN (*to DAVE*): Father is out at the moment, but I don't expect he'll be long. Won't you sit down?

DAVE: Thanks.

[*As he happens to be by the couch, he chooses it to sit on. PRUDENCE turns to an armchair, but SUSAN quickly forestalls her, and gives her a nudge towards the couch. As HELEN has taken the other chair, she finds herself with no alternative but to*

sit beside him, which she does with rather bad grace. There is a general air of self-consciousness as they arrange themselves.

SUSAN (*brightly*): You've been having a strenuous morning!

DAVE: You call it strenuous, driving round the town with parcels?

SUSAN: No, I suppose not, for—for anybody who's been to Canada.

DAVE: Don't forget I had two energetic assistants.

SUSAN (*winks at HELEN*): Oh yes, the Phelps girls! We know them. *Nice* girls.

DAVE: Are they?

[*There is a little lull for a moment, during which PRUDENCE peeps at him sideways.*

SUSAN: I've just been telling them about your wonderful car.

DAVE (*puzzled*): What about it?

SUSAN: Well, how—how wonderful it is.

DAVE: Is it? Yes, perhaps it is—over here. I've seen better. Although, mind you, I have no right to criticise. It's the first *new* car I ever owned. (*To PRUDENCE, who is peeping at him again.*) Any times I could afford a car in Canada they had to be second hand ones. Are you fond of driving?

PRUDENCE (*looks away quickly*): Not very.

SUSAN: Don't be silly, Prue, you know you are.

PRUDENCE (*turns to her*): I know I am *not*!

[*Another little lull.*

SUSAN (*trying again; to HELEN*): It's such a lovely car! You know, one of those long, luxurious limousines—like a—like a kind of—female submarine.

DAVE: Why female?

SUSAN: Well—submarines usually look so masculine, don't you think?

DAVE: I see.

[*Yet another little lull.*]

(*To HELEN.*) The bazaar was a big success, I hope?

HELEN: I think so. I didn't really see much of it.

DAVE: You were too busy working, I guess?

HELEN: It *was* rather a rush.

DAVE: We certainly transported a lot of junk this morning. (*To SUSAN.*) Why didn't you let me carry *your* things, when you knew I was coming up here?

SUSAN: Oh, I didn't want to bother you.

DAVE: You've got everything now?

SUSAN: Yes, thank you. (*To HELEN.*) I think?

HELEN (*smiles*): Except our twelve apostles.

DAVE: *Who?*

HELEN: Oh, they're just tea-spoons with the heads of the apostles on the handles.

SUSAN: But I thought Prue brought them?

PRUDENCE: They got put in Mrs. Bolton's box by mistake.

SUSAN: That woman always manages to get things mixed up.

DAVE (*to HELEN*): Can't I fetch them for you?

HELEN: Well—I think Prue is going for them, thank you.

DAVE (*to PRUDENCE*): Would you like me to lift you there?

PRUDENCE: No, thank you; I'd rather walk.

SUSAN: Oh Prue, it's on the other side of the town!

PRUDENCE (*stiffly*): I'm quite aware of that.

[*Another lull.*]

HELEN (*rather desperately*): I'll see if father is back yet. (*She goes out.*)

SUSAN (*rises*): I think I must be getting back too; I have a lunch to cook. Good-bye, Mr. Man—Man—oh dear, I'll never remember it! I'll just have to call you Mr. Man.

DAVE (*rises*): That'll do. Or perhaps Dave is easier to remember.

SUSAN: Yes, much easier. And I'm Susan. Sue for short.

PRUDENCE (*rises*): I'm afraid I've got a letter to write too——

SUSAN: Don't be ridiculous, Prue, you know you haven't!

PRUDENCE: I *have*!

SUSAN: But you can't leave Mr.—Dave—here all alone. Good-bye, darling. Good-bye, Dave.

DAVE: Good-bye, Sue!

[SUSAN goes, quickly.]

[PRUDENCE and DAVE are left standing by the couch.]

DAVE: Don't mind me if you want to write that letter.

PRUDENCE: I'm not just being rude—I honestly do.

DAVE: Sure! Go right ahead.

PRUDENCE: It can wait a few minutes, of course.

DAVE: Well—shall we sit down?

[*They sit again. DAVE leans back and surveys her with an air of puzzled amusement.*]

And you're Prudence, eh? Can I call you that?

PRUDENCE: If you wish to.

DAVE: Well, would you mind very much telling me, Prudence, what you have against me?

PRUDENCE: Against you?

DAVE: You certainly didn't hand me a very warm reception.

PRUDENCE: Well—I—I'm engaged to be married, you see.

DAVE (*puzzled*): How do *I* stand to blame for that?

PRUDENCE (*puzzled and a bit confused*): Besides, I—well, I've never seen you before.

DAVE: Why worry? I've never seen *you* before, but I didn't kind of freeze at the sight of you just now.

PRUDENCE (*turns to him slowly*): You've never seen me before?

DAVE: Not to my recollection. You weren't in that bun fight yesterday with your sister, were you?

PRUDENCE: You mean you—you only saw Helen?

DAVE: I'm afraid so. I didn't know she had any sisters until I met Susan this morning.

[*SUSAN'S mistake dawns on PRUDENCE. At first she is partly embarrassed and partly relieved; then the humour of the situation appeals to her and she averts her head, repressing a smile.*]

Have I said something humorous?

PRUDENCE (*giggles*): Sue is a fool . . .

DAVE: Well, we seem to have broken the ice at last.

[PRUDENCE *controls her giggles. Her manner changes gradually to one of friendly familiarity. She turns to him with a smile.*

PRUDENCE: What *did* you say to Sue this morning?

DAVE: Say? Why, nothing very particular. I said I remembered her father before I went to Canada as a boy. And that I saw her charming sister yesterday afternoon. But what's the little joke?

PRUDENCE: I don't know how to tell you. I feel *such* an ass. I could kill Sue. But I'm glad. Helen *is* charming. She's fifty times more charming than me.

DAVE (*sits up suddenly*): Say, you don't mean . . . ? Sue didn't kind of get you mixed up together?

PRUDENCE (*nods*): I *do* feel a fool!

DAVE (*laughs*): Well, that's swell! I'll say that's the best little joke I've run across in years!

PRUDENCE: It's awfully decent of you to take it like that.

DAVE: Why, now we can be friends, you and I.

PRUDENCE: I'd like to be.

DAVE: Say, does Helen think that too?

PRUDENCE: Of course!

DAVE: Well, well, well! I'll certainly call you Prudence after this, it suits you grand!

PRUDENCE: You may call me Prue if you like, for short.

DAVE: Fine!

PRUDENCE: And—as a matter of fact—I *would* like to go for a drive—to call for the spoons.

DAVE: Sure!

PRUDENCE: I want to drop in a letter at a certain office in the town, to warn someone that father may be calling on him.

DAVE: Oh? Somebody been scrimshanking from Church?

PRUDENCE: Oh, no, it's—my fiancé. You see, father doesn't approve—putting it mildly. (*Suddenly*) I'm terribly glad you like Helen.

DAVE: I guess lots of men must like Helen.

PRUDENCE: They do—but she seldom responds. You'll find her terribly reserved—*much* more than me!

DAVE: You don't say!

[HELEN enters.]

HELEN: He'll be here in a moment. Sue met him at the corner; they're standing talking. (*To DAVE*) I expect she's telling him about *you*.

PRUDENCE: Helen, I *am* going for the spoons. I'm just going to scribble my letter first. Will you wait for me, Dave?

DAVE: Certainly, Prue. If—Helen—doesn't object. (*HELEN blinks.*) And if she doesn't mind me calling her Helen.

PRUDENCE: You mustn't, Helen. We're all on Christian names. Sue began it. (*To DAVE*) She's Hell for short, when father isn't around! (*To HELEN*) Dave likes *your* name best!

[*She goes out, with a wink at DAVE and a smile at the mystified HELEN.*]

HELEN: Funny child!

DAVE: I think she's grand! We just had a good laugh together.

HELEN: Yes? Do sit down. (*Sitting in armchair*) Father will be here in a second.

DAVE (*remains standing*): That's a pity. I hoped we might have a little talk.

HELEN: Oh—I'm afraid you wouldn't find me nearly as amusing as Prue.

DAVE: You're not offended with me for calling you Helen?

HELEN (*looks at him frankly, and smiles*): Funnily enough, I'm not; it seems natural somehow.

DAVE (*with enthusiasm*): Fine!

HELEN (*hastily*): I mean, it seems natural for you to call people by their Christian names; you look that kind of man. Oh, I don't mean—I suppose that sounds rather cheap—at least—(*A bit confused*) But I—I really meant it as a compliment.

DAVE (*with more enthusiasm*): You did? Better still!

HELEN (*with deliberate composure*): It must be fun for you to be back in England again after—after—I don't really know how long you've been away, of course.

DAVE: Seventeen years. I can't really believe I'm here yet. I can't get used to that big barn of a house I live in.

HELEN: You mean Tamworth Hall?

DAVE: Yes. You see, I'm not very acclimatised to palatial surroundings. Most of my time in Canada I've been what you folks call a working man. Every day of the first twelve years was spent swinging an axe in a lumber camp—praying for the sun to dip—and dossing wherever you happened to drop, so to speak. I guess that won't indicate much to a girl like you, but it was mighty different from lording it round an empty castle all day.

HELEN: Yes, it must have been.

DAVE: I guess you know Tamworth Hall?

HELEN: Oh yes, we've often passed it on walks.

DAVE: You've never been over it—inside?

HELEN: No. It looks a beautiful old place.

DAVE: Would you *like* to see over it?

HELEN: Well, I—it's very nice of you to suggest it—I would, some time.

DAVE: How about tomorrow afternoon?

HELEN (*looks at him blankly*): I—I'm afraid I'm not free tomorrow—but I'm sure *Prue* would love to.

DAVE: I'm not asking *Prue*. I'm asking *you*.

HELEN: Well—as I say—it's terribly nice of you, but——

DAVE: Listen! I'm going to ask you something else. What did you think about me trailing *Prue* here?

HELEN: Trailing——?

DAVE: Don't pretend you didn't know. Sue greased ahead to warn you all.

HELEN: I—I—I don't know what I thought.

DAVE: Well, what do you think *now*? Do you think I'm a—passable sort of man for her?

HELEN: Passable?

DAVE: Well—for instance—do you reckon I'd make a good—husband?

HELEN: I—I reckon you'd make a very extraordinary husband!

DAVE: Oh. What do you mean by that?

HELEN: You know, you really are the most—the questions you fire at me!

DAVE: I wish you'd answer some of them, instead of being so darned reserved.

HELEN: Reserved! I like that! I've never spoken to a man like this in my life before!

DAVE (*amused*): Is that so? Then I guess the other guys must have had some lovely times with you.

[*That remark does evoke her reserve. Her manner becomes politely sedate again. DAVE is quick to notice the change.*]

DAVE: Oh Lordy, what have I said now?

HELEN (*smiles*): I don't think you quite realise that English people *are* rather—well—as you say, reserved——

DAVE: In other words, what you're trying to say is, I'm a bit of a clumsy fool the way I put things.

HELEN: I'm not trying to say any such thing. I only mean——

DAVE: You don't have to say it. Don't worry. I know my limitations. I learned them five years ago when I quit lumbering, to have a crack at civilisation in the city. But we're getting away from the point. Why won't you come over to Tamworth tomorrow?

HELEN: Well—I'm rather a busy person, you know. I more or less run the house here.

DAVE: I guessed you were a domesticated kind of woman. Now don't go taking me up wrong again! I only mean by that a—a *real* woman.

HELEN: I see. But I'm certain Prue would adore to look over Tamworth tomorrow.

DAVE: Thanks. That'll be swell.

[*He drops dejectedly on to the couch. There is a moment's silence, in which she steals a glance at him, as if appraising his uncouthness.*]

HELEN: What happened after you—quitted lumbering?

DAVE (*guardedly*): Oh, I—I beat it up to Ontario. Thought I might make a little money. A friend of mine fixed me up for the job—in an office—so I guess I didn't shine much—they soon asked me to take a little holiday. Then I got a break outdoors—measuring up roads for a new building plan—but that folded up when the plan was through. (*He is silent.*)

HELEN: And then?

DAVE (*smiles, rather bitterly*): Why, then my lucky star stopped shining. I struck a little row of rocks for a year or two—and—I just muscled in wherever I saw a chance. I'd have made a getaway back West, only—well, circumstances didn't kind of suit. I just had to take the count every little while and get up again.

HELEN (*with simple sincerity*): I'm sorry you had such bad luck.

[DAVE looks at her and rises quickly.]

DAVE: Listen—there's something I want to tell you. Sue hit the wrong trail this morning. She got kind of mixed up between you and Prue.

HELEN (*mystified*): I'm afraid I'm kind of mixed up too.

DAVE: It wasn't Prue I meant. It was you. I never saw Prue before.

[HELEN stares at him, and rises. He goes to her quickly and touches her arm, speaking with rough tenderness.]

Say, listen. This wasn't how I meant to tell you. I guess I haven't got the hang of your ways of doing things yet. But you can't turn me down for that.

HELEN: But—I—I——

DAVE: And you can't go back on what you said.

HELEN: What I said?

DAVE: You said you'd like to come to Tamworth some time.

HELEN: But——

DAVE: You can't stop me either with "buts". (*She shrinks a little from him, struggling to retain composure.*) Why, you seem kind of scared! You're not afraid of me?

HELEN: Of course not.

DAVE: Listen. When I saw you yesterday I just knew one thing: I wanted to see you again. That's why I froze on to Sue this morning when I heard she was your sister. And now I've seen you again, I—well, I want to see you *again*, that's all. Tomorrow. Don't you want to come?

HELEN: I—I would like to come some time. But I—well——

DAVE: I guess Prue was right; she said you'd be tough. (*HELEN looks at him in surprise.*) But she warned me about you.

HELEN: Warned you?

DAVE (*with the cunning ingenuity of a lover*): Yes. She said you had no pluck—you mostly got scared stiff like a High School kid if a man looked at you.

HELEN (*indignantly*): Prue said that!

DAVE: She certainly did. And if you turned me down now I could take it you were through with me for good and all, and clear out. She reckons she knows you pretty well, too.

HELEN: Oh, *does* she!

DAVE (*close to her again*): What do you say? You'll come? I'll pick you up here tomorrow any time——

HELEN: Oh no, not *here!* (*She says it involuntarily, then realises that in saying it she has consented.*) Father would have a fit if he—if he thought I—oh, I *can't!*

[*She turns away from him, but he grips her wrist and draws her back.*]

DAVE: Can't? Or won't? Which?

HELEN: I think I hear father in the hall!

DAVE: Do you want to come, or not? Yes or no?

HELEN: Yes.

[*He releases her hand and she moves to the fireplace.*]

DAVE: Where do we meet?

HELEN (*speaking quickly, not looking at him*): I'll be on the South Road, walking towards Tamworth, at four o'clock.

DAVE: Four o'clock. Fine!

[FAIRLEY *enters.*]

HELEN: Father, this is Mr.—Mr.——

DAVE: Manford—Dave Manford.

FAIRLEY: I know—Fellman's nephew. (*To DAVE shaking hands.*) I've just been hearing about you from Susan. And of course I remember your father and mother very well. (*Smiles.*) I *think* I remember *you*—I wouldn't like to swear to it! I remember a fellow who played truant from school most days and robbed his first orchard at the age of nine. Would that be you?

DAVE: It's a bit far back to remember, I guess.

FAIRLEY (*serious again*): Let me see, you lost your mother shortly after you went out there?

DAVE: The next fall. The dad went two years later.

FAIRLEY: As soon as that! Well, well.

[PRUDENCE *enters, with a letter in her hand, which she quickly puts behind her back when she sees her father.*

PRUDENCE: I'm ready. (*To FAIRLEY*) Dave is taking me to Mrs. Bolton's to collect our spoons.

FAIRLEY: Dave?

PRUDENCE: We're all on Christian names. He calls me Prue.

[ANNIE *enters.*

ANNIE: Miss Cunningham has called sir, with two other *persons*. (*She makes it sound as ominous as possible.*)

[*Significant glances pass between HELEN and PRUDENCE.*

HELEN (*to FAIRLEY*): She has no right to come bothering you at this hour of the morning.

FAIRLEY: A clergyman has no "hours", my dear. (*To ANNIE*) I'll see them presently.

[ANNIE *goes, in silent dudgeon.*

DAVE: Well, I guess I'll be moving—if you're ready, Prue.

FAIRLEY (*to DAVE*): We must have a talk some time, about the good old days when you used to rob orchards.

DAVE: Sure!

FAIRLEY: Perhaps you could look in this afternoon—have a cup of tea with us?

DAVE: It's very kind of you, but I'm fixed to spend the afternoon with a solicitor, signing long-winded legal documents that put the fear of God into me. (FAIRLEY *winces at the irreverence.*) Oh, Gee, I'm sorry! That kind of slipped out.

FAIRLEY (*humorously grave*): I'd like to see those documents; they should be valuable; I've spent many years trying to find ways of putting the fear of God into people.

DAVE (*awkwardly and self-consciously*): I guess I'd better tell you right now, sir, I—I don't want to come here under false pretences—but I feel you'll be kind of disappointed in me about—religion.

FAIRLEY: I'm disappointed in a good many people about religion.

DAVE: What I mean is, I don't know much about—*real* religion.

FAIRLEY: Very few of us do, nowadays. Real religion is very scarce, Dave. May I call you Dave too?

DAVE: Sure! But you don't *get* me, sir. What I'm trying to say is—I'm not even a Christian.

FAIRLEY (*smiles faintly*): Oh? That's interesting. What *are* you?

DAVE: I guess I'm just—nothing.

FAIRLEY: You know, I'm very glad to hear that. You're what we call, in my job, virgin soil. The people I'm up against are people who *do* call themselves Christians, without very much claim to the title. If I had to choose, you know, I'd much rather be in your shoes.

DAVE: It's grand of you to say so.

FAIRLEY: Well, I'd feel I had some chance of *finding* real religion—don't you see?—which I

wouldn't have if I was already cluttered up with *false* religion.

HELEN (*smiles*): *Cave, pater!*

FAIRLEY (*to DAVE*): That means: "Dry up, you're beginning to preach." (*Indicating HELEN.*) We work a—a racket together. She dries me up when I start being—wet.

PRUDENCE: The haybags are waiting for you, too.

FAIRLEY (*to DAVE*): Now you know how Vicarages are run. You and I must have a talk some time—away from female interference. What about tomorrow for tea?

DAVE: I'm afraid I've got a very important date tomorrow.

FAIRLEY: You *are* a busy chap!

DAVE: The next day—if that's jake by you?

FAIRLEY (*to HELEN*): Is the next day—jake by us?

HELEN (*smiles*): I think so.

DAVE (*going, in response to an impatient signal from PRUE*): Fine! I'll be along. Good-bye, sir. (*To HELEN, with a significant, direct look*): Good-bye.

HELEN: Good-bye.

[*He goes out with PRUDENCE.*]

FAIRLEY (*to HELEN*): What a grand fellow he is! I could hardly believe Susan's description, but he's certainly a fine type. Don't you think so?

HELEN: Yes.

FAIRLEY (*enthusiastically*): Prudence seems to think so too. Susan *told* you what happened?

HELEN: Yes.

FAIRLEY: One never knows, my dear: this may be the solution of the whole problem. If Dave is as fine a chap as he looks—and if Prudence falls in love with him—one never knows. (*He goes out cheerfully.*)

[HELEN *sits down slowly, staring in front of her as if in a dream.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE: *The same.*

TIME: *Two days later.*

AT RISE: PRUDENCE is curled up on couch reading a book, which has a brown-paper cover. There is a newspaper on her lap.

ANNIE enters with a tray of tea-things and a white tablecloth. PRUDENCE starts guiltily, and hides the book under the newspaper, but resumes reading when she sees it is only ANNIE. ANNIE removes heavy cloth from table, stealing a glance at PRUDENCE.

ANNIE (*casually*): Busy, Miss Prudence?

PRUDENCE (*pointedly*): Only reading.

ANNIE: Dean Murray's book on divorce, I'll be bound.

PRUDENCE: Well, you needn't *shout* it!

ANNIE: If I was you, I wouldn't let your father catch you reading that book—not after what happened at the Deanery last night! (PRUDENCE *looks up*.) It's not for me to spread gossip, of course—

PRUDENCE: Oh, don't start that, Annie; you know you're just bulging to tell me something. What is it?

ANNIE: 'Twas Pilton's boy told me; he delivers at the Deanery Tuesdays and Fridays; the Dean likes his bit of fresh fish, same as your father—

PRUDENCE: Oh, for goodness sake come to the point, Annie! *What* did he tell you?

ANNIE: Well, it seems a man forced his way into the Deanery last night—after midnight, if you please—demanding to see the Dean as bold as brass. (*Steals a glance at her.*) Fighting drunk, Pilton's boy said he was. Had to be took away by force. Three men it took to get him out——

PRUDENCE: Annie! You don't mean—Mr. Sinclair! (*She rises, horrified, dropping book on couch.*)

ANNIE: Perhaps I shouldn't have told you, Miss Prudence. Miss Helen said not to. But I only thought——

[HELEN enters. *A subtle change has taken place in her. She moves more briskly, and there is a smiling, alert look in her eyes that wasn't there before.*

HELEN: Have you forgotten the muffins, Annie?

ANNIE: No, miss—they've been in the oven this half hour.

HELEN: I know, but hadn't you better keep an eye on them? You know what happened once when the Bishop came to tea. I've just saved them from catching.

ANNIE: There! That's the wind has done that—it's gone East on me again!

HELEN: I'll see to the table.

ANNIE (*going*): Dear oh dear, that oven! I've always said it's more like a weathercock than an oven. (*She goes out.*)

[HELEN busies herself at the table; then suddenly notices PRUDENCE's dejected air.

HELEN: What's wrong, darling?

PRUDENCE (*frigidly*): You know perfectly well what's wrong. I wish you'd mind your own business and not try to make Annie treat me like a child.

HELEN: I knew you'd only be worried, Prue——

PRUDENCE: So that's the thanks I get for helping you with the house all the morning! (*with sudden enlightenment.*) That's why you *asked* me to help you—to keep me at home so that I wouldn't find out!

HELEN (*goes to her*): Oh, darling, you know I only wanted——

PRUDENCE (*flaring up*): Please don't! Can't you *ever* leave me alone? I'll scream if you touch me again! (*She moves away and sits on window seat, staring out gloomily.*)

HELEN (*getting on with laying the table*): Since you know so much, you may as well know the rest. I'm afraid there's a squall coming. The Dean rang up father just now.

PRUDENCE (*startled out of her gloom*): What for?

HELEN: I couldn't make out. But father was angry; I think he rang off while the Dean was speaking. I'm terribly sorry, Prue.

PRUDENCE: I don't want your pity, thanks.

HELEN: I don't mean that. I mean I've thought a lot about it in the last few days—if you and Jack are really in love with each other—and I know *you* are with *him*——

PRUDENCE: I've told you I'm *not* in love with him. I love him.

HELEN: Well, if you really love each other—I'll take your part against father, if you want to marry him.

PRUDENCE (*looks round at her*): You've changed very suddenly!

HELEN: I feel I understand better than I did.

PRUDENCE (*bluntly*): Because you've fallen in love yourself.

HELEN: Don't be ridiculous!

PRUDENCE: Ever since you met him you've been looking like a Glamour Queen from Hollywood.

HELEN: Like a *what?*

PRUDENCE: Even your walk is different. All this morning you've been going round like a film star on stilts.

[HELEN *tries to look indignant, but only succeeds in looking embarrassed and guilty.*

You needn't try to deny it. I'm not such a half wit as you seem to think. I've seen girls at school go just as goofy.

HELEN: How awful!

PRUDENCE (*patronisingly*): It isn't a bit awful, if it lasts. I hope it does, for your sake. You *are* in love with him, aren't you?

HELEN (*smiles*): I'm afraid I don't know as much about love as you do. I admit I like him—more than I've ever liked anyone before.

PRUDENCE: That's the first stage.

HELEN: Is it?

PRUDENCE: Did he kiss you yesterday?

HELEN: Good heavens, no!

PRUDENCE: You needn't look so coy about it, you know he's *going* to.

HELEN: I don't know any such thing!

PRUDENCE: I suppose you're going to accept him? Although he probably won't even propose; he looks the type that'll just tell you what day you're going to be married on.

HELEN (*trying to dismiss the subject*): You do talk a lot of nonsense. It's a pity Sue can't come to tea today; she's got a Women's Institute thing on.

PRUDENCE: Why don't you want father to know about you and Dave?

HELEN: But I tell you there's nothing for him to know!

PRUDENCE: Oh yes, there is. You've let him go on thinking that Dave is after *me*. You made Sue promise not to tell him, either.

HELEN (*with a depressed air*): I believe father would have a fit if he thought I was interested in a man . . .

PRUDENCE: I know. You've been the "little mother" so long he just takes it for granted now that men mean nothing to you. That's really why you're half ashamed of him knowing you've suddenly gone dippy over one.

HELEN: You're in a very analytical mood today.

PRUDENCE: Somebody's got to face the facts of life. There's bound to be a bust-up when he realises that it's *you* Dave is after and *I'm* going to marry Jack. And he'll have to know some-time.

HELEN: Yes, I suppose you're right.

[FAIRLEY enters, with a few papers in his hand.]

FAIRLEY: Oh Helen, you might see to these for me. (*Handing a letter*): That's an invitation to dinner at the rectory; I think we'll have to go this time. And this is the bill for the new matting in the vestry.—Oh thank you, Prudence, for those lovely buttercups; they make the vestry look quite gay. (*To HELEN*) Have you seen them?

HELEN: Buttercups—in April?

PRUDENCE: He means ranunculi.

FAIRLEY: Oh? You didn't have to buy them, I hope?

PRUDENCE: Don't be a mingy, father; they only cost a shilling.

FAIRLEY (*dubiously*): Oh well, I suppose they're worth a shilling.

HELEN: And this? (*Taking third letter from him.*)

FAIRLEY: Oh that—er—you might see to that too. It's from Mrs. Deveril; her husband is out of work again and I—er—promised to send him that old flannel suit of mine—you know the one I mean.

HELEN (*severely*): I know exactly the one you mean: the one you bought only the summer before last—and that, incidentally, hasn't got a coat or waistcoat, because you gave them to that jobbing gardener at Xmas, for cutting up firewood.

FAIRLEY: Ah—yes—I remember. Rather extortionate payment I thought at the time. Oh well, Deveril must make do with the trousers, that's all.

HELEN (*going to desk*): I warn you, father, if you give away just one more pair of trousers—well, you won't *be able* to accept Mrs. Rector's invitation.

FAIRLEY: Oh? Why?

HELEN: Because you'll have to stay in bed, that's why.

FAIRLEY (*seeing the point, scratches his ear*): H'm . . . that's an idea. Oh Prudence, there's something—rather unpleasant, I'm afraid—I have to tell you.

PRUDENCE (*dwinning it*): You needn't, father; I've heard already. Annie felt she had to do her good deed for the day.

FAIRLEY (*whimsically*): Of course—I'd forgotten Annie. (*To HELEN*) You know, that woman is becoming a menace. She almost knows things nowadays before they happen; in the Middle Ages she'd have gone to the stake for witchery.

HELEN: So would a good many others in this town, I expect.

PRUDENCE: A pity the stake was ever abolished.

HELEN: It'd be fun to make a list of all the people who——

FAIRLEY (*smiles*): My dear, I didn't mean my remark to be taken quite so literally. (*To PRUDENCE*) Then you know that Sinclair disgraced himself last night?

PRUDENCE: I know he went to the Deanery.

FAIRLEY: At midnight, rolling drunk, and demanded that the Dean should come over here and marry you both. (*To HELEN*) It's going to give another weapon to those meddlers who are coming to see me this afternoon; I'll bet you it's one of the first things they bring up.

PRUDENCE: What meddlers?

FAIRLEY: A group of muddle-headed busybodies who style themselves the Committee of the Midenhurst Branch of the Society for the Reform of Christian Marriage.

HELEN: They've got some very influential names on their notepaper, father.

FAIRLEY: Oh, very! And they're out to make things hot for *me* if I don't knuckle under to them. (*To PRUDENCE*) As I say, they're bound to refer to this affair of last night, and I should very much like to be able to tell them that you have no wish whatsoever to marry this man.

[PRUDENCE *is silent*.

HELEN: I don't see what business it is of theirs.

FAIRLEY (*sits on couch*): Nor do I. But then, I don't see what business it is of theirs to try to destroy the sacrament of Christian marriage. (*To PRUDENCE*) What time are you expecting Dave?

PRUDENCE: I'm not expecting him. *I didn't invite him.*

FAIRLEY (*glances at HELEN expressively—to PRUDENCE again*): I should have thought you'd be a little more interested?

PRUDENCE: I'm no the least bit interested. (*Looks out of window.*)

[FAIRLEY *sees the paper-covered book on couch beside him, and takes it up casually.*

HELEN (*quickly*): Father, the Committee will be here any minute now. Don't you think——? (*But she is too late.*)

FAIRLEY (*sternly*): Whose book is this?

PRUDENCE (*starts round*): Oh—mine.

FAIRLEY (*rises*): So—you've disobeyed me again? Am I to understand from this that you still harbour the same misguided feelings for Sinclair?

PRUDENCE (*rises*): I told you—I love him.

FAIRLEY: You can still talk of loving this *drunkard*—who was dragged through the streets last night like a——

PRUDENCE (*gasps*): He *wasn't* dragged through the streets?

FAIRLEY:—and who might be in gaol now, if it hadn't been for——

HELEN: Oh, father, don't make it sound worse than it was! He was only kept at the police station a few minutes.

PRUDENCE (*with a little cry*): Oh, *no!* They *didn't* take him to the police station!

HELEN: Only for a few minutes, darling.

[*She goes to her. But PRUDENCE pushes her aside and confronts her father.*

PRUDENCE (*tensely*): And *you* don't care! You're *glad!* You think it will stop me loving him!

HELEN (*sharply*): Prue, don't be silly.

FAIRLEY (*To HELEN*): Let her speak.

PRUDENCE: Yes, I *will* speak! It's never occurred to you that Jack is a human being, with a soul. Just because he divorced his wife—and because he's weak and drinks too much—you think he's an inhuman brute who deserves what he gets. You don't know him—but I *do!* I know how good he is—and how kind and gentle and human he can be! (*Suddenly verging on tears*) I know what he's suffering now—with the shame and misery of everything last night—the ghastly humiliation of being dragged to the police station like a criminal! You don't know—you're only sorry he wasn't *punished!* But I know how he's being punished *at this moment*—and will be for days—ashamed to go out in the streets—afraid to look people in the face—everybody pointing at him—and sneering at him . . . Oh! (*She bursts into tears and runs to the door.*)

FAIRLEY: Prudence!

[*She runs out.*]

Prudence . . . (*Is about to follow her.*)

HELEN: Father—wait! Let her go. I want to speak to you.

[FAIRLEY *hesitates, then closes the door and comes back slowly.*]

She's terribly upset. She couldn't have spoken to you like that if she wasn't. Prudence would be the last person in the world to accuse you so unfairly, if she wasn't so unhappy about it all.

FAIRLEY (*thoughtfully*): She was right.

HELEN: Oh, father, don't you start blaming yourself! It's ridiculous. You knew perfectly well she wasn't right.

FAIRLEY: She was sufficiently right to make me feel—rather ashamed of myself. I've been using my personal feelings as a father to bolster up my spiritual convictions.

HELEN (*smiles*): Is that so very terrible?

FAIRLEY: It's very foolish—and rather dangerous, my dear. Spiritual convictions exist in their own right.

HELEN (*firmly*): Father, I want to tell you something.

FAIRLEY: Yes, my dear?

HELEN: I hate having to hurt you, but—Prudence and Jack love each other, and I believe now—well—I'm in favour of them marrying. (*He stares at her ; she continues quickly before he can speak*) I often told you—didn't I?—that I could see the argument for—for allowing the innocent party in a divorce to marry again—the *intellectual* argument, I mean—but I used to agree with you that *spiritually* it seemed wrong.

FAIRLEY (*quietly*): That spiritually it *was* wrong.

HELEN: Yes, I *used* to think that, to believe that—

FAIRLEY: In other words, you had faith. You're not telling me you have lost your faith? (*Smiles.*) Because if you are, my dear, I'm afraid I can't believe *that*.

HELEN: Well, you know that once or twice lately, father, I have been a bit—wobbly—on this particular point. I always found it hard to see why it's—immoral.

FAIRLEY: You know, the longer I live the more convinced I am that most of our troubles today come from this habit we've fallen into of regarding Christianity merely as a code of morals—as if morality were an end in itself.

HELEN (*puzzled*): But— isn't it, father?

FAIRLEY: You know very well it is not, my dear. The one thing Christ taught, from first to last, was that morality is only a *means* to an end—a means of subduing our animal nature so that we can enjoy—not only in the next life but here on earth—a deep, rich life of spiritual value and meaning. “The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.” Isn't it one of the commonest and saddest complaints we hear today—“Life has no meaning”? No wonder our churches are empty if we just tell people they mustn't do this and they mustn't do that, “because God says so”, as if God were some old tyrant who enjoys putting unbearable restraints on us for the pleasure of seeing us squirm under them.

HELEN: But then, why should Prudence and Jack have to squirm if they're both morally innocent?

FAIRLEY: Listen, my dear. See it like this: morality is the “narrow way” of self-restraint, leading to the “larger life” of self-fulfilment—just as we often find a dark narrow lane, full of stones and pitfalls, leading to a huge field of sunshine and flowers. Now make just one exception—make just one small gap in the hedge that borders that lane—and the throng of humanity will gradually break it down and widen it—until it's wider than the lane itself, and we all go pouring through it—into the wrong field, the swampy field of physical gratification, from which it's very hard to pick one's way back.

HELEN (*thoughtfully*): I see that, father; but I still think it's hard that innocent people have to suffer for other people's sins.

FAIRLEY: Then surely the solution is to *prevent* the “other people” from sinning, by preventing divorce? You're not telling me that there's any less suffering in the world since divorce was

introduced? I should say there's a great deal more. Prudence wouldn't be suffering now, if Sinclair was still married—she'd never have allowed herself to *think* of loving him.

[ANNIE enters.]

ANNIE: Mr. Brasebury is here, sir: he says to say the Committee has arrived.

FAIRLEY: How many of them are there?

ANNIE: Three men and two women all told, sir.

FAIRLEY (*to HELEN*): I'll bet the women do most of the talking. (*To ANNIE*) I'll be with them in a moment.

ANNIE: Yes, sir.

FAIRLEY: Oh, and—ask Prudence to come here.

ANNIE (*nervously*): Miss Prudence has gone out, sir.

FAIRLEY: Out?

ANNIE (*penitently*): Yes, sir. I know 'twas my fault, sir. But it's the last time I'll let my tongue run away with me like that again. I wouldn't have said a word, sir, only I thought it'd have a good effect, and keep her from seeing him again, instead of sending her straight off to him like that.

HELEN: How do you know she's gone to him?

ANNIE: Well, I only *thought*, miss—I saw her from the kitchen window, running down the road, pulling on her coat, the tears streaming down her face.

HELEN: You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Annie.

ANNIE: I *am*, miss. I *am*, sir. I'll never let my tongue run away like that again, sir.

FAIRLEY: I might put some faith in that, Annie, if your tongue hadn't been running away with you, off and on, for twenty years.

ANNIE: I'm sorry, sir.

FAIRLEY: I'll see you about this later.

ANNIE: Yes, sir. (*She goes out, gloomily.*)

FAIRLEY: I'm very worried about Prudence, Helen. I can understand your sympathy, my dear; it's terrible to see her *torn* like this.

HELEN: Well, I just had to tell you how I feel, father. It's so difficult to explain really—but honestly, when I'm being absolutely truthful with myself, I just *can't* believe it would be a sin for them to marry.

FAIRLEY (*rising—sympathetically*): Yes, that's the real problem, isn't it? To know when we're being absolutely truthful with ourselves—truthful to the highest thing in us. But how often have we agreed, my dear, you and I, that the highest truth is only to be learned by listening, not to the prompting of some passing emotion, which can make black appear white if it suits our little human interests, nor to some temporary conclusion of our finite minds—but by listening to the still, small voice of conscience, the true voice of the spirit—which comes to us from the sunlight field at the end of the dark lane?

HELEN: Yes, I know, father; but to-day the voice of the spirit seems to tell me that they *should* be allowed to marry.

FAIRLEY (*smiles, gravely*): Then I can only say, my dear, that you haven't been listening very hard lately—or that you've been listening to the wrong voice, perhaps. (*Cheerfully, moving to door*) I still have hopes, you know, that Prudence may come to realise what a fine fellow Dave is. I don't see how any young woman could fail to admire him. Do you?

HELEN (*turns to tea table, self-consciously*): That's another thing I wanted to tell you. I don't think Dave is in love with Prudence—

FAIRLEY: Give him a chance, my dear! He's only spoken to her once. And if I know anything about men—as Susan would say—I shouldn't think he's the kind of chap to be put off easily by a woman. Would you?

HELEN (*her back to him*): No, I shouldn't think so . . .

[ANNIE enters.]

ANNIE: Mr. Dave Manford has called, miss.

HELEN (*drops a bunch of spoons*): What?

FAIRLEY (*looks at his watch. To HELEN*): Already?

HELEN (*flurried*): Yes, I—he said he'd come a little early.

FAIRLEY: Oh? He rang up?

HELEN: Y-yes. I didn't think he meant nearly an hour early!

FAIRLEY: Show him in, Annie.

ANNIE: Yes, sir. (*She goes out.*)

FAIRLEY: A pity Prudence is out, and I've got this committee! I'm afraid you'll have to try to entertain him.

HELEN: Yes, I'll try . . . (*She gives one or two surreptitious touches to her hair and dress.*)

[ANNIE returns with DAVE, and withdraws.]

FAIRLEY: Ah! Welcome!

DAVE: Hello, sir.

FAIRLEY (*shaking hands*): You'll have to forgive us—I'm afraid we're all rather scattered at the moment. Prudence is out, and I've got to see a botheration Committee—but Helen would like to have a chat with you.

DAVE (*smiles*): Fine! That'll suit me!

FAIRLEY: I'm sure she'd be interested to hear about Canada.

DAVE: Sure! I'll tell her lots.

FAIRLEY (*having his little joke*): That's jake by you?

DAVE: It certainly is.

FAIRLEY: O.K. I'll see you later. (*He goes out, taking the book with him.*)

[DAVE smiles across at HELEN, who has been rather embarrassed by her father's unwitting tactlessness.]

DAVE: So you haven't told him yet?

HELEN: About—about us meeting yesterday? No, I was just summoning up courage to, but—I'm afraid you're a little earlier than I expected.

DAVE (*crosses to her*): You're lucky I wasn't here an hour ago! It took a mighty big effort not to be here a lot earlier. All the clocks at Tamworth seemed to be going at half speed since yesterday.

HELEN (*picking up spoons again*): Yes, you must find time passes rather slowly after your life in Canada.

DAVE: If you think we're going to talk about Canada you'll be disappointed. I want to talk about something else.

[*His hand closes over hers. She half turns to him, with fear in her eyes, and the spoons slip from the other hand.*]

You'd better tell your father pretty soon,
Helen . . .

HELEN: Yes, I—I *am* going to tell him!

DAVE: . . . because I'll have to tell him if you don't. And when I start, it won't be just our little meeting I'll tell him about. I'll have something more important to say to him.
(*Takes her other hand.*)

HELEN: More important?

DAVE: Something I've known since yesterday—known for certain, that is—although I had a pretty good hunch at the bazaar. It's something *you* know about, too—if you don't, you must be mighty slow in the uptake. You do know, don't you?

HELEN: I—I—I——

DAVE (*drawing her into his arms*): It's no good making those funny little noises in your throat. You know as sure as any woman *could* know. And I'm as sure as any man was ever sure, Helen, that you're the woman I've been looking for. And in case you haven't taken it in yet, I'm going to tell you right now, for the sheer joy of saying it. I love you, and always will love you, more than any woman in life! (*He tilts her face up and smiles down into her eyes.*) You knew I was going to say something like that, didn't you?

HELEN (*smiles back at him shyly*): I hoped you were. . . .

DAVE (*amazement spreads over his face*): You *hoped* I was?

HELEN (*startled by the change in him*): Yes. I mean——

DAVE (*with indescribable relief*): Gee! And I figured it would take days—weeks, perhaps!

HELEN: Oh! (*In half real, half mock embarrassment, she makes a little movement away from him.*)

DAVE (*drawing her back*): Here! Say that again! You *hoped* I was going to tell you I loved you?

HELEN (*looking down, defiantly*): Yes.

DAVE: Well, I'll be——! Here have I been planning tactics all day—for returning to the

attack every time you—and now you——(*Words fail him.*)

HELEN: I'm sorry if I've spoilt your tactics.

DAVE (*tilts her face up again*): You mean this? You're not playing with me? You really mean you—you—you——

HELEN: Now who's making funny noises?

[*They smile incredulously at each other; then their smiling changes subtly to solemn gazing. DAVE draws her closer to him, and her arms go round his shoulders. He kisses her. When he speaks again, there is real humility in his voice.*]

DAVE: I guess you're right. You've certainly spoilt my tactics. I just can't believe this is true. This morning I was figuring out what I'd do if all my tactics failed. I didn't believe my luck could hold. And now I—well, I haven't a tactic left!

HELEN: I'm glad.

DAVE (*on second thoughts*): Yes, I have. (*He kisses her again. Then resting her head in the crook of his arm, he looks at her in silence for a moment.*) It is true, isn't it? I'm not just dreaming this?

HELEN (*sighs happily*): If you're dreaming, I'm dreaming too.

DAVE: And it is true, too, what you've said? (*Significantly.*) At least, what you *haven't* said?

HELEN: Words are so feeble. I never knew before how feeble they could be.

DAVE: H'm. That sounds a pretty feeble excuse to me! (*He raises her head until their lips are almost touching.*) You can't get out of it like that.

HELEN: I love you. I think I've loved you all my life. . . .

[*He kisses her again, with sudden spontaneous passion. Then:*]

DAVE: Say, this is making me giddy. Come and sit down. (*Taking her to couch.*) Perhaps we'd better have our little talk about Canada after all.

[*They sit on couch, holding hands like a couple of children. HELEN is in a kind of smiling trance.*]

DAVE: No, I guess Canada can wait . . . there's something more important to settle. Now listen—we've got to be practical. I have a feeling that if I don't lay hold on myself right away I'll be sitting here holding your hand this time next week, and there's a whole heap of things to be fixed before then—things that'll need your co-operation—and I guess that'll be hard to get if you don't even listen to me.

HELEN (*starts out of her trance*): I *am* listening!

DAVE (*smiles suddenly*): Gee, I'm certainly well ahead of schedule! I didn't reckon to have you sitting down listening to me for three days at least!

HELEN (*smiles*): I have been a brazen hussy, haven't I?

DAVE: You sure have! I thought Sue was the brazen one of the family. That reminds me—what's Sue got against *me* suddenly?

HELEN: Sue? Nothing! Why?

DAVE: She certainly has. I'm not such a dumb-bell as not to know when a girl is nursing a frozen mitt for me.

[HELEN *puckers her brows, mystified.*]

Coming along just now, driving through the High Street, I saw her on the sidewalk and sang out to her in my best soprano. She took one look at me and bolted into the nearest store.

HELEN: Oh, she couldn't have seen you!

DAVE: She saw me all right. She even gave me a cute little smile, like a bent hairpin. But let's quit talking about Sue. (*Kisses her hand.*) What I've been wanting to ask you since yesterday is: what's your real impression of Tamworth?

HELEN: You know I loved it. It's much more beautiful than I thought—and much bigger. It's a huge place inside!

DAVE: You won't be scared of running it, I hope?

HELEN: Running it?

DAVE: Now say, listen! (*Leaning over her, smiling.*) I suppose you know we're going to be married—and it'll be your job to run Tamworth—anyway, the domestic part? Hadn't that occurred to you?

HELEN: I may be a brazen hussy, but I hadn't got quite as far as that!

DAVE: Then you'd better get used to the idea, quick. Because I want to take you over again tomorrow; I guess I've been jumping ahead, in my mind—and I've got one or two ideas to put to you. That big room at the top, for instance, facing south—the one my uncle used for his museum—I discovered something about it. It used to be the nursery.

HELEN (*looks down*): Did it?

DAVE: I guess it will make a darn fine nursery.

[HELEN *hides her face against his sleeve in genuine shyness.*

What's the matter?

HELEN: You certainly do "jump ahead".

DAVE: Oh, I got further than that. While I was shaving this morning—looking out on that lovely English park—I bought a few ponies for our eldest boy. (*As a sudden thought occurs to*

him:) Gec, won't the family be tickled when they hear the news!

HELEN: You *will* break it gently to father, won't you?

DAVE (*puzzled*): Sure. But—you don't mean——

HELEN: Oh there's nothing to worry about. Only you see—well, he depends on me rather a lot—he has for years—especially since mother died.

DAVE: I got you. I guess he's going to miss you plenty—it's natural he won't want to lose you——

HELEN: Oh no, it's not that. He's not selfish; he'll be glad—for my sake. It's *I* who'll miss *him* in a way. You see, he doesn't really *know* how much he depends on me—he won't know till I'm gone.

[SUSAN bounces in, in her usual way, and recoils at the sight of them.]

SUSAN: Oh! I—I'm sorry!

DAVE (*to HELEN, rising*): Well, I guess we've got to break the news to the family some time. We can start on Sue. I'm going to be your brother-in-law, Sue. What do you think of that?

[SUSAN looks from one to the other in silence.]

Well, you certainly don't seem to be set on fire by the idea!

HELEN (*rises*): What's wrong, Sue?

SUSAN (*to DAVE*): I expect you'll hate me for it, but I wanted to be fair with you—that's why I came up now. I guessed you'd be here, and I wanted to say it to your face—something I heard about you this afternoon.

DAVE: I fancied something was wrong when I saw you in the High Street.

SUSAN: I know rumours are often silly and wrong, but I don't think this one is. I heard this afternoon that you had a wife in Canada.

DAVE: You don't say?

SUSAN: And you've run away from her.

DAVE: Well, well! Isn't it just wonderful how news travels? I thought no one in Midenhurst knew that except my solicitor.

SUSAN: It's true, then?

DAVE: Well—yes, in a sense it's true. I *had* a wife in Canada, and I suppose I *have* kind of run away from her. You see, we were divorced. (*To HELEN, who is staring at him in horror.*) It's one of the little things I was going to tell you tomorrow, when I returned to the attack.

HELEN: You mean you—you—*how* divorced?

[DAVE is puzzled by the question.]

SUSAN: Were *you* the innocent party?

DAVE: Innocent party! I'll say I was! Innocent wasn't the word for me—until I caught Louise out the *second* time—then I decided the other guy could have her for keeps.

HELEN: You mean *she* was unfaithful to *you*?

DAVE: She certainly was. But I don't get the point of this third degree business. There's plenty of divorces in England.

SUSAN: You seem to forget that we're parson's daughters.

DAVE: Oh—yes, I expect that makes a little difference. Your father has ideas about divorce?

SUSAN: He has very definite ideas. So have we.

DAVE (*to HELEN*): Say, you're not trying to scare me? *You* seem kind of shocked about it, too.

HELEN (*smiles, rather dazed*): Not really. I—as a matter of fact, we were talking about divorce only today. Father isn't even in favour of the innocent party marrying again.

DAVE: Gosh, that sounds a bit tough!

SUSAN: Neither are *you*, Helen.

HELEN: Yes, I am.

SUSAN: Since when?

HELEN: I've been getting more in favour of it for a long time now. I told father today I——

[ANNIE enters.

ANNIE: Excuse me, miss. Mr. Manford is wanted on the phone.

DAVE (*surprised*): On the phone? I guess there's some mistake. Nobody knows I'm here, except the gardener at Tamworth.

ANNIE: Then maybe it's him that wants you, sir.

DAVE (*still puzzled, to HELEN*): Perhaps someone else has been getting the low-down on me; news certainly travels fast in this little community. You'll excuse me?

[*He goes out, with ANNIE. There is a moment's self-conscious silence between SUSAN and HELEN.*

SUSAN (*bluntly*): Has he been making love to you?

HELEN (*smiles, sitting on couch*): I'm afraid he has.

SUSAN: And you let him?

HELEN: I'm afraid I did.

SUSAN: Helen, you can't be—you can't *think* you're in love with *him*?

HELEN: I'm afraid I can.

SUSAN (*throwing a black look at the door*): The swine!

HELEN: Don't be ridiculous, Sue! I'm not a baby!

SUSAN: You are a baby, in this. You know nothing about men.

HELEN: Well, I'm certainly learning fast!

SUSAN (*earnestly*): Helen, you're *not* in love with him?

HELEN (*laughs*): I'm sorry, darling, I am in love with him; hopelessly, helplessly, gloriously, idiotically in love with him!

SUSAN (*ominously*): Then you're a fool. You don't know the truth about him.

HELEN: What do you mean?

SUSAN: What I say. He's not worth your little finger. He's nothing but a common adventurer.

HELEN (*rises*): You have no right to say that! You know nothing about him! How dare you say such a thing!

SUSAN: I do know something about him. I know he is *not* divorced. He's lied to us.

HELEN: You *can't* know! How *could* you know?

SUSAN (*calmly*): Because his wife at this moment is in Midenhurst, staying at the Falcon Hotel. She arrived by the two o'clock train from Southampton.

HELEN (*sinks on to couch again*): It's not true—it can't be true——

SUSAN: It is true, Helen.

HELEN (*suddenly seeing an explanation*): She's kept his name—that's what it is! She'd still have his *name!*

SUSAN: I thought that at first. So did Mr. Leonard at the Falcon, until she deliberately told him she was the wife of Dave Manford of Tamworth Hall. (*With another glance at door.*) It's easy for him to sneer at the rate news travels

in Midenhurst. I'd like to know where that kind of news wouldn't travel fast! (*She notices HELEN's expression of misery, and goes to her.*) Oh, darling, I'm sorry, I'm terribly sorry.

HELEN: I can't believe it . . . I *can't* believe it . . . I can't *believe* it . . .

[DAVE enters, wearing a very worried expression. The two women rise as he enters, and he at once notices the change in their manner.]

DAVE (to SUSAN): I see. So you know already?

SUSAN: Know what?

DAVE: You know that Louise has trailed me to England?

SUSAN: Yes, she's staying at the Falcon Hotel.

DAVE (*smiles grimly*): You're a little behindhand. She only called there to lunch and powder her nose—before she went on to park herself at Tamworth. I give you my word she won't be at Tamworth long.

SUSAN: So your dirty swinish game is found out?

DAVE (*frowns*): Say, what's biting you now? Got another little surprise packet up your sleeve?

SUSAN: You admit she's your wife?

DAVE: Haven't I said we divorced?

SUSAN: She doesn't say so. She told the hotel-keeper she's your wife.

DAVE (*ponders it, then smiles grimly again*): Thanks for the tip. She would. Louise never does things by halves. I can just see her sitting down to figure it out when she heard I'd landed a nice little fortune in England. She was always the girl for money, was Louise; she'd sell her soul any day for a thousand dollars—if she had one to sell. That's why she sold her body instead. It was me being out of work and having no

money that bust us up; but there were plenty of other guys ready to spend their money on her. Now she thinks she can stage a come-back. She's got some hope! (*He looks at HELEN and sees her eyes fastened on him.*) Say, you're not doubting my word on this? *You* don't think I'm just spilling a bunch of lies? (*She smiles and shakes her head. He crosses to her—tenderly*) I'm sorry you've got to hear it like this, honey, but I swear by God I never thought . . .

HELEN (*puts a finger on his lips*): You needn't swear. I know anything you tell me is true.

[*He thanks her with a look; turns to SUSAN.*]

SUSAN: I'm afraid I'm not quite so easily convinced.

DAVE (*angrily*): No? Then maybe you'd better hustle down town and see if you can pick up some more dirt about me.

HELEN: You mustn't blame Sue. She's my sister, and she thinks she ought to—to protect me (*smiles*).

DAVE (*doubtful for a moment, then smiles too*): I see your point. I guess you're right. I'm sorry, Sue. But you don't have to worry. I'll do all the protecting necessary for Helen. You can take it from me, Louise's hit the wrong trail. She won't find me as soft as she used to. She's going to meet a very different guy from the guy she divorced last fall.

SUSAN: *She* divorced? You've just said *you* divorced *her*!

DAVE: You'll pardon me—I said no such thing.

SUSAN: You definitely said that *she* was unfaithful to *you*!

DAVE: I certainly did.

SUSAN: And that *you* were the innocent party.

DAVE: I certainly was.

SUSAN: Well, then!

DAVE: But *she* divorced *me*, for all that.

[HELEN and SUSAN look at each other.
Say, what's this buck you're trying to pull on me *now*?

SUSAN: Do you mean that you—supplied her with evidence?

DAVE: Sure. (*Then he remembers he is talking to parson's daughters.*) I suppose that doesn't sound a very nice thing to do—to girls like you. But Louise made a big handle about being divorced respectably—she's a great girl for respectability—on the outside. Besides, *I* had no legal evidence against *her*, although I knew she'd double-crossed me; so she held the trump card.

SUSAN: How utterly sordid and disgusting!

DAVE: Well—I'm sorry—it was Hobson's choice. At that time I'd have done more than that to get quit of Louise, I don't mind confessing.

SUSAN: You certainly don't seem to mind confessing.

HELEN (*hotly*): That's not fair, Sue! A moment ago you accused him of lying!

SUSAN (*shrugs*): Anyway, it doesn't alter the fact that he's the guilty party in the divorce. Even *you* can't deny that.

HELEN (*hesitates for a second*): Legally—not morally.

SUSAN: Helen, how can you talk like that? You can't possibly mean what you're saying!

HELEN: I do mean it. I know father wouldn't agree—

SUSAN: Neither would anyone else—with decent feelings! Even Dean Murray draws the line at such—such beastly mockery of marriage!

DAVE (*to SUSAN*): You know, I can't make you out. A couple of days ago you were nice and friendly—real human. And now, suddenly, just because I had a bad break once and got tied up with the wrong sort of girl, you whip round on me like a young jackal!

SUSAN: I don't know anything about jackals; but I happen to be a Christian, and I have my ideals about marriage.

DAVE: Ideals about marriage? Sounds to me like what Louise calls "respectability". I guess you and Louise have quite a bit in common.

SUSAN: Thank you for that *insult*!

[ANNIE *enters in a flurry of suppressed excitement; she closes the door before she speaks.*

ANNIE: Excuse me, miss. Dean Murray has called to see your father. When I said he was with the Committee, he asked if Miss Prudence was in, and when I said she'd gone out but *you* were both in, he said would I announce him.

[HELEN and SUSAN, especially the latter, are thrown into a nervous flutter for a moment, as the result of many years of deference to the hierarchy of the Church.

SUSAN: I'm off! (*Collects her bag and gloves hurriedly.*)

HELEN: Annie, let him stay in the visitors' room for a few minutes; then——

ANNIE (*lowers her voice*): He's not in it, miss—he wouldn't go. He's waiting in the hall.

SUSAN: Oh, Lord, that's torn it!

HELEN (*to SUSAN*): He'll have to come in.

DAVE: Say, honey, I've been thinking: I don't feel very like a tea-party just now; the sooner I beat it back to Tamworth and make Louise realise she's on the wrong——

HELEN: Don't go for a few minutes—please! I want you to see the Dean—and I want *him* to see *you*. Show him in, Annie.

[ANNIE *exits, closing door.*

SUSAN: I can't possibly stay more than a minute, Helen, I've got this Institute meeting. I suppose you know why he's come? You heard what happened last night?

HELEN (*tidying cushions on sofa*): Yes, he rang up father.

DAVE: Who *is* this guy, anyway?

HELEN (*smiles*): Sssh! He's a Dean—one of the big guns of the Church.

DAVE (*grins*): Bigger than a canon?

HELEN: Much bigger! And he's a very famous "ecclesiastical controversialist".

DAVE (*nervously*): Gee, I hope he don't pick on *me* for a little argument!

[ANNIE *enters and announces "Dean Murray", and exits. He is a rather short, rotund man of about 50, with pale, bland features, crowned by a high intellectual forehead. From behind a pair of rimless spectacles his very light blue eyes look out on the world with a benign shrewdness. As if by way of atoning for his obvious intellectuality, he adopts a jovial, bantering manner on social occasions.*

MURRAY: Well, Susan, how are you?

SUSAN: Very well thank you, Mr. Dean.

MURRAY (*shaking hands*): And what are you doing here, may I ask, instead of at home minding your baby? (*Pats her cheek and turns to HELEN*) I do believe you look younger every time I see you, Helen; you'll soon be wearing a pigtail down your back again! (*Shakes hands.*)

HELEN: This is Mr. Manford, Mr. Dean. (*To DAVE*) Dean Murray.

DAVE: How d'you do, sir? (*Offers hand.*)

MURRAY (*holding his hand, puzzled*): Manford—
Manford?

DAVE: I'm the new guy at Tamworth Hall.

MURRAY: Why, of course! (*Shakes hand heartily.*)
You're the very man I've been looking for!
(*DAVE raises a suspicious eyebrow at him, but
MURRAY drops his hand and turns to HELEN.*) Now
isn't that lucky? Coming along here I was
worrying my head off about the new heating
plant for the Cathedral. (*To DAVE*) I want
some money from you, young man.

DAVE (*relieved*): Oh! Sure!

MURRAY: Don't be too sure; you don't know
how much I want yet. (*To HELEN.*) The con-
tractors were too smart for us—the rogues—
I've never known contractors yet who didn't
work up a list of extras almost as big as the
job itself. They're stinging us for another £355.
(*He sees DAVE making a wry face.*) Oh, I'm not
going to ask you for *all* of that! I've raised
£55 already!

HELEN: Do sit down, Mr. Dean.

SUSAN (*as he is about to sit*): You'll excuse me,
won't you? I'm afraid I must rush away, I've
got a Women's Institute meeting.

MURRAY (*mock severely*): There's no need to
make excuses, young woman. Have I ever
entered this house when you didn't have to
rush away somewhere? (*To HELEN*) Isn't that
true? (*HELEN smiles at SUSAN.*) Now I charge
you, Helen—was she in any hurry to rush away
before I arrived?

HELEN (*sharing his little joke*): Well—I can't
say I really—

SUSAN: Oh, Hell, I was!

MURRAY (*gasps*): Did I hear aright?

SUSAN: Oh—I'm sorry! Hell is short for Helen—we use it sometimes.

MURRAY: I see; when there are Deans and people about? (*He smiles.*) Off you go, my dear; you mustn't be late for your meeting. Good-bye.

SUSAN: Good-bye! (*They shake hands.*) So long, Hell—Helen!

[*She throws a glance at DAVE, and goes.*]

MURRAY: She gave me quite a turn! (*Sitting*) I've really come in to see your father, of course; we—er—we got cut off during our talk on the phone.

HELEN (*after a moment's hesitation*): Mr. Dean, would you mind if I asked your advice about—I mean your *opinion* about something?

MURRAY (*peers at her through his spectacles before replying*): I should be highly honoured, my dear.

HELEN (*trying to sound impersonal*): Well, it's just—we were talking about—divorce—before you came in——

MURRAY (*helpfully*): Yes?

HELEN: ——and wondering whether, if two people were divorced, and if one of them—the woman, for instance—was really the guilty party—I mean, if she had been unfaithful to her husband, but he had been faithful to her—and—but if he provided evidence so that she could divorce him——

MURRAY: Yes?

HELEN: Well, don't you think—I mean, *do* you think—that he was morally innocent?

MURRAY (*with a benign look*): I should have to have a very queer notion of morality, my dear, to say that a man who deliberately commits a mortal sin is morally innocent . . .

HELEN: But——

MURRAY: —for whatever reason he commits it.

DAVE: But suppose—if I may butt in—I was listening to the conversation too—suppose he had no alternative?

HELEN: Surely, Mr. Dean, if his wife was unfaithful to him—twice, for instance—it was twice, in the case we were discussing—but if he couldn't prove anything—and if she simply refused to let him divorce her—surely that makes a difference?

MURRAY: I fail to see it. The laws of mathematics apply to sin as much as to anything else, my dear. Two plus one mortal sins still make three mortal sins. Added to which, from the type of case we seem to be discussing, it doesn't sound as if either party is over-burdened with a sense of the sanctity and moral obligations of marriage.

HELEN: Oh, but that's not true, Mr. Dean. We—we know the people. The husband is a moral man.

MURRAY: I see. And he wants to marry again, I suppose? That's the problem?

HELEN: Yes.

MURRAY: What about the woman he wants to marry? Has she no—religious scruples in the matter?

HELEN: She thinks he's morally innocent. And you must admit, Mr. Dean, that quite a number of clergy would agree.

MURRAY (*curtly*): No doubt. Quite a number of clergy I regret to say, don't know the rudiments of the religion they profess to teach.

HELEN (*rather timidly*): Well—you could hardly say that, Mr. Dean, about—well, the Bishop of Dalminster, for instance. He believes that every case should be judged on its merits and

he has married several people who were—what *you* would call guilty.

MURRAY: I am aware of that fact. I am also aware that there are gentlemen in the Church who aspire to be even more progressive than the Bishop of Dalminster, to the extent of not even bothering if the parties concerned are—what *you* would call—guilty. I expect to hear any day that some fellow has gone the whole hog and pinned a notice on his church door: “Step right in. No questions asked.” Then we shall have achieved the perfect Christian registry office.

HELEN: Oh, it’s all so *muddling* . . .

MURRAY: Well, there you are, my dear—you asked for my advice—for my opinion, I should say—and I’ve given it. Personally, I should refuse to marry your two friends. I should advise the woman concerned to put away all thoughts of marrying the fellow.

HELEN: Even if you knew she was a woman who always tried her best to be a good Christian?

MURRAY: Even if she was as good a Christian as you, my dear. In fact, even if you were the woman concerned.

[HELEN and DAVE exchange faint smiles. The DEAN proceeds to wipe his spectacles with a silk handkerchief, adding mildly,

And even if I was hoping to raise the best part of £300 from the man concerned.

[The smiles on the lovers’ faces fade slowly, and they look at each other and at the DEAN with dawning suspicion. He goes on wiping his spectacles innocently.

[FAIRLEY enters. He has his grim, set expression, and his voice is a little hoarse; but his eyes are shining with a strange brightness. He goes straight to the DEAN, offering his hand.

FAIRLEY: I'm sorry. Annie has just told me you were here.

MURRAY (*shaking hands*): There's no need to be sorry. We've been having a very interesting discussion—a very enlightening discussion. (*To HELEN.*) Haven't we?

FAIRLEY: You're lucky. I've been having a discussion—(*pointing*) in *there*, and the one thing it lacked from beginning to end was the faintest gleam of enlightenment. You probably know all about the Society for the Reform of Christian Marriage?

MURRAY: I wouldn't say that. I know all about some of its *members*—all I want to know.

HELEN: How did the meeting go, father?

FAIRLEY: It didn't go. I went—off like a rocket. (*To the DEAN*) But you want to talk to me? If you'll just wait a moment—the place reeks with tobacco smoke—I've opened the windows. Well, Dave? I'm afraid you're not finding us very good hosts. (*To HELEN*) Where's Prudence?

HELEN: She's not back yet.

FAIRLEY: Not yet?

DAVE: If you don't mind, sir, I'll ask you to excuse me. I've had a message through from Tamworth—I'm wanted back there urgently.

FAIRLEY: Oh? The ancestral home falling down?

DAVE: No—but I guess they've got a burglar in.

FAIRLEY: You don't mean it!

DAVE: I sure *do!* So if you don't mind, I'll slip along. (*Offering his hand.*) Maybe we can fix another day for tea?

FAIRLEY (*shaking hands*): It's jake by me. I'll get Prudence to fix it.

DAVE: Fine! (*Nervously.*) Well—good-bye, Mr. Dean.

MURRAY: Good-bye. (*Holds his hand, while he says ominously*) I'll be seein' ye!

DAVE: Oh—sure!

[*He goes out, accompanied by HELEN, who has moved to the door.*]

FAIRLEY: Fine chap, isn't he?

MURRAY (*non-committally*): Very.

[*He sits again. There is a moment's silence between the two men, as if each is conscious of an impending clash.*]

FAIRLEY: Well, of course I know why you've come, Dean. But first I'd like to say I'm sorry for that telephone business.

MURRAY: Yes, we had rather a bad line; got cut off suddenly.

FAIRLEY (*smiles*): Thanks; but—I apologise sincerely. I should have had more pluck. Do sit down.

MURRAY (*sits*): Pluck?

FAIRLEY (*sits*): Oh, I can be a terrible coward sometimes. I was today. You see, I thought this affair of Sinclair had blown over. We'd had some very stormy scenes about him, Prudence and I, and when I realised yesterday that she—loves him—I knew the fight was on with a vengeance. (*Staring before him.*) It's a hard thing, you know, for a father—a father who loves his daughter as dearly as I love Prudence—it's a hard thing to have to put aside that love and look on at suffering that can tear the heart out of you, for the sake of the Higher Love that rules our spirit.

MURRAY (*sincerely*): I'm sure it is. I sympathise.

FAIRLEY: I need all my courage at times to keep myself from listening to the voice of the tempter.

MURRAY (*smiles*): Meaning me?

FAIRLEY (*smiles*): Well—you can be very plausible, Dean.

MURRAY: Knowing the sense in which I usually employ that word, myself, I won't pretend to feel flattered.

FAIRLEY: You say that Sinclair, in his drunken state last night, asked you to marry him and Prudence?

MURRAY: Yes. He also seemed very anxious that I should come over here and "dot you one on the boko." That isn't why I've come, of course. You're bigger than me, for one thing.

FAIRLEY: A pleasant prospect, having him for a son-in-law!

MURRAY (*leans forward suddenly, with an air of getting down to business*): Fairley, do you realise *why* he drinks so much? I know Sinclair; I know how utterly unsuited he and his wife were; and I do believe in my heart that the sole cause of his present—debauchery—is his frustrated love for Prudence. You said just now that she loves him? It's not just infatuation?

FAIRLEY (*with a rare tenderness in his smile and voice*): Ah, yes, she loves him. That I know. She loves him as only Prudence *can* love—with an angel's love. That's her tragedy; her tragedy and my—torture—because I daren't admit it when she's with me—in case I weaken—I have to pretend not to believe it.

MURRAY: But why pretend? Are you being fair to her? Fair to yourself?

FAIRLEY: Perhaps not. I'm trying to be fair to something higher than either of us—our faith in the spirit of Christ's teaching. So let me ask you one thing—one favour. Let us not try to argue this. It would only be a waste of words.

MURRAY: Of course—argument always is. But may we not discuss it? You speak as if we were poles apart, Fairley; but you'll admit that our views on this subject are much closer than—

FAIRLEY: I have no views. I have only convictions.

MURRAY: Our convictions, then. We differ from each other on one single aspect of marriage—whereas we both differ from extremists like Dalminster on a hundred points. You and I are much closer.

FAIRLEY: I prefer the extremists. They're less dangerous.

MURRAY: Dangerous?

FAIRLEY: To me. Just because they're *not* close. The pagan twaddle they teach is so far removed from my conception of Christian marriage that I run no risk from them—they're too far away on the outskirts of the crowd. If you'll forgive the analogy, it's the plausible gentleman at your elbow in the crowd who is most likely to pick your pocket.

MURRAY (*not too pleased, in spite of his bland smile*): I should hate to pursue that analogy—in case I found myself suggesting that some of your convictions may be a little insecure, if you're so afraid of losing them.

FAIRLEY (*slowly*): No. It's not that. My convictions—since we're using that word—I should prefer to say my faith—my *vision of Christ's message*—is so valuable to me—so priceless—that I dare not risk losing sight of it. I've seen, too often, how easy it is for articles of faith to get lost in the labyrinths of intellectual discussion.

MURRAY: You're very down on the intellect—which, after all, is but one of God's gifts.

FAIRLEY: And, like any other of His gifts, can be abused and put to wrong purposes. The snare of the intellect can be as dangerous as the snare of the flesh.

MURRAY: But should we not—

FAIRLEY (*jumps up suddenly*): Oh, what's the *use* of this? We have nothing to discuss, Dean. We stand on different ground. You are a man of great knowledge, of great intellectual gifts, and you employ those gifts to interpret and criticise and analyse Christ's message. That, to me, is a fundamental error. Christ's message was a message of the spirit—to be interpreted by the spirit. Who were His first followers? Who were the first to understand His message? Were they men of intellect? Were they men of great knowledge and critical ability? No! They were fishermen—peasants—the poor and lowly—the uneducated, illiterate rabble! They required no intellect to grasp that divine message—it went straight to their simple hearts like a shaft of pure sunlight from Heaven. But the brilliant intellects of that day—what did they think of it? How did *they* receive that simple message? With jeers—and mockery—and the Cross!

MURRAY (*rises and crosses the room slowly, and turns*): I should be very sorry, Fairley, if I thought that you suspected me of undervaluing the great spiritual strength of your faith. I beg you to remember, as I said just now, that the only point at issue between us is whether, in certain circumstances, Christian marriage may permit of a divorced person being . . .

FAIRLEY: No! Christian marriage, if it means anything, means the holy sacrament of marriage—a sacrament that establishes a mystical and permanent relationship between two human souls—a relationship that no earthly power can dissolve—as real and lasting as that of parent and child, of brother and sister. Can any

power on earth dissolve the relationship of parent and child, however "unsuited to each other" they may be? No . . . and Christian marriage makes the relationship of husband and wife no less real and no less sacred! If two people can fly apart at will to satisfy the cravings of the flesh—with the Church's blessing—then the sacrament of marriage is a mockery and a myth!

MURRAY (*still imperturbed, and even a little impressed*): I wish I could convince you, Fairley, that I entirely sympathise with your attitude on this subject—*entirely*. If two people can tear up their marriage contract when they chose, then certainly marriage—and love—have very little significance. But after all, surely the essence of the problem—as indeed of every problem—lies in the meaning we attach to that one small word, love. Oh, I freely admit that in modern life it frequently has the narrowest meaning. As you've just said, love between parents and children, brothers and sisters, love between friends—the modern world seems almost to have forgotten that such love can achieve a far nobler expression, and yield a far deeper enrichment of character, than is always attained in marriage, even in successful marriage. If one were to judge by the modern cinema, or the magazine covers, one might be pardoned for assuming that the whole meaning of love today is exemplified by a dark man with a moustache harbouring the worst possible intentions towards a blonde woman with a permanent wave. But I don't think the Christian ideal of love is in any danger of being reduced to such a simple tonsorial formula.

FAIRLEY (*with a trace of sarcasm*): You've expressed it very humorously, Dean. But, humour may *hide* facts, it doesn't *alter* them. And love is not the only small word that has had its meaning narrowed down in this broad-minded age. Take

any of the other small words that were once big with meaning for Christians—God—the soul—faith. What meaning have *they*, in this broad-minded age? God is narrowed down to a mathematical cypher; the soul is conjured out of existence by a childish theory of psychology; faith becomes another word for bigotry and ignorance.

MURRAY (*adopting a lighter tone*): Fairley, I want to ask you something. As a younger man, I held your views, until I took on myself the duty of investigating the findings of modern biblical research. I take it that *you* have examined all the evidence of modern research on the subject?

FAIRLEY (*rather impatiently*): No, I have *not*. I also, as a younger man, became fascinated for a time by that intellectual will-o'-the-wisp, until I realised that it could only lead to spiritual bankruptcy and decadence.

MURRAY: I venture to submit that it may be a duty we owe to ourselves and to the souls in our care, at least to investigate the findings of—

FAIRLEY (*with rebellion in his voice*): You may submit what you like. I refuse to let my spiritual vision of God be blurred by the confused mumblings of other men's minds.

MURRAY (*ominously quiet*): Then let me ask you this question. Can a faith that is afraid to—I use the word deliberately—afraid to face up to modern established facts relating to Christ's teaching—can such a faith, however strong, claim to be either profound or truly sincere?

FAIRLEY (*with a little laugh*): Established facts . . . what a joke! (*Rises and crosses quickly to him.*) I'll answer your question with another. Whose "established facts" am I to listen to? Yours? Or Canon Scott's? Or Dalminster's? Or some of the bright young clergymen coming along today who want to turn the House of God into an institution for the licensing of lust? Which

of your brilliant intellects have discovered the right "established facts"?

MURRAY (*after a moment's hesitation*): I fully appreciate the cogency of that argument. The great pity today is that certain people are attempting an intimate study of the Gospels with little or no training in methods of scientific investigation——

FAIRLEY (*going off like a rocket*): Bah! Scientific investigation! Don't talk to me about scientific investigation! What can science teach *us*? What does science know about religion? What does science even *claim* to know about religion today? Nothing! Less than nothing, as all the great scientists to-day admit! (*Goes up to him, bluntly.*) I'll tell you what's wrong with *you*: you're fifty years behind the times.

MURRAY: Really?

FAIRLEY: Yes, *really*. Fifty years ago, scientists ruled the roost. Everyone had to bow down before their "established facts"—which changed almost from day to day. They even had the impudence to suggest that the tremendous *spiritual* fact of Christianity, established for two thousand years, should give way before their clever intellectual conjuring. But what are scientists saying today? They're saying that science knows *nothing*, and never *can* know anything about the ultimate truth of things—not even about this stuff here under our noses—(*Tapping the table*) this stuff we call matter—let alone the truth about man's immortal soul.

MURRAY: Yes, I'm aware that scientists are modifying their views profoundly——

FAIRLEY: Do you know what one of our greatest scientists said the other day? He said this: "The closer we approach the baffling mystery of *matter*, the more we are driven to

conclude that the ultimate reality of the Universe must be a *spiritual* reality." Doesn't that strike you as funny? Science going spiritual, while the Church—fifty years late—is trying to go scientific!

MURRAY: I'm afraid I can't altogether accept that as an accurate summary of the case.

FAIRLEY: No, because you're too blinded by your intellect—too dazzled by the brilliance of your own "scientific investigations"!

MURRAY (*losing control for the first time*): I resent that! I resent it particularly from a man who lacks the courage even to study the very thing he condemns!

FAIRLEY (*also losing control*): Oh? Do you study the things you condemn? Do you study vice and crime and all the other snares of the devil? Because that's where I rank your scientific tinkering with the Scriptures! The world is crying out for light—for a glimpse of God—the soul of humanity is starving—starving for spiritual guidance—and men like you waste your time grovelling at the clay feet of science—searching for new ways of analysing God's word—setting your puny intellects to dissect the faith of generations—to murder the one hope of humanity—to destroy the very meaning of God Himself!

[*Then he realises what he has done, and sinks into a chair.*]

Forgive me. I—— (*He buries his face in his hands for a moment*) I beg you to forgive me. Let my sin be my punishment. I have humbled *myself*, not you.

[HELEN *enters.*]

HELEN: Oh—I'm sorry—I thought you were in the study! (*Then, as she sees her father's haggard face*) Father! Aren't you well?

FAIRLEY (*rises*): I'm all right. I've been—gassing too much. I should have had you here to put the brake on.

HELEN (*to MURRAY*): Tea is just coming in; you'll stay and have a cup?

MURRAY: Much though I should like to, my dear, I must hurry away. I'm late for an appointment already. Good-bye, Fairley—as you said just now, you and I must agree to differ for the present. We'll consider this meeting null and void, shall we?

FAIRLEY: Thanks. It's good of you. And as a matter of fact, it *may* all be beside the point. Prudence is a strange creature, and this chap Dave is—well, I believe the correct expression is “he's fallen for her”. I have hopes that something may yet come of it.

[The DEAN glances shrewdly at HELEN, but she looks away quickly.]

MURRAY: I'm afraid you'll be disappointed.

FAIRLEY: Oh? Why?

MURRAY: I think Dave has fallen for someone else. I'll leave it to Helen to explain. Good-bye to you both.

[He goes, leaving HELEN in a little swither of embarrassment.]

FAIRLEY: What did he mean by that?

HELEN (*in little jerky sentences*): I'll tell you, father. But I don't want to *talk* about it—not *now*—please. It's hard enough to tell you. Sue made a mistake. Dave didn't come to see Prue—he came to see *me*. Prudence knows now, of course. I met Dave again yesterday. He took me out to Tamworth. He . . . we're in love with each other.

FAIRLEY (*when he has recovered*): But—my dear—that's wonderful. I'm—

HELEN: Wait. There's more. Something that's going to hurt you—that's why I don't want to talk about it *now*. Dave was married once—in Canada—and now he's—divorced. His wife divorced *him*. He was innocent really, but—

FAIRLEY: Helen! You're not telling me—

HELEN: *Don't, father, please! Please don't make me talk about it now! I—we—it's all happened so quickly—I—I can't think properly—I feel lost! Please don't make me talk about it!*

FAIRLEY (*with a kindly smile*): Very well, my dear. But don't fear, *you're* not lost. There's no danger that *you* will ever be lost.

[PRUDENCE *enters, with what looks like a small notebook in her hand. She goes straight to an arm-chair, curls up in it, and studies the contents of the book. FAIRLEY'S eyes rest on her for a moment.*

You've been to the town, Prudence?

PRUDENCE: Yes, father.

FAIRLEY: Did you meet the Dean just now?

PRUDENCE: I saw him I didn't speak to him; I slipped in the back way.

ANNIE *enters with laden tea tray.*

ANNIE (*crossing to table*): Mrs. Williams has just rung up, sir.

FAIRLEY (*wearily*): Oh, I can't be bothered. Helen, you—

ANNIE: Oh, not that Mrs. Williams, sir. Mrs. Williams of Penny Lane, I mean—her with the husband that used to work in the Gas Works.

FAIRLEY: Oh yes?

ANNIE: She said you told her to let you know if her husband got bad, and it seems he took a sudden turn for the worse last night. The doctor came again just now—

[FAIRLEY *jumps to his feet.*

HELEN: Oh, father, have your tea first!

FAIRLEY (*to ANNIE*): What did he say?

ANNIE: It seems the old man is sinking slowly, sir.

HELEN (*turning to table*): Here, father, quickly! Have a *cup* of tea!

FAIRLEY: When I come back.

[*He rushes out.*]

[HELEN turns from the table with a sigh, and sees his muffler lying on the couch. She grabs it up and runs after him, with:]

HELEN: Father, your muffler—you *mustn't* go without it!

[*Exit HELEN.*]

ANNIE (*shakes her head*): I know what'll happen one of these days. That man's stomach'll turn right round on him.

[*She looks at PRUDENCE, who has remained curled up in her chair, as if this kind of thing is a normal, everyday occurrence; which, of course, it is.*]

After me making all those muffins, too! (*PRUDENCE is silent.*) I'm sorry, Miss Prudence, for telling you all that about . . . I shouldn't have.

[HELEN returns.]

HELEN (*crossing to table*): Annie—here—take some of these muffins to keep hot for him. Aren't they lovely ones, too! (*Hands her a few on a plate.*) And keep an eye on the kitchen window, to have some nice fresh tea ready the minute he comes in.

ANNIE: Yes, miss. I'll keep me kettle singing—even if I don't feel much like singing meself!

[*She goes out.*]

HELEN (*going to table*): Tea, Pruc.

PRUDENCE: Will you do something for me, Helen?

HELEN (*putting sugar and milk in cups—smiles*): That *depends*. I was going to ask you to do something for me.

PRUDENCE: I'll do yours if you'll do mine.

HELEN: Very well, that's a bargain. What's yours?

PRUDENCE: Can you lend me four pounds seventeen for three days?

HELEN (*surprised*): That's a lot of money for a little girl to want.

PRUDENCE: My Post Office thing is a beastly nuisance; I've got seven pounds seventeen altogether, but I can only draw out three without filling in a form and sending it off somewhere; and the man said it will take a few days to get the rest.

HELEN: I see. Very well, darling. Come and have your tea.

PRUDENCE: It may be only four pounds thirteen—or fourteen—perhaps. These wretched figures add up differently every time.

HELEN: Am I allowed to ask *why* you want it?

PRUDENCE: I want to lend it to Jack. He's lost his job. They've given him the sack over last night's affair.

HELEN: Oh, Prue, how rotten! I'm terribly sorry, darling.

PRUDENCE: It's rotten for him. I don't mind—for myself. He needs me more than ever now.

HELEN (*firmly*): Come along—tea. (*Rattles spoon in cup.*)

PRUDENCE (*coming to table*): What's *your* thing?

HELEN: I want you to do the rooms tomorrow.

PRUDENCE (*suspiciously*): You want to keep me in again?

HELEN: No, darling, I want to go out myself.

PRUDENCE: Oh. "Am I allowed to ask" *where* you're going?

HELEN (*smiles*): Dave is taking me for rather a long drive.

[PRUDENCE *sits at table.*

I'll tell you all about it when you start your tea. And remember, it's a deathly secret. I'm telling no one but you.

PRUDENCE (*taking a muffin*): Cut my throat. (*Does so with muffin.*) *Where, Helen?*

HELEN: Dalminster.

PRUDENCE: Dalminster? Whatever for? (*Takes a mouthful of muffin.*)

HELEN: We're going to see the Bishop.

PRUDENCE (*eyes and cheeks bulging with amazement and muffin*): Going to see th' Bish'p?

HELEN: Sssh! (*Puts finger to her bulging mouth.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE: *The same.*

TIME: *The next morning.*

AT RISE: HELEN is "doing" the room, looking very efficient and "housewifely" in a pretty flowered apron. PRUDENCE enters, with her Post Office book.

HELEN: You needn't bother about this room, Prue, it's done. Not very well perhaps, but it will do for today.

PRUDENCE (*significantly*): Have you been in to father yet?

HELEN (*smiles*): No.

PRUDENCE: I nearly giggled at breakfast when he said he'd like to see you in his study. It must be *ages* since *you* were on the carpet.

HELEN (*lowers her voice*): I'm not going to see him if I can help it, until I get back from Dalminster.

PRUDENCE (*seriously*): He's going to be terribly shattered when he hears about Dave.

HELEN: I know . . . I can't bear to think of it. . . .

[*She crosses to window and stares out. PRUDENCE watches her for a moment.*

PRUDENCE: Could you give me that money before you go, Helen, just in case?

HELEN (*turns*): In case what?

PRUDENCE: Well—in case you're not back in time—I'm meeting Jack at three o'clock.

[HELEN *hesitates, as if about to make some comment; then crosses to bureau and takes out cash box.*

HELEN: How much did you say? Four pounds *thirteen*, wasn't it?

PRUDENCE: It was four pounds *sixteen* the last time I counted.

HELEN: Here are five: you can buy lollipops with the change.

PRUDENCE: Thanks awfully. I'll pay it back in three days.

HELEN (*putting back cash-box*): I don't want to be inquisitive, darling, but—hasn't Jack any money of his own? Surely they gave him a week's pay at least when he was dismissed?

PRUDENCE: Yes, they gave him two weeks.

HELEN: But he needs your money too—*today*?

PRUDENCE: He's going up North this afternoon to look for a job.

HELEN: Do you mean he's leaving Midenhurst?

PRUDENCE: Yes.

[ANNIE enters.]

ANNIE: You're wanted on the phone, Miss Prudence.

[PRUDENCE starts, as if in fear, and runs out quickly.]

(to HELEN) And the master said to remind you, miss, that he's waiting in his study.

HELEN: Tell him I'm busy for the moment.

[HELEN gives a few finishing touches to the room; then titivates at the mirror, with a little thoughtful frown.]

[PRUDENCE runs in excitedly.]

PRUDENCE: Helen—I'm terribly sorry—I can't stay in this morning. Couldn't Annie manage by herself just this once?

HELEN: Why, what's happened?

PRUDENCE: Jack has just phoned to say he's leaving in half an hour, and I want to give him the money.

HELEN: Do you mean he's leaving Midenhurst for good?

PRUDENCE: Yes.

HELEN: And what about—you?

PRUDENCE (*looks away*): He says he'll send for me when he has enough money for us to marry.

HELEN (*after a tiny pause*): You believe him?

PRUDENCE (*frigidly*): Yes. (*Then her eyes flash fire.*) I think you're *bestly* to say that!

HELEN (*goes to her*): Oh Prue . . . I'm sorry—it was stupid of me.

PRUDENCE (*suddenly verging on tears*): Just when I hoped you'd be nice to me . . .! Nobody has any faith in him! (*she sobs*).

HELEN: Oh darling—it *was* rotten of me—I'm ashamed of myself—I only doubted for a moment for *your* sake.

[*She takes her in her arms, and strangely enough, PRUDENCE makes no effort to resist her "mothering".*]

PRUDENCE (*drying her eyes*): I'm sorry, Helen. I'm—all on edge. I didn't sleep last night.

HELEN: Of course he'll send for you, darling.

PRUDENCE: I want to ask you a special favour, Helen.

HELEN: Do.

PRUDENCE: Will you—pray for Jack—always—please?

HELEN: Yes, darling. I will. From now on I'll say a special prayer for him every day.

PRUDENCE: Thanks. Oh, Helen, I do love you! (*She flings her arms round her neck and kisses her.*)

[FAIRLEY *enters*.

[PRUDENCE *runs out quickly without looking at her father*.

[FAIRLEY *watches her go; then turns to HELEN*.

FAIRLEY: I wondered why you were so busy. She's been telling you about Sinclair, I suppose?

HELEN: Yes.

FAIRLEY: I had a letter this morning from a certain busybody. Apparently the poor chap has lost his job.

HELEN (*picks up the duster*): Who was the busybody?

FAIRLEY (*in a mock-solemn whisper*): The Cunning-face.

HELEN: Ugh! And that woman calls herself a Christian.

FAIRLEY (*whimsically*): Yes, we Christians are a funny lot. We all tend to suffer from misplaced zeal at times.

HELEN (*polishing table busily*): Do you honestly believe, father, that a woman like that can go to Heaven?

FAIRLEY (*with a very innocent look*): I don't see why not. I sincerely hope so. Not that I particularly want to meet her there. That's assuming I scrape in myself. Why shouldn't she? We're all busybodies about something.

HELEN: But she's so beastly narrow-minded!

FAIRLEY (*sits*): You know, I was thinking only last night—after the Dean went—that I must seem to him the most narrow-minded person in Midenhurst. I could only think of one other person in the whole town more narrow-minded than myself.

HELEN: Who?

FAIRLEY: Why, the Dean!

[HELEN *smiles*.

And that reminds me: I've been thinking over what you told me yesterday, Helen—about Dave——

HELEN (*quickly*): Father, I'd rather not talk about him now—please—I will this afternoon.

FAIRLEY: Is he coming this afternoon?

HELEN: No, he's coming this morning, and he'll be here any moment now: he's taking me for a drive.

FAIRLEY (*surprised*): This *morning*? Where are you going?

HELEN (*hesitates*): To—Tamworth. We'll be back this afternoon.

FAIRLEY: But it can't be more than half an hour's drive to Tamworth!

HELEN: He—wants me to lunch there.

FAIRLEY: And you can't talk to me until you've come back?

HELEN: Oh, father, why do you try to make me if I don't want to?

FAIRLEY (*shrewdly*): I'm just a little puzzled by your excuse, my dear——

HELEN: Well, I told you I can't even *think* properly.

FAIRLEY (*persisting*): But you'll be able to think properly this afternoon? Do you mean that you want to talk it over with Dave—or someone—first?

HELEN (*fearing that he is on the scent, forces a smile of submission*): Oh I suppose I'm being foolish really. It's—it's all so muddling, I don't feel I'll ever be able to think properly about it. (*She sits, accepting the inevitable.*)

FAIRLEY: How often have we agreed, my dear, that the choice between right and wrong,

between good and evil requires very little *thinking* about—if we listen to the voice of conscience?

HELEN (*finding it difficult*): I *have* listened, father. Last night I prayed for guidance—and sometimes the voice told me it would be wrong—a sin—if I—married Dave. But sometimes—you see—it was his wife who broke up their marriage—by going off with another man—but *he* provided evidence for the divorce. I know you think it's terribly wrong, father, but sometimes—last night—while I prayed—the voice told me that he is really innocent and that it *wouldn't* be a sin of—

FAIRLEY: That was not the voice of conscience, Helen, that was the voice of *self*, the voice of your own desires.

HELEN: But how do I *know* that?

FAIRLEY: You knew it two days ago, before the voice of self became suddenly insistent. You've known for *twenty years*, without a shadow of doubt, that such marriages are sinful. Are you now going to abandon that faith of a lifetime, just because self is uppermost at the moment?

HELEN: But—father—I know *you* believe that divorce is wrong—under *any* circumstances—and so do lots of clergymen—but—(*She hesitates to finish it.*)

FAIRLEY (*sitting*): But others disagree? Others make exceptions—as Prudence has pointed out so often lately—the Dean, for instance?

HELEN: Yes—and—the Bishop of Dalminster?

FAIRLEY (*grimly*): So the poison has entered *your* soul too . . .

HELEN: Oh father, don't let's say any more now—I admit I can't answer your arguments—and you'll only be hurt by the things I say—I've *asked* you to wait until this afternoon.

[FAIRLEY *stares at her for a moment, then leaps to his feet.* HELEN *realises that he suddenly suspects the truth. She tries to save herself, but only confirms his suspicion, by adding quickly:*

I want to talk it over with Dave first.

FAIRLEY: That's a lie.

[*She rises guiltily.*

You've *lied* to me, Helen.

HELEN (*cowed, but timorously defiant*): You made me . . . you drove me to it . . .

FAIRLEY (*at his grimmest*): Dalminster? So that's where you were going? You were going behind my back—throwing aside my teaching of twenty years—

HELEN: I *wasn't*, father, I was only—I—I only wanted to know both sides.

FAIRLEY: Don't deceive yourself, child. You were going with the deliberate object of silencing the voice of your conscience—

HELEN: I *wasn't*, father, I'm *certain* I wasn't. I—I think it's only *fair* I should know both sides if I'm to judge for myself.

FAIRLEY: I see. You want to do the 'fair' thing? You want to hear both sides and sum up the evidence impartially—*so you tell yourself.* But have you the slightest doubt now as to which side you'll be on at the end of your impartial summing-up?

HELEN: Oh, father, you're only trying to muddle me—

FAIRLEY: On the contrary, I'm trying to save you from muddling yourself—I'm trying to save you from building up a barricade of false reason between your conscience and your own desires. Make no mistake, Helen: this is not a problem that can be solved by any clever reasoning, neither yours nor mine nor any other's. You're fighting an age-old battle, the

battle between your immortal soul and your mortal self—the battle between good and evil, between light and darkness. I say again don't deceive yourself. You have seen the light; you have walked in the light for twenty years. Reasoning won't help you. *Prayer* is the weapon of the spirit, not reason——

HELEN: But I *have* prayed, father, and I'll *go on* praying, you *know* I will, but—I—I *love* Dave—I love him with all my heart—and if God put that love in my heart——

FAIRLEY: God did *not* put that love in your heart. Your love is born of the powers of evil——

HELEN: Oh, no! It's not true! I can't *believe* it!

FAIRLEY: You can't believe it because your vision is blinded by the mists of *self*. You've believed it, I repeat, for *twenty years*.

HELEN: But I—I never *loved* before! Not as I love *now*! I tell you I love him with all my heart!

FAIRLEY (*cunningly*): And has God put love in *his* heart for *you*?

HELEN: Yes!

FAIRLEY: Then tell me: Whence came his *first* love for his *wife*? Who put *that* love in his heart? Who put love in *her* heart for *him*? Was that God's work?

HELEN (*feeling trapped*): Oh father, I said I don't——

FAIRLEY: *Who* united them in the holy sacrament of marriage?

HELEN: Father, *please*——!

FAIRLEY: Was *that* God's work? Answer me!

HELEN: I *can't* answer you, I *can't*——!

FAIRLEY: You *shall* answer me!

[HELEN turns away with a little sob and sinks onto couch. FAIRLEY crosses to window and stares out, his hands clenched behind his back.

[ANNIE enters.

ANNIE: Mrs. Manford to see you, miss.

[HELEN and FAIRLEY swing round simultaneously.

HELEN: Who?

ANNIE: Mrs. Manford, miss. She said you'd know the name.

FAIRLEY (to HELEN): His wife?

HELEN: Yes—she arrived yesterday—from Canada. I don't want to see her. Annie, tell her—

FAIRLEY: One moment. I want to see her.
(To ANNIE) Show her in.

ANNIE: Yes, sir.

[She goes out.

FAIRLEY: Why was I not told yesterday that his wife had arrived?

HELEN (sullenly): She's not his wife—she's only followed him to England to get money out of him.

[ANNIE returns and announces.

ANNIE: Mrs. Manford.

[She goes out.

LOUISE MANFORD enters. She is a chic blonde of about 26, dressed expensively and with some taste.

LOUISE: Oh. You're Miss Fairley. How do you do? (Shakes hands.) No mistaking you from Dave's description; he certainly took an eyeful of you. I'm Louise, his erring wife. (Turns to FAIRLEY and shakes hands.) And you're her Pop, I guess. I'd know you by your collar, of course.

FAIRLEY: Won't you sit down?

LOUISE: Thanks. (*To HELEN*) Well, I expect you know why I've come?

HELEN: I'm afraid I don't.

LOUISE (*thinks she is only pretending because of FAIRLEY's presence*): No? Well, there's a little matter I'd like to discuss with you—alone—if your Pop doesn't object.

FAIRLEY: I object very strongly, madam. Are you referring to my daughter's relationship with your husband?

LOUISE: Oh—well—I don't mind you staying if *she* doesn't.

FAIRLEY: Thank you.

LOUISE (*to HELEN*): Then I'll get to the point right away. Dave says he wants to marry you, so I thought——

FAIRLEY: My daughter has no intention of marrying him.

LOUISE: I'm very glad to hear you say so, Mr. Fairley, it's nice to know you're on my side. But I'd like to hear what she has to say herself.

HELEN (*coldly*): I have nothing to say.

LOUISE: Now that's not very helpful, is it? Can't we settle this little matter in a friendly spirit?

HELEN: I can't pretend to be friendly when I'm not.

LOUISE: I didn't say friendly; I said "in a friendly spirit." In other words, I'm for a show-down.

FAIRLEY (*listening attentively*): For a what?

LOUISE: A show-down. Cards on the table. (*To HELEN*) And to prove my sincerity I'll spread mine first.

FAIRLEY (*politely*): Excuse me—since we're not very familiar with Canadian expressions——

LOUISE: Oh, I'm not Canadian, Mr. Fairley; I'm American.

FAIRLEY: Well, since we're even less familiar with American expressions, wouldn't it be simpler if you just said straight out why you've come?

LOUISE: Very well, I will. I've come to warn your daughter to keep her hands off my property. I guess that should be clear enough English.

FAIRLEY (*gravely*): Yes, we have quite a strong sense of property—although it doesn't apply to husbands *yet*.

LOUISE: Well, you must remember America is a little more advanced than England in some ways.

FAIRLEY: Apparently.

LOUISE (*with a glance at HELEN*): And it's certainly going to apply between me and Dave.

HELEN: He's not your husband, you have no legal claim on him.

LOUISE (*smiles*): Perhaps not. But I have a very strong *moral* claim on him.

FAIRLEY: Ah. Now . . .

HELEN (*with contempt*): Moral! *You* talk about moral claims—

FAIRLEY: One moment, my dear! (*To LOUISE*) Forgive me if I seem to be interfering, but I have a very deep interest in this too. The moral aspect of things is part of my job, you see—

LOUISE: Sure it is. I don't mind you interfering; I like you to interfere. (*With a smile*) If you don't mind my saying so, I like your face.

FAIRLEY: Do I understand that you regret being divorced from Dave?

LOUISE: Oh, he didn't divorce *me*—I divorced *him*.

HELEN: Because you made him provide evidence, although *you* were——

FAIRLEY: Helen! Please! (*To LOUISE*) You regret having divorced him?

LOUISE: Yes.

FAIRLEY: And you want to be united again?

LOUISE: Yes.

FAIRLEY (*sits back, immensely relieved*): I see. That shouldn't be difficult with a decent man like Dave.

LOUISE (*realising that she has found an ally*): That's what I thought, Mr. Fairley; but I'm afraid Dave hasn't changed for the better since he's come to England. (*Throws a glance at HELEN, who looks away haughtily.*)

FAIRLEY (*confidentially, almost with a wink*): Never mind; don't give up hope; I'll have a talk to Dave.

LOUISE: Thanks. But I'm afraid you'll find him tough. He's not what you call religious, you know.

FAIRLEY: Oh, I wouldn't be so sure of that. Are you, by the way?

LOUISE: Well, no, I can't say I am either. Although I do think there's something *in* religion.

FAIRLEY: Yes? You know I find that most people think there's something in religion, and it interests me very much. Why do *you* think it?

LOUISE: Gee, now you've asked me! It's not very easy to say. It's just the feeling you get sometimes of—well—the feeling there must be something *behind* everything—some kind of power, I suppose. And as you say, everybody feels the same, so most likely it's true.

FAIRLEY: What *kind* of power? A good one—or a bad one?

LOUISE (*puckers her brow*): Well, myself, I'd say sort of neutral.

FAIRLEY: I see—the good and the bad cancelling out, as it were. Personally, I like to think the good power is winning. Although I confess, at the moment, in the world to-day, the powers of evil seem to be having a bit of a run.

LOUISE (*smiles*): Oh, I don't believe in powers of evil. That's just superstition to me.

FAIRLEY (*feigning amazement*): Don't believe in powers of evil? With the world in the state it is to-day? Everybody thinking there's "something in religion" but not even able to search for that something?—The whole world at war or preparing for war—which nobody wants but nobody is able to prevent—and you don't believe in powers of evil?

LOUISE (*smiles*): I tell you what, Mr. Fairley; I'll make a bargain; if you'll do what you said, and get Dave to take me back, I'll believe in powers of evil. (*Realising the ambiguity of that*): Oh, I didn't mean it like that! (*Turns to HELEN*) I know what *you're* thinking, Miss Fairley. You're thinking I'm just a bad lot, that's ruined Dave's life, and *he's* got nothing to answer for at all. (*HELEN is silent*) Which just shows how little you know about it.

FAIRLEY (*on the alert*): What do you mean by that?

LOUISE (*to HELEN*): Oh, I don't blame you for falling for him. *That's* nothing new in his life. Girls start falling for Dave as soon as he puts a leg out of bed in the morning—(*To FAIRLEY, apologetically*) metaphorically speaking, of course. (*To HELEN*) At least they used to up in Toronto. That's how he got *me*; I couldn't resist joining in the competition. Unfortunately I won.

FAIRLEY: Unfortunately?

LOUISE (*realising she has made a slip*): Oh, I don't really mean that, of course—but—well, I'll tell you. (*Again she turns to HELEN*). When I married Dave he hadn't a dollar to his name. His weekly pay roll just about kept a roof over our heads and gave us two square meals a day. And that wasn't what I was used to. My folk had money, plenty of it, and I was brought up to know the *value* of money; there wasn't a thing I ever wanted I couldn't have. But I married Dave because I loved him, and because he told me the tale about his wonderful ambitions and how he'd sure be a big success and make a pile of money if he had *me* for a wife. Oh, he was going to be Rothschild all right, and I was going to be the Queen of Sheba—when he made good. I'll bet he hasn't told you all this?

HELEN: We didn't discuss you.

LOUISE (*notices the snub, but lets it pass*): Well—he didn't make good—he made bad.

FAIRLEY: You mean only bad—financially?

LOUISE: I mean he got the sack. And in twelve months he had three different jobs, each of them worse paid than the one before. So you see? That's what *my* first year of marriage was like. Twelve months hard labour, without a dollar to spend on clothes or any of the things a woman really enjoys.

FAIRLEY: And then?

LOUISE (*hesitates*): Well—then—naturally it began to get me down. I stuck it as long as I could—but—there were always plenty of other men hanging around—*with* money—and I admit I—well, I lost my bearings with one of them.

FAIRLEY (*innocently*): Lost your bearings?

LOUISE (*almost embarrassed*): I guess that's the only way I know for telling a minister. (FAIRLEY is still puzzled.) Well, we had relations then, does that explain it? (*She sees HELEN's look of disgust, and her voice becomes rather aggressive.*) It's all very well for you to sneer, Miss Fairley; but it wasn't just what *you* think; it wasn't just immorality. If you want to know, that kind of thing means darn little to me. I think it's very much over-rated. That's why I always said to Dave I wasn't really unfaithful to him in that sense. So far as *that* goes I was just as innocent as *he* was when he gave me evidence for divorce. You see my point, Mr. Fairley?

FAIRLEY (*sadly*): Only too well.

LOUISE: Perhaps folk like you don't realise what it's like to have more money than you know what to do with all your life, and then suddenly have only just enough to get along.

FAIRLEY: No, we've been very lucky; all our lives *we* only had just enough to get along.

LOUISE (*to HELEN*): And that wasn't the only way Dave let me down. What did he do when he came in for this money? Did he tell *me* he——

HELEN: I don't know and I don't wish to know!

LOUISE (*angrily*): Oh, *can* that high and mighty stuff! (HELEN rises quickly and turns away in window. LOUISE rises too.) Who do you think you *are*?

FAIRLEY (*rises*): Please!

LOUISE: O.K. Mr. Fairley, don't worry: I'm not going to waste any more time on her. (*Looks at her watch.*) I guess I've stayed too long as it is. (*Picks up her bag and gloves and goes up to HELEN. With a forced smile.*) So you think you'll win, eh? You think *you're* going to be mistress of Tamworth Hall?

HELEN (*turns to her*): I think you're the vilest creature I've ever known.

LOUISE (*her eyes flashing*): So that's what you think? Then let me tell *you* something, Miss Fairley. There's a little *surprise* coming to you. So take my advice; hands off Dave. And *get* this: if I don't win I'll take darn good care *you* don't either! (*Turns to go.*) Goodbye, Mr. Fairley——

[ANNIE enters, and, almost before she can announce "Mr. Manford", DAVE bursts in behind her. He pulls up angrily before LOUISE. ANNIE goes back.

DAVE (*to FAIRLEY*): I'm sorry to break in like this; your maid told me *she* was here. (*To LOUISE, who recovers her composure quickly.*) What are you *doing* here?

LOUISE: Oh, just checking up on the position in general.

DAVE: You've no right to come here! I'm *through* with you!

FAIRLEY: Dave I must ask you to remember where you are; this is not the place to settle your differences. Mrs. Manford has every right to come here.

DAVE (*To LOUISE*): This is a matter between Helen and me.

FAIRLEY: Oh, no; Helen is my daughter; I'm concerned too.

LOUISE: I guess so am *I*. It's going to make a very nice little foursome, in fact.

DAVE (*wheels at her*): You'd better go! Quick! You're not fit to be in the same room as Helen!

[LOUISE's body stiffens as if he had struck her. She stares at him for a moment, then throws down her bag and gloves with the air of accepting a challenge.

LOUISE: Oh I'm *not* eh?

FAIRLEY: Mrs. Manford, please! I will *not* have quarrelling here!

LOUISE (*tensely, her eyes glued on DAVE*): Don't worry, Mr. Fairley, this isn't going to be a quarrel; this is going to be just a little *clean-up*. Before I go these two love-birds are going to *hear* something. (*With a faint smile.*) This gentleman here thought he'd pulled a fast one on me when he got me to divorce him last Fall, pretending all the time he knew nothing about the little fortune that was coming to him in England—

DAVE: Don't be crazy—I never heard until a month ago!

LOUISE: Then why didn't you find me and tell me a month ago?

DAVE: Why should I? We were divorced.

LOUISE (*ominously*): Oh no, we weren't. That's just where you slipped up. Do you know when I first heard? *Ten days* ago, when I went to my attorney's office to apply for the decree absolute. *He* told me.

DAVE: Well, what if he did? What's the point?

LOUISE: The point is that I *didn't* apply for the decree absolute. (*Significantly*): And for the present I don't *intend* to apply for it! (*Picking up her bag and gloves.*) *Now* do you see the point? When I took the boat from Canada I told myself I'd try and get you to have me back of your own free will. I thought you might be ready to forget and forgive. I thought you might have some feelings for the girl who once left a wealthy home to marry a *pauper*. But I guess I was a fool. I forgot what money does to an *upstart*. (*Goes to door.*) So, when you've finished playing around with your parson's daughter, you'll find your *wife* at *Tamworth Hall*—waiting to talk business. S'long!

[*She goes, leaving DAVE and HELEN staring at the door. Then they turn and stare at each other across the room.*]

FAIRLEY (*after a pause, in a friendly voice*): Well, Dave; this is not the moment for *me* to speak. I confess I was preparing a pretty hot lecture for you, but——

DAVE (*staring at door*): She thinks she's won, but, by God, she hasn't! I'll fix her yet!

FAIRLEY: Only cowards harden their hearts, Dave, when they have to face up to things. There's a far simpler way of dealing with your problem, if you have the pluck to take it. It's not the hard heart, but the soft heart, the loving heart, that solves most problems——

DAVE: If you think I'm going to have her back you're making a mistake.

FAIRLEY: Haven't you the courage even to *try* the other way?

DAVE: You're wasting your breath! No power on earth could make me take her back!

[*He moves away impatiently.*]

FAIRLEY: I wasn't referring to any power on earth. There's another power that could help you.

DAVE (*pacing the room angrily*): She hasn't won yet!

FAIRLEY: Are you so much the *injured* party as you're allowing yourself to imagine at this moment? Are you so much more sinned against than sinning?

DAVE: I don't know anything about "sinning" —I only know she double-crossed me once too often back in Canada. I expect she's been pitching *you* some hell-of-a-fine yarn.

FAIRLEY: She said that she left a wealthy home to marry you when you were a poor man.

DAVE: Well, what if she did? She *wanted* to, didn't she? Was it *my* fault I was a poor man? Was it *my* fault I had no education and never learnt any proper business?

FAIRLEY: Of course not. And she stuck to you when you were out of work on three occasions—

DAVE: Was that my fault either? Was *I* to blame because I had a run of bad luck for a year? That's just what she could never understand. How *could* she—brought up in the lap of luxury and pampered all her life?

FAIRLEY: Exactly. What about *her* bad luck? As you say, spoilt and pampered from childhood and trained to think only of herself. What chance did *she* have of making good—of developing any character? If you feel hard and bitter towards her because she—

DAVE: Now listen, sir. It's all darn fine you talking to me like this. You say I'm bitter and hard; well, so I *am*. Perhaps *you'd* be bitter if you'd been through what I have, and then found yourself double-crossed by a woman like Louise when you—when you've just met the one woman who means everything in the world to you. (*He looks across at HELEN, who has been sitting on the window-seat during the scene. With simple sincerity*): I'm sorry, honey. I've let you down. I didn't mean to, I swear I didn't.

HELEN (*huskily*): I know . . .

DAVE: But I'll put things right—I swear that too.

FAIRLEY: What about the other woman you let down? The other woman to whom you made the same pledge of loyalty and love?

DAVE (*faces him*): There's just one thing you don't understand, sir; I love *Helen*; I loved her the first moment I saw her—and there's not much I'd stop at to get her.

FAIRLEY: I understand perfectly. Jungle law.

DAVE: Maybe. It's the law of nature.

FAIRLEY: *Animal* nature.

DAVE: Perhaps animal nature and human nature aren't so far apart as some people try to imagine.

FAIRLEY: They're perilously *near*—to-day.

DAVE: Oh words don't alter facts! You don't *know* Louise. I *do*. She's rotten to the core!

FAIRLEY: No human being is rotten to the core, Dave. Why, the mere fact that she came over from Canada with the hope of trying to win you back—wanting to forget and forgive—

DAVE: Yes, because she liked the idea of the money I got!

FAIRLEY: Well—is that such a crime? Don't *you* like the idea of the money you got? And, after all, it was only the *lack* of money that caused the trouble between you. If this money had come a year ago—

DAVE: I tell you words don't make any difference! If a wife has any guts she doesn't let a man down when his luck is out.

FAIRLEY: I agree with you. A wife takes a husband "for better, for worse" and she certainly let you down when your worse time came. But so does a husband take a wife "for better, for worse"—and two "worses" don't make a "better", you know.

DAVE: But I'll fix her yet. I know Louise's game. Money, that's all she's after. She thinks she's going to dig herself in at Tamworth—and run the bidding up. But if she plays that game I know a better one. If I was to beat it back to Canada she'd follow like a shot—and it wouldn't be long before some of her wealthy guys were hanging round again.

FAIRLEY: How would that help?

DAVE (*rises, with a bitter smile*): I'd have her trailed. I could afford it now, I couldn't before. I'd put some of the smartest tecs in Canada on to her. She'd slip up all right if I gave her time. Then *I'd* be the innocent party.

FAIRLEY (*deeply shocked*): May God in His Mercy forgive that bitter heart of yours.

[DAVE shrugs, and turns to HELEN.

DAVE: What time do we meet tomorrow?

FAIRLEY (*quietly but firmly*): You will not meet tomorrow, nor any other day.

HELEN: Oh, father, we *must* meet again. We——

FAIRLEY: I say you will *not* meet again.

DAVE (*to FAIRLEY*): So *I'm* the one that's bitter, eh? Not you? That's how you care about her happiness?

FAIRLEY: That's how I care about her *true* happiness, which is very far from what *you* mean by happiness.

DAVE (*his anger rising*): So that's Christianity, eh? No wonder folk turn it down. It's men like you, with your cast-iron rules, that cause all the misery in life to-day!

FAIRLEY (*with pity and contempt in his voice*): No, my friend; it's people like you—poor cowardly souls who haven't the courage or the loyalty or the Christian charity to stand by their chosen partners in life—you are the people who are plunging the world in misery and bringing ruin and desolation to innocent, noble souls. (*The contempt gone from his voice*) So—go your way. Go your way, my son. God help you—and God bless you.

[DAVE goes up to the door. HELEN watches him, her clenched hands pressed to her cheeks. He turns at the door and looks back at her.

DAVE: I'll write to you. (*She nods, not trusting herself to speak.*) Don't worry, honey. I'll put things right for us. We'll meet again. Goodbye.

HELEN (*faintly*): Goodbye . . .

[*She turns back quickly to the window as he goes out. FAIRLEY paces the room once or twice in deep thought, then drops wearily into an armchair, his hands shading his eyes. Presently he looks up, arrested by the sound of HELEN'S crying in the window seat. He watches her compassionately for a moment, then rises to go to her. At the sound of his movement she also rises and is hurrying quickly from the room, but he intercepts her with open arms.*

FAIRLEY: Helen . . .

[*As he draws her into his arms she succumbs to a little storm of sobbing. He takes her to the couch.*

[*Stroking her hair gently.*

My poor child . . .

HELEN (*through her sobs*): It's not fair . . . it's not fair!

FAIRLEY: No, it's not fair . . . it's not fair . . . it's all terribly unfair and terribly cruel . . . to everyone. You're not the only one, my dear, who . . .

HELEN: I know . . . I know! But that doesn't make it fair! That only makes it worse! I can't believe there's a God who could be so cruel . . .!

FAIRLEY: Tomorrow, my dear, you will see everything differently—

HELEN (*breaking from him*); I won't! I'll go to him! You can't stop me! (*Turns to him again, struggling for self control and brushing her tears away.*) I have my life to live—you forget that! You have no right to stop me!

FAIRLEY (*puzzled*): I have no right to stop you, Helen, I admit that. But—

HELEN: You don't admit it! You only pretend to! It's all *words*—as he said! (FAIRLEY *flinches at such an unexpected accusation from her; she continues a little hysterically*): But you're not *going to!* If you try to I'll—run away! I have a right to live my own life! You don't think of that! You don't care!

FAIRLEY (*hurt*): I don't care, Helen?

HELEN: I've never had a *chance* to live before! For years I've been nothing but a—a *servant* in this house!

FAIRLEY (*after a deep look*): You were a very happy servant, Helen.

HELEN: I wasn't! You—you only made me *think* I was! Because I was useful to you!

FAIRLEY (*after another look*): Helen. Argument won't help us. In the past you and I have never failed to find a solution to our problems in prayer. If we——

HELEN: I won't pray! You're only trying to make me give in to you! That's all you want! You don't care if my whole life is ruined!

FAIRLEY: I care very deeply, Helen!

HELEN: You don't! You're only thinking of yourself! (FAIRLEY *flinches again*) You've proved it! You proved it this morning when you wouldn't let me go and see the Bishop! Because you knew he wouldn't agree with your—cast-iron rules!

[FAIRLEY *stares at her dumbly*. HELEN, *knowing well how she has hurt him, bursts into tears again and sinks onto the couch*. When her sobbing has subsided FAIRLEY *comes and stands beside her*.

FAIRLEY (*tenderly*): Very well, Helen. The choice shall be yours. No words of mine will deter you from whatever you decide. But make very sure that it is *your* decision—the decision of your own best and truest self.

HELEN (*softened, drying her eyes*): I'm sorry, father . . .

FAIRLEY: I ask only one thing of you. We won't speak of this again until we have both spoken, in prayer, to the One who—

HELEN (*suddenly tearful again*): Oh father, I can't pray . . .!

FAIRLEY: My dear—come—come with me—we'll pray together.

HELEN (*desolately*): I can't . . . I can't . . . I have no-one to pray to! (*She buries her face in a cushion and sobs again.*)

FAIRLEY (*standing over her, tenderly*): That's the saddest thing I've ever heard you say. Strange words from *you*, Helen. Poor, troubled heart—be brave—

HELEN: I can't be brave . . . I can't!

FAIRLEY: Ah yes, *you* can be brave, Helen; you were always the bravest of us all. If *you* can't be brave, who can? If only I could give back to you now some of the comfort and courage you have given to *me* so often . . . my poor child . . . my heart aches for you . . . come . . . let us seek courage together from the One who has never failed us yet . . . the One who has solace for every sorrow, even for the deepest sorrow of all, the sorrow of lost love.

[*Torn by the sight of her weeping, he turns away and stands by the window, looking out. HELEN gradually gets herself under control and sits up again, drying her eyes. She is still sobbing a little when ANNIE enters, with a letter.*]

ANNIE: Oh, I'm sorry, miss!

HELEN: What is it, Annie?

ANNIE: Just a note from Miss Prudence, miss; she must have forgotten to give it to you when she went out; I found it in your bedroom.

HELEN (*takes letter*): Thanks, Annie. I'll come and help you with the rooms presently; I won't be going out.

ANNIE: Oh, that's all right, miss; don't you stir; I can manage—so long as the wind doesn't turn on me oven.

[She goes back.

[HELEN opens the letter and reads.

HELEN (*rises suddenly, staring at letter*): Oh!

FAIRLEY: What's wrong?

HELEN: Oh, father . . . !

FAIRLEY (*goes to her quickly*): What's wrong, Helen?

HELEN: It's . . . Prudence . . . she's—she's gone.

FAIRLEY: Gone? Where?

HELEN (*she sits again. Weakly*): Gone with—gone away—with Sinclair.

FAIRLEY: Gone away with—?

[The shock of it stuns him for a moment; then he pulls himself together suddenly.

Where have they gone? Quickly!

HELEN (*shakes her head*): She doesn't say—he took her away in his car.

[FAIRLEY'S momentary alertness dies away and his dazed look returns. He stares over HELEN'S head, actionless.

FAIRLEY: What does she say?

HELEN (*reads*): "Dearest Helen and Father—Please, please forgive me for the pain this is going to cause you. I know it will hurt you both, especially father. I haven't time to write a real letter, so I can only say now that I'm going away with Jack for good. He's waiting for me in his car while I'm scribbling this.

We're going to be married in a certain town in the North. I promised him I wouldn't say *where*. I'll write to you again when I'm married. God bless you and keep you safe—and do please try to forgive me—I love you both so very, very dearly."

[She puts the letter aside and watches the motionless figure of her father with deep compassion.]

FAIRLEY (to himself): Prudence . . . I'd forgotten Prudence . . .

HELEN (runs to him suddenly): Oh father . . . poor father!

[She takes his hand and presses it to her cheek, dropping on her knees beside him. FAIRLEY looks down on her expressionlessly, then he raises his head and looks upward, and begins his simple prayer in a simple manner as the curtain falls.]

FAIRLEY: Our Father in Heaven, be near to us in this hour of trial. Forgive us for the sins and strife of this day. In the noise and tumult of the earth we have lost the sound of thy friendly voice. Restore us to grace, oh Lord, that we may know the comfort of Thy love once more . . .

CURTAIN

GLORIOUS MORNING

GLORIOUS MORNING

A Play in Three Acts

by

Norman MacOwan

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*She never undertook to know
What death with love should have to do :
Nor has she e'er yet understood
Why to shew love, she should shed blood
Yet though she cannot tell you why,
She can LOVE, and she can DY.*

Crawshaw's hymn to the "name
and honor" of St. Teresa.

PEOPLE IN THE PLAY

ANTON VEERKIND	
ANNA	His daughter-in-law.
WODEN	His grandson.
LEDA	His granddaughter.
KATRINA HOEFLER	
HANS SKAEDIA	Of Litzia University.
GURGANI	Of the Supreme Council.
RUTZSTEIN	} Of the Burglitz Council.
BULOFF	
DUREN	
NEKELL	
LEMAN	} Peasants of Burglitz.
JACOB KELLNER	
RUTH KELLNER	
1ST SOLDIER	
2ND SOLDIER	
AN OFFICER	

The action of the play takes place in a room in Anton Veerkind's house, a room in the Town Hall, and a corridor in the Prison.

This play was first produced at the Duchess Theatre on May 26th, 1938, with the following cast:

<i>Anna</i>		OLIVE WALTER
<i>Katrina Hoefler</i>		ISOLA STRONG
<i>Woden</i>		CHRISTOPHER QUEST
<i>Anton Veerkind</i>		HERBERT LOMAS
<i>Leda</i>		JESSICA TANDY
<i>Professor Hans Skaedia</i>	(of Litzia University)	RAYMOND HUNTLEY
<i>General Gurgani</i>	(of the Supreme Council)	REGINALD TATE
<i>Leman</i>	} of the Burglitz- Council	GIBSON COWAN
<i>Rutzstein</i>		GILBERT DAVIS
<i>Buloff</i>		HENRY WOLSTON
<i>Duren</i>		GEORGE ELTON
<i>Nekell</i>		ALFRED GRAY
<i>Jacob Kellner</i>	} (Peasants of Burglitz)	VINCENT HOLMAN
<i>Ruth Kellner</i>		SELMA VAZ DIAS
<i>1st Soldier</i>		DAVID HALLAM
<i>2nd Soldier</i>		DEERING WELLS
<i>An Officer</i>		PAUL SMYTHE

The Play Produced by CLAUD GURNEY

ACT I

The action of the play takes place in Burglitz, the Capital of Burglitzia. Burglitzia is a remote part of Zagnira, a republican State in Europe, of which Rachina is the Capital.

The present form of Government in Zagnira, established after a civil war which lasted for eighteen months, has now been in existence for seven years.

The play begins in the living room of an old farmhouse which, with a great deal of the land surrounding it, belonged to Anton Veerkind at the time of the revolution. The property has been in the possession of his family for two hundred years. After the revolution all private property was confiscated by the State.

At the time of the revolution the house was occupied by Anton Veerkind, then a man of 63, his son Hugo, Hugo's wife, Anna, and their two children, Woden, a boy of 15, and Leda, a girl of 12. Hugo was killed in the revolution.

When the play opens Anton Veerkind, now a man of 70, is living in this house with his daughter-in-law, Anna, and his two grandchildren. Woden, now 22, has a job on the railway. Leda, now 19, is studying to become a doctor at the University of Litzia.

The Veerkinds, before the revolution, were prosperous farmers and the living room remains much as it has been for a couple of generations. There is a door to the kitchen and a door to the entrance hall. A very large covered-in stove with pipe going up through the wall is in the centre of the left wall of the room. Centre, at the back, is a rather small window. The furniture is old and heavy.

(At one end of a fairly large table ANNA has just laid a table-cloth and, on RISE OF CURTAIN, is arranging the table for a meal for three. ANNA

is a woman of 47. She has rather fine features but her face is sad and anxious and her hair scanty and ill-cared for. She wears an uncomfortable-looking black dress. As ANNA finishes laying the plates KATRINA enters abruptly. She is a lively-looking girl of about 20. On entering she gives the salute that is customary in Zagnira; the closed fist is brought sharply to the right shoulder as one repeats, "The State is All.")

KATRINA: The State is All.

ANNA: The State is All. Katrina! I didn't hear the bell.

KATRINA: Oh, the door was open, so I didn't bother. Is Woden back?

ANNA: Not yet.

KATRINA: I hope he is on the morning shift today.

ANNA: Yes, he is.

KATRINA: That is lucky. I am glad. Then he should be here any minute now. He'll be terribly surprised to see me.

[ANNA makes no reply. After a moment she moves towards kitchen.]

ANNA: Excuse me. (ANNA goes out.)

[KATRINA looks after her, makes a slight grimace, then goes up to window. ANNA returns with a heavy pot which she places on side of stove; she takes soup plates from table and places them also on side of stove. KATRINA comes down and sniffs in a friendly way.]

KATRINA: Stew!

ANNA: Yes.

KATRINA: Smells good. Have you heard from Leda lately?

ANNA: Yes. She usually writes to me about once a week.

KATRINA: How is she getting on?

ANNA: Very well, I think. Did you see nothing of her in Litzia, then?

KATRINA: Not much. She is always so busy.

ANNA: Yes. Well, I suppose to become a doctor she will have to work very hard. She is not very strong, either. Why she wanted to be a doctor! But there it is. Nothing else would satisfy her.

KATRINA: No.

ANNA: When did you see her last, Katrina?

KATRINA: I saw her in the Gymnasium one Sunday evening. I think it was about a month ago.

ANNA: Well, I am glad that she takes some little time off—if you saw her in the Gymnasium.

KATRINA: All the students have to drill, at least one evening a week. That is why Leda was there. I don't think she ever takes a minute off. But she looked jolly well all the same. Almost beautiful, I thought. I shall be living in Burglitz again now. I've been transferred. Isn't it lucky?

ANNA: Does Woden know?

KATRINA: No. I didn't write, on purpose. It will be a grand surprise for him. You see, the Supreme Council is sending—(*she stops and hesitates*) sending someone to inspect the administration here. The man I've been working for in Litzia is to be on the Staff, so I shall be here for months and months. Isn't it lucky?

ANNA: Yes. But—— Why do the Supreme Council want to inspect us here?

KATRINA: Oh, well . . .

ANNA: I hope there is no chance of a new Commandant. Rutzstein has been good to us.

KATRINA: Yes. He is a kind man, but—
(*She decides not to continue what she was going to say.*) We don't start work till tomorrow, so I have got a holiday today.

ANNA (*anxiously*): A holiday. Then you will want Woden to—

KATRINA: Well, I thought we might go out somewhere this afternoon. And this evening there is to be a performance in the Town Hall. My brother got two tickets and has given them to me.

ANNA: Well, about the evening—I don't know, perhaps Woden could manage it. But please don't ask him to go out this afternoon, Katrina.

KATRINA: Good gracious me, Anna Veerkind, why shouldn't your son take me out this afternoon? It's natural enough surely when we haven't seen each other for three months.

ANNA: Woden promised to help his grandfather on the farm this afternoon.

KATRINA: Oh, but surely—now that I am here—

ANNA: But he must. It is very, very important. He must. (*She is agitated, but controls herself.*) You had better sit down, Katrina, and I will try to explain. You see, Anton Veerkind is an old man, you must remember that. He is nearly seventy. Well, he cannot work quite as he did, though the good God knows that he tries hard and— Oh, I shouldn't have said that—about—

KATRINA: It's all right, I won't tell anyone. But you should try to remember, Anna Veerkind. Someone will hear you one day.

ANNA: I'm sorry. It's when I feel things, but—I must try to remember. I know it is very important. You won't report it to the Council, Katrina?

KATRINA: Of course not. It was only a slip.

ANNA: Well, as I was saying, Anton cannot get ahead as fast as he once could—especially with the digging—he has such pains in his back. And the Inspector is coming tomorrow morning. It's the draining trenches he's ordered. So Woden promised to help his grandfather today. It would make a great difference. And if we were only just a very little behind—perhaps the Inspector—

KATRINA: I think it is silly of Anton Veerkind to try and cling on here.

ANNA: The Veerkind's have lived in this house for two hundred years. The land is his, the house is his, and—

KATRINA: *Were*, you mean, Anna Veerkind.

ANNA (*after a pause*): Yes. *Were*, I mean. (*She turns to stove, lifts lid of pot and inspects the stew.*)

KATRINA: Well, I think it is very silly. And I know no other town in Zagnira where such an arrangement would be allowed to go on. It is against the law—to live like this—in a private house. Besides, only Government officials are allowed to work after they are sixty.

ANNA: They made an exception in Anton's case. The people of Burglitz still remember what the Veerkind's have done for their city for two hundred years.

KATRINA: But it's absurd. It's all wrong. All that kind of thing was finished and done with seven years ago. It was to free themselves from the domination of ownership that the people

of Zagnira fought. Really, when one comes up North here again one is amazed at the slackness, one wonders if the revolution ever took place at all.

ANNA: You must remember, Katrina, that more people fought against it than for it, here in the North.

KATRINA: I know that, but they were wrong and they lost. Oh, I know how you feel. Your husband was killed fighting for what I suppose he thought right. I know it is difficult for you, and for those like you, but it really is your duty now to face the facts and work wholeheartedly for the New Régime. Anton Veerkind should be in a State Hostel with the rest of the old men. He would be well looked after and have nothing to do. And you would be given suitable work—far lighter work than you do now, I expect, and you would be paid for it, too.

ANNA: Better shoot Anton Veerkind and be done with it than take him out of this house.

KATRINA: That is ridiculous.

ANNA: Well, the Burglitz Council did not think so. They had to confiscate our house and land, of course, but we are allowed to live here so long as Anton Veerkind can work the few fields nearest the house to the satisfaction of the Council.

KATRINA: But, don't you see that twenty people could live in this house. And the mere fact that you three live here like this reminds people of a past which they should all forget. There's no other place in the whole of Zagnira where you can find any trace of the bad old pre-revolution ways of living. It is no wonder that the Government have sent—*(she stops again)* sent someone here.

ANNA: Our living here harms no one, Katrina.

KATRINA: Yes, it does—indirectly. You are being different. You are shutting yourselves off from the communal life of the State. All these huge new buildings are to teach people to live happily together as members of the State instead of as members of a family. I am sure that Woden can't like being different from his comrades—living here in this absurd way.

ANNA: He has never said that he does not approve. Woden is very fond of his grandfather. That is why he is going to help this afternoon, though he has been doing his own work on the railway since six this morning. It is not fair to say that Woden doesn't like living with us here, Katrina. It is not true.

KATRINA: I am sorry. And I know now why you weren't very pleased to see me when I came in just now. But I promise you that I won't take Woden away from you this afternoon.

ANNA: You promise that?

KATRINA: Yes. I promise.

ANNA: Thank you, Katrina. (*She is really grateful and comes and kisses KATRINA.*)

KATRINA: I'll stay and work, too, with Woden and his grandfather. I'm very strong and I like digging. It's not as if I didn't understand the work, either. I used to help father in the old days.

ANNA: My husband and your father were good friends before the revolution, Katrina. But you will hardly remember.

KATRINA: Of course I remember. After all, the New Régime—health to it—is only seven years old.

ANNA: I suppose so. It seems longer to me, the war.

KATRINA: You shouldn't call it war. It was a struggle for freedom on the part of all the people of Zagnira, and—— Why, here is Woden!

[WODEN, a good-looking, sturdy youth, in surprise at seeing KATRINA, stands at door.]

WODEN: Katrina!

ANNA: Katrina Hoefler is going to have a meal with us, Woden, and help with the trench digging. (ANNA goes out.)

WODEN comes down eagerly to KATRINA.

WODEN: Katrina! (He is about to kiss her.)

KATRINA (salutes): The State is All!

WODEN: The State is All! (He laughs and takes her in his arms.)

KATRINA: Still glad to see me, Woden?

WODEN: You bet!

KATRINA: I thought, perhaps—in three months——?

WODEN: I'd find someone like you? In Burglitz? Ha! I bet you didn't think anything of the kind, Katrina. But what about you? You must have met a lot of swaggering young men in Litzia. With more polish on 'em than a railway shunter like me.

KATRINA: Dozens.

WODEN: And I bet they were after you.

KATRINA: Of course.

[WODEN takes his arms from her.]

Don't be an idiot.

WODEN: You're sure?

KATRINA: I never knew how much you meant to me till I went away.

WODEN: Katrina!

[They embrace again.]

KATRINA: Woden?

WODEN: Yes, Katrina?

KATRINA: Shut that door, will you?

[WODEN looks surprised but goes and closes door to kitchen.]

I want to tell you something, but I don't want your mother to hear.

WODEN *(coming back)*: Well?

KATRINA: I tried to tell her just now but I couldn't. I was afraid.

WODEN: What is it?

KATRINA: I think there are going to be tremendous changes here—in Burglitz.

WODEN: What kind of changes?

KATRINA: Everything is going to be made much stricter. Our Leader is sending Gurgani here to see things for himself.

WODEN: Gurgani! Oh, my God!

KATRINA: Woden! There you go, you see!

WODEN: I'm sorry.

KATRINA: People here are always saying things like that. Your mother did just now.

WODEN: It's only old habit.

KATRINA: Well, it's a very dangerous habit. Why can't you forget all these old lies? And I'm afraid, you know, Woden, you won't be allowed to live on here—in this old-fashioned way.

WODEN: No.

KATRINA: I wanted to warn your mother about that. But I didn't like to tell her that it was Gurgani who was coming. But I do think they should be told, all the same.

WODEN: Yes. (*He is much disturbed by this news.*)

KATRINA: You won't mind, will you? I mean, for yourself.

WODEN: I didn't think we'd have to go as long as Grandpapa was alive. I thought Rutzstein would see to that—he's fond of the old man. It is beastly, Katrina! Fancy Anton Veerkind in an Old Men's Hostel! Why, our family used practically to keep the old Pauper's Hospital.

KATRINA: But, Woden, the State Hostels are not like that!

WODEN: Aren't they? I don't see much difference. (*Pause.*) I used to toddle along there, I remember, with Grandpapa on Saturday afternoons. He used to sit on their beds, and talk—give them sweets and tobacco and—

[KATRINA goes and slips her arm into his. She is about to answer when the door opens and ANTON VEERKIND enters. He is a tall man who has once been very strong. He is an obstinate man, very sure of himself, and quite without fear. He is proud and very impulsive. Though he looks rugged and stern, he has a gentle manner with people who have his affection.]

ANTON: Katrina Hoefler! Oh-ho! So you have come back to us, eh? What had Woden to say to that? Did he seem glad to see you, Katrina?

KATRINA (*smiles*): Well, he did not seem exactly displeased, Anton Veerkind.

ANTON (*affects astonishment*): No? (*He turns and looks at WODEN. His expression changes.*) Hullo! What's this? Is there something wrong? (*He looks from one to the other.*)

WODEN: Of course not, Grandpapa. There is nothing wrong. Nothing.

ANTON: Don't be a fool, Woden. Do you think I'm blind? So you've thrown him over, Katrina Hoefler! Found someone better than a railway shunter in Litzia? Eh? A jumped-up Commandant, perhaps? Or a Sub-Deputy Assistant Director of Drains! Well, of course, my grandson cannot aspire to such heights! But there is no need to look as if you had been whipped, Woden! Katrina Hoefler has a right to change her mind, I suppose, if she wants to.

KATRINA: I've not changed my mind. I love Woden more than ever. I've just told him so.

[*There is a pause.*]

ANTON: You must forgive me, Katrina. My temper is very—very uncertain. I must learn to control it or I shall get you all into grave trouble one of these days. But—what is the bother? Eh? When I came in Woden hardly looked like a young man whose sweetheart had just returned and told him that she loved him more than ever.

KATRINA: I think Woden was upset by some news I gave him just now.

WODEN (*warningly*): Katrina!

KATRINA: You see, Anton Veerkind, I have now left Litzia for good. I have been transferred to Burglitz.

ANTON: Do you call that bad news? I do not see why Woden should—

KATRINA: That was not what upset Woden. It was the *reason* of my transfer. General

Gurgani—has been appointed to take over the administration of this area.

ANTON: Gurgani! (*He becomes rigid—rather like a dog that smells danger.*)

KATRINA: Woden was afraid that, perhaps—it might—well, cause changes and—

ANTON: I see. Yes, it is certainly likely to do that. But don't be unhappy about it, Woden. It was bound to happen, and I would rather it were this than that our little Katrina, here, had thrown you over. I have endured a great deal in my old age, and I can endure more. Old age teaches you how to endure, you'll find—if you live to be old. When does this Gurgani arrive?

KATRINA: Today or tomorrow, I think.

ANTON (*smiles*): It seems hardly worth while to go on digging the draining trenches for our little Inspector, then. We may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb. You had better go off with Katrina, Woden, and enjoy yourselves.

[ANTON goes down to the door. WODEN goes quickly to KATRINA and they whisper together.
ANTON calls:—

What about our dinner, Anna? I am back from the fields.

ANNA (*off*): Just coming, Father.

[ANTON walks up to the window and stands looking out with his back to the room. After a moment he turns.

ANTON: I must go and wash my hands before dinner, I suppose.

[ANTON goes off, upstairs.

WODEN: He took it damned well. Oh, blast the Supreme Council!

KATRINA: Woden!

WODEN: Oh, well. I get fed up sometimes. I feel stifled. You can't get away from it for a minute. If it's easy here, as you say, I shouldn't like to see what it is like in other places. Regulation this, regulation that. Clause 12, Clause 22. Like a lot of babies at school!

KATRINA: Woden! You've no right to speak like that! No right at all. It is absolutely disloyal—it—it's absolutely . . . I can't believe that—

[ANNA is heard calling from kitchen.

ANNA (off): Katrina! Katrina!

[KATRINA goes off. She returns in a moment or two carrying two bowls of soup, followed by ANNA also with bowls of soup.

Where's your grandfather, Woden?

WODEN: He's gone to wash.

ANNA: Dear me. I thought he was ready. Now his soup will get cold.

WODEN: He'll be here in a moment, Mother.

KATRINA: I'll call him. (*She calls.*) Anton Veerkind! Anton Veerkind! Dinner is ready and your soup is getting cold.

ANNA: Sit down there, Katrina. Come along, Woden!

[ANTON enters and sits at head of table.

You look tired, Father.

ANTON: Well, that does not matter. If I am tired I can rest. From what Katrina tells me, Anna, it seems likely that from now on I shall do nothing else. Nothing but rest. They tell me that in the Old Men's Hostels there are thirty beds in each dormitory. Very well. That is fine. Each old man is allowed a bed to

himself. The new régime is very considerate, you see.

ANNA: What are you talking about? (*To KATRINA*) What does he mean?

WODEN: Katrina told you, didn't she?

ANNA: Told me what? Oh, that someone was coming here to inspect us. Oh, yes. She told me that. But I don't see that—

ANTON: Then you soon will see. You will see Gurgani in action.

ANNA: Gurgani!

ANTON: You will not like what you see, Anna Veerkind, but you and I are accustomed to that by now. We have not seen much to like in seven years.

KATRINA: You should not speak like that.

WODEN: Katrina will think we are all traitors.

ANNA: You must be careful, Father. You may not care what they do to you, but there is Woden to consider. You should remember that.

KATRINA: And it is not true, either.

ANTON: What is not true?

KATRINA: What you said—about the past seven years. Things are better now than they were. And a hundred times better than before the Revolution. Everyone knows that. Why, no people in the world are so well off as we are in Zagnira. If it hadn't been for Mürzer who stirred up the people and led them to victory we should still be hungry, down-trodden slaves, like the people in England.

ANTON: How do you know what the people of England are like, Katrina?

KATRINA: Everyone knows.

ANTON: Everyone knows! People know only what they are told.

KATRINA: Well, about the world outside, perhaps. But here in Zagnira we can see for ourselves. For instance, here everything belongs to us, the people, and we want only what is for our good—for the good of all the people. And it is for that we all work together. You know it is only here in the North, Anton Veerkind, that some people are slow to learn that it is their duty to give implicit obedience to our beloved Saviour, Mürzer, and to the Supreme Council he has chosen. Why, in Litzia no one would be allowed to speak as you did just now.

ANNA: Katrina is right, Father. Think what you think, if you must, but do not speak about it. You have been warned before. Because of you, Woden was nearly sent off to Masberg to work in the coal mines. Remember that.

WODEN: It was only Rutzstein who saved me. He is a fine man, Rutzstein.

ANTON: You are right, Woden. Rutzstein is a good man.

KATRINA: Do *you* say that, Anton Veerkind? Why, I have always heard that it was Rutzstein more than anyone else who persuaded the people here to fight for liberty.

ANTON: That is true. But it does not alter my opinion. Rutzstein is a good man. I am not sure that Gurgani will think so. I shall be surprised if Rutzstein is Commandant in Burglitz for very long. Once Gurgani is here.

ANNA: But the people all love Rutzstein.

ANTON: Yes. But that will not please General Gurgani, I imagine! But you are all quite right. For myself I do not at all care what happens. But for all your sakes I must control my tongue.

You are young, Woden. And you will have to live your life in these new conditions. I will not make things difficult for you. I will be good. (*He sups up his soup. There is silence for a moment or two.*) Did you see anything of my little Leda in Litzia, Katrina?

KATRINA: Not very often. I was so busy and those of us who work in Administrative Bureaus do not see much of the University students.

ANTON: Leda a doctor! That is a very funny idea. But she was always a very odd child. Do you remember, Anna? I used to say that she was as obstinate as a mule.

ANNA: She was always as good as gold with you, Father.

ANTON: Yes. That was because I used to tell her long stories. I would start some nonsense and I would have to carry it on for a week, perhaps. If I made a mistake, she would say, but how could that be because of so-and-so—something I had said some days before—and so I had to invent something to make that all right. It was all very difficult but so long as it was a story, then it was all right and Leda was happy. But she must think it was true—the story—or she would be in a terrible state. That was why I had to be careful not to make too many mistakes.

KATRINA: Made-up stories about elves and fairies and animals who talk and so on are very bad for children. Children should be told nothing but the absolute truth about things.

ANTON: Dear me! They are not likely to hear very much, these children. Who knows what is the absolute truth about things? Eh?

ANNA: Ssh! I think I hear someone—

[*They all listen. Some voices are heard and the noise of luggage being brought in.*]

WODEN (*half-rising*): I thought I heard a car a minute ago.

[*The door opens and LEDA enters. Behind her is PROFESSOR SKAEDIA. LEDA is dark. Her face is sensitive and extremely intelligent; though delicate in features and pale in colour it gives no impression of ill-health. LEDA is vital and magnetic. In some curious way she conveys an impression of unusual purity. She looks strangely happy, as if she were exalted by some inward, secret knowledge. She is completely herself—natural, unaffected. PROFESSOR SKAEDIA is a man of 40. He has a scholarly appearance. His reserve makes him appear more coldly intellectual than he really is. On LEDA'S entrance the whole family rise from the table in astonishment. In happy excitement LEDA comes quickly down and embraces her mother.*

LEDA (*with great feeling*): Mother! (*Having kissed and caressed her mother, she looks at her for some moments with smiling affection, and then goes quickly and hugs her grandfather.*) Dear, dear, Grandpapa.

[LEDA goes to WODEN and holds out her arms to him. The brother and sister kiss with great affection.

And Katrina, too. How nice to see you! (*She kisses her.*) But, good gracious! I forgot! (*She goes quickly to SKAEDIA, who is still standing at the door.*) Forgive my rudeness. I was so excited.

[LEDA takes SKAEDIA'S hand and brings him forward.

This is Professor Skaedia of Litzia University. My mother——

PROFESSOR (*bows and gives the usual salute*): The State is All.

ANNA: The State is All.

LEDA: My grandfather.

MI

PROFESSOR: The State is All.

ANTON: The State is All.

LEDA: My brother.

PROFESSOR: The State is All.

WODEN: The State is All.

LEDA: And this is our friend, Katrina Hoefler.

PROFESSOR: The State is All.

KATRINA: The State is All.

ANTON: Please honour my table, Professor Skaedia. Woden!

ANNA: Children, get some plates. Quickly, or the stew will get cold.

[WODEN offers his chair and the PROFESSOR comes down to it.

ANTON: There were Skaedias in Burglitz when I was a boy. I can remember one, Hans Skaedia, who farmed here.

PROFESSOR: Yes. Hans Skaedia was my father. I was born in Burglitz, but my family moved to Litzia when I was three years old.

ANTON: Oh, that is interesting. You and I may have met once upon a time.

PROFESSOR: We may, indeed—in my perambulator. I confess I can remember nothing of the meeting.

ANTON: Nor I!

[They laugh, and the family join in. LEDA is now by her mother with an arm round her, and WODEN and KATRINA are standing beside them in a little group near the stove.

ANNA: But what about food, Leda?

ANTON: Yes, indeed. Professor——?

PROFESSOR: No. I thank you. We had a good meal on the train. (*Smiles at LEDA.*) Did we not, Leda?

LEDA: Yes. We had a very good meal on the train. (*Slight pause. She seems troubled suddenly.*) Professor Skaedia has been so kind to me—so very, very kind. He has brought me from Litzia—and looked after me all the way—and — (To the PROFESSOR) It is going to be very difficult to explain.

PROFESSOR (*soothingly*): Oh, no. Not at all. And there is no hurry, Leda. I do not have to return till the night train.

ANNA: You do not have to go back tonight, I hope, Leda?

LEDA: No, Mother. I do not have to go back tonight.

[*There is something strange in her manner. There is a rather tense silence. The family remain still, as if movement had been arrested, waiting to hear more. After a moment or two, ANTON, as if uncomfortable, breaks the silence.*]

ANTON: Well, that is good. That you can be with us, Leda.

LEDA: Yes. If I could stay here with you all, that would be very good.

PROFESSOR (*rises and goes to her*): There is nothing to prevent you from staying here, my dear child. Nothing in the world.

LEDA: But—I do not want to bring trouble here. If I am in this house—

PROFESSOR: Do not think about that—for a little while. Eh? (*He puts his hands on her shoulders and looks at her.*) How would it be if you went to your room? You have been travelling all night and are tired.

LEDA: I do not feel tired. And I must not shirk things—at the beginning.

PROFESSOR: There is no *question* of shirking things. There is no reason that I should not have a talk with your family first.

LEDA: But I know what you will say.

PROFESSOR: Very likely.

LEDA: And though you think it is the truth, it is not the truth.

PROFESSOR: You believe that truth will prevail, don't you?

LEDA (*with a look of ecstasy*): He told me that it would prevail.

PROFESSOR: Then there can be no harm in your family hearing what I have to say first. I can at least tell them what did occur.

LEDA: Yes. But you can only tell them what you *saw*.

PROFESSOR: Well, that would be a beginning. And the right beginning, surely.

LEDA: Perhaps. And to please you—who have been so kind to me. Would you carry my bag upstairs for me, Woden, please? It is rather heavy for me. I'll be down very soon, Mother. (*She goes to her.*) There is nothing to fear, Mother. Nothing.

[LEDA *kisses her mother, and goes out, followed by WODEN.*

ANTON: What is all this?

PROFESSOR: I will explain. I will explain everything that I can explain. But—— (*He looks at KATRINA.*)

KATRINA: You would rather be alone with them?

PROFESSOR: It would be better, I think.

KATRINA (*nods and goes to door*): Woden and I will be working at the draining trenches if you want us, Anna Veerkind.

ANNA: Thank you, Katrina.

PROFESSOR: It's not very easy. (*He turns to ANNA.*) Your daughter is under the impression that she has had a vision.

ANNA: A vision?

[*The PROFESSOR nods gravely.*]

ANTON: What kind of vision?

PROFESSOR: Well, I can only tell you what she has told me. But—— I had better begin before that. Shall we all sit down?

[*They sit, one on each side of the PROFESSOR.*]

I was lecturing in the theatre on the Brachial plexus of nerves. The students were grouped round me and as I dissected the various branches I asked them questions. My eyes were on my work, and I did not look at the students, you understand. I usually name the student who is to answer. If the student is slow in answering I name another. When your daughter failed to answer for the second time, I looked up in surprise. She is one of my best students, if not the best. She was standing with her eyes fixed on the subject I had been dissecting. She was apparently attentive, but as I looked at her I saw at once that she was in some kind of a trance. It was clear to me that she was as unconscious of all that was taking place in the theatre as if she were a thousand miles away. I spoke to her but could get no reply. The student next to her was about to shake her but I told him to leave her alone. I dismissed the class. Leda Veerkind remained standing just as she was. Her eyes

were open and filled with ecstasy. She looked supremely happy. It was a quarter of an hour before she returned to normal consciousness.

[ANTON *has sat very still, his eyes on the*
PROFESSOR. ANNA *rises abruptly.*

ANNA: I must go to her.

PROFESSOR (*restrains her gently*): Please!

ANNA: But the child is ill! She has overworked.

PROFESSOR: Perhaps. But I think you should hear what I have to tell you.

ANTON (*sternly*): Sit down, Anna Veerkind.

[*After a moment the PROFESSOR continues.*

PROFESSOR: She knew nothing of what had happened during the half-hour or so that I had been lecturing. She had no recollection of entering the theatre at all. She said that as she was coming up the big stone staircase that leads to the theatre, with the other students, she saw a man dressed in white coming down. As he reached her, he stretched out his hand and said, "Come with me."

ANNA: Oh, my poor child!

ANTON: Will you please be quiet. Let us hear all that Professor Skaedia has to tell us and we can decide then what to do.

PROFESSOR: Well, I think that would be best. But I am not sure that Leda should not tell you herself exactly what she experienced then. What matters is, that nothing will shake her conviction that it was a true experience. She believes that all she described to me actually happened.

ANTON (*slowly*): If she likes to think so—and is otherwise all right as—as she seemed to be just now. Perhaps—— Do you think it will matter much?

PROFESSOR: I am afraid so.

ANNA: Oh, dear!

ANTON: I do not see why it should matter. It was strange, of course—and not healthy—to have a dream like that—in the daytime—standing on her feet, too. But—Leda looks very well now. In a few days, perhaps, she will forget all about the funny dream she had.

PROFESSOR: I wish I could believe that.

ANNA: You do not think that she will forget?

PROFESSOR: No.

ANTON: Well, that is a pity. But even if she still likes to believe it, is there any harm in that? If she is all right now. She needn't talk about it to people, I suppose. We don't want people to think she is mad. She is not that, I'm sure. Or——? (*He looks a little fearfully to the PROFESSOR.*)

PROFESSOR: There is no question of that. Her psychical state is, of course, curious, and rare. Otherwise, she is perfectly normal. Her brain—an unusually fine one—is as sound as ever, so far as *I* can judge.

ANTON: That is very good news. Isn't it Anna?

ANNA: Yes. I suppose 'it is. But—— (*She looks at the PROFESSOR.*)

PROFESSOR: Yes. (*To ANTON*) I am afraid you must face a very difficult situation. You said just now that Leda need not talk to people about her dream. But that is just what she intends to do. She believes that she is called upon to "deliver a message," and I do not think that anything short of forcible confinement will *prevent* her from delivering the message. If she does . . . ! Well, the consequences will be terrible. (*He is much moved.*)

Terrible for her and—and for you. (*Slight pause.*) She is convinced that she has been given this vision of the truth so that she may tell the people. And—her message is in direct opposition to what the people are commanded by the Supreme Council to believe. To put it as shortly as I can, her message is that God does exist, and that a people who do not know Him are utterly lost.

[*There is a pause.*]

ANNA (*in horror*): But—if Leda were even to whisper such a thing—and the police heard of it——

PROFESSOR: I am afraid she means to do more than whisper it.

ANNA: But she would not dare! If she was to—— The penalty for preaching such a thing is death.

PROFESSOR: She knows that and is in no way afraid. (*Slight pause.*) Fortunately for us, she thinks she was told to deliver her message—first in the North, so I thought it best to seize the opportunity and bring her home to you. I told the authorities that she was gravely ill and that it was necessary I should accompany her. It is a good thing that I did. Leda refuses now to repeat our greeting “The State is All.” I had some difficulty in concealing that on our journey.

ANNA: What can we do to save her? What can we do, Father?

ANTON (*gently*): Hush, Anna, hush.

ANNA (*rises*): I must go to her. (*Moves to door. Stops.*) But I am so afraid. (*Turns.*) What can I say? What can I do?

PROFESSOR: If I may advise you, I should say very little. Just make her feel that you love

her and are very glad to have her with you again.

ANNA (*feels a little happier*): Yes. I can do that.
(ANNA goes off.)

[PROFESSOR comes back.]

PROFESSOR: It is a very difficult position this. I have thought and thought and I confess I see no way out. Unless——

[ANTON looks at him questioningly.]

She is very devoted to you all. I was wondering if perhaps—for the sake of all of you—she might be persuaded not to—to speak about this. What do you think?

ANTON (*after a pause*): I do not think I could persuade her.

PROFESSOR: It would be difficult, I know. She is very determined. And she seems to have no fear.

ANTON: We have had all sorts in our family—good men and very bad men—but I think we must have had few cowards.

PROFESSOR: It was her affection that I hoped we might be able to use. Her love for you all. That we might persuade her for your sakes—not for her own—to keep silent.

[ANTON rises and moves away. He comes back.]

ANTON: I am deeply grateful to you, Professor Skaedia. I should have thanked you before.

PROFESSOR: No, no.

ANTON: You have taken great pains to help us. And great risk, too. I know how dangerous it is to—— I do hope this will not get you into trouble.

PROFESSOR: There is no fear of that, I think. My position is pretty secure.

ANTON: You make light of the danger, I think. But—I am deeply grateful to you.

PROFESSOR: It was nothing. But how to prevent her! That is the problem. How to prevent her! What she says strikes at the foundation of our system.

ANTON: In this case, of course, they would say she is mad.

PROFESSOR: Yes.

ANTON: And she would be put out of the way.

PROFESSOR: Yes. That is what I fear most. Shut her up in a mental home and she *would* go mad.

ANTON: Have you told her that they might do that? Shut her up with the insane?

PROFESSOR: Yes.

ANTON: And what did she say?

PROFESSOR: She simply said that she could not deny what she had seen.

[There is a pause.]

ANTON: And of course it is true. That is the trouble.

PROFESSOR: What?

ANTON (*very simply*): Whatever they may say in the towns, it is not possible for us who work on the land to doubt that God lives, Professor Skaedia.

[PROFESSOR SKAEDIA looks at him in surprise.]

There is a slight pause.

PROFESSOR: If the man who thinks so wants also to live, he must keep that belief to himself in Zagnira.

ANTON (*quietly*): Yes. That is true, of course. But what Leda says is true, also. This vision—

well, I don't know about that. The Church tells us of many such cases but—— Well, these are things I do not understand very well. But what she says—in whatever way she came to know it—well, that is true. Of that I am as certain as that I am standing here.

[PROFESSOR SKAEDIA *looks at him, but ANTON is not looking at SKAEDIA. Slight pause.*

PROFESSOR (*smiles*): I can see a great resemblance between you and your granddaughter.

[ANTON *is too wrapped up in his thoughts to pay attention to this remark.*

ANTON: And knowing that, you see—knowing that Leda is right—well, that makes it very difficult for me. If a young girl, with all her life before her, is not afraid to say what she believes, why should I—a skulking old man, who should perhaps have done long ago what she means now to do—dissuade her? Ask her, too, to cower before these bullies as we have all been cowering? No! (*He rises.*) I do not think I could do that.

PROFESSOR: But——

[*His reply is cut short by the entrance of LEDA and her mother.*

ANTON: Leda. (*He puts out his arms.*)

[LEDA *comes to ANTON and he puts his arms round her. She frees herself after a moment, and moves a little away.*

LEDA: Don't be too kind to me.

ANNA: But we all love you, Leda, and——

LEDA: I must not think of that now, Mother.

[*There is a pause. LEDA looks a little lonely as she stands apart from the rest, rather frail for so great a burden. But she has great control, her*

face is serene and calm. In some strange way she conveys an impression of authority.

ANTON: What do you mean by that?

LEDA: I must not think now of you, or of Mother here, or of Woden—or of myself. I have to keep very quiet and listen. Then I can hear.

ANTON: What?

LEDA: The things I'm being told to say.

ANNA: But, Leda, you are just imagining these things.

LEDA: No, Mother, I am not.

PROFESSOR: That is all very well, but if you attempt to say what you think you are being told to say, your mouth will be shut by force, and *at once*. The people will have no *chance* to hear you.

LEDA: Perhaps. But—I must obey.

PROFESSOR: You may not care what they do to *you*, but what of your family?

LEDA: When I came in here with you, Professor, and saw my family again, just at first I was troubled for a little. But that is past now.

PROFESSOR: But surely—you must care what happens to them—to your own family.

[LEDA looks at her mother and her grandfather. She smiles with great affection on them.]

LEDA: Of course I care.

PROFESSOR: Well, then?

LEDA: I cannot deny what I have seen. I cannot!

ANNA: We do not ask you to *deny* anything, Leda, but just to say nothing about it.

LEDA (*nods*): I know.

ANNA: Well, then?

LEDA (*shakes her head*): That would not be right. People must be told. Why else was I shown what—what I was shown?

[*There is a pause. LEDA has a strange exalted look. LEDA does not say the words strongly but one feels that her will is unshakable. ANNA begins to sob.*

Please do not cry, Mother. If only you knew how tranquil it is. How peaceful.

ANNA: They will kill you—or——

LEDA: Do not be afraid of anything they do to me, Mother. I'm not.

[*Only ANNA's sobbing is heard for a moment or two.*

The new will which I have may not yet be very strong, but I will be held up. I know that I will be told what I must say. The truth is so glorious. I don't know how I can make people understand.

[*ANTON comes and puts an arm round her for a moment. He moves away again.*

But I will be shown. I know I will be told what I must say.

[*LEDA stands in silence for a moment as if listening. Then she smiles faintly, and nods assent. She turns and leaves the room.*

ANNA (*cries*): Oh, Leda! Leda!

PROFESSOR: She is not going out, I hope. We must stop that. She must not go out.

ANTON: Let her do what she wishes, Hans Skaedia.

PROFESSOR: But——

ANTON: Hush, Anna. If Leda has courage we must have courage.

ANNA: But what will they do to her! Oh, what will they do to her!

ANTON: That is not our concern now, I think.

[ANNA stops sobbing, in her surprise at his words, and looks up.

Your daughter is out of our hands now.

PROFESSOR: But will you not try to stop her?

ANTON: No.

PROFESSOR: But if she tells the people that—

ANTON (*strongly*): Well, it will be the truth, will it not?

PROFESSOR: I'm afraid I'm not at all sure of that. She will tell them what she thinks she has seen. But— (*He shrugs his shoulder.*) To ask me to believe that what she thinks she saw actually does exist. Well!—that is another matter.

ANTON: You do not believe that God exists?

PROFESSOR: No. I do not. But that's not the point. Your granddaughter believes that she has been shown, in a vision, a portion of God's kingdom so that she might tell the people of Burglitz that He—God—lives. Surely there can be no question that it is our duty to stop her from saying such things in public. Against the preaching of any such doctrines the State must—in self-defence—take action. Surely you see that?

ANTON (*nods*): Yes, yes. I see. But Leda must be allowed to tell these poor people the truth.

[ANNA is horrified, and PROFESSOR SKAEDIA is almost unable to believe that he has heard aright.

I shall stand by her and help her. (*He draws himself up. The light of battle comes into his eyes.*)

[WODEN and KATRINA enter unnoticed and stand by the door.

ANNA: Father! You must not!

ANTON: I will! I know in my heart that God lives. I have always known it. Who ripened my crops for fifty years before these damned Inspectors arrived to tell old Anton Veerkind what he must do with his land? (*His excitement grows.*) Does the Supreme Council and our Leader Mürzer make the sun shine and the rain fall? Ha! Leda has made me feel ashamed! I, who have worked with nature all my life. Have I not seen God's hand in it? Ay, and felt His Presence, too, at times! In my fields and woods—as well as in His Holy Church. The State is God, indeed! I have often longed to throw that lie back in their teeth! Yet I, too, have kept my mouth tight shut! Have been afraid! Well, it is not too late. The people will hear. They will believe. They will rise again—They will cry, God and His People.

[KATRINA shrieks. She puts her fingers to her ears, turns and runs blindly from the room.]

WODEN: Katrina! Katrina!

[WODEN runs after KATRINA.]

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE I

The next day.

A room in the Town Hall.

(Five members of the Burglitz Council are sitting in somewhat dejected attitudes at a table. They are RUTZSTEIN, BULOFF, DUREN, NEKELL, and LEMAN, the most important of these characters is RUTZSTEIN. He is a man of 44. He first came to Burglitz as a schoolmaster when a man of 22. He is an earnest and sincere man. He is extremely able, but a cultured and thoughtful mind, a humane disposition, and a leaning towards tolerance prevent his being completely successful as Commandant. BULOFF is a man of 60, fat and lazy, his own comforts are always his first consideration. DUREN, the oldest man present, is about 70. He is very small. He is quiet and gentle in argument, and in his manner. NEKELL is a rather anxious-looking man of 40. He is the most sensitive and imaginative of the five members of the Council. LEMAN is much younger than the others. Although a fanatic he can be calculating where his own interests are concerned; at the moment he is anxious to be on the right side of GENERAL GURGANI. GURGANI is a heavily-built man of 40. His face is hard but he has good looks of which he is very proud. He has tremendous drive and force. Under the smiling suavity of his manner one senses something extremely unpleasant, and rather terrifying. He is at the head of the table. They are all seated except GURGANI, who stands at the corner of the table.)

GURGANI: You will observe that I have not attempted to mince matters. The position is

far too grave for anything but the most direct speech.

LEMAN: Hear, hear.

GURGANI: Throughout the whole of Zagnira, East, West and South, the authority of the State is unquestioned. Why is it not so here in the North?

RUTZSTEIN: Before we answer your question, General Gurgani, may I ask if we are on trial? Is it your intention to impeach the Burglitz Council?

GURGANI: That will depend on the result of my investigations.

BULOFF: Investigations?

GURGANI: The details of my tour are now being arranged. I shall go everywhere and see everything.

DUREN (*rises*): That is surely very irregular. In my time——

LEMAN: Your time's gone, Duren!

[DUREN *sits*.

RUTZSTEIN: Does the Supreme Council consider that any member of the Burglitz Council is disloyal to the State?

GURGANI: The Supreme Council will decide that when they have seen my report.

DUREN (*rises*): But——

LEMAN: Shut up!

[DUREN *sits*.

GURGANI: We find that the people here are badly disciplined and are giving unwilling service to the State.

BULOFF: Oh, no!

GURGANI: That the State is All appears to be more a phrase on their lips than a burning conviction in their hearts.

NEKELL: I cannot agree that the people of Burglitz—

LEMAN: We're here to listen to General Gurgani, not to air our views, Nekell.

GURGANI (*to NEKELL*): That is what we think. (*Moves forward addressing Council.*) Regulations of the New Régime are not always enforced. Exceptions are often made. Seven years after the revolution a great many people here are living much as they were before it. The progress in communal housing is slow. And even where communal hostels exist, these are not always filled because you have feared to evacuate these peasants from the wretched homes they prefer to occupy.

RUTZSTEIN: They are strange people, here, remember, General Gurgani.

GURGANI: They are the people you were appointed to govern, Commandant Rutzstein. The hands of the Supreme Council were full. The problems of our industrial cities demanded all our attention, and we were compelled to leave the control of this area in the hands of the Burglitz Council. After all, it was only peasants you had to control.

RUTZSTEIN: We had the problem of the production of food. Seventy per cent of the population of Zagnira is fed by us, and never have we failed to deliver our supplies.

BULOFF: Not once.

DUREN: A remarkable achievement, too—when one knows all the circumstances.

NEKELL: Hear, hear.

GURGANI: It is perhaps unfortunate, Commandant Rutzstein, that you did *not* fail to deliver the food.

RUTZSTEIN: I don't understand.

GURGANI: Then I will explain. If the supplies had failed, the Supreme Council would have taken immediately the action they are only now about to take. An iron control would have been established here, as in the rest of Zagnira. It would have been easier to establish then than it is likely to be now—after seven years of lax rule.

RUTZSTEIN: I'm quite prepared to defend the work of the Burglitz Council, General Gurgani.

DUREN: I'm with you there, Rutzstein.

GURGANI: Indeed? Then you will have much to defend, comrades. I assure you of that.

BULOFF (*in a conciliatory tone*): Perhaps, if we had some details? If we could only hear specific reasons for the dissatisfaction of the Supreme Council we might—

GURGANI: You shall hear them, Councillor Buloff. But first let me remind you of something. Did any of you ever see Masberg before we took control, or the industrial hell of Rachina—where factory workers lived in underground cellars like half-starved rats? (*Paces up and down.*) Throughout the whole of Zagnira, except here, in the Province of Burglitzia, were degradation, poverty, misery. These conditions were intolerable. The people rose. By our efforts the misery and poverty have been swept away. But what is our position now? We have to control the lives of forty-seven million people, remember. When the State is All the Government must be strong, and its authority over its people—individually and collectively—must be absolute and unques-

tioned. (*Moves below table to RUTZSTEIN.*) We of the Supreme Council feel that the authority of your Council, here in Burglitz, is not strong, and your control of the people is not absolute. Your weakness, Commandant Rutzstein, is a danger to the whole State. (*Moves away.*)

RUTZSTEIN: I presume that the peculiar difficulties of this part of Zagnira can hardly have escaped the minds of the Supreme Council. Conditions here were not intolerable, as in the industrial towns, and the people here were not united for revolution. Here we had to *make the revolution.*

GURGANI: I know, I know, but that does not excuse your weakness in establishing the New Régime.

RUTZSTEIN: The New Régime was established.

BULOFF: All property was confiscated.

DUREN: The churches were closed.

NEKELL: We were recognised as the sole authority, and most people obeyed us without question.

LEMAN: But the priests were allowed to escape.

RUTZSTEIN (*to LEMAN*): They were driven out, that was enough. What would have been gained by their slaughter? It certainly wouldn't have made the work of our Council easy in these parts. (*To GURGANI*) The Church was our greatest obstacle. It had a stronger hold here than anywhere in Zagnira.

GURGANI: And should therefore have been exterminated. Cut out like a cancer from the body politic.

RUTZSTEIN: Such ruthless methods were impossible here. They would have antagonised all those who had supported the Church, and—

GURGANI: When the Church governed, were

her methods any less ruthless than ours? Martyring men's bodies to save their souls! She didn't spare men who questioned her authority. Nor shall we. But you allowed these priests to escape to other countries—where they malign the work we are doing, and plot against us. Who knows that they may not return some day, and stir up the people against us.

RUTZSTEIN: Mürzer knew what we were doing. Why didn't he order us to destroy the priests?

GURGANI: His hands were full.

DUREN: So were our hands full.

LEMAN: I said all along that it was a mistake to let the priests escape.

NEKELL: I don't remember your saying so, Leman.

LEMAN: Well, I did say so again and again. In Burglitz the priests were battering on the ignorance of our peasants—squeezing them to support their cathedrals. They sat back in their pomp and glory while our people starved.

RUTZSTEIN (*strongly*): What you wanted was impossible. Our own side would have refused to do it. (*To GURGANI*) The closure of the churches alone was a difficult enough matter—here in Burglitz. We dared not order liquidation of the priests.

GURGANI: A dangerous timidity, Commandant Rutzstein. The State is All. How can it be all if there be an authority higher than the State? An authority who claims to be obeyed before the State and in spite of the State?

RUTZSTEIN: May I ask, General Gurgani, if you have ever spent much time in Burglitz?

GURGANI: No, I have not. A tedious train journey, and a most unpleasant hour at sea separate you from the rest of Zagnira

RUTZSTEIN: Exactly. And because of that you will find the people here are different.

GURGANI: Then they must be made the same. We cannot allow people to be different in Zagnira. Our system demands a mass mind and a mass obedience. If your Council has failed to obtain these essentials—essentials upon which the whole success of our system depends—then I shall take control here.

RUTZSTEIN: But what more could we have done?

GURGANI: Perhaps I shall be able to show you. I have been very patient, Commandant Rutzstein. Since my arrival you have had a good deal to say and I have listened. But listening to you one might almost believe that the revolution here in the North had been won, not by the blood and courage of the people, but by the persuasive tongue of Commandant Rutzstein.

BULOFF: The fight here was a very bloody one, General Gurgani. All of us—except old Duren, there—were in that fight.

NEKELL: And no one fought harder or better than Rutzstein did.

DUREN: You see, we were greatly outnumbered here. I don't think that the revolutionaries were outnumbered in any other part of Zagnira.

GURGANI: Your preliminary propaganda must have been weak.

NEKELL: It was not. But the people here were not naturally inclined to revolution. They had none of the bitter grievances of those who lived in the mining districts and industrial centres.

BULOFF: As Rutzstein said, the revolution here had to be made, and we all know that Rutzstein more than any other man helped to bring it about.

DUREN: He converted me, for one.

LEMAN (*bitterly*): That was extremely useful!

RUTZSTEIN: It was. We wouldn't have had Kroonstadt Province but for Duren.

NEKELL: He converted me, too. For twenty years Rutzstein plotted here. Secretly, and in danger, he never ceased to preach revolution. (*To LEMAN*) You know as well as I do that it was he who formed the first revolutionary cell in Burglitz.

RUTZSTEIN: All that I have done I have done for only one reason. The good of the State. The State is All. That has been my life-long conviction. But I beg you to remember, General Gurgani, that the people of Burglitz are so different from other Zagnirians that they might almost be a foreign people.

GURGANI: I think you exaggerate.

RUTZSTEIN: I should like to believe that I do, but I know better. Our policy was based on our knowledge of the people here. They are with us now, only because they are learning to trust us.

GURGANI: Rather slowly, I'm afraid! We must see what we can do to hasten the process.

RUTZSTEIN: By force?

GURGANI: Yes. By force. In a State where the collective good has to be protected from individual greed you cannot govern otherwise. People who will not do what they are told without question must be forced to obey. Do the peasants here think they know better

what is good for them than the Supreme Council? That way lies madness—democracy!

RUTZSTEIN: Don't make martyrs here, I warn you, General Gurgani.

GURGANI: Martyrs? When ~~the~~ traitors to the State are executed in Burglitz, do they become martyrs?

LEMAN: No. Because traitors to the State are not executed here in Burglitz.

GURGANI: Indeed! We use stronger methods where I come from, with very satisfactory results. Well, we shall see. My mind is open. I am here to investigate. But if immediate action is required I have authority to take control here. If I think it advisable I shall use that authority. Our conference is over. The State is All.

[All rise and salute.]

OMNES: The State is All.

CURTAIN

SCENE II

Same as Act I. Some days later.

(JACOB KELLNER sits at the end of the table. He is a simple-minded peasant of middle age, but at the moment he seems to have almost a conspiratorial air about him. ANTON VEERKIND sits away from the table.)

JACOB: Of course, you must forgive the liberty, Anton Veerkind.

ANTON: Liberty! Nonsense! There's no one more welcome than you are, Jacob Kellner.

JACOB: It's a wonderful thing to have happened.

ANTON: Yes.

JACOB: Almost a miracle.

ANTON: Quite a miracle.

JACOB: Well, yes, quite a miracle. And that was it, you see. We talked it over, Ruth and me, and we thought—well, this is a very important thing. People should know. Now, there's quite a handful of people near us—the Heitners, for instance, and Boorman, he's a good fellow—and one or two others—people we could trust.

ANTON (*who is beginning to get excited*): Yes.

JACOB: So Ruth thought I'd better come at once and see you. We wondered if you and Leda Veerkind could come to us tonight.

ANTON: Tonight?

JACOB: After it's dark, of course—about nine, say.

ANTON: And you would have them there? The Heitners and Boorman and so on?

JACOB: We'd have eight or nine at least.

ANTON (*delighted*): Ha! Ha! We'll come, Leda and I. Be sure of that. She's out now, you know. She's always out. But I will arrange. You'll get as many as you can for us, Jacob?

JACOB: Not less than what I said. Perhaps a few more.

ANTON: A dozen, or fifteen, perhaps? Eh?

JACOB: Yes. But of course you must be careful, Anton Veerkind.

ANTON: Yes, yes. I'll be careful, of course.

JACOB: Now, you could come to us by the fields and through the Kroonstadt Wood. You needn't be on the road at all.

ANTON: We must leave everything to Leda. She'll know best what to do.

[The door is heard to slam upstairs. They both look round.]

(Rising) Come along now. I'll see you out, Jacob. *(ANTON hustles JACOB off and goes off with him.)*

[ANNA arrives at foot of stairs in time to see them disappear. She looks after them suspiciously, then sits by the table and begins her work. She is making a shirt, and works rapidly, and with great efficiency. ANTON re-enters, and comes above table towards stove.]

I tell you, things are going very well. Very well, indeed. I begin to feel like my old self again.

ANNA: Perhaps.

ANTON: What do you mean by perhaps? I tell you it is so.

ANNA: Very likely.

ANTON: There you go again. Very likely? Is that all you can say when the most wonderful things are happening under your very eyes, Anna Veerkind?

ANNA: Well, see that they don't happen under other people's eyes. The wrong people's eyes!

ANTON: I'm not quite a fool. I suppose I know the people of Burglitz as well as any man. I should, by this time, I think.

ANNA: And the people know you, Father. Don't forget that, please.

ANTON: Know me? Of course they know me.

ANNA: And that is the danger. They notice you. There goes Anton Veerkind, they say. For years you never move beyond your fields. Then sud-

denly, every day you go out. Do you think people do not notice that, people who perhaps are *not* your friends?

ANTON: I am not a fool. I admit there is some sense in what you say, but I knew it before. I have been very careful. Besides, it is usually only at night.

ANNA: I do not like it at all. And poor Woden. I can hardly bear to see the pain in his face. He who was always so cheerful. He has been so good to us all these years. Always so willing to help.

ANTON: It makes me sad, too, to see the boy so unhappy, Anna. But what can I do? It was very unfortunate that Katrina came in the other day—just at that moment.

ANNA: And now she will not come near us. But there is one thing. She cannot have reported what she heard or the police would have been here long ago. We must be grateful for that.

ANTON: She promised Woden she would not report it.

ANNA: Yes. But she refuses to see him, or come near us. It is breaking Woden's heart.

ANTON: I know. I know. But all may come right, yet. Wonderful things are happening. I am beginning to believe again that it may even be possible to——

ANNA: Hush! You need not say it. I know. I know why you are so happy. Why you say you are feeling like your old self again. (*She puts down her work and comes to him. She looks round as if to make sure no one is near. Her voice is low and tense.*) You have gone back to your old plans and schemes. You are plotting again. You think

you can stir up the people by using this madness that has come upon poor Leda and——

ANTON (*stung to fury*): Be silent, woman! How dare you! No, no. This is too much! (*With an effort he controls himself.*) Never speak like that again. I will not allow it! (*He moves about the room, trying to recover his composure. When he speaks again it is in an altogether new way. He is almost gentle with her.*) You should not have said that. You, her mother, should know that Leda is not mad. What has happened is beyond her understanding, as it is beyond yours, or mine, or that of any man. But it has happened. Within her is God's flaming truth. Not one to whom she has yet spoken—except only you, her mother—has doubted that. A miracle has happened. And through Leda you will see another happen here in Burglitz. The people are ready to hear, I tell you. They were thirsting for her news, as my land has often thirsted for the rain. Listen to me, Anna. Surely you must remember how, here, in the old days we would sit round that stove on winter evenings sometimes and listen to Father Bonnard when he told us of the Saints of Zagnira, and the wonders they performed. The Blessed Lady Bonina, and others. He did not tell lies, Father Bonnard. These things happened. You know that. Here, and in other lands. In your history book at school, I suppose, you read of Joan of Arc and of her Crusade? Well, then. You see God can select anyone—a poor fisherman, say—or a weak girl to carry out some great purpose for Him. But because it is to Leda it has happened—this miracle—then, of course, it is not true! She is mad! Very well. You will see. You say I have returned to my plotting. Yes. That is true. And very likely I shall be shot. And Leda, too. But sooner or later they who tell us that there is no God will be overthrown. And if our deaths hasten the day—as I think

they may—we shall not have died in vain. (*He pauses.*) That is all I have to say. (*He gets up. He moves away and picks up a large meerschaum pipe which he fills. He lights it.*)

ANNA: It is hate of this Government, not love of God, that moves you, Father.

ANTON (*pettishly*): It is both. I hate the Government. Who wouldn't, who has had his land taken? But I believe in God. And who are they to tell us that we must not worship Him! (*He crouches close to stove, puffing fiercely at his pipe.*)

ANNA (*who has returned to her work*): More bloodshed. The people here all killing each other again.

ANTON: Perhaps the right ones will be killed this time!

ANNA: Fighting in the streets. Bombing and stabbing one another.

ANTON: Yes. For God!

ANNA (*looks round at him*): Would He have us do that, Anton Veerkind? I do not believe it. (*There is a pause.*) Even if all Leda says is true, you have no chance. When Gurgani is here! Already the police are being strengthened. And only yesterday troops arrived from Rachina, if you please. What was that for? All the way from Rachina? What can you and your friends do against trained soldiers, I should like to know?

[ANTON remains obstinately silent, puffing at his pipe.

And where is Leda now?

ANTON: I do not know where Leda is. She will be about her business, wherever she is.

ANNA: Every moment she is not in the house I sit here in terror. And when she is here I expect, every moment, that the police will come.

ANTON: I am very sorry for you, Anna. But nothing will happen to Leda that is not intended to happen. The best way we can help her is to believe in her. For some reason Leda has been—been beckoned out—that is all that I can think. It is beyond me—beyond us all. But I am proud. And you, her mother, should be proud. The moment that Professor Skaedia told me what she had said I knew it was true. I knew it. In here. (*He taps his breast.*) There is no hope for a people who do not know God. None at all. What they have done to us—this Government—is—is—— It is bringing darkness and confusion. It is so evil that—— No, no, the people will rise against it. They—— (*He is greatly agitated.*)

[ANNA looks at him.

ANNA: Sit down, Father.

[*He does so, after a moment.*

It was my fault—arguing that way. But—— You must try not to get so excited. It is bad, at your age. (*Slight pause.*) I wish Leda would come back.

ANTON: I hear someone at the door now. (*Listens.*) Oh, no. It is Woden.

[*A moment later WODEN enters. He comes and kisses his mother in silence, and moves to the stove.*

(*Smiles at him*) Well, Woden?

WODEN: It has got much colder again.

ANTON: Yes?

ANNA: We had not noticed that—in here by the stove.

ANTON: Winter will be on us in earnest soon, I suppose.

[*There is a slightly uncomfortable silence which WODEN breaks suddenly.*]

WODEN: I have had a letter from Katrina.

ANNA (*drops her work*): Oh! Is——? What does she say?

WODEN: She wants to see me.

ANTON: That is fine, Woden. I am very glad.

WODEN: She has asked me to meet her—so that we can talk things over. I'm not going.

ANNA: But you must go, Woden.

WODEN: How can I go? She'll want to know everything. Why should she be drawn into—into what is going on here? You know what the police are. It will not be just you and Leda—anyone who is believed to have had anything to do with us—will be—— I can see it coming.

ANNA: You are right, Woden. It is terrible—terrible! We should have done as Hans Skaedia advised. We should have kept Leda here with us all the time. Never allowed her to go out. As it is—every moment I expect the police to—— How she has escaped so long I——!

ANTON: She has escaped because she is in the hands of God.

WODEN: Someone's bound to talk about this—someone who is loyal to the State—will tell the police. Then——

ANTON: Loyal to the State, you say! There are far greater things than the State to which one must be loyal, Woden. Can we worship a town council or a committee? Must we think and believe as they tell us to think and believe and nothing but what they tell us? Bah! This is a madness that has spread through Zagnira like a plague—is spreading through the world like a plague.

WODEN: Even if you're right, Leda can do no good. She will be arrested. If she is not shot at once as a traitor, she will be sent to Masberg. You know what that means! And we—we shall be sent there, too. And what good will it have done? No one will know. The Veerkind family will have disappeared as others have disappeared. No one will know why. It will only have been one more lesson to people to keep their mouths shut—do as they are told—make the best of things as they are.

ANNA: Woden is right, Father.

ANTON: No, Anna, he is not. He is wrong.

WODEN: I should like to believe that, Grand-papa. That I am wrong.

ANTON: You may believe it. And you should believe it. You should know the people of Burglitz better. You are a Veerkind—a Burglitzian. Our people, Woden, are a spiritual people. Deep in their roots—part of their very being—part of their blood and their bones—is the longing for God.

WODEN: I meant—wrong about Leda—about what would happen—to her—and to us. If we are sent to Masberg, or shot as traitors, it will make no difference. Things will go on just the same.

ANTON: I do not think so. We have always fought for freedom here. We shall do so again.

[There is a pause.]

ANNA: How much does Katrina know about Leda, Woden?

WODEN: She doesn't know anything.

ANNA: And about what she heard—that day?

WODEN: It frightened her at first—but when we talked it over, we both thought it was

only that grandpapa had been arguing with Skaedia—and got too excited.

ANNA: But if that was all, why has she kept away?

WODEN: She hasn't.

ANNA: But I thought——

WODEN: I have refused to see Katrina.

ANNA: Oh! (*Slight pause.*) I didn't know that.

WODEN: How could I see her, after I knew about Leda? (*He turns away to conceal his feelings.*)

[*There is a pause.*]

ANTON: I am very sorry. Very, very sorry.

ANNA: If Katrina thinks what you say she does, surely you can leave it at that, Woden. She needn't know anything about—what has happened. But you should go to meet her. Certainly.

WODEN: If I see her, I must explain things. Katrina saw Leda arrive here with Skaedia and—— We thought that they had got married—or had come to say that they were going to be married.

ANNA (*nods*): Yes. Just at first I thought so, too. Oh, if only it had been that! (*She breaks down.*)

[ANTON and WODEN maintain an uncomfortable silence as ANNA sobs. LEDA enters. She stands for a moment, sees what is happening, and comes down to her mother. She stands beside her and puts her hand on ANNA'S shoulder. She stands very still and says nothing. ANNA stops crying, dabs her nose with her handkerchief, and speaks without looking up.]

ANNA: I am glad you are safely back, Leda.

LEDA: Yes, Mother.

ANNA: Where have you been all this time?

LEDA: I was feeding the ducks.

[ANNA is so much astonished at this reply that her expression makes LEDA laugh.]

You know, Mother, on the pond in the Park. You used to take me there. When I was small. Do you remember?

ANNA: Of course I remember. *(She returns to her sewing.)*

LEDA: They looked just the same, the ducks. Just as comical. Though, of course, they couldn't have been the same ducks. *(She smiles.)* And I fed the gulls, too. There were hundreds of them there. They had come in from the sea. They came and fed out of my hand and quite a crowd of people collected. The gulls shrieked and made a terrific noise. They were beautiful when they were flying, but they didn't look so pretty close to with their beaks open. And their eyes looked rather angry. But I think it was only that they were frightened by all the people who were standing round me. A man said he'd never seen the gulls here do that before—or anywhere so close to the sea. Only in inland towns like Rachina, he said he had seen them do that. Anyway, it was great fun.

ANNA: But—— You have not been in the Park all this time, surely, Leda?

LEDA: No. *(Pause.)* There were several places I had to go to first.

[Another pause. Her eyes travel to ANTON for a moment. A look of understanding seems to pass between the two, but LEDA almost immediately looks down. Then she looks at WODEN.]

LEDA: Have you finished work for the day, Woden?

WODEN: Yes.

LEDA: That is nice. What are you going to do?

WODEN: Oh, I don't know. Would you like me to help you, Grandpapa? There is still a good deal of that trench to do. I thought they would have been to inspect it before this.

ANTON: Yes. So did I. I don't understand why they have not been. Well, we would have a good chance of finishing it. If you are sure you don't mind, Woden.

WODEN: I don't mind.

ANNA: But what about Katrina?

WODEN: That wasn't to be till this evening. Besides, I'm not going. (*He goes off quickly.*)

[*After a moment ANTON follows him.*]

ANNA: Poor Woden.

LEDA: What did he mean about Katrina?

ANNA: She has asked him to meet her. But Woden is afraid to go.

LEDA: Because of me?

ANNA: Yes.

[*LEDA moves to the stove. She looks as if she had suddenly become very tired.*]

LEDA (*as if to herself*): When you love someone very much, as I love Woden, it's difficult to stand aside and let him choose. But that is what I must do. It's no good to argue or dispute. Both gates stand open, and Woden must choose for himself. (*She turns to her mother and smiles.*) Can I help you, Mother?

ANNA (*rises*): Well, I did want to go out, Leda. There's food to get. Our ration tickets are only

available today. I've nearly finished, but there are still these socks to do. If you could darn them it would be a great help.

LEDA: Of course I will. (*Goes above table to ANNA.*)

ANNA: Then I'll go and put my things on.

[ANNA moves towards the kitchen door, stops, and returns to LEDA, who has sat at the table, and kisses her. Then she goes into the kitchen. She returns in a moment with a shopping basket and gets her shawl, puts it on, and comes to the table, looking at LEDA. LEDA is darning. She does the work carefully, and rather like a little girl who is pleased at having been entrusted with such important work. She looks up as ANNA stands beside her.]

LEDA: What is it, Mother?

ANNA: I was just wondering—you'll be all alone in the house.

LEDA: That won't matter.

ANNA: But suppose someone came? Not that I'm expecting anyone, but you never know. Woden and your grandfather wouldn't see anyone from where they're working. Perhaps it would be better if you took the socks to your room. Then, if anyone comes, they'd think the house was empty and go and find your grandfather.

LEDA: Are you afraid of anyone seeing me, Mother?

ANNA: Well, it might be awkward——about the salute, for instance. You don't like giving that now, do you, Leda? But it is compulsory and very important. I don't know how you manage when you're out so much.

LEDA: Well, it's very queer. But sometimes I give it. Sometimes I know it's quite right for

me to give it. But, at other times, with someone else, I know I mustn't give it.

ANNA: Well, I think it would be better if you took the socks to your room. Then you can wait there till your grandfather comes. And if anyone comes, pay no attention.

LEDA (*rises*): Very well. (*She begins to gather up the socks.*)

ANNA: I know you have to do what you think right. But you will be careful, won't you, for all our sakes. I'm always so frightened that—

LEDA: But you believe in God.

ANNA: I do, Leda, I do. But we cannot say that we do. God must know that we cannot. That's forbidden.

LEDA: I saw you praying last night.

ANNA: A lot of us do that, Leda. The older ones—but—in secret. He must understand and excuse us, I think.

LEDA: But when the older ones are dead? If this goes on. Katrina? Woden? A whole people who do not know God.

ANNA (*uncomfortably*): Well, I mustn't wait now, Leda. There's the food to get. And there's always such a long queue waiting.

LEDA: Yes, Mother.

ANNA: And you will go to your room?

LEDA: I'll go now.

[ANNA goes off. LEDA picks up the bundle of socks and ANNA's sewing, taking everything except a pair of scissors, and goes upstairs.

[The room is empty for a few moments, then a door is heard to slam. There is another pause, then LEDA reappears, and goes to the table for the scissors. As she does so, there is a knock on

the door. LEDA is undecided for a moment whether to go upstairs, then she goes to the windows and looks off. She is greatly surprised, and goes quickly to open the door.

PROFESSOR (*off*): May I come in?

LEDA (*at door*): Of course.

HANS SKAEDIA *enters. He goes to the table, puts his hat down, and starts taking off his gloves, LEDA follows him.*

Why have you come back?

SKAEDIA *does not reply. He stands and looks at her for a moment as if studying a case. He seems cold, aloof, impersonal. His interest in LEDA is intense and one feels that the difficulty of this problem is exciting his brain.*

PROFESSOR: Is your grandfather here, Leda?

LEDA: He's in the fields. It's quite near. I'll go and get him. (*She turns to go off.*)

PROFESSOR: No. Don't trouble now. (*He puts his gloves on the table beside his hat.*)

[LEDA comes to a chair at the table.

It will do later. (*Moves to stove and warms his hands.*) Well, how are you, Leda?

LEDA: I'm very well.

PROFESSOR (*cheerfully*): That's good. And your family?

LEDA (*abruptly*): Professor Skaedia, you mustn't stay here very long.

PROFESSOR (*turns to her*): Why not?

LEDA: It's not safe.

[*Slight pause.*

PROFESSOR (*nods*): I see. So you've been busy then, Leda?

LEDA: Of course.

PROFESSOR: You've been out—and——

LEDA: Every day. I'll go and get my grandfather. (*She moves quickly upstage, but stops suddenly, and turns, as if arrested by some new idea.*)

PROFESSOR: What is it?

LEDA: I've just remembered. You were to address the International Medical Assembly last night.

PROFESSOR (*smiles*): Why not? I did.

LEDA (*astonished*): But—— The Assembly was to be in Rachina!

PROFESSOR: Well, so it was. I spoke in the Great Hall at Rachina. There were a thousand delegates there from all over the world. (*Puts gloves in hat.*) As far as I could judge I didn't send many of them to sleep.

LEDA (*still astonished*): But—it's impossible!

PROFESSOR: That isn't a very flattering remark, Leda!

LEDA (*paying no attention*): It's impossible. You have to leave Rachina in the morning to get the boat. It takes twenty-four hours to get here.

PROFESSOR: It took me only five

LEDA (*smiles*): How stupid of me. I forgot. You came by air?

PROFESSOR: Yes. (*Moves to stove.*) At this rate, you know, your remote island will soon be only a suburb of Rachina. I like your home, Leda. It's a lovely old house, and this seems to be an extraordinarily comfortable—sensible—room. (*His hand moves to his hip pocket.*) May one smoke here?

LEDA: Of course.

PROFESSOR (*moves up to the window and looks at woodwork*): What's the date of this house, by the way?

LEDA: Parts of it, they say, are four hundred years old.

PROFESSOR: It's always belonged to your family?

LEDA: Always.

PROFESSOR: You were born here, I suppose?

[LEDA *nods*. *She is thinking hard. She seems to be having a battle of some kind with herself.*

You must have had a very happy childhood here, I think. Till the time of the trouble, of course, when your father was killed. (*His eyes wander to her for a moment.*) Your grandfather's a most remarkable old man. I was greatly impressed by him. Though impressed's hardly the word—it wasn't just admiration I felt. He seems to inspire affection, somehow, and I began to——

LEDA: Stop! (*The word is a command. It is not an emotional plea for mercy. LEDA does not suggest that if he goes on she will break down. She turns and looks at him.*) Do you think I don't know what you're trying to do to me? (*There is almost scorn in her voice. She waits a moment, and when she speaks again there is no antagonism or personal feeling in her voice.*) Of course it isn't easy when I love them all so much. When I saw mother and grandfather and Woden again—I knew. But—I must do what I have to do. I must.

PROFESSOR (*with sudden irritation*): It's madness!

LEDA (*strongly*): No, it's not! The people must be told! (*She waits for a moment.*) So I must forget my mother and my brother——

[SKAEDIA *looks at her for a moment, then turns and stubs out his cigarette at the table. He thinks over the problem.*

PROFESSOR: Shall we sit down, Leda?

LEDA: It mustn't be for long. (*Sits at the end of the table.*)

[SKAEDIA *sits by the table.*

You shouldn't be here at all, Professor. You see, they will soon know that we—are traitors in this house.

PROFESSOR: It's at night you go out, I suppose.

LEDA: Yes. To the farms near here. The people are free from their work at night and can listen. A few who have been told about me come together. Sometimes it is in a barn, or in a field; sometimes in a house.

PROFESSOR: What do you say?

LEDA: I tell them about my vision. And what I was told.

PROFESSOR: Do they believe you?

LEDA (*simply*): Yes.

PROFESSOR: What else do you say to them?

LEDA: I speak to them about God, and how He desires that the people of Burglitzia should turn to Him again. Love Him again.

[*The simplicity, and strange spiritual beauty of LEDA moves SKAEDIA deeply. There is a pause.*

PROFESSOR: I hear that Gurgani is in Burglitz.

LEDA: Yes.

PROFESSOR: That's bad. If you fell into his hands, Leda, it would be terrible.

LEDA: Why should I fear Gurgani? God would be with me. But you shouldn't be here, Professor, it's too great a risk.

PROFESSOR (*leans back in his chair*): I can look after myself. I'm in no danger. Mürzer and

I are good friends, for one thing. Everyone knows that. And then I'm some sort of a celebrity, you know. (*He laughs.*) My reputation in the world is supposed to bring honour to Zagnira.

LEDA: It does.

PROFESSOR: Thank you. (*He leans across the table to her and speaks earnestly and impressively.*) Listen to me, Leda. What you are trying to do is madness, my dear. Causes far beyond your understanding have brought about our present system. You can't stand against such things, it's impossible. If God exists, He may be using the Supreme Council to fulfil His purpose here. Working in them. How can you tell? Mürzer's brought about great reforms in Zagnira, you know. The people are better fed, better housed. Surely this God of yours cares how His people live?

LEDA: Yes.

PROFESSOR: Suppose as the result of what you're doing this Government is upset. What then? Would you have our people go back to their old bad conditions of living?

LEDA: No.

PROFESSOR: Then leave well alone, Leda, I beg you. Suppose these men are right and God doesn't exist?

LEDA: I know He exists.

PROFESSOR: Then, why don't I know—now? If God lives, why doesn't He let me, Hans Skaedia, know? I tell you, my child, you cannot help anyone by allowing the State to put you in prison or kill you. Let me take you back to Litzia. We'll work together in medicine. Help people in that way. Trust me, Leda. Trust me. What I say is best for you and for all of us.

LEDA: How can you know that? You can't know what God's purpose is with me. You must go away now. (*She rises and puts out her hand.*) Good-bye.

[He sees he has failed. He rises and takes her hand. He is deeply moved. He bows over her hand and kisses it. The door opens, and ANTON enters.]

ANTON (*in surprise*): Hans Skaedia!

LEDA: Professor Skaedia came here to try and help us, Grandpapa.

ANTON (*to SKAEDIA*): That was kind.

PROFESSOR: I only came because I had to. That was all.

ANTON: Still, it was kind of you.

LEDA: It was—very kind. (*She smiles to SKAEDIA and goes upstairs.*)

[There is a pause.]

PROFESSOR (*to ANTON*): I've been trying to persuade Leda.

ANTON: Yes?

PROFESSOR: But it was all quite useless.

ANTON: Of course. She has been told what she is to do, you see.

PROFESSOR: She's in great danger here, Veerkind.

ANTON: Yes, she is in great danger. We all are, I suppose—in this house. You yourself, Hans Skaedia, should not have come here. It was a great risk.

PROFESSOR: I had to come. I felt that I must do something to try and stop her. If the police hear about it you know what will happen?

ANTON: They will soon hear, I think.

PROFESSOR: But it will be terrible. Really terrible.

ANTON: What exists in Zagnira is terrible. It must be changed. (*Crosses to stove.*) Men must be free.

PROFESSOR (*crosses over to the table*): How can Leda free them? How can she fight the State—fight a man like Gurgani? Why should she die for this madness? No one will believe what she says. It will make no difference. Her sacrifice will be useless. Utterly useless.

ANTON: We do not know that.

PROFESSOR: I know it! The State will be All when Leda is— (*Picks up hat.*) Well, I can do nothing here. I must go. (*Goes towards the door, stops, and returns to ANTON.*) If Leda is arrested, send for me. You understand? If the worst happens, send for me. I have influence with the Supreme Council. Mürzer and I are close friends. Promise to send for me.

ANTON: I promise.

[*The two shake hands.*

[*SKAEDIA goes to the door as—*

CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE III

SCENE: *The same.*

TIME: *Two days later. It is early in the afternoon and the room is empty.*

(*A few moments after the rise of the curtain, voices are heard off and sounds of the arrival of*

people. A moment later GURGANI, RUTZSTEIN and LEMAN enter.)

GURGANI: No one here.

[He strolls round the room, much as a man does when he is inspecting a furnished house which he has some thought of renting. RUTZSTEIN remains near the door. LEMAN, in smiling obsequience, keeps near GURGANI.]

So! Very interesting! Quite a relic of the past! Pre-revolution period, eh, Leman?

LEMAN (*laughing*): That exactly describes it, General.

GURGANI: See if there's anyone in there.

[LEMAN goes off.]

And how many of our citizens occupy this fine spacious house, Commandant Rutzstein?

RUTZSTEIN: Three.

GURGANI (*in mock astonishment*): Three?

RUTZSTEIN: The old man, his daughter-in-law, and his grandson.

GURGANI: A family!

RUTZSTEIN: Yes.

GURGANI: A dangerous unit in a communal state. It means private affections—private loyalties. . . .

[LEMAN re-enters.]

LEMAN: There's no one there, General.

GURGANI: Where are they, then, this highly favoured family?

RUTZSTEIN: The old man is probably at work in the fields.

GURGANI: He should not be. We do not allow our old people to work. We are more humane than that, nowadays, I hope. And the son?

RUTZSTEIN: He works on the railway.

GURGANI: See if you can find anyone upstairs, Leman.

[LEMAN goes off.

[GURGANI looks round the room again.

This is really extraordinary. I could not have believed that such places still existed in Zagnira.

RUTZSTEIN: There are unusual circumstances in this case.

GURGANI: I hope it is unusual to find a family of three generations living together. And I observe a great many "unusual circumstances" in this room, too. Why has all this plate not been removed and forwarded to us at Rachina? And this furniture? There is a market for this abroad, you know. In unprogressive countries, they like this sort of thing. They would rather dream about past ages, it seems, than organise and work for a new age. Well?

RUTZSTEIN: We hold an inventory of all that is in this house.

GURGANI: Yes?

RUTZSTEIN: There seemed no reason that it should not remain here till required.

GURGANI (*drily*): Indeed!

[LEMAN enters.

Well?

LEMAN: There is no one in the house. But I have found something that I think will interest you. (*He comes down eagerly. He keeps one hand behind his back.*)

GURGANI: What is that?

LEMAN (*in triumph*): This!

[LEMAN reveals what he has been concealing. It is a figure of the Mother and Child, the kind of image common in Catholic countries. GURGANI stiffens as he looks at it. He becomes very still. LEMAN, as if eager to stimulate his anger, holds the image up to him.]

GURGANI: Where did you find it?

LEMAN: In one of the bedrooms. The woman's, I think. There was a stool in front of it. A praying stool.

GURGANI: Another unusual circumstance, Commandant Rutzstein?

[GURGANI looks at him, but RUTZSTEIN says nothing.]

Well, with my usual luck it would seem that I have come to the right place for my first inspection in Burglitz. (*Pause.*) Who are these people? Who are they, I say?

RUTZSTEIN: Veerkind is the name—one of the very old families in Burglitz.

GURGANI: Is that a recommendation in your eyes? I had thought that the people had decided, once and for all, Rutzstein, that they would be very much better off without such families in their midst. They did not leave many of them in the rest of Zagnira, I assure you!

LEMAN: And we should have done the same here. I always said so. But I was over-ruled.

RUTZSTEIN ignores LEMAN and addresses GURGANI.

RUTZSTEIN: We could not go so far here. It was not possible.

GURGANI (*with contempt*): You mean you were afraid!

RUTZSTEIN: I was not afraid, General Gurgani.

LEMAN: You were always trying to stop us.

RUTZSTEIN: There were limits beyond which we could not go.

LEMAN: There should have been a purge after the revolution.

RUTZSTEIN: That would have been madness! We had to concentrate on the essential things—on the production of food.

GURGANI (*interrupting*): I should have thought it essential to deal with this family. It should have been liquidated—as all such families were.

RUTZSTEIN: That would have been a blunder.

GURGANI: A blunder? To exterminate this family—living on land stolen from the people?

RUTZSTEIN: Yes. Our clemency to old Anton Veerkind brought support from some of our most dangerous opponents.

GURGANI: In Rachina we demanded support. We did not go down on our knees and plead for it!

RUTZSTEIN: Nor did we. But what we did in this particular case saved bloodshed, and helped to heal some of the bitterness that existed. I assure you, General Gurgani, it enabled us to do at once a great deal that we might never have been able to do.

GURGANI: You mean well, Rutzstein. But I do not think that you can instruct me in the business of revolution. In a revolution you cannot—you dare not—be humane. Those who are not for you are against you. They must be got rid of. They must be exterminated. It is unfortunate. But it is the only way. Any other

course, sooner or later, means disaster. What has been going on in this house all these years? That image, for instance. What plotting and intrigue may not have been taking place here. Right under your eyes!

RUTZSTEIN: There has been no plotting. I am certain of that.

GURGANI: You cannot be certain.

RUTZSTEIN: I know old Veerkind.

GURGANI: And I know treason when I am near it. I can smell it. And I smell it now—here—in this house. This family should have been exterminated long ago—when it was easy. Work that should have been carried out then has to be done by me now, when it is not so easy.

RUTZSTEIN (*horrified*): But . . .! You could not do that!

GURGANI: What?

RUTZSTEIN: Exterminate, you said. You could not do that! These people—after all these years. They are no danger to the State. Anton Veerkind is a very old and quite harmless man. His grandson is loyal to us and works on the railway. As for the woman, Anna Veerkind, she is only interested in looking after them—getting their food. She knows nothing of politics. She is interested in nothing outside this house. It is madness to think that there is treason—plotting against us—going on here. (*Turns to LEMAN.*) Leman, you know what I say is true.

LEMAN: I do not see why these people should be so favoured. Why are they allowed to live in this house? Old Veerkind should be in the Old Men's Hostel. The son should be in a communal dwelling. Treason? Well, I don't know about that. But it doesn't look well to have religious emblems stuck up in your bed-

room, does it? (*To GURGANI.*) What shall I do with this, General? (*Holds out image.*)

GURGANI: Give it to me. (*He takes it and looks at it for a moment.*) You've been the cause of a lot of trouble in the world, my Holy Mother! (*He looks round the room. He goes to the dresser and throws the image into the drawer which he closes again.*) Remember to take it with us when we go, Leman. And now, before the family returns, I think I shall inspect this house. See what else we can find. Come!

[*He moves up, followed by the others. Just at that moment ANTON enters quickly. He looks round anxiously and is relieved to find LEDA is not in the room.*]

ANTON (*salutes*): The State is All.

RUTZSTEIN	}	The State is All!
GURGANI		
LEMAN		

ANTON: I am sorry that I was not here to receive you, RUTZSTEIN. I was busy on the draining trench that the Council have ordered me to dig.

RUTZSTEIN (*nods*): This is Comrade Anton Veerkind, General Gurgani.

ANTON (*salutes GURGANI*): The State is All.

GURGANI: The State is All. (*He sits.*) Tell me, Veerkind, how old are you?

[*There is a slight pause.*]

ANTON: I am seventy.

GURGANI: Seventy! Then, why are you living here?

ANTON: This was my house.

GURGANI: Indeed?

ANTON: I have always lived here. I was born in this house.

GURGANI (*smiling*): Seventy years ago.

ANTON: Yes.

GURGANI: But a great deal has happened in seventy years.

ANTON: Yes. A great deal has happened.

GURGANI: There have been great changes. (*He waits.*)

ANTON: Yes.

GURGANI: Great improvements. (*He waits again.*)

ANTON (*unwillingly*): Yes.

GURGANI: You do not seem very sure.

ANTON: I am rather old, perhaps. It is not so easy for old people to change their ways.

GURGANI: No. But they must not be allowed to keep back progress. To hamper those of us who are making a new world in Zagnira. Age must not be on the back of youth like an old man of the sea. (*He lolls back in his chair, stretching out his legs, and looks at ANTON who stands in front of him.*) Tell me, Veerkind, what is this trench you spoke of just now?

ANTON: It is a draining trench.

GURGANI: Yes?

ANTON: The Council ordered it. Said it was to be dug. I have never known my land to be flooded—but— (*He stops.*)

GURGANI: The Council ordered it.

ANTON: Yes.

GURGANI: So, of course, you dug it.

ANTON: Yes.

GURGANI: You always obey the Council?

ANTON: Naturally.

GURGANI: Even when you do not approve?

[ANTON is silent.]

I mean, when they tell you to do something stupid, like making a trench to drain fields which are never flooded, you still do as you are told?

ANTON: It is their business. We are not asked what we think.

GURGANI: And you think that you should be asked.

ANTON: I have not said so.

GURGANI: But you think so.

ANTON: No. When all this land was mine I ordered what was to be done. I did not ask the men who worked for me what was to be done. Why should the Council ask me? The State now owns my land. Let the State get on with it, then. We are here to do as we are told. We are not asked to think. Indeed, we are forbidden to—— (*He is in danger of being carried away. He stops short.*) It does not matter.

GURGANI: What are you forbidden to do?

ANTON: It does not matter.

GURGANI: I wish to hear.

ANTON: I have nothing to say.

GURGANI: I insist.

ANTON (*after a pause*): You know very well what the State allows the people to do and what the State forbids the people to do. Why should you ask me to tell you, then?

GURGANI: It always interests me to know what our people are thinking.

ANTON: A man's thoughts are his own, surely!

GURGANI: Not entirely, I think.

ANTON: It is not easy to know what a Burglitzian is thinking.

GURGANI (*smiling*): And you are a Burglitzian.

ANTON: As long as there has been Burglitz there have been Veerkinds in it. All Burglitzia knows that.

GURGANI: You seem very proud of your family.

ANTON: I have reason to be.

GURGANI: No doubt. But everyone might not agree. There are ways of looking at such things, you know. What about the people whose land has been usurped for so long by your family? Do they love the Veerkinds as much as you do?

[ANTON *is on the point of an outburst, but with an effort controls himself. He suspects that GURGANI is playing with him, and trying to make him say something foolish.*

ANTON: You will have to ask *them*, not me. If there are such people.

GURGANI: You know, it does not seem to me that you are a very strong supporter of our new régime.

ANTON: I do what the State tells me to do.

GURGANI: Well, the State is going to tell you to do something different now. It is not good for people to shut themselves up. You will see more of your comrades in future. We live as a community now, you know. Not as individuals warring against one another, but as a whole

people with one purpose and one ideal—the good of the State. (*Turns to LEMAN.*) You have the order made out, and signed?

LEMAN: Yes.

GURGANI: Then give it to him.

[*LEMAN turns over the pages of a book till he finds the one he wants. The pages are perforated—he tears out a leaf and hands it to ANTON. The old man reads it. He is shaken. He looks up.*

ANTON: But . . . I do not understand.

GURGANI: Can you not read?

ANTON (*turns for help to RUTZSTEIN*): Rutzstein.

RUTZSTEIN: I am very sorry. I have done my best. But General Gurgani is in control now.

GURGANI: What is the fuss about? Are the Old Men's Hostels not comfortable? They seemed to me luxurious.

LEMAN: You know where the Eastern Area Hostel is?

ANTON: Yes, I know where it is.

LEMAN (*looks at his watch*): Be there before five o'clock, then. You need take nothing with you. Everything is provided by the State.

[*ANTON is not listening. He is deep in thought.*

You will not return here at all, you understand.

[*ANTON looks round the room, then he looks at LEMAN.*

ANTON: There is my daughter-in-law—my son Hugo's wife—Anna Veerkind.

LEMAN: Yes, yes. I know. We have all particulars. Work will be found for her. All you have to do is to carry out these instructions. Be at the Old Men's Hostel before five o'clock

You would have been there years ago if I had had my way.

[ANTON *is dazed by the blow that has fallen on him. RUTZSTEIN comes down to him.*

RUTZSTEIN: You will not find it so bad as you think. There are friends of yours there. Old Muller, and Hoffberg, too—you like him. It won't be nearly so bad as you think. I will come in a few days and see how you are getting on.

[ANTON *nods. LEDA enters. She stops short in surprise. ANTON, turning, sees her.*

ANTON: Run away, Leda! We are busy.

[LEDA *turns quickly to go.*

GURGANI: Stop!

[LEDA *stops.*

Come here, girl.

LEDA *comes slowly to him.*

What do you want here?

LEDA: Nothing.

GURGANI: Nothing? Why have you come, then?

LEDA: As I came in, just now, I heard my grandfather in here, and——

GURGANI: So you came to find him?

LEDA: Yes.

GURGANI: And what is *your* name?

LEDA: Leda Veerkind.

GURGANI: Where do you live?

LEDA: I am living here for a—a little while.

GURGANI: What is this, Rutzstein? You said nothing of this. Three, you said. The old man, the woman, and her son.

RUTZSTEIN: I didn't know. (*Turns to LEDA.*) I thought that you were in Litzia, Leda Veerkind.

LEDA: Yes. But—I returned from there last week. I am here for a little while.

ANTON: She has not been very well. She has been over-working a little. Her Professor—Skaedia, you know—of Litzia University—thought that she required rest and—— You can run along, Leda. I will explain.

GURGANI: Just a minute.

[LEDA stops. GURGANI turns to ANTON.

You seem very anxious to get rid of your granddaughter, Anton Veerkind.

ANTON: I? Not in the least!

GURGANI (*smiles*): Well, we shall see. There are a few questions I should like to ask our young comrade here. But she does not know who I am, perhaps. I think you had better introduce us, Rutzstein.

RUTZSTEIN: This is Leda Veerkind—General Gurgani.

[GURGANI waits for her to salute him. When she does not, he salutes her.

GURGANI (*salutes*): The State is All. (*He is surprised that she does not reply.*)

[ANTON looks pleadingly at LEDA but she does not see him. Her eyes are fixed on GURGANI. She is quite calm and composed. GURGANI repeats his salute.

The State is All.

[*There is no reply from LEDA.*

ANTON: The child is ill. I told you. She is overstrained and——

GURGANI: Be quiet!

[There is a pause. GURGANI looks at LEDA for a moment. Then moves thoughtfully away a step or two and turns. He seems a different GURGANI—less affected, more in earnest. It seems almost as if he thought that there was something worth the serious attention of even the great GURGANI. All in the room seem to understand that the man is now different and infinitely more dangerous. When he speaks his tone is graver and more courteous.]

You are a student?

LEDA: Yes.

GURGANI: At Litzia University?

LEDA: Yes.

GURGANI: How long have you been there?

LEDA: I am in my third year.

GURGANI: What have you been studying?

LEDA: Medicine.

ANTON: She has passed all her examinations with high honours—

GURGANI: Be quiet! *(There is a pause.)* The students at Litzia University are loyal to the State, I suppose?

LEDA: Yes.

GURGANI: Do you know of any who are not?

LEDA: No.

GURGANI: Now, when you were there in Litzia, you did as your fellow students, I suppose. I mean, about the salute—in your classes, and in the street, and wherever you were.

LEDA: Of course. Always.

GURGANI: Then, why didn't you salute me, just now?

OP

[LEDA stands very still. There is a pause.]

LEDA: It would not have been right.

GURGANI: That is curious, isn't it?

LEDA: Yes.

GURGANI: You know that I am General Gurgani.

LEDA: Yes.

GURGANI: Of the Supreme Council.

LEDA: Yes.

GURGANI: How could it be wrong to salute me as you salute your Professors, or your comrades, or anyone you meet?

[LEDA stands in a passive attitude. Her face is calm and happy but she seems to be far away from what is happening.]

Answer me.

LEDA: In Litzia—and wherever I have been—I have always done as the others did. It did not seem wrong. But that was before—before I knew.

GURGANI: Before you knew what?

ANTON (*breaking out again*): I told you that the child was ill—that her work had——

GURGANI: Will you be quiet! If you interrupt again I will have you turned out.

LEDA: It is all right, Grandpapa. And please—please, do not say anything that is not true, about me. (*Turns to GURGANI.*) I am sorry. He has always been very excitable, you know. And now that he is old—— (*She nods and smiles at ANTON and turns again to GURGANI.*)

GURGANI: You were saying, Leda Veerkind, that you did as the others.

LEDA: Yes.

GURGANI: But that, you said, was before you knew.

LEDA (*nods happily*): Yes.

GURGANI: Before you knew what?

LEDA: That what they said was not true. The State is *not* All.

[*There is a pause.*]

GURGANI: Indeed?

LEDA (*nods*): Yes. There is . . . something else. Above the State and——

GURGANI (*harshly*): What?

LEDA (*after a slight pause*): Truth.

GURGANI: The State decides what is true and what is not true.

LEDA: It says it does. But——

GURGANI: You do not believe it.

LEDA: No. I do not believe it.

[RUTZSTEIN *tries to intervene.*]

RUTZSTEIN: If this girl is ill, do you not think it would be better to——

[GURGANI *waves him impatiently aside.*]

LEDA: I am not ill, Commandant Rutzstein.

[GURGANI *turns and looks at her.*]

GURGANI: Pay no attention to anyone but me. Explain what you meant.

LEDA: I meant, there are things in me—and in each one of us—that must be obeyed—must!

GURGANI: Before the State?

LEDA: Yes.

GURGANI: Perhaps even against the State?

LEDA: Yes. Even against the State.

GURGANI: We know how to deal with people who think like that.

LEDA: Yes. You can imprison us or beat us.

GURGANI: And we do. Those who endanger the State are punished.

LEDA: Only their bodies.

GURGANI: That is usually enough.

LEDA: Only for those who do not know.

GURGANI: Know what?

LEDA: That life is a mystery, and holy. And that we are spirit.

ANTON: Amen!

[GURGANI *turns and looks at* ANTON.

GURGANI (*to* LEDA): Who taught you this nonsense? This old man, here? Your grandfather?

ANTON: No! To my shame, I did not! Fire from heaven has shown her the truth. She is God-possessed. (*He points his finger at GURGANI.*) Whatever you do to her, you will do to Him! To God, who inspires her!

GURGANI (*smiles*): That will not stop me, I'm afraid, comrade.

[*He goes to dresser and takes out the image. As he is doing so, LEDA comes to ANTON and soothes him down.*

LEDA: Do not be excited or angry, Grandpapa. I am not.

GURGANI (*holds image out to* LEDA): Is this yours?

LEDA: No.

GURGANI: Whose is it, then?

[LEDA *will not speak.*

It belongs to someone in this house. (*To ANTON*)
Is it yours, Anton Veerkind?

[*There is a pause. As the image belongs to ANNA, he does not quite know what to say.*

ANTON: The Holy Mother and the Child belong to all the world, I think, General Gurgani.

[GURGANI *looks at him for a moment in silence.*

GURGANI: I see. You, too?

ANTON: I, too.

[GURGANI *turns and looks at RUTZSTEIN.*

GURGANI: I told you there was treason here. I knew it. Well, I shall have my hands full in Burglitz, I see. (*To LEDA*) Where did you learn this sedition?

LEDA: I will not say.

GURGANI: We shall see if we cannot make you speak.

[GURGANI *comes to her, threateningly, ANTON steps forward as if to attack GURGANI, but LEDA stops him gently, and smiles at him.*

LEDA (*to GURGANI*): No. There is no way. You have no power.

GURGANI: In Burglitz I have all power. I am the State.

LEDA: In the world of light and understanding you have no power.

GURGANI (*grimly*): I do not require it there.

LEDA: It is only there that it exists.

GURGANI: We shall see.

LEDA: Put me in prison and I will still have God. I will not fear what man can do to me.

ANTON: Veer kinds have died for their faith before and can die again, Leda.

[RUTZSTEIN *tries to calm ANTON, and take him aside, but the old man resists and shouts at GURGANI.*

A Veer kind was burnt in the market-place once—here in Burglitz! His blood is in me and in this child!

GURGANI: Keep that old man quiet, Rutzstein. Or take him away.

[ANTON *allows himself to be led aside by RUTZSTEIN. GURGANI turns to LEDA.*

When did you leave Litzia?

LEDA: Ten days ago.

GURGANI: The University was in session. How could you leave?

LEDA: I—just left.

GURGANI: And you have been here in Burglitz ever since?

LEDA: Yes.

GURGANI: Why did you come here?

LEDA: I had to.

GURGANI: Why? Were you sent here?

LEDA: Yes. I was sent here.

GURGANI: By some secret organisation in Litzia?

LEDA: I know of no secret organisation.

GURGANI: By whom were you sent, then?

LEDA: I was sent by God.

GURGANI: Indeed! You were highly favoured!
And for what purpose were you sent?

LEDA: So that I might tell the people of Burglitz
the truth.

GURGANI: Which you alone know, I suppose?

LEDA: Countless millions know it! Millions on
earth. And many millions who are no longer
here.

GURGANI: You have delivered your message?
You have told people what you have told me?
Here, in Burglitz?

LEDA: Yes.

GURGANI: Many?

LEDA: All that I could reach.

GURGANI (*to RUTZSTEIN*): You see! She has
been preaching sedition here for a week, and
you didn't know! No one has reported her.
Is that how you govern? (*To LEDA*). Who were
these people? The people to whom you spoke?

LEDA: I will not say who they were.

GURGANI (*with deadly calm*): You will! Before
I have finished with you! They listened to
you—these people?

LEDA: Gladly.

GURGANI: Believed what you told them, I
suppose?

LEDA (*nods happily and then looks at GURGANI*):
They believed.

ANTON (*excited*): And they will spread the
truth. They are whispering these things now
in Burglitz. Soon they will be shouting them!
What will you do then? Kill! Kill! Kill! Yes.
And for each man you kill, a dozen will arise.
(*He is glaring at GURGANI and comes close to him.*)

A dozen! And the people will rise against you—you, who have dared to come between them and Him! They will cry God and the people!

[GURGANI *strikes* ANTON *heavily and the old man crumples up on the floor.*

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE I

Same Scene as Scene I, Act II. The arrangement of the furniture has been altered. The table at which the Council sat in Scene I, Act II is now in a slanting position.

Behind it GURGANI sits in full dress uniform. On chairs, almost against the right wall, sit BULOFF, NEKELL and DUREN. Close to the left wall is a bench. In front of this stand a middle-aged couple, JACOB and RUTH KELLNER, guarded by soldiers. Facing this couple is LEMAN. He is standing at the extreme left of the table at which GURGANI is sitting.

LEMAN: Well, have you nothing to say?

RUTH (*to her husband*): Oh, speak, Jacob! Say something.

JACOB (*sullenly*): What would be the good.

LEMAN: You have heard the sentence of this Court. The charges against you have all been fully proved. It has been proved that on at least three occasions you sheltered Leda Veerkind in your house. You got your friends to meet her there—to listen to treason against the State. You yourselves assisted her to spread treason. The penalty decreed by the State for the offence of treason is death. You knew that, I suppose, when you were conspiring with this dangerous woman Leda Veerkind.

[LEMAN *pauses*. *They say nothing*.

Did you know it?

JACOB: Yes.

LEMAN (*to the woman*): And you?

RUTH: We did not conspire. There was no plan against the State. Leda Veerkind told us about the vision she had had. And we listened. What harm was there in that? Just to listen?

LEMAN: You persuaded others to listen.

JACOB (*angrily*): If it was true what she said, why shouldn't people hear it? It is important for us to know, I suppose, whether there is a God or not!

LEMAN: The State tells you that there is no God. Are you wiser than the Supreme Council?

JACOB (*stubbornly*): They might be wrong. Leda Veerkind told us that she had——

LEMAN: We know all about what Leda Veerkind told you, Jacob Kellner.

JACOB: No doubt you do. But it does not alter what I say. If there is a God all the time—as Leda Veerkind says—surely people ought to be told about it. I remember Father Bonnard told me that if it——

GURGANI (*moves impatiently*): How much longer is this to go on, Leman? We have been here for three days, remember.

LEMAN: These are the last of the prisoners. We have no more.

GURGANI: That is no reason that you should waste hours in coming to the point.

LEMAN: But I thought that it was your wish that as many of the peasants as possible should be made to recant.

[GURGANI *with an angry gesture stops* LEMAN.]

GURGANI: Yes, yes, I know—sit down!

[LEMAN *sits*.

(*To the prisoners.*) Now listen to me. You two—(*he looks at his paper*)—Ruth and Jacob Kellner. The State is strong but it is also merciful. You have been sentenced to be shot, along with many others—guilty as you are guilty. To be shot publicly in the Market Place at ten o'clock tomorrow morning. But there is still hope of your lives being spared.

[*The Two look up with eager interest.*

The State recognises that you are simple and foolish, and that you have been deceived by the wicked lies of the traitors Leda and Anton Veerkind. Denounce these lies in the Market Place tomorrow. Tell the people that Leda Veerkind has lied to you, and that there is no God, and your lives will be spared.

RUTH (*torn between fear and joy, turns to her husband*): Oh, Jacob!

JACOB (*shakes his head sadly*): No, no.

RUTH: But perhaps— She may have been mistaken, and—

JACOB: You know she was not. (*He looks at GURGANI.*) We will not do that.

RUTH (*with a cry*): But—Jacob—!—!

JACOB: No. I will *not*.

GURGANI: Well, that is your affair. But your wife may perhaps be more sensible. Ruth Kellner! You have been wickedly deceived by the Veerkindes. Tell the people so tomorrow and your life will be spared.

[RUTH *struggles in doubt*.

RUTH: And—Jacob's? If I recant—will you spare his life—my husband's life?

JACOB: No. No! Don't listen to them, I say! You know that Leda Veerkind did not lie. How could *she* lie? You saw her, you heard her! You believed her, as we all believed her.

[*He comforts her for a moment and then speaks quietly to her.*]

She told us not to be afraid. Tell him you won't. Quick! Now!

[*After a struggle with herself, RUTH turns again to GURGANI.*]

RUTH: What Leda Veerkind said was true. I cannot deny it.

GURGANI: Then why does she deny it?

JACOB: What?

GURGANI: She has confessed that it was a plot against the State. Nothing else. What she told you about her vision was a lie.

[*There is a pause.*]

JACOB (*slowly*): I do not believe it. It isn't true!

GURGANI (*shrugs his shoulders*): Leda Veerkind has recanted. And you will find tomorrow that most of your comrades have recanted. They've been wiser than you.

JACOB: You are lying!

GURGANI: Perhaps when you hear them you will believe me—and wish to do the same. We will give you time. The State is merciful. (To the SOLDIERS.) Take them away.

(*As* GURGANI busies himself with his papers. The KELLNERS are taken off by their guard.)

Well, I have put them down as doubtful.

LEMAN (*looking at his list*): That makes twenty-two doubtful.

NEKELL: And how many who have agreed to recant?

LEMAN: Only fifteen, I'm afraid.

BULOFF: I do not think that these two will recant.

NEKELL: Are they the last of the prisoners?

LEMAN: Yes. The last of one hundred and thirty-three.

BULOFF: How could Leda Veerkind influence so many in so short a time? She was only here for about a week, and——

LEMAN: She is a clever woman, Buloff.

BULOFF: Still, it is remarkable. After all, she is only a girl, and——

LEMAN: She is a dangerous enemy, and it is lucky that we caught her so soon.

BULOFF: But what has given her such power?

DUREN: Yes. That is what I cannot understand. How she has persuaded so many people to believe her story.

GURGANI: One hundred and thirty-three! And in only a few days. (*He turns to the three.*) If it had been left to RUTZSTEIN, and to you, what would have happened?

[*There is an uncomfortable silence.*]

NEKELL: How many of the hundred and thirty-three were found guilty?

LEMAN: They were all proved to be guilty.

BULOFF: Extraordinary. How they could believe such nonsense.

NEKELL (*hesitatingly*): Of course—— People have believed such things. I mean—— (*He hesitates.*)

GURGANI (*very quietly*): What things?

NEKELL (*hastily*): Oh, of course, it is just superstition—I know. But I meant—well, what

Leda Veerkind told them—about this vision, for instance. And—and about God. (*He laughs nervously.*) Country people—ignorant peasants—they cling to these ancient ideas. It was fairly easy for her to deceive them—that is what I meant.

GURGANI (*smiles*): I see. You are not inclined to believe in such things yourself, I trust?

NEKELL: I? Certainly not!

GURGANI: That is a good thing!

NEKELL: I was only pointing out how—how strange it is that—that ideas of this kind—can still persist.

GURGANI: Don't ponder on the problem, Councillor Nekell. The ideas you speak of are dangerous, and very insidious!

DUREN: Some of these people have recanted, you said?

LEMAN: Ninety-six have not recanted.

DUREN: But Leda Veerkind has, herself, recanted. When they know that, how can they stand firm?

[GURGANI has been busy with his papers in consultation with his two officers. He now turns to DUREN.]

GURGANI: It is quite simple, Duren. They do not believe it.

BULOFF: Then we must get Leda Veerkind herself to tell these people that she has been lying to them!

[LEMAN laughs.]

DUREN: I do not know why you should laugh, Leman.

NEKELL: I thought that we were all anxious that as many as possible should publicly recant.

DUREN: We do not want to make martyrs.

LEMAN: A few death sentences carried out in the Market Place tomorrow will do no harm. It will be a much-needed lesson to the people.

DUREN: A few! Ninety-six is more like a massacre.

BULOFF: And when other countries get to hear of this—that would do us no good.

GURGANI: I agree. That is why I have been trying so hard to persuade these people to—to allow us to save their lives. But unfortunately, Leda Veerkind has not recanted.

NEKELL: But you said——?

DUREN: What——?

BULOFF: Not recanted——?

GURGANI (*quietly*): I am afraid that in my efforts to be merciful—to save the lives of our comrades—I was not strictly accurate.

[BULOFF, NEKELL and DUREN are disturbed by this news.]

Now, comrades, we have wasted enough time. This trial has lasted three days. The Court is legal under the martial law I declared to exist in Burglitzia. Leman has represented your Council and assisted the prisoners. He has legal knowledge which none of you possess. He was the right man for this particular task. That is why he was chosen. The trial had unfortunately to be secret. But I wished you, the only remaining members of the old Burglitz Council, to be present for part of the trial at least. I wished you to be satisfied regarding its impartiality. That is why I invited you to be present today. Not because I was compelled to, but because I wished to, you understand.

Now Leman informs me that some of you are opposed to these sentences being carried out publicly tomorrow—in the way I have arranged. You fear the effect on the people, he says. Well, you must allow me to know best. I have decided. You will all officially attend tomorrow. As you know, all the citizens of Burglitz have been ordered to attend. And I do not think that after tomorrow you will find it difficult to govern in Burglitz. People will do as they are told in future, I imagine. Has anyone anything to say? (*He waits a second, and then goes quickly on.*) Very well. Now then, about the three chief prisoners. Rutzstein and the Veerkinds. I wish you to hear for yourselves any plea for mercy that any one of these three can offer. I take this action chiefly because of Rutzstein—his position is different from that of the Veerkinds, about whom I know you are all agreed. Rutzstein was head of your Council. He has not conspired against the State but as Commandant of Burglitz we have found him guilty of gross negligence. That amounts to treason and he must die with the others tomorrow. But I wish you to hear all that he can say in his own defence. Call the prisoners in, Leman.

[LEMAN goes to the door and signals to someone off. RUTZSTEIN, LEDA and ANTON are brought in by SOLDIERS and marched to the bench, where they are told to sit. The SOLDIERS stand behind them.

Rutzstein, stand up!

[RUTZSTEIN does so.

Till a few days ago you were Commandant—the head of the Council of five which governed Burglitz. In that capacity you, against the laws of the State, favoured certain citizens. Within two or three days of my arrival in Burglitz I find these same citizens—favoured

by you and living under your direct protection—engaged in active conspiracy against the State. Before the sentence which I passed upon you two days ago is carried out, is there anything you wish to say in your own defence?—Here in the presence of the other members of the Burglitz Council?

RUTZSTEIN: No.

GURGANI: You confess your guilt,—then—to them?

RUTZSTEIN: They know that I am not guilty of any treason—that I am as loyal to the State as they are. I do not wish to defend myself to them, there is no need. But because I am loyal—because to me the State is All—I beg you once more to consider what you intend to do tomorrow—not to me—but to more than a hundred of our citizens.

LEMAN: Citizens! To more than a hundred of our traitors!

RUTZSTEIN: I do not think that all these men and women are traitors.

LEMAN: Then you must be one.

RUTZSTEIN: Your view of what constitutes betrayal is different from mine, Leman. (*He turns from him and addresses the others.*) You all know what I have tried to do here in Burglitz—what we have all tried to do. To make the people happy and contented—secure in their work—without the old poverty and fear and misery. For that we had our revolution. For that we made the State all-supreme—because only a totalitarian state could do these things for the people—give them security and comfort. For seven years we have worked and governed in Burglitz. We had to be strict, of course. People could not be free. But, without too much harshness, we have managed. Tomorrow,

if these people are shot down in public in the Market Place, our work of seven years will be undone. For years to come you will suffer. A ruthless rule will have to be established and the State will remain All only at the point of the bayonet. I implore you not to do these things. If General Gurgani insists, appeal to Murzer. He is our leader, the head of our State!

[The members of the Council are impressed. THEY whisper together. RUTZSTEIN watches them for a moment and then sits. The moment he does so GURGANI calls out.]

GURGANI (*harshly*): Stand up, Rutzstein!

[After a moment's hesitation RUTZSTEIN does so. GURGANI turns to the Council.]

Do any of you wish to ask the prisoner any questions?

BULOFF: We cannot help feeling that there is some truth in what he has said.

GURGANI: There is none. What he has said is false and ridiculous. It has no reality. It is opposed to the principles of our State. It is the weak democratic gospel, not ours. It is because this man persuaded you to believe these things that Burglitz is as it is today—seven years after our revolution. If you still believe as he does, Duren, Nekell, and Buloff, you should stand beside him tomorrow morning. What he has said is treason to our State.

BULOFF: Yes. Yes. Of course. We understand that now. But——

GURGANI: Well?

BULOFF: It was only about these death sentences tomorrow. You do not think that perhaps——
(*He hesitates.*)

GURGANI: What?

BULOFF: We were wondering if it is wise, General, to carry them out in public.

GURGANI: Why not?

DUREN: They are an excitable people here, you know.

GURGANI: Too excitable. And they need a lesson. I intend to restore order in Burglitz. I will purge it of traitors. (*He looks at them meaningly.*) Whoever they may be, or wherever they may be found.

BULOFF: } Certainly.

DUREN: } Of course.

NEKELL: } We understand that.

GURGANI: Very well. In future, the State will be *All* in Burglitz as in the rest of Zagnira. What we order, the people will do. What they are told to think and believe, they will think and believe. If we provide these people with food, and shelter, and security, they cannot expect also to be allowed to think what they like. Or to worship ideas, or respect laws, that are not laid down by the Supreme Council. If you do not agree with me, say so now.

[*THEY do not speak.*]

Sit down, Rutzstein.

[*RUTZSTEIN does so.*]

Anton Veerkind, stand up.

[*ANTON VEERKIND stands up.*]

You do not believe that the State is *All*?

ANTON: I do not.

GURGANI: And you have tried to persuade people to rise against the State?

ANTON: I have.

GURGANI: You hoped to get your land back again, I suppose?

ANTON: You can suppose what you like. I do not belong to you. I am not afraid of the State. The State is not All. Can it control the sun and the moon and the stars, do you think? Why, you can't even farm my land properly. I grew twice as much as you grow now. Do you think people don't know anything in Burglitz? Shoot us tomorrow and see what happens. Rutzstein was right. He's the best man you've got and you're going to shoot him! That's clever! Very clever! Your head is so damned full of nonsense about the State being God that you don't know anything. Restore order in Burglitz, will you? We don't take orders here from foreigners, you'll find. When Rutzstein goes—you all go! Every man Jack of you! Mark my words! (*He points a threatening finger at GURGANI.*) They will be crying in the streets tomorrow God for His People!

GURGANI (*turns to the three*): Do you wish to hear more?

BULOFF: What he has said is certainly treason.

NEKELL: That's enough. A man who conspires against the State *must* be shot. It stands to reason.

DUREN: We're all agreed about that.

GURGANI (*to Anton*): Sit down, Veerkind.

[ANTON *does so.*

Leda Veerkind, stand up.

[*Through all that has been going on since she entered LEDA has sat impassive as if in another world. But, though she has been impassive regarding what has been happening close to her, one feels that her spirit has, all the time, been alive and active elsewhere. She is pale but she is not sad.*

She seems exultant. Spiritual power animates her whole being. The extreme quietude of her attitude through all the previous scene has been vital and dominating. GURGANI'S harsh command to her to stand up does not reach her. A SOLDIER roughly draws her attention to the fact that GURGANI has spoken to her. LEDA returns to earth and rises.

Do you agree with Anton Veerkind that tomorrow the people of Burglitz will be crying God for His People?

LEDA: How can my grandfather know what people will be doing tomorrow. Only God, and some of His angels know that.

GURGANI: And they don't inform the people. That seems hard! But you hope that they will do what Anton Veerkind has said. You hope that these people will rebel—rise against us?

LEDA: No. When one knows that God has spoken to a man one does not then hope that that man will do this or that. I know that through me God has spoken to many men and women and children, too, in Burglitz. These people are all safe in His hands. They will do what He tells them to do.

GURGANI: And refuse to do what the State tells them.

LEDA: Surely these people are the State?

GURGANI: Not when they rebel, and refuse to obey. Traitors cut themselves off from the State. It is not we who cut them off.

LEDA: Yes. It is you who cut them off. You cut them off from the State when you cut them off from God. A State that denies God does not exist, because the only reality is God. In your stupidity you have tried to whip the people of Burglitz into submission so that they will be ready to believe that the Supreme

Council is God. But it is not God and you cannot make it God!

GURGANI: Leda Veerkind—you admit that since you returned here from Litzia you have been working night and day to spread this sedition in Burglitz?

LEDA: Yes. If to speak of God is sedition.

GURGANI: And that your grandfather, Anton Veerkind, eager to have his lands restored to him, has joined with you in this conspiracy? And that you two have tried to persuade the people to rise and overthrow the Government?

LEDA: To you it must seem so.

GURGANI: But it is so. That is what you did. I want you to tell these men that that is what you did.

LEDA (*after a pause*): I will tell them the truth. (*Moves to corner of dock.*) I have been in Litzia for two years. One day there, in the University, when I was going upstairs to a lecture, I heard a voice. I turned and saw one dressed all in white, his eyes were as flames of fire, his face was kind, and his voice was gentle. He took my hand, and we moved to a place of light and beauty where my eyes were allowed to see a small portion of God's Kingdom. And then—I saw the other. (*Her face is full of pain.*) The darkness and confusion of evil. (*She pauses for a moment to let the horror of what she sees again pass from her.*) Where God is—there is Heaven. Where God is not—there is Hell.

GURGANI (*after a pause—quietly*): You are deceiving yourself.

LEDA (*shakes her head*): All these things which I tell you are true.

GURGANI: No. They are not true.

LEDA: I know that they are true, and these are the things which I have told to all I could reach in Burglitz.

GURGANI: What right had you to speak to the people?

LEDA: It was so that I might open their eyes that I was granted a vision.

GURGANI: The vision was nonsense, and you tampered with politics—which you know nothing about.

LEDA: I only asked people to turn to God, and not to deny Him.

GURGANI: You endanger our whole system, Leda Veerkind.

LEMAN (*rises*): If you told people that, you're a traitor! Did you?

LEDA: I told them that we must obey God rather than the State. So perhaps I am a traitor.

LEMAN (*to the COUNCIL*): You see. What more do you want to hear? If I——

GURGANI: Sit down, Leman!

[LEMAN *sits, and writes.*]

NEKELL: If people believed you, our State would be overthrown.

LEDA: Perhaps.

NEKELL: The whole people of Zagnira would be thrown back into the horrible conditions from which we have freed them. Is that what you want?

LEDA: No.

DUREN: Then don't cause it to happen, I beg you.

BULOFF: You've only to say a few words and we'll get everything put right again.

NEKELL: A hundred people will die tomorrow if you don't speak.

DUREN (*rises and takes a step towards her*): Leda Veerkind, you know me well enough, surely. You've known me all your life. I implore you to speak—to save all these lives.

NEKELL: You can't want these people to die.

LEDA: No.

NEKELL: Then do as your old friend Duren asks.

BULOFF: As we all ask.

[DUREN *sits again*.

GURGANI: One word from you will save them. Recant, and their lives will be spared.

LEDA (*quietly*): If I recant their lives will be lost.

DUREN: Lost? What do you mean?

LEDA: They will be without hope.

BULOFF: Nonsense, girl. Without hope? Why, they'll have every hope. We'll soon be able to give them still more food—and better houses—and——

LEDA: You don't understand. Your eyes are shut. You can't see.

NEKELL: See what?

LEDA: If you take God away, there is nothing left.

LEMAN (*rises and to LEDA*): You're either mad or a traitor. You're betraying the people. We give them food, clothes, houses, playing-grounds, pleasure halls. What can you give them? An old legend, a fairy-tale, a lie?

LEDA: I give them the truth. God lives.

LEMAN: Lives! Huh! (*Sits.*)

LEDA: Without Him, the whole world would be dark—confused—men would be . . . terrified.

BULOFF: Terrified? Of what?

LEDA: Of life . . . without God.

BULOFF (*leans back in exasperation*): Oh, the girl's mad!

LEMAN: Mad? She's a traitor. She wants to betray the people.

GURGANI: Don't interrupt, Leman. Let the Council hear what she has to say.

LEDA: I have nothing more to say.

DUREN: Leda, for all our sakes, do not persist. It was only a dream you had, and—

LEDA: It was not a dream. It was true. I will not recant.

LEMAN: Then that's the end of you—and of them.

LEDA: We shall find our way—to God.

GURGANI: Well, we can do no more. I'm sorry. I'm afraid Leda Veerkind must die tomorrow. Have any of you anything to say?

[*There is a long pause.*]

I am waiting.

BULOFF (*uneasily*): I think we're all agreed, General Gurgani.

GURGANI: Very well. Remove the prisoners.

[*He bends over his papers and writes. LEMAN writes in his book. The SOLDIERS begin to take the PRISONERS off.*]

SCENE II

The next morning.

The scene is a kind of entrance hall of the Prison. It is below ground level, and from it all rooms and offices on this level are reached by the corridors which run from left to right.

At the back are iron gates which open on to a paved court. From this court a short stone stair leads directly into the Market Place. The gates are shut, but through the bars one can see what lies beyond. One cannot, however, see more than halfway up the stone steps.

(TWO SOLDIERS are discovered at the rise of the Curtain. The 1ST SOLDIER is seated on a narrow stone seat built into the wall, and plays with a piece of string. The 2ND SOLDIER is looking out of the gates.)

1ST SOLDIER: Seems queer.

2ND SOLDIER: They're quiet enough, anyway.

1ST SOLDIER: That's what I don't like. They're too damned quiet.

2ND SOLDIER: Think there'll be trouble?

1ST SOLDIER: You never can tell with these damned Burglitzians. Why the hell *are* they so quiet? (*Looks back.*) Thousands of them crammed into the Market Place not ten yards away from us and you can't hear a sound!

2ND SOLDIER (*moves forward*): Afraid, that's what they are. Our Gurgani's put the wind up 'em. And about time, too, I say.

1ST SOLDIER: Well, I wish I was back in Rachina.

2ND SOLDIER: I hate this place. Can't get a girl for love or money. (*Leans on wall by the gates.*)

1ST SOLDIER: They don't like us, my lad. Troops from Rachina, they say. That's enough for them!

2ND SOLDIER: They're like a lot of savages here.

1ST SOLDIER: We're not Burglitzians, you see.

2ND SOLDIER: That's it! They just look at you—sulky like, scowl at you—and move off.

1ST SOLDIER: Boors, bears, Burglitzians, they say. It's true, too.

2ND SOLDIER: They'll be tame bears today, anyway. Our troops will see to that.

1ST SOLDIER: Yes. We've got machine-guns trained on 'em from every window round the Market Place.

2ND SOLDIER: Well, they've asked for it. And if it's a purge you want, you don't have to ask Gurgani twice for it!

[The 2ND SOLDIER notices something off and signals to his companion. The 1ST SOLDIER stands one side of the gates, the 2ND SOLDIER the other.]

[BULOFF and DUREN enter. BULOFF goes up to gates, and looks off, then moves forward and looks at his watch. DUREN sits on seat.]

BULOFF: I shall be glad when it's all over.

[NEKELL enters, goes up to gates, and looks off.]

DUREN: Yes. Gurgani and Leman are out there now, aren't they?

BULOFF (*nods*): They've gone to see that everything's in order.

DUREN: They're taking no risks, it seems.

BULOFF: Just as well, Duren.

DUREN: Yes, I suppose so. Can you see anything, Nekell?

NEKELL: No. Nor could I hear anything. (*Moves forward.*)

BULOFF (*to gates, looks off*): They seem docile enough—out there. (*Moves forward.*) I don't think we'll have any trouble.

DUREN: I can't understand it. A huge crowd like that. It's not natural to be so quiet.

NEKELL: What do you expect? What else dare they be—but quiet? Lines of troops—machine-guns everywhere? Do you expect them to cheer, Duren?

[BULOFF and DUREN exchange glances.]

DUREN: I wish I knew what they're thinking, though.

BULOFF: I don't see that it matters much what they're thinking. It's quite certain they can't *do* anything. They're in a trap out there, all right.

NEKELL: Yes. They're in a trap—*today*. But what about afterwards? There's always tomorrow, you know.

DUREN: Tomorrow?

NEKELL: When we've shot all our prisoners, what then? (*To BULOFF*) In two hours from now these men and women will be dead—Leda and Anton Veerkind, Rutzstein, that couple we saw yesterday, the Kellners. A whole hundred or more—all who refuse to recant—just so many cold corpses. But—is that the end? Is that the last of them? Shall we hear no more of Leda Veerkind, and her vision?

BULOFF: Well, we couldn't let her go about preaching that nonsense—stirring people up against the State.

NEKELL: No.

DUREN: She can't do that—she can't harm the State—when she's dead, Nekell.

NEKELL: I wonder?

BULOFF (*smiles*): You don't believe that dead men tell no tales, then?

NEKELL: The man who believes that is a fool, Buloff.

BULOFF: Well, I think I know what you mean. But I think you're exaggerating the importance of all this. Leda Veerkind isn't a second Christ, you know.

[NEKELL *looks at him as if he were going to dispute even that statement. He changes his mind.*

NEKELL: I suppose not.

[BULOFF and DUREN *exchange glances again, BULOFF puts his hand in his pocket, and feels for his watch.*

DUREN: Now I come to think of it, they thought when they crucified Him that that trouble was over.

[*Slight pause.*

BULOFF (*looks at watch*): Well! It's time we got to our places.

DUREN (*rises*): Yes. Shall we go this way?

NEKELL: No!

[DUREN and BULOFF *turn in some surprise at his tone. NEKELL, when he speaks next, does so very quietly.*

That way is for *them*—for the prisoners.

BULOFF: But we can get straight to our seats this way. It's the best way.

NEKELL: Not for us, Buloff! (*He turns away.*) We go this way!

[NEKELL goes off. DUREN looks at BULOFF, then goes off. BULOFF shrugs his shoulders, digs his hands in his pockets, and follows them off.]

2ND SOLDIER: What's up with that bloke?

1ST SOLDIER: You can search me, comrade.

2ND SOLDIER: He seemed scared to go this way.

1ST SOLDIER: All the better for us. We can sit for a spell. (*Sits down.*) And take it easy. (*He stretches himself and yawns.*)

2ND SOLDIER: I wish to hell I could have a cigarette, chum, but I don't suppose we dare.

1ST SOLDIER: Not with old Gurgani loose, I wouldn't.

[*The 2ND SOLDIER sits down, and stretches out his legs. THEY sit in silence for a moment.*]

2ND SOLDIER (*confidentially*): Did you hear that one about the girl in Rachina who wanted to know whether——

[*An OFFICER is heard off: "Guard! Present arms!" There is the noise of hands slapping rifle butts. The TWO SOLDIERS spring up, they take up their positions on either side of the gates, and stand to attention.*]

GURGANI comes down the steps, followed by LEMAN. The SOLDIERS open the gates and salute as GURGANI passes them. When the two have entered, the SOLDIERS close the gates. LEMAN appears, anxious and shaken. GURGANI looks off, then turns and looks at LEMAN.

GURGANI: What's the matter, Leman?

LEMAN: Nothing, General.

[*Something off attracts the attention of the 2ND SOLDIER, and he goes off.*]

GURGANI: You're frightened. What are you afraid of? (*Suddenly angry.*) Answer me, you fool!

LEMAN (*crosses to GURGANI*): It was only the people—as we came through just now. Didn't you see how they looked at us?

GURGANI (*moves to the gates*): That's all they can do—look. I've seen to that!

LEMAN: Today, perhaps.

GURGANI (*coming forward a little*): You will find them very obedient—after today. I can promise you that, my good Leman.

[*Voices of 2ND SOLDIER and PROFESSOR SKAEDIA are heard off. GURGANI turns and looks.*]

2ND SOLDIER (*off*): You can't go in there, it's against orders.

PROFESSOR (*off*): Nonsense!

GURGANI (*goes to the entrance and calls off*): What is all this? Who is that man?

2ND SOLDIER (*re-enters to just inside entrance and salutes*): He's asking to see Leda Veerkind, sir.

GURGANI (*calls off*): Come here, you!

[*GURGANI moves back. After a moment PROFESSOR SKAEDIA enters.*]

(*Turns and sees him.*) (*In surprise*): Professor Skaedia!

PROFESSOR (*gravely*): The State is All. (*Salutes.*)

GURGANI (*salutes*): The State is All. You are the last man in the world that I should have

expected to find here, Professor. What can I do for you?

PROFESSOR: I wish to see the prisoners, Anton and Leda Veerkind.

GURGANI (*his face hardens*): That's impossible. I'm sorry. I would do a great deal to oblige you, Professor Skaedia, but what you ask is out of the question, I'm afraid.

PROFESSOR: I have an order, General Gurgani.

GURGANI: An order?

PROFESSOR: From Mürzer himself. (*He hands it to GURGANI.*)

GURGANI (*reads order and returns it*): In view of this, of course, I have no option. But it's not at all convenient, Professor Skaedia, you see——

PROFESSOR (*cuts him short*): Please! Can you make haste! The time is very short.

GURGANI: Leman! Have the two prisoners, Anton and Leda Veerkind, sent here. At once.

[LEMAN *goes off.*]

PROFESSOR: Thank you, General. (*Moves thoughtfully to gates.*)

GURGANI (*looking after him, curiously*): May I ask for what purpose you wish to see these prisoners?

PROFESSOR: To say good-bye.

GURGANI: This girl, Leda Veerkind—was one of your students?

PROFESSOR (*turns to him*): Yes.

GURGANI: Well, I'm sorry—it's very unfortunate. But you will understand that I had no alternative. She refused to recant.

PROFESSOR: I understand.

GURGANI: So what else could I do?

PROFESSOR: Mürzer agrees that you had no alternative, General Gurgani.

GURGANI: And you?

PROFESSOR: My opinion, for what it may be worth, I have given to Mürzer.

[The two men look at each other for a moment.]

GURGANI: I see. (*Moves to the entrance.*) Your friends come first and second on the list. (*He looks at his watch.*) I'm afraid you'll have a very brief interview.

[GURGANI salutes abruptly, and goes off.]

[SKAEDIA looks after him for a moment, then moves towards gates. The 1ST SOLDIER steps in his way.]

PROFESSOR: Where are the prisoners kept? Is it far?

2ND SOLDIER: The cells are only a few yards away, down the corridor.

[Marching feet are heard approaching off, followed by a word of command: "Guard, halt!" The footsteps cease. The 2ND SOLDIER goes to the entrance, and beckons ANTON in. ANTON enters. He is in handcuffs. The 2ND SOLDIER stands beside ANTON. SKAEDIA goes to ANTON.]

ANTON: Hans Skaedia! So you have come!

PROFESSOR: Yes. Mürzer gave me permission to see you.

ANTON: That is good.

PROFESSOR: But I come empty-handed, Veer-kind. There's no reprieve.

ANTON: Still, it's good to have a friend like you with us at the end.

[SKAEDIA half turns away.]

ANTON: No, no. It's all right. There's nothing to be sad about. It is as we expected—Leda and I. We would not have it otherwise.

[Slight pause.]

PROFESSOR: How is Leda?

ANTON: I have not seen her since yesterday. We're not allowed to meet.

PROFESSOR: She's coming here now.

ANTON: Then I shall see her—before——?

PROFESSOR: Yes. Gurgani's arranging it. That is all I've been able to do for you.

ANTON: All? It's quite a lot, I assure you, Hans Skaedia.

PROFESSOR: I tried everything—everything in my power. I went to everyone I knew. I pleaded with Mürzer himself.

ANTON: You cannot plead with stones, Hans Skaedia. These men killed what is inside a man that one can plead to when they killed their God!

PROFESSOR: I begin to think that you're right.

ANTON: I know that we are right.

[Marching feet are heard approaching off, followed by a word of command: "Guard, halt!" The footsteps cease. The 1ST SOLDIER goes to the entrance, and beckons LEDA in. LEDA enters. She is handcuffed. The 1ST SOLDIER stands beside her, above her. LEDA is calm. She is natural and unstrained. She looks peaceful and happy and very beautiful. SKAEDIA comes forward to her. He looks at 1ST SOLDIER guarding her.]

PROFESSOR (to 1ST SOLDIER): Move a little away.

[1ST SOLDIER does not budge.]

I have an order from Mürzer himself to speak to this lady alone. Move away, I say!

[The 1ST SOLDIER is impressed by his manner and steps back a little.]

ANTON: Leda?

[LEDA crosses to ANTON. ANTON makes a movement towards her, but the 2ND SOLDIER restrains him. SKAEDIA moves to LEDA.]

PROFESSOR: The time is very short, Leda. There are things I want to say—but— First I have messages for you.

LEDA: Yes?

PROFESSOR: Woden asked me to say that he and Katrina send you their love.

[This moves LEDA more than anything that has happened. She closes her eyes for a moment. She regains her calm.]

LEDA: Have you seen my mother?

PROFESSOR: I've just left her. Woden is with her. Your mother asked me to tell you that she is praying for you all the time.

LEDA (*happily*): Yes, I know.

[There is a slight pause. SKAEDIA moves close to LEDA and speaks rapidly but with burning conviction.]

PROFESSOR: Leda, we've only a few minutes. There are things I want you to know. What you are doing is right. I was wrong to try to persuade you to do otherwise.

LEDA: I'm glad that you believe that, Hans Skaedia.

PROFESSOR: I do believe it. And there's something else.

LEDA: Yes?

PROFESSOR: I want you to know that I shall use all the power I have in Zagnira to make certain that your sacrifice is not in vain—here or in the world outside. What a man believes he must be free to say. I'm determined, Leda, to work ceaselessly for that.

[The gun is fired off.]

1ST SOLDIER: That's the signal.

[The SOLDIERS open the gates. LEDA and SKAEDIA and ANTON look at each other for a moment. Then ANTON goes to LEDA and kisses her. LEDA then turns to SKAEDIA. He puts his hand over hers. The SOLDIERS come down to them.]

2ND SOLDIER: Time's up.

[The 2ND SOLDIER seizes ANTON and pushes him away. The 1ST SOLDIER pushes LEDA away from him.]

ANTON (*turns and calls over his shoulder as he is put in his place*): Good-bye, Hans Skaedia. Good-bye. All is well.

[SKAEDIA moves a little towards LEDA.]

LEDA: This is not the end. It's only the beginning.

[SKAEDIA moves up a little. The town hall clock begins to strike ten. At about the third stroke, an OFFICER appears coming down the steps. He marches to the gates. At the fifth stroke of the clock, he calls out:—

OFFICER: Leda Veerkind!

[LEDA steps forward, turns and marches through the gates and up the stone steps. As she moves forward, RUTH KELLNER, handcuffed, appears in the entrance. There is complete silence except for the clock. The last stroke sounds. There is a moment's silence, and then the rattle of rifle

fire is heard. The OFFICER marches to gates, turns and calls out:—

Anton Veerkind!

[ANTON VEERKIND *steps forward. As he does so, RUTZSTEIN appears, handcuffed, at the entrance. As ANTON marches through the gates and starts walking up the steps—the CURTAIN SLOWLY FALLS.*

CURTAIN

SIX MEN OF DORSET

Miles Malleson and H. Brooks

SIX MEN OF DORSET

A Play in Three Acts

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*All applications for permission to perform this play professionally
should be made to Laurence Howard, Berkeley House, Hay Hill,
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should be made to the League of British Dramatists, 11 Gower
Street, London, W.C.1*

FOREWORD

THIS PLAY is founded on history. There are no facts mentioned in it that are not, as far as can be ascertained, true; and a good deal of the dialogue is built up on hints and indications and scraps of conversations that George Loveless recorded in his story.

The meeting with the farmers took place at Dr. Warren's; the promise of a rise, the refusal to put it on paper, Dr. Warren's pledge to the men, and his subsequent repudiation of it are historical.

The "Initiation" ceremony is a shortened form of an actual ceremony. Much of the dialogue when George Loveless is questioned by the Magistrates Frampton and Wollaston is built up from Loveless' diary; and many of the actual phrases used by Frampton and Wollaston are quotations from their own letters.

In the Court House scene, the cross-examinations and the speeches for the defence and of the judge are built on the contemporary report in *The Times*.

Similarly, in the third Act, the dialogue on the convict ship, on Van Diemen's Island, and in Canada, all has a background of reality.

Loveless, for instance, records a meeting with a wretched convict named Pocock who told him just such a story as Pocock tells in the play. The overseer's attempt to get Loveless a flogging for "neglect of duty," and his defence in front of his master, is in places almost word for word; and he did actually come across the news of his free pardon in an old copy of the *London Despatch*.

In the Second Scene of Act III, the quotations from his letters are genuine; Wakley did take them and afterwards read them in the House; and finally, in the Canadian scene, the

FOREWORD

little story of the silent Hammett's only comment on his "adventures" was told by a very old relative of his still living in Tolpuddle; and Loveless' closing remarks are taken from his own writings, the phrasing being altered as from the written to the spoken word.

M. M.
H. B.

This play was first produced on February 8th, 1937, at the Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton, with the following cast :

Characters in order of their first appearance (Act by Act)

ACT I

<i>Nellie Loveless</i>	BESSIE FIELDS
<i>Georgie Loveless</i>	IRIS CLOUGHTON
<i>Jinnie Loveless</i>	NORA NICHOLSON
<i>Betsy Loveless</i>	SYBIL THORNDIKE
<i>George Loveless</i>	LEWIS CASSON
<i>Bob Dominy</i>	CECIL G. CALVERT
<i>James Loveless</i>	ALEX MCCRINDLE
<i>Susan Morris</i>	ALICE CALVERT
<i>James Brine</i>	BARTLETT MULLINS
<i>James Hammett</i>	JOHN BROOKING
<i>Edward Legg</i>	JOHN SALEW
<i>The Squire</i>	SYDNEY BLAND
<i>Dr. Warren</i>	J. FARRIES MOSS
<i>Farmer Bryant</i>	J. C. AUBREY
<i>Farmer Case</i>	FRANCIS HOPE
<i>Farmer Duffett</i>	FREDERICK VICTOR
<i>William Cobb</i>	LLEWELLYN REES
<i>Harry Brown</i>	MARIO FRANCELLO
<i>Thomas Stanfield</i>	FRED RIVENHALL
<i>John Stanfield</i>	BASIL ROYAL DAWSON

ACT II

<i>George Loveless</i>	LEWIS CASSON
<i>James Brine</i>	BARTLETT MULLINS
<i>James Loveless</i>	ALEX MCCRINDLE
<i>Thomas Stanfield</i>	FRED RIVENHALL
<i>John Stanfield</i>	BASIL ROYAL DAWSON
<i>Edward Legg</i>	JOHN SALEW
<i>Mr. Wollaston, J.P.</i>	HAROLD SCOTT
<i>Dr. Warren</i>	J. FARRIES MOSS
<i>James Frampton, J.P.</i>	LEONARD SHEPHERD
<i>Constable Brine</i>	CECIL G. CALVERT
<i>James Hammett</i>	JOHN BROOKING
<i>Mr. Gambier (Counsel for the Prosecution)</i>	ARCHIBALD MCLEAN

<i>Mr. Butt (Counsel for the Defence)</i>	JACK BROWN
<i>Judge Baron Williams</i>	FREDERICK VICTOR
<i>Clerk of the Court</i>	FRANCIS HOPE

ACT III

<i>George Loveless</i>	LEWIS CASSON
<i>Guard</i>	JOHN BROOKING
<i>Captain</i>	FRED RIVENHALL
<i>Officer</i>	ALEX MCCRINDLE
<i>William Cobb</i>	LLEWELLYN REES
<i>Robert Owen</i>	VICTOR TANDY
<i>Thomas Wakley, M.P.</i>	JACK BROWN
<i>Betsy Loveless</i>	SYBIL THORNDIKE
<i>Jinnie Loveless</i>	NORA NICHOLSON
<i>Susan Morris</i>	ALICE CALVERT
<i>Harry Brown</i>	MARIO FRANCELLI
<i>Rcv. Dr. Wade</i>	SYDNEY BLAND
<i>1st Convict</i>	JOHN SALEW
<i>2nd Convict</i>	CECIL CALVERT
<i>3rd Convict</i>	ARCHIBALD MCLEAN
<i>4th Convict</i>	BARTLETT MULLINS
<i>Pocock</i>	HAROLD SCOTT
<i>The Master</i>	J. C. AUBREY
<i>The Overseer</i>	LEONARD SHEPHERD
<i>Robin Nealy</i>	DAVID BLAIR
<i>Nellie Loveless</i>	JOAN GEARY
<i>Stage Director</i>	HAROLD MORTLAKE
<i>Stage Manager</i>	DAVID BLAIR
<i>The Play produced by</i>	MILES MALLESON

SCENES

ACT I

SCENE I: A room in George Loveless' cottage in Tolpuddle.

SCENE II: A few days later. The same room.

SCENE III: A few days later. A room at Dr. Warren's Parsonage.

SCENE IV: Two years later. The room at George Loveless' cottage.

ACT II

SCENE I: The room in George Loveless' cottage.

SCENE II: A room in Mr. Wollaston's house.

SCENE III: The Court House, Dorchester.

ACT III

SCENE I: On board "The William Metcalfe."

SCENE II: The room in George Loveless' cottage.

SCENE III: A room in a house in the Tottenham Court Road.

SCENE IV: A convict hut in Van Diemen's Island.

SCENE V: Loveless' farm in Canada.

ACT I

SCENE I

A room in the cottage of GEORGE LOVELESS.

It is towards evening, and the place is in semi-darkness. But we can discern two children, little NELLIE LOVELESS and her younger brother GEORGIE—aged about six and four—crouched together over the fire. For a few moments there is silence. Then the little girl, NELLIE, shouts with unexpected suddenness loud and shrill.

NELLIE: Jinnie! . . . Jinnie! (*No answer. She shouts louder, terror creeping into her voice*) Jinnie!!
. . . JINNIE!!!

[Still no answer. Then she lets out the biggest yell that her little lungs are capable of.]

JINNIE!!!!

[JINNIE, the eldest Loveless child, of about twelve, appears at the door.]

JINNIE: Whatever be you makin' that clatter for? You'll be wakin' the baby.

NELLIE: I be afeared.

GEORGIE: I be afeared, too.

JINNIE: What be you afeared of?

NELLIE: Shadders! Them glimpsey shadders!

GEORGIE: Can't we have candle alight?

JINNIE: Candle! We only got oone. And that's only a bit. And you knows very well Father, he won't have candle lit till he reads out of the Book.

NELLIE: I be scared o' the dark.

GEORGIE: So be I.

JINNIE: You be a couple o' girt sillies. There be nothing to be scared at i' the dark.

NELLIE: Bain't there? ! . . . Come you here, Jinnie. . . . And Georgie. (*She gathers the two to her*) . . . There be a girt big skelington in that corner. I know ! I see'd un ! Keeps poppin' out, he do.

[The three children, keeping close to each other, peer into the corner. . . . A little lick of flame in the grate throws a sudden darker shadow on to the dark wall.]

JINNIE: Where be candle?

[She goes and picks it out of a drawer, and adds as she lights it:]

Arter all, Mother an' Father'll be home any time. I got supper to get.

NELLIE: Supper !! I be hungry !

GEORGIE: So be I !

[They are round her, like two little animals at feeding-time. JINNIE lifts a dish of potatoes on to the table. Instantly the two younger ones have their noses in it.]

NELLIE: Can I have a tatie?

GEORGIE: Can I?

JINNIE: That you can't. You must wait !

NELLIE (*whimpering*): But I can't wait !

GEORGIE: Nor can't I !

[Their three heads are close round the bowl of potatoes.]

JINNIE: There bain't enough. Mother an' Father'll want theirs.

NELLIE: Be Father and Mother always hungry, too?

JINNIE: It'll be an awful long time 'fore we're as big as Father and Mother. I sometimes think it'll be an awful long time to be hungry ! . . . P'raps, if I can find three little uns !

[She picks out three small ones, gives one each to her brother and sister, and takes one herself. . . . The

three children, round the dish, devour their potatoes like the three famished little creatures they are. Their mother, BETSY LOVELESS, enters; and stands, for a long moment, watching them; then she advances towards them.

BETSY (*speaking with a certain amount of stealth*):
Jinnie! . . .

NELLIE }
GEORGIE } Mother!

BETSY: Jinnie!!

[JINNIE goes to her mother. With the same stealth BETSY produces something from under a sack that is round her.

JINNIE: A turnip!

BETSY: Sssh! Run out wi' it to the back-house, 'fore your father sees it. He be comin' down-along.

JINNIE: The back-house?

BETSY: It'll do for to-morrow. There weren't nobody 'bout when I came by the sheepvold. . . . Quick now.

[JINNIE takes the turnip, and runs out with it.

Well, my dears!

[GEORGIE runs towards her.

Nay—best not come too near. I'm that soaked.

[*She puts off her sacking, hangs it on a peg in the fireplace. The children have returned to the fireplace. She kisses them both; then goes to the cradle.*

Did he get off easy?

NELLIE: No.

BETSY (*kneeling to look closely and lovingly at the baby*): He's quiet enough now.

NELLIE: 'Tis the first time he's been quiet all day. He do cry worse nor Georgie did; and worse than t'other that died!

[BETSY, *kneling by the cradle, peers anxiously into it.*

Mother, I want my supper !

GEORGIE : I want my supper, too !

BETSY (*rising from the cradle, and putting some supper-things on to the table*) : You'll be havin' it now, my dears. Your father's just here.

[JINNIE *returns into the room; and, as BETSY finishes putting the scant things on the table, JINNIE begins to make tea.*

Oh, Jinnie, I dunno whether we ought to 'ave that tea; there be so little left.

JINNIE : Oh—when you be so wet and cold. (*She continues to make it.*)

BETSY : Here be Father ! . . .

[GEORGE LOVELESS *enters.*

GEORGE : Betsy ! I be glad you're home !

BETSY : I be only just come.

GEORGE (*he goes straight to the fireplace to hang up his sacking*) : My dears ! (*He kisses the children.*)

NELLIE : I be that hungry !

GEORGE : I be that hungry, too !

BETSY : Be you ready for your supper, George ?

GEORGE : Be it ready for me ?

BETSY : Aye.

GEORGE : Draw up then.

[BETSY, JINNIE, NELLIE, and little GEORGIE *fetch chairs for themselves, put them round the table, and wait, standing by them. . . . Meanwhile, GEORGE removes his sacking; then, with a kind of dignity, he joins the waiting, expectant group at the table, moving to the head of it. He glances round at the family, and the three children drop their heads; BETSY does not, and for a brief but definite moment*

GEORGE and BETSY LOVELESS, *their eyes meeting, confront one another across the scanty, hopelessly inadequate meal. Then GEORGE drops his head.*

(*With a slow, quiet reverence*) "For these, and all Thy Mercies, may Thy Holy Name be praised."

[JINNIE pipes "Amen," and nudges NELLIE, who pipes "Amen," who nudges little GEORGIE, who pipes "Amen." There is a tiny silence while they wait for BETSY LOVELESS to add her "Amen," but she remains silent. . . . GEORGE seats himself, and immediately the others do so. GEORGE LOVELESS shares out the food, and, as soon as it touches their plates, the children begin to eat it ravenously. BETSY pours out the tea for herself and her husband. The children have mugs of water.

Did you get wet, Betsy? I been worryin' 'bout you all the arternoon, since the rain came on.

BETSY: There be things I *can* do, George, and things I can't; and to work i' the rain without gettin' wet's one of 'em!

GEORGE: It's cruel bad weather; and that's a fact.

NELLIE (*having wolfed down every scrap that was on her plate*): Bain't there no more?

BETSY: Not to-night, Nellie.

NELLIE: But I want some more!

BETSY: You best get off to bed, you children, soon as you've finished. You can get in together—all of you. Maybe you'll keep warm; and sleep; and forget.

GEORGE (*a touch of reproof*): Not till I've read from the Book, Betsy.

BETSY (*a touch of exasperation*): That won't fill their bellies, George; nor keep 'em warm.

GEORGE (*ignoring this*): Bring me the Book, here, now, Jinnie.

[While JINNIE is fetching him the Book, GEORGE puts some food from his own plate on to hers; and BETSY does the same for NELLIE and little GEORGIE.

JINNIE brings her father the Book.

(While the children are eagerly devouring their extra food) What shall I read to-night, Betsy?

BETSY (*very short*): I doan't mind! Makes no odds.

[GEORGE regards her for a moment, puzzled and hurt. He opens the Book.

GEORGE: Well, maybe I'll go on from where I was reading last night . . . Luke . . . 'leventh chapter it was. . . . Aye, here it is! . . . Tha' remembers: the man had come at night and asked his friend for three loaves. And the friend wouldna get out of his bed, nor open the door, nor gie 'im any. That's where I got to. (*He continues reading*) "I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will arise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth . . ."

[At this point little GEORGIE, who has been the last to finish the food that had been put on his plate, breaks in:

GEORGIE: More!! Father, I wants more!! Father! . . .

[GEORGE stops reading. BETSY and the others hush the child into a fitting silence. GEORGE recommences the reading.

GEORGE: ". . . And of which of you that is a father . . ."

[He pauses; hesitates over what is to follow; and somehow his voice loses its deep ring of confidence. . . .

". . . shall his son ask . . . a loaf . . . and he

give him . . . a stone . . .” (*The voice trails off into silence . . . the silence lengthens. . .*)

BETSY: Now then, children, to bed. Say good night to your father.

[NELLIE and little GEORGIE clamber from their chairs and kiss their father and mother.

Jinnie, me dear, put 'em to bed for me. And you'd best get in with 'em yoursel'. You'll be tired. I'll see 'bout supper-things.

[JINNIE too kisses her parents. The two little ones have reached the door that leads upstairs; and stand there hesitating.

NELLIE: It be all dark.

JINNIE (*going to them*): I can feel my way. Take my hand.

[*She takes a child by each hand, and the three disappear.*

Alone with his wife, GEORGE gets up and crosses the room to replace the Bible. He handles it reverently. His wife watches him; her lips are tight.

GEORGE (*as he puts the Book down; and rather as if to reassure himself*): What comfort there is in the Book!

BETSY (*bitter*): Ah, you're a one for finding comfort, George. Seems to me, the harder it is to find, the more you think o' yoursel' finding it!

GEORGE: What's come over you, Betsy? You didn't say "Amen" when I spoke the blessing.

BETSY: And why should I?

GEORGE: It was the Lord I was thanking.

BETSY: And what for?

GEORGE: Betsy!! . . . 'Twas a bad example for the children, showing a rebellious and discontented spirit.

BETSY: Maybe that's the best thing I can gie 'em. I can gie 'em little else!

GEORGE: You've never said things like this before ! What ails you ?

BETSY (*really flaring up, at last*): What should ail me ? And me out in the fields and the blindin' rain, all day and every day and day after day, with my body bent double, pickin' stones, and with another child movin' in me . . . for three shillings a week ? They do say the Lord sends the babies. Why He'd do that without sendin' the vittles for 'em is more'n I know !

GEORGE (*his anger rising against hers*): That be blasphemous talk !

BETSY (*not to be stopped*): Be it !! And that's more'n I know, too ! Maybe it's blasphemy for you to stand there askin' a blessing, when the children go to bed with their bellies empty, and lie crying for hunger in the night.

GEORGE: You shouldna say that. You know my heart aches that I can't do better for 'em; you know that. Every night I pray—

BETSY: Aye, you may pray ! And read your Book !

GEORGE: Betsy !!

BETSY: And did you get comfort out of it this night ? About the children asking their father for bread, and he give 'em a stone ! What do you give yours ? Taties ! And not enough o' *them* !

GEORGE: Be fair, Betsy ! I only mean, for myself, I do try to be content with my lot, and accept in a humble spirit what the Lord sends.

BETSY: What the Lord sends ! Do the Lord send that you and I, and the likes of us, should slave all our lives, from the cradle to the grave—and live worse than the beasts; and others live idle on the fat o' the land. That bain't God's Goodness, George Loveless; that be Man's Wickedness. That be the real blasphemy, putting *that* on the Lord !

GEORGE (*surrendering*): But, Betsy . . . what can I do?

BETSY: Ah, maybe nothing. But if you've got to take your part in it—that's naught to be proud of. I sometimes think to myself—acceptin' it all, so humble and meek, you're as bad as your masters. I tell you it fair sickens me to hear you askin' blessings and givin' thanks—

[Suddenly her whole body is shaken with a great sob. Her outburst is over. Continuing to sob almost silently, she moves about the room putting away the supper-things. . . . When she has done that, she is quiet again. She goes to her husband, who all the while has sat unmoving, staring in front of him.]

(*Very gently and rather contrite*) Maybe I've said more'n I meant. Though God knows not more'n I feel. . . . Be you comin' to bed?

GEORGE: You go, me dear: you'll be tired.

BETSY: What be you goin' to do?

GEORGE: I'm best alone. . . .

[He adds with the ghost of a smile round his lips:]
You've given me something to get on with.

[She kisses him, picks up baby, and goes out of the room.]

For a few moments GEORGE sits staring in front of him. Then he seems to rouse himself; he looks round the room; rises, and walks over to the Bible; he takes it up; stands holding it . . . then, replacing it where it lay, he returns without it to his chair . . . and sits, staring in front of him. . . .

CURTAIN

SCENE II

The same room in the Loveless' cottage; a few evenings later. GEORGE and BETSY are there. They are moving the chairs to the table; and talk as they do so.

BETSY: Be your brother James comin' ?

GEORGE: Yes; and young Brine, Constable's lad; and James Hammett.

BETSY: *He won't say much.*

GEORGE: But he's a good lad . . . and Edward Legg; and Susan.

BETSY: Legg ?

GEORGE: Yes. He'll off-set Susan; she be headstrong.

BETSY: Them five ?

GEORGE: Yes.

BETSY: And Bob Dominy.

GEORGE: I haven't asked *him* !

BETSY: No, but he got wind of it; and asked *himsel'*.

GEORGE: That's bad.

BETSY: Why shouldn't he come ?

GEORGE: Bob be a poacher.

BETSY: But no vool !

GEORGE: I don't like the thought of him comin' here—leastways, not to-night.

[A loud knock at the door.]

BETSY: There they be. (*She goes and opens it.*) No, it be Bob Dominy.

BOB DOMINY (*entering*): Hullo, Betsy ! Well, George ! You don't mind my comin' in this evening, do you ?

[There is an awkward little silence.]

BETSY: 'Course he don't, Bob. He be glad to see you.

BOB: He bain't. But your George could never tell no lies; leaves *you* to tell 'em ! Don't 'ee, George ?

GEORGE: Well, maybe I thought what we was goin' to talk about wouldn't interest you—seein' as you do no work!

BOB: No work? I work all right, George. But for myself—seems more sense in it that way.

GEORGE: Leastways, high wages or low makes little odds to you.

BOB: Ah, maybe you're right there. I reckon whatever wages you get, I'll always be better off—long as rabbits and partridges do grow in same field as turnips!

GEORGE: Aye, Bob, but they're not your'n to take. You know that—well as me.

BOB: But I can never remember it! I be very absent-minded 'bout some things.

GEORGE: But it's agin the law——

BETSY: Now, George, none o' thy preachin' for Bob.

BOB: Nay, don't stop him! They do say he be the best preacher for a hundred miles round. That's what I've come for! A good sermon! I haven't heard a fine, wrathful sermon since I were a lad! I well remember the last. The preacher—he were a ploughman like yourself, George—he preached, "The labourer is worthy of his hire." And I knew what he was gettin'! Seven shillings a week! Dang me, I says to myself, I be worth more'n that. And I never went no more.

BETSY (*delighted*): Ah, Bob, that's the talk! You've got the spirit in you.

BOB (*encouraged by this to renew his chaffing of GEORGE*): Seven shillings a week, George Loveless! I s'pose *that* be what you think *you* be worth! Or maybe a bob or two more—if you can get it.

BETSY (*suddenly rounding on him; he has gone too far*): That be enough from *you*, Bob Dominy! You hold your tongue. You leave my George alone. I'll hear no man say no word agin my George. He be the best ploughman in this vil-lage; aye, an' in Dorset. And what be *you*? A good-for-nothin'! A bad 'un! That's all you be!

BOB: Well! You womenfolk! You be queer critters! A man never knows where he is with 'em! I be glad I never married.

BETSY: And if half what folks say about 'ee be true, there be more'n one about these parts 'ee ought to a' married!

BOB: Hark to that, George! Thy Betsy be sayin' I did ought to a' married more'n one wife. And dang me, if thy precious laws 'llowed it, I would! They could loose off their tongues at one another; and leave I in peace!

[*More knockings at the door. Again BETSY goes and opens it. We hear JAMES LOVELESS' voice outside, as the door opens.*]

JAMES (*voice*): Evenin', Betsy!

BETSY: Ah, James . . . George, 'tis yer brother.

JAMES (*entering*): Evenin', George.

GEORGE: Evenin', James.

JAMES: T'others be just behind. Hul-lo, Bob!

[*SUSAN MORRIS appears in the doorway.*]

BETSY (*by door*): Come in, Susan.

SUSAN (*coming in*): . . . Well, Betsy, my dear, how be 'ee?

BETSY: As well as may be.

SUSAN (*low, to her*): I be that sorry for 'ee. Evening, George!

GEORGE: Evenin', Susan.

[BRINE *appears*.

BRINE: Evenin', Mrs. Loveless.

BETSY: Evenin', James Brine.

GEORGE: Come in, young Brine.

BRINE: Evenin', Mr. Loveless.

JAMES HAMMETT *has appeared in the doorway. He is a young ploughman, stolid, and without words. He stands on the threshold hesitating.*

GEORGE: Come in, Hammett. Don't be standin' outside.

BETSY: Come in, James Hammett. You be welcome.

HAMMETT (*taking a step in*): Oh, aye!

GEORGE: Well, sit down, friends. There be just about seats enough.

[*They seat themselves at the table. The door begins to open.*

(*Taking his seat at the head of the table*) Now we be all here——

[*The door has opened wide enough to admit a head.*

SUSAN (*seeing the head*): Lord sakes! Look what be here!

LEGG (*the owner of the head*): Be I late?

GEORGE: No, Edward. Come in. You're welcome. Sit down.

[EDWARD, *coming in, finds a seat and sits.*

Now, friends, we'll waste no time. I'm not sure it oughtn't to be my Betsy that says what's in my mind, and not me.

BETSY: You go on, George. I be no hand at talkin'.

GEORGE: Well, I don't know as I'd say *that*, me dear ! But let be ! . . . I think I can best put it shortly and simply this way: It's come to me that seven shillings a week be no fair wage for a man who works hard from morning till night for the whole of his lifetime, to keep himself, and his wife, and his children.

[*A chorus of approval greets this:*

BETSY	}	That's right, George.
JAMES		By God, you're right there, boy.
BRINE		Hear, hear, Mr. Loveless.
SUSAN		Fair ! It's a cryin' shame of a wage !
BOB		Better late than never.

[*Only EDWARD LEGG and JAMES HAMMETT don't respond; and HAMMETT only because he is slower of reaction than the others.*

GEORGE: We seem to be agreed upon that. All of us ! Eh ? Hammett ?

HAMMETT (*his acquiescence coming slowly but definite*): Oh, aye !

SUSAN (*who has noticed LEGG's silence; to him*): Can't you say *summat* ?

LEGG: When time comes !

GEORGE: Now the first question be this: Can our masters afford to pay more ?

LEGG: Ah ! That *be* a question !

SUSAN: Hold yer tongue !

LEGG: I don't 'llow they *can* afford it !

SUSAN: That's the sort o' dam' vool thing you would say.

GEORGE: Now, Susan, bide quiet ! Legg be entitled to his opinion—same as rest of us !

SUSAN: Opinion ! He ? He bain't got no opinion ! He be a louse !

LEGG (*rising to his feet, with a shrill squeak of indignation*): A louse ! She called I a louse !

JAMES: Sit down, Edward. We bain't here to discuss what you are.

SUSAN: We knows !

JAMES: George, allowing they can afford it——

BOB: They can afford it.

BRINE: And a sight more—eh, James ?

HAMMETT (*thus suddenly appealed to*): Oh, aye !

JAMES (*continuing to his brother*): Have you anything in your mind as to how to set about gettin' it ?

GEORGE: It's all in me mind. I think o' naught else, day and night. I propose I should go to Parson——

SUSAN: Parson ?

GEORGE: And ask him that a few of us men should meet some o' the farmers, up at Parson's house.

SUSAN: Fat lot you'll get out o' Parson !

GEORGE: It's no more'n his duty, Susan. To help his flock. And, arter all, church folk or chapel folk—and them that be neither for a' that—be all his flock. Brothers.

JAMES: Tell Parson he be brother to the Squire, he'll swell like a peacock. Tell him he be brother to you or I, he'll sing a different song.

GEORGE: I don't think we should speak such things o' Parson till we knows.

BOB: George, have you thought if you do get to meet the farmers, and ask for a rise, you may get more'n you reckon for ?

LEGG: What d'you mean by *that*, Bob Dominy ?

BOB: The sack !

LEGG: The sack ! !

GEORGE (*calmly*): Aye, I've thought o' that, too!

LEGG: It be presumptuous! That's what it be: presumptuous—askin' for a rise. We bain't like Squire; or even like farmers. We be poor folk. Our lot be hard, I know that; but we be born to it, look you!

SUSAN: Edward Legg, if a worm was to stand up on its hind legs and open its mouth and let forth words, it 'ud talk as you do talk.

LEGG: First I be a louse; then a worm. I wish I'd never come.

SUSAN: You bain't the only one.

GEORGE: Please! Hard words between ourselves won't get us no further. My own mind's made up. I shall go to Parson first thing in the mornin'; and arrange, if may be, to meet the farmers; and ask for a rise.

LEGG: George, you be a godly man. You ought to know better. It bain't *safe* to ask farmers. It be safer to ask the Lord!

GEORGE: It's come to me, Edward. I'll ask the Lord for nothing I'll not risk everything to get.

LEGG: That don't sound Christian to I. Prayin' for summat and then tryin' for it. You might get it, for yourself—and that don't give the Lord a chance to show what He can do.

BOB (*in sudden disgust*): You be worse than any squealin' rabbit I ever trapped.

LEGG: Now a rabbit! George, will 'ee stop un!

GEORGE: Maybe I used to think like you, Legg. But I come to think that God works through men; yes, and looks to us to do our part. So there's nothing for it but to strive after a more decent livin'—not only for ourselves, but for all them that labours. It be a duty.

SUSAN: You be a good man, George Loveless.

GEORGE: I don't know 'bout that, Susan. But I was never one to be happy escapin' a duty. So my way's clear. Though I ask no man to follow me . . . all the same I've writ down some names of those that might come wi' me to meet farmers. (*He produces a piece of paper.*) There's Thomas Stanfield; and his son, John . . . and the rest be here. My brother, James.'

JAMES: I'm with you, George.

GEORGE: James Brine.

BRINE: 'use, Mr. Loveless. I be glad you've writ my name down.

GEORGE: Good boy . . . and James Hammett?

LEGG: Don't 'ee go, James. Don't 'ee go. You be warned in time.

GEORGE (*ignoring* LEGG): Well, Hammett? . . . What d'you say?

HAMMETT (*slow but sure*): I?? . . . Oh, I says. Oh, aye.

CURTAIN

SCENE III

DR. WARREN'S study. Evening

There are two groups in the room. The group comfortably seated round the fire consists of the SQUIRE, DR. WARREN, and the three farmers. They all have half-filled wine-glasses beside them; the SQUIRE is smoking. The other group is on the opposite side of the room, and all standing. GEORGE and JAMES LOVELESS, THOMAS and JOHN STANFIELD, JAMES BRINE and JAMES HAMMETT. GEORGE LOVELESS is speaking.

GEORGE (*effectively, but simply*): And so, gentlemen, we're not askin' for your charity; we be

askin' for no favours. We be askin' for this rise, in the name o' justice, and humanity, and right. . . .

[He comes to an end, and for a few moments there is silence in the room.]

SQUIRE: The feller can talk! (*He turns to the farmers.*) Well, Bryant, what d'you think of all that?

FARMER BRYANT (*business-like and effective; obviously the senior farmer present*): Just that, Squire. Talk! He seems to think us farmers are in the business for our health! We got to live—same as you, Loveless.

JAMES (*interjecting*): Aye, but you *don't* live same as us.

FARMER BRYANT: And if we lived same as you, who'd be payin' your wages? It's all very well for you to come here grumbling, because we pay *only* seven shillings a week. We pay what we can afford. If we paid more, there'd be no farms. And you'd get nothing. Then you might have something to grumble about.

FARMER CASE (*a very deferential little man, who is always in agreement with a senior or superior*): That's true enough, Mr. Bryant. That's true enough, indeed.

FARMER DUFFETT (*a full-blooded diehard*): 'Course it's true. But you'll never get fellers like them to see it. Waste of breath!

SQUIRE (*turning to GEORGE LOVELESS*): Well, Loveless? . . . I'm enjoyin' this! Come on, man! You're not beaten yet. You must have an answer to that.

GEORGE (*after a momentary pause*): I think you'll agree, gentlemen, that Dorset land be as good as any; leastways, as good as Hampshire land.

SQUIRE: And I'm not drinking with any man who doesn't agree to *that*. Dorset's the finest county in the kingdom, with the finest land. Here's to it. (*He drinks.*)

GEORGE: And Dorset men at least as good as Hampshire men.

FARMER CASE (*taking the same line as the SQUIRE*): Well, yes, I don't see why we shouldn't agree to *that*.

GEORGE: And Dorset farmers at least as good as Hampshire farmers.

FARMER DUFFETT: And a damn' sight better!

GEORGE: And Hampshire farmers can afford to pay their men ten shillings a week.

SQUIRE: . . . Warren, fill up a glass for him.

GEORGE: No, sir; thank you; not for me; I bain't used to it. . . . Well, I said my say. P'raps Parson here, who was good enough to arrange this meeting, will say a few words on our behalf.

DR. WARREN (*taken aback, and embarrassed*): Me? Really, Loveless, I hardly think it's fair of you to ask me to interfere between Masters and Men. These gentlemen know their business far better than I do. After all, it's the spiritual welfare of my people I'm concerned with much more than the material. I always say the less the Church mixes itself up with Politics and all this Political Economy, the more spiritual it will remain.

FARMER BRYANT: Hear, hear, Doctor. Hear, hear. Very sound.

FARMER CASE: You took the words out of my mouth, Bryant.

FARMER BRYANT (*dryly*): Did I? Seems to me folks usually put words *into* your mouth!

THOMAS: Parson, can I ask you a question?

DR. WARREN: Well?

THOMAS: Would you work for seven shillin' a week? From early mornin' till late at night; and as often as not go hungry, and cold. And worse, see your wife and children go hungry and cold? Would you, Parson, would you?

DR. WARREN: I don't see what that's got to do with it.

SQUIRE: Oh, come, Doctor. It's a question, anyhow! It wants an answer.

DR. WARREN: Very well, Squire. It seems to me perfectly clear that Stanfield and I lead our lives in entirely different stations; in our appointed stations; and appointed for us by One who is infinitely wiser than either of us. Who knows what is good for me, and what is good for Stanfield? It isn't a question of whether I would work for Stanfield's wages, or he for mine; but that we should both do our best, uncomplaining, at our allotted task. And, viewed in that light, the question appears to me—with all due respect to you, sir—as a mere piece of pointless insolence.

FARMER CASE: That's so. That's so. That's what it is—insolence.

DR. WARREN (*now well under weigh*): No. I'm inclined to think it's more. The disrespect to myself I could overlook. But it goes deeper than that. It's a questioning of a social order which may not be perfect—because man is not perfect—but which is, in its main structure, Divine.

FARMER DUFFETT: By God, that's what I call Religion! That makes short work of all this whining; shows it for what it is; Against Religion. Downright Wickedness.

SQUIRE: I didn't know you were a religious man, Duffett.

FARMER DUFFETT: I'm not one to parade my religion, Squire. But I know the value of it! Keeps these fellers in their place. And mind you, when all's said and done, they got precious little to complain of.

JAMES LOVELESS (*dangerously*): Precious little to complain of!

GEORGE: Steady, James!

JAMES: I won't "steady," George. I bain't be going to stand 'ere and be told I got little to complain of.

DR. WARREN (*sternly*): James Loveless!

FARMER DUFFETT: No. No. Let him go on. Let him go on.

JAMES: And I be goin' on! And without askin' your leave, neether. Look'ee. We do plough, and sow the wheat for 'ee, and reap it; and never a loaf o' bread do we get our hands on. And we raise the cattle for 'ee; and the sheep; and never a bite o' good meat do we get our teeth into; and we do shear the wool, and go in rags and sackin' oursel'; we tend the chicken and ducks and geese, and collect the eggs; and never a one for us. We——

DR. WARREN (*breaking in to stem this torrent*): That's enough! Be quiet! You ought to be ashamed of yourself. I allow you men to come here as a special favour. You ought at least to show some gratitude. And, instead, this unseemly outburst.

FARMER BRYANT: Well, what did you expect?

FARMER CASE: Quite right, Bryant.

FARMER DUFFETT: Given their whole case away—that's what he's done! They don't want an

extra shilling or two ! They want everything. They want the Earth !

HAMMETT (*the silent one, suddenly inspired*): And the Earth do belong to us, much as to you ! 'Tis us do tend her !

SQUIRE: What about *that*, Duffett ? 'Pon my word, you're gettin' as good as you give.

FARMER DUFFETT (*rising with a fling; he has lost his temper*): I've no patience with 'em ! And really, Squire, I've little patience with *you* !

SQUIRE (*very much resenting this; after all, he is the SQUIRE, and the farmers must be kept in their place*): And what may you mean by that, Mr. Duffett ?

FARMER DUFFETT: Encouragin' 'em !

SQUIRE: And let me tell you, Mr. Duffett, that whether I choose to encourage them or not is no concern of yours.

FARMER DUFFETT: And by God, sir, that's just where you're wrong. It concerns all of us. We've all got to stick together. Haven't you any memories ? Any of you ? Less than a year ago, what happened ? Mobs of these fellers, thousands of 'em, rioting, burning, pillaging; not only here in Dorset, but in Hampshire, Wiltshire, all over the country. And that's what you're askin' for again. Unless you keep 'em under—where they belong. I tell you, give one inch—here and now—and we'll all be murdered in our beds.

JAMES (*in a sudden flame of rage*): I got somethin' to say to that ! Look-ee—

GEORGE: James ! Keep quiet, boy ! Quiet ! You leave this to me. Let me answer him. . . . Mr. Duffett, sir, we can't let that pass. You know as well as I do, when there was all this rioting you speak of, and rick-burning, I and my brother here was set to watch 'em ! Would you 'a done *that* if we was rioters ? And you

know, as well as I do, all of you gentlemen, how many men be turned off after harvest-time. Twenty here, in Tolpuddle. Good steady men, too; with families dependent on 'em. Have you ever thought o' the misery o' such men? Have you ever tried to? Through the long winter-time. Gatherin' faggots o' dead wood and tryin' to sell 'em in the villages; with few who could afford to buy. And at night—tho' they be law-abidin', and know full well the penalty for breakin' the law—driven to rob a swede maybe from the fields, or poach a rabbit, just to stay the cravin's of their own hunger; or stop the cryin' of their children for food!

SQUIRE (*sternly: the man of property*): Come, come, come, Loveless, you're not defendin' poachin' and thievin'.

GEORGE: No, Squire. But I be tellin' you what makes poachers, and thieves, and rioters—like what Mr. Duffett here's afraid of.

FARMER DUFFETT: Afraid!! Me afraid!!! Who said I was afraid?

BRINE: And you'd have little need to be, if you'd do right by us.

HAMMETT: Oh, aye!

FARMER DUFFETT: There you are—*threats*! Talk of their *rights*, from two boys. Good God, I don't know what the country's coming to!

GEORGE: Gentlemen, what could those poor men hope for, armed with sticks, against your soldiery? What harm did they try for?

FARMER BRYANT: Harm! They smashed up my new threshing machine.

FARMER CASE: And burnt two of my ricks.

FARMER DUFFETT: And the same the length and breadth of the country.

GEORGE: And in the whole length and breadth o' the country, gentlemen, those thousands o' workers, desperate with hunger, didn't take a single life or deal a single wound. Even in their madness there was no murder in their hearts. But at the 'Sizes, arterwards, hundreds of 'em was sentenced to death; and hundreds more taken from their families and transported overseas. I'm not defendin' what they did; but they was drove to it, by low wages and no wages. Good men they were; and brave; and honest; and patient and endurin' beyond belief. I *know'd* 'em, gentlemen. There was men that I'd worked beside in the fields, since we were boys, that swung up in the gallows. There are women down in the village now, on the parish, with naught to do for the rest o' their lives but wonder what be happenin' to their men, who are livin' out *their* lives, as criminals, t'other side o' the world.

[*Nobody has an immediate answer. Again it is the SQUIRE who takes the initiative.*]

SQUIRE: Come on, Bryant. (*Rises and crosses with glass to BRYANT.*) Drink this down. And then cough up that ten shillings.

FARMER DUFFETT: What's that? That's all very well for you, Squire! Look here, if *we* raise their wages, will you reduce *our* rents?

SQUIRE: Don't be a damned fool, Duffett. But if you don't raise the wages, I'm raising the rents!

FARMER BRYANT: You're not serious, Squire?

SQUIRE: I've never been more serious in my life. (*Suddenly the SQUIRE dominates the scene.*) Duffett here—rather forgetting himself, I think—suggests that I'm encouragin' the men. Well, maybe. But I know what I'm about. I know which side my bread's buttered. And it's to my

advantage that you farmers should pay your hands enough to keep the countryside safe for your betters. And that's flat.

FARMER BRYANT: Yes; but, Squire——

SQUIRE: Now, Bryant. I know what you're gettin' for your wheat; and you're ploughin' fresh land every year. Don't you talk to me about not being able to afford it.

FARMER DUFFETT (*disgruntled but subdued*): 'Tisn't a question of being able to afford it—it's the principle of the thing!

FARMER CASE: Of course, there's a lot in what Squire says——

SQUIRE: Thank you, Case!

FARMER CASE: No offence, Squire. And I can afford the ten shillings if Bryant can.

FARMER BRYANT: Better than you, Case!

FARMER DUFFETT: No man's goin' to say o' me I can't afford what they can.

SQUIRE: You've got your rise, Loveless.

GEORGE: We've much to thank you for, Squire.

DR. WARREN: Well, now that's all fixed up so pleasantly, I think perhaps you men ought to be gettin' home, don't you? (*He turns from them to the farmers.*) You'll stay, gentlemen, for a bite of supper?

BRYANT	}	Oh, thank you.
CASE		That's very kind of you. Very kind.
DUFFETT		Thank 'ee. I don't mind if I do.

DR. WARREN: And Squire? Will you so far honour my table, and these gentlemen, by sitting down with us?

SQUIRE: If your food's as good as your wine Warren——

DR. WARREN: I've had prepared a pair of soles, a haunch of venison—roast; a snipe and woodcock; a French pie; and some Bath cheese. And my housekeeper cooks like an artist.

SQUIRE: I'll stay.

DR. WARREN: I'm gratified. This is indeed an occasion!

[He turns to find, to his surprise, that GEORGE LOVELESS and his group are not going.]

Well, Loveless?

GEORGE: There's one thing, Parson. 'Tis usual, surely, to have agreements like this put on paper, and signed.

FARMER DUFFETT: Well, I'm damned!

DR. WARREN: Are you implying, Loveless, that you don't trust these gentlemen to keep their word?

JAMES: And if they do mean to, where's the harm in writing it down?

FARMER BRYANT: No, Loveless. Nothing on paper. That's going too far.

FARMER CASE: I agree. Quite unnecessary.

FARMER DUFFETT: Who do they think they *are*? That's what I want to know!

SQUIRE: You know very well, Duffett, if *I'd* promised to reduce your rents you'd want it on paper.

FARMER DUFFETT: And that I would! But you're different, Squire!

SQUIRE: And what may you mean by that, Mr. Duffett?

DR. WARREN: Now, look here, Loveless; frankly, I think you're presuming too much on our good nature; and it's time you went. And as for wanting anything in writing, that's

beside the point ! After all, I've been a witness here to-night of what's passed and if you'll go quietly now, and about your work in the morning, you shall receive as much for your labour as any men in this or any other district ; and if your masters should go back on their plighted word, I'll undertake to see you righted ; so help me God !

FARMER DUFFETT : I say, Parson——

GEORGE (*very moved*) : Dr. Warren, in my own way, I too am a servant of the Lord. And arter those words o' yours, I can—and I *do*—thank you from the bottom of my soul. And there be many hundred o' poor folk outside these walls that'll thank you, and bless your name, long arter all we be dust. . . . Come, lads.

[*He goes and opens the door, and his friends pass through it, and disappear. Before following them, GEORGE LOVELESS turns towards the room again.*]

Good night to you, sir. And thank 'ee again. And thank 'ee to you, gentlemen ; and Squire. . . . Good night.

[*He goes out.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE IV

GEORGE LOVELESS' cottage.

GEORGE and BETSY LOVELESS are there ; and with them two Union delegates from London—WILLIAM COBB and HARRY BROWN.

COBB is middle-aged, quiet and exact in manner. BROWN is a younger man, restless, with a fine enthusiasm, which is apt to explode into bursts of indignation.

GEORGE : In this very room it were, gentlemen, two year ago, we decided to ask for a rise. And a

few nights arter that we met three o' the farmers, up at Parson's. Two year ago, Betsy, and it seems like t'other minute. Two year !

COBB: But I understand they did keep the promise they made then; and your wages went up to ten shillings.

GEORGE: No. Never. To nine they went; and that only for a few months. And then to eight. And that, gentlemen, caused a good deal o' bad feelin', and arter a good deal o' discussin', this way and that, among ourselves, every one of the labourers o' Tolpuddle, we went to a neighbouring magistrate to ask his advice. And what he told us was this: we was told we must work for what our employers thought fit to give us; because there was no law in the land, nor nothin' else, that could cause 'em to give us more'n they wanted to. And very soon arter that the wages went back again to seven; and now there's talk of 'em goin' to six ! And I thought then it were about time to send a letter to you gentlemen in London.

COBB: I'm very glad you did.

GEORGE: We'd heard tell o' this Grand . . . Grand . . . You must forgive me, gentlemen, it's got such a longish name I can never get my tongue to it first time !

COBB: The Grand National Consolidated Trades Union.

GEORGE: Aye, that's it. And we thought p'raps you might help us.

COBB: And we can.

GEORGE: You see, gentlemen, meetin' round this table two year ago, and meetin' farmers, and goin' to the magistrate and to the County Hall; all that seemed a beginnin', somehow; joinin' together. We seem to have put our hands to the

plough, as you might say, and it don't seem right now to turn back.

BROWN (*with enthusiasm*): God, that's fine. There's no turning back now; for any of us. You know, you're the kind of man, and your people are the kind of people, we want to help.

COBB: As soon as your letter reached us, a meeting was called; and young Harry Brown, here, and myself were delegated to come down and see you.

BETSY: All the way from London!

COBB: We left yesterday. Salisbury last night. And here we are. It's wonderful how quick you can do the journey in these days!

BETSY: It must be a terrible long way. I wonder how much you gentlemen who live right away there know of the things that go on in these parts?

COBB: We get to know all we can.

BETSY: There are things I could tell you——

BROWN (*suddenly interested; coming to her*): Yes? Go on, Mrs. Loveless.

BETSY: While I been listening to you gentlemen, I been tryin' to keep my mind from the next village. There be a woman there—little more'n a girl she is—I don't know how she be livin' through these hours . . . seems only t'other day, I met her in the street just outside here; the day her lad asked her to marry him. And she didn't know what answer to give to him—she was afeared. And I told her, "Say yes." And she did. And they got on that well, and had two children . . . and then, sudden, he were put out o' work. . . . And 'tweren't so many weeks ago I met *him*; as I was comin' home from the fields. And I spoke to him. But he didn't see me. He was close near me, and he looked at me

—but he didn't see me. And he passed on into the darkness. And the next night it was, he took a sheep and killed it—and fed himself, and them that were his to feed. 'Tis easy enough! The sheep do roam all night, over the fields and hills far away from the village, in the dark, untended; so many of 'em. Who'd miss one? But they caught him. And hanged him. And she walked mile upon mile to where he was swingin' from the tree; and begged his body; and begged a lift in a cart to bring her man home; to bury him decent . . . this mornin', she buried him. . . .

COBB: A life for a life, eh?

BETSY: And they do kill us and break our homes for less than that. There was that fine gentleman from Parliament, George—

GEORGE: Aye, Betsy; but let be.

BROWN (*deeply stirred*): No; let her go on. Go on, Mrs. Loveless. Tell us in your own way. I'll let the brothers in London know of what you tell.

BETSY: That's what I thought. From the London Parliament he was. And he was a-judgin' on the bench here. And they brought before him a man they said had took a plank o' wood, off the gentleman's own land it was. And the gentleman sat there, and made a fine speech; full o' tongue-twistin' words; 'bout the "enormity o' the crime"; and sentenced him to be sent overseas—for fourteen year! And there was young Sutton; a boy he were, and down at pub they gave him some beer, and maybe fuddled the lad. And he took fourpence. And him they sentenced to be hung.

BROWN: Hung!

BETSY: Aye. But in their great mercy they spared him. And sent him overseas—for life. And young Edward Baker, eighteen he were, he took a

pocket handkerchief that weren't his. He went for life, too. . . . I could go on and on. Folks round here, gentlemen, look up to my George; and they bring him these tales from all the country round.

GEORGE: And such tales, gentlemen; and so many. But there's one thing that passes my comprehension.

COBB: What's that, Loveless?

GEORGE: The gentry! The gentry themselves! When they sit in judgment on some poor fellow who, maybe shiverin' with cold, took an old throw'd-away coat from a hedgerow—that was one tale; from Wiltshire that come—and as Betsy here says, sentences men to death; as they do, gentlemen, at the 'Sizes; in batches; twenty and thirty at a time; there don't seem to be no sorrow in 'em, let alone pity or mercy; rather, a queer kind o' pleasure—or leastways, righteousness; as if they was doin' somethin' fine!

COBB: I think I can account for that.

GEORGE: How, sir?

COBB: They're *afraid*, Loveless. And fear makes people savage. But very few care to be savages in their own eyes. A man can't be a villain to himself. That's why they've got to dress up all this travesty of justice in their solemn-sounding phrases—the righteousness you spoke of—saving the country, and civilisation—when they're only trying to save themselves! After all, it wasn't so long ago, over in France, these same gentry drove the workers too far; and their heads came tumbling off like ninepins.

BROWN (*exploding*): And, by God, you can understand it!

GEORGE (*concerned*): Oh, but, gentlemen, we don't want none o' that here. An eye for an eye—we'd be as bad as they.

COBB: You can make yourself easy on that score, Loveless. This isn't a revolutionary country; and ours isn't a revolutionary movement; not in that sense.

GEORGE: I bain't one for goin' agin the law.

COBB: And we're certainly not asking you to. To form a Society or join a Society is not illegal; it was, until recently; but it's not now.

GEORGE (*still a little alarmed*): But Mr. Brown here——

COBB: Ah, you mustn't take my young friend too seriously.

[Although the older man is chaffing the younger, it is always obvious that there is a profound personal friendship between these two.]

He's a hot-head!

BROWN: Hot! I should think I was! All this *savagery* makes my blood boil.

BETSY: And mine, sir!

BROWN (*turning quickly to her; there is a spontaneous sympathy between these two, as there is between GEORGE and COBB*): What you've been telling us, Mrs. Loveless, it's terrible enough, God knows! *And* your hours of work, *and* your wages. But at least you're out in the open, under God's sky. But in the spinning-mills, men and women are herded together in rooms and sheds, fourteen hours a day; *and locked in*. And the air gets foul; and their throats get dry and parched, till it's torture—and even the rainwater is kept out of their reach, in case they should steal it! . . . Three shillings a week you get; that's what they pay the children.

BETSY: Children?

BROWN: And little more'n babies; they get 'em as soon as they can walk; as soon as they can crawl! The tinier they are, the better; to crawl

under the machines and pick up the waste cotton. And from six in the morning they work 'em, till half past eight at night; and, when the mills are extra busy, from *three in the morning till past ten at night*. Just as long as they can keep 'em awake, they keep 'em at it. And, as they sit at the looms, they have to beat 'em across their little backs with leather whips, to keep 'em from falling to sleep; and even so they drop off; and fall forward into the machinery; and get mangled to pieces. And the lucky ones never wake up!

BETSY: But how can the parents allow it?

BROWN: They get no relief from the parish unless they do send their children to work; so it's that or extinction. I've seen a mother hurrying off her children to the mills at five in the morning; they probably hadn't been in bed six hours; and the poor mites were sobbing their hearts out, but so was she! A "hot-head," am I, Willie? Yours is always so damned cool.

GEORGE: Well, gentlemen, there'll be one o' these here Union Lodges in Tolpuddle just as soon as we can get it started.

COBB (*rising, with an air of putting an end to the interview*): And that's what we've come all this way to hear. . . . Well, Harry, if we're going to put up at the inn, we'd better be getting along. . . . Good night, Loveless, and we're meeting your friends here to-morrow evening at the same time.

GEORGE: Aye, sir.

COBB: There are details about the actual initiation ceremony of the Lodge that have to be explained. . . . Good night, Mrs. Loveless.

BETSY: Good night, sir.

GEORGE (*who has risen; but is again a little doubtful*): 'Bout this . . . what you call "initiation

ceremony"—there bain't nothin' illegal—agin' the law—in that ?

COBB: Good gracious no !

GEORGE: I'd heard somethin' of a lot o' swearin' that had to be done !

COBB: You mean the initiation oath ? But that's only what the Freemasons do ; and the Orange Lodges ; and the Oddfellows, and various other societies that have their own rites and secrets.

GEORGE: Yet I don't rightly see the reason of it.

COBB: Well, Loveless, you know some of your employers aren't going to be too pleased with you ?

BETSY: That's true enough !

COBB: And they'll put a black mark against any man who has anything to do with you ?

BETSY: Black mark ! Give 'em the sack right away !

COBB: Probably more so in the country than in the towns. . . . So, on the whole, we've found it advisable to have these initiations, where the men take a solemn pledge together to stand by one another ; and never give each other away . . . but I'll explain the whole thing to-morrow evening, when I meet your friends.

GEORGE: Yes, sir. Thank you. They'll all be here. . . . You can find your way to the inn ?

COBB: Oh, yes. We passed it on our way.

GEORGE: You can't miss it ; at top o' street.

BROWN: Good night, Mrs. Loveless.

BETSY (*very moved*): Good night, sir. And I shan't never forget the things you said. I never have heard such things spoke before ; yet, when you spoke 'em, I seem to have known 'em all my life.

BROWN: Well, maybe this evening's been a fateful evenin' for Tolpuddle; and you; and your husband.

BETSY: Maybe.

BROWN: Good night, Loveless.

GEORGE: Good night, sir.

COBB (*as the two disappear*): To-morrow at the same time.

[GEORGE stands at the open door, obviously watching them into the distance, till the darkness swallows them. Then he closes the door, and returns into the room to his wife.]

BETSY (*after a little silence; slowly*): A Union Lodge in Tolpuddle! That be good talk.

GEORGE: We got to make it more'n talk, Betsy!

BETSY (*suddenly*): Oh, George, I be so proud of 'ee. I do love 'ee!

GEORGE (*surprised by the suddenness of her outburst; and touched*): Betsy!

BETSY: You be right, George. I've so much to be thankful for. *You*. While I got you, there be happiness deep in me all the time. (*She is overwrought, and on the verge of breaking down.*) But I couldn't live without 'ee, George; I couldn't.

GEORGE: But, Betsy lass, you'll never have to. You know 'tis the same with me. *I* couldn't live without *you*. And now there's the Union to be started. That's good. We'll do it together.

BETSY: Aye; that's good; together.

GEORGE: But, Betsy, what be you cryin' for?

BETSY: This night's work.

GEORGE: There be naught to cry about in this night's work.

BETSY: No. Naught.

[She quietens herself; they are sitting together at the table, and for a few moments both seem to be occupied with their own thoughts. The room is very still.]

George, why be folks so cruel ?

GEORGE: Ah, lass, you do ask questions ! . . . I liked that Mr. Cobb.

BETSY: I liked that Mr. Brown. . . .

[Another little stretch of silence. Broken by a tiny catch in BETSY'S breath.]

GEORGE: Nay, lass, no more cryin'. . . . The world be a cruel place. . . . Maybe we can do summat to make it better. . . . We can do our best . . . and we got each other. There's no power on earth can part us two . . . no power on earth.

BETSY (*very low*): George !

[She lays her hand in his . . . and so they remain for a few moments. The curtain hides them.]

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE I

The room in GEORGE LOVELESS' cottage.

We are to be present at a ceremony of admission to the Union Lodge of Tolpuddle. In the room are GEORGE LOVELESS as the President of the Lodge; JAMES LOVELESS as the Vice-President; THOMAS STANFIELD as the Warden; and JAMES BRINE as the Inside Tiler. GEORGE and JAMES LOVELESS and THOMAS STANFIELD are wearing surplices. There is a large six-foot painting of Death, represented by a skeleton; and on a table is the Bible. The ceremony that follows must be carried out with the utmost sincerity, conviction, devotion, and devoutness. The scene must not be produced to extract from it any comedy that might be there to our modern eyes and ears, but to reproduce as far as possible the atmosphere of such actual scenes a hundred years ago, when such men as these performed such rites, specially devised and written by men of their own kind, and which were considered as absolutely essential to safeguard not only themselves, but their great purpose of raising—against an enormous and ruthless opposition—the standard of living of the wage-earning classes.

When the curtain rises, the men sing together the following verse. They sing well and quietly, and, as they do not wish to be heard outside, there is no forcing of their voices.

ALL (*singing in unison*):

“ Brethren, here we agree
To strive for harmony,
In this our cause
May love lead these our laws,
And may the Secret be
For evermore.”

[*When that has been sung, GEORGE LOVELESS, as the President, says the following prayer:*

GEORGE: O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, defend us in this our undertaking, that we may not fear the power of our adversaries, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[*There is a knocking at the door.*]

BRINE (*as the Inside Tiler*): Who comes here to disturb the peace and harmony of this our most worthy and honourable Order?

JOHN'S VOICE (*from outside the door; as the Principal Conductor*): I am not come here to disturb your peace and harmony; I am a brother with a stranger who wishes to be admitted.

BRINE (*the Inside Tiler*): Most worthy President, a brother stands at the door with a stranger, who wishes to be admitted.

GEORGE (*President*): In the name of the Lord admit him.

[*Enter JOHN STANFIELD as the Principal Conductor, followed by EDWARD LEGG, who is the candidate for initiation into the Lodge, and who now has his eyes bandaged. LEGG, thus blindfolded, stands on the threshold. JOHN STANFIELD, the Principal Conductor, leads him a few paces into the room. JAMES BRINE, the Inside Tiler, shuts the door; and JOHN STANFIELD, the Principal Conductor, addresses LEGG, the candidate.*]

JOHN (*Principal Conductor*):

Stranger, within our secret walls we have admitted you,

Hoping you will prove honest, faithful, just, and true.

Go hence, you are at liberty to retire.

Are your motives pure?

LEGG: Yes.

JOHN (*Principal Conductor*): Do you declare they are?

LEGG: Yes.

JOHN (*Principal Conductor*):

Then, brethren, to initiate this stranger we
will now proceed,
And our most worthy master may proceed to
read.

JAMES (*Vice-President*):

Stranger, you are welcome, and if you prove
sincere,
You'll not repent your pains and labour here.
We have one common interest, and one common
soul,
Which should by virtue guide and actuate the
whole.
Stranger, the design of all our Lodges is love
and unity,
With self-protection founded on the laws of
equity.
And when you have our mystic rites gone
through,
Our secrets all will be disclosed to you.
You are now within our secret walls, and I
must know
If you can keep a secret.

LEGG: Yes.

JAMES (*Vice-President*): And will you do?

LEGG: Yes.

JAMES (*Vice-President*):

Then amongst us, you will shortly be entitled
to the endearing name of brother,
And what you hear or see here done, you must
not disclose to any other;
We are uniting to cultivate friendship, as well
as to protect our trade.
Give me your hand.

[LEGG *holds out his hand*; and JAMES LOVELESS
grasps it.

He then turns to BRINE and JOHN STANFIELD.

Conduct him now to our most worthy master,

to be further instructed in this our most worthy and honourable Order.

[Upon this, BRINE and JOHN STANFIELD walk LEGG several times round the room; while the others stamp their feet softly and mysteriously on the floor.]

They then lead him up to GEORGE LOVELESS, the President, who is seated beneath the figure of Death.

GEORGE LOVELESS rises.

GEORGE: Guards, give the stranger sight!

[JAMES BRINE and JOHN STANFIELD remove the bandages from LEGG's eyes.]

Stranger, mark well this shadow, which you see,
It is a faithful emblem of man's destiny.

Behold that head once filled with pregnant wit,
These hollow holes once sparkling eyes did fit:
This empty mouth nor lips nor tongue contains,
Of a once well-furnished head see all that now
remains.

The sting of death is Sin—are we not Sinners
all?

Then upon us one day the heavy stroke of
Death must fall.

[GEORGE presents a Bible to LEGG.]

Hold this with me. . . .

Kneel!

[LEGG kneels; and GEORGE administers the oath.]

Say the words after me, as I say them:

[GEORGE then speaks the various sentences of the oath clearly and distinctly, LEGG mumbling them quickly and only just audibly after him.]

“I, Edward Legg——”

LEGG (*repeating*): I, Edward Legg——

GEORGE “being in the awful presence of
Almighty God——”

LEGG: being in the awful presence of Almighty
God——

GEORGE: “do voluntarily declare——”

LEGG (*continuing to mumble quickly, so that the flow of GEORGE LOVELESS' voice is interrupted no more than need be*): do voluntarily declare——

GEORGE: “that I will persevere in endeavouring to support a brotherhood——”

LEGG: that I will persevere in endeavouring to support a brotherhood——

GEORGE: “known by the name of ‘The Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers.’”

LEGG: known by the name of “The Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers.”

GEORGE: “And I solemnly declare——”

LEGG: And I solemnly declare——

GEORGE: “that I will to the utmost of my power——”

LEGG: that I will to the utmost of my power——

GEORGE: “assist them in all lawful and just occasions——”

LEGG: assist them in all lawful and just occasions——

GEORGE: “to obtain a fair remuneration for our labour.”

LEGG: to obtain a fair remuneration for our labour.

GEORGE: “And I call upon God to witness this my most solemn declaration——”

LEGG: And I call upon God to witness this my most solemn declaration——

GEORGE: “that neither hopes, fears——”

LEGG: that neither hopes, fears——

GEORGE: “rewards, punishments, nor even Death itself——”

LEGG: rewards, punishments, nor even Death itself——

GEORGE: “shall ever induce me——”

LEGG: shall ever induce me——

GEORGE: “to give any information respecting anything contained in this Lodge.”

LEGG: to give any information respecting anything contained in this Lodge.

GEORGE: “And if ever I reveal part or parts of this my most solemn obligation——”

LEGG: And if ever I reveal part or parts of this my most solemn obligation——

GEORGE: “may all the Society I am about to belong to——”

LEGG: may all the Society I am about to belong to——

GEORGE: “disgrace me so long as I live.”

LEGG: disgrace me so long as I live.

GEORGE: “And may what is now before me——”

LEGG: And may what is now before me——

GEORGE: “plunge my soul into the everlasting pit of misery.”

LEGG: plunge my soul into the everlasting pit of misery.

GEORGE: “Amen.”

LEGG: Amen.

GEORGE: Kiss the Book.

[LEGG *does so.*

Rise and stand.

[LEGG *gets up.*

They all then sing quietly the verse of the hymn with which the meeting opened.

ALL (*singing*):

“Brethren, here we agree
To strive for harmony,
In this our cause
May love lead these our laws,
And may the Secret be
For evermore.”

GEORGE (*the President*): I declare this Lodge to be duly closed, and so it is. . . .

God save our noble King:

William the Fourth let's sing.

Brethren, ere we depart, let us join hand and heart.

May our next meeting be blest with sweet harmony,

Honour, and Secrecy, in this our Cause.

CURTAIN

SCENE II

A room in MR. WOLLASTON'S house.

WOLLASTON, JAMES FRAMPTON, and DR. WARREN are there.

WOLLASTON (*with a large cautionary poster*): There it is, Dr. Warren.

[WARREN takes it.

You see how we've worded it. (*He looks over WARREN'S shoulder, and, pointing to a passage, reads it*) "mischievous and designing Persons have been for some time past, endeavouring to induce and have induced, many Labourers in many Parishes in this County, to attend Meetings, and to enter into illegal Societies or Unions to which they bind themselves by unlawful oaths, administered secretly by Persons concealed, who artfully deceive the ignorant and unwary" . . . "Guilty of Felony" . . . "Transported for Seven Years" . . . We've had that posted all over the place.

DR. WARREN: I've not met with one.

WOLLASTON: It was only put up a day or two ago. And this morning I had six of the ring-leaders arrested. They're here now, in the next room, with the Constable.

FRAMPTON: By the way, Wollaston, before we have 'em in, I had another letter this morning

from Lord Melbourne. (*He turns to DR. WARREN.*) I think perhaps I ought to tell you, Dr. Warren, before we go any further—of course all this is very confidential—

DR. WARREN (*with a little inclination of the head*): Quite.

FRAMPTON: As a matter of fact, I've had a very considerable correspondence with Lord Melbourne. . . . In the first place, I considered it my duty to inform him of the very alarming and dangerous state of affairs down here—I mean this combining of the labourers. . . . And Lord Melbourne, in answer, was good enough to acquaint me with the fact that he himself considered that all these new societies, all over the country—because what's happening here is obviously only part of a very widespread movement—were, in fact, one of the most formidable difficulties with which he had to contend. . . . Well, he asked me to send him a complete statement, as far as I could, concerning the men themselves, their characters and past records, their meetings, their professed objects, and particularly concerning this Secret Oath, because he feels—as I'm sure we all feel—the Evil has to be met here and now, and, if it's in any way possible, a blow dealt while there's yet time, and before the infection spreads. No half-hearted blow either! A final one!

WOLLASTON: Yes; that's all very well; but the point is, surely, that this combining is not in itself illegal. A recent Act of Parliament definitely made it legal—and a damned silly Act, too!

FRAMPTON: I agree. But, in my view, *and* in the view of the Government—Lord Melbourne has been in close consultation with the Law Officers of the Crown on this very point—the whole thing turns on the question of this oath. Only of course it is deucedly difficult to

get information about it. All this secrecy! I thought we might get something, now, out of the arrested—if we're clever.

WOLLASTON: That's why we had 'em brought here. As a matter of fact, Warren, we've had one or two men we can trust watching 'em. (*He goes to a door, opposite the one into the room in which are the arrested men.*) We know something. More than they know we know. But not enough. (*He opens and calls through the door*) Legg! . . . This is one of the men who's informed on 'em. . . . Come in here.

[LEGG *appears; hesitating and uncomfortable.*

LEGG: Morning, gentlemen.

[*They do not answer him.*

WOLLASTON (*crossing to the other door and opening it*): Constable! . . . Constable Brine. . . . Bring those men in!

CONSTABLE'S VOICE (*inside the room*): Come on, lads; in you go.

[*The six men enter, chained together: the CONSTABLE follows, and closes the door. WOLLASTON is now in a chair behind his desk—a large flat one; FRAMPTON and WARREN have seated themselves on either side of him.*

WOLLASTON: Well, Constable, you arrested these men this morning?

CONSTABLE: Yes, sir.

WOLLASTON: Any trouble?

CONSTABLE: No, sir. I went first to George Loveless' house; and I came up to him just as he was leavin' for his work. And I said to him, I said, "George Loveless, I've a warrant from the magistrate for your arrest."

WOLLASTON: And what did *he* say?

CONSTABLE: He asked what was in the warrant.

WOLLASTON: And what did *you* say?

CONSTABLE: I told him to take and read it for himself. "You be a scholar," I said, "George, more'n I be."

WOLLASTON: And when he'd read it?

CONSTABLE: He gave it back. And I said, "Be you willing to go to the magistrate with me?"

FRAMPTON: And what was his answer to that?

CONSTABLE: He said he'd come with me to any place, wherever I wished. So I took him along with me, and arrested t'other five; and here they be.

WOLLASTON: And no trouble with any of 'em?

CONSTABLE: No, sir. George Loveless, he told 'em all to come quiet; he told 'em they hadn't done naught to be ashamed of; and they hadn't broken no law; and they'd be back again in their homes by the evening.

WOLLASTON: Did he? I shall be sorry to disappoint him!

FRAMPTON: Which is he? George Loveless?

CONSTABLE: This man, sir.

FRAMPTON: And the others? Their names?

CONSTABLE (*indicating them*): James Loveless, sir; and Thomas Stanfield; and John Stanfield; and James Hammett; and James Brine.

WOLLASTON: Legg! Come here!

[LEGG *comes uncomfortably forward from where he has been trying to disappear through a wall.*]

These six men! Are you prepared to swear that these are the men who were present at the meeting, at George Loveless' cottage, when you were compelled to take this oath?

LEGG: Yes, sir.

WOLLASTON: These six.

LEGG: Yes, sir.

WOLLASTON: And, as far as you know, no others.

GEORGE (*breaking in*): No, but, Mr. Wollaston, sir——

WOLLASTON: Well?

GEORGE: That bain't correct.

WOLLASTON: We needn't go into that now. You'll have plenty of opportunity.

GEORGE: But this bain't justice.

FRAMPTON: You'll get justice all right.

GEORGE: James Hammett, boy, speak up for yoursel.' You weren't there when Legg was.

JAMES HAMMETT: Maybe I weren't. But I'm with you all the same! I wouldn't be no-where else but here.

GEORGE: But, boy——

JAMES HAMMETT: Let be, Mr. Loveless.

WOLLASTON (*indicating LOVELESS*): Constable, take those things off his wrist.

[*The CONSTABLE frees GEORGE.*]

(*To GEORGE*): Come here!

[*GEORGE moves to stand in front of WOLLASTON at his desk.*]

What have you got there—in your pocket?

[*GEORGE takes from his pocket a folded poster; and hands it to WOLLASTON.*]

(*Taking it*) So! The proclamation! You can read?

GEORGE: Yes, sir.

WOLLASTON: Presumably you've read this?

GEORGE: Yes, sir.

WOLLASTON: This seems to put rather a different complexion on all this fine talk of yours, eh, Loveless? Not breaking the law, indeed! Here it is (*he taps the poster*) as plain as can be set out

that you *were* breaking the law—and we find the thing on you !

GEORGE: Mr. Wollaston, sir, how can you say that ?

WOLLASTON: If I might suggest, instead of making lying statements of that sort, you'd pay proper heed to a caution put out by the magistrates, you wouldn't find yourself in this predicament !

GEORGE: That were only posted up the day afore yesterday. How can you say I took no heed of it ? I took one down, and put it in my pocket, to have it to study . . . and, as far as I can make out, what we've been brought here for—forming this Union—that happened nigh on two months ago. So how can you say we knew we were goin' agin the law ?

WOLLASTON: I can see it's no good talking to you.

GEORGE: No, sir ; unless you talk more reasonable !

WOLLASTON: What's that ?

GEORGE: And would you mind tellin' me, sir, in what way we *have* gone agin the law ?

WOLLASTON: Oh, you'll find *that* out all right !

GEORGE: *When* shall we find out, sir ?

WOLLASTON: Look here, if there's going to be any cross-examining done here, I'm the one to do it. . . . Eh ?

[*During the preceding scene, DR. WARREN has scribbled something on a piece of paper, which he now pushes in front of WOLLASTON. WOLLASTON, with a little noise of query, consults the message on the paper . . . then:*

Yes. . . . Yes, I agree. Certainly. . . . Constable, take these five men back into that room and wait. . . . George Loveless, stay here. . . . Legg, you'd better go with those others.

[LEGG *hesitates*.

What? . . . Oh, very well! You go in there, then.

[*He indicates the opposite door. The CONSTABLE herds the five back into the room from which he brought them, and LEGG disappears into the other room. GEORGE LOVELESS is alone in front of WOLLASTON, FRAMPTON, and DR. WARREN.*

(*Adopting quite a different tone; conciliatory and ingratiating*) Well, Loveless! . . . We don't want to be hard on you. Speaking for myself, and I'm sure for these two gentlemen here as well, frankly, we're sorry to see a man of your quality in a situation like this. And we want to give you another chance. Now, if you'll give us your promise here and now to have no more to do with this Union, you can walk out of this room a free man, and go home to your wife and family.

GEORGE: I don't understand, sir.

WOLLASTON: Oh, surely! It's quite simple! Tell us all you know of this Union; who else belongs to it, and so forth.

GEORGE: You're asking me to betray my friends.

WOLLASTON: There's no need to put it like that.

GEORGE: This be foolish talk, sir! I can tell nothing.

FRAMPTON (*interrupting violently*): 'Pon my word—

[WOLLASTON *silences him with a gesture.*

WOLLASTON (*continuing; still ingratiating*): No, Loveless. It's *you* that's being foolish. And obstinate; and proud. . . . We're interested in this Union. And why shouldn't we be? And why shouldn't you tell us about it—if it's all open and above-board and legal, as you obviously imagine it is? Come now, that's sense,

isn't it? When you started this Union—or Society, or whatever it is—you must have had some idea at the back of your head; some purpose; some high hopes, I dare say, of your own betterment. What does it mean to you? Come now, you can tell us *that*!

GEORGE (*he is silent for a few moments; and then speaks, choosing his words with careful deliberation*): We meant nothing more, sir, than to unite together to keep up the price of labour, and to support each other in time of need.

WOLLASTON: And that's all.

GEORGE: Of course, sir. Dr. Warren here can bear witness. He was there when we met the farmers; and there was discussion. And we were promised a rise in wages; to get as much as was paid in other districts. A promise that has been broke. (*Turns and confronts DR. WARREN*) And this gentleman then said if the farmers went back on their plighted word, he'd heard that promise and would see us righted. He gave his solemn word to us on that, in the sight o' God.

DR. WARREN: What on earth are you talking about? My dear fellow, you must be mad. I certainly never said anything of the kind.

GEORGE: And it was because we learned we couldn't trust the farmers, any more'n we could trust this gentleman—for all the livery he wears—that we formed this Union among ourselves.

DR. WARREN (*breaking out*): What's the good of going on with this? A lot of idle, discontented, irreligious dissenters—

WOLLASTON (*quieting DR. WARREN's wrath*): One moment, Doctor! . . . (*Then he continues, still very conciliatory*) There may be idle discontented men among them; but I think we've agreed that Loveless is not one of them. He's honest and truthful. And that's why I'm the more surprised

at your attitude now, Loveless. Because you're not telling the truth; or withholding the truth.

GEORGE: No, sir!

WOLLASTON: Oh, yes! . . . About these Unions. There's some conspiracy at the back of them.

GEORGE: No, sir, the reverse; every man that joins the Union is bound not to go agin the laws.

FRAMPTON: The laws of the Union?

GEORGE: Of the country, sir!

WOLLASTON: *And what are they bound by?*

[GEORGE is silent.]

FRAMPTON (*angry impatience getting the better of him*): You know very well, Loveless, you've some secret sign among yourselves, by which these Societies up and down the country know one another, and can keep in touch, and start a strike against work, or rise up together, at the given signal.

GEORGE: I know nothing about *that*, sir.

WOLLASTON: But you must know something about this oath that's administered.

GEORGE: I can tell nothing, sir.

FRAMPTON: Have you taken this oath yourself?

GEORGE: I can tell nothing, sir.

DR. WARREN: Listen, Loveless. If you're keeping silence now, because you've taken an oath not to reveal anything, then I tell you you are sinning against God and man, until you break that oath.

[GEORGE turns to look full at DR. WARREN, but does not answer.]

FRAMPTON: Have you any idea, Loveless, what seven years' transportation means?

GEORGE: Yes, sir.

FRAMPTON: I don't think you have! A hell

upon earth these convict settlements have been called.

GEORGE: I'm in your hands, gentlemen. But I can tell nothing.

WOLLASTON: Is that your last word?

GEORGE: Yes, sir.

WOLLASTON (*calling*): Constable!

[*The CONSTABLE appears.*]

Chain him up again; and take the six of them to the jail.

DR. WARREN: One moment, Constable! . . . There is one final aspect. . . . Men like you, Loveless, often take a misguided pleasure in self-inflicted martyrdom. But in your blind selfishness have you ever given a moment's thought to your wife and children? What will be *their* fate when the wage-earner deserts them? You know yourself—you've seen it—to what depths of misery and want they sink, innocent as they are, when the man who has solemnly undertaken, before his Maker, to care for them, leaves them utterly unprotected.

[*GEORGE is silent. He seems on the verge of breaking. WARREN adds:*

For seven years. If, indeed, he ever comes back at all.

[*GEORGE's face is drawn with agony. . . . Then, at last:*

GEORGE: I can tell nothing.

[*WARREN, with a shrug, turns away, and WOLLASTON makes a sign to the CONSTABLE, who moves to GEORGE and touches him on the shoulder. As in a daze, GEORGE follows the CONSTABLE from the room.*

WOLLASTON: Well! I'm inclined to think it's all turning out for the best.

DR. WARREN: That man has a large following in these parts. A jury might acquit him.

FRAMPTON: The jury will be very carefully chosen, Dr. Warren. (*Stretching out his hand, palm upwards, he makes a little gesture of closing it.*) We've got 'em !

CURTAIN

SCENE III

The trial, the Court House, Dorchester.

MR. GAMBIER (*Counsel for the Prosecution*): Now, I want you to tell us, in your own words, when first you heard of this Union—this Society.

LEGG: I saw young Brine and James Hammett one evening.

MR. GAMBIER: And where ?

LEGG: In the street. I was in my house, and they called me and said they wanted me.

MR. GAMBIER: And you went out to them ?

LEGG: Yes, sir.

MR. GAMBIER: And what then ?

LEGG: They asked if I'd go wi' 'em to Tolpuddle.

MR. GAMBIER: And what did you say ?

LEGG: I asked what for.

MR. GAMBIER: And what did they say to that ?

LEGG: They said they wanted to see how many they could get together.

MR. GAMBIER: How many they could get together. Yes. Did you ask any other questions—any details ?

LEGG: I asked whether there was goin' to be any swearin'.

THE JUDGE: What did you ask that for ?

LEGG: Well, I'd heard there was a lot o' swearin' goin' on.

THE JUDGE: What do you mean by swearing?

LEGG: Well, swearin'!

THE JUDGE: You don't mean bad language? You mean the swearing of oaths?

LEGG: Yes, sir.

THE JUDGE: Yes. All right. Go on.

MR. GAMBIER: You asked them straight out if they intended to make you take an oath. Is that what you mean?

LEGG: Yes, sir.

MR. GAMBIER: And what did *they* say?

LEGG: They said "No."

MR. GAMBIER: They said "No"! So you went along with them, towards Tolpuddle?

LEGG: Yes, sir.

MR. GAMBIER: Did anything happen on the way?

LEGG: We came upon Thomas Stanfield and his son John.

MR. GAMBIER: What were they doing?

LEGG: Same as we was—walkin' 'long the road.

MR. GAMBIER: And you overtook them? And you all five went on together towards Tolpuddle?

LEGG: Yes, sir.

MR. GAMBIER: And when you reached Tolpuddle, where did you go?

LEGG: To George Loveless's.

MR. GAMBIER: And what happened then?

LEGG: We went inside.

MR. GAMBIER: Did you see anybody when you went inside?

LEGG: I saw George, and his brother.

MR. GAMBIER: What were they doing?

LEGG: Well, I didn't rightly see 'em, as you might say. I saw their backsides goin' 'long the passage.

THE JUDGE: You say you saw—er—you saw these men from behind. How do you know who they were?

LEGG: Oh, I know'd 'em.

MR. GAMBIER: They were George Loveless and James Loveless—two of the prisoners in the dock?

LEGG: Yes, sir.

MR. GAMBIER: You've absolutely no doubt?

LEGG: No, sir—know'd 'em all my life.

MR. GAMBIER: Now, Legg, I want you to tell us, again quite in your own way, and your own words, what happened to you that evening in George Loveless' cottage.

LEGG: I was took into a room. And then young Stanfield, 'e comes up to me and asks if I'm ready.

MR. GAMBIER: Ready for what?

LEGG: Ah! That's it! I didn't know.

MR. GAMBIER: Then what did you say?

LEGG: I says, "Yes." And then 'e took out a pocket-'ankerchief and bound it over my eyes.

THE JUDGE: Over your eyes?

LEGG: Yes, sir.

MR. GAMBIER: Legg, you must address his Lordship as "My Lord."

LEGG (*to* GAMBIER): Yes, my Lord.

MR. GAMBIER: No, not me! His Lordship.

LEGG: Yes, sir.

THE JUDGE: So that you couldn't see?

LEGG: Yes, sir. I beg your pardon, sir—my Lord.

THE JUDGE: What did he do *that* for?

LEGG: Ah! that's what I says to myself! And I says to 'im too; "'Ere," I says, "what be you doin' that for?"

THE JUDGE: And what did he say?

LEGG: Nothin'. He took me by the arm, 'e did, and led me 'long a passage, till we was standin' outside a door.

THE JUDGE: If you had this handkerchief round your eyes, so you couldn't see, how d'you know you were standing outside a door?

LEGG: 'Cos I could hear 'em inside.

THE JUDGE: Talking?

LEGG: Singin'!

THE JUDGE: Singing? What were they singing?

LEGG: Ah! I dunno!

THE JUDGE: What kind of singing was it?

LEGG: A funny kind o' singin'.

THE JUDGE: Funny?

LEGG: Yes, sir. Funny.

THE JUDGE: What do you mean by funny?

LEGG: Funny!

THE JUDGE: Yes, but do you mean they were singing some kind of a comic song?

LEGG: No, sir. Funny.

[*The JUDGE gives it up.*]

MR. GAMBIER: Had you ever heard anything like it before?

LEGG: Yes, sir.

MR. GAMBIER: When?

LEGG: In church.

THE JUDGE: In church?

LEGG: It was a kind of a hymn.

THE JUDGE: A hymn! Would you call a hymn "funny"?

LEGG: Them singin' it there.

THE JUDGE: Oh—ah, yes. Quite, quite, quite. . . . Well, go on.

MR. GAMBIER: Go on with your story, Legg.

LEGG: Then somebody in the room said somethin'; and young Stanfield outside said somethin'.

THE JUDGE: Wait a minute, wait a minute! Somebody inside said something, and somebody outside said something. That's no good. That won't do. *What* did they say?

LEGG: I dunno.

THE JUDGE: But you must know! You've got ears! *They* weren't covered, were they?

LEGG: There weren't no sense in any of it.

THE JUDGE: What do you mean—"no sense"?

LEGG: It sounded like poetry; or somethin' out o' the Bible!

THE JUDGE: Something out of the Bible! And did you recognise any words?

LEGG: No, sir.

MR. GAMBIER: "My Lord," Legg.

LEGG: Beg pardon, sir.

MR. GAMBIER: You must address his Lordship as "My Lord."

THE JUDGE: All right, Mr. Gambier, all right. I can waive that! It's the evidence that's important!

MR. GAMBIER: Go on, Legg—in your own words.

LEGG: Then I was took into the room, and somebody seemed to be reading a piece, though I don't know what it was all about, and then they led me about and around.

MR. GAMBIER: About and around, so that you didn't know where you were?

LEGG : That I didn't. And then they took off the bandage from my eyes; and I fair jumped out o' my skin.

MR. GAMBIER : Why ?

LEGG : I was standin' right in front of a picture of Death.

THE JUDGE : Of what ?

LEGG : Death m'lord, six feet 'igh—A skeleton it were.

MR. GAMBIER : Life size in fact.

THE JUDGE : Hardly " life " size Mr. Gambier !

MR. GAMBIER : I appreciate your point, m'lord. And when your eyes were uncovered you could see who was in the room ?

LEGG : Yes, sir.

MR. GAMBIER : And who was ?

LEGG : Those six.

MR. GAMBIER : No one else ?

LEGG : No, sir.

MR. GAMBIER : But you'd swear to those six ?

LEGG : Yes, sir.

MR. GAMBIER : Then what happened ?

LEGG : George Loveless he put a little book into my hand.

MR. GAMBIER : Yes ?

LEGG : And said I was to kneel down.

MR. GAMBIER : Yes ?

LEGG : And said I was to repeat words after him; and I did.

MR. GAMBIER : Do you remember any of the words you were told to repeat ?

LEGG : Can't say as I do. I don't rightly know what they were all about.

MR. GAMBIER : Do you remember whether there was anything about promising to keep what you were saying and doing a secret ?

LEGG: Yes, sir; there was that.

MR. GAMBIER: You spoke of having a little book put in your hand to hold. Can you tell us more about the book?

LEGG: At the end, George said I were to kiss it.

THE JUDGE: This book—was it the Bible?

LEGG: Looked like it.

THE JUDGE: Come, come. Surely *if* it was a Bible, you'd know it was a Bible. Wouldn't you?

LEGG: Yes, sir.

THE JUDGE: Well. Answer the question. Was it the Bible?

LEGG: Yes, sir.

MR. GAMBIER: Is there anything more you can tell us?

LEGG: Yes, sir. George Loveless, and James, and old Stanfield, they had on a funny kind o' dress.

THE JUDGE: You seem to live in a "funny" kind of world! What kind of a dress?

LEGG: I can't rightly say.

MR. GAMBIER: Not an ordinary smock-frock, for instance?

LEGG: No, sir.

MR. GAMBIER: More like a surplice?

LEGG: Yes, sir.

MR. GAMBIER: And after this ceremony—or whatever it was—was anything said among yourselves?

LEGG: Yes, sir. They said I was to pay a shilling.

THE JUDGE: A shilling! That's a lot of money for you!

LEGG: A terrible lot. And a penny a week afterwards.

MR. GAMBIER: And did they tell you why you had to pay it?

LEGG: To support other men when they was standin' out o' work.

MR. GAMBIER: Was anything said about stopping work—striking?

LEGG: Yes, sir. They said we were as brothers. And when we were to stop work, we shouldn't have to tell our masters ourselves, but that our masters would have a letter sent them.

MR. GAMBIER: Thank you.

[He sits down. A stir; a hush; MR. BUTT rises for the Defence.]

MR. BUTT: You have told the Court, Legg, that one of the prisoners in the dock asked you to repeat certain sentences after him.

LEGG: Yes, sir.

MR. BUTT: And you have told the Court that you don't remember what those sentences were.

LEGG: No, sir.

MR. BUTT: Can you repeat here, now, anything at all of what you repeated then?

LEGG: No, sir.

MR. BUTT: In fact, you can't remember one single word?

LEGG: No, sir.

MR. BUTT: Now, Legg, I want you to look across at those men facing you in the dock. You told my learned friend that you'd known them all your life.

LEGG: Yes, sir.

MR. BUTT: You've grown up with them. Played with them as boys, worked with them as men. Is that so?

LEGG: Yes, sir.

MR. BUTT: Have you ever heard a single word against any of them?

LEGG: Can't say as I have.

MR. BUTT: You can't say that you have! You'd like to be able to, but you can't! But, in fact, they were your friends—your very good friends.

LEGG: Yes, sir.

MR. BUTT: Yet you go to the house of one of them—the house of one of your oldest friends—and immediately you rush off and tell some story—a vague, rambling, uncertain story, it's true; because about this alleged oath you say you don't remember a single word—but still, you make of it all a very highly embellished story, with the one object of getting your fellow-workers into trouble?

[LEGG is silent.]

And what is your answer to that?

[LEGG is silent.]

Well, I must say, I'm not surprised you can't find one!

[He sits down. MR. GAMBIER jumps up.]

MR. GAMBIER: You understood, as you yourself said, that there was to be no swearing. You were tricked into taking what you believed to be an oath, and you considered that you had a duty that transcended friendship.

LEGG: Yes, sir.

[MR. GAMBIER sits down.]

THE JUDGE: This peculiar dress that some of the prisoners were wearing—you say it was like a surplice?

LEGG: Yes, sir.

THE JUDGE: That'll do. You can stand down.

[LEGG leaves the witness-box.]

THE JUDGE: Any further witnesses?

MR. GAMBIER: No, my Lord. That closes the case for Prosecution.

[MR. BUTT rises to address the Court for the Defence.

MR. BUTT: Gentlemen of the Jury, the first point that it is my duty to make perfectly and absolutely clear in all your minds is that those six men who stand before you as prisoners in the dock, stand there indicted under an Act of Parliament passed in the reign of His Majesty King George the Third, in 1797, nearly half a century ago; an Act passed for a specific and special cause, under extraordinary circumstances—an isolated case of Mutiny in the Navy. If I may quote a few phrases from the Preamble of this Act . . . It dealt with certain “evilly disposed persons,” who were, at that time, “seeking to seduce His Majesty’s Forces by land and sea from their duty and allegiance; and incite them to acts of Mutiny and Sedition”; and were administering an oath in their attempt . . . and it judged all such persons to be guilty of felony.

Now, gentlemen, this Act was doubtless very properly framed for the protection of soldiers and seamen against evilly disposed persons at a time of considerable danger; and was no doubt a very proper measure.

But I want to put it before you—only, surely there is no need to put it before you; the thing is, in itself, so patently obvious—that it is a grotesque mishandling of the facts to pretend that those six men are, in any way, the evilly disposed persons against whom this measure was designed, or that their purpose was the purpose against which it was to be a safeguard—namely, the purpose of mutiny and sedition.

Indeed, gentlemen, here in this Court to-day, for everyone who has any knowledge of his fellow-men, the very opposite has been proved.

These men are respectable, honest, hard-working, labouring men. Witness after witness has attested to that. And witnesses, mind you, brought here and put into that box, not by the Defence, but by the Prosecution. You have heard their own employers, the farmers for whom they worked, brought here to give information against them, who had to admit, on oath, that those men, the prisoners, were the best men they had ever had on their farms, and apart from this alleged crime of forming a Union, that there was absolutely nothing against them.

Try as they might, bring what witness they might, ask any questions they might, the Prosecution—although they would have liked to have done so, gentlemen—have not been able to blacken the character of one of those men in one single detail! And, when all's said, what have they done? Ask yourselves that! And what's the answer? This, and just this: They have formed among themselves what is no more, or less, than an Agricultural Friendly Society—a society to provide a fund out of their own wages; one might call it a kind of Agricultural Savings Bank, for mutual succour in their hours of need.

It is past my comprehension that the forming of such a society—to provide against the inevitable seasons of scarcity, to obviate the terrors of starvation that only too often must stare them in the face—can, by any stretch of imagination, be deemed a mutinous or seditious act, or in the mind of any reasonable man be regarded as unlawful behaviour. I will go further. I will suggest that, so far from being evilly disposed, they have acted as you or I would have acted under similar circumstances—in a praiseworthy spirit of prudence and foresight. Gentlemen, if you look honestly into your own hearts, you must find there, not

blame for what they have done, but admiration !

And now, before I resume my seat, one final word. As to this oath—the alleged illegal oath to which the Prosecution attach supreme importance.

Now, even supposing that this Act of 1797 has any bearing on this case at all—which I most emphatically deny—but, even so, that Act requires, and the ends of justice require, that this material part of the case—the administering of an illegal oath—should be explicitly proved. And has it been? There is only one answer. As surely as I am standing here, it has not. To prove this most vital point in their case, the Prosecution have brought here just one witness—and a peculiarly stupid one at that !

And what was his story, extracted from him with extreme difficulty, despite all the skill of my learned friend the Counsel for the Prosecution, who brought him here? That at a certain meeting, to which he obviously went of his own free will, some words were uttered, by whom he didn't know, about something he didn't understand, and for what purpose he couldn't imagine !

I do most confidently submit that not one charge brought against any of the prisoners has been proved.

And if here, to-day, they are branded before the world as criminals, there will be a most profound and disturbing dissatisfaction, from one end of this country to the other. Never before, in the whole of my legal career, have I felt as strongly as I feel now that, not only Mercy and Humanity, but Truth and Justice, cry out for your verdict of "Not Guilty." . . .

[He sits down. There is a general stir in the Court while the JUDGE prepares to sum up. When the

JUDGE is ready, an expectant hush comes over the Court . . . and the JUDGE begins.

THE JUDGE: Before putting before you the vital point at issue, I feel it incumbent upon me to venture a few words on one extremely important aspect of this case—namely, the most regrettable habit that is growing up all over the country of the administering of indiscriminate oaths.

I say regrettable because it is a habit which, if it is allowed to grow, must, in my view, bring discredit upon the administering of oaths altogether, and thereby affect the purity of the judicial oath, upon the due observance of which the proper administration of justice depends.

To withdraw responsibility from our Courts of Law, which because of their very publicity are accountable for any error, and remove it to such as are self-constituted, irresponsible, and without control, is surely in the last degree dangerous, and strikes at the very foundations of society.

Now, you have, of course, heard a good deal during this case of the Unlawful Oaths Act of 1797; the Act of Parliament under which the indictment against the prisoners has been framed. And the Counsel for the Defence, in his very able handling of the case, quoted certain portions of the Preamble of this Act—the portions that dealt particularly with cases of Mutiny and Sedition.

But there is more to be said than that !

You must bear in mind—and this is a vitally important point—that this Statute extends to *all* societies the objects of which are illegal. And a further Statute of the same reign, two years later, in 1799, makes illegal any society which administers an oath not required by law. So that if you consider that you have had proper evidence that some person, or persons, administered an oath to bind to secrecy for an

illegal purpose, there is no doubt or question but that such an oath comes within the Act, even though there may be no evidence to satisfy you that it is connected with a seditious purpose.

That is all I have to say.

I need hardly remind you that the case, and your verdict, is of far-reaching import.

That such societies do exist is common knowledge; and, if they are allowed to continue, there can be no doubt but that they will ruin masters, cause a stagnation in trade, and destroy property. . . . Gentlemen, you will consider your verdict.

[A stir in the Court. . . . The JUDGE rises and all those in the Court rise. The JUDGE leaves, and several people begin to make their way out of the Court.]

The curtain falls, but rises again in a few moments.

The JUDGE is back in his place; and those whom we saw leaving are back in their places. Everyone is tense and still . . . there is a long moment of complete silence. Then:

Prisoners at the bar, you have been found guilty. Have you anything to say before I pronounce sentence upon you?

GEORGE: I should like to say something.

THE JUDGE: What's that? Did one of them say anything?

MR. BUTT: Yes, my Lord. One of the prisoners said he would like to say something.

THE JUDGE: All right. Very well. Let him say it; in as few words as possible.

GEORGE: My Lord, I should like to say this: If we have violated any law, it was not done intentionally. We have injured no man's reputation, character, person, or property. We were uniting together to preserve ourselves, our

wives, and our children from utter degradation and starvation. We challenge any man, or number of men, to prove that we have acted, or intended to act, different from what I have said.

THE JUDGE : You say you meant no harm against any person; and your intention was altogether without offence. Of the intention of men, it is impossible for man to judge. But there are cases in which, whatever may have been the intention, the necessary effect of the act done upon the security of the public is of such a nature that the safety of that public requires a penal example to be made. The law punishes not for the sake of revenge—that is not the view of those who administer the law, nor the intention of the law itself. It punishes for the sake of example. Having deliberated well and seriously upon all that has been said on your behalf, having deliberated well and seriously as to what is my own duty, I feel I have no discretion but that I am bound to pronounce the sentence of the law, which the Act of Parliament has provided. And in so doing I have in mind, not so much anything that you may have done, or indeed that can be proved you intended to do, but, as I say, that your punishment should be as an example to others. The sentence is seven years' transportation across His Majesty's high seas, upon each and every one of you.

ACT III

SCENE I

On board the Convict Transport ship "The William Metcalfe." Somewhere between decks. It is evening; and the great wooden ship is lit by lanterns.

On a part of the ship that is near toward the audience, under a lantern and in its patch of light, GEORGE LOVELESS is seated on a great coil of rope. He has on convict dress, and is chained. He is gazing about him, with apparently hopeless eyes, at his new and appalling surroundings.

To quote LOVELESS' own words, when he first was taken on to the ship; "he began to sink down; the convicts were men of all ages, and as many dispositions as there were countenances; the greater part of them such monsters as I never expected to see, and whose conduct I am not capable of describing."

Towards the back of the scene, a party of such convicts, stripped to the waist, and in chains, are loading supplies on to the ship. It is obvious that the work has to be done quickly, and those in charge of the working-party, veteran sailors of the Royal Navy, have very little mercy on any poor wretch too young, or weak, or unruly to work quickly enough to satisfy them.

There is a general air of bustle and excitement aboard. Various shouted commands can be heard; bugles; and the ship's whistles. The seamen who pass occasionally across this part of the ship do so hurriedly, and intent on some duty.

A MILITARY SENTINEL passes to and fro at regular intervals, on his guard. . . .

For a little while, LOVELESS is the only quiet figure on the scene, sitting apart, solitary and utterly forlorn. . . .

A CONVICT GUARD strolls on and stands looking about him. He sees LOVELESS, and immediately goes up to him.

THE GUARD: You! Why aren't you working?

LOVELESS: I've had no work set for me to do, sir.

THE GUARD: What are you doing, sitting there, anyhow?

LOVELESS: I've only just come aboard, sir.

THE GUARD: Stand up when I'm talkin' to yer.

[LOVELESS rises. . . . The CAPTAIN of the ship, and his FIRST MATE, enter, and come straight towards LOVELESS.

(Seeing them and hissing at LOVELESS) The Captain! Stand up straight!

1ST MATE: This is the man, sir; one of the Dorchester Machine Breakers.

[The MATE turns to the GUARD, who is hovering round.

Get out!

[The GUARD retires. The CAPTAIN is consulting a document he carries.

CAPTAIN (to LOVELESS): I've a list of six of you here. Where are the others?

LOVELESS: Beggin' your pardon, sir, that's what I was goin' to ask you!

1ST MATE (to the CAPTAIN, in a low voice, so that LOVELESS can't hear): They sailed, sir. A few days ago. Orders came through that they were to be got away as quickly as possible.

CAPTAIN: Why didn't this man go with them?

LOVELESS: I've been ill, sir.

CAPTAIN: Ill!! Trying to dodge your punishment?

LOVELESS: No, sir; proper ill.

CAPTAIN: What's wrong with you?

LOVELESS: Bein' in the prison, I suppose, sir.

CAPTAIN: You look strong enough.

LOVELESS: We was put in a cell, sir, that small, all of us . . . and what with the cold and damp and bein' near suffocated . . . day after day . . . we be used to the open.

CAPTAIN: One of the whining sort, eh?

LOVELESS: I don't know about *that*, sir. But I did beg to be allowed to come with my friends.

CAPTAIN: I suppose they wanted to separate you. (*He consults the paper again.*) You look a pretty rough lot. (*To the MATE*) All right, Mr. Nicholson, I'll speak to this man alone.

[*The MATE retires.*

The loading-party have now finished; so that for the moment the CAPTAIN and LOVELESS are alone in this corner of the ship.

(*Reading from the paper*) "George Loveless," eh?

LOVELESS: Yes, sir.

CAPTAIN: "Ringleader, very active in the recent riots."

LOVELESS: No, sir, that bain't true.

CAPTAIN: Now, look here, Loveless, I give you fair warning. You'd better keep a sharper look out on that tongue of yours. I know all about you. D'you know what I've got here? I've got a list of you and your precious friends, your records and characters, sent by your own magistrates at Dorchester to the Home Office. Are you going to tell me this is all lies?

LOVELESS (*quite simply*): I haven't seen it. . . . I can't say whether it be *all* lies!

CAPTAIN: I see! . . . And if this is all lies, what are you doing here, anyway? Tell me *that*!

LOVELESS: It seems in some way we gone agin the law.

CAPTAIN: Ah! Now we're coming to it. You acknowledge *that*! Well, as long as you know you've done wrong, and are sorry for it . . .

LOVELESS: But I don't know where we *have* done wrong, sir. And, not knowing, I don't see how I can be sorry for it.

CAPTAIN: So that's the line you're going to take, is it? We have a way of breaking-in fellows like you. Maybe this little trip'll do you good. Make a decent useful citizen of you!

LOVELESS (*deeply, with great bitterness*): It be strange fare, sir, for strivin' to live honest—

CAPTAIN: Live honest!

LOVELESS: Aye, sir. For a man's hard put to it to live honest, with a family, on six shillin's a week . . . and there were no talk o' any Union, sir, afore they threatened us with *that*. . . . Seems to me they could hang us with as much justice as transport us, for what we done.

CAPTAIN: And I dare say you'll be wishing they had before we've finished with you!

[*He turns, and walks away. . . . But he has only taken a few steps when there is a loud cry somewhere in the ship: "All Below." . . . It is taken up, and sounds from many quarters: "All Below." . . . The CAPTAIN stops, hesitates, and returns to LOVELESS.*

(*His tone altered; there is human sympathy in it*) We sail in a few hours; and in a few minutes now you'll have to go below with the others. . . . If there's anybody on shore—at home—you'd like to send a message to, you'd better do it now. Have you any means of writing?

LOVELESS: No, sir.

CAPTAIN (*looking round; seeing an officer, and calling to him*): Here

OFFICER (*approaching*): Sir?

CAPTAIN: Get this man pen, ink, and paper; and see any letter he writes goes off with the rest.

OFFICER: Yes, sir.

CAPTAIN: And let him stop there till his letter's written.

OFFICER: Yes, sir.

[*The OFFICER goes. The CAPTAIN stands looking at LOVELESS for a moment and then, without speaking again, turns and goes quickly off. . . .*

The convicts are now being herded below. Hundreds were locked down in the hold every night. We can see the top of the gangway through which they have to pass on their way below, one at a time, in single file. Lanterns illuminate a yard or so just at the head; so that we see each convict distinctly for a fleeting moment as he passes through the bright patch of light. . . .

The OFFICER brings LOVELESS paper and pen and ink.

LOVELESS: Thank you, sir.

[*And, manacled, he begins to write as best he can. . . . As the apparently unending stream of human cargo trails below, counted like beasts by their guards, the noise and tumult of it grows. The guards do not hesitate to manhandle any of them who are slow or clumsy, unused to the ways of a ship.*

As LOVELESS writes, suddenly the sound of a violent brutal quarrel breaks out. We can't see what is going on, but it is evidently only just out of sight. . . . Several extra guards hurry to the spot; one carrying a heavy knotted whip. . . . The noise grows; and a sound of the whip; and a howl of agony. . . .

LOVELESS pauses for a moment in his writing; and lifts his head.

The stream of human cargo pours down, quiet and

subdued, into the depths. . . . LOVELESS goes on with his writing.

The scene grows black.

CURTAIN

SCENE II

LOVELESS' *cottage.*

JINNIE *alone, clearing a few things off the table.*

SUSAN MORRIS *comes in from the street.*

SUSAN (*breathless—she has been running*): Jinnie !

JINNIE: 'llo, Susan !

SUSAN: Be your mother back ?

JINNIE: No. . . . I just gi'en Nellie and little Georgie their supper, and put un to bed.

SUSAN: The London coach be just gone through—and who d'you think got down off it ? . . . One o' them wot came down afore, and persuaded your father, and told him there were no harm in it.

JINNIE: Be 'e comin' 'ere ?

SUSAN: Where else ? . . . (*She looks out of the door.*) 'Ere 'e come ! . . . and there be two others with 'im.

JINNIE: The one that told father there were no harm in it !!

SUSAN: Aye !

JINNIE: . . . If mother come in when he be here . . . !

SUSAN: What then ?

[COBB *appears in the doorway.*

COBB: Good day.

[*He is received in silence.*

May we come in?

[*He is not answered. . . . He turns to speak out of the door.*

This is the house. . . .

[*Two others enter. . . . A short tense pause.*

(*To SUSAN*) Are you one of the family?

SUSAN (*hostile*): I be a neighbour. . . . This be Jinnie, their eldest.

COBB: How d'you do? . . .

[*JINNIE stands silent, black and sullen.*

Is your mother in?

JINNIE: Mother be in the fields.

COBB: In the fields?

JINNIE: Workin'.

COBB: Working?

JINNIE: She works longer now. . . . (*Suddenly she flares out in unexpected directness*) What be you come for?

COBB (*taken aback*): Why? . . . To see your mother.

JINNIE: Are you sure it wasn't to see my father?

COBB: Your father!

JINNIE: Aye! . . . He bain't here! . . . Didn't you know?

BETSY'S VOICE: Jinnie!

[*BETSY, standing in the doorway, has heard the last few sentences. . . . She comes slowly into the room . . . towards COBB.*

COBB: Mrs. Loveless! . . .

BETSY: Yes?

COBB: You remember me?

BETSY: Oh, yes . . . I remember you . . . very well.

COBB: I hope you will find it in your heart to forgive me.

BETSY (*she looks at him for a long moment as if it were an effort to speak; and when she does, she speaks more slowly than in the first scenes, as if every moment of life were a great weight*): When you were here afore . . . you only said things you thought was true . . . as far as I can see they *was* true . . . tain't you I have to forgive.

COBB: That's very generous of you.

BETSY: I think *I* be more to blame for where he is now than anyone. . . . Only, maybe, he'd 'a done what he done without neither you nor me.

COBB: Mrs. Loveless, these are two gentlemen who want to do what they can to help you. . . . Mister Owen—Mister Robert Owen—and Mister Wakley.

OWEN (*with infinite courtesy*): This is a great honour. I'm proud to meet you . . . very proud. . . . Have you had any news of your husband?

BETSY: They've took him . . . he's gone . . . he bain't here . . . that's all I know. . . . I've heard nothing. . . . Nothing except— (*She breaks off . . . and speaks again, without turning her head*) Jinnie, you best be goin' up to Nellie and little Georgie.

JINNIE (*in expostulation*): But, Mother—

BETSY: It'll be easier for me with these gentlemen with you away. . . .

[JINNIE goes upstairs . . . BETSY continues:

Nothing except he were ill. They must 'a treated him terrible hard.

OWEN: Not necessarily. . . .

BETSY: I never know'd him have a day's illness. . . . He to be bad and me not by. . . . And when he were better they took him to Portsmouth.

. . . I 'ad a word *about* 'im from there; from the clerk o' the prison that went with him to guard him; he were a good man; he came and told me. . . . 'Twas when he was bein' took through Salisbury . . . and the clerk o' the prison said to 'im, "Will I take off the irons from your legs through the town, lest the rattlin' o' the chains cause people to turn and stare?" . . . "You'll put 'em on again after we're out o' the town?" asks my George. "I'll have to," said the clerk. "Then let 'em stay," says my George; "the shame o' these things isn't mine; but 'tis to those that caused 'em to be put upon me."

OWEN: Fine. That was fine. . . .

BETSY: Aye, they'll not break his spirit—not my George's . . . and if he be keepin' his spirit up, it's best *I* should. . . . We was always as one. . . . But I 'an't had no word from *him*: not from him hisself; he be out o' reach. . . . It be queer standin' here and sayin' 'e be out o' reach—and there be his coat!

[They all follow BETSY's eyes to where hangs GEORGE's coat. . . .]

A sudden silence fills the little room. . . . A loud knock at the door.

Who be that? . . . Susan! See who it be.

[SUSAN goes to the door and opens it.]

A VOICE FROM OUTSIDE: Mrs. George Loveless live here?

SUSAN: Aye.

[She is given a letter. She takes it; and turns back into the room.]

A letter.

BETSY: From George?! Be it from George?

[She is across the room to SUSAN—and takes the letter from her.]

Aye.

[*With the letter in her hand, BETSY stands, for a moment, looking at it. . . . She comes with it back from the door into the room. . . . She opens it; and stands reading it. . . . The others wait and watch. . . . For long moments, MRS. LOVELESS reads. . . . Then she comes to the end of it. . . . Moving to a chair, she sits. . . . And reads some of the letter again. . . . She looks up from it with unseeing eyes. . . . Gradually, she seems to become aware again of others in the room.*

OWEN (*very gently*): . . . Well? . . . May we know?

[*BETSY looks at the letter in her hand, hesitates for a moment, and then holds it out towards OWEN.*

BETSY: You can read it . . . if you want. . . . Take it, sir.

[*OWEN takes it. . . . For a few moments he stands reading it in silence. Then:*

OWEN (*under his breath*): Good God! . . . (*He looks up.*) Wakley!

[*WAKLEY takes a step to his side. OWEN continues:*

Mrs. Loveless, this is one of a group determined to do everything in their power for your husband. . . . May I show this to him?

BETSY: Yes, sir.

[*OWEN turns back to WAKLEY, and takes him a step aside; he doesn't give him the letter, but speaks almost under his breath, for him only to hear.*

OWEN: Written from the ship! . . . Ever been on a convict ship?

WAKLEY: No, but I can imagine what it's like.

OWEN: Indeed you can't! Listen to this! . . . (*He reads, quietly, for WAKLEY alone*) "Depend upon it, all will work together for good, and we shall yet rejoice together. I hope you will pay particular attention to the morals and

spiritual interest of the children. Don't send me any money to distress yourself. I shall do well; for He who is Lord of the winds and waves will be my support in life and death."

[*They exchange glances.*]

And here. Here again. "You may safely rely upon it, I shall never forget the promise made at the altar; and though we may part awhile, I shall consider myself under the same obligations as though living in your immediate presence."

[OWEN *finishes reading.*]

WAKLEY *stretches out his hand for the letter; and, taking it, goes to* MRS. LOVELESS.

WAKLEY: Mrs. Loveless, may I keep this for a day or two?

BETSY (*doubtfully*): Keep it, sir?

WAKLEY (*sitting beside her; persuasively*): You see, Mrs. Loveless, I'm speaking in the House to-morrow evening.

BETSY: Yes, sir. . . . Whose house, sir?

WAKLEY: The House of Commons. Parliament. . . . And if you'd allow me to have this letter, and perhaps read some of it—

BETSY (*still more doubtfully*): To have it read out, sir . . . for all to hear! . . . It were to *me*, sir . . . his last words to me.

WAKLEY: I appreciate that. But you see, Mrs. Loveless, the Government and their supporters everywhere are doing everything they can to spread the impression that your husband and his friends were . . . well, a bad lot . . . poachers, smugglers, rioters, thieves. . . .

BETSY: Them—rioters! My George, a thief!

WAKLEY: And if I could have this in my hand when I was on my feet in the House . . . it would be a very great help—to us and to *him*.

BETSY: If it 'ud be a help to George, sir——

WAKLEY: I can?

BETSY: Of course, sir.

WAKLEY: Thank you.

[*A little pause. Then:*

BETSY: . . . It were written on the ship?

OWEN: Yes.

BETSY: He be gone now.

OWEN: Yes.

BETSY: How long do it take to get t'other side o' world?

OWEN: About twelve weeks or so. . . .

[*BETSY has to make a great effort for control.*

BETSY (*her voice terribly level and quiet from a terrific restraint*): . . . Susan . . . will you thank the gentlemen, please . . . and tell 'em—would they go now.

SUSAN: Gentlemen! . . .

[*The three nod understandingly.*

COBB (*coming to MRS. LOVELESS*): Mrs. Loveless, I shall be staying at the Crown for to-night. . . . If I could see you in the morning . . . We have arranged that you and your children should be well looked after while your husband is away—as far as money is concerned: you understand.

BETSY: You're all very good to me, gentlemen; and kind; and I be grateful . . . but not now. . . . It don't seem as though I could listen.

[*COBB, OWEN, and WAKLEY make an unobtrusive exit.*

(*As soon as they have gone*) Leave me be, Susan.

SUSAN: Good night to you.

[*She goes. . . .*

Alone, BETSY, moving her head slowly, looks about her; it seems as if her agony must break from her in a great cry. . . . But something stays it. . . . Her body suddenly becomes alive and alert, listening. Her head turns to the stairway. . . . JINNIE appears. Taking no notice of her mother, the child crosses the room, swiftly and silently as a shadow; and crouches, on a stool in the fireplace, over the embers of a fire. . . . Presently a little whimper comes from her.

BETSY: Jinnie! . . . What be it?

[JINNIE is crying softly to herself. . . . Immediately BETSY rises, and goes to her.

Jinnie!

[JINNIE goes to her mother.

JINNIE: Mother!

BETSY: Jinnie!

JINNIE: It be Nellie, and little Georgie—they keep askin' where Father be. . . .

[Clinging to her mother, she begins to cry convulsively. . . .

BETSY is now quite strong, controlled, and comforting.

BETSY: There, there, Jinnie . . . you mustn't cry. We must be brave—like he be. . . . And get on with what's to do. . . . There, there . . . my dear. . . .

[Her mother's strong arms about her, the child quietens.

CURTAIN

SCENE III

A room on the first floor in the Tottenham Court Road, April 21st, 1834.

The room is evidently used as an office. On the walls are several placards, one headed "London Dorchester Committee"; another "Dorchester Labourers' Fund."

ROBERT OWEN and THOMAS WAKLEY, M.P., are standing together at a large open window, looking down into the street. From below float up the sounds and murmur of a great crowd.

OWEN: I don't think I've ever seen a crowd like this in London before.

WAKLEY: Certainly not here in the Tottenham Court Road! . . . Well! The procession should be coming round that corner any moment now.

OWEN: Pray God there won't be trouble! With these thousands of people out in the streets, anything might happen!

WAKLEY: Where's our Right Reverend Doctor of Divinity?

OWEN: Wade? He's leading the procession! But he said he'd leave them at Russell Square, out round behind the British Museum, and join us here.

[WILLIAM COBB puts his head in at the door and looks round. . . . OWEN and WAKLEY are both looking out of the window and don't notice his entrance. . . . He comes into the room, holding the door open for someone to follow.]

COBB (*encouragingly*): This way! . . . Come along!

[BETSY LOVELESS comes into the room.]

(*Raising his voice a little*) Mr. Owen!

[OWEN turns from the window.]

OWEN: Mrs. Loveless! . . . Tom, here's Mrs. Loveless. I'm so glad you're here—and only just in time. . . .

[WAKLEY *has placed a chair for BETSY. She sits.*

WAKLEY: Well? . . . Any further news of him?

BETSY: Nothin'. . . . Nothin', sir. . . . But Sarah had a letter from James—his brother.

OWEN: Yes?

[COBB *closes the windows; to shut out the growing sounds of the crowd.*

BETSY: . . . Fourteen weeks on the sea they was. . . . It were a terrible letter . . . chained up, they was, all the time, with men the like o' which they never know'd existed—more like beasts than men . . . and treated worse than any beast; the whole time they was on that ship—the whole fourteen weeks—they wasn't able to stretch theirselves out and lay down. . . . Oh, sir . . . what be they doin' to my George? . . . What be they doin' to 'im? . . .

OWEN: Don't cry, Mrs. Loveless, don't cry. We're going to get him back. We're going to get them all back.

WAKLEY: There's been such an outcry; such indignation; from one end of the country to the other.

OWEN: And not only from the workers, Mrs. Loveless—but from many thousands who don't even approve of these new unions, but are jealous of their country's good name.

WAKLEY: Protest Meetings. Demonstrations. Processions all over the country.

OWEN: Almost beyond belief. Why, in the last few weeks we've had resolutions from—Cobb, where's that list?

[COBB *hands him a paper from a table.*

Yes; here we are—in the last few weeks; from “Newcastle, Belfast, Cheltenham, Hull, Yeovil, Liverpool, Leeds, Marylebone, Wolverhampton, Macclesfield, Loughborough, Sheffield, Nottingham, Walsall, Barnsley, Leicester, Bradford, Manchester, Halifax.” . . . Not so bad! . . . It’s the *spontaneity* of it that’s so amazing. Not meetings of a few hundred; but thousands; tens of thousands.

WAKLEY: And to-day is our crowning effort.

OWEN: You must have seen the crowds as you came along.

BETSY (*almost laughing through her tears*): I didn’t know there was so many people in the world!

OWEN (*moving towards the windows; the others following*): A great procession formed up this morning in Copenhagen Fields. Right the other side of London, behind King’s Cross. And they’re marching now to Whitehall, to deliver an enormous petition for a free pardon to the Home Secretary, to be presented to the King himself!

[*He throws open the window. Immediately the sounds of the great crowd below—now greatly increased—roar and rumble into the room. At the same moment, young HARRY BROWN bursts into the room. He is nearly bursting with excitement himself.*]

BROWN: The Reverend Wade’s here! Just come in! The procession’s just round the corner! He’s been at the head of it! On a horse! And in his full rig-out! By God, that parson’s a great man!!

[*THE REVEREND DOCTOR WADE, D.D., enters. He is indeed a great man. He actually weighed a good twenty stone; and he did lead the procession on horseback, in his full canonical robes as a Doctor of Divinity. And that is how he sails into the room now. A terrific figure; and blown up to twice his*]

natural size by a great gale in him of elation and excitement.

OWEN (*at once; with keen anxiety*): Well, Wade? How are things going?

WADE: Going! Magnificent! Magnificent!!! Beyond all expectation! What a day! Our people began to collect and form up as arranged, in perfect order, at seven o'clock this morning! They're marching now, a few moments off, a hundred thousand strong! Owen, old friend, a quarter of a million have signed the petition! We've had to put it on a cart and have it pulled along. . . . The Household Troops are out! Two detachments of Lancers; two of Dragoons; eight battalions of Foot; and twenty-nine cannon. And they swore in five thousand Special Constables this morning! The City's like an armed camp!

OWEN: Is there going to be trouble?

WADE: Trouble! Trouble!! There's going to be trouble in the minds and consciences of the Cabinet, and nowhere else. Why, when we started, our own people themselves tried to stop the crowds who are lining the streets, and the housetops, all the way along, from cheering! *They* know what they're here for! *They* know what it means that to-day should pass without any disorder. And they're determined; every man jack of 'em. (*There is a superb exaltation in this mountain of a man.*) God! This is a day to lift one's spirits! And give one hope in mankind.

OWEN (*quietly*): Oh, Wade! This is Mrs. George Loveless.

WADE (*suddenly quiet*): Mrs. Loveless!!!. . . (*And the huge man seems of a sudden to become humble.*) Oh, but I'm proud to meet you. Proud. This is a great privilege.

[He stoops to take her hands, and holds them in his for a moment, bending over them. . . . Then the man of action in him asserts itself again, and he turns, with a new idea, to HARRY BROWN.]

Harry! Run downstairs and say that Mrs. George Loveless will appear at the window, when the procession passes, between Mr. Robert Owen and myself! . . . See that they know it's Mrs. Loveless; let everybody you can know; spread it round.

BROWN: Yes, Mr. Wade.

[He rushes out.]

COBB (*at the window, suddenly throws it wide open*): Listen! . . .

[Above the growing expectant murmurs of a vast crowd can be heard the sound of a song which thousands are singing as they march, coming ever nearer. . . . Everyone in the room stands spellbound, listening. . . . As the marchers come nearer, some words of their singing can be distinguished—the lilting chant of the chorus: “We will, we will, we will be free.”]

BETSY: But them be George's words.

OWEN: Yes, Mrs. Loveless. They're his. They've become a kind of anthem for the workers.

COBB (*a great shout from the window*): Here they are!

[They all rush to the window—all except BETSY, who is forgotten. . . . Now the procession is passing right underneath the window. The tops of brightly coloured banners which are being carried in it can be seen, floating past the window in a long gay line . . . thousands are singing as they march; and the great crowd breaks into spontaneous cheering. . . . Forgotten and alone in the room, it is more than BETSY can bear. She creeps to a wall, and, leaning against it, weeps as if her heart would break . . . her knees

give, and she sinks on to them against a chair, broken. . . . Banner after banner sweeps past the window, and the noise of the tramping feet, the singing, and the cheering is thunderous. . . . At the window, the REV. DR. WADE, D.D., remembers BETSY. He turns into the room and looks round for her. Very gently the huge man lifts her to her feet, and holds her to him in infinite tenderness. When she is quieted, he leads her to the window. . . . As she appears, a great roar goes up from thousands and thousands of throats. . . .

The scene becomes black.

SCENE IV

Van Diemen's Island. September 16th, 1836.

A convict hut.

LOVELESS says himself of his quarters: "Our hut was none of the best; in fine weather we could lie in bed and view the stars, in foul weather feel the wind and rain."

His particular hut was meant for five men, and there were eight in it.

In this hut are six men, but with four rough beds.

Two men, sitting on their beds, are playing some gambling game; and a third looks on. These three are all of a very rough type, who have become hardened to their dreadful conditions. One of them is continually humming and singing snatches of a song that has a fine rollicking tune; and when occasionally he gives it words, we hear, as a kind of recurring refrain: "We're low, we're low, we're very, very low."

The others know the song, and occasionally take up and join in a snatch of the tune.

GEORGE LOVELESS is there, sitting on a bed, resting and silent. On the opposite side of the hut to LOVELESS is another convict—a little man, of a

much more refined type than the others. He is continually whimpering; an occasional sob and moan break from him; but his companions take not the slightest notice of any sound that he makes.

There is a sixth man, stretched on his bed, absorbed in reading some old newspapers. . . .

Presently LOVELESS rises and crosses to the miserable little wretch who is whimpering.

LOVELESS: Is there nothin' I can do for you, friend?

POCOCK (*in a shrill anguish of desperation*): What can you do for me? What can anybody do for me? Here, at the mercy of devils—devils in human shape that *have* no mercy! Whose one delight is to torture me . . . torture me beyond words. . . .

[His answer is a snatch of song from the gamblers.

I'm not like you. I'm not even used to a hard life; I was brought up in comfort. I can't stand it! If I had the courage, I'd kill myself; if I had the strength, I'd kill that overseer . . . then they'd hang me, and I'd be out of it.

ONE OF THE GAMBLERS: Why don't yer? Plenty have! And we might get a better one!

LOVELESS: What did you get your flogging for?

POCOCK: When they sent me here, I made up my mind to work myself to the bone for them; do everything to please them. . . . But there's no pleasing that overseer, God blast him! The more work I do, the more he gives me . . . till I can't move, let alone work. . . . And half starved!

ONE OF THE GAMBLERS: Starved! Hark at him! . . . Why don't you go out of a night, and catch a stray dog or cat and cook it, like the rest of us!

[A snatch of the song.

POCOCK: And then, when I'd worked, desperately—desperately, I tell you—from the time I

got up, till night . . . he said I'd done nothing !
And he'd get me a flogging in the morning. . . .
I'd seen that ! I've lived in terror of that ; day
and night ; awake and asleep . . . so I ran away.

[*A snatch of the song.*]

I got out into the Bush. Four days I was, lost !
. . . And when I came upon some people, I gave
myself up ; and they brought me back here . . .
and they strapped me, and tied me up to the
triangle, and lashed me . . . for hours it seemed
. . . hours. . . .

[*A roar of laughter at some turn of the game.*]

(*To LOVELESS*) You ever been flogged ?

LOVELESS : No.

POCOCK : How long have you been here ?

LOVELESS : Nigh two year.

1ST GAMBLER : You'll get it.

THE MAN WHO IS WATCHING THE GAME : And
sooner'n you think. I 'eard the overseer—only
yesterday it was—say 'e was *sick er you*. Always
gettin' yer work done ; and doin' wot you was
told ; and bein' so bloody well-be'aved !

2ND GAMBLER : Don't pay ! Do yer bloody work
too well, and they frame yer up at the end of
yer term—just to keep yer. I've known that ; I
'ave ; many a time.

1ST GAMBLER : Me, too.

[*A snatch of the song.*]

POCOCK (*suddenly, with rising horror at the recollec-
tion*) : Merciful God ! It's beyond endurance . . .
like jagged wire tearing through your flesh.

THE MAN WHO IS WATCHING THE GAME : Oh,
stow it !

1ST GAMBLER : We know.

POCOCK : And then as if they were filling every
gash with red-hot lead.

2ND GAMBLER: *Stow* it. . . . Enough to give anyone the 'ump !!

POCOCK: And there you are, tied up !

1ST GAMBLER: *Stow* it !

2ND GAMBLER: *Stow* it !!

ALL THREE (*together—shouting*): *Stow* it !!!

[*The 1ST GAMBLER begins to sing the song; the others take it up; but above the song POCOCK can still be heard, now almost raving.*

POCOCK: And all you can do is to scream and curse . . .

[*The volume of the song grows. POCOCK's voice can now be only just heard.*

. . . till you go insensible; and they fling cold water on you; and bring you to; and scrub your back with salt and water—

[*By this time the song, well under way by all three of them, completely drowns his voice, and he collapses. . . .*

The song itself has a fine, violent, stirring tune. A kind of Workers' "Marseillaise" . . . and they sing raucously but with growing enthusiasm.

These are the words:

" We plough and sow—we're so very, very low
That we delve in the dirty clay,
Till He bless the plain with the golden grain,
And the vale with the fragrant hay.
Our place we know—we're so very low,
'Tis down at the landlord's feet:
We're not too low the bread to grow,
But too low the bread to eat.

" We're low, we're low, we're very, very low,
Yet from our fingers glide
The silken flow—and the robes that glow
Round the limbs of the sons of pride.
And what we get—and what we give—

We know; and we know our share;
 We're not too low the cloth to weave
 But too low the cloth to wear.

“ We're low, we're low, we're very, very
 low——”

OVERSEER (*putting his head in at the window*): Stop
 that row!

[*The noise subsides. . . . The OVERSEER passes by
 the window on his way into the hut. . . . Another
 figure passes the window, following him.*

(*Entering the hut*) The Master!

[*The OVERSEER stands to attention, as the
 MASTER OF THE ESTATE, on which these convicts
 are employed, stands in the doorway.*

The convicts scramble to their feet.

MASTER: Which is the man?

OVERSEER: This one, sir; George Loveless.

[*The MASTER walks up to GEORGE.*

MASTER: What's the charge?

OVERSEER: Neglect o' duty, sir.

MASTER: What *are* his duties?

OVERSEER: Shepherd and stockkeeper, sir. And
 nine o' the wild cattle was taken to the pound
 yesterday, sir; and he didn't miss 'em till this
 mornin'!

MASTER: Seems a pretty good case of neglect;
 never heard a better! (*To LOVELESS*) Well?

LOVELESS: 'Tis true, sir; nine o' the cattle was
 in the pound; and I didn't miss 'em till this
 mornin'——

OVERSEER (*triumphant*): A damned good floggin',
 sir, if I might suggest, would do 'im no 'arm.
 I've been 'aving a lot o' trouble with 'im.

MASTER (*to LOVELESS*): Go on. What have you
 got to say?

LOVELESS: Yesterday, sir, I was up afore sunrise; and took the sheep into the Bush to feed; then I come back to the farm here and had the cows—ten of 'em—to milk; and as many calves to suckle. Then I had to go out to the sheep again; there be a lot o' dogs about just now, sir, and they get among 'em, and worry 'em. And I was weanin' some lambs, and the ewes were that restless, I didn't like to leave 'em. . . . And it were night, and dark, afore I had time to see about the cattle—that's how I came not to miss some of 'em. . . .

MASTER (*to the OVERSEER*): Is what this man is saying true?

[*The OVERSEER is silent.*]

Come on, man! You must know! The sheep, and the cows, and the cattle—and they all in his charge.

OVERSEER: Yes, sir.

MASTER: He can't be in two places at once, can he?

OVERSEER (*obstinately*): 'E wasn't mindin' the cattle, sir—and that's neglect o' duty!

MASTER: 'Seems to me he's got more than he can do; more than any man could do. So it's *your* fault more than his. (*He moves towards the door.*) What on earth did you want to drag me here for?

[*He disappears through the door.*]

OVERSEER (*hissing at LOVELESS with concentrated venom*): Get me into trouble, would yer?

MASTER (*his head in at the window; to the OVERSEER*): Come along. I'll see you about it now.

[*The MASTER disappears; and the discomfited OVERSEER follows him. . . . There is a few moments' rather awestruck silence in the hut. Then, unexpectedly, and rather as if nothing had so far*

happened at all, the man with the newspapers suddenly speaks :

THE MAN WITH THE NEWSPAPERS: Funny thing ! Just before he put his head in, and they said your name, what d'you think I was doin' ? . . . Found myself lookin' at your name in the paper. . . .

LOVELESS: *My name ?*

THE MAN: That's right.

LOVELESS: What paper is it ?

THE MAN: This one—wot I was readin'.

LOVELESS: But what paper is it ?

THE MAN: Ah ! It's a London paper. The *London Despatch*. The master has 'em sent out ; he give me some to read. . . . (*He gets up, coming to LOVELESS.*) Here 'tis. " George Loveless." In print ! In the paper ! Just when they come in I saw it ! I ain't read what it says. . . . (*He gives GEORGE the paper.*) See ! There !

[*GEORGE takes the paper, and reads in silence. . . . What he reads obviously has the most profound effect upon him. . . . The others watch him in a queer, strained silence. . . . This is a much more unusual event in the convict hut than a flogging. Into this silence—LOVELESS still as if dazed by a great blow—crashes the OVERSEER.*

OVERSEER (*he is in a blind animal passion of rage ; he goes straight to LOVELESS*): I'll get yer now ! I've been wantin' to for weeks ! I'll get yer ! And, wot's more, before the day's out I'll 'ave you screamin' for mercy.

[*GEORGE has hardly seemed to be aware of him. The OVERSEER's rage runs up a key or two.*

Can't you 'ear ? You think I can't ! I'll show yer ! (*He turns on the wretched POCOCK.*) Here ! You ! D'yer want another floggin' ?

POCOCK (*a piteous wail*): For God's sake ! No ! !

OVERSEER: You come with me then, now; to the Master; and swear on yer solemn oath wot I tell yer to about this man. Get up ! ! !

[POCOCK *scrambles to his feet*. . . . But LOVELESS rises, too.

LOVELESS (*quietly, but in a way that somehow dominates*): Can you read ? !

[*The question is so unexpected that the OVERSEER is for the moment side-tracked.*

OVERSEER: Read ? What d'yer mean—*read* ?

LOVELESS: Understand what's writ down.

OVERSEER: Wot d'yer take me for ?

LOVELESS: You can ?

OVERSEER: 'Course I can.

LOVELESS: Read that, then. . . . (*He hands him the paper.*) There.

[*The OVERSEER takes the paper, and puzzles over it for a few moments. The others have gathered round, expectant. The OVERSEER becomes embarrassed, realising he is the centre of a tense group—and he's having difficulty with his reading !*

OVERSEER (*starting to bully again*): Wot's all this about ?

LOVELESS (*quietly insistent*): You've read it ?

OVERSEER: I can read, I tell yer ! But not this stuff.

[GEORGE *takes the paper from him.*

LOVELESS: Then I'll read it to you—this be a London paper. “ Last night——”

OVERSEER (*breaking in*): Stop yer row ! I didn't come 'ere to be read to !

LOVELESS: I warn you ! ! It be best for you ! ! You listen ! !

OVERSEER: *Warn* me ?

LOVELESS: Aye!!! "Last night in Parliament Lord John Russell gave notice that orders had already been forwarded to the Colonies concerned that the Dorchester Labourers were not only to be set at liberty, but also to be sent back to England, free of expense, and with every necessary comfort."

[And, having read, LOVELESS goes straight to take his hat from a peg, throws a cloth round his shoulders, and walks to the door.]

OVERSEER: Here! Where are you goin'?

[LOVELESS is a changed man; he seems suddenly to have come to life; he is again the leader of the Tolpuddle labourers.]

LOVELESS: To Hobart Town. . . . A night's walk. But I'll see the Governor in the morning.

OVERSEER (*aghast*): The Governor!

LOVELESS: It be dated March; and this be September. The Order must 'a been here many weeks—

OVERSEER (*going to LOVELESS at the door*): You stop where you are! You can't see the Governor!

LOVELESS: *Can't I?* The law brought us here, but the law be goin' to take us back! Same as it says here. (*He waves the paper, a kind of flag of freedom.*) Every man of us.

[He strides out. . . . The OVERSEER gapes after him—and the others stare at one another, open-mouthed!]

The stage becomes black.

CURTAIN

SCENE V

Some twenty years later. The living-room of GEORGE LOVELESS's farm in Canada. MRS. LOVELESS, now grey-haired, is alone in the room, counting a pile of clean linen into a basket.

NELLIE (*now a fine girl of about twenty-five, entering*):
Mother!

BETSY: Hullo, Nellie!

NELLIE: Can Robin come in?

BETSY: Well, considerin' he's goin' to be one of the family in less than a week, I s'pose he can!

NELLIE: It's all right, Robin. Come in.

[She stretches out an arm towards the door, and ROBIN, a man a few years older than she is, enters, and takes her hand; he does not let go of it.]

ROBIN: How do, Mrs. Loveless.

BETSY: How do, Robin. Come right in. You'll stay and have a bite o' somethin' to eat?

ROBIN: I can't stay, Mrs. Loveless; thank you. I promised to get back to the farm to help Father.

BETSY: It's a long way to come just to look in for a few minutes.

NELLIE: He's been here all the afternoon, Mother.

BETSY: Oh, I see! Well, you'll not go afore you've seen George. He'll want to see you. He's out, sittin' in his chair down the orchard. Sit ye down! Don't mind me! I'll just finish this.

[There is obviously something very much on ROBIN'S mind, and NELLIE'S. The two young people are both awkward and tongue-tied under the stress of it. . . . Old MRS. LOVELESS counts the last linen into the basket.]

NELLIE: Can I help you, Mother?

BETSY: No thanks, my dear. I'll just put these in the bedroom.

[*She goes out.*]

ROBIN (*with mysterious apprehension*): She don't look the same to me any more! It's as if I was lookin' at her with other eyes. The whole place seems different! I don't know what I'll do when I look at your father again!

NELLIE: Oh, Robin!

ROBIN: Well—don't *you* feel like that?

NELLIE: I've known it all my life, Robin.

[*MRS. LOVELESS returns; and the two are smitten again with silence.*]

BETSY (*sitting down . . . and noticing the silence*): Well, 'pon my word, what's the matter with you two? Lost your tongue, Robin? . . . Bless the boy, you look as if you'd seen a ghost!

ROBIN: Mrs. Loveless—Nellie's told me!

BETSY: Told you? What?

ROBIN: Why! About Mr. Loveless; and him being taken, and tried, and sent over the seas.

NELLIE (*going to her mother*): You're not angry, Mother?

BETSY: No. But I don't know what your father'll say!!

ROBIN: It's fair knocked me all of a heap! We've known Mr. Loveless all these years here as a kind man, and a good man, always ready to help a neighbour; aye, and a learned man, with his books. . . . But *now*—

BETSY: And what—"now"?

ROBIN: I know it's silly of me, but, now I know, I feel I want to go to him out in the orchard and kneel down. Maybe it's silly.

BETSY: And maybe it's not! Anyway, if you feel like that, I'm glad Nellie told you, too. So there!

ROBIN: But, Mrs. Loveless, what I can't make out is *why* you've never told anybody.

BETSY: There's no great mystery to it. When they got back they was made a great fuss of—by their own people. When they landed; and at Exeter; and again at Tolpuddle. But not by the masters! They had no love for 'em, nor no work! So some o' the good folk that had worked all the time for bringing them back subscribed some money, so we could come out here. And out here, for the sake o' the children, George said we'd say nothing; and we never have.

ROBIN: It must have been dreadful for *you*, Mrs. Loveless, when they took him.

BETSY: Ah, lad, I can't tell you about *that*! I can't remember it myself! I call it to mind sometimes; but it's as if it happened to someone else.

ROBIN: Nellie's told me up to the time when he saw it in the newspaper—about him havin' a pardon; and the paper was near a year old! What did he *do* then?

BETSY: Ah! Then! . . . He fought his way right to the Governor of the island, he did. . . .

ROBIN: And what did the Governor do?

BETSY: Made a lot of excuses! They all did; said they didn't know where to find the men! But they know'd right enough! They didn't want to send 'em back! And didn't mean to. But George, he'd written to the papers about it out there; so it all came out, and they had to send him back; him and the others. They couldn't beat my George.

ROBIN: The part I liked best was when they took you to London; and you heard all them people singin' the piece that he wrote. . . .

BETSY: Ah! (*She goes to a little box.*) Now you know, I'll show you somethin'! (*She takes out a very old faded piece of paper.*) There! That's the piece! That's the poem! Just as he wrote it—on that piece o' paper. Arter the trial, while he was waitin' to be took away.

ROBIN: It's fair knocked me sideways! He's always seemed so gentle, and so old!

BETSY: He's always been gentle, my George has; and we've grown old together, so I don't notice that.

[GEORGE LOVELESS *enters*. *He, too, is grey-haired and frail.*

GEORGE: Ah, Robin!

ROBIN: Good afternoon, Mr. Loveless.

GEORGE: Come over to see our Nell?

ROBIN: Yes, Mr. Loveless.

BETSY: Come and sit down in your chair, Father.

GEORGE (*crossing to his chair*): How's your mother and father?

ROBIN: Very well, thanks.

GEORGE: That's good.

NELLIE (*in a whisper, to ROBIN*): Tell him you know! Go on! Tell him now!

ROBIN (*whispering back at her*): No, you!

GEORGE: Now then, you two, what's all the whispering about?

[*There is a little complete silence.*

BETSY: George—Nellie's been and told Robin: 'bout Tolpuddle, and the Union, and every-thing.

[*Again a complete silence.*]

GEORGE: Come here, lad!

[*ROBIN crosses, and stands before GEORGE. GEORGE regards him for a few moments without speaking.*]

. . . So she's told you!

ROBIN: You don't mind, Mr. Loveless?

GEORGE: Well, she's told you, so maybe it's a bit late—mindin'!

ROBIN: Mr. Loveless, I give you my word, my solemn word, as one of the family, it shan't go no further.

GEORGE: You're a good lad. I can trust you. That's all right.

ROBIN: And, Mr. Loveless—

GEORGE: Well?

ROBIN: I always was glad I was going to have you and Mrs. Loveless for another father and mother; but now I think I'm . . . I'm more than glad.

GEORGE (*with a little laugh*): Ah, you're not marrying me, nor Betsy—but Nell.

ROBIN: But, please . . . you know what I mean.

GEORGE: Maybe I do . . . and maybe I'm pleased enough you feel as you do.

ROBIN: And, Mr. Loveless, some day, now I know, you'll tell me more about it. I mean, all you've been through.

GEORGE: I don't know as I'm over-fond of talkin' about it.

NELLIE: They're all like that. I remember when I was a little girl in Tolpuddle—just after they'd all come back; and I was asking James Hammett—

BETSY: He was never a one to talk!

NELLIE: No. But I remember I said to him: "Uncle James"—I used to call him Uncle James—"Uncle James," I said, "why won't you ever tell me about your adventures?" "Adventures," he said—you know the funny way he had o' talking. "Adventures! If *you'd* been put up and sold for a pound, like a sheep, would *you* want to talk about it?"

GEORGE (*with something of the old fire*): Yet there are things you must talk about; and go on talking about, till they be banished off the face of the earth. I've writ a book about 'em; seemed the best I could do; but I can't put 'em out of mind.

ROBIN: But, Mr. Loveless—

BETSY (*anxious for GEORGE*): No more now, Robin.

ROBIN: Oh! Yes! All right! And I must be getting along too. Good night, Mr. Loveless.

GEORGE: Good night to you, my lad.

ROBIN: Good night, Mrs. Loveless.

BETSY: Good night, Robin.

ROBIN (*to NELL*): Will you walk a piece of the way?

NELLIE: Do you want me, Mother?

BETSY: No, my dear. You go along with him. Don't take her too far, Robin.

ROBIN: No, Mrs. Loveless—and if she *should* come too far, I'll walk back with her!

BETSY: Get along with you!

[ROBIN and NELLIE go out. GEORGE and BETSY are alone. . . . BETSY goes and sits in a chair opposite to him, and they sit for a few moments in silence. Then:

GEORGE: D'you ever think o' Dorset, Betsy?

BETSY: Often, George.

GEORGE: Down in the yard this afternoon, it seemed it was the Dorset sun sinkin' over the Dorset orchards. (*A long pause.*) I wonder how they be gettin' on? (*And another.*) I be sure o' one thing, Betsy. If the labouring people are ever to rise out o' their poverty, and take their rightful share o' their own toilin', they've got to do it for themselves. . . . What you got there?

BETSY: The piece you wrote arter the trial.

GEORGE: Oh! That!

BETSY: I can see you now, George . . . as you was took away; and there was chains on your wrists! But I saw you toss somethin' to the crowd!

GEORGE: Aye, and it was took straight back to the Judge—and thought worse nor treason!

BETSY: Say it to me, George.

GEORGE: There! If I haven't forgot how it begins. Read me out the first line.

BETSY: I can't.

GEORGE: Why not?

BETSY: Not without my spectacles.

GEORGE: Where are they?

BETSY: I lost 'em.

GEORGE: What's the good o' you havin' spectacles, if you keep losin' them?

BETSY: You read it.

GEORGE: I can't.

BETSY: Why not?

GEORGE: Not without my spectacles!

BETSY: Where are they?

GEORGE: I don't know! You lost 'em as well as your own—that's what *you've* done.

BETSY: That I haven't.

[She rises and gives him his spectacles. He puts them on, takes the poem, and looks at it.]

GEORGE (*after a little silence, he reads, quietly and simply*):

“ God is our Guide, no swords we draw.
We kindle not war's battle-fires;
By reason, union, justice, law,
We claim the birthright of our sires;
We raise the Watchword ' Liberty.'
We will, we will, we will be free ! . . . ”

What we did was right, Betsy. I know that.
That's somethin'. . . . But I be tired. . . . Now
it's for them that come after.

CURTAIN

HARVEST IN THE NORTH

James Lansdale Hodson

HARVEST IN THE NORTH

*A Play in A Prologue
Three Acts
and an Epilogue*

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This play bears little or no relation to my novel of the same title. The play was written as a sequel to that book, and, later, became the framework of the novel *God's in His Heaven*.

Harvest in the North was first produced at Manchester Repertory Theatre on January 21st, 1935, with the following cast:

<i>Harriet Renshaw</i>	EILEEN DRAYCOTT
<i>Peter Renshaw</i>	CLIFFORD MARLE
<i>Jane Meadows</i>	ALLISON BAILEY
<i>Sam Renshaw</i>	DOMINIC ROCHE
<i>George Renshaw</i>	EDWARD MIDGELEY
<i>Trix Bishop</i>	JOAN SHARP
<i>Mrs. McIntyre</i>	ENID HEWITT
<i>Jamie McIntyre</i>	BRIAN MELLAND
<i>Joe Holroyd</i>	NOEL MORRIS
<i>Eddy Whitehead</i>	KEITH PYOTT
<i>Maggie O'Halloran</i>	VALERIE SKARDON
<i>First Ambulance Man</i>	JOHN DERRHAM
<i>Second Ambulance Man</i>	STEPHEN WARDALE
<i>First Policeman</i>	JOHN BYRNE
<i>Second Policeman</i>	A. F. JOHNSON

The play produced by DOMINIC ROCHE

The play was later produced at Bradford Civic Playhouse by James R. Gregson (who played the part of Peter Renshaw); and on June 10th following at the Embassy Theatre, N.W.3, with Herbert Lomas as Peter Renshaw and Hilda Davies as Harriet. John Fernald produced.

CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

HARRIET RENSHAW	
PETER RENSHAW	Her father-in-law
MRS. JANE MEADOWS	A neighbour
SAM RENSHAW	Harriet's husband
GEORGE RENSHAW	Her son
TRIX BISHOP	Jane Meadows' daughter
JOSH MEADOWS	Jane Meadows' husband, step- father to Trix
MRS. MCINTYRE	A neighbour
JAMIE MCINTYRE	Her husband
JOE HOLROYD	A friend of Harriet's
TOM EDMUNDS	A neighbour
EDDY WHITEHEAD	A leader of unem- ployed
MAGGIE O'HALLORAN	A neighbour
FIRST AMBULANCE MAN	
SECOND AMBULANCE MAN	
FIRST POLICEMAN	
SECOND POLICEMAN	

SCENES

PROLOGUE

ACT I

Harriet Renshaw's living-room kitchen. October.

ACT II

SCENE I: A month later.

SCENE II: A day or two later.

SCENE III: A week later.

ACT III

SCENE I: A fortnight later.

SCENE II: A few days later.

SCENE III: A few months later.

EPILOGUE

Chesterford War Memorial.

The play takes place in one setting—that of the Renshaw's living-room-kitchen in Chesterford, a small cotton town in Lancashire.

The room is that of a superior working-man—a cotton spinner earning in good times £5 to £7 a week. It is fairly large and contains on the right, looking from the audience, an upright piano, and, close by, a small loud-speaker wireless set. There is a door in the right-hand far corner leading to a passage which runs to the front door, and there is a door left leading to the scullery and so into the strip of yard and back garden. The fireplace is on the left—a comfortable kitchen grate. In front of this there is an armchair covered in brown Rexine. Along the back wall stands a sideboard-dresser and on the wall a pot-rack. In the centre is a dining-table and two or three chairs. The general appearance of the room is homely and has colour. There are a few flowers and books. The room should grow a little more drab and poor-looking as the play progresses. In the final scene the wireless set and some pictures have been removed.

PROLOGUE

SCENE I

The prologue shows three scenes played either through a gauze curtain or lit up with a spotlight and plunged swiftly into blackness again when the scene ends.

[In the first a SCOTSMAN, managing director of a firm owning several shipyards, is addressing his fellow directors. He is a big, florid, overbearing man, with cropped grey hair. He wears a square wing collar. No one else is visible. He is standing leaning forward a little and is saying :

SCOTSMAN: We haven't built a ship, gentlemen, worth calling a ship for nearly a yeear, nearly a yeear. (*He pauses dramatically.*) We canna go on. Aye, Mr. Watson, I remember the two wee sloops—ye could sail 'em in your bath. One yard'll ha'e to go. And I'm thinking it's the Harford one. We used to employ fifteen hundred men there—and how many are there now? Five—and it's nothing but charity keeping *them* on. Aye, Mr. Watson, I know what ye'll say, "What's to become of the locality?" Nobody's sorrier than oursel'es, Mr. Watson. But it's no good being sentimental aboot it. Does no good, no good at all. We've got to concentrate what business there is at Blairgowan. It's the only chance for us. Harford's is redundant, gentlemen, redundant. Aye, Mr. Watson, I know what ye'll ask about these fifteen hundred men—are they to be redundant, too? Ye'll say that without the yard the men are so much scrap. Well, there's the dole, I think, Mr. Watson, there's the dole. Rationalisation. . . .

[Other men's voices, fainter, repeat : "There's the dole, Mr. Watson. . . . There's the dole. . . . There's the dole. . . . Rationalisation. . . ." as the scene is darkened and blacked out.

SCENE II

A WELSHMAN, *small, foxy, bald, sharp nose, is speaking to his Board of Directors :*

WELSHMAN: It iss a matter of profound regret to me to make this proposal to the Board. I shall feel it ass a personal blow. Of course, I am not a mining engineer. I am a lawyer and business man. But I must haf the interests of our shareholders at heart. Until the export price of coal rises far higher than it iss at the present time there iss no reasonable expectation of our making the Garrowclyd mine to pay. We haf been piling up stocks in the hope that the tide would turn. Far from turning, gentlemen, it iss still ebbing. We are stranded, gentlemen, left high and dry. As I see it, and I say it with profound regret, the only thing to do iss to shut down the mine entirely, and use what capital remains to us in the new mine in Kent. Garrowclyd iss redundant, gentlemen, redundant. Yess, yess, Mr. Morgan Owen, I know well what you will say. You will say that Garrowclyd is the source of livelihood of two thousand men, and I do not deny it. But what are we to do? There iss the dole—you and I, Mr. Morgan Owen, contribute to it, do we not? I repeat, there iss the dole—rationalisation—modern methods. . . .

[*As the scene darkens, voices, fainter, repeat :*
 "There is the dole, rationalisation. . . . There is the dole. . . ."

SCENE III

A LANCASHIREMAN, *wealth of grey hair, gold spectacles, fresh face, fat, is speaking :*

LANCASHIREMAN: Well, it comes to this, gentlemen, with every pound o' yarn we spin we've got to give tuppence away to get rid of it. I don't know how deep your pockets are—mine are that shallow I can't get my thumbs in, let

alone my fingers. There's only one hope for Lancashire—shut down the redundant mills, and smash the machinery so it won't do any more damage. The Lily Mill's got to go—aye, an' quick if we don't all want to go with it. (*Pause*) Now we've had this 'ere matter up before and I hope we are not going to be opposed by Mr. Ackroyd. Mr. Ackroyd's all in favour of keepin' runnin' to find the operatives something to do. Well, I'm not. He said, "Try short time—half-time." Well, we've tried it. (*Ironically*) If he'd use his influence with some of our Indian friends and Mr. Hobrito in Yokohama, and get *them* to remember the Lancashire operatives they're puttin' out of work, he might do some good. The Lily Mill's got to go, gentlemen. It's redundant. And if anybody asks what about the operatives, I say there's the dole for *them*. There'll be no dole for *us* if we find ourselves in the gutter, gentlemen. There's the dole, Mr. Ackroyd.

[*Voices as the scene darkens* : "There's the dole Mr. Ackroyd. . . . Rationalisation. . . . There's the dole."

THE PROLOGUE ENDS

ACT I

SCENE: *Harriet's living-room in a council house on an October afternoon*

HARRIET is ironing. She takes a new iron from the fire, spits on it to see if it is hot enough, watches the bead of spittle roll off on to the floor, rubs the iron on the rug and proceeds to iron a pinafore. HARRIET is forty-three, rather tall, dark, with fine long nose, wide mouth and hair parted in the middle. She has high courage, and a sense of humour allied with an indomitable spirit. She is neatly dressed.

Her father-in-law, PETER RENSHAW, is heard coming downstairs in his stockinged feet. He comes in from the door leading into the passage. He wears no collar or tie, has a grey backed shirt open at the neck. His waistcoat is flying loose. He is sixty-six, a man with a mass of white hair—face rather finely drawn—clean-shaven. His manner and speech are a bit jerky, he quickly changes from one mood to another.

HARRIET: Did y'ave a nap?

PETER: Aye. I must ha' dropped off. I've slept as much this last twelve-month as if I were a babby.

HARRIET: Might as well.

[He pads across to the window and looks out and scratches his head.]

PETER: Tha con see Berry Hill as plain as a pikestaff. Used to be a sign o' rain, they said. Now tha' might say it's a sign Chesterford is on t' dole. It used to be hidden in smoke an' dirt an' red as hell every neet o'er yon—Turner's sunsets weren't in it. Now, by God, it's as bracin' as Blackpool. What is it they say on t' wireless? Visibility champion? (He turns) 'Ere, shall I make thee some tay?

HARRIET: Nay, I'll put t' kettle on.

PETER: Nay, tha winna. Let th' owd chap do summat for his livin'! (*Takes kettle, goes out and talks from the scullery*) Did Sam tell thee owt about t' Lily Mill?

HARRIET (*starts a little and after a pause*): No—why?

PETER: Nowt, happen. (*Comes back with the kettle.*)

HARRIET: What is it?

[*Silence.*]

Come on! Don't wrap it up.

PETER: Now then, now then. Howd thy whist.

HARRIET: I'st do nowt o' t' sort. You're allus quizzin'; what do you know?

PETER: Nowt. If I'm goin' t' 'ave my tay I'd best go an' titivate mysel' up a bit.

[*But as he goes past her, she catches his arm.*]

HARRIET: Now then, father—I want to know.

[*PETER's manner changes to anger.*]

PETER: Why plague thysel'? I've said nowt.

HARRIET: Go on.

PETER: It's nowt fresh, whatever it is. Shut down! Aren't they shut down everywheer? (*He makes a dramatic gesture turning this way and that as he speaks*) Shut down, theer! Theer! Theer! (*He points with his hand.*)

HARRIET: What's it got to do wi' Sam?

PETER: Nowt as I know on. They don't tell me. (*Suddenly vehement*) We're not tow'd, nor axed—thy sort an' my sort. Did they ax me when they took our Wilf for a model for t' War Memorial—did they ax me to th' unveilin' till I tow'd 'em summat? They said I shouldn't want for a job as long as I lived. Did it stop 'em payin' me off at t' blast furnace five year sin'?

HARRIET: I know, father, I know. (*Pause.*) Why didn't Sam tell me?

PETER: Why didn't Sam win t' V.C. same as Wilf? Why didn't he get kilt instead o' Wilf? What miracle were it as made 'em come out o' t' same womb?

HARRIET (*drily*): It's easier for t' dead to be heroes than for t' livin'.

PETER: Tha'd ha' married our Wilf if he'd ha' lived.

HARRIET (*very quietly*): Sometimes, father, I think you are goin' daft. (*Pause.*) Best go an' get washed. Kettle'll be boilin'.

[*She gently encourages him with her hand on his arm to go towards the door.*]

PETER *begins to go, then pauses.*

PETER: If tha finds a stockin' in t' bed, don't throw it away.

HARRIET: Throw what away? (*She hears the door open behind her and turns to greet MRS. MEADOWS.*) Hello, Jane! (*Then she turns to PETER again.*)

PETER: That sweaty stockin'-foot I had round my throat to stop my cough. Don't wash it—no good if it's washed.

HARRIET (*banteringly*): Yo're a dirty owd mon.

[PETER *exits.*]

MRS. MEADOWS *is a smaller woman than HARRIET. On her face, time and her husband JOSH MEADOWS, have drawn a map whose lines are deep. She is poorer than HARRIET and accustomed to rely on HARRIET, but at the moment she has come to give comfort.*

MRS. MEADOWS: 'Ave yo' 'ad any luck?

[HARRIET *shakes her head.*]

Tha's been as long as this past thy time afore.

HARRIET: Nay.

MRS. MEADOWS: It's only three weeks——

HARRIET: Four.

MRS. MEADOWS: I once went a month mysel', then——then it come all right. Josh hit me. He could never understand why——why I——(*her hands flutter as she seeks the word she wants*)——said nowt about him hitting me.

HARRIET: I'st not get cured that road.

MRS. MEADOWS: Shall yo' tell Sam?

HARRIET: I thowt o' doin. (*Changing the conversation.*) Is Trix back?

MRS. MEADOWS: Not yet. George went wi' her.

HARRIET: Are yo' sure?

MRS. MEADOWS: I saw 'em go.

HARRIET: He'd no money. He were spent up yesterday.

MRS. MEADOWS: That wouldn't stop 'em going together as long as Trix had any.

HARRIET (*grimly*): This being out o' work turns things upside down.

MRS. MEADOWS: George has never been *in* work, has he?

HARRIET (*surprised at Mrs. Meadows' sharpness*): No. (*And then*) I like it no better than you do, Jane. I'll see George pays his share——if I have to do an extra wash for it.

MRS. MEADOWS: It's not that. On'y it's not right what she has to do——keep Josh, who's out of work, and me an' t' child because she earns fifty shillin' a week. It's spoilin' her——an' us. Josh hates her. Tha'd think it were poison he's suppin' every time he takes a glass of ale that comes out o' her pocket. It puts poison *in* him.

HARRIET: I'm surprised she stops. Is it because—

MRS. MEADOWS: Yes, she wouldn't if she weren't frettened o' what Josh would do to *me*. I've begged her to go. Josh would draw his own money if she went. It cuts both roads. . . .

[*The latch at the back door is rattled, and a Scottish voice asks: "Are y'in, Mrs. Rinshaw?"*]

HARRIET (*pursing her lips and calling*): Yea, come in, Mrs. McIntyre.

[*MRS. MCINTYRE enters with a little rush. She is diminutive, fifty odd, typically voluble, full of an almost impertinent self-confidence.*]

MRS. MCINTYRE: Well, Mrs. Rinshaw, have ye heard? No? Well, I'm telt there's more bad news flying about. The Lily Mill, they're sayin'. I thank God ivery day o' ma life mae Jamie's in worrk. There's not many like him. No. The best mill ingineer in Chesterford, they say. (*Turning to MRS. MEADOWS.*) How long's your mon been oot noo, Mrs. Meadows?

MRS. MEADOWS (*with a reluctant shrug*): Eighteen month.

MRS. MCINTYRE: D'ye tell me so? I thocht it wuz more than that. The way people bears it is juist wonderful. They willna be so patient in Glasgae, I'm thinkin'.

HARRIET (*drily*): I don't read about any riots in Glasgow, eyther.

MRS. MCINTYRE: Not juist riots mebbe, but not lyin' doon to it neether. I tell Jamie a stirrin' up, a stirrin' up. Jamie, I say, if you wuz oot of a job. . . .

HARRIET (*breaking in and with an ironical smile*): I suppose Ramsey Mac 'ud find him one. Happen he'd giv' him his own.

MRS. MCINTYRE: I do believe Jamie could mak' a shot at that, too. Aye. There'll be plenty more

on the Public Assistance I'm thinkin' if the news about the Lily's true.

[PETER *coming in again.*

PETER: So you've yerd too, eh?

[*The kettle begins to boil and he makes a pot of tea, and places it on the hob to stand. HARRIET clears the table of its ironing.*

MRS. MCINTYRE: I wuz sayin' what a terrible thing it is to be oot of a job.

PETER (*drily*): Why, has Jamie gotten t' sack at last?

MRS. MCINTYRE: Och no, no; but arren't we all livin' in the middle of it?

PETER (*curtly*): Some on us are.

MRS. MCINTYRE (*trying to pacify him*): I wuz takin' a look at the War Memorial. I said to maesel', "Mr. Rinshaw'll be glad tae see these new flowers," I said. "It's as if they wuz intendit for that puir laddie Wilfrid." A tragedy if ivver there wuz one. Aye.

PETER (*biting it off*): Happen.

MRS. MCINTYRE: Nay, nay, Mr. Rinshaw, don't be thinkin' so. Wilfrid wuz a fine lad.

PETER (*furious*): Howd thy din, woman! Don't I know what he were? Don't I know there isn't a chap i' Chesterford fit to *wash* his memorial? That two should ha' 'listed an' one come back—an' that one Sam!

HARRIET (*sharply*): Father! Hush, will yo'?

PETER (*quietly, but without heeding her*): But happen Wilf's better off. No more sorrowin' for him, no cryin', no walkin' t' streets seekin' for work as isna theer. No wonderin' for him whether God A'mighty's in His Heaven. Wilf knows by now. Aye, he knows that by now.

[*The three women have eyed him curiously and a little anxiously. He pours out tea into a pint pot and*

sits soaking a piece of bread in it and eating it. He doesn't invite anybody to have tea, nor does HARRIET. During the quietness that has fallen a flute can be heard in the street. MRS. MCINTYRE gets up and feels in the pocket of her underskirt but finds nothing. She says:

MRS. MCINTYRE: I thocht I'd gie the puir man a copper but I see I've come wi'oot mae purse.

[HARRIET *silently goes to the mantelpiece, takes a small purse and gives MRS. MCINTYRE twopence.*

MRS. MCINTYRE: I'll owe ye a penny.

HARRIET (*gently*): Dunnot bother.

MRS. MCINTYRE: Nay, nay. I'm a parteeklar woman aboot mae debts. (*Pause.*) Is there anythin' I'll ask him to play for ye?

PETER (*ironically*): Ax him to play "Land of Hope an' Glory!"

MRS. MCINTYRE (*quite seriously*): Aye, I will. That'll cheer ye up fine. I will that.

[*As MRS. MCINTYRE is about to go, her husband JAMIE rattles the latch, pops in his head and slowly enters. He is a man of fifty-five, a little bowlegged man in a flat cap with a scarf tied in a knot. His face is greasy and dirty from his work. His wife speaks as soon as she sees him.*

MRS. MCINTYRE: I'm juist comin' Jamie, juist comin'.

JAMIE: If ye'd leave the door loose I wouldna ha' to seek ye. (*She goes out and JAMIE pauses a moment to say apologetically to the RENSHAWs*) Ye'd think we lived in the Bank of England the care she tak's to lock up ivery time she moves a coupla yards away.

[JAMIE *exits.*

PETER (*grimly*): It were a bad do for us when we conquered t' Scots. They'n bin payin' us reparations ever sin'.

HARRIET: Yo're hard on her. She's got a gallopin' tongue, that's aw. Have a cup, Jane?

MRS. MEADOWS (*getting up*): It's time I were goin'.

PETER: Shorten thysel'. What's th' hurry? Don't tell me tha's got a plush seat waitin' for thy backside at t' pictures.

[MRS. MEADOWS *looks a little confused.*

HARRIET: Don't plague her, father. Even if she had, it 'ud be only what she ought to do. There's monny a woman 'ud be ready for t' 'Sylum if it weren't for fourpennorth o' Ronald Colman.

PETER (*pausing with his soaked bread half-way to his mouth*): Theer yo' go. No discrimination. Arliss, George Arliss for my threepence every time.

[HARRIET *cuts bread and butter and* MRS. MEADOWS *eats almost ravenously, always hesitating to take a piece when the plate is offered, but eating eagerly when it is in her hands.*

How's Josh? Still doin' them mathematics—sixpence each way Bookie's Delight, any to come Paddy's Rise, if cash all on Barmaid's Glory?

[*There is a piercing whistle at the end of the street—a man whistling with his fingers in his mouth.* MRS. MEADOWS *puts her cup down and gets up hurriedly.*

MRS. MEADOWS: That's Josh—he'll want his tea.

HARRIET (*very quietly*): It's all right, Jane. Knock on the wall if you want me.

[MRS. MEADOWS *gives a quick little grateful smile and—exits.*

PETER: There's plenty wuss crimes than murder, lass.

HARRIET: Plenty. (*Pause.*) Have yo' had enough?

PETER: Aye, it gies me t' belly-ache eatin' food I've not worked for. Tha knows, Harriet, we're beginnin' to see work in its proper light. There's a sort of a halo round it awready. When we'n lost it awtogether we'st begin to worship it. They'll be makin' graven images o' blast furnaces and bowin' down and worshipping 'em. T' Golden Calf winna be in it.

HARRIET: It'll be a long time afore women have to look far for work any road.

PETER: Dost mean loom tacklers prefer summat wi' skirts on?

HARRIET: No, I don't. I mean what wi' bringin' yo' all into t' world and nursin' yo', and motherin' yo', and wifin' yo' (*then with a half smile*) to say nowt o' puttin' buttons on yore breeches and food in your stomachs, we'n no chance to *stop* workin'.

PETER: Dost think a woman could attain peace wi'out it?

HARRIET: They'll never have an opportunity o' findin' out.

PETER: Yea, yea. Not thy sort, happen, but there's Sapphos and Nell Gwynnes to spare. Nay, I'm not blamin' 'em. It's a side o' life I could ha' done wi' knowin' more about. But Chesterford is limited i' some ways.

[*He chuckles.*]

HARRIET *who is standing with her back to him, diving into a circular straw work-basket, turns round and scratches her head with a knitting-needle. She appears to think he's a bit daft again.*

HARRIET: You'll have to start and wear your shoes or slippers more in th' house. I'm sick o' mendin' them stockings.

PETER: Half th' ailments o' th' feet are caused by not lettin' th' air get to 'em.

HARRIET: I've no objection to you wearin' *nout* on your feet, but socks and no slippers—no.

PETER: Tha'rt a rare bosser. Not as tha shouldn't be wi' our Sam about.

HARRIET: That reminds me, too. I won't 'ave yo' runnin' him down i' front o' other folk.

PETER: I fathered him, didn't I?

HARRIET: Yo' make me doubt it, unless somebody stood over ye' wi' a pistol. But he's wed to me—remember that.

PETER: That's why I try an' make it up to thee—fetchin' thy mornin' tay.

HARRIET: Yo' can give o'er, then.

PETER: Well, as tha'rt at outs wi' me, I'st go to the unemployed club and see if they've owt to give away.

HARRIET: And yo' needn't hurry back.

PETER: Now, now, tha' doesn't mean it. Con I fetch thee owt on t' road?

HARRIET: If tha can pick up a bit o' gumption it ud' come in handy for somebody I know.

PETER: Sam?

[HARRIET makes a little run at him and he trots out.

As PETER goes he collides with JOE HOLROYD, who is entering.

Nah then, Joe Holroyd! What art after?

JOE: I've come to see about that window cord.

PETER: Well, tha needn't hurry so much. I'm not goin' to hang mysel' till next Tuesday.

[PETER goes.

JOE, a tall, big, handsome man of thirty-eight, comes and stands there and lolls against the door. He

smiles at her. He is full of humour, apron wound round his waist, and cap which he pushes back a trifle.

JOE: Hello there!

HARRIET (*pleased to see him*): Hello, Joe!

JOE: Can I come in?

HARRIET: You're in, aren't you? Don't act daft. When are yo' goin' to grow up?

JOE: Tha knows that can't happen now.

HARRIET: Why?

JOE: Tha knows I can't get spliced.

HARRIET: Why?

JOE: Unless tha' art goin' to commit bigamy. (*Laughs.*)

HARRIET: Tha'll laugh at t' other side o' thy face in a minute. Well, what about that window cord? Hast come to do it?

JOE: No.

HARRIET: What, then?

JOE: I've come to make an appointment to do it. We're not as haphazard as we used to be. We have to have it aw cut and dried now—now I've joined t' Union. When will it suit thee?

HARRIET: I see nowt wrong wi' now.

JOE: Nay, I tell thee it can't be done. Shall we say eleven o'clock in t' mornin'? What time does owd Peter go for his walk?

HARRIET: Don't plague me, Joe. If tha doesn't promise to behave thysel' tha shan't come at all. There con never be nowt between thee an' me.

[JOE goes to small loud-speaker, turns it on and begins to dance by himself to the dance music, using his apron like a skirt. HARRIET can't keep her face straight, and she goes and turns it off.]

JOE: It were a bad job for me when I went to Canada.

HARRIET: It were a worse job for Canada. It beats me how tha keeps thy job. Tha doesn't know what work is.

JOE: There's summat in that. If a chap does nowt, nobody tries to pinch his job. But if tha makes thyself indispensable th'art sure to be sacked sooner or later by some pig-headed fool that wants to show thee he *can* do without thee. Of course, there's another way o' lookin' at it, too. I keep t' tenants i' good fettle when I go to see 'em. The money I save t' boss by just talkin' to folk instead o' usin' costly materials doing what they want done, why it's prodigious, Harriet.

HARRIET: We're gettin' truth at last. I thought we should if tha talked long enough. (*Pause.*) What time dost mak' it?

JOE (*consulting his watch*): Five o'clock as near as dammit.

HARRIET: If tha'd like to wait while I put my hat on I'll walk as far as Co-op with thee. Tha con put t' wireless on again. It's childer's hour.

JOE: Aw reet, yore majesty. Tha needn't doll thyself up to come wi' me.

HARRIET (*going into front room for hat and coat and talking all the time*): Tha con tak' thy apron off and put it i' thy pocket. Tha looks as if tha'd come about thy undertakin'. That's funny, too—thee takin' to undertakin'.

JOE: It's nobbut a side-line, and there's brass in it. When they're that upset, they'll pay owt. Tha owt to see me makin' a note in my little book o' them as aren't lookin' so well.

HARRIET (*goes to stairs and calls*): Father, have yo' gone out?

[*No answer.*]

Aye! he's gone. We'll go out t' back road. I'll lock t' front door and leave t' key in t' W.C. George'll know where to look.

JOE: I suppose tha winna let me kiss thee?

HARRIET: Tha supposes reet. Come on.

[Exit JOE and HARRIET.]

The stage is empty for a moment or two before TRIX and GEORGE enter. TRIX is twenty, reddish-gold hair. She is rather short in stature and beautifully made. She is daughter of MRS. MEADOWS and step-daughter to JOSH. Earns her living by singing in cinemas and public-houses. GEORGE is nineteen, tall, good-looking in a rather feminine way, ill-dressed—a little foppish—wearing grey flannel trousers, dirty check sports coat, and a floppy soft hat. TRIX enters from the back door with GEORGE on her heels. GEORGE comes in, looks round and calls "Cuckoo."

When there is no response, he says :

GEORGE: That's a bit o' luck, Trix. (*Places his hat on the top of the upright piano.*)

TRIX: Why, George?

GEORGE (*singing*): Why, why, why? Where there's a why there's always a because.

[He takes TRIX's hand, snatches her to him as in the Apache dance and they begin to dance that dance. GEORGE holds her very tight. He stoops to kiss her but she turns her head and puts up her hand palm uppermost towards his mouth. GEORGE kisses her palm. She unwinds his arm from around her waist.]

TRIX: You've got to be good, George.

GEORGE: What—again?

[He goes to the piano rather noisily and suddenly begins to play "I'm dancing with tears in my eyes." He plays very well in a slapdash sort of way. TRIX dances a waltz round the room, lazily, languorously.]

Well, you coming in for it?

TRIX: I'd be disqualified.

GEORGE: How's anybody at Ashton-under-Lyne to know you're a pro? We'd wipe the floor with 'em. It's worth twenty-five bob.

TRIX: Besides, I'm not *keen* on competitions with amateurs.

GEORGE: Said the Duchess of Teck.

TRIX: You're not too posh at the tango, either.

GEORGE: Sez you! (*Pause.*) Well, what's the matter with the waltz?

TRIX: I'm not *keen*, George. I wish——

GEORGE: Wish away.

TRIX: I wish you'd get a job. I wouldn't care what it was.

GEORGE (*singing to the tune, "Every morn I bring thee violets"*):

"Every morn I 'as my card stamped,
Every week I draws my dole."

But I don't draw a ha'penny now, not since the blasted Means Test. (*Pause.*) You know you're all the same, you women. You all think (*breaking into Cockney effect*) we 'as a job handed to us on a plite every arternoon, and that we says: "Jimes, tike it awie!" That's right, isn't it?

TRIX: No, George, but when I think how clever you are——

GEORGE: Wot oh!

TRIX: There must be *some* job you could get.

GEORGE: Rattle the dominoes (*indicating the piano*), win a dance competition with your ladyship's assistance, smoke a cigarette without taking it out of my mouth, do without an overcoat in winter, read a paper over another bloke's shoulder, back losers at the dogs, fill up football coupons, and, greatest gift of all, propagate my bloomin' species—sort o' qualifications a soldier has when he isn't soldiering, or a gent born

lucky and rich—or a bloke retired on his savings. That's what I am really—retired before I've started—livin' on my father—the Honourable George Renshaw, a well-known figure at the dirt track. (*Gets up and strikes a ridiculous pose.*)

TRIX: I wish you wouldn't get so bitter, sometimes. It's no use being bitter, George.

GEORGE (*ironically*): Bitter? What have I to be bitter about? I can stay in bed till dinner-time and peruse the world's literature in the library free gratis. The only thing wrong is that the old man is working. Consequence, Public Assistance give me nix. If he got fired I might be better off—they might give me a few bob a week and then I wouldn't have to sponge on you. (*In sudden despair*) Oh, God, Trix. I get that sick. (*Turns his head away.*)

[TRIX goes to him and gently rumples his hair.]

TRIX: I know, George, but—perhaps it'll be better soon. Things'll buck up.

GEORGE: That's what my mother sez—but they don't do. Do you know the only job I ever had? Latherin' at a barber's. And they don't even have lads to do that now—not since these safety razors got folk into shavin' theirsels. I heard a chap on t' Town Hall square sayin' it'll be no better even if trade *does* buck up—he said it 'ud be worse really in t' weavin'-sheds because the firms 'ud instal automatic looms an' sack more folk. (*After a pause he goes on*) I say, do you know what I've been thinking about?

TRIX: No, George.

GEORGE: Do you remember when we used to play at bein' married when we were little kids?

TRIX (*smiling*): Yes, I remember.

GEORGE (*very gently*): It was always *me* you married.

TRIX: Yes, I know. (*Her face lights up.*) And we

lived in a great big boat on the canal, and we went up and down England with a black and white horse pulling us, and we had a lot of babies and they all sat on the horse's back.

GEORGE: And we saw all the nice places—fields and fields as far as you could see, and windmills too, and when we came to the locks the lock-keepers used to bow very low to you, like as if you were a queen.

TRIX (*with a wistful smile*): It was only a kid's fairy-tale, George.

GEORGE: Life *ought* to be a fairy-tale, didn't it? It *is* for some people.

TRIX: Not our sort, George.

GEORGE: I've been thinking if we were *really* married—

TRIX: George, how *can* we?

GEORGE: I should have the dole then. . . .

TRIX: Oh, I know plenty have done it. But it doesn't seem right. Besides, when I look at my mother—I don't think bein' married is any good unless you can live decently without pinching and scraping all the time. *Her* marriage has been no catch.

GEORGE: You've been born, haven't you? Almost anything is worth while if it produces something as good as you.

TRIX: You're nice, George, but . . . you can't go running into something like getting wed just because you're fed up. The only time to get married is when you simply can't go on living unless you're with the other.

GEORGE (*hopefully*): Well, *I* feel that road many a time. And then again—Josh isn't fit to be in the same house with you. . . .

[*There is a violent knocking on the wall followed*

by a scream. **TRIX** seizes her hat, frightened and at the same time raging.

TRIX: Oh, God, that's my mother!

[Both she and **GEORGE** stand tense, listening for a moment.]

I must go.

GEORGE: Shall I come?

TRIX: No, better not—not unless I call.

[She goes out swiftly.]

GEORGE stands listening, then walks to the fire and pokes it and stands thoughtful, poker in hand. Replaces poker. Goes to piano and begins to play very softly the negro spiritual "Steal away, steal away to Jesus," which he hums softly, pausing now and then to listen. **HARRIET** returns the back way.

HARRIET (taking her hat off and going to put it in the front room): Your father come?

GEORGE (still sitting at the piano and shaking his head): No.

[**HARRIET** returns and begins to put the cloth on again.]

Row on next door. (Nodding his head towards the **MEADOWS'** house.)

HARRIET (starts): Did she knock? I promised . . . why didn't you go? How long since?

GEORGE: **TRIX** was here. She went. Said she'd call if she wanted me. I'll go if you think I'd better. It's been quiet since.

HARRIET: A pity somebody doesn't bring him home by t' canal when he's drunk one night—and shove him in.

GEORGE (suddenly taking his fingers off the keys where they have been softly moving, and with a sideways glance at her): Sort of job an unemployed young man might do.

HARRIET: (*startled and a little frightened at his tone*): Now then, don't talk soft.

GEORGE (*vehemently*): He'd better not touch Trix.

HARRIET: If Trix is well advised, she'll go and live somewhere else. It's no place for her.

GEORGE: That's what I told her—when I asked her to marry me.

HARRIET: When you what?

GEORGE: Asked her to marry me.

HARRIET (*after staring at him*): Don't plague me.

GEORGE (*patiently*): Don't you see, mother, we should all be better off? I should get twenty-three bob a week. Trix and I could live on that. Josh would go on Public Assistance. It 'ud be better all round.

HARRIET (*drily*): I've wondered what was the matter wi' you lately. My word! Besides, if Trix worked you wouldn't get a ha'penny.

GEORGE: She wouldn't work. *I'd* see to that.

HARRIET: Where's your pride? Married on t' dole. An' you—you're nobbut a lad. But you're *my* lad, an' it'll never be said this family did a thing like that. Married on t' strength o' bein' on t' poor-house. Nay——

[*She butters very furiously the loaf she is cutting.*]

What did Trix say?

GEORGE (*bitterly*): About the same as you. You could make a duet of it. You've all got it in your heads there's something shameful in being kept by old Neville Chamberlain instead o' sponging on your relatives. (*Flaring up*) Is it *my* fault I'm not working?

HARRIET: Tha needn't start on that agen. I know all tha can tell me—world chaos and what not. It doesn't alter facts.

GEORGE: That's just what it *does* do. Lancashire's na poo—a lot of it, anyway. It's up to the Government to realise it and set about finding fresh jobs for us—on the land or somewhere.

HARRIET: Folk as are any good mak' their own road i' this world—allus have and allus will.

GEORGE: That's what I'm going to do—but I'll make my own road my own road.

HARRIET: Not as long as tha'rt i' this house. If tha gets wed on t' dole I'll——

[At that moment there is a crash next door as of a table over-turning and a body falling. HARRIET and GEORGE stare at one another, then GEORGE cries :

GEORGE: I'll go, mother.

[He runs out.

HARRIET *stands undecided and then goes on preparing the meal, stopping now and then.*

After a moment GEORGE and TRIX appear supporting MRS. MEADOWS, who has a weal on her cheek from which a trickle of blood oozes.

HARRIET (*who has hurried towards them*): Put her in t' rocking-chair. I'll get some warm water.

[Her movements are certain and decided. She takes a basin, fills it with water from the kettle and with a piece of flannel begins to bathe the wound. MRS. MEADOWS is pale and looks extremely ill. After a moment or two MRS. MEADOWS speaks.

MRS. MEADOWS: I'st be all right in a two-three minutes.

HARRIET: George, light t' gas stove for some tea. It'll be quicker than t' fire.

[GEORGE goes into the scullery.

(Turning to TRIX) Wheer's Josh, Trix? (Nodding towards next door.)

TRIX: Went up the street. I—I threw the poker at him. (*Wildly*) I—I don't know what I'll do if he touches her again—or me. (*Pause.*) Shall I go for the doctor?

MRS. MEADOWS (*quickly*): No—no—it's nobbut a scratch. (*Pause.*) I don't think he intended it.

[*A look from TRIX of despair at her mother's attitude and of comprehension by HARRIET passes between these two.*]

TRIX: You'll have to leave him, mother.

MRS. MEADOWS (*gently*): I conna do that. I've made mi bed, I mun lie on it. An' happen if he got a job again he wouldn't be so bad. He's been worse since he's been playin' him.

HARRIET: Is there any o' that boracic ointment, George?

GEORGE: I used it all last night for my feet. Shall I go for some?

HARRIET: Yea, and some lint and a bit o' plaster. You'll find my purse in that drawer.

GEORGE (*taking the purse and opening it*): Will a shilling be enough?

HARRIET: Should be.

TRIX: I'll come, George.

GEORGE (*grateful*): Fine.

TRIX: You'll be all right, mother?

MRS. MEADOWS: Yes, luv.

HARRIET: I'll make some tea in a minute. Are yo' feeling any better?

MRS. MEADOWS (*smiling*): I'm champion now.

HARRIET (*drily*): Aye. I con see that wi' my eyes shut. What happened? I blame myself for going out.

MRS. MEADOWS: Nay. Nobody could do anythin'. When I knocked on t' wall it only made him more mad. (*Pause.*) It were o'er some fish cakes I'd made for his tea. He said he couldn't abide 'em. Said I made tastier things for Trix. Then he started about Trix . . . how she were carryin' on wi' t' manager o' t' picture palace where she sings. He heard it in t' White Horse—an' your George were another—and how if she weren't careful, he'd tak' her himself—said she'd tempted him often enough. (*Pause.*) I couldn't stand that. I lost my head a bit, some road. I tow'd him he were a liar an' he took his belt off. (*Pause.*) He'd had a sup too much. He hit me—t' buckle caught my cheek. I knocked on t' wall and Trix come in. Things were quiet for a bit and then he started again wi' Trix and he said some o' the things to her he'd said to me. And he got hold of Trix, to— (*She pauses.*) And in the struggle t' table went o'er and I screamed. (*She looks down and says brokenly*) Oh, God! I'd rather be dead.

[She cries for a moment or two but quickly controls herself.]

There is a step in the lobby and SAM stands there, rather handsome with moustache over a red mouth, his cap pushed back from his auburn hair, and his tipsy face wearing a bemused grin. He is easy-going, humorous, good-natured, feckless.

SAM: Hello, Harriet, mi lass. I've got a bit o' news for thee—

HARRIET: Aye. (*Looks at him and goes on tending MRS. MEADOWS, who is now quiet.*)

SAM: You're like a couple o' love-birds. Doesn'ta want to know what it is? (*Pause.*) Well, I'll tell thee, so's how it is. I'm out of a job—a gentleman—aye. Factory's shut up. Redundant—scrap (*with a flourish of his arm*). They'll be smashin' up t' spinnin' frames wi'

sledge-hammers for scrap in a two-three weeks. (*Then, with a flash of distorted insight*) It used to be men as wanted to smash machines—Luddite rioters, they ca'd 'em,—*now* it's bosses who're smashin' 'em. Bloody funny that, isn't it? (*Pause.*) I'll tell thee one thing—it's a dam' good job we didn't have any more young 'uns. Aye, above a bit.

[HARRIET *bends her head a little lower and furtively wipes her eye with the corner of her apron.*

Thee and me and Jane and Josh'll be a reg'lar quartet now, eh?

[SAM *stands there swaying unsteadily and grinning foolishly. The two women are as still as if carved.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT II

SCENE I

SCENE: HARRIET'S house a month later. Time, early evening. SAM is on the stage alone when the curtain rises. He is in his shirt-sleeves and wears an apron round his waist. He is preparing to bake on the table. He has a large brown mug and a paper bag of flour, a cup of yeast and so forth. He is enjoying himself. He has written down on a scrap of paper instructions how he is to proceed.

TOM EDMUNDS, a neighbour, a bald little man, bandy-legged, also in shirt-sleeves, comes to the door and stands there with a pint pot in his hand, smoking a cob pipe.

TOM: Con tha lend me a cupful o' rice? I'm makin' a rice puddin'.

SAM: Corn'ta see I'm gettin' ready for my bakin'?

TOM (*coaxingly*): It winna tak' thee a minute. Sally'll play hell wi' me if t' puddin' isn't in th' oven when she gets back.

SAM: Tha'rt best borrower in t' street, Tom. Tha owes me a pint o' milk an' two cups o' flour as it is. Come on wi' thee. (TOM goes to SAM and SAM takes the pint pot and examines it critically.) I thowt tha said a cup? More like a bucket. (He goes to a cupboard and fills it with rice out of a paper bag.) How art gettin' on wi' t' job?

TOM (*launching into explanation*): It's same as I con do t' cookin' middlin-like, but our new babby's a fair teaser. Tha'd think it were made o' pins. I'm punctured all o'er. An' it's same as if it were a reg'lar water-cart too. I howld it out o'er t' basin same as Sally says and it'll do nowt, but let it get a nice warm napkin on an' by gum . . . ! Fause little devil. I had to bring it wi' me in t' go-cart . . . winna let me out of its

seet—hundred per cent feminine. (*A baby cries off.*) An' it'll chew owt—tha'd think it were a factory boiler it's that fond o' coal. (*Baby cries again.*)

SAM: When didta feed it last?

TOM (*thunderstruck*): By God, I'd forgotten—heh, if Sally knows . . . (*He begins to hurry off, and SAM shouts after him.*)

SAM: Tha should set th' alarm clock every time to remind thee.

[HARRIET enters as SAM empties a paper bag of flour. It rises in a cloud and makes him sneeze.

SAM (*after sneezing*): Consarn it!

[HARRIET looks up from the darning she is beginning to do and smiles indulgently.

HARRIET: I wish tha wouldn't sneeze into t' bread, Sam.

SAM: I turned my head away.

HARRIET: Cooks han' to be careful. (*Pause.*) I found a trouser button in the potato pie yesterday.

SAM: Tha never did!

HARRIET: Yea, I did. I very nearly broke a tooth on it. Sally Edmunds said I ought to ha' trained yo' better than that.

SAM: Oo's jealous? Her Tom isn't in t' same street as me when it comes to makin' a hot-pot.

(*He has been mixing the yeast, and now brings it to her for inspection.*) Is there enough water in it?

HARRIET: Tha's nearly drowned it.

SAM (*scratching his head*): Aye, I thowt I had.

[*He pours it into the flour, and proceeds to mix it, with his fingers. Then he stops, and, turning his head, tries to wipe his nose on his shoulder.*

HARRIET: What art doin'?

SAM: My nose itches.

HARRIET: Now then, I've tow'd thee afore. (*She gets up.*) Tha mun tell me when tha wants thy nose wipin'.

[*She goes to him and wipes it, during which process he says:*

SAM (*rather incoherent*): It's nobbut itchin', I tell thee. (*Then adds*) Gi'e us a kiss while tha'rt here.

HARRIET: Don't be daft.

[*But he has stopped mixing the flour and stands waiting, and she kisses him. It is rather a peck, but she is pleased, nevertheless.*

SAM: Not much more than make-weight, lass.

(*He goes on kneading.*)

[*She resumes her sewing.*

(*Smiling*) How dost like wearing t' britches?

HARRIET: I don't.

SAM: I'll bet tha'rt best weaver in t' shed.

HARRIET: What art t' after?

SAM: Nowt. (*But, of course, he is*). Tha allus were a good weaver. I shouldn't ha' wed thee if tha hadn't been. I allus looked on thee as my owd age pension.

[*But she is smiling.*

HARRIET: It were nice on 'em to gi'e me four looms, I thowt.

SAM (*pondering*): Aye, well, happen it were. But I don't believe tha relishes gettin' up at afe past six any moore than I did.

HARRIET: I never realised before what a nice warm back tha's got.

SAM: Gi'e us another kiss, then.

HARRIET: Behave thyself! (*But she is in great good-humour.*)

SAM (*crossing over to her with the jug*): Will that be enough water to add to it?

HARRIET: Tha knows well enough.

SAM: Nah, nah, tha knows tha likes to be asked. (*He kneads for a moment*) Didta look at t' fire-irons?

HARRIET: Yea.

SAM: What didta think on 'em?

HARRIET: Pretty tidy.

SAM: There were afe a crown's worth o' elbow grease on 'em. I'll tell thee summat. Two or three on us had a bit of a meetin' 'ere this afternoon.

HARRIET: What sort of a meetin'?

SAM: A trade union meetin'. We want a rise. We reckon we're underpaid—washerwomen, bakers, charrin', an' what-not for a shillin' a week. We con only go to pic-chers once. It's not enough. We want our wages doublin'.

HARRIET: If tha gets two shillin' tha'll be takin' somebody else to t' pic-chers as well as thyself.

SAM: Nah then, tha' knows me weel enough.

HARRIET (*drily*): That's just it.

SAM: If tha thinks a chap can go wrong on a couple of bob a week tha must have a grand imagination.

HARRIET: There's them as has to get wed on *nowt* a week. It costs *nowt* to make a child. I often think it's a pity.

SAM (*grandiloquently*): Tha'rt evadin' th' issue. Double wages an' an extra packet of Gold Flake and a trip once a month to Burnham. What dost say to that?

HARRIET: I 'll consider it.

[PETER comes in, hangs his cap up, and stands looking at SAM critically.]

PETER (*bitingly*): Why hasn't tha got thy gradely pinny on? That one wi' a bib?

SAM (*good-humouredly*): Nay, not when I have to wash 'em mysel'.

PETER: I yerd of a hen as changed its sex, but tha'rt a bigger miracle than that.

HARRIET (*sharply*): That'll do, father.

PETER (*furiously*): Dost think Wilf would ha' let thee go t' factory an' keep him?

HARRIET: It would ha' takken' more than him to stop me. It's not Sam's fault he's out o' work. Don't pretend.

PETER (*pulling a chair up and in a derisory tone*): It's not Sam's fault, I suppose, that he washes up an' cooks t' dinner.

SAM (*gently and half musingly*): He were a grand cook in th' army, were Wilf. Give him a spade an' a piece o' wood an' a bit o' bacon an' he'd ha' it frizzling and every mouth waterin' in no time. And as for washin' up, they allus put him on that job when t' Brigadier were goin' to inspect th' hut. (*As he talks he has carried the bread mug near the fire and laid a cloth over it so that it may rise.*) It'll be an hour, risin', I reckon.

[*A cracked bugle is heard blowing faintly, and then nearer, and voices grow louder singing: "The Inter-nation-ale will unite the hu-man race" and there's the tap-tap of a drum going past the front door and the tramp and shuffle of feet. The three of them listen, quiet and rather tense.*]

HARRIET: They're late comin' back.

PETER: They had a meetin' near t' War Memorial. Spoutin' t' usual muck. SOSOS they

say, dunnot they—same-owd-stuff-only-softer. Harry Richardson were talkin' about that bloodless revolution as is comin'. I shouted: "It's come, hasn't it? Afe on yo' are nowt but skivvies and pram-pushers, and t' other afe are bed-ridden till dinner-time every day." (*Pause.*) They'n worked it out to fine art—breakfast at dinner-time and summat else at six o'clock. If livin' on two meals a day makes folks healthy we're breedin' Goliaths i' Chesterford. Only fro' what I con see afe on 'em 'ud mak' jockeys for whippets. (*Pause.*) I met Eddy Whitehead on t' road. He'll be here in a jiffy. He's comin' to see thee (*turning to SAM*).

HARRIET: What does he want?

PETER: Bit o' soundin'—plumbin' t' depths—wants to know how far chaps'll sink yet afore they do summat. What do they call him—human dynamite?

HARRIET: He's wasting his time. (*With scorn*) Human dynamite!

[*There is a knock on the front door and SAM goes to let WHITEHEAD in. He walks with the aid of two sticks—tall, cold, handsome, domineering, forty years old. Left leg artificial from above the knee. He has lost a lot of his dialect in his studies. They are all a little awkward with him—a slight awe and fear. Even HARRIET has to fight against it.*]

WHITEHEAD (*easily*): Evening, Mrs. Renshaw. Evening, Sam. I've been treading on your shadow, Peter.

[HARRIET stands looking at him, having murmured "Evenin'!"]

SAM (*uncomfortably*): Mak' thysel' at home (*motioning WHITEHEAD to a seat.*)

[WHITEHEAD sits down, his left leg straight out.

WHITEHEAD: You didn't come to the meeting, Sam.

SAM: No. I were busy-like.

HARRIET (*incisively*): He were bakin'. More important than chin-wag.

[SAM looks at HARRIET a little deprecatingly.

WHITEHEAD (*with a cold smile*): Man doesn't live by bread alone.

HARRIET: I suppose t' unions'll object to us bakin' our own bread next. (*Proceeding like a parrot and with a sneer in her voice*) Go to t' shops as employ trade union bakers.

WHITEHEAD: Something in that. I'm not sure I like men baking at home.

HARRIET: Not sure *yo'* like.

WHITEHEAD: That's what I said.

HARRIET: An' how long's it bin *thy* business?

WHITEHEAD: Quite a while. It's everybody's business.

HARRIET: How dost mak' that out?

WHITEHEAD: What Sam's doing is turning life upside down. I'm all in favour of turning life upside down—but not in ~~this way~~. It's degrading—skilled spinners and weavers spending their time over kitchen sinks.

HARRIET (*still sneering*): Tha doesn't think it degrades a woman?

WHITEHEAD: No—not in the same way. It's her job.

HARRIET: Even after she's stood mindin' four looms aw day?

WHITEHEAD: More her job than his even then.

HARRIET: Even if he's bin playin' him all day and she's bin workin'?

WHITEHEAD: *You* know why so many women weavers get the preference over men.

HARRIET: Why?

WHITEHEAD: The skirts they wear. Tacklers. . . .

SAM (*clumsily*): 'Ere, 'ere, there's nowt of that sort 'ere, Whitehead.

WHITEHEAD: Mrs. Renshaw knows I'm speaking of others, not her.

HARRIET (*who speaks partly at the same time as WHITEHEAD and continues after he has finished*): But it's a fairy-tale, whoever he's talkin' of. Any tackler'll tell thee who gets most cuts off, men or women.

WHITEHEAD (*turns to SAM*): It's the employment of women when the work might be done by men that I've come about.

SAM: Aye—well.

HARRIET (*nettled*): Sam's a spinner—I'm a weaver. He can't do my job.

WHITEHEAD (*drily*): I've heard he's deen doing it very well lately.

PETER (*enjoying himself*): He had thee theer, lass.

HARRIET: Aye, ~~aye~~, go on. Stick up for one another. You're a fine lot. There's three men i' this house and I'm the only one workin'. And there's a bit of a lass keepin' 'em all next door.

WHITEHEAD (*quickly*): You're on my side, Mrs. Renshaw, if you'd only realise it.

HARRIET: Never. Why don't they shape and find summat to do?

PETER: Nay, by God, I'st not ha' that. Aren't we *pinin'* for work?

HARRIET (*scornfully*): You've tow'd us often enough.

PETER: Tha thinks we con start blast-furnaces and spinnin'-mills in t' back yard.

HARRIET: There's many a business bin started in a back yard.

PETER: Paintin' spots on doobby-horses, happen. Tha'rt talkin' like two pennorth o' Ramsey's Newsletter. If men han worked aw their life at a job and then the works is scrapped, it's somebody's responsibility to find work for 'em. If society, through bein' unable to organise itsel' on common-sense lines and mak' use o' th' earth's fruitfulness, conna find men work, then t' men have a right to sit on their backsides and be kept and wait for summat to be done.

HARRIET (*scornfully*): Well, you're doin' it, aren't yo'? Like a lot o' spoilt childer, sayin', "I shan't play in yore game."

WHITEHEAD: It's precisely because we're determined to play in the game, Mrs. Renshaw, that I'm here. We've no intention of allowing *you* to work while three men are idle, or of allowing the girl next door to keep the family.

Harriet: And when are yo' goin' to set agate stoppin' it?

WHITEHEAD: Now, I hope. I'm going to ask Sam to keep you at home so that a man can have your looms.

HARRIET (*in deep disgust and scorn*): Talk sense. How do you know a man would get 'em anyhow? Sithee, if I weren't workin' Sam 'ud draw eight shillin' dole for me. I work and mak' thirty so we're twenty-two bob a week better off. Tha must have a face o' brass. How long 's thy name been Hitler?

WHITEHEAD (*ignoring that and turning to SAM*): Any blackleg could put up the same argument. You can live on the dole. Two millions are doing it. Well, Sam?

SAM (*scratching his head*): I don't know. All I'm sure about is that if I tell her to stop she'll tak'

no notice. Besides, I'm not sure as I relish being towd what to do by t' union, eyther.

PETER: Don't worry, Sam. Another boss or two'll mak' no difference to *thee*.

SAM (*surprisingly*): That's reet. I've takken little notice of any on 'em.

HARRIET: See, you've no more chance o' stoppin' me weavin' than o' stoppin' that bread fro' risin'.

WHITEHEAD: We might get the firm to sack you. We've already had a meeting with 'em about giving men priority.

HARRIET: An' yo're t' chap as is allus gassin' about liberty!

WHITEHEAD: Liberty and *laissez faire* run riot is chaos. You don't allow liberty to house-breakers and lawbreakers. You're breaking a moral and economic law.

HARRIET: Laws? It's not a question o' laws. It's a question o' my self-respect. Dost think I could hold my head up wi' Sam standin' in a queue drawin' dole for me, when I might be earnin' my livin' and be beholden to nobody?

WHITEHEAD (*ironically*): You're a Bolshevik.

HARRIET: I shall be if tha tries any more o' thy interference i' this house or wi' me. We'st go our own road at 24 Lavender Street—an' t' door's on t' latch.

WHITEHEAD (*rising*): We shall see.

SAM: Nah, there's no need to part this road.

HARRIET: Tha doesn't think I'm goin' to mak' a chap welcome as talks o' gettin' me t' sack? I allus wondered what were wrong wi' men. No wonder th' House o' Commons is a wash-out—call a man a liar one minute, and stand

him a drink t' next. Mak' jokes about th' unemployed. (*Apeing what she imagines men say*) Don't be vulgar and lose your sense o' humour o'er it. Oh, you make me sick!

WHITEHEAD (*admiringly*): We shall be fighting on the same side yet.

HARRIET: Aye, when tha crosses to my side o' t' street.

[*She stands watching him go out, PETER, in his turn, staring at her in amused admiration. SAM scratches his head.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE II

A day or two later, Time : afternoon.

[*SAM enters, looks round, and turns, saying :*

SAM: Come in, Jamie, there's nobody in.

[*JAMIE MCINTYRE enters. He looks ill and miserable and limps a little. SAM is protective and kindly.*]

If thy missus comes in tha'rt not so well, tha's come whoam for a while, dost sec? Sit thee down, I'll mak' thee some tay. (*Pokes the fire.*) How long didta say tha'd been playin' thee?

JAMIE: Three months.

SAM (*whistles*): An' wheers tha bin puttin' thysel'?

JAMIE: God knows. Walkin' mae feet off lookin' for a job outside Chesterford.

[*SAM pauses with the kettle in his hand before taking it off the fire.*]

SAM: Why doesn't tell her?

JAMIE: She's said o'er much aboot me never bein' oot of a job when other chaps are oot, an' then I thought I'd mebbe get another job soon and then juist tell her I'd made a change—and then again she's awfu' close. It 'ud break her hairt not to ha' ma wages.

SAM: But she's not gettin' thy wages, any road.

JAMIE: Aye, she is.

SAM: 'Ow's tha managed it, then?

JAMIE: Made mae dole up wi' money from the Post Office bank. But it canna go on much longer.

SAM (*from his deep knowledge and with conviction*): I'll tell thee what, Jamie, women are a damned nuisance. Has she twigged nowt?

JAMIE: Nae. The works bein' at t' far end o' th' toon, an' me goin' at the same time ivery mornin' an' comin' hame at the usual time and takin' care to dirty mae face, an' makin' up chat as goes on at t' works—what Fergusson telt me an' what I telt him. By God, man, it's awfu'. I've telt more lies in three months than iver I telt in mae ~~life~~ before.

SAM (*feelingly*): I know, an' if'oo finds that out—what tha's done to spare her—it'll go for nowt. I've tried it mesel'. Tha con lie thy yed off, they ne'er appreciate it. (*Pause.*) Aw t' same, I'm damned if I know how tha's kept it dark. (*With a gesture*) If I nobbut spit somewheer, aw Chesterford knows about it.

JAMIE: I've always kept maesel' to maesel' an' niver gone to the kirk. The kirk's the devil at findin' things out.

SAM (*after a pause*): Tha'd better tell her.

JAMIE: I know.

SAM: Best to tell 'em (*ruefully*) what they'll find out any road.

JAMIE (*avoiding the issue*): I were takin' a look at a paper last neight. Ye canna get a job any more if you're ovver forty-five, it said.

SAM (*eyeing him*): Newspapers talk a lot o' bunk.

JAMIE: I'm fifty-seven. (*He holds out his hands.*) They're as good as iver they were. (*Turns them over.*)

SAM: Better! (*Takes the tea-pot, puts tea in it with his fingers, and goes to the kettle; then cheerfully*) There's one thing, Jamie. I don't need a spoon to measure t' tay wi' now. I con tell i' my fingers as well as Harriet ever could.

JAMIE: Aye, do yo' tell me so? (*But he isn't interested.*)

[SAM *makes the tea and gets two cups.*

(*Resumes*) If I'd kept mae work I was goin' to South Africa next year. Juist a holiday. I'd bin savin' up for ten years. Mae daughter Aggie's there. D'ye ken Aggie?

SAM (*pouring out the tea*): Aye, nice lass. Why not tak' a chance an' go now? 'Appen there'll be a job when tha gets back—or—tha might find a job out there. 'Ere (*giving JAMIE a cup*), the stuff that won the war. Not rum, tay. Funny, that, isn't it? What do they call this? An economic war? An' we're back to tay again.

JAMIE (*sipping his tea*): Will it be time for me to go hame? (*Takes out his watch.*)

SAM: Tell her th' engine broke down an tha'rt home a bit sooner while they mend it.

JAMIE (*with quiet pride*): Mae engines *niver* broke down.

SAM: Well, they're broken down now at ony rate. Tell her t' spare parts couldn't be got.

[JAMIE takes a small bottle of oil from his pocket and goes to the hearth.

What art doin'?

JAMIE (*with grim humour*): Makin' a worrkin' man. (*He puts oil on his hands and face and takes a little ash from underneath the fire and smears his face.*)

SAM (*admiringly*): Tha'rt a regular actor.

JAMIE (*with sudden intensity*): I tell ye, mon, I wish the bluidy play was ended. What good's a chap like me who canna get work? I'd better be dead. I *am* dead to all intents and purposes. It isn't as if I'd iver been brocht up to spind a lot o' time makin'—what do they ca' it—whoopee? Whoopee, by God! I tell ye, I'm afear't to go home.

SAM: Nah, nah, Jamie. (*Again from the depths of his knowledge but half humorously too*) Find me a chap as is wed who *isna* feart o' goin' home some time or other.

[*There is a rattle at the back door and SAM goes to the window to look who it is, and waves the person to enter, turning to JAMIE to say:*

Our neighbour at the off-beer. Nobody *tha* knows.

[MAGGIE O'HALLORAN enters, a dark haired Irishwoman of thirty-five. She has been to New York and has the tricks of the cinema and some of the speech also. She is handsome in a florid way and rather fat.

(*Introducing them*) This is Mr. McIntyre, Maggie. Mrs. O'Halloran, Jamie.

MAGGIE (*demurely and swaying her hips a little*): Pleased to meet you.

JAMIE (*disconcerted, and taking his cap*): Same to ye, I'm sure. Well, I'll be slippin'. I daresay it'll work itsel' oot.

SAM (*going with him to the door*): Well, be good, lad. Drop in any time. (*Conscious of the irony of it*): Tha'll find me washin' or blackleadin' or summat.

MAGGIE (*when SAM has returned—smiling at him*): Are you busy, honey?

SAM: I will be in a minute, lass.

[*He walks swiftly to her and takes her in his arms and kisses her with great energy. The kiss over, MAGGIE leans back, looking up at him and supported by his arms behind her waist.*]

MAGGIE: Ain't you the husky boy?

SAM (*shaking her gently*): Chesterford's Mae West, eh? S'welp me, but tha could have anythin' tha wanted—if I had it to gie thee.

MAGGIE (*smiling*): I've known plenty generous that way. (*Pause.*) You couldn't lend me five bob, honey, could you?

SAM (*with sincerity*): I wish I could, lass.

MAGGIE: Me old fellow had another loser yesterday. Don't *nobody* have any luck in this town?

SAM: Nah, nah, yo' mun be payin' super-tax, 'Arry helpin' to train t' Wanderers an' yo' runnin' th' off-beer. 'Ere, when are yo' takkin' me to t' pic-chers?

[*They are playful and skittish with one another, with occasional laughter and tickling and caressing.*]

MAGGIE: Wait now while I tell you. Could you manage Burnham on Thursday?

SAM (*gravely*): Thursdays I blackleads t' grate and does top shelves.

MAGGIE (*chinking with laughter*): And when do you wash Harriet's undies?

SAM (*smiling*): Well, I've done that afore to-day. It's aw reet thee laughin', but I can't 'ave it every road. Them as stops at home mun keep t' fire in.

[MAGGIE nestles closer to him. SAM squeezes her and then goes on a little grandiloquently.]

Don't imagine, mind thee, as I don't get sick on it. A seven-pound-a-week mon I were, an' Harriet—well—I like a woman wi' a bit of elastic about her—stretch a bit, tha knows. A chap hates to be made to feel he's a wrong un—women 'ud see that if they'd any sense. After all, we're as we are, tha knows, Maggie—there's no alterin' us.

MAGGIE (*comfortably*): What's the confession for if nobody ain't goin' to sin? People have to have their re relaxation.

[*There is a heavy knocking at the front door, and MAGGIE starts.*]

SAM: Tak, no notice. Tha'd think we were millionaires i' Lavender Street, judgin' by t' stuff they want to sell me—vacuums, newspaper canvassers, carpets. I tell 'em all, "Tha con leave it, but I sign nowt an' I pay nowt." That gets shut on 'em.

MAGGIE (*looking at him from under her lashes*): It beats me what you find to do all day.

[SAM gives her a squeeze and a kiss, and then resumes his talk, rather to her disgust.]

SAM: I've had my thinkin'-cap on. I could cook enough potato pie for aw this row while I'm at it. Communal—that's what it ought to be.

MAGGIE: Communal—thats free love, isn't it?

SAM (*going on*): An' all this brass-polishin' and steel-fender business an' washin' up an' breakin' pots. Tommy rot. Knife, fork an' spoon, and billy-can—that's aw a man needs. I tell thee,

Maggie, if us chaps stop at home much longer, there'll be a revolution in th' homes of England.

MAGGIE: Three wives to every man, eh?

SAM (*sagely*): There's summat i' that, too. There aren't enough men to go round and there's a lot o' women goin' daft i' consequence. Summat ought to be done about it.

[He kisses her again, and while he is doing so there's a rattle of a key in the front door and SAM gets up just before HARRIET walks in.]

SAM (*stroking his face*): Hello, Harriet. Summat up at t' mill or summat?

HARRIET (*looking round and speaking drily*): No. Is there summat up here? I see tha'rt entertainin'.

MAGGIE (*holding her ground and remaining seated*): O'Halloran was wondering if ye'd both look in and have a hand o' cards one evenin'.

HARRIET (*taking off her hat and jacket and going to rake the fire and saying with meaning*): Nay, I seldom hold so good a hand as Sam does.

SAM: Yea, yea, we mun be sociable, tha knows.

HARRIET: Tha makes up for the pair on us. Yo'll excuse me.

[She takes the kettle out to fill. MAGGIE gets up.]

SAM (*feeling responsible for the awkward situation, and wanting to explain, mutters*): Her's afe an hour afore her time.

[MAGGIE pinches his arm and crosses to the back door, and as HARRIET returns.]

MAGGIE: You won't be after forgetting, Mrs. Renshaw?

HARRIET (*putting the kettle on with a smack*): I'll promise you I won't.

[MAGGIE exits. still smiling.]

SAM (*uncomfortable, but feeling he must speak*):
Th'art home early, lass.

HARRIET: Aye, I could see I arrived a bit too soon. I'm sorry I interrupted thee. (*Pause.*) So she's another on 'em, is she? It were bad enough when tha were workin'. I see it's goin' to be a seet wuss now tha'rt playin' thee.

SAM (*trying to be grieved*): Tha can't expect a chap to bang t' door i' people's faces when they come to see him.

HARRIET: Naw, not when they're beezems like yon. (*There's a pause.*) Hast ever thowt what it's like for me? (*She has sat down thoughtfully and rather sadly.*)

SAM: I think tha tak's it too serious-like.

HARRIET: Men change so soon.

SAM (*gropingly*): It's this road. A chap takes a fancy to a woman and he wants her and he'll never be reet till he gets her and then . . . It doesn't mean so much as tha imagines it does.

[HARRIET brushes her hand across her eyes.

Of course, I know tha'll think I'm not much good, and happen tha'll be reet. (*Pause, and then, trying to explain again and wanting to be honest*) An' it's no good my sayin' it'll never happen agen, because it might do. But if it does, it'll pass like t'others have passed.

[HARRIET dries her eyes and sits looking stolidly at the fire.

Tha thinks I'm deceitful, but what's t' good o' tellin' thee?

HARRIET: I allus know.

SAM (*with a queer, wry smile*): Nay, tha doesn't. Tha's not allus known. (*Pause.*) It's only mak's thee suffer, tellin' thee.

HARRIET: I'd rayther know, an' suffer.

SAM: I know. That's one o' t' things I con never make out about thee. It seems such a waste-like.

HARRIET (*rising and speaking a little dully*): I've got summat to tell thee.

SAM: Aye, lass?

HARRIET: I'm a long way—past my time.

SAM (*gravely*): Hey, I'm that sorry. Why didn't tell me? (*Pause.*) Had tha better tak' summat?

[He goes and puts his arm round her and she leans against him.]

HARRIET: I've been takkin' stuff. That's what made me so cranky. Why mun folk have childer they don't want?

SAM: It's aw my fault.

HARRIET: Dunnot say that.

SAM: Don't worry, lass. What does t' poet say—

“Tha'rt welcome, bonnie brid,
Tha shouldn't ha come just when tha did,
Times are hard.”

Folk han gone through it afore. Tha munna mak' thysel' poorly wi' takkin' stuff any moore.

(But he is wondering if he is being too generous.)

HARRIET: Wheer are we gooin' to be if we han another child? It's not right. (*Pause.*) An' thee carryin' on wi' somebody else.

[Suddenly she breaks down and cries.]

SAM (*stroking her hair*): Theer, theer, lass. Th'art probably worryin' too soon.

SCENE III

A week later.

PETER is seated wearing steel spectacles reading the Bible and GEORGE is quietly playing the piano—Chopin's *Etude No. 10, Opus No. 3*. When he stops playing, PETER begins to read from the *Sermon on the Mount*.

PETER: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

GEORGE (*swinging round on the piano-stool*): I wonder!

PETER: Howd thy din. (*More gently*) "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." Aye. Aye. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt——"

GEORGE (*ironically*): There's not much chance, is there?

PETER: This'll suit *thee*. "Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its savour wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under the foot of men." (*Violently*) By God, there ~~was~~ were a truer word spokken. Thee and me, eh? Crabbed age and blighted youth. Tha'd think there were a plague i' Chesterford. T' Black Death or summat. Why doesn't clear out? Is this lass next door keepin' thee fro' goin'?

GEORGE (*easily*): Happen.

PETER: Tha'rt too young to get mixed up wi' a wench, lively as she is. Thirty's time enough. An' don't let thy mother keep thee 'ere. Women are never gradely reet wheer their childer are concerned—they don't know what's wrong wi' 'em till they've 'ad one, an' they're not much better at after. They're mostly like kangaroos

—want to carry t' childer about. (*Pause.*) Has Josh Meadows bin behavin' hissel' lately?

GEORGE: I've not heard of that miracle.

PETER: Th' Angel o' Death doesn't exercise as much discrimination as he might do i' choosin' his followers.

GEORGE: We'll have to send him a postcard, making a suggestion.

PETER: It's a lamentable thing that if there were another war, chaps like Josh 'ud be too owd to go. It 'ud be them same as thee t' Moluch 'ud swallow. Death likes his princes young an' fair. . . . Aye, young an' fair.

[*There is a rattle of the latch of the back door and Mrs. McINTYRE comes in.*]

MRS. McINTYRE: Is Mrs. Renshaw not home yet?

PETER: It's noan her time yet. (*Banteringly*) You're not the only one as has gotten one in th' house as is workin', you know.

MRS. McINTYRE: Oh, I ken that. I ken that fine.

PETER: How's Jamie?

MRS. McINTYRE: Oh, Jamie's fine. Juist that. We're talkin' o' takin' a trip to South Africa, you know. But I tell him, I don't know juist how he'll manage to live wi'out workin' unless they gie him charge o' the engines on the ship.

PETER (*drily*): I dunnot see how they could help doin' that once they had him aboard. Is there owt you're wantin'?

MRS. McINTYRE: Mrs. Renshaw wuz tellin' me about the recipe she had for the indigestion. Jamie's bothered wi' it a bit. Not very much, you know, but he's not sleepin' so well. I tell

him he's excitit about this South Africa business. Last night he was talkin' in his sleep a bit—dreaming time wuz hangin' heavy on his hands, seemingly. Aye, I say I do admire the way he gets the days over.

PETER: Aye, it wants a bit o' doin'.

MRS. MCINTYRE: 'Tis sure ma Jamie would juist wither away—aye, wither away.

PETER (*rising with sudden violence*): What do yo' make o' the sort o' life, Mrs. McIntyre, as kills men because they've the chance at last to smell the earth an' breathe t' fresh air an' examine how th' Almighty made t' birds for man's music an' t' sky for his picture? Tell me that, Mrs. McIntyre, will yo'? (*Shaking a long forefinger at her.*)

MRS. MCINTYRE: I'm sure I hardly know whit to say. We've ~~all~~ bin brought up to worrk. I alwis say gie me a bucket o' water an' a scrubbin' brush an' I'm as happy as the day is long.

PETER (*disgusted*): No imagination. (*And tosses his head.*)

MRS. MCINTYRE: Eh?

PETER (*shouting*): No imagination! What does the book say? "Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine."

[*But three-quarter's way through PETER's outburst Mrs. MCINTYRE has begun to go, and as he finishes the door bangs. GEORGE, who has been quietly amused, turns back to his piano and begins to play Chopin again, starting half-way through at the downward sweeping chords, and he has played for a few moments when there is a violent bang at the front door, and a scurry along the passage.*]

JOSH'S VOICE (*heard off*): By God, tha bitch, I'll ha' thee.

[There is a short, low sound, half scream and half sob, from TRIX, then her voice saying

TRIX'S VOICE: You devil!

[Then a grunt is heard and a thud as a body hits the ground. PETER and GEORGE have started towards the passage, GEORGE ahead, and PETER pauses at the door and waits for GEORGE to return. He does so, supporting TRIX, whose blouse is torn, showing part of her left breast. In her right hand is a bread-knife, which she suddenly realises she holds. She shudders at it and drops it. It bears a smear of blood. TRIX sits in a chair and looks round towards the passage, frightened, her face pale, her breath coming fast, her eyes dilated.

GEORGE (*keeps muttering*): Darling, you're all right, all right now. Don't worry, dear. By God, I'll pay Meadows for this. Oh, darling, why didn't you call me?

[But TRIX says nothing. PETER'S voice calls from the passage.

PETER: George!

GEORGE: Yes, grandfather?

PETER: Tha'd better fetch th' ambulance or summat.

[TRIX begins to cry quietly.

(Coming to the door and standing there) I'll be tryin' to fix him up a bit.

[He sees the knife, picks it up, wipes it on a piece of newspaper, and puts the paper on the fire, where it burns; takes his handkerchief, spits on the knife, polishes it, and puts the knife on the sideboard.

GEORGE: Wouldn't a doctor do?

PETER: Th' ambulance'll get shut on him. A few days i' hospital'll gie 'em a bit o' peace next door.

GEORGE: The police'll come.

PETER: I've thowt o' that. But they'd come any road sooner or later. (*Ponders a moment, thinking how he can invent a tale of what happened.*) Him an' me were havin' an argument (*he walks to the fireplace looking for a weapon: picks up the poker*) and I hit him o'er t' yed wi' this, dost see? I've bin wantin' to do it for quite a while.

[TRIX *takes no notice—she doesn't seem to realise what is happening.*

GEORGE: How—how bad is he?

PETER: I reckon he'll mend—he's cut o'er t' temple and stunned seemin'ly. Happen he winna recollect what happened, and I doubt he'll boast o' what he were tryin' to do—tho' he seems to be mad enough for owt.

GEORGE: Better let me say I did it. (*Looks at TRIX.*) I'd like to do it.

PETER: Nay, by God, I thowt on it first. (*He almost chuckles.*) Look sharp wi' thee.

GEORGE (*to TRIX*): Shan't be long, darling. (*Passes his hand lightly over her hair and goes out the back way.*)

[PETER *goes and slowly hauls JOSH partly into the kitchen, so that we see his head and shoulders. JOSH lies there breathing stertorously. PETER takes the poker, feels the weight of it, makes a stroke or two with it, decides he held it by the handle, goes into the passage and comes back smearing a little blood on the end of it. Goes to TRIX.*

PETER (*very gently*): Lass, tha'd better go next door agen afore they come. I'll see to this.

TRIX (*dully*): I did it.

PETER: Tha mun forget it.

TRIX (*smiling through her tears*): You're kind—but I did it.

PETER: Nah, nah, where's thy work goin' to be if tha gets mixed up i' this? Tha'll get t' sack as sure as God made little apples. That cinema winna like it. Now wi' me it's different. They'll do nout to me as winna amuse me. It'll be like havin' a job agen for a while. Do as I say. It'll please me.

[As he has spoken, he has taken a basin of warm water from the kettle, and with his handkerchief he begins to bathe JOSH's head.]

TRIX (*getting up and a little uncertainly*): If anything happens to you, I shall come and say it was me.

PETER (*gently*): Aye, that's right. Now better go, lass.

[He gets up from his knees and accompanies her to the back door. He returns and stands contemplating JOSH. He says:]

"They have mouths but they speak not, eyes have they but they see not——" Aye, it's aw their. (*Picks up the Bible and looks at it, opening it*) "Great peace have they which love Thy law and nothing shall offend them."

[HARRIET enters the back way, takes off her shawl, sees JOSH, and stands looking at him.]

HARRIET (*sharply*): Hello! (*Going to stand looking down at him*) What's the matter wi' him? Is he——

PETER: He'll mend.

HARRIET: Who's done it? George?

PETER: Nah, then, don't be imaginin' thy off-spring are th' only ones capable o' doin' summat. We'd a few words. His tongue wanted stoppin' and I stopped it. I allus had a fancy for this. (*He makes a swing with the poker.*)

HARRIET: I do believe tha'rt lyin'. How did he come to be here?

PETER: Why, it's not t' first time he's come.

HARRIET: I know that, but it's queer—his comin'.

PETER: Happen he'd a thirst for wisdom. (*Banteringly*) There's some as ca's me Owd Socrates, tha knows.

HARRIET: What did yo' quarrel about?

PETER (*with relish*): Astrology. It seems he's one of them flat earth men—tha knows, them as think they might walk o'er th' edge any minute.

HARRIET: Stop being funny, will yo', an' tell t' truth for once. Where's Trix?

PETER: Nay, nay, ax that lad o' thine, not his grandfeyther.

HARRIET: An' where's George?

PETER: I sent him for th' ambulance. (*Explaining with grim humour*) I'll grant thee it seems a bit illogical to lay him out (*pointing to JOSH*) and then get him better again, but there's plenty o' historical precedent for it. In war it's counted the chivalrous thing to do. It's t' main difference between civilisation and savagery. T' savages finish 'em off proper—even eit 'em sometimes (*wags his head*) but I reckon a bit o' Josh 'ud lie heavy on my stomach.

HARRIET (*going to him and seizing his arm*): Suppose t' police don't believe you?

PETER: I don't see what else they *can* do. Here's a nice little shemozzle—victim stretched out and t' villain waiting to be locked up. I'm showin' 'em every bit o' consideration, amn't I? They're not aw as unreasonable as thee, tha knows. When they come—hearken, this sounds like 'em

—(at that moment the ambulance bell can be heard and the sound of the motor ambulance drawing up at the front door)—all tha's got to do is to know nowt. That's why I've tow'd thee nowt—I doubt tha'd make as good a liar as me.

[*The front door opens and GEORGE enters, followed by two AMBULANCE MEN and a POLICE CONSTABLE.*]

1ST AMBULANCE MAN (*kneeling down and examining JOSH*): Some concussion seemingly.

2ND AMBULANCE MAN: Aye, best get him yonder.

CONSTABLE (*a tall, slow man with a sense of humour*): What's bin goin' on, like?

PETER: I dotted him one wi' this 'ere (*giving him the poker*).

CONSTABLE: You did, eh? Happen he were a bit provokin'-like? But I'd best warn you about anythin' you may say.

PETER: I never cared for him. Tha con see he's no beauty.

CONSTABLE: Aye, I con see that. Still, tha can't go spoilin' what there is, tha knows. Peter Renshaw, isn't it? I shall want yo'. We may as well have a ride as walk. Th' ambulance'll howd t' lot of us. Put your cap on. (*He has taken out his notebook.*) It'll be causin' grievous bodily harm, I'm thinkin'. (*Makes a note or two and picks up the poker.*)

[*PETER puts his jacket and cap on. The two AMBULANCE MEN have carried JOSH out. No stretcher need be used.*]

PETER: Will they gie me a cup o' tay or had I better get a bit sent up?

CONSTABLE: I daresay I con fix yo' up. (*To HARRIET*) I'll look after him, missis.

PETER (*to HARRIET*): Dunnot worrit. It'll keep me occupied.

[PETER and CONSTABLE *exit*.]

HARRIET (*to GEORGE*): Who's he shieldin'? Thee?

[GEORGE *shakes his head*.]

GEORGE: I wanted to say it was me. He wouldn't let me. (*Pause*.) It's Trix. Josh was after her. She came into the lobby.

HARRIET: Wheer is she?

GEORGE: I don't know.

[*Suddenly they see TRIX, who has crept in the back way, standing just inside the back door, pale and distressed*.]

HARRIET (*opening her arms to TRIX*): What is it, luv?

[TRIX *moves to HARRIET and buries her face in her shoulder*.]

Theer, theer. (*Patting her shoulder*) Heh, these men! It's a pity we can't get shut o' the lot on 'em. (*Banteringly, as TRIX lifts her head and half smiles at GEORGE*) Aye, our George, too. He'll be a rare nuisance to somebody afore he's done.

GEORGE: In a different way to that, I hope.

[TRIX *turns away slowly and sits down*.]

TRIX: I'd no right to let 'em take him.

HARRIET: Hush, luv. I daresay nowt'll happen to him.

[MRS. MEADOWS *enters down the passage. She is very white and strained, but she is not crying. She goes to TRIX and puts her arms round her and holds her tightly for a moment or two without speaking*.]

TRIX: They've taken Mr. Renshaw, mother, for something I did.

[MRS. MEADOWS *looks mutely at HARRIET.*

HARRIET: I've been tellin' her nothin'll happen. Rest yoursel's, both on yo'. I'll get yo' summat. We'st be havin' our tea, George an' me. We can aw have it together.

[HARRIET *begins very quietly to prepare a meal.*

MRS. MEADOWS (*to* TRIX): You'll ha' to go away, luv.

TRIX: You'll have to come, too, then.

MRS. MEADOWS: Nay, I canna do that. I've made mi bed. But it's best you should go, when things are as they are. Happen it'll be better for aw on us. (*Pause.*) I'st be all right.

TRIX (*rising*): I'd better go and change me——

HARRIET: All right, luv, don't be long. George, go to t' corner shop an' get a quarter o' boiled ham. We must try an' eat.

[TRIX *goes the back way, and GEORGE, taking HARRIET'S purse, goes the front way.*

MRS. MEADOWS: Is it all right wi' yo' yet?

HARRIET: Aye, thank God.

MRS. MEADOWS: How did yo'——?

HARRIET: Mrs. Marshall. It bothers me, Jane, Is it wicked? But what's t' good o' childer bein' born when yo' can't keep 'em and them as is livin' can't get work?

MRS. MEADOWS (*timidly*): I suppose they'd be useful if there were another war or summat?

HARRIET: That's just it. Yo' wouldn't think men could be as wicked—pretendin' it's your soul they care about when happen it's another war they've got at t' back o' their heads.

MRS. MEADOWS: Don't worry thy head so. It does no good.

[*As she speaks GEORGE and TRIX enter, TRIX first and GEORGE a moment later.*

They come an' pester us for our votes but I canna see as it mak's any difference who gets in. I don't get paid any moore for doin' my day's washin', an' it's same as if tea goes down, bread or summat else goes up.

[*There is a sharp double knock at the front door. They all start. GEORGE goes. Nobody speaks. They all sit looking at the passage door waiting. GEORGE is followed down the passage by the CONSTABLE who stands at the kitchen door.*

CONSTABLE (*looking at TRIX*): I'm sorry, miss, but I want you.

TRIX (*very pale and rising*): Very well.

HARRIET: Wait a minute. What's happened? What do you want her for? (*Going to stand half in front of TRIX.*)

CONSTABLE: Meadows is conscious. Says it was her struck him—wi' a knife.

GEORGE (*violently*): He didn't tell you, I suppose, what he was trying to do—the swine! It was self-defence.

CONSTABLE (*in regret and indignation*): 'Ere, 'ere, none o' that. Don't mak' it more awkward than it is. Who said Meadows were tellin' the truth, eh? But we've got to tak' notice, see? Got to inquire. You ready, miss?

TRIX (*composed*): I'm ready.

MRS. MEADOWS: Can I come, too?

CONSTABLE: Yea, I see no reason why, not.

[*TRIX and her mother put their hats on.*

HARRIET (to TRIX): Don't lose heart, luv. (To MRS. MEADOWS) You'll come back. I'll have summat ready.

GEORGE (to TRIX, *pleadingly*): Darling, I'm so awfully sor—

TRIX: It's all right, George. Don't worry. I'm glad. I shall be easier in my mind.

[*They begin to move. The CONSTABLE pauses at the door before following them.*]

CONSTABLE (to GEORGE and *emphasising it with his finger*): Howd thy hush. See?

[*TRIX and her mother and the CONSTABLE exeunt.*]

HARRIET and GEORGE stand staring after them.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT III

SCENE I

SCENE: HARRIET'S house a fortnight later.

TIME: 11 a.m.

HARRIET is peeling potatoes. She looks tired and rather worn out. First she is standing, then she pulls a chair towards her with her foot and sits down.

PETER enters from the front door. He hangs his cap up.

HARRIET: Well?

PETER: T' lass is remanded again. (*Violently*) By God, tha'd think it were a new form o' cruelty. Remanded, remanded, suspense, suspense.

HARRIET: What is it this time?

PETER: Some other complication. Bit o' blood poisonin'. They think he'll be out o' hospital in two-three days and fit to gi'e evidence.

HARRIET: Where's George?

PETER: Him an' Trix have gone for a walk.

HARRIET: Is it any more hopeful?

PETER: How can it be when she winna deny it? Fat lot o' good me sayin' it were me when 'oo says it were her. There might be a chance if there were a jury. But this damned Stipendiary Magistrate'll preach at her and send her down, if I'm any judge. I reckon he's no option eyther, things bein' as they are. It's not *why* tha did a thing, but just that tha did it as counts. Apparently accordin' to t' law she ought to let hersel' be ravished an' complain after it's finished. Human life sacred—except to t' State. Murders only allowed by public order. Now wi' a jury

there's allus a chance o' some on 'em bein' soft an' lettin' thee off. Aye, best to 'ave a jury when th'art guilty. (*Pause.*) Nowt fresh from t' cinema or t' Black Bull, I reckon?

HARRIET: Not that I've heard of.

PETER: Aye, 'oo's put her checks in theer. Afe o' t' pic-chers they show are full o' naked women or crooks and t' Black Bull's done its share i' makin' Josh what he is. But they bar thee singin' theer if tha gets into court for doin' summat as wanted doin'. No wonder they blindfold Justice when they carve him i' marble.

HARRIET (*ironically*): You'd best start doin' some o' your local preachin' again. Yo' seem i' good form.

PETER (*now on his feet again and chuckling*): Nay, I were too strong on the Song o' Solomon for 'em. What is it?—"Until the day break an' the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether. Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet and thy speech is comely. Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies." (*Pause.*) Aye, that's how it goes. But it seems women don't ha' breasts i' Chesterford. They'd ha' locked Solomon up if he'd been on t' Market Place and, by God, if th' Almighty published some of His Divine words in a book to-day, t' Public Prosecutor 'ud be worried to death by sanctimonious journalists callin' his attention to 'em for t' sake o' morality—coupled wi' bigger circulation. Aye. (*Pause.*) Can I help thee wi' t' dinner? (*Ironically.*) Any salmon tha wants a steak cuttin' off, or a pheasant to be plucked?

HARRIET (*savagely*): Th' only pheasant tha'll ever see again is stamped on t' margarine.

PETER: Come, come, corn't tha see when I'm

bein' humorous? I sometimes think God only had a bit o' humour handy when He were busy creatin' and He used what He had i' makin' Adam. I'm on thy side, really. There's no Divine right about havin' enough to eat as so many folk seem to think. Well, it's good to see thee doin' thy real job agen. Sam weren't much better at cookin' than at owt else.

HARRIET: Yo' men mak' me tired. Aw Hitlers at t' bottom on yo'—tellin' us women's place is in th' home. You'd think it took brains to manufacture childer, you're so proud o' t' trick. You were that jealous o' me workin', I do believe you were aw glad when *my* factory shut down, too.

PETER (*humorously*): We didn't like to see thee out o' t' fashion. Tho' I must admit I were disappointed not to see thee finish thy feight wi' Whitehead. It 'ud ha' bin a good test case, gettin' thee sacked.

HARRIET: Will yo' stop bein' funny and get out o' my road? Th' only time I get a bit o' peacc is when I'm shut of yo' all and I can fancy you're workin'.

PETER: Aw reet, I'll be as serious as tha likes. Why doesn't get out moore? When were t' at Burnham last?

HARRIET: Tha can keep thy Burnham.

PETER (*ironically*): Why doesn't get out moore—fresh air, exercise. Hasn't tha heard o' t' new leisure? We're aw goin' to act Shakespeare and read Voltaire an' do Folk Dances. Can tha see thysel' Maypole dancin' down Ogden Street?

HARRIET: Aye, me out—an' Sam entertainin' Mrs. O'Halloran i' this kitchen.

PETER: *That* painted Jezebel? So ~~that's~~ it.

HARRIET: That's part on it. Tha needn't look so surprised.

PETER: So he's not even faithful to thee. I've often wondered. By the mon! Why is it as t' worthless flourish like a green bay tree, an' t' proud an' lovely ones are cut down? Th' Almighty must ha' garnered enough fine spirits from 1914 to 1918 to fill His halls for ever. An' Wilf'll be theer marchin' at th' head of a comp'ny, I'm thinkin'. By God, but tha'd ha' been a proud, happy woman if he'd ha' lived. (*Quoting again from the Song of Solomon*) "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy and black as a raven . . ."

HARRIET (*beside herself*): Stop, wilta?

PETER: If a man has two sons, must he allus think an' speak o' the good-for-nowt?

HARRIET: Happen he'd better.

PETER (*sternly*): Better?

HARRIET: Go to t' club and gi'e me a bit o' peace.

PETER (*violently*): Why dost allus go on t' rampage when I mention Wilf? I thowt tha loved him.

[HARRIET *is silent*.

He were crazy about thee.

[HARRIET *says nothing*.

He'd never done talkin' about thee.

[HARRIET *goes and gets her hat and takes her shawl*.

What's up wi' thee?

HARRIET: Don't torment me. I tell thee I want some peace. If *tha* winna go out, I mun.

PETER: Torment thee, dost say? What art implyin' against our Wilf?

[HARRIET *is silent.*

ANSWER me, wilta? By the mon, tha doesn't leave this room. . . .

HARRIET: Don't act daft.

PETER (*fuming*): What's at t' back o' thy yed?

HARRIET: If tha doesn't howd thy din tha'll drive me as crazy as thysel'. (*She starts to go and PETER hurries to her and takes her arm.*)

PETER: Drive *thee* crazy? I like that. Spit it out. Let's hear what it is. Tha'll ha' no peace till tha——

HARRIET (*sternly*): Very well. It's thy own doin'. (*Pause.*) Tha's said a seet too much about Sam. Sam is (*makes a gesture*) *what* he is. (*Pause.*) Wilf were no better.

PETER: Nay, by God——

HARRIET: Listen, wilta? (*Then, wearily*) I loved him reet enough. He said he loved me, too. He took me. Aye, dost hear? Took me afore he went to France.

PETER: Well?

HARRIET: But he'd another woman i' Alder-shot. An' by t' time he went to France he were finished wi' me. Finished! There'd ha' been a child but for Mrs. Marshall and her physic and what not. (*Pause.*) That's ~~two~~ grand-childer o' thine she's stopped. Aye, she's just stopped another. Corn't tha see it in my face? (*Pause.*) Sam knew about Wilf. When he come on leave it were him as—— He did what he could. (*She leans on the mantelpiece, her head on her hand.*)

PETER (*in anguish*): Art tellin' t' truth?

[HARRIET *doesn't move or speak.*

(*Then in a whisper*) Aye, I can see tha art.

[*Slowly HARRIET moves and arranges her shawl about her head and goes out the front way.*

PETER *sinks into a chair, his head in his hands. Presently he lifts his head and begins to say in a low voice which becomes more broken as he goes on, and finally leaves him very deeply moved.*

He hath bent His bow and set me as a mark for
the arrow; He hath filled me with bitterness;
He hath made me drunken with wormwood;
He hath broken my teeth with gravel stones;
He hath covered me with ashes.

THE CURTAIN HAS SLOWLY DESCENDED

SCENE II

A few days later. Time: evening.

HARRIET, SAM, PETER and WHITEHEAD *are talking. PETER has begun to look a little wilder and more dishevelled and his speech is more jerky.*

WHITEHEAD (*to SAM*): We want you to take a collecting box on the march.

SAM: Aye, I know, but—*I'm noan starvin'.*

WHITEHEAD: No certainly you won't be before you're finished. We've got to stand together. Come, it's the first time we've asked you to do anything. What do *you* say, Mrs. Renshaw?

HARRIET: Tha con leave t' box.

SAM: Aye, but——

HARRIET (*to SAM*): If tha doesn't *I* will. I've not gone scavengin', walkin' a mile to save a

penny, goin' to t' market at five minutes to nine on a Saturday night to 'ave a bit o' beef thrown at me for sixpence, wi' out larnin' summat. Happen *we're* not starvin' but there's plenty as is, specially t' women. I wonder sometimes what men are made on. They must believe i' miracles. Elijah and t' ravens an' Moses an' his manna weren't in it wi' t' way women feed 'em on t' dole money—an' t' men tak' meat and eggs for granted an' t' women say nowt an' live on bread an' marg.

SAM: Nay, nay—

HARRIET (*turning on him*): What dost think Lizzie Pearson died on? She were havin' a child an' she'd bin sick every mornin' for a fortnight and she'd nowt to be sick on. She vomited herself to death an' aw because t' poor lass were three parts starved.

PETER (*rather wildly*): Who were it said aeroplanes and wireless were shortenin' distances? There's been no shortenin' 'twixt Chesterford an' Whitehall. We might be in th' Argentine for aw they know about us i' London. There's a regular fanfare o' trumpets i' th' House o' Commons every time th' unemployment figures are down by ten thousand—but we need a roll o' drums to drown t' mockin' laughter i' Chesterford. (*He laughs himself and stops and then says*) Can't you hear 'em laughin'? (*And cocks his head and laughs again. A laugh with a little madness in it.*)

[*After a moment there is the tap tap of a drum past the corner of the street and then the boom once or twice of a big drum.*]

WHITEHEAD (*looks at his watch*): They're going to hold another meeting. Time I was going. I wish you'd come and speak, Mrs. Renshaw.

HARRIET: What could *I* say? I'm no spouter.

WHITEHEAD: No use despising it. Most of the people who get things done have been tub thumpers—indoors or outdoors. Shaw and Wells can write till their fingers are numb, but a man who can speak for a couple of hours and make men excited has more authority over 'em.

HARRIET: If I talked to a lot o' men I should insult 'em—not havin' enough brains to see that their wives are starvin' in front of their eyes. (*More excited*) Aye, an' I con see that t' women by their very sacrifice are keepin' t' men fro' doin' what they might do. The better men are fed, t' less they see there's owt wrong. They'd ha' more i' their heads if they'd less i' their bellies.

[*The back door is rattled and MRS. MCINTYRE is heard asking :*

MRS. MCINTYRE: Can I come in?

HARRIET: Yea, come in. (*And she walks to the door to encourage her.*)

MRS. MCINTYRE (*pauses at the door. She is very worried*): I thoct I'd juist look in to see if you'd seen anythin' o' Jamie.

HARRIET (*to SAM*): 'Ave yo' seen him, Sam?

SAM: Nay, not for a day or two. Owt amiss?

MRS. MCINTYRE: No, oh no. Only he's not hame yet an' it's a couple o' hours past his time. I'm a bit worried. There's so much traffic on the roads. Mebbe they kept him to do a wee bit job extra, though. He's niver afraid of a bit of extra work. It's second nature to him.

PETER (*grimly*): It'll soon be only chaps like me wi' second sight who will recollect what it were like. It'll be a miracle winnot it, a miracle! (*He chuckles.*)

HARRIET: Did yo' ring up to see if he were theer?

MRS. MCINTYRE: Ah well, no, I juist didna think on it.

WHITEHEAD: The office would be closed, anyhow.

MRS. MCINTYRE: Aye, 'twould so.

[MRS. MCINTYRE *dabs her eye nervously. Then she says:*

He's sich an awfu' steady man, mae Jamie. Makes me worrit more. If he wuz in the habit o' call'n an' ha'in' a drink, I would nae be worryin' juist i' the same way.

SAM (*drily*): Aye, let a man spoil a woman wi' kindness and it's hell for both on 'em when he trips up. (*Then, quickly, feeling HARRIET'S eye on him*) But I shouldn't be botherin', missis. I shouldn't be botherin'. He's happen home by this time.

MRS. MCINTYRE: Aye, mebbe so. I'm sorry to be troublin' you.

PETER (*musingly*): An' if it's his last home he's gone to (*his voice becomes very low*) he's only a bit in front on us.

HARRIET: Father, don't! (*She adds quietly as MRS. MCINTYRE moves towards the door*) I'll look in presently if you like, Rachel, and (*with an encouraging smile*) you'll both be havin' your supper as right as rain, I'll bet a shillin'.

[MRS. MCINTYRE *exits.*

WHITEHEAD (*getting up to go and speaking to HARRIET*): I was hoping you were coming with me. You'd do a power o' good.

HARRIET: Nay, I don't do things so sharp as

that. If I'm ever goin' to speak, I mun know what I'm goin' to say.

WHITEHEAD: It's all there inside you. You've only to let it come out.

HARRIET: We'll see.

WHITEHEAD: Amn't I right, Peter?

PETER: I tow'd th' Almighty t' other day that when He were puttin' her tongue in, He didn't stint her none. Th' art speakin' t' usual driv'el thysel', I suppose?

WHITEHEAD: I shall say a word or two.

PETER: I'll bet tha will. Come, Sam, it's time the prophets showed theirsels to t' proletariat. 'Ow does it go—— (*Singing*) "The International will unite the 'uman race." Unity! (*Savagely*) Why, they corn't divide t' second-hand overcoats wi'out snarlin' like a pack o' dogs.

SAM (*to WHITEHEAD*): What is it yo're bent on?

WHITEHEAD: We're going to keep on demonstrating outside the Town Hall till the Public Assistance committees open their purses a bit wider.

HARRIET: What's good o' playin' kettle drums and blowin' tin whistles i' Chesterford? It's an army to occupy London yo' want—an' no comin' home agen till yo' get justice.

PETER: Justice. (*Laughs a little madly again.*) What a thing to hope for! Yo'd better seek mercy.

HARRIET: Mercy's for them as have no fight in 'em. Are yo' as bad as that? A hundred men wi' courage enough to die in Downing Street and leave their corpses under t' flags o' t' Cenotaph—and there'd be no more women and

childer starvin' to death on bread and marg.i' Chesterford, I'm thinkin'. (*A little wearily*) You'd best be goin', or you'll be late for your play-actin'.

PETER: Aye, come on. (*Quoting*) "O that we had but one ten thousand of those men in England who do no work to-day." One ten thousand! Chesterford could gi'e King Harry thirty thousand! Aye, thirty thousand. Thirty thousand!

[*As PETER says this the men go out.*]

HARRIET *knocks on the wall between her house and that of the Meadows*'. She busies herself about the room until MRS. MEADOWS comes in.

HARRIET: Well, Jane? How are yo' gettin' on?

MRS. MEADOWS: He come 'ome this afternoon.

[HARRIET *nods and waits.*]

He were makin' double U's up t' street when he come. Some on 'em had been treatin' him. The hero! He were very full of hissels'. He swore he'd get her sent down if he could.

HARRIET: Did you tell him you were goin' to give evidence agen him about—what he's tried to do wi' her?

MRS. MEADOWS: No. Time enough for that, I thowt, when he sees me at t' court. (*Pause.*) I think he might kill me at after. (*Pause.*) But I'm not feart.

[HARRIET *goes to her and stands with her arm round MRS. MEADOWS' shoulder.*]

HARRIET: If he'd a grain o' sense he'd see t' risk he's runnin' in goin' into court at aw.

MRS. MEADOWS: I sometimes think he's a bit cracked. He seems to think 'oo—stabbed him—just for t' (*she can't find a suitable phrase*)—for t' fun on it.

HARRIET: Wheer is he now?

MRS. MEADOWS: He had his tay and he's gone off out agen like a dog wi' two tails. I daresay he's as drunk as a lord agen by this time.

HARRIET: You'll have to leave him, Jane.

[MRS. MEADOWS *doesn't speak.*

There's no sense in stoppin' wi' 'im.

MRS. MEADOWS: I spoke to Father Ruley. He sez it's my duty to help to mak' him a better man. (*Pause.*) I should ha' nothin' at all if I left him.

HARRIET: He'd have to make yo' an allowance.

MRS. MEADOWS: I think he'd go to prison afore he'd pay it. Even if he intended t' pay it, he'd just sup it away.

HARRIET: When Trix gets a job again she could keep yo'.

MRS. MEADOWS: I don't want to be a burden on her. I'st 'ave no peace wi' him, but happen I shan't be here so long. (*Pause.*) I get such a pain sometimes—here. (*She touches her breast.*) It's like a—like a mouse eatin' it away inside. (*She puts her hands over her face.*)

HARRIET (*shocked*): 'Ave yo' bin to see t' doctor?

MRS. MEADOWS: I fainted one day when I were washin' at Dr. O'Grady's, an' he took me off to t' Royal Hospital for th' X-ray. They said I ought to be operated on right away. (*Pause.*) I've kept puttin' it off. I remember my mother—they cut an' cut—but it were same as it grew faster. (*Pause.*) I'm that sorry. I'm only upsettin' yo'. You've enough troubles o' yer own.

HARRIET (*gently*): Yo' ought to go in, luv. They're a sight cleverer than they used to be.

MRS. MEADOWS (*very quietly*): They canna gi'e me a new body. It's the only thing as is any use to me. (*She gets up.*) I'm goin' to see Trix at her lodgin's. I promised I would. If George 'ad a job an' they'd get wed—I should be content then.

HARRIET: Happen he'll get one, luv. If tha sees him yonder, tell him not to be too late.

MRS. MEADOWS: Yea, I'll tell him. (*She turns at the door.*) Do yo' think there's peace at after—when we'n done wi' aw this toilin' an' moilin'?

HARRIET: That's what He said He were, isn't it—the Prince o' Peace.

MRS. MEADOWS: I do hope so. I should be so fain.

[*She goes out.*]

HARRIET *stands for a moment, looking after her. She has barely gone when GEORGE comes in the back way. He is pale and rather wild-looking. He stands irresolute for a moment or two.*

HARRIET: Hello, I thowt tha were wi' Trix.

GEORGE (*not looking at her*): I left her a bit since. (*He goes and hangs his hat up*) Can I borrow your dress basket?

HARRIET (*eyeing him and disturbed*): What for?

GEORGE (*jerkily*): I've heard of a job. I want to go after it. It means going away.

HARRIET: What sort of a job?

GEORGE: Oh, I don't know for certain. It's in Burnham.

HARRIET: It's a funny sort of a job if tha doesn't know what it is. Besides, Burnham's not a cock-stride away. No need to go now.

[*GEORGE crosses the room and vanishes up the*

stairs. His steps can be heard. HARRIET crosses to the foot of the stairs and listens.

What art doin'?

GEORGE (*his voice rather indistinct*): Putting a few things together.

[He comes down with a pair of old flannel trousers and an old jacket and some underclothing.]

GEORGE: Can I have your basket?

HARRIET: Tell me. Tha'd better. What's t' matter?

GEORGE: Nothing's the matter. Dick Sharples's steam waggon's going to Burnham. He's giving me a lift. Save me walking to-morrow.

HARRIET: Where'll you stop to-night?

GEORGE: I can sleep in the waggon, Dick says. He doesn't leave Burnham till six in the morning. Where is the basket, mother? Come on. (*He is nervous and jumpy.*)

HARRIET: Tha'd better tell me what it is. What's bin doin'?

GEORGE: Don't pester me, mother. If I'm not there early in the morning somebody else'll get the job.

HARRIET (*very sad*): I don't believe a word tha sez. Hast had a row wi' Trix? Tha'd no business to, an' her wi' her case comin' on in t' mornin'.

GEORGE: No, I *haven't* had a row with Trix. You know as well as I do there's nothing I wouldn't do for her.

HARRIET: Then what is it? Tha doesn't need thy clothes to go after a job i' Burnham. Besides, if thart not at owts wi' Trix, what dost mean by goin' away an' leaving her when she

needs thee? When folk are i' love, they stick like glue.

GEORGE (*suddenly composed*): I've got to go, mother. It's no use. Don't ask me what's the matter. For one thing I can't go on livin' on you any longer. I ought to have gone long since. Trix—Trix'll be goin' too, soon. There's plenty of other towns besides Chesterford. She'll never get a chance here again.

HARRIET: Are yo' runnin' away wi' Trix?

GEORGE: No, no. Where is the basket, mother?

HARRIET (*wearily*): Tha'll find it next door.

[*There is a sharp rat-tat at the door. GEORGE starts guiltily and says:*

GEORGE: See who it is, mother.

[*He goes into the other room while HARRIET goes to the front door. We hear a POLICEMAN'S voice saying off:*

POLICEMAN: Do yo' happen to know where Mrs. Meadows is? I can get no answer when I knock.

HARRIET (*off*): She's gone out for a while. Will yo' leave any message?

POLICEMAN (*off*): I'd better try an' find her. Can you suggest where she might be?

HARRIET (*off*): Is there anythin' amiss? Yo' can come in a minute. (*In a loud clear voice*) There's nobody in but me. (*She precedes him into the kitchen*) I'm just mendin' a few clothes. (*She indicates the heap of GEORGE'S things.*)

POLICEMAN (*he is not the same man as the first constable*): It's about Meadows. They pulled him out o' the Rochdale Canal half an hour since.

HARRIET (*steadying herself with the table and leaning against it—in a strained voice*): As if that poor woman hadn't enough to bear.

POLICEMAN: Aye, a bad business—tho' there'll be some as are glad, I darse bet. He were a bad lot if I'm any judge.

HARRIET: 'Ow were he—found?

POLICEMAN: Oh, a courtin' couple. It's a lonely place just there.

HARRIET: What do you think happened to him? Is he—were he—

POLICEMAN: There's a bit of a bruise on his forehead, but that might be caused by anythin'—hittin' a bit o' wood as he fell in, happen—oh, anything. There was a bit o' mist about and the canal bank is slippy in places. It's a short cut from the Three Jolly Carters to the Black Bull.

HARRIET: If he were drunk—he's bin on t' spree aw day, I hear.

POLICEMAN: Aye, easy enough. Where does his step-daughter stop? His missis might be with her. That reminds me, they're sure to have her address at the station, anyway.

HARRIET: Oh, I could tell yo' that—Thirty-one, Mount Pleasant.

POLICEMAN (*making a note in his book*): Thirty-one, Mount Pleasant. Right. I'll go along. If I don't find Mrs. Meadows, and she comes back, tell her I'll be looking back, will yo'? The Coroner's Officer'll be coming along, too. Well. I'll be moving. Funny it should have happened to-night wi' that case on to-morrow. Well, it'll save a lot o' bother, I reckon—that is, if nowt transpires. There'll be a post mortem, I don't doubt.

[*He goes down the passage and HARRIET accompanies him. He says, "Good-night, Mrs. Renshaw, and thank yo'."* HARRIET is heard saying :

HARRIET (*off*): Good night. I'll give Mrs. Meadows the message.

[HARRIET returns and sits down heavily and bows her head on her hand for a moment.

GEORGE enters and stands looking at her.

HARRIET (*looking at him steadily*): So that's it.

[GEORGE utters a small inarticulate cry and goes to her and she folds him in her arms. After a moment or two he releases himself. Almost whispering he says :

GEORGE: You see—I've got to go.

HARRIET: Just th' opposite. Tha mun stop. Suppose they ax for thee? They'd know summat were amiss right away.

GEORGE: I couldn't face 'em. I might give—give it away.

HARRIET: Why, oh why didta do it? It were mad. Did I put it in thy yed that day? I've never forgot what tha said.

GEORGE: I suppose it's been there a long time. Every time Trix was unhappy it was there. He—he deserved it. I couldn't bear the thought of her going through all that in court to-morrow. And I've thought so much. Nothing much else to do but think. My mind was in a tangle. I followed him from The Three Jolly Carters—I asked him to say he couldn't remember what happened the day he was hurt—that he'd made a mistake. . . . He tried to hit me and then—I hit him—and he fell in. I could have saved him—he clutched once or twice at the side—he were that drunk—

[He turns away and after a moment begins to pack the basket. He looks up.

I've got to go, mother. I can't—

HARRIET (*drying her eyes on her apron*): I'll go and get my purse from upstairs.

[*As she leaves the room and GEORGE continues packing the basket—on his knees in the middle of the floor,*

THE CURTAIN QUICKLY FALLS

SCENE III

Several months later. Time: afternoon.

HARRIET is leaning on the piano, desultorily rubbing it. She is thin and worn. Her appearance is rather uncared for but her courage remains.

SAM comes in from the scullery in his shirt-sleeves, hair ruffled. He stands watching her a moment or two.

SAM: I don't like partin' wi' it.

[HARRIET doesn't speak.

George might come back any time. An' then—
an' then he'll want to play it, winnat he?

HARRIET: It'll give us a bit more meit. If tha were as tired o' bread and marg. as I am—

SAM: Oh, I'm tired o' that aw reet. Every time I see a loaf I could be sick. Tom Edmunds sez t' doctor sez he mun stop eitin' so much bread—givin' him a fatty heart. "Fatty heart, sez Tom, by Crikey, it's good to know summat about me's fat." (*Pause.*) Hast heard fro' George lately?

[HARRIET shakes her head.

Still livin' in—what does he call 'em—spikes? He'd no business to go—wi'out a word to me, eyther. Tha should ha' stopped him.

HARRIET: Dost think I *wanted* him to go?

SAM: I'd ha' gan him livin' i' workhouses. Aye, an' I'd ha' kept him at home, too.

HARRIET: If he wouldn't stop for me, he'd ha' took no notice o' thee. (*She is still rubbing the piano.*)

SAM: He'll be gettin' hisselt' locked up afore he's finished.

HARRIET: An' what if he does?

SAM: That'll be a fine thing, winnat it?

HARRIET: Aw depends what he gets locked up for.

SAM: They don't lock folk up for nowt.

HARRIET (*deliberately*): Didta ever hear o' Christ crucified?

SAM (*to whom that is a finishing stroke*): I gi'e thee up, absolootly, gi'e thee up.

[SAM wanders about the room uncertainly, now and then rumpling his hair.

(*Ruminatingly*) I never could understand him goin' like he did. He tow'd thee nowt, tha sez?

HARRIET: He tow'd me he couldn't stond bein' kept by other folk. Tha knows that well enough.

SAM: Aye, I know. I meant, did he tell thee owt else?

[HARRIET *doesn't answer*.

(*Sighs*) I've lied to thee too often to expect t' truth from thee now, I suppose. Dost think he'll *never* come back? I mean, wi' thee wantin' to sell t' piano an' that?

HARRIET: Tha knows as much as me.

SAM (*momentarily stung*): He's my lad as well as thine, tha knows. (*More gently*) I've had afe a

mind to go seekin' him sometimes—only (*half to himself*) I hardly know what I should say to him if I were to find him. I've a funny feelin' about him—I dreamt he were runnin' away fro' some men, and I were on a hill tryin' to tell him to come to me but he couldn't see me an' I shouted an' t' wind were blowin' my voice away. An' then he'd gone—vanished. By God, it were real. Dost think—dost think he's aw reet?

HARRIET: How *can* he be?

SAM: Naw. Naw. I know. It's not same as if he'd been used to a job eyther, been steadied down by workin'.

HARRIET: It's taken thee a long time to start worritin'. Tha might ha' looked after him a bit better when he were here.

SAM: He took after thee. He were . . . I never . . . (*SAM doesn't finish it.*)

HARRIET: Dost remember summat tha once said to me—happen tha'rt worritin' too soon? Well. . .

SAM: Aye, I remember.

HARRIET (*coaxingly*): Go an' have a walk. (*Then, with a faint smile*) Only tha'd best not go too far. Thy boots are gettin' that thin I con very near see through t' bottoms.

[JOE HOLROYD *enters. He wears a bowler and looks prosperous.*

JOE: T' front door were open.

HARRIET (*glad to see him*): Come in, Joe.

JOE (*a little uncomfortably*): Howdo, Sam!

SAM: Howdo, Joe! (*Goes to take his cap and jacket off the peg.*) Hast come about t' piano?

JOE: Summat like that.

SAM (*to HARRIET*): Thou knows what I think about it.

HARRIET: Yes, I know.

SAM: Aye—well, then—(*He pauses, irresolutely, and wipes his moustache and—then goes.*)

JOE (*trying to cheer her up*): Now then, lass, this'll never do.

HARRIET (*giving him a fleeting smile which momentarily lights up her face*): What'll never do?

JOE: Aw this 'ere 'ere. Thee lookin' like tha art—aw washed out, an' what not. I shall gi'e o'er anxin' thee to run away wi' me if tha doesn't look better than this.

HARRIET (*deeply moved*): Don't, Joe. I can't stand it.

JOE (*twiddling his bowler in his hands*): Well, I can't bottle it up for ever, tha knows.

HARRIET (*indicating the piano*): How much willta gi'e us for it? . . .

JOE: Much as tha likes, ten pound, twenty—

HARRIET: What it's worth to thee, I mean. What can tha sell it for agen an' mak' a profit?

JOE (*stroking his chin*): Tha'd better let me lend thee summat.

HARRIET: Happen tha'd never get it back.

JOE (*smiling*): I tak' that risk wi' everybody.

HARRIET (*with energy*): If tha doesn't mak' me an offer, Joe, I'll go to somebody as will.

JOE: Ten pound, then. I'll keep it in t' shop an' when tha wants it back, it'll be theer waitin'.

HARRIET: Don't put it wheer I'st see it. I don't want to see it. That's why I'm partin' wi' it. George . . . (*She stops.*)

JOE: Just as tha likes.

HARRIET (*smiling*): Th'art good to me.

JOE: I would be if tha'd let me. Sam—he's not afe as washed out as thee. Art starvin' thysel' for him?

[HARRIET *shakes her head*.

JOE: Or is it Mrs. O'Halloran as gi'es him what he wants?

HARRIET: Happen.

JOE: What is there for thee to stop 'ere for? That's what I want to know. George has gone—Sam—well, tha knows as well as me. Owd Peter—he's goin' off his chump—he owt to be in t' 'sylum.

HARRIET: Don't Joe!

JOE (*goes on*): Tha'rt wearin' thysel' out for 'em—and what good is it doin' thee? To say nowt o' what tha'rt deprivin' me on—and thysel' too.

HARRIET (*with a wan smile*): Tha doesn't look so bad on it.

JOE: Tha corn't see my inside. Sometimes I feel as if I were a volcano—eruptin'. (*Trying again, patiently*) Tha knows it's not as if tha were doin' any good. Tha's heard about savages stickin' knives into theirsels for penance. Well, tha'rt in t' same boat. Torture, that's what it is.

HARRIET: Fastin' does folk good, doesn't it?

JOE (*smiling*): I can't say as I've ever tried it—I shouldn't say *tha* were a good advert for it.

HARRIET: I know. But I don't mean quite that road. (*Wondering*). If I did run away wi' thee, dost think we should be happy?

JOE (*simply*): I should be happy.

HARRIET (*pondering*): I've thowt a lot about it. When tha's lived wi' somebody for a long while, they're sort of a habit wi' thee.

JOE (*interrupting*): There's bad habits as well as——

HARRIET: I know all about that. Yo' know, Joe, I'm not sure as we were meant to be happy—not happy all t' time. "Happy as t' day is long"—they say i' books, dunnot they? I've never *been* happy that road. There's allus bin summat comin' at me just round t' corner. But I've not allus been exactly miserable when I've been unhappy. Life's a feight. Feightin'—feightin'. Suppose tha took me away an' we lived at Southport or somewheer nice—an' I'd nowt to do but sit in t' garden and get thy tay ready and go for bits o' walks: oh, it'ud be luvly to ha' peace like that, luvly for a bit, but, after a while, it wouldn't suit me, Joe. There's more to life than that.

JOE (*wistfully*): I daresay I could rake up a bit of a quarrel, sometimes.

HARRIET: An' then there's Sam's father. Ever sin' I tow'd him about Wilf—he's not been t' same. I never ought to ha' tow'd him. I were wicked.

[*She moves to the fireplace and JOE follows her.*]

JOE: Now then, tha knows he drove thee to it. Besides, he'd been goin' that road afore.

HARRIET: Not t' same.

JOE: I wish tha'd stop thinkin' about other folk an' think about thysel' a bit more. I don't think I'st ever giv' up hopin' whatever tha sez. I'm set. I shan't change no more now. It's eyther thee or nobody. I've been workin' towards thee for a couple o' year now. T' shop an' that. I should never have had t' guts to tak' it, but for th' image o' thee i' front o' me.

HARRIET: I'm sorry, Joe. But it's no good.

JOE: Tha'rt terrible hard—an' yet I know tha'rt not hard inside. I can see straight through thee. It's as if tha'rt feightin' thysel' aw t' time.

HARRIET: There's a bit o' that in it; but there's more beside. I'm on th' unemployed committee.

JOE: I know. I heard thee speak one night. Tha didn't wrap it up.

HARRIET: It's like t' war o'er agen. There's hardly a house as isn't smitten some road. Tha heard about Jamie McIntyre—throwd hissel' i' front of a train at Chadworth. Look at t' next door—Trix gone off tourin', Josh dead, Mrs. Meadows in th' hospital—look at us 'ere—it's same as a cancer—eatin' away, eatin' away. Tom Edmunds's missis took his false teeth away and hid 'em yesterday. "*Tha* shan't eat what thy childer earn," she said. "Tha mun clear out." I sometimes think we'st aw go crazy afore we'n finished.

JOE: What can *tha* do—why, it 'ud tak' another Jesus Christ to change t' world afore— (*He stops, overwhelmed by the size of the problem.*)

HARRIET: I can win a bit o' peace for mysel'. When I've tried mysel' out rantin' or goin' collectin' or sewin' for them as can't sew—I feel quiet inside then.

JOE: But tha'rt not allus quiet inside. I can see that i' thy face.

HARRIET: No, not yet. Happen it'll come, though.

JOE: I'st be sorry if it does. It'll mean there's nowt left for me. (*He turns.*) Happen I'd best be gooin'.

HARRIET: Tha winna forget about t' piano?

JOE: I'll send t' money wi' Harry Roscoe when I get him to fetch it across to t' shop in t' mornin'.

HARRIET: Winna tha bring t' brass thysel'?

JOE (*not looking at her*): I'd rayther leave thee to thysel' for a while. Happen it'll be easier for me then.

HARRIET: Just as tha likes. I like to see thee.

JOE: Thanks, lass. (*Hesitates.*) Well, I'd best be goin'. (*He looks at her.*) Good-bye, lass.

HARRIET: Good-bye, Joe. Don't look so sad. We'st see one another agen.

[JOE goes.

She begins rubbing the piano again with her apron, then sits on the stool and leans across the keys and bows her head on her arms.

A moment or two after JOE had gone, and while HARRIET is still bent over the piano, TRIX comes quietly in, nicely dressed in outdoor clothes.

HARRIET (*seeing her and her face lighting up*): Hello, luv. Why, I thought you were . . .

TRIX (*running to her and kissing her*): We're playin' at the Hoppodrome, Burnham, this week. I've been to see my mother in Chesterford Royal.

HARRIET: How is she?

TRIX: About the same, she says. She's nothing but skin and bone. (*Very sadly.*) She said she was ready to—to go, now she's seen me again. She said her wick was burnt right down to the bottom. She didn't want to go on being a trouble to them, she said. (*She cries a little, then wipes her eyes*) And how are you?

HARRIET: Oh, I'm all right. And you—why yo'

look champion. Sit you down. I'll have some tea made in a jiffy. (HARRIET *begins to see to it.*)

TRIX: How's—how's George?

HARRIET: Oh, I expect he's all right.

TRIX: I wrote to his last address but I didn't have any answer.

HARRIET: He's not much of a writer, our George. And then—I think he keeps shiftin'.

TRIX: He wouldn't have gone but for—it was all through me. I wish you'd told me when it . . .

HARRIET: There was nothin' to tell you, luv.

TRIX: *Where* is he?

HARRIET: I don't—I don't just know—not for certain.

TRIX: Do you think he'd marry me?

HARRIET: I know he *loves* you—but you couldn't go weddin' him out o' pity. It wouldn't be fair—it wouldn't last.

TRIX: He's taken risks for me and spoilt his life, and . . .

HARRIET: When folks love somebody, they don't mind *what* they do for 'em—they don't even think of it. George said once anythin' he went through he'd just do it rejoicin' like . . .

TRIX: Well, don't you think I'm the same? I've found things out—since he went away. You don't get loved like that—often. (*With more energy*) And here am I living on the fat o' the land—why, I *get* four pound a week . . .

HARRIET: Best wait, luv, till he gets a job. There *must* be somewhere in England where there's works as are busy, what wi' wireless an' motor-cars and what not. Happen one o' these fine days

he'll come home and want to take me off to live in t' south—in t' sunshine. An' happen you'll be married an' . . .

[*There is a bump overhead as of something falling on the bedroom floor. HARRIET goes to the foot of the stairs in the passage and calls :*

What are yo' doin' father?

[*PETER's voice off begins to sing in a light tenor voice a little quavery :*

“Tis thy wedding morning,
Shining in the skies,
Bridal bells are ringing,
Rise, fair maid, arise . . .”

HARRIET (*catching sight of him as he descends the stairs*): Here, what are yo' playin' at? (*She is shocked at what she sees, for PETER is wearing grey trousers and an old black tailed coat with a stiff collar and a light spotted blue tied bow. He comes in and puts a small posy of flowers on the mantelpiece. He combs his hair in a quiff and arranges the tie rather foppishly.*)

HARRIET (*rather frightened*): What are yo' doin'?

PETER: Do I look nice?

HARRIET: Yes.

PETER: Nice enough for a weddin'?

HARRIET: Weddin'? What are yo' talking about?

PETER: Wilf's weddin'. Dost know who he's be wedded to?

[*HARRIET and TRIX stare at him, fascinated.*

Death! I'm goin' to put these on his bridal bed. Chesterford subscribed for it, tha knows. These were his favourites—snowdrops an' violets. (*He smells them.*) Heh, but they're lovely. An' he were lovely, too. Aye, so lovely, so lovely.

[*He goes out down the passage smiling ethereally.*

(HARRIET and TRIX stand staring after him, unmoving, spellbound for a moment. Then TRIX runs after him saying) I'll go and see what's he's doing.

[HARRIET, who has moved to the fireplace, looks at a text over the mantelpiece and reads aloud a part of what it says :

“Let nothing disturb thee,
Nothing affright thee,
Everything passes . . .”

She stops and then repeats as though to impress it more firmly on her mind :

“Let nothing disturb thee
Nothing affright thee . . .”

Then she turns to the door through which PETER and TRIX have gone, and resolutely follows them.

As she does so

THE CURTAIN FALLS

EPILOGUE

As in the Prologue we see a person addressing others, but only the speaker is visible. It is HARRIET. She stands on the steps of the War Memorial. It is dusk. The Memorial must be seen or outlined in some way, and the light falling on her must illumine not much more than head and shoulders. She is addressing the unemployed. But it is not a tub-thumper's speech; it is the out-pouring of a sincere working woman.

HARRIET is saying . . . for the speech has been going on for some minutes :

As far as I see the Government is waitin' for us to die out. We're scrap, you an' me, same as our looms and spinnin' frames.

VOICES: Aye, that's reet, that is!

HARRIET: Our machinery they've smashed up with sledge-hammers. They conna smash us up—but they're waitin' on us rustin' away. How many folk have killed theirsels through idleness—how many women have died havin' childer as wouldn't ha' died if they'd been fed proper—how many homes have been broken and ruined—how many men have gone out of their minds? This want o' work is a bigger curse to-day than gamblin' an' drinkin' an' whorein'. Because it has the effect of 'em all and forces men and women into 'em all.

[From the distance can be heard the tap of a drum and the shrilling of a fife or two.

HARRIET: There's a lot o' shoutin' goes on when a few thousand here an' there find work. It makes no difference to us who *don't* find it, who haven't found it, month after month, and year after year. Are we to sit 'ere waitin' till the Cabinet tak' it into their heads to go an' have a look at England to see if it's still theer? There's a war on—

VOICES: Aye, not arf!

HARRIET: . . . a war against starvation and misery and degradation, and we are part o' the army feightin' it. We're goin' to let 'em know we've no intention o' dyin' out like an extinct race. We want 'em to know we're Englishmen and women, same as anybody else, entitled to a livelihood in the country we belong to and which belongs to us, the country some of our men died for. (*She half turns to the Memorial behind her*) When the steel chisels were cutting names in that stone, there were some of us here who felt their hearts (*she wavers—unable to go on. Then, making an effort*)—Is this the Chesterford they hoped to see? This war in some ways is as bad as theirs.

VOICES: Aye, it lasts longer, missis. (*And another voice*) I'd rather be in t' trenches any day.

HARRIET: And I don't blame you! We've allowed peace to become hideous. Folk don't know even to-day what's goin' on in the heart of the country. England spends two pounds a head on lookin' after criminals i' prison. How much do yo' get—not arf that amount.

VOICE: No, by God! (*and murmurs from the crowd*).

HARRIET: There's plenty o' fancy ladies payin' fees to doctors to put 'em on slimmin' diets. I could put 'em on one free o' charge—let 'em come an' live on 't' dole i' Chesterford.

VOICE: That's the stuff to give 'em (*and laughter*).

HARRIET: Yo' remember what it says in t' Bible. "My son was lost and is found. He was dead and is alive again." There's some of us have sons of whom we pray to God we may be able to say that some day. (*Her voice has sunk very low but she rouses herself again.*) There's parts of England that are lovely an' prosperous,

where childer are bigger and handsomer than ever they were, where t' sun seems to be shinin' all t' time. There are nice folk livin' theer, kindly folk, they're no different to us at t' bottom. They don't want us to be like this 'ere. But they don't know—or if they know, they forget. It's so easy to forget.

VOICES: Not so easy for us, missis.

HARRIET: Some of yo' have marched to London before, but yo'll have to keep on goin', aye, an' happen refusin' to come back till work o' some sort is found for us so we can hold up our heads again. I don't believe Lancashire is finished yet. We're not givin' in—not ever. We're goin' to keep on feightin', feightin' for a decent heritage for our childer, feightin' that they may have work again, an' peace, an' a bit o' comfort such as every man and woman is entitled to, an' same as God intended.

[*There are a few ragged cheers and cries of "Good ould Harriet" and the tapping of a drum and more ragged thin cheers and the shrilling of a fife or two which turns into the tune "Keep the home fires burning." The noise grows fainter.*

The scene closes.

THE PLAY ENDS

AUTHOR'S NOTE

If the producer of this play wishes to omit the Prologue and Epilogue he may do so after communicating with the author through his agent

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